

Revisiting the Theme of Long Slumber in Washington Irving' *Rip Van Winkle* and the Tale of *the Seven Sleepers*: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This study provides across-cultural comparison of the theme of long slumber in Asian and European tales. An analytical approach is adopted to reveal secrets and demystify ambiguities that encompass both canonical tales: *The Seven Sleepers* and *Rip Van Winkle*. That is, we hope to figure out how these tales correlate, interact and reflect on one another by focusing on the three major periods: the Pre-slumber period, the slumber period, and the post-slumber period. We found that the canonical tales in question, despite the theological and historical differences, (co)respond to one another and reveal further secrets and ambiguities. An interesting example elucidated how Irving didn't hint at the conditions that had encompassed his protagonist, Rip, during his slumber. However, based on our analysis of *The Seven Sleepers* tale, we inferred that Rip's body was miraculously protected to make him a mediator and/or a witness for the two periods. In short, long slumber was employed in both tales to convey morals like rebirth and change.

Key words: long slumber, qur'anic narrative, American narrative, the seven sleepers, *Rip Van Winkle*

Introduction

The theme of the present study sounds very bizarre because it tackles the conception and the denotations of the theme of long slumber and its relatedness to European literature. What makes it so is its commonality in the tales of the holy Quran as it is mentioned in more than one occasion, especially occasions whose themes tackle matters of challenging and questioning God's power, miracles, ...etc. The tale, which in the Christian faith is referred to as *the Slumbers of Ephesus* (Grysa, 2010:45) while in the Islamic tradition is called the 'the People of the Cave' (Archer, 2016: 1), had been mentioned in the Greek mythology and later in Christianity and Islam. Amazingly, we found several commonalities between those Quarnic tales and European works. This study investigates the connection and relatedness between the Quarnic depictions of long slumber in the story of *The Seven Sleepers* and Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* (1863). These works, expectedly, as Haspel (2017: 382) states, 'can flow back and forth between and among different societies, influencing one another in turn'. Also, according to Blakemore (2012) such commonalities demonstrate the nexus between literature and history with regard to past eras and how consequently they created an international dialogue, despite text typologies, that plays a great role in the formation of newly-born cultures. It is worth mentioning that the connections and commonalities in the present study are remarkably noticed through drawing comparisons between two tales, each of which represents a different culture and/or a literary genre.

The Seven Sleepers Tale

The story narrates the escape of seven people with their dog to a cave in Jordan, although some other studies argue that the cave was set in Turkey. Suffering religious persecution in their hometown, those people escaped and decided to purify themselves from the corruption that had plagued their faith. So, it had been revealed to them to resort to the cave in search of shelter and safety where they had fallen asleep for more than 300 years. During the slumber reign much had happened. However, when they woke up they were shocked to realize they had slept that long.

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Much controversy had taken place regarding the tale, or what the present researcher terms as the miracle, or *karamah* (Namli, 2013: 20), of the Seven Sleepers in terms of the setting, the number of the slumbers, their faith, the duration they slept, and most importantly, their waking scene. Grysa (2010: 50) claims that the whole story was placed in controversy. Although the number of the sleepers was not fixed in Quran, some other religious sources approved the number seven. The holy Quran maintained that the number of the sleepers not limited ranging between three, five or seven. However, Derek Rivard (2011) in his book *Blessing The World: Ritual and Lay Piety in Medieval Piety* claimed that the number was seven, “The famous sixth-century Christian story of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus appears in the Quran in 18:9-27, in surah al-Kahf, the chapter of the cave. The Quran only suggests that the number of the young men might be seven” (n.p).

Islam (2013: 1-2) supported Grysa’s point when he identified the location of the cave and to which faith and/or tradition it belonged. While Muslim believers and scholars in Jordan associate a site near Amman, Abu Ulanda, with the site where the miracle of the Seven Sleepers took place, in the Christian traditions, others consider the site at Ephesus, Turkey, as the place where the incident had taken place. Similarly, there was no clear-cut evidence about the exact historical and/or religious context that precisely narrates the contextual thematic debate of the legend of the Seven Sleepers. In fact, various interpretations and hypotheses of the story *the Seven Sleepers, or The People of the Cave* were proposed. Some Sufi consider this incident and the manners performed by its people as belonging to their mystical Sufi morals, being their ‘exemplary manners’ (ibid, 2013: 22). Namli (2013:21) considers the cave people as *awliyaa* (saints) and their extraordinary experience true and genuine. For him, those people’s actions are compared to the mystical life style of the Sufis, who through their strong belief and spiritual connections with their lord may well be equipped with special extraordinary manners e.g., long slumber.

