

Mythological Critique of Death in *Death on the Apple Tree*

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Extended Abstract

Throughout the history of mythology, we have witnessed many universal myths such as death, creation and the first man. No matter where these common myths originate, they have similar functions. For example, in many myths, death is the result of sin or enmity; human beings die because of their sins, the curse of the devil, or the enmity of the gods, even though they have a strong desire for immortality. Therefore, death has been frightening for human beings in most cases. Death, as one of the most important human anxieties, takes many forms. In her book, Kathrin Schärer

illustrates this anxiety, which is the fear of destruction, with the help of text and images. In *Death on the Apple Tree*, by considering the commonalities between the myths in the face of death, she makes an attempt to present a different view of death and life. Death in this book is not the result of enmity but a part of life. In fact, death is life itself, to the extent that life without death and death without life has no meaning.

The research is based on Mircea Eliade's theories on the subject of myth. Although the images and the text of this book are meaningful independent of each other or sometimes complement each other, a new level of meaning can be achieved by describing and analyzing the structural elements of the book. Although the truth of death destroys us, its image is life-giving; and although death is the endpoint of life, it is itself the starting point.

The title and opening images of the book are always guides for interpreting the text. The title of the book leads us to enter the world of mythology. The tree, because its roots are in the ground and its body on the ground, is a bridge between the world of the dead and the world of the living, and it transmits messages from each world to the other. It should be noted that the tree in question is the apple tree, and the apple evokes the story of creation for us. The fruit causes the mystic man to become good and bad, and whoever attains such knowledge will attain immortality. The interesting point is that death in this book sits on the apple tree, meaning that he is aware of everything that happens in life and death, and that he is eternal.

The story begins when the fox and his wife wake up to the sound of crows approaching their apple tree. It is said in the myths that crows are messengers of death and we will know from the beginning of the story that death is coming, but it should be known that the messengers of death are trying to grab the apple, the fruit of immortality, because death itself seeks immortality.

Years pass and finally death comes. The fox is afraid of facing his own death. He tries to beguile him with all kinds of deceptions and tricks, and in the first place, he seems to achieve success. But death is a mythical being and time does not appear to him as meaningful to material beings. Years pass and death still waits patiently. Time passes on the fox and makes him old while death awaits, fresh and smiling, sitting on an apple tree. One day, the fox realizes that death is another aspect of life. He calls and embraces death with an apple in the fox's hand and completes the meaning of the fox's existence. Death in this book is not the enemy of the living and is not even the result of their sins and errors. Death and life are not two sides of one coin, the one exists when one does not exist; death is life.

The colors in a picturebook can, to a large extent, convey the meaning of the illustrations to the readers. Colors are the factors that help characterize a story. In most of the pictures, the fox is painted in vivid colors which convey to the audience a sense of desire to live. And when the fox grows old, the strength of the colors gradually decreases, and gray and black lines are added to the images, which is a sign of the fox's aging and loss of reasons to live in this world. Throughout the book, the color of

death conveys to the audience a sense of calm, patience and kindness, and clearly shows that death does not intend to be at enmity with the living.

As we approach the end of the book, we see in the final pictures that a cover of death, with the same warm and soft colors, and that of a fox, with the same vivid and happy colors, have fallen on the ground next to each other, as if this world has been a world of clothes that have been worn by the living for some time, and then there is a time when the old clothes no longer sit on the stature of creatures and they have to take them off and leave them. In the next illustrations, we see crows that have eaten the apples with their beaks and have flown as if the story of life and death will continue forever, and this story will always take place in a new form.

Creatures have always sought immortality, which is why, in most myths of death, they have had terrifying faces and are constantly trying to escape from it. Despite this chase, the living eventually accept death because they think that if there is no death, suffering will continue indefinitely. If it were not for death, compassion and morality would lose their function over time. However, death in this book does not have the same rituals as the rituals of death in mythology. Death is not scary, it's a character like all of us. He is calm and patient and is not only the end but also the beginning. Death fertilizes life just as trees bear fruit after winter.

Keywords: mourning, death, mythology, literature, apple tree

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