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## **Examining the Identity Position of Myth in Contemporary Iranian Painting Regarding *Carl Gustav Jung's* Ideas\***

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### **Abstract**

Human being thinks through language, symbol and myth by which they interact with the environment. Myth and art share the same subject, because both speak of the unconscious. Similarly, the reproduction of ancient myths in contemporary painting reflects this connection and interest. The identity function is among the hottest discussions among the mythologists, especially the Swiss psychologist *Carl Gustav Jung*. The present study aims to examine the relationship between individuation and identity function of myth based on *Carl Gustav Jung's* ideas and the way they are reflected in contemporary Iranian painting. The main questions of the study include: Which factors influence the formation of myth identity function in contemporary Iranian painting? How is the myth identity function reflected in Iranian painting according to *Carl Gustav Jung's* ideas? This research implements a descriptive-analytic approach by examining selected paints. The sampling is among the works of contemporary Iranian painters, who are Bahman Mohasses, Iran Darroudi, Mansour Ghandriz, Aydin Aghdashloo, and Gizella Varga Sinai. The findings show that relying on Iranian myths, contemporary Iranian artists seek to find their identities, once imagined as lost or missing. The reliance on Iranian myths is so heavy that Iranian artists endowed Iranian spirit to Western myths in search of their own identities. Such attempts for identification appeared in different symbolic ways in their paintings resulted by the collective unconscious shared by these artists. Consequently, they may have different explanations according to *Carl Gustav Jung's* ideas.

**Keywords:** Myth, Identity, Individuation, *Carl Gustav Jung*, Contemporary Painting of Iran.

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## **Introduction**

Myths narrate the spiritual past of mankind, rooted in beliefs, ancient adventures and endeavors to justify and understand real or unreal phenomena. Since myths have extraordinary characteristics beyond human abilities, they have always been desirable for consideration, praised by mankind and remembered by many generations. Myths refer to supernatural facts, reflected in human history along with symbols and religious rituals. These wonderful facts, on the one hand, originate from early human imagination where rational and intellectual thought begins, and on the other hand, exist in the unconscious mind of contemporary man, sometimes showing through symbols and hints. Knowing about the roots and essential elements of mythology as well as related concepts such as being, moment, eternity in an allegorical and symbolic way, has led to the knowledge of mythology in the contemporary world.

Myth has always been a mental, inspiring heritage for painter artists and for some contemporary Iranian painters, mythical motifs, their reflections and the use of concepts hidden in them have been thematized as the origin of the work. But what this study focuses on is how myth's identity function works to self-identify artists in the works of contemporary painters. This function has been affected by a variety of factors, including social, religious, historical and political ones.

The present study aims to examine the relationship between individuation and myth's identity function based on *Carl Gustav Jung's* ideas and how they reflect in contemporary Iranian painting. Accordingly, this paper seeks to answer these questions: Which factors influence the formation of myth's identity function in contemporary Iranian painting? How is myth's identity function reflected in Iranian painting based on Carl Gustav Jung's ideas? The present study examines how mythical motifs are symbolically reflected in the works of contemporary painters which represent the effort made by the artists to find their identity and a kind of individuation.

## **Research Method**

The research method is descriptive, analytic and comparative. Data are collected through the current literature as well as by observing the works. The statistical sample consists of the works of five artists including Bahman Mohasses, Iran Darroudi, Mansour Ghandriz, Aydin Aghdashloo, and Gizella Varga Sinai selected by selective sampling.

## **Literature Review**

According to surveys conducted, no research was found with a focus on the subject of the present article to specifically address the issue of myth's identity in contemporary Iranian painting from Carl Gustav Jung's perspective. Among the studies close to the subject, the following can be noted.

Mohammad Reza Fam, in his research entitled "The position of mythological motifs in the paintings of the last 50 years of Iran" (2008), tries to know whether contemporary painters have used myths in their works. He also wants to know the roots of the image of the applied motif. The thesis entitled "The Metamorphosis of Myth to Symbol in Ancient Iran" was written by Behrokh Tafaraj Norooz (2008). In this thesis, the main purpose was the discovery of myths manifested in the form of symbols.

In his thesis, "The pictorial expression of the Myth in the Paintings of Iran (1951-1991)", Rasoul Moareknejad (2001) examined the history of art and contemporary art movements in Iran and addressed the reflection of myth in fifty works from the works of contemporary Iranian artists. Also, Maryam Riahi has completed the thesis entitled "The Study of Symbolism and the Use of Native Motifs in Contemporary Painting of Iran" (2010). She points out that the culture and history of every nation are the backbones and the driving force generating novel motivations. The book *Myth and Art* by Rasul Moareknejad, (2014), refers to the meanings, definitions and types of myth; myth in literature and visual arts; mythology, mythography,

myth critique, scientific mythology, and in the end, it examines and analyzes the "Siavash's passage through fire".