However, there are three major hypotheses on the origins of the legend. The first claims that it was first written in Latin, then it was translated to Greek then to Syriac. Another says that the legend came into existence originally by the Greeks while the last hypothesis says that the legend was originated at first by the Syriac (Grysa, 2010: 45-46). On the other hand, most critics had agreed on the purpose and/or the interpretation of the incident i.e., why those sleepers slept in the cave for more than 300 years in the early 6th century, around one hundred years from the beginning of Islam. Here, it is axiomatic to infer that it was a miraculous event depending Rubenstein’s view (2018) whose comment on the character of Honi in Talmudic tales represent a similar reading for the tales of the Seven Sleepers and also like that of Irving’s Rip. Rubenstein states that

Honi, the Circle Drawer, a mercurial figure who has enjoyed a long afterlife in Jewish folklore and still features today in legends and children’s literature. The famous story that accounts for his nickname relates that, during a time of drought, Honi drew a circle in the ground and refused to move until God granted rain (*Mishnah Ta’anit* 3:8). For this reason he developed a reputation as a special type of “miracle worker,” a divine favorite whose prayers—or demands—received immediate attention. (3)

Islam (2013:3) argues that the major reason for slumbers’ escaping their home and residing in the cave for a long time was for purifying themselves from worshipping any other God and/or religion, e.g., paganism, other than Christ. Grysa (2010:44) attributed this legend to the suppression processes performed by religious extremism and authoritative movements: Decius, in 250 BC, had issued an edict for the sake of suppressing Christianity by ordering citizens in the Roman Empire to show allegiance and obedience to God via sacrificing their properties, money and souls for the sake of getting a heaven certificate. Under the pretext of maintaining their purity and righteousness, the Seven Sleepers had to escape such an unbearable turmoil by resorting to a cave and slumbering 309 (some narrations say more, though). They had woken up in a time of political and religious turmoil, the reign of Theodosius II, who exterminated the entire pagan’s culture and heritage. Meanwhile, no clear vision regarding the nature of Christ was given thus creating more conflicts.

The story of *The Seven Sleepers* shares many distinctive features with other classical Arab literature like folk tales and fairy tales in terms of the long slumber, the dog as a companion and a guard, the escape from religious and socio-political persecution that had taken place during the slumber period, through which all events had changed dramatically. In the first section of the story, the script points to the setting of the story, the revelation from God to the slumbers to resort to the cave, and the main reason for their isolation and/or escape. The first section of the story reads,

We relate to thee their story in truth: they were youths who believed in their Lord, and We advanced them in guidance [13]: We gave strength to their hearts: Behold, they stood up and said: "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and of the earth: never shall we call upon any god other than Him: if we did, we should indeed have uttered an enormity![14]

“These our people have taken for worship gods other than Him: why do they not bring forward an authority clear (and convincing) for what they do? Who doth more wrong than such as invent a falsehood against Allah? [15] (Surat Al Kahf, 2019: 293-94)

Then the script continues talking about the major elements of the story including the characters, the dog and the currency used. It also indicates how God could protect them from getting decayed. At the end of section two is the miraculous event of resurrection, the argument about their number and, most significantly, the argument about the duration they spent while they were asleep. The second section reads,

When ye turn away from them and the things they worship other than Allah, betake yourselves to the Cave: Your Lord will shower His mercies on you and disposes of your affair towards comfort and ease." [16][...] Thou wouldst have deemed them awake, whilst they were asleep, and we turned them on their right and on their left sides: their dog stretching forth his two fore-legs on the threshold: if thou hadst come up on to them, thou wouldst have certainly turned back from them in flight, and wouldst certainly have been filled with terror of them [18]. Such (being their state), we raised them up (from slumber), that they might question each other. Said one of them, "How long have ye stayed (here)?" They said, "We have stayed (perhaps) a day, or part of a day." (At length) they (all) said, "(Allah) (alone) knows best how long ye have stayed here.... Now send ye then one of you with this money of yours to the town: let him find out which is the best food (to be had) and bring some to you, that (ye may) satisfy your hunger therewith: And let him behave with care and courtesy, and let him not inform any one about you [19](Surat Al Kahf, 2019: 294-95)

