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PORTRAYAL OF POST MODERN MYTH IN JOHN BARTH'S "CHIMERA"

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ABSTRACT

The present paper concentrates on the Portrayal of Post Modern Myth in John Barth's *Chimera*. It aims to exhibit how the writer recycled myth in his creation through the reconstruction of this concept, consisting importantly in demythologization, revealing its central ridiculous situation and literary reprocessing. In order to understand the multi facet application of myths in *Chimera*, the article analyzes the subject from different aspects. Subsequently offering some preliminary remarks concerning the traditional history and meaning of myth, the first part of the article turns on to tracing Barth's partiality as well as argumentative with distinct philosophical views and literary theories as far as the sort of myth is discussed. The second part of this paper is concerned to the dissection of the understanding of myth in order to storytelling, understood especially in the nature of existence and epistemological conditions.

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INTRODUCTION

The term 'Mythos' derived from Greek. The word 'Myth' signifies any story or plot, whether true or false. Most of the myths involve rituals – prescribed forms of sacred ceremonial but social anthropologists disagree as to rituals generated myths or myths generated rituals. If the central character is a man rather than a supernatural being, the story is not called myth but legend. A mythology in which no longer believes in any religion. The word has also explained to signify the supernatural tales which are intentionally used by their authors. Many writers have also stated that fuse mythology, whether heredity or made up is important to literature. James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Eliot's *The Waste Land*, O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* and *Chimera* and many other authors have thoughtfully produced their works in the form of ancient myths. Now Myth is one of the most famous terms in contemporary

literature. In addition to myth, is firmly imagined place in which a work of art appears in Faulkner's myth of Yoknapatawpha country' and 'the mythical worlds of *Moby Dick*.

Myth can be considered as religious belief, primary archetype, structural lexical model, mode of cognition, political promulgation. We could rethink to its Greek origin: myth is the foremost a narrative story since, and then at the consequence of every myth lays a tale. According to Edmund Leach Mythology involves both of the East and the West, mythic stories around Man and Gods and then concentrating on the reciprocal relations between the two worlds.(quoted in Warrick 75). In this context, Mythopoeia is an instrument for grand sense, perception, and interpretation of the surrounding reality. In the minds of artists, myths have known as multiple transformations their literary traditions were changing along with cultural, philosophical, political and social changes. But it was

no other span than postmodernism that interchanged myth into a bunch of contradictory definitions. Thus in this regard, myth gained the degree of literal meaning of the fundamental concept of post-modern philosophy. Miserably, it is impossible to find the whole idea of myth related postmodern texts, let alone to show all the dimension of myth portray by postmodern writers in such a creative writing. As a result, it will be confined to defendable the most important of them, John Barth's fiction *Chimera* (1972) explained by other dignified postmodernists such as Thomas Pynchon, Donald Barthelme or Kurt Vonnegut remarks to mythology can be beheld as a peripheral affection, restructure and revising of myths constructs the core of Barth's literary work.

Since Barth's mythical works are dealt with highly sensitive, at times bound on misunderstanding because of the collection of formal experiments. Most often focused at disturbance and dissolution of narrative formula, literary critics aim to approach Barthian depiction of myths in a somewhat unique manner. Barth's mythopoeia involves holistic approach, formally, co-existences of binaries and which encircles more precise post-modern to be more precise which encircles, co-existences of binaries and inappropriate. Therefore in this chapter will analyze to show how John Barth delivers and regenerate myth in his writing by controverting this 'Bizarre' and unrealistic, as Robert Graves puts it gently in his prologue to *The Greek Myths* (1992:11) Since Barth's close study incarnated by Genie in Dunyazad in *Chimera*. This fiction states straightly while annotating on stories: "the quality of art, which if it could not ...save us the revulsion of living and dying, at least retained, reviewed, spread out and fertilized our spirits along the way". (*Chimera*, 17)

In order to understand the multi-access of mythology in John Barth's *Chimera* will scrutinize this subject from distinguished perspectives. This chapter is based on the author's kinship as well as controversy with the typical philosophical tendency and literary theories, which can be described in *Chimera*. The aim of the section is to reveal both external source of Barthian myth and its internal references within the fiction. The meaning of myth,

analyses chiefly relating to storytelling so as to come out with the postmodern perception of human existence, established by one of the most popular American storytellers.

