

The Restoration of Archetypal Memory in Yusif Samedoglu's The Day of Murder: A Psychoanalytic and Symbolic Interpretation

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Abstract:

Yusif Samedoglu's "The Day of Murder" is a significant literary work that unites the deep layers of individual psychology with the symbolic manifestations of collective memory. The central conceptual axis of the novel is the restoration of archetypal memory. The narrative presents the revival of national identity and the collective unconscious against the backdrop of the protagonist's individual memory loss. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the dreams, symbols, and behaviors of the characters are analyzed through Freud's theories of repression and the unconscious. According to Jung's archetype theory, symbols and motifs such as the grey wolf, the tree, the light, the wind, and the dream function as representations of the collective unconscious and national memory. The novel's multilayered temporal structure (the Qajar period, the Soviet era, and modernity) reflects the fragmented nature of memory. As the protagonist recalls his past, he attains moral wholeness, a process that unites the restoration of individual identity with the revival of collective memory.

Objective: To examine the psychoanalytic and symbolic aspects of the restoration of archetypal memory in "The Day of Murder."

Method: Psychoanalytic interpretation, text analysis based on archetype theory, and symbolic analysis.

Conclusion: The study reveals that Yusif Samedoglu artistically expresses both the restoration of individual and national identity through the recovery of archetypal memory.

Keywords:

archetypal memory, psychoanalytic analysis, collective unconscious, Yusif Samedoglu, The Day of Murder

Introduction

In contemporary Azerbaijani literature, the novel genre is not limited to the presentation of events and themes; it also provides broad opportunities to explore various layers of human psychology, internal conflicts, and motivations. From this perspective, psychoanalytic analysis is regarded as

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“a crucial method for examining the subconscious motives, repressed desires, fears, and inner conflicts of the characters” (Freud, S., 1923, p. 19).

Yusif Samedoglu’s novel “The Day of Murder” offers rich material in this regard. The novel’s characters are shaped not only by social and historical contexts but also under the influence of individual psychological processes. Their inner dialogues, fears, desires, and dream motifs define their psychological portraits, as well as their patterns of decision-making and behavior.

The characters of the novel embody various contradictions. On one hand, they possess personal desires and needs; on the other hand, the social, moral, and historical norms of society restrict the expression of these desires. As a result of this confrontation, certain needs and impulses become suppressed and relegated to the subconscious. These repressed motives later manifest themselves in different forms within the characters’ behavior and decision-making processes. For instance, a character may react impulsively in certain situations, revealing their internal tension through various behavioral expressions. According to Freud’s theory, this is “a manifestation of the conflict between the id and the superego” (Freud, S., 1923, p. 47).

Psychoanalytically, the influence of repressed motives is reflected not only in individual behavior but also in emotional states, dreams, and fantasy scenes. The protagonist’s dreams, fragmented memories, and internal monologues reveal the hidden messages of their subconscious desires. Consequently, the inner psychological world of the character is depicted in a fuller and more complex manner. Furthermore, the repressed desires and inner conflicts are presented as expressions of the character’s social relationships. The interactions with various objects, relational tensions, emotional reactions, and conflicts are portrayed as the outcomes of these repressed motives. Such an approach does not merely describe the character’s behavior but also interprets its underlying psychological basis.

The novel’s symbolic scenes, dreams, and fantasies of the characters serve not only as artistic elements but also as means of expressing their psychological states. Based on Carl Jung’s theory of archetypes, these symbols and images can also be analyzed as “reflections of the collective unconscious” (Jung, C., 1968, p. 152). The symbolic scenes, visions, and fantasies in the novel appear not only as physical representations but also as expressions of the characters’ inner psychological conditions, subconscious fears, and desires. According to Freud’s theory, such scenes represent “the subconscious manifestation of repressed instinctive needs, suppressed desires, and fears.”