For those who belong to Islamic belief, it is very common to hear the daily expression of the ‘long slumber of the People of the Cave’, or ‘the Seven Sleepers’ long slumber’. This expression has many societal and religious connotations and shades of meanings like carelessness and laziness, long slumber, and wishing people bad and or/unexpected fate, e.g., May you sleep like the sleep of the people of the cave! It is also very common for Muslims, when they read the Washington Irving’s *Rip van Winkle*, to make connection with the story mentioned in *Surat Al-Kahf* in the Holy Quran. Most significantly, the story became one of the most significant religious stories leading to an extravagant number of literary innovations. Mevlut and Demir (2019:15) pointed out to the significant literary contributions the story had had on the Turkish literary world especially that most sources considered Ephesus as the original site of the story. They elucidated that the story had been among the most indispensable narratives of the Turkish cultural and religious heritage due to the multiple morals it had along with the symbolic denotations it brought. For them, the story is a nucleus for many literary productions, being transferred and reproduced in many oral and written literary products.

Irving’s *Rip Van Winkle*

The story of Rip tracks the voyage (before and after of Rip’s mysterious slumber) of a Dutch-American villager in colonial America whose name was *Rip Van Winkle* into the Kaatskill Mountains (Wendy, 2009: 109). Escaping his nagging wife, Dame, Rip falls asleep in the Catskill Mountains and wakes up 20 years later, a time when the American Revolution had completely ended by gaining complete independence from Britain. Not witnessing the gradual progress of the revolution or the events that led to the declaration of independence in 1776, Rip has become as alienated as an outcast (Pierre, 1864:1883). In reference to the Seven Sleepers tale, especially the part that talks about how the sleepers’ flesh was protected during their sleep, it can be inferred that during his sleep Rip was divinely protected during and later will be ‘resurrected’ as a witness. That is, he wasn’t absent from the political arena of the American Revolution, but he was functioning during his slumber to reawaken as a mediator and/or an in-between of the two eras. Pierre (1864) added that Irving wrote this story while he was living in Birmingham, England. The story is set in New York’s Catskill Mountains, but Irving later admitted, ‘[w]hen I wrote the story, I had never been on the Catskills’ (ibid).

Here, the researchers argue that both texts under study represent texts of war, rebellion or independence, hence change which will expectedly lead to positive consequences. Blakemore (2012) pointed out that such a period would have been greatly appreciated if the revolutions that had taken place during the Americans’ struggle for independence were successful. There would have been binaries that would have resulted such as freedom, equality, fraternity, equality and rebels. Blakemore states that

There was the subsidiary idea that, if successful, America would be inspiring example that would ignite other worldwide revolutions, although this idea was promoted primarily by the most radical revolutionaries. Thus, there were a series of binaries by which the revolution was classically represented by its fervent supporters-freedom/slavery, equality/hierarchy, fraternity/fragmentation, enlightenment, superstition, rebels/reactionaries, and a host of other differences but could be extended ad infinitum (2-3).

Apparently, the American Revolution, like any other revolution throughout history, had had very noble and promising goals. Some critics, e.g., Blakemore (2012), argued that those revolutions not only could change cultures and heritage, but they have also changed people's mentalities (17). Here, one can infer that Rip, as a representative of the American society, had preferred to choose slavery to freedom, hierarchy to equality...etc. To look at the scene of Rip from a societal rather than a political perspective, we argue that during his 'long slumber' he was doomed to remain under the hegemony of the domestic culture, mainly represented by his wife that dealt with him in a very oppressive way. In fact, he had a better choice. Instead of constantly staggering under a termagant wife, he could have worked to improve and renovate his farm to mend his financial status and evade insults day and night from Dame. His farm, once well maintained, could have saved him all the familial arguments with his nagging wife. Had Rip worked in his farm the way he had worked for his neighbours, he could have avoided all the trouble he had with his family. Below, Irving pointed to the miserable status of Rip's farm in addition to his idleness and carelessness that had turned his farm into a useless source of income. Irving mentions that

It was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country; everything about it went wrong, and would go wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some outdoor work to do; so that though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst-conditioned farm in the neighbourhood (*Rip Van Winkle*, 1863: 10).