Abbas Mokhber, in a part of *Foundations of Mythology* (2017) deals with the relationship between myth and art. In this book, he examines the views of five mythologists such as Freud, Eliade, Levi-Strauss and Campbell and also expresses their views on the proximity of myth and art.

Among the studies conducted outside Iran, Hamid Keshmirshakan in *Contemporary Iranian Art; New Perspective* (2014) indirectly implied the function of myth in contemporary Iran's painting without focusing on a particular approach. Also, Mania Saadinejad in an article entitled: "Mythological Themes in Iranian Culture and Art: Traditional and Contemporary Perspectives" (2009) investigate the relationship between culture, myth and artistic production in contemporary Iran and mythical themes in the works of Aydin Aghdashloo.

Linda Kumarov, in *Islamic Art Now: II* (2016), for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art has addressed the new approaches of Islamic artists in the Middle East many of whom are Iranian artists. In this book, Kumarov noted indirectly to the contemporary functions of myth in contemporary Iranian painting as part of Middle Eastern Islamic art. Of course, none of the artists she studied are artists whose works have been studied in this research.

In a recent article titled "Influence and Application of Texture in the Works of Contemporary Iranian Painters (From 1987 to 2017)", Ebrahim Torkzadeh and Morteza Afshari (2019) studied using of visual elements in Iranian paints. They briefly examined works of Bahman Mohasses and Iran Darroudi who are among the subject of this article.

## **Definition of Concepts**

### ***Myth***

Mythology theorists have provided several definitions of myth since myth does not fit into a single definition due to its extent. For example, according to Claude Lévi-Strauss, myths are narratives that are shaped to modulate or resolve the fundamental contradictions that human beings face in their lives. Psychologically-minded theorists, including Joseph Campbell, consider myth as the collective and general dream of society, which, as a result of adaptation to individual dreams, leads to good coordination of individuals with group and society and as a result, the compatibility of the two.

But perhaps the definition of myth given by Jalal Sattari is a definition agreed on in all these theories. According to Sattari: "as the mythologists have said, myth in every society and culture, gives meaning to the world, a meaning that the world did not have per se, creating order out of disorder, and generally attributing symbolic meaning to anything cultural, in an anthropological sense. To put it in a nutshell, myth makes the world understandable and reasonable and makes human relations with fellow-beings and the universe system meaningful" (1997, p.70).

### ***Identity***

In Persian culture, there are different meanings for the word "identity". In Dekhoda's dictionary, identity is the personhood and this meaning is well-known among scholars and theologians. Identity is sometimes referred to as external existence. Identity sometimes refers to nature with appreciation (Dekhoda, 1965, p.349). In Moein's dictionary, the term "identity" has been used in four senses: 1) Divine (Omnipotence) Essence, 2) Being, existence, 3) The things to identify a person, 4) The particular truth... (Moein, 2008: p.1246). In Oxford dictionary, the term "identity" refers to (1) who or what somebody/something is (2) the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others and (3) the state or feeling of being very similar to and able to understand somebody/something (Oxford, 2005, p.643).

Meanwhile, in the definition of identity, it can be said that the examination of the senses mentioned for this term represents a number of features and concepts of distinction, similarity, identification, action and continuity. Another feature of this term can be found in binary oppositions, which indicate the opposite aspects of the concept, including personal identity versus collective identity, attributive identity against acquisitive identity, and internal identity against external identity. The binary opposites of internal and external, in fact, represent the most important characteristic of identity in setting a 9/6 boundary between the inner and outer world that defines the concept of "me" versus "not me". This opposition is expressed, in other words, with the concepts of ego and personality, in such a way that ego contains the internal aspect and the personality representing the external and social aspects of identity formed over time. In this way, it can be said that the formation of identity is the product of an inner-outer dialectic process between the individual's personal world and social concepts (Soleimani et al., 2016, p.17).

### **The Relationship between Myth and Identity from the Perspective of Individuation According to Carl Gustav Jung's Ideas**

Jung believes that human psyche consists of three distinct systems that interact with each other and identifies these systems with the terms of ego or self-conscious, personal unconscious and collective unconscious. He believes that human, by knowing unconscious and obtaining appropriate patterns of behavior and contributing to the interpretation of dreams, can coordinate with the world around him and achieve real cognition from ego, which is the individuation.

Individuation, which Jung considers to be the main process of human transformation, is one of the most important terms in his analytic psychology. In fact, Jung expresses the role of collectivist unconscious, archetype and Id in making personality, and in his view, individuality involves the process of forming a distinction between one person and others (Jung, 1999, p.193). The unconscious is like a treasure hidden in the depth of the human psyche and self-consciousness must seek it.