Based on Carl Jung’s theory of archetypes, these symbols and images can also be analyzed as “reflections of the collective unconscious” (Jung, C., 1968, p. 152). For example, the recurring images that the protagonist encounters in dreams and fantasy scenes—such as the murderer, the fleeing figure, or frightening places—do not merely reflect the state of individual psychology but also represent the symbolic expression of universal human experience and the collective unconscious. These archetypes illustrate the protagonist’s inner conflicts, fears, and needs.

According to psychoanalytic interpretation, the symbolic objects and events appearing in the protagonist's dreams and fantasies subconsciously reveal repressed desires and fears. For instance, the protagonist's repeated confrontation with similar problems demonstrates the persistence of internal contradictions. These elements are also crucial for examining the influence of social and historical pressures on the individual.

Psychoanalytic analysis conducted through symbols and metaphors demonstrates that the processes occurring within the protagonist's inner world are not confined to individual psychology but are closely connected with society and the collective unconscious. Dreams and fantasy scenes thus carry the codes of both individual and socio-civilizational contexts.

In various parts of the novel, historical and social influences are brought into focus through symbolic scenes and metaphors. The situations the protagonist faces, social events, and relationships with family and friends intervene in his psychological state, creating subconscious conflicts. These psychological struggles become not only determinants of individual behavior but also key factors shaping the protagonist's social relationships and decisions.

Therefore, psychoanalytic interpretation allows for a deeper understanding of the subconscious world of the characters in "The Day of Murder", their symbolic behaviors, and their interactions with socio-cultural influences. This analysis integrates both literary and psychological perspectives, enhancing the humanistic and social dimensions of the novel.

Analysis

The term archetypal memory was primarily developed within the framework of Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology. According to Jung, archetypes are primordial images residing in the collective unconscious of humanity, existing independently of individual experience and shared by all people. These archetypes manifest in various forms—myths, symbols, dreams, and symbolic behaviors. In literature, archetypes are expressed through cultural codes, subconscious experiences, and historical traumas.

In modern Azerbaijani novel writing, Yusif Samedoglu's "The Day of Murder" draws particular attention as an artistic embodiment of the problems of memory and national identity. The novel portrays not only a process of individual psychological transformation but also a creative reconstruction of the structure of universal and cultural collective memory. The protagonist's internal transformation in "The Day of Murder" is presented as both a personal and a cultural-historical awakening of memory.

The sequence of events and symbolic structures in the novel—such as the motifs of murder, concepts of guilt and atonement, and the conflict between violence and sanctity—are all constructed upon archetypal foundations. Through these motifs, the layers of the collective unconscious are gradually revealed. The protagonist's psychological tension and moral conflicts are symbolized through the cultural and historical codes embedded within his subconscious—that

is, through archetypal memory. He is compelled to recall the traces of the past, the recurring patterns of history, and the unchanging schemas inherent in human nature.

In the novel, the frequently recurring archetypes of the “victim” and the “murderer” parallel Jung’s concept of the “shadow.” The figure of the murderer functions as a symbol of the dark side of human consciousness. Confronting, recognizing, and accepting this figure represents an archetypal stage the protagonist must pass through in order to achieve self-realization. Furthermore, motifs such as “the return of the past,” “the cleansing of guilt,” and “the profanation of the sacred” are encoded in the text as structural elements of the process of restoring archetypal memory. The language and symbolic structure of the novel are deliberately coded to convey these archetypes to the reader.

Yusif Samedoglu’s “The Day of Murder” is one of the most complex literary works in Azerbaijani literature, distinguished by its postmodern and symbolic structure. The problem of memory—particularly the restoration of archetypal memory—forms one of the central conceptual lines of the novel. Archetypal memory refers to a system of remembrance that exists in the deepest layers of individual and collective consciousness, shaped by mythological and historical experiences. The recovery of this memory holds great significance in the search for both personal and collective identity. Carl Gustav Jung characterized the archetype as “the primordial images of the collective unconscious” (Jung, 1968, p. 57). This concept in literature is associated with the restoration of symbolic, mythological, and historical memory. In “The Day of Murder,” the author symbolically portrays the loss of individual memory, the fragmentation of collective memory, and the process of their restoration.