In fact, Rip demonstrates a very controversial character in American literature. Yet, some critics insist to view him very positively to some extent. While Fiedler (1996:6) views him as a person who 'presides over the birth of the American imagination', Leary (1972:22) simply describes him as the 'guardian angel' of American literature. Ferguson (2005:529) describes him as a 'myth' through which one can 'explore alternative sides of a mystery'. He further believes that Rip is a 'failure that succeeds and because his failure indicates something about us [people] that we can face only indirectly' (ibid). The character of *Rip van Winkle* had entered the national lexicons of people in the States and therefore had become a very common saying and/or a proverbial expression in the Western culture. Wendy (2009:109) illustrated several examples. He mentioned how a 'Ploughboy reported on the reappearance of a Mr. Dunham after a twenty-nine-year absence.' He was like *Rip Van Winkle*, unknown in the place of his youthful residence' (ibid). Another example Wendy used was when a writer for the *Spirit of the Times* used *Rip Van Winkle* in the following decades to elect one considerably behind the age (ibid). Also, another referred to the name of *Rip Van Winkle* in a call to action for the united States naval forces, 'it is time for *Rip Van Winkle* to be awake!' (ibid).

1. Pre-Slumber Period

Apparently, the characters in both tales have suffered from different kinds of persecution like, societal, political and religious persecutions. While the Seven Sleepers escaped because they had undergone much religious oppression and persecution, Rip had escaped, though 'subconsciously' (*Rip Van Winkle*, 1863: 13), because his wife, Dame, harshly maltreated him. She always yelled at him for his imperfections and idleness. The Seven Sleepers did not feel safe under the cover of fanatic religious teachings that banned them from practicing their faith. Similarly, Rip was banned from acting socially the way he wanted.

There are numerous examples from the two works that support the argument that persecution functions as the major reason that energized the characters to search for change. In the Quarnic verse 'When ye turn away from them and the things they worship other than Allah, betake yourselves to the Cave: Your Lord will shower His mercies on you and disposes of your affair towards comfort and ease' (Surat Al Kahf, 2019: 294-95) there is a call for escaping the tyranny of non-believers. While the Seven Sleepers along with their dog, prayed their lord to bestow them relief, Rip, along with his dog, escaped to the mountains in search of peace. The Seven Sleepers supplicated their lord to 'bestow on [them] Mercy from [Himself], and dispose of [their] affair [...] in the right way! (ibid)' Likewise, Irving elucidated how Rip only had one alternative, 'to escape from the labor of the farm and the clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods' (*Rip Van Winkle*, 1863: 13). By and Large, while Rip escaped his domestic life and his nagging and despotic wife, the Seven Sleepers escaped the persecution and tyranny of strict religiosity, represented by the puritans' strict and fanatic instructions that deprive people from the recreational aspects of life. Here, it should be pointed out that dogs in both tales, and therefore both cultures, have had a major role.

Dogs constituted a major thread between the two works. In fact, the existence of a dog in both narratives is indicative despite the conflict that revolves around dogs in the two cultures. In the Islamic tradition, dogs can be used to guard and watch out people's properties. In the Western culture, much care is given to dogs. The west in general spends billions on dogs' health, food and medication. The major role of dogs in the western culture is as a domestic pet. Archer (2016:4) points out to the contradictory function of dogs in literary and religious traditions. He states that 'dogs are religiously and allegorically powerful because they are full of contradictions. They stand between categories'. This point was emphasized by Irving to indicate that the dog, Rip's best companion, was physically powerful by nature but was emotionally weakened and depreciated because of the persecution of Dame, '[H]e was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods-but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue?' (*Rip Van winkle*, 1863: 11). He further clarifies how dogs associate with people whether as predators or as domestic animals, i.e., they may hunt for people and sometimes they might hunt people. So, for him, dogs belong on a threshold (ibid: 4).

In conflict with what is entirely common in the Islamic traditions, dogs in the narrative of the Seven Sleepers have received a positive depiction. They are considered a member of the slumbers rather than just an animal that is supposed to be safeguarding outside. In *The Seven Sleepers*, the Quranic verse mentions that 'their dog stretches forth his two fore-legs on the threshold (Surat Al Kahf, 2019: 294-95)', meaning that he was indoor with his companions rather than outdoor. Contrary to what is known in the Islamic tradition, much more significance is given to the dog in the Quran which creates a counterargument about those who claim that dogs are impure. On the other hand, the dog in Irving's *Rip Van winkle* is depicted as a sufferer, like his master, who is persecuted by Dame just because he is a companion of Rip. Irving explains how Dame keeps insulting the dog as she does for her husband, '[H]e was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods-but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue?' (1863: 11). He also points out how both Wolf, the Dog, and his master are fellow-sufferer(s) in persecution (ibid: 13).