By studying the myths of various nations, as well as his patients' files along with mythological studies, the Swiss psychoanalyst and founder of analytic psychology concluded that myths share common roots despite the variety they enjoy. On the contrary, Freud considered myths to be primarily reflections of anxiety and sexual strife. Jung sought the signs for the association of myths with a holy meaning; and while Freud limited the formation of myths to the first half of life and in the personal and internal experiences of individuals. Jung speaks of the inner population and collective unconscious that is common to all people and inherited from the ancestors for posterity. According to Jung, the archetypes are in three sets: the Shadow, Persona, and Anima. Jung sees the shadow as the dark and negative angles of the personality. Perseus is a mask of personality that is noticed and related to the outside world; and Anima refers to the inner part of the unconscious personality. Jung calls female's sensitivity in the man, Anima and male's sensitivity in the woman animus (Moarknejad, 2017, p.218).

Meanwhile, he considers the recognition of unconscious and possibility to communicate with it as the main function of myth. The necessity of the symbolic reading of myth also emanates from the fact that the ultimate achievement of communicating with the unconscious is to identify the person with himself and his own realization. Myth is a self-medication guide book, and one who succeeds in it will achieve a kind of enlightenment and real self-knowledge, which is individuation (Mokhber, 2017).

*Carl Gustav Jung* believes that myths are in fact a kind of mediator between the conscious and unconscious of mankind that makes sense to human life and can tolerate it, because meaninglessness prevents the exuberance of life and is equivalent to disease. Myths satisfy some of our most basic spiritual needs, and these needs are real as much as hunger and fear of death. No science will ever replace myth, and no myth can be made out of any science (Jung, 1999).

Thus, it can be said that individualization from the Jung's perspective is equivalent to the acquisition of individual identity and personality. Identity as individuation in Jung's ideas can also be adapted with the definition of identity in the previous section and examined more carefully. For example, similar to what has been said about identity oppositions, it can be found in the definition that Jung offers for ego and the shadow. It is by the presence of the shadow that ego finds meaning, just as light, in contrast to darkness and goodness, stands in contrast to evil. Jung believes that "shadow is influenced by collective pollution more than the self-conscious personality. For example, it is relatively reasonable when ego decides alone, but as soon as other people do unrighteous and unreasonable works, it surrenders the attractions which in fact does not belong to him due to fear that it should not be considered crazy" (Jung, 1973). It seems that "ego" cannot continue to progress disregarding the shadow, which has a special position in Jung's thought. It also needs to defeat the shadow and dominate it in order to ultimately reach the self; and "individuality is the revolt of my ego against the coercion imposed on it by self" (Moreno, 2009, p.44).

Jung brings mythology into a new position by discussing the archetypes. In addition to the personal unconscious which Freud brings up in relation to the unconscious mind of each individual and its relationship with the past life experience of the person, he believed in the collective unconscious - the archetypes, a deeper layer that is a reservoir of universal subjective images. The collective unconscious that causes the formation of myths is a mental order driven by the power of the generation's inheritance. In addition to myth, folk literature, apologues, heroism and ... to the purest form, are a number of archetypal images imagined in art and literature (Ahmadi, 1996, p.377).

According to what was discussed above, the function of myth's identity as well as archetypes from the viewpoint of Jung have also been shown in painting in such a way that contemporary Iranian painting is significantly affected by it. According to the research subject in the next section, this function will be examined in a number of works by the most important contemporary Iranian artists.

### **The Function of Myth's Identity in the Works of Contemporary Iranian Painters, Focusing on Jung's Ideas:**

Jung believed that "artwork, like a living being, grows within the artist's minds and becomes independent of its creator after being offered to the public". In his speech in Zurich (1922), he explicitly states: "The psychological analysis of artists always reveals that artistic creation derived from the unconscious is highly powerful and very wonderful and totalitarian" (Ahmadi, 1996, p.365). In his view, "art and myth as the reflection of the contents of collective unconscious are the children born from entangled parents lacking specific gender. Art is the representation of a process of self-organizing the lives of nations and times (Jung, quoted by Mokhber, 2017, p.201). According to Jung, one of the most prominent functions of myths is the identity function which can be found in its finest form in art and literature. Iranian painters have sought such an identity function of myths on their tableaux. In what follows, the identity function is studied in several works selected by contemporary Iranian painters:

#### **I. Minotaur on the Seashore by Bahman Mohasses (1931- 2010)**

Bahman Mohasses was a pioneer Iranian painter, statuary and translator. His avant-garde paintings are among credible contemporary Iranian works. Due to studying and living in Italy, he was greatly influenced by ancient Greek and Roman mythology. Minotaur, who was a character highly favored by Mohasses, "was a weird creature in Greek mythology with a cow's head and a human body" (Hall, 2001, p.180). Minotaur was a frightening monster to him. Greeks had to send scapegoats into a maze to save their own lives. The maze signifies human fears and questions appearing in contact with life. Meanwhile, it is known that Minotaur was created by the intercourse of human and animal. The human was an aristocrat of royal birth. In Mohasses's works, figures have common features that characterize his tableaux. As Mojabi (2014) believes, small heads, muscular arms, slender waists, toeless and feetless legs give an expressive mode to the statue.