The novel’s plot unites three temporal layers: the Qajar period, the era of Soviet totalitarianism, and the modern age. This parallel structure illustrates the “intertemporal fragmentation” of memory. By placing memory at the center of the artistic construction, the author demonstrates how human identity is deeply connected to historical and spiritual roots. The protagonist of the novel—known as “the Patient”—has lost his memory but carries within him a strange “echo of the past.” He represents a symbol of a person who has forgotten the past yet remains conscious of his own forgetfulness. The author expresses this state through the statement: “A man who loses his memory also forgets his own death” (Samedoglu, 1987, p. 64). This sentence reflects the writer’s perception of the identity between the loss of archetypal memory and spiritual death. A person who forgets the past is, in essence, like a tree torn from its roots.

In this sense, the absence of memory in the novel is not merely an individual issue but also signifies the disintegration of national identity, preserving the tragic essence of the narrative. As researcher Gunel Ahmadova notes, “Yusif Samedoglu connects the loss of individual memory with the collective memory of the nation, and the motif of ‘illness’ becomes a symbol of this state of oblivion” (Ahmadova, 2018, p. 42). Thus, the novel depicts a stage of spiritual confusion and transformation at the beginning of the journey toward the restoration of lost memory. The recovery of memory in “The Day of Murder” is realized through symbolic and mythological means. The

structure of the work is filled with mythological archetypes—symbols such as the wolf, the tree, the light, the wind, and the dream.

In the novel, the image of the gray wolf (bozqurd) occupies a special place. In Turkic mythology, the gray wolf symbolizes national memory, spiritual strength, and origins. Samedoglu interprets this archetype in a personal and distinctive way: “The wolf that once showed the way has now lost its path” (Samedoglu, 1987, p. 119). Here, the author symbolizes the weakening of collective memory and the loss of cultural roots. As literary scholar G. Ahmadova writes: “The transformation of the gray wolf into a ‘shabby beast’ symbolizes the nation’s estrangement from its archetypal memory” (Ahmadova, 2018, p. 53).

The tree image functions in the novel as the central metaphor for the restoration of memory. The text reads: “The roots beneath the earth wanted to rise upward, but the soil held them down” (Samedoglu, 1987, p. 201). This sentence illustrates that both individual and collective memory have been “buried beneath the ground.” According to Jung’s theoretical view, the tree archetype is “a symbol of spiritual growth and a return to one’s roots” (Jung, 1968, p. 82). In “The Day of Murder,” this archetype symbolizes a return to the forgotten memory of one’s people.

The motif of light in the novel symbolizes the awakening of memory, while darkness represents forgetfulness: “The light that filled Zulfugar’s eyes brought him back to the past” (Samedoglu, 1987, p. 173). The “light” here, in a mystical and spiritual sense, signifies the light of truth and remembrance. Ahmadova interprets this motif as “an act of spiritual enlightenment” (Ahmadova, 2018, p. 61).

In the novel, the wind is presented as a carrier of collective memory. The cultural reverence for the wind in national and ethnic consciousness is expressed in Samedoglu’s artistic vision through the following line: “Wherever Baba Kahan’s wind passed, a voice remained there” (Samedoglu, 1987, p. 205). The wind, carrying mythological codes, symbolizes “the invisible yet existing breath of memory.” In the narrative, the wind serves both as a warning and as a call.

The dream scenes in the novel are portrayed as mechanisms for unlocking archetypal memory. The Patient’s dreams, fragments of the past, and symbolic events contribute to the subconscious restoration of memory. The text notes: “What he saw in his dreams felt so familiar, as if he had lived there for years” (Samedoglu, 1987, p. 137). This line offers a poetic explanation of the emergence of archetypal memory into consciousness. Researcher Tahira Mammad writes: “In