That was said, in the post-slumber scene, both dogs were found dead, unable to function during their long slumber, unlike the human beings who were resurrected in the final scene. This is another indication that both tales have purposefully added the dogs to indicate that they can function as witnesses of change and rebirth of new cultures.

2. Long Slumber Period

It is very apparent that the notion of 'long slumber' exists within the normal realm of human beings, but it does not last more than three days. In literary traditions and movies, this theme exists abundantly. The normal context in which it happens is that an incident takes place before and after a long slumber. A normal expected conclusion is that everything before the slumber is turned to either the best of it or even the worst, thanks to the passage of time that can dramatically change the settings of the place upside-down. In the holy Quran's narratives of long slumber tales, most took place in response to people's wonder about the theme of resurrection. In the meantime, during and after the process of resurrection, whole cultures, traditions and regions are bound to change.

In fact, the theme of long slumber is very prominent throughout literary traditions. Much scholarship has tackled matters related to long sleep, sleeplessness and dreams. Apparently, most tales below represent magic realism, like the case we have in question, where fancy and imagination intermingle with reality. Apparently, each tale has a connection with a normal human along with a supernatural one. Urdang and Ruffner (1986) elaborated on the existence of such this theme in the Greek Mythology. Commenting on the tale of the hero Edymion, they explained how the moon had fallen in love with him when he had fallen asleep forever due to a kiss from the moon which made him youthful forever. Likewise, Thomas Wheatland (1991) explained how the theme of long slumber had extensively spread out in literature, especially in early western myths, medieval and Renaissance fairy tales. One example he illustrated dates back to Judeo-Christian traditions. In it, he commented on how the prophet of Elijah who was said to fall in deep slumber in the bosom of Abraham until the Antichrist appeared. (n.p) He further illustrated another example about Jesus and his disciples in the New Testament when all disciples went in deep sleep due to a request from Jesus that they keep praying with him after the Last Supper of the eve of his crucifixion when all of a sudden all fell in deep slumber. Wheatland further illustrates another example about the theme of long and/or deep slumber in the Arthurian legends and how such theme was very common back then. He states that

The Arthurian legends of the medieval era are remarkable for several sleeping characters. King Arthur is said to be asleep by enchantment and will return to the world someday to regain the throne of England. Likewise, Merlin, the wizard who helped Arthur ascend to power, is said to be asleep rather than dead. It is likely that the Arthurian storytellers sought to show that England was not dead, but would someday rise again to glory and splendor (102)

In the story of *The Seven Sleepers*, 'long slumber' means that the slumbers remain safe under the protection of their Lord. When they woke up, their truthful story had been revealed to public and they had been strongly condemned, rejected and scolded because it simply goes against their normal traditions and religious belief. The miraculous side of the tale is clear here as sleeping that long would undoubtedly result in decaying their bodies. Yet, the slumbering process was accompanied with a special protection from God who dedicated the sun to keep following their bodies so that they did not get rotten. In the meantime, slumbering was accompanied with frequent moving on both sides so no harm would be done to their bodies. Therefore, it was an apparent realistic slumber, but it had real-life practices that made the body adapt with the surrounding conditions. Similarly, little is understood about the physical aspects of Rip while he was asleep. He was biologically growing up, especially that his beard had grown while aging had become a distinctive feature of him. Here, both groups had received full nutrient care to securely protect themselves from any external authorities, which would only view them as being outcast, traitors or aliens.

3. The Post-Slumber Period

One of the major commonalities between the two tales in question is the post-slumber scene i.e., the sleepers' waking scene. Islam (2013:1), among others, looked at the slumbers' waking scene from a very religious point of view. He viewed it in terms of Christian traditions and the way Jesus Christ was escalated and/or resurrected, exactly the way Rip's waking scene was viewed. He clarifies that the Seven Sleepers' waking scene was taken by most religious traditions and thoughts, e.g., Theodosius, as a proof of Jesus Christ and how he would be resurrected. Rebirth in *The Seven Sleepers* is 'comparable with the rebirth of the entire American culture' endowed with modernity, civility and liberalism; thus any aspect of difference or contradiction to the newly-born culture would be a violation or will be considered an odd act. The act of long slumber can be interpreted as the recession that normally precedes progress and modernity. When people sleep, they are like dead: no motion, no work, no progress, and no civility (ibid).

