

The Articulation of Two-Dimensional Insight in the Mythical Structure of the Novel *Dear Squirrelfish*

Negin Binazir

Assistant Professor of Persian Language and Literature,
University of Guilan

Introduction

Two-dimensional insight or two-way thinking is one of the most fundamental mythical motifs that is recreated and reproduced in literature and fiction. Relying on two-dimensional/dual insights, the present essay analyzes and articulates the mythical concepts, phenomena and motifs in Fariba Dindar's novel *Dear Squirrelfish*. The two-dimensional infrastructure is intertwined in all the concepts and phenomena of the story. Nina is a teenage girl struggling with difficulties of puberty, experiencing both the world of childhood and the world of adulthood. Several dualities, including the experience of the ritual death / the process of transition and rebirth, and the connection between the meaning of her life and the death of her father; take place in layers of linear time (calendar and real) and circular time (mythical and infinite), as well as the tangible space of Nina's life and her mandala-like space. This study shows how Nina goes through her internal contradictions and conflicts in the process of writing letters to an unknown person, "Mr. fish"; and in achieving individuality and unity,

she achieves both physical maturity and, by accepting the death of his father, peace and spiritual and social maturity.

The Research Methodology, Background and Purpose of the Study

The present essay, by presenting the hierarchical structure and dichotomous / binary thinking, states that in mythical thinking, like other human lived worlds, there are opposite and symmetrical concepts, but with the fundamental difference that the two opposite poles of the mythical world are not separated and distinct. In the world of mythology, different things can be seen as coexisting in one figure; for instance many themes such as numbers, time, space, infrastructure of the ritual of transition, the motif of the mother-gods (virgin mothers), the dual image of the dreadful kind mother and also in phenomena such as tree, water and snake.

Many works of children and adolescent literature have been analyzed from a mythological point of view; examples in the adolescent fiction are Sara Hosseinpour's dissertation, "A Study of the Archetype of Journey in the Trilogy *Persians and I*"; Fatemeh Taremi's dissertation, "Mythology in Adolescent Literature of the Decade 2000-2010 from the Perspective of Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes"; Reza Yazdani's Thesis, "The Analysis of the Mechanisms of the Ritual of Initiation in Young Adult Fiction"; and Fatemeh Zamani's article, "The Analysis of Meta-Textual and Hyper-Textual Relations in the novel *Mystery of the Bird Mountain* and *Shahnameh*". The present study is different from the mentioned researches in two ways: firstly, in the mythological approaches of the researches

mentioned above, the important two-dimensional motifs in the world of mythology have not been addressed independently; secondly, no research has been done on the novel *Dear Squirrelfish*.

Discussion

Two-dimensional insight is a symbol of the entanglement and coexistence of two opposite things in each other; the lack of distinction and separation and the entanglement and parallelism of concepts in the mythological realm results in the distribution of all components, phenomena and events in the general body of the space, so that they find meaning in the heart of the mythical time and space. According to Cassirer, "all contrasts and qualitative distinctions have a kind of spatial correspondence, and through this common relationship, it is as if heterogeneous elements communicate with each other" (Cassirer, 2017: 157). Mythical time is a non-linear and qualitative time, sacred and reversible, in which there is no sequence or order between events.

The novel *Dear Squirrelfish* pictures the coexistence of two seemingly contradictory domains inside Nina. Nina is the name of the main character, but she calls herself a squirrelfish since she considers herself both a squirrel and a fish, a creature which can live both on land and at sea simultaneously. There are no dates on the letters that Nina receives, each of which is ended with the words: "Today; at this hour; Mr. Fish." The letters reach Nina in calendar time and in a natural space, but they are not written in the context of calendar time. In Nina's two-dimensional world,

everyday time is linked to Minoan and mythical times, and in this connection, the phenomena of this world are used. These phenomena first of all create a mandala-like space. The sacred space of Nina is both a place where she has lost her father and is disturbed, and in a rotation in the same place, she acquires the father of another kind and finds peace (see Dindar, 2016: 15- 16, 94-95, 97, 100, 104).