**Picture 1.** Minotaur on the seashore, oil paint on canvas, 1977, by Bahman Mohasses (Pakbaz, 2015, p.92)

These figures with exaggerated bodies lived in a timeless, placeless and static state. In (Picture 1) Minotaur is illustrated on seashore in a desperate defeated manner. Significant points with regard to this study include the broad space that can be seen behind Minotaur. The space has been divided into three parts along with horizon and coastal line. Pakbaz believes that in Mohasses's tableaux, especially this one, "the line of horizon in configurations is the element that separates the background and the foreground. He uses these measures to express general, symbolic concepts from the contemporary situation" (2015, p.92). Almost all paintings by Mohasses form a fragmented bed where the sky, sea and seashore meet. This may be deeply rooted in the unconscious mind of Mohasses and his birthplace. Mohasses was born in Northern Iran (Rasht) and selected Italy for living, where sea is an important part of nature. Consequently, depicting the element of sea is a very important component in the paintings of Mohasses which can be attributed to his unconscious mind and related to the dominance of the element of sea in his mental images, especially in relation to the memories of his early childhood.

Although Mohasses considers any kind of attribution to any parts of the world as random, he confirms the relationship between sea image and his unconscious mind (Tajedini, 2013). He considers the sea as an endless space full of question, fear and lifelike. So, it can be said that his look at the sea is a mythological look, based on the recognition of the unconscious as it was referred to by Jung and the possibility of communication by the artist.

Most mythologists believe that human beings created myth to answer their questions and cover their fears with regards to whatever questionable and frightening in life<sup>3</sup>. Among human fears and questions are great natural elements; however, it is seen in this tableau that by turning a natural element such as the sea into a myth, Mohasses causes the questions and fears of life to invade back in a multiplied form. In other words, in this tableau, he uses myth in a reversed manner and provides a reversed definition of myth as compared with the viewpoint of the mythologists. This reversed mythological image of sea at the background, especially in the background of Minotaur's tableau, becomes meaningful along with the above-mentioned analysis.

Regarding what was mentioned, it can be said that in this tableau Mohasses somehow turns his own life into a myth. A myth that does not answer questions nor fears but provokes fears and questions of life and makes them seem much more frightening and ambiguous before the eyes of the addressee. In an interview, Mohasses confesses that he has claustrophobia. He considers painting as "showing indefinite in a finite

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<sup>3</sup> - For example, for Levi Strauss, myth function means providing a reasonable sample to help human mind avoid contradictions such as fear of death versus the pleasure of life, that creates disparity in his/her mind. Or Joseph Campbell, who pays special attention to the relationship between art, literature and myth, considers myths as a way out of anxiety and disasters of the modern world (for further information, see Segal, 2015, pp. 193-203 and 176-184).

space". By showing indefinite in a finite space, he has attempted to overcome his fear over closed spaces (Pakbaz, 2015); so, it can be said that in the said tableau, by depicting Minotaur, Mohasses has imagined the maze in which Theseus entered to defeat him and reminds his own fear of such a frightening, closed space leading to the clash with Minotaur. By depicting the sea, which is an open, vast space, he tries to overcome such fear. Maybe, it can be claimed that the reason for his special interest in the myth of Minotaur was the common characteristic he imagined between himself and Minotaur: being entangled in a closed space and the maze of life. Meanwhile, head, which has been the place of thought and wisdom since ancient times is smaller than normal size in the paintings of Mohasses. Metallic space with dim, grey colors illustrates the individual ideology of the artist as well as the image of the world involved in disaster. As Kashmir Shekan (2014) believes, illustrating disastrous situations of contemporary man in Mohasses's works or the rough performance of metamorphasized creatures isolated in the middle of nowhere is the main characteristic of his paintings.

As a result, the sea behind Minotaur may have the same function as intended by the said mythologist; that is, by the sign of the sea, vastness overcomes the sign of Minotaur implying closed space. In other words, sea as myth responds to the artist's fears of life showing in Minotaur. On the other hand, Minotaur fills the space in the foreground and doesn't allow for the sea to show itself in the background. It implies that such an attempt by the artist to overcome his questions and fears has not been successful.

On the whole, it can be said that according to Jung's viewpoint, in this piece of art, myth finds an identity function because the artist tries to restore the roots of his questions and fears in quest of his own individuality so that he could survive in interaction with his surrounding environment. Consequently, it can be said that Minotaur and the sea act as shadows for the painter in such a way that in his tableau he tries to display the attempt for overcoming the shadow in the process of individuality.

## II. Anonymous by Mansour Ghandriz (1935-1965)



**Picture 2.** Untitled, Lithography on paper, 40 \* 70 cm, 1963, Mansour Ghandriz, [www.en.camagallery.com](http://www.en.camagallery.com)

In this work by Mansour Ghandriz, we witness a symmetric combination using simplified symbolic designs that characterize his latest works (Picture 2). In this regards, Ghandriz is included among the artists of Saghakhaneh School<sup>4</sup>. This method aims to "use the liberation of modern art, of course, by considering local and national identity and whatever reminiscent of the past" (Aghdashloo, 2002).