At this point, we look at the waking scene as twofold. At a face value, it refers to the slumbers' normal waking from the long slumber in the cave after they had slept for more than three hundred years. As for Rip, it refers to his waking up from a 20-year long sleep. The embedded meaning points to the factual life they had found themselves staggering in. They had found themselves floating in a new epoch, a new king and new people but without recognizing the gap in time and the change of life status and, most importantly, appearances. So, the post-slumber scene is a significant feature as it illustrates a switch from an abnormal state into a normal one, thus leading to major shared threads.

Both tales share the notion of the waking scene after long slumbers. The characters in each work woke up after a long slumber during which everything had dramatically changed except for peoples' mentalities, i.e., Rip's and The Seven Sleepers' mentalities. The state of the post-slumber period proves a turning point in people's own history. As for the Seven Sleepers, it was noticed that the community in which they existed had become more diverse and assimilative. That is to say, it had secularized itself against the religious domains and restrictions that used to encompass them, yet with an entire rejection of their past historical and religious heritage. Also, they started viewing religion as an extreme and fanatic entity, so people who belong to such religious perspectives were highly unwelcome. This explains the reason why the cave people insisted that the one who should get to the town should be wise and smart enough so that the town's people would not recognize him. The verse says,

"They said, "We have stayed (perhaps) a day, or part of a day." (At length) they (all) said, "(Allah) (alone) knows best how long ye have stayed here.... Now send ye then one of you with this money of yours to the town: let him find out which is the best food (to be had) and bring some to you, that (ye may) satisfy your hunger therewith: And let him behave with care and courtesy, and let him not inform any one about you. [...] So they stayed in their Cave three hundred years and (some) add nine (more)"(Surat Al Kahf, 2019: 294-95)

Apparently, as the verse above reads, unpleasant consequences had been waiting the seven sleepers once captured. Similarly, the community in which Rip had found himself in was entirely, or allegedly, liberal rather than despotic, modern rather than primitive, and secular rather than religious. Ostensibly, the post-slumber scene of the Seven Sleepers was set in a collective manner rather than in an individual one.

An evidence on the speaker's tendency to refer to the collectivism of the Quarnic narrative is the plural form in which the Seven Sleepers were addressed, 'Now **send ye** then one of you with this money of yours to the town' (Surat Al Kahf, 2019: 294-95). Here, plurality (you) is synonymous to collectivism in that the sleepers have collectively chosen one who is wise enough to evade trouble and get them food to survive. Now, their need for food is indicative that during their long slumber their bodies had been functioning as if they had slept normally. Here, one can infer that the collectivist notion implicitly signifies the rise of the Islamic culture that is highly characterized with the sense of collectivism throughout its establishment. On the other hand, it is noticeable that Irving meant all acts and deeds to evolve from an individualistic perspective, thus indicating and hinting at the rise of the American culture that has always valued the idiosyncratic sense to the collective sense of community. This explains why Irving made Rip escape alone without a company except for his dog and gun.

As for Rip's post-slumber scene, Wendy (2009), among others, viewed Rip as a 'figure of dislocation, who slumbers through history and wakes to a changed world.' He was also characterized as 'displaced, confused, anachronistic, and alienated both physically and psychologically from a hostile post-Revolutionary crowd' (110). The first notion that came into Rip's mind after waking up was his persecutor, Dame. It was a very sunny day supposedly indicating a rebirth of a new Rip. The excerpt below indicates how Rip had been doomed a new life by the virtue of the deep slumber which apparently could have freed him from the horror and hegemony of his termagant wife. Irving mentions that

On waking, [Rip] found himself on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes-it was a bright sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. "Surely," thought Rip, "I have not slept here all night." He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with a keg of liquor- the mountain ravine-the wild retreat among the rocks-the woebegone party at nine-pins-the flagon-"Oh! that flagon! that wicked flagon!" thought Rip-"what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle?" (*Rip Van Winkle*, 1863: 16)

