

MYTHOLOGICAL CRITICISM APPLIED TO SPOTTED DOG RUNNING ALONG THE SEASHORE NOVEL BY CH. AITMATOV

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МИФОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ПОДХОД К ПОВЕСТИ Ч. АЙТМАТОВА «ПЕГИЙ ПЕС, БЕГУЩИЙ КРАЕМ МОРЯ»

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Abstract. This paper identifies the role of mythology in Spotted Dog Running Along the Seashore Novel by Ch. Aitmatov. The aim of the study is to apply mythological criticism to the novel, to find related myths and legends in the story, to interpret their roles, and to underline Aitmatov's style of writing through his use of cultural mythology of certain folk. In order to complete the research on the topic, a critical analysis was done on the main myths of the novel. During the conduct of the analysis, it was revealed that the symbols used by the author do coincide with the world symbols. For example, in the book, Luvr duck symbolizes the parental sacrifice for the sake of the future chick, the same way as universal symbols, where the duck is a symbol of family happiness, and fertility. Thus, the importance of Aitmatov's usage of myth in the literary work, with the help of which he introduces other cultures and nations to his folk and vice versa, is obvious due to the research paper done. The reason is that it's exactly the most distinctive feature of his writing style.

Аннотация. Определяется роль мифологии в произведении Ч. Айтматова «Пегий пес, бегущий краем моря». Цель исследования - использование мифологического критицизма и выявление мифов и легенд в рассказе, интерпретация их роли и выделение особенностей стиля Айтматова. Был выполнен критический анализ. Определено, что символы, использованные автором, совпадают со всемирными символами. Для примера, в книге утка Лувр символизирует родительскую жертву ради будущего птенца, подобно общепринятым символам, где утка — это символ семейного счастья, плодovitости и плодородия. Таким образом, важность использования мифов Айтматовым в литературном произведении, с помощью которых он знакомит свой народ с другими культурами, нациями и наоборот, очевидна благодаря проделанной работе, потому как именно это и является большей отличительной чертой его письменного стиля.

Keywords: myth, Spotted Dog Running Along the Seashore, Luvr duck, the Great Fish-Woman, style of writing, criticism.

Ключевые слова: миф, Пегий пес, бегущий краем моря, утка Лувр, рыба-женщина, стиль написания, критицизм.

The role of mythology in Spotted Dog Running Along the Seashore Novel by Ch. Aitmatov must be considered essential, since the author includes different myths as a frame of his book: “*But Luvr the Duck, ... was flying at that time over the world all alone, and she had nowhere to lay an egg*” [1; 2]. Mythological criticism is a lens through which readers can look at a text detecting a myth or a legend in it. This criticism can be named an Archetypal criticism as well. There is a term for Aitmatov’s style of writing called ‘айтматовский мифологизм’, mentioned in Miekina’s research paper [3; 5]. There are countless articles, essays, academic research papers, and books devoted to the art of Aitmatov, his writing, and his creativity. Nevertheless, I would like to write about his novel ‘Piebald Dog Running Along the Shore’ from the mythological perspective. This story of Aitmatov became special to me, as we were introduced at university, as a result, I reread it several times. Later on, I came across an interview of Vladimir Sanghi, to whom the book was devoted, taken by Abdyzhapar Nurdinov, who is a Kyrgyz journalist. The interview reports on the historical background of the story, where I faced many unexpected facts for me as a reader. They impressed, promoted, and encouraged me to create this article.

In order to find related myths and legends in the story and to interpret them the qualitative method was used most of all. The interview, research articles, and books became the basis of this writing. Archetypal and mythological critical approaches are particularly relevant in exploring the nuances of these myths given by the author. A descriptive type of research was employed since fact-finding inquiries were described and all the textual information from the book was given in this paper. Additionally, an analytical method was used as well, as already existing materials that are facts were involved in this study. It is impossible not to mention the comparative method; certain symbolic notions of different cultures had been held here and their analyses were conducted too.