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<sup>4</sup> Saghakhaneh was the title given by Karim Emami when the first group gallery of the artists working in this style was held, to describe their artworks. The Saghakhaneh School can be considered as a reconstruction of the ancient's heritage in a modern form.

Ghandriz, who was continuously concerned with cultural identity and the attempt to create a national school of art, traversed the course of his artistic evolution trying to answer the question of how to find a way to the coexistence of tradition and modernity. This way, “mythological method and mysterious ancient themes gradually found their ways into his works” (Pakbaz, 2008, p.387). In this regards, Barahani (2016) says: “creating myth by Mansour could be known from his limitless interest in old legends as well as popular culture and fiction”. In this work, nature and rustic atmosphere as well as bright, warm colors observed in his previous works either disappeared completely or were illustrated in an abstract manner in the form of mechanical elements. As Pakbaz (2016) stipulates in a conference in memorandum of Ghandriz: “in his latest works, a sign of traditional elements are hardly seen distinctly. In a manner, suns have turned into cogwheels and stars into bolts and nuts and ribbons into conveyor belts”.

In the lower part of the painting, two abstract shapes that are seen symmetrically, representing ploughshare, symbolically remind industry. Similarly, above the picture, two signs of a snake and an apple are seen that represent the mythical fiction of eating forbidden fruit by Adam in heaven resulting in the fall of Adam from heaven. Snake that has different meanings and definitions in different civilizations is regarded as holy and admired, a religious symbol, the symbol of birth and death in one place while devil or the enemy of Sun-God somewhere else, ... (Hall, 2001). However, considering juxtaposition with apple and other symbols that are recognizable in this tableau, snake here represents deception, Adam’s fall and also symbolizes Satan. Also, in terms of symbolism, apple has some distinctive concepts; however, these concepts are more or less related. In all these situations, apple is the means of recognition and wisdom, the fruit of the life tree and sometimes the fruit of the tree of good-evil recognition. Unifying recognition is compared with eternity and differing recognition causes fall (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, vol. 3, p.700).

In this picture, circle signifies unity and perfection. Circle, “like sphere, is the symbol of the universe, heavens and God the Almighty [...] because it has no beginning nor end and implies eternity” (Hall, 2001, p.9). The image of triangle which is seen in the tableau above seems to be equilateral and is seen in the lower part of the tableau. “Each triangle is related to one of the elements and equilateral triangle is related to soil” (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, vol. 5, p.155). It seems that the artist has used special symbols to link the upper space of the picture to the heavens. As we move down the tableau, signs that are used get far away from spiritual, heavenly space up in the picture. In lower parts, using mechanical and industrial shapes refer to the material, earthly world and getting away from the origin and spirituality and actually the fall from heaven. The fall was previously referred to by using the myths of snake and apple in the upper part of the picture. The human being in the middle of the picture holds in his right hand something like a human that can represent next human society resulted by multiplying of the fallen Man. In his left hand, he holds a flower vase that can represent nature in a different form. It can be concluded that this mechanical man in the lower part of the picture may represent contemporary man in battle between nature and culture or tradition and modernity. In fact, it can be said that in this tableau, traditional myths in upper part are in contrast to modern myths in lower part. Also, since in semiotics what is placed up has priority over what is placed down, here nature and tradition in upper part have priority over modernity and culture in lower part. In this tableau, the artist seemingly intends to show that there is an irresolvable contrast in contemporary world between nature and culture in such a way that the only way it can be resolved is to have knowledge of the original source of meaning and humanity since it was born in the universe and then to attempt to restore it to the very status in which humanity was uninterrupted bond with nature and the spirituality hidden in it. This way, it seems that identity formation resulted by an internal-external dialectic process between the individual world of the person and social concepts. According to the viewpoint of Jung, the representation of revolt against the force imposed by self on human being can be seen in the work of Ghandriz in the contrast between tradition and modernity, nature and culture, spirituality and what takes us away from spirituality including technology and industry. A quotation by Barahani, one of Ghandriz’s friends can confirm this interpretation: “at that time (after 1959), he used to see nature naked and was



highly preoccupied with discovering nature. Things in nature, especially the significant and eternal things such as sun, tree, mountain, horse, plants and birds are always present in his initial works. His vision was absolutely rudimentary and created myths unconsciously” (Barahani, 2016). It can be concluded that this tableau emphasizes the individualization of the artist via returning him to the spiritual world before the dominance of technology over the world. Based on what was expressed about Jung’s psychological theory, this agrees with myth's identity function from Jung’s viewpoint.