In the second part of Barth's *Chimera* finds on the mythological sketch of the twentieth century, let us deliberate for a while at those who prepared this sketch for future generation. Obviously, two famous writers of modernism Carl Jung Swiss Psychiatrist and Joseph Campbell American mythologist established the most extreme theory of myths, contributing psychology, linguistics, and literature into a new sphere. As a result of these writers, an absurd folk tales and legends were now supplied with depth meaning since, conforming with the modern approach, they delivered a fragment of universal truths and knowledge. According to Jung myths are "original preconscious psyche, automatic articulation about unconscious psychic events" (Graves 1992:21-22). On another hand, Campbell rather on human pre-consciousness attracted more on the impressions controlling effectively all kinds of narratives, which he named "Monomyths" (a simple concept of Levi-Strass's 'mytheme'). There are some differences in these theories; Jung and Campbell arose a mainstream movement references to myths a quality of mythical experiences, locating it on the point of the intrinsic and abstract, which is outlying from Barth's approach towards myths.

In the third part of his fiction, the author briefly gives us, with his self-aesthetic view on how myths should be treated. Barth asserts his readers that myths themselves one amidst another concept poetic mixture of our simple psychic experience and so situation always to daily experience, to create realistic stories which mark always to mythic form is in his opinion to share the wrong end of the mythological stick, on the other hand outstanding such fictions may be in another consideration. He is better to take the forms of myths directly (*Chimera*, 199). By this central reason why the most salient features of *Chimera* applies to modify, which deals mainly in discovering the model of hero-hood. Consequently, we are expounded with two demigods from Greek mythology Perseus and Bellerophon, not in the pinnacle of their lives, but living through a difficult mid-life dilemma. The

former criticizes about his marriage with Andromeda, which is his mental and physical strength. He said that he has been twenty kilos bulky and bored inflexible. He felt repressed and repository. Eventually, he is frustrated by "forty and too tired" (*Chimera*, 71). Barth obviously focuses on the end of the mythological stick, rejecting formal patterns in favor of everyday reality. The critic, Jerry Powell exhibits most interestingly to this discussion, making distinguish between Barth's and Grave's theory of mythology. According to Powell, Barth looks to be given towards Graves theory of myth, looked as "reduction to the narrative record of ritual mockery". This is clearly what the author of *Chimera* exclaims "poetic infusion of our ordinary knowledge"(Powell 1976:76). The model of a hero is rejected by "a warm human being, off his substructure", who is simply a man with a story to narrate "(*Chimera*, 70). Furthermore, this is personal, not a collective or combined, a story upon which nobody should involve as if it were a figure to follow, chiefly if we accept the fact that the alleged hero is lost and baffled in his mythic life.

Barth narrates the two mythic heroes, Perseus and Bellerophon at the main point of their lives, both are bygone the lives of their magnificence and glory. At first, Perseus fails his battle for rebirth because he carefully grasps to the heroic figure. Dispirited, tired and bored with his life, he analyses to recur the delightful deeds of his youth. This intrinsic excursion to do so stems not very much from variety but rather from an attraction to discover the pattern, the important to his story. And he declares for the pattern guides him disposition, direct into Lake Triton, above which he once perfectly operated with Medusa's head. His failure is created by the refusal of Athene's advice. This type of research in the second activity must be opposite to his first one: on the other hand, direct instead of not straight (*Chimera*, 94-95). if a man forty and more, he cannot do like a youth. So far Perseus is unused by Barth and allowed a second chance. On the contrary falling in the lake, he detects himself caught to by the kindhearted Calyxa, a faithful student of mythology. He becomes his pupil caretaker, beloved, and teacher. The images of Calyxa temple display twist in Perseus heroic

profession. Finally, he thinks that in order to alive, he must move outside the pattern, exchange it and the modifying circumstances, instantly, as Medusa, or New Medusa is created to live by Athene, Perseus sets to meet her again and accept his earlier fault. She is in affection with him, once she actually secured him from drowning in the lake. If he really accepts her feelings, he will be awarded immortally instead of demoralized with new benefited consciousness of the artifice of the pattern, which was lower than a hateful device contrived by King Polydectes with regard to disposes of Perseus, he looks Medusa, kisses her and agrees placed in the heavens to settle with his beloved. Literary critics among them Paul Vickery and Bronwen Whitehead accept that Perseus correction, which affects to excel the pattern and going beyond transforming the strong structure of the story. It is the clear manifestation of the pattern towards myths.