Rubbing his eyes along with the birds' gaiety and the mountain breeze points to Rip's new free life from his bossy wife. He apparently valued his old pattern of life, where he absorbed humility and submissiveness yet rejected liberality and freedom. Here, the notion of post-slumber scene is not looked at from a religious perspective. Instead of reading it as a reference for the doomsday incident of resurrection, we look at it in terms of the rebirth of new culture, or as Wendy (2009) viewed it, as a 'retrospection of gap of time' (111). Wendy further explained how Rip wakes up thinking that he spent one night in the Kaatskill Mountains only to find that he has slept through twenty years. He is confronted by a profusion of unfamiliar sights "an old firelock...encrusted with rust" has replaced his "clean well-oiled fowling piece" (*Rip Van Winkle* 16); his beard has grown a foot long"; he is "stiff in the joints" (*Rip Van Winkle* 16); in his hometown the villagers are dressed in a "different fashion from that to which he was accustomed" (*Rip Van Winkle* 16); and there are "rows of houses which he had never seen before. "Though, Rip seeks places and people of familiarity ...he finds that these too have either changed or disappeared". (ibid: 111-112).

Wandering in search of familiarity and escaping his phobic self, he found himself staggering among people to whom he had never been familiar. However, he insisted to explore the new world of 'unknowingness' when, to his surprise, he eventually found that his beard had grown a foot long and that the time he had slept was longer than he imagined. Irving maintains that as Rip approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he knew, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with everyone in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and whenever they cast their eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of this gesture induced Rip, involuntarily, to do the same, when, to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long! (*Rip Van Winkle* 17)

The reference to time in the two tales was also remarkable. The Seven Sleepers points to the period of time, 'We have stayed (perhaps) a day, or part of a day' (Surat Kahf 19) and Irving's statement, 'Surely I have not slept here all night' (*Rip Van Winkle*, 1863: 16) at a face value point to the confusion about time. It illustrated how Rip had no consciousness about the passage of time, and consequently about the changes that had taken place during his slumber. Like that of Rip, the first idea they did after waking was to return to their normal life, though they were fully cognizant of the thought that occurred to the Seven Sleepers.

In the post-slumber scene, Rip did not accept the new culture or, in other words, to free himself from the whimsical past that colonized his thought and mentality. Therefore, he was declined and rejected in the new culture, an expected consequence in the new materialistic world. He had been an outcast in the new culture as he was attached to his old habits.

The excerpt below shows how Rip had been entirely rejected by the community that at first highly respected and accepted him. Even dogs now started barking at him after he had been friendly to everybody and in the neighbourhood. At that moment, even the houses to which he belonged had viewed him as an alien and displaced. Irving mentions that[a] troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him, and pointing at his grey beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognized for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. **The very village was altered; it was larger and more populous.** There were rows of houses which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. (*Rip Van Winkle* 17, emphasis added)

A major thread in the two stories was both characters' fearfulness and anxiety of the upcoming. Also, both literary works share the protagonists' notion of not belonging and the unfamiliarity of the place in which they found themselves as not belonging. Both groups wanted to function in places where they were denied due to their religious and political views. The Seven Sleepers looked very enthusiastic and adherent to their old faith while Rip insistently remained faithful to his ill-structured past. The characters in both works represent simple, idle and gentle people who sought something unpretentious e.g., a spiritual home (Shehabat: 2016) to change but came up with prodigious ends, thanks to the long slumber theme implemented in the two tales. The Seven Sleepers remained devoted to their old faith until the expansion of the new nation. Similarly, Rip, the father, also insisted that his son, Rip, should follow his footsteps.

Conclusion

Washington Irving in *Rip Van Winkle* adopted some referential segments that are highly relevant to the religious tale relating the story of the Seven Sleepers more than 1500 years ago. This provides evidence how important literary works flow back and forth among different cultures and influence one another. In other words, canonical works despite theological and historical differences (co)respond to one another. For example, Irving didn't hint at the conditions that had encompassed Rip during the slumber period. However, building on our analysis of the religious tale, we conclude that he was miraculously protected; his body was functioning normally as if he had been alive. Further, both literary pieces have purposefully resorted to mixing mythology with real-life trauma to create rebirth and change. In other words, 'Long Slumber' from a religious perspective functions as a legend, a miracle and/or a *karamah* for people to conceal corruption, reveal truth and create change.

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