### III. Eternal Beloved by Iran Darroudi (1936)



**Picture 3.** The Eternal Beloved, Iran Darroudi, oil paint on the canvas, 140 \* 140 cm, 1993, [www.irandarroudi.com](http://www.irandarroudi.com)

“Flowers nonexistent in nature, branches coming out of swamps, looming perspectives out of which ordinary and syntactic things rise in an eccentric way, amid which a ruin or monster of Persepolis appears obscurely or dream-like” (Legar, 1973). This is one of the most significant descriptions of the tableaux by Darroudi, especially *Eternal Beloved*. Iran and its bright past are clearly intended. By illustrating Persepolis in a foggy and dreamy atmosphere, Darroudi emphasized its mythical aspect. Using light in all works by Darroudi and especially this one reflects the mythical opinion of light and glory by Iranians. According to Hinnells (1992) and Shayegan (2014), light, brightness and whiteness have long been the symbols of purity and heavenly state to Iranians while blackness and darkness represent devil to them. By this approach, the paintings by Darroudi are loyal to the bright Iranian light. The light that on the one hand represents the geographical climate of Iran with its steep angle of sunlight and on the other hand symbolizes the culture, enlightenment or mythological, philosophical aspects and according to Jung a type of archetype derived from the collective unconscious of Iranians.

Iranian look has always been focused on light as a creative element and force. In Iran, sun used to be the center of Mithraism at a time, the symbol of fire in Zoroastrianism, then it lit Iranian vision as the mystic light of lights. It may be said that the same old promising light seen in Manichaean art and painting is seen in Darroudi’s paintings in a modern way (Mojabi 2002).

The swan on top of the tableau, as if born in light explosion, is symbolic. “[In swan] this stainless bird whose whiteness, strength and grace turns it into the live visualization of light, there is a bulk of myths. Meanwhile, there are two types of whiteness and two types of light: the whiteness of day, sun and man; the whiteness of night, moon and woman. Regarding which whiteness swan embodies, its symbols tend to two different directions. If these two types of whiteness are not separated and are considered in combination, as it sometimes happens, then swan is considered male-female and filled with sacred secret” (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, vol. 4, p.461). In the said tableau, it is as if two types of whiteness are witnessed that can

entail aforementioned concepts. This characteristic of swan can, in the form of binary oppositions, associate with anima and animus archetypes according to Jung. Using the symbol of swan with a radiant pearl in the middle of the body can be an emphasis on the glorious ancient Iran because in all sources that have a mythical look at Iran, Iran equals the land of pure and noble people. Consequently, using swan as the symbol of purity, grace and nobility by the artist point to this characteristic of Iran and Iranians. Also, pearl is the symbol of creativity and genesis (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, vol. 5) and can have meanings such as creativity that are linked to the aforementioned signs and symbols of Iran.

The fire seen in the picture has a mythical aspect as well. The element of fire in ancient Iranian culture is holy and signifies the son of Ahura Mazda, his presence and the sign of his true order. This way, fire as an archetype deeply rooted in Iranian collective unconscious in relation to other elements of the picture helps the myth-making of Iran. On the other hand, with a close look in the background among the obscure designs associated with urban atmosphere a dome and minaret are recognizable. The dome and minaret that remind a mythical sacred place are rooted in the lived experience of the artist because after she returned from Germany to Iran, due to World War II, as a five-year-old, she had to live in Mashhad near the Green Dome. The mosque in her early childhood had a deep influence on her character and consequently it is present in many of her paintings. As a result, it can be said that these pictures, each derived from the personal unconscious of the artists or rooted in their collective unconscious, express Jung's viewpoint regarding myth's identity function.

In her book, "Distance between Two Points", Iran Darroudi says: "I daringly write, depicting Persepolis is not only about history. It is retelling the legend of a love story. My love to my homeland" (Barati, 2008). This way, Darroudi whose first name is Iran as well, has confirmed myth-making of Iran in her works based on the aforementioned characteristics. Of course, this goes side by side with myth-making of femininity and links Iran and all of her signs with femininity. Woman as homeland or homeland as woman with characteristics such as genesis and creativity are among cases relying on collective unconscious that find identity and psychological function mentioned by Jung that are highly visible in her painting. In this painting, Darroudi tries to reach her personal identity and individuality through her national, historical identity.

#### **IV. The Broken Beauty (Collapsed) by Aydin Aghdashloo (1940)**



**Picture 4.** The Broken Beauty, Aydin Aghdashloo, Gouache on cardboard, 2005, 75 \* 57 cm, [www.aghdashloo.com](http://www.aghdashloo.com)

Another artist who has been studied in this research is Aydin Aghdashloo. Aghdashloo is one of the artists who have mastered both theoretical and practical aspects of painting. Hence, he has worked as an intermediary ring between several generations of Iranian painters and his works have always been considered. In the works of Aydin Aghdashloo, valuable antique objects such as enameled dishes and images have mythical personality with a functional identity. In Picture 4, where we are confronted with an object made gracefully and broken with a sudden blow we clearly feel regret and sorrow for the loss and oblivion. In this work and its similar works, Aghdashloo, uses the motifs such as enameled dishes and Persian miniature for myth-making of the past, in which the gentility of Iranian identity lies. Also, in Aghdashloo's works, the acquired collective identity in the context of history is in contemporary outer identity discourse. This is an example of Jung's idea that individuality involves the process of forming a distinction between person and others and emphasizing the role of collective unconscious in making personality.