The story was written by the great Kyrgyz author, Chyngyz Aitmatov, in 1977. The actions occur on the shore of the Sea of Okhotsk first, and later on the sea itself: “*all along the shore of the Sea of Okhotsk, ... the everlasting, implacable opposition of two elements was being fought out ...*” [1; 2]. Aitmatov narrates about the life of the Nivkh people, a little tribe living in Sakhalin (<http://www.literatura.kg/articles/?aid=2621>). Inarguably, Aitmatov’s writing style and the novel ‘Piebald Dog Running Along the Shore’ have been investigated in multiple scientific articles, dissertations, and research papers by different academicians. Margarita Miekina, in her dissertation, presents the research on mythological symbolism in the books of C. Aitmatov. She was convinced that the writer’s mythological aspect of prose had not been specifically analyzed by 2004, nevertheless, the issue of the mythological nature of consciousness had been mentioned repeatedly in Aitmatov’s public speeches [6]. According to the theory of Jung, archetypes can be interpreted in Aitmatov’s novel as universal symbols in the paper. Jung insisted that ‘myths incorporate repeated patterns that he called archetypes, basic symbols such as the wise old man or the great mother, which existed in what he called our collective unconscious, the shared human experience’ [3]. The scientist believed that characters and archetypes from dreams and stories of human beings were much wider than their own cultures’ limits. They did exist innately in every person’s mind long before an individual was introduced to a particular culture. Therefore, there are universal patterns or archetypes that can be viewed and considered as common and universal symbols regardless of a nation, culture, folk.

Formalist Approach applied to the plot of the Spotted Dog Running Along the Seashore Novel.

Summary of the plot:

Kirisk, an 11-12-year-old boy, main character of the novel by Aitmatov: “*The boy was*

excited. His quivering nostrils were dilated and the hidden freckles had appeared on his face [2], goes to sea for the first time together with his grandfather Organ, his father Emrayin, and his father's cousin Mylgun. It is a rite of initiation for the boy, as he got older enough to become a hunter. They successfully reach the place of the seal rookery and kill one of them. But a storm breaks out when moving to a neighboring island for an overnight stay at sea. No one is killed, however, the hunters lose food, guns, the right course and are now sailing in an unknown and invisible direction. The reason is that a dense fog descends on the sea and covers all around. The subsequent problem is that freshwater begins to run out and in order to save the boy, to give him a chance to survive, everyone on the boat decides to sacrifice his life and jump off the boat. On the eighth day, Kirisk swims to the shore exhausted, thirsty, and starving. He finally sees the Piebald Dog cliff, next to where his native village is located and which serves as a guide for hunters: "*Kirisk looked ahead of him, wiped his eyes and was dumbfounded. Piebald Dog was coming straight towards him from behind the dark green swell of the sea. Piebald Dog was running to meet him!*" [2]. The boy is fortunately saved.

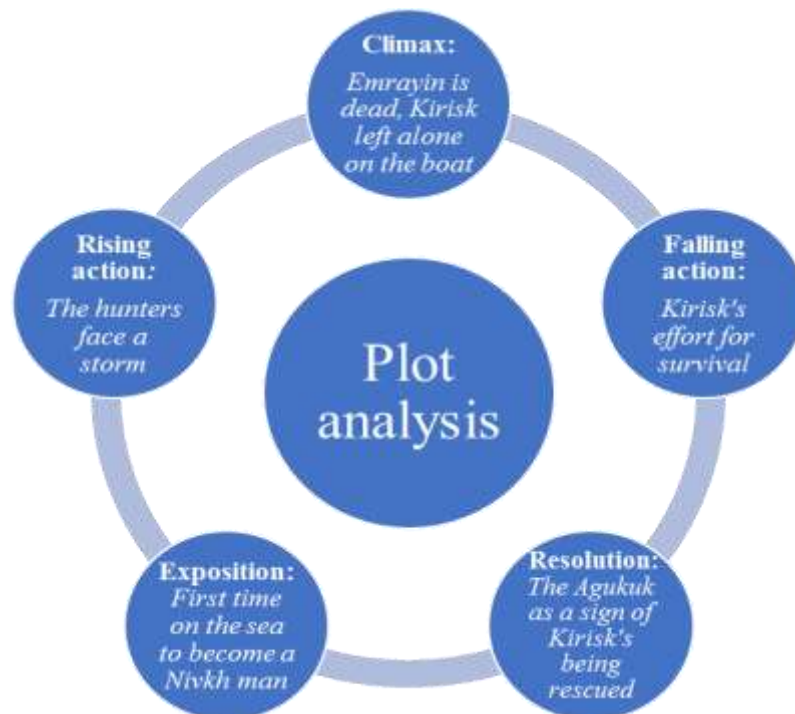


Figure 1. Plot analysis of Spotted Dog Running Along the Seashore

Application of the Mythological or Archetypal Criticism to Spotted Dog Running Along the Seashore

Applying the mythological or archetypal criticism we have discovered two myths used by the writer in the work: the myth about Luvr Duck and the Great Fish-Woman.