One of the most important rituals in mythology is the rite of transition / initiation. In the process of initiation, adolescent girls and boys face severe physical tests. The distinguishing feature of this rite for girls is that the initiation process for them usually begins with their first menstrual period and is always done individually (see Eliade, 2017: 187-213 and Eliade, 1989: 93-94). The rite of transition is in itself a two-dimensional rite, a combination of two seemingly contradictory and different things: death in one form and birth in another form, which occur simultaneously in one body. The first signs of maturity in *squirreelfish* are expressed in her encounter with the phenomenon of menstruation. "I run through the hall and the yard and get to the bathroom. The vortex in my stomach is coming out of my mouth. I hate toilets, too; the stench that makes me sick, and the sentences and words that are written on the doors and walls of the toilets, and the buckets at the corner of every bathroom which remind us that we are growing up" (Dindar, 2017: 64- 65).

To get through the rituals of transition, the novice needs the help and guidance of a wise old man who shows the path in different ways. The *squirreelfish* goes through the thresholds of the ritual of transition step by

step with the help of the letters by Mr. Fish; letters that have the wisdom of an old wise man.

Conclusion

The wisdom of the guide / the wise old man in the form of letters from Mr. Fish prepares the squirrelfish step by step to face the fears, sufferings and bitter misfortunes of life (the death of her father and the acceptance of her physical changes and menstruation). Mr. Fish's last letter reaches the squirrelfish when she has undergone a process of secrecy at the sacred place (near a tree and a lake) by cutting the squirrel-like hair and getting separated from the world of childhood. The letter states that the squirrelfish has grown up now and can deal with all her problems and issues, big or small. After passing the ritual of transition, the squirrelfish goes through her internal contradictions and conflicts, and on her quest for individuality and unity, she reaches physical maturity and, by accepting the death of the father, she achieves peace and spiritual and social maturity.

Keywords: mythical thinking, two-dimensional insight, ritual of transition, Dear Squirrelfish, Adolescent Novel

Sources:

Beaucorps, M. D. (1997). *Les symboles vivants* (J. Sattari, Trans.). Markaz.

Bierlein, J. N. (2010). *Parallel myths* (A. Mokhber, Trans.). Markaz.

Campbell, J. (2017). *The power of myth* (A. Mokhber, Trans.). Markaz.

- Cassirer, E. (2017). *Philosophy of symbolic forms* (Y. Moghan, Trans.). Hermes.
- Chevalier, J. & Gheerbrant, A. (2006). *The Penguin dictionary of symbols* (Vol. 4) (S. Fazaili, Trans.). Jeyhun.
- Chevalier, J. & Gheerbrant, A. (2009). *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols* (Vol. 3) (S. Fazaili, Trans.). Jeyhun.
- Coupe, L. (2011). *Myth* (M. Dehghani, Trans.). Elmi va Farhangi.
- Dindar, F. (2016). *Dear squirrelfish: God has not created Sundays and Wednesdays for the fish*. Hoopa.
- Eagleton, T. (2001). *An introduction to literary theory* (A. Mokhber, Trans.). Markaz.
- Eliade, M. (1989). *Rites and symbols of initiation: The mysteries of birth and rebirth*. (N. Zangoui, Trans.). Agah.
- Eliade, M. (2004). *The myth of eternal return* (B. Sarkarati, Trans.). Tahoori.
- Eliade, M. (2014). *Images and symbols* (M. K. Mohajeri, Trans.). Ameh.
- Eliade, M. (2017). *Rites and symbols of initiation: The mysteries of birth and rebirth* (M. K. Mohajeri, Trans.). Parseh.
- Eliade, M. (2017). *Myth and reality* (M. Salehi Allameh, Trans.) Parseh.
- Frazer, J. G. (2007). *The golden bough: A study in magic and religion* (K. Firoozmand, Trans.). Agah.
- Ghavimi, M. (2009). Descriptive value of characters' names in *one thousand and one nights*. in *The world of one thousand and one nights* (J. Sattari, Trans.) (pp. 51-69). Markaz.

- Harland, R. (2001). Derrida and the concept of writing. in *Structuralism, post-structuralism and literary studies* (F. Sojoudi, Trans.). Houzeh Honari.
- Harland, R. (2006). *Literary theory from Plato to Barthes: An introductory history* (S. Jorkesh, Trans.). Cheshmeh.
- Makaryk, I. R. (2006). *Encyclopedia of contemporary literary theory* (M. Mohajer & M. Nabavi, Trans.). Agah.
- Payandeh, H. (Ed.). (2014). *Theories of novel*. Nazar.
- Shayegan, D. (2003). *The range of myth: Mohammad Reza Ershad's interviews with Dariush Shayegan and others*. Hermes.
- Zimran, M. (2013). *Transition from the world of myth to philosophy* (4th ed.). Hermes.