Also, Aghdashloo believes that his interest in the artworks and historical objects and restoration of artworks and historical objects caused his works to become subject (Salamt, 2016). But it seems that in this work and similar tableaus, his relationship with these objects and works, contrary to what was happening in his real life. Instead of restoration of these objects, destruction happens in this tableau. It seems like this beautiful enameled dish is a dear person, the artist, the thinker that we regret losing. The beauty that was buried under the dust of time passage. An example of Shakespeare's poem that says: "And Time that gave doth now his gift confounds. Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth and delves the parallels in beauty's brow, feeds on the rarities of nature's truth, and nothing stands but for his scythe to mow" (Saeidpoor, 2010).

Shayegan also interprets Aghdashloo's works as "there is no you and me". Its bitter and cold look is about capturing that basic and sensitive moment in which everything goes into a state of suspension. The decisive moment when the elusive features of things unfold at once and whatever is more glorious whose effort becomes more dramatic in the vicious cycle of nullity" (Shayegan, 2014). As it was said, Jung believes that human, by knowing unconscious and obtaining appropriate behavioral patterns, can balance himself with the world around him, and reach his actual recognition, which is individuality. It seems that Aghdashloo also expresses his concerns about the destruction, annihilation and mortality of human and life in his paintings. And in this way he will gain his mental relaxation.

It is seen that the beautiful enameled dish in his work is not only an object, but also represents a magnificent human whose death in one moment ends all his/her magnificence and destroys all his memories. Aghdashloo's painting is a historical report of this massive destruction in his own language; therefore, according to Jung's ideas, Aghdashloo pursues a kind of individuality and identity in this work, an identity that had a mythic presence in the past, but has been broken up and destroyed at present. This disintegration and fractures can, according to Jung's idea, be a sign of the fractures and internal disintegration of the artist, which is a reminder of the shadow in Jung's idea, the shadow that refers to the dark parts of the artist's own being or, on a larger scale, to contemporary broken humans. Restoration of these fractures in the life of the artist is an attempt to overcome the darkness and to create a mask or persona to cover it.

**V. Ariadne 2 by Gizella Varga Sinai (1944)**



**Picture 5.** Ariadne 2, Gizella Varga Sinai, Acrylic on canvas, 100 \* 120 cm, [www.gzellavargasinai.com](http://www.gzellavargasinai.com)

In Ariadne, of the Silent Reflection Collection, Gizella Varga Sinai, a Hungarian painter who moved to Iran after marriage, has tried to link myths of the East and the West in an ambiguous and mythical space. Ariadne was the princess of the Greek myths and the daughter of Cretan king Minos. She fell in love with Theseus, who came from Athens to submit himself as a victim to Minotaur. Ariadne secretly gave him a sword to kill a cannibal giant and gave him a ball of red thread, and Theseus unrolled it as he penetrated the labyrinth, which allowed him to find his way back out. Theseus took Ariadne away from Crete, but then forsakes his promise to marry her by abandoning her as she sleeps on the beach of the island of Naxos. Ariadne stayed so long until finally Dionysus found her there and married her (Plowden et al., 1972, p.16).

*In Varga Sinai's work, a red thread in Ariadne's hands is drawn toward the right side statue of the image and a dagger is placed on the waist. These signs indicate that the right side statue is the same as the Theseus character; but the interesting point in this picture is that the Theseus here has the form and superficial structure of one of Iran's myths and Achaemenes commanders. Minotaur also is depicted as the relief of a cow in Persepolis.*

*Sinai says in a conversation that before coming to Iran, she was familiar with the Orient and its literature and myths, and that myths were always attractive to her. Therefore, she studied books about the myths of the world, which also included stories from the Shahnameh, as well as the works of Sa'di and Khayyam. Therefore, before she moved to Iran, she had a mental background from Iran and the East (Rasti and Salamt, 2016). By discovering similar myths and characters in the two civilizations of Iran and Europe (Greece), the artist narrates a new story with a link to them in this tableau, without making them opposite and contradictory. This way, she tries to connect the myths of the East and the West, what might have happened in her life through a combination of two cultures and two views. Therefore, considering what was said in relation to Jung's idea about identity and individuation, it seems that Gizella has tried to recapture her identity with the help of myths and the link between myths of the West and Iran. It can also be said that this tableau may implicitly represent the artist's own life, an artist from a country in the west (Europe) who came to the east (Iran) and tried to find the way of her art through the combination of Eastern and Western art.*

*The thread which allowed Theseus to find his way back out from the labyrinth that was Minotaur's place is the symbol and the means of ascension as well as a desire to ascend (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 2003, Vol. 3, p.416). Perhaps, it also means the same for the artist. The creator of this tableau, with the help of her western thread which is reflected in the myth function in her art, has climbed to an eastern state and thus saved her life. So here, by turning the Greek myths of Minotaur and Theseus into Iranian mythic roles, these*

myths become signs of salvation rather than being lost in labyrinth or betrayal. It should be noted that in this tableau the Iranized myths of Minotaur and Theseus, refer to the Animus archetype according to Jung's idea in the artist's unconscious.

