

## SYNOPSIS

The void of formal criticism on Jostein Gaarder's work is only slightly palliated by a few websites of ardent admirers, which give sketchy albeit interesting insights into his work. The mix of fantasy, the marvelous as well as the whimsical, and his stunning imagination are all apparent in even the most superficial readings. However, this is an incomplete analysis at best and a rather limiting view of the possible interpretations of his work. This thesis places Gaarder's writing in a new dimension by tracing the strong overtones of Sufi tenets and literary techniques that inform his texts, introducing a novel aspect to the appraisal of his books. Almost all of Gaarder's work reflects Sufi tendencies; this thesis looks closely at Sophie's World, Maya and The Solitaire Mystery and attempts to place Gaarder's work in the Sufi tradition. These three novels have similar themes, share the structural blueprint of the regressive Chinese-box nesting and have trans-textual links to each other, which are explored in the thesis.

Alchemy is a relatively unknown synonym for Sufism and Carl Gustav Jung makes an excellent case for the collective unconscious in his psychoanalytical researches taking alchemical rudiments. This thesis embraces Jungian psychology to explain alchemical symbols and interprets them with reference to the three novels. This thesis also suggests possible links between Sufism, Surrealism and Magic Realism and uses this connection to construe parts of the texts.

Gaarder's work is beset by ontological questions of being and existence, placing his philosophical education at the centre of his imagination and creativity. The time

honoured themes of life and death, love, Man and God are the leitmotifs of his work but they are infused with Sufi meaning. The pedagogical in his stories is garnished somewhat heavily with his fantastical imagination and his bagatelles, rendering his work exactly into the mould of the Sufi fairytale where the nugget of wisdom is always concealed in an apparent love-poem or fairytale.

The first chapter of this dissertation expounds the known beginnings of Sufism and alchemy, their influence on the West and their basic doctrine. The second chapter highlights the hitherto largely ignored connections of Surrealism to Sufism and Magical Realism. The third chapter discusses the mysteries of the soul, body and spirit symbols. It also contends with numerology, colour, cards and their significance in the novels. The fourth chapter lays bare the influence of all three generic techniques on Maya and Sophie's World. The fifth chapter establishes how effectively Gaarder uses Sufi and alchemical Archetypes and the conclusions drawn are put forward in the sixth and final chapter.