The author begins his work with a description of the confrontation of the two natural elements: water and land. Later, the story continues by mentioning the *Luvr duck* which attempted to find a place, a land, for laying an egg on it a long-long time ago: "*But Luvr the Duck ... and she had nowhere to lay an egg. There was nothing in the whole world but water, there weren't even any reeds with which to build a nest*" [1; 2]. However, at that time the whole world was completely covered with water. According to the story, the poor duck had no choice except to sit down on the water, plucking feathers from its chest and making a nest from them. Starting with this nest built by

feathers, the firm ground - the land was formed: *“And it was from that floating nest that the land began to form. Little by little the land spread outwards, little by little the earth was settled by all kinds of creatures”* [2]. Thus, Aitmatov employs the Nivkh tribe’s tale of a land’s emergence, of the beginning of life in the world. He reveals a story about Luvr duck which creates a nest from its own feathers.

In the Dictionary of Symbols, J.E. Cirlot proclaims that the duck, the frog, and the fish are all tied to water, as a result, to ‘primal waters’. That is the reason why those animals, namely, the ducks represent ‘the symbols of the origin of things and of the powers of rebirth’. In addition, the writer states that the duck just like the swan or the goose is the animal associated with the Great Mother and with the ‘descent into hell’ (<http://www.literatura.kg/articles/?aid=2621>). It is a universal meaning of the duck, and, it does resonate with Aitmatov’s meaning of the mythological Luvr duck’s usage in the story [1, 2].

On the other hand, the custom of giving a pair of wooden ducks in the wedding ceremony came from the old Korean tradition [4]. It is known that in Asian countries, “the geese and mandarin ducks symbolize fidelity, love, peace, and offspring because they are known to be monogamous animals that mate for life” [4]. In this case, we can see the resemblance of the symbolic meaning of the ducks between the Asian interpretation of the animal and Aitmatov’s. Moreover, in a teacher’s sourcebook for “Korean Art and Beauty”, it is emphasized that a duck is a symbol of happiness and fertility, while mandarin duck carries a meaning of fidelity. Concerning wild goose, they say that this animal symbolizes good news and loyalty (<https://goo.su/Epsq>). It is obvious that all of them have approximately similar meaning and interpretation not only among themselves but also there is a connection with the symbolic meaning in the Spotted Dog Running Along the Seashore Novel.

The purposes of Aitmatov’s usage of the tale about Luvr duck are being a frame, a basis for the story’s writing and to demonstrate the Nivkh folk’s tight connection with nature. According to the interview of journalist Abdyzhapar Nurdinov with Vladimir Sangi, the person to whom Aitmatov addressed his story; the great Kyrgyz writer was a guest in Sangi’s home. Therefore, the Nivkh writer decides to give this Luvr duck story as a present to his guest from Kyrgyzstan: *“And suddenly it dawned on me: No, I won't write, I'll give it to you!” and poked him with my finger in response. The excited Chyngyz hugged me joyfull*” (<http://www.literatura.kg/articles/?aid=2621>). Delighted Aitmatov decides to create a story of the Nivkhs. He was amazed by the memories of Sangi about his sea hunting with his grandfather. Consequently, the *Luvr duck* served as a base of the Spotted Dog Running Along the Seashore Novel. It is proclaimed that the Luvr duck has even a constellation according to Organ, who discusses the navigation with his grandson:

“There are stars in the sky for that. The stars won't let you down, they'll always show you the exact way. Only you have to know which star is where. You'll learn in time. D'you know the constellation of Luvr the Duck?”[2]. The old man teaches his grandson that it is important to know the constellation of the Luvr duck and rely on it in order to find his way back home.