As Gizella who knows his artistic development in Iran believes: "I was formed here and became a painter. When I arrived in Iran, I found that the country had a strong and powerful history. As a painter, I felt I could link past to present in this territory. If I return to Hungary, I will preserve this feature. I discovered this world" (Rasti & Salamt, 2016). Perhaps the lady inside the image is Gizella herself, who, with the thread of art, tries to pull out Iranian culture, civilization, and art from the labyrinths of history and show it to everyone. Therefore, in addition to what we have said before, it is also possible to recognize Jung's view in this tableau that the myths with all sorts of varieties have common roots and seek signs for the association of myths with a holy meaning. Gizella Varga Sinai is looking for these common roots to achieve her own individuality by linking Iranian and Western mythological elements in her tableau. This way, myth's identity functions is readable in her works on the basis of Jung's ideas.

**Table 1. Components** of identity function from Jung's idea and comparing the examined works according to these components.

Components of Identity Function from Jung's idea	Gizella Varga Sinai	Aydin Aghdashloo	Iran Darroudi	Mansour Ghandriz	Bahman Mohasses
					
Ego and shadow opposite		*			*
Persona		*		*	
Anima and Animus		*		*	

### Conclusion

According to what was said about myth's identity function from Jung's idea the questions raised in the research can thus be answered through the study that was carried out on five selected contemporary Iranian artists based on this approach. Each of the contemporary artists studied in terms of individual and social experiences in their particular way has addressed identification by creating artworks. Therefore, the factors affecting the formation of myth's identity function are different in the artwork of each painter. As if in the case of Mohasses, his fear of closed spaces (*claustrophobia*) and the life on the beach in his childhood has been an effective factor in the function of the myth's identity; But in the case of Ghandriz, his acquaintance with the Saghakhane Painting School along with his work at the factory, are reflected in the display of traditional and spiritual myths and symbols in contrast with modern myths and earthly symbols. In Iran *Darroudi's* tableau, her limitless love for Iran (her homeland) is linked to her special attention to the myths of femininity resulting in the artist's identification. Also, for Aydin Aghdashloo, his other important work, which is the restoration of historical works, is a very effective factor in this identification. Finally, in the Gizella Varga Sinai's work her immigration to Iran and her acquaintance with Iranian myths provided a

way for the artist to liberation, so that she has been able to cover the gaps of thought and psyche. Hence, the identity functions of the myth in her work are understandable.

Another important point is that each artist has devised a unique way for individuation through the creation of artwork. As in the work by Bahman Mohasses, the elements of the sea and the Minotaur, with their mythological aspects, have caused sometimes opposite and inconsistent implications which are the result of the artist's attempt to cover up his questions and fears. The artist's attempt to find ego in opposition with the shadow archetype can be found in this tableau. In the work by Mansour Ghandriz, symbols such as snake and apple on top of the image are in opposition with symbols such as special geometric shapes in the bottom of the image that indicate earthy and earthly. The primacy of the spiritual aspect of human in the creation of mankind is reminiscent of the dominant material aspect of human in modern times. Thus, Ghandriz manifests the identity function of the myth during his reverence for the spiritual, holy and paradise fountain of human in his works. In Iran, *Darroudi's* tableau, symbols such as Persepolis, Fire, and Whiteness, creating mythical aspects, are accompanied with signs such as pearls and swans that imply meanings such as femininity and *generativity*. Thus, Iran *Darroudi* through his feminine gender and Iranian nationality tries for identification and individuality in her tableau. Aydin Aghdashloo also emphasized the loss of a valuable collectivist identity that formerly existed in the past that reminded of the need to retrieve it, by displaying valuable pieces of the past which are broken. Finally, in the work by Gizella Varga Sinai, Greek mythical characters such as Ariadne, Theseus and Minotaur are transformed into Iranian elements in Persepolis reliefs. Thus, the artist finds ways to save her life from the psychological point of view in finding her lost identity in Iranian myths, thus she will grant Iranian form to Western myths. In all of these cases, the identification of artists is based on Jung's ideas such as individuality, archetype such as Anima, Animus and Shadow, the collective unconscious and its connection with the unconscious and self-conscious through myth. Thus, myth's identity function based on Jung's ideas has been manifested in various ways in the works of contemporary Iranian artists. Contemporary Iranian artists in their paintings consider the unconscious as a treasure hidden deep in human whose self-conscious is searching for. A worthwhile gift of this charming and risky trip for them has been their endeavor to harmonize with the world. This harmony seems to have been created not for artists such as Mohasses, Ghandriz and Aghdashloo, but for Gizella Varga Sinai and Iran *Darroudi*. But in the end, it seems that not the apparent result of the effort but the process of attempt has been important for individuation, resulting in the creation of lasting works in contemporary Iranian painting.

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