Barthian theory of "Mythemes", accepted as literary characters, is more even noticeable in Perseid's twin sister, Bellerophoniad. However, Bellerophon's story is a slight change of Perseid, highlighting while domain of ghosts, reiterates and assimilates (a wife of a royal header, an over, a supernatural being to kill, a duplicitous plot objected against the hero and an idealistic journey replaying the past). It should convey him similar statements, Bellerophon's myth enhances a mere imitation of his role exemplary Perseus. It tries to maintain the Pattern at all cost, Bellerophon fails everything including his own personality as the god asserts that: "By paralleling perfectly the Pattern of the Mythic Heroism, Bellerophon become a classical imitation of the mythic hero"(*Chimera*, 299). In an almost unconscious repetition of his past (or the pattern of the mythic story) he culminates in being himself and reverses into "the comic comparison of Perseus ... without self – consciousness"(Powell 1976: 62).

Myth as post modern philosophy

In this process of myth is Barth's allegory for fiction, story and literature in common, myth – maker equals story teller. And in post modern perception, "to narrate a story" more often than not is at same time moving the entertaining dimension of a story into the backdrop. Internally, *Chimera* acts

the same form. In *Perseid* and *Bellerophoniad* both conception and summation of myths seem to be the only way of understanding of human beings, imperfect and confusing as it is. This is why Perseus, likewise his less fortune follower, goes to replay the story of his life just so as to free himself from the attack and confusion delivered by the absence of knowledge of who he is and what the meaning of his life is. his second adventure for hero hood comes a query for understanding and meaning, like he defines to Calyxa descriptively: on that account this infinite repetition of my story: as both hero and author, so to assert, I hope to defeat with understanding my adjust chapter as it were by exploring my labeled past, and thus noted, proceed clear to the future's book" (*Chimera*, 80-81). Though description our life, Barth pretend to say, we imagine ourselves a different, and only like this can we study anything about the nature of life in the world. This is what the writer calls "Mythotherapy", a word seeming in his earlier fiction entitled *The End of the Road*. In a point of view, its hero, Jacob Horner, shows the same depression of mid-life dilemma as our two mythic heroes and his physician cures his epistemological crisis with the above remarked mythotherapy. As Barth asserts that not only are we the heroes of our own life tales but also we're the one s who accept the story, and other people transfer nature of minor characters. But since no one's life as a rule is consistently one story with a plot, we are always believing just the type of hero we are, therefore just the role of minor characters that other people are accepted to pay. This kind of role playing is myth making. (*The End of the Road*, 337)

Conclusion

From the deep discussion of Barth's *Chimera*, we can freely evaluate that his analysis of myth is new and contrary and, above all, highly complicated. In his fiction, he invariably escapes explicit directions, parting far from the traditional forbearing of mythopoeia. Although *Chimera* truly seems to accompany the utmost deformity of myth, then extending it to the limits of understanding, it is also ridiculing, disproving and mistreated its literary, traditional and philosophical foundations, which

peculiarly enough appears in myth's inevitable restoration.

With regard to refresh this rigid form, Barth achieves involved on the pages of *Chimera* argument with the modernist and the structural method toward myth, the ones truly responsible for its significative failure. Hence, through the use of Perseus and Bellerophon myths are appearing them as the tale of a fake and a true hero. Barth demolishes the concept of forms, devices and designs, exposing the misconception behind fatiguing to follow structures at all and pursuing structures the highly enigmatic, unreality and openly, at all times utterly confused world. For such a world, Barth assumes to assert, many meaning or sense is able to come out from disorder rather than order. In this subject, myth already agitated and altered, works as a skillful example of post modern philosophy.

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