Moreover, it was essential to demonstrate the people’s beliefs and their connection with nature. The old man, Organ, mentions the bird Agukuk, which can aid in finding the correct direction for sailing: *“... we must look at the air all the time and listen, in case an agukuk flies past. ... If we find ourselves between some island and the mainland, the flight of the agukuk can show us the way. ... It never turns, only straight on. That goes for the agukuk”* [2]. All the signs to find a way to the homeland, to have good hunting, and to protect themselves from evil spirits are tied to nature and its signals. These Nivkh people do rely on nature, they feel and consider themselves as a part of it; so, all signs of mother Earth are perceived by them seriously and as a guide to get what they need. For instance, they need assistance while trying to locate them at sea; they make an effort

to observe the mentioned bird, agukuk.

In the second myth of the book, the story of the *Great Fish-Woman* takes place there too. The old man, Organ, remembers that it was believed that once, three brothers lived on the seashore. The eldest brother married a reindeer man's daughter, became the owner of the reindeer husbandry, and moved to the tundra: *"The eldest was a fast walker and a good climber, and always, wherever he was, he got things done on time. He married the daughter of a reindeer man, became the owner of reindeer herds, and wandered off into the tundra"* [2]. The youngest one married a girl from the forest folk went to taiga, and became a hunter: *"The youngest was a tracker and a crack marksman. He also married, took himself a girl from among the forest people, went into the taiga and became a hunter there"* [2].

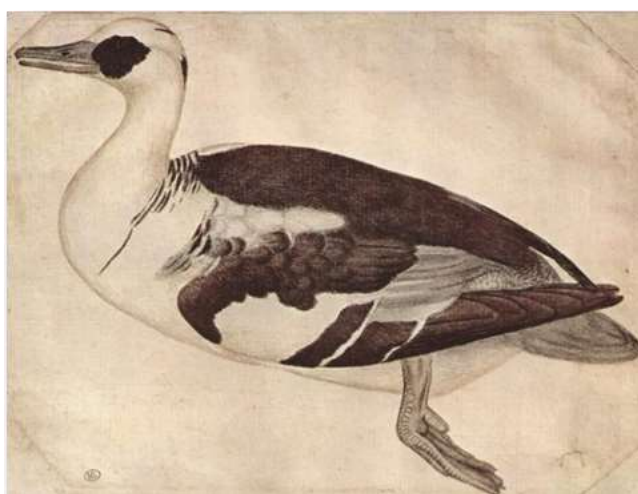


Figure 2. The duck as a symbol of the Spotted Dog Running Along the Seashore Novel
Source: Antonio Pisanello 'Duck' 1430-1440; 17 x 22.2 cm; Watercolor. Paris. The Louvre. <http://www.artitaly.ru>



Figure 3. The Fish-Woman as a symbol of the Spotted Dog Running Along the Seashore Novel
Source: 'The Girl-Fish' by Michelle Tocher; March 13, 2016. <https://michelletocher.com/the-girl-fish/>

Nevertheless, the middle brother was lame which is why had no chance to run or to hunt, thus, no one wanted to give him his daughter to marry her. As a result, the man was left alone by the blue sea: *"No one in the district gave him his daughter's hand in marriage, his brothers abandoned him, and he was left alone by the blue sea"* [2].

One day, he got hooked on a fish in the form of a beautiful woman. They were together that day but after the Fish-Woman jumped into the sea and swam away. Long time he was longing and begging the woman to come back to see her at least once shouting out her name from the shore. Almost a year later, the middle brother found a baby, his son, on the seashore. When his son grew up, he married a girl from a forest tribe, and they founded the Fish-Woman clan: his son *"was respectfully given the hand of a maid from a forest tribe. Children were born, and thus the tribe of the Fish Woman's people multiplied"* [2].



Figure 4. Table of interpretation of the primary symbols from the Spotted Dog Running Along the Seashore Novel according to the universal dictionary of symbols and their role in the novel itself

Summing up all the information presented above, it is significant to proclaim that mythology in Aitmatov's writing has an essential and irreplaceable role. Exactly the fact of Aitmatov's inclusion of myths and legends from other cultures in his writing, familiarizes people with new knowledge about other folks and differentiates his writing style from other authors' works. Therefore, his book becomes a story within the story in it.

The same happened in his Spotted Dog Running Along the Seashore Novel, where the writer introduces myths and symbols of other nation (namely, Nivkh people), where readers are able to find even similarities with their own culture. Which is why the term mentioned above was formulated by literary critics, 'айтматовский мифологизм'. That is universal; that is special and unique way of self-presenting and introducing C. Aitmatov's folk and culture through his own style of writing a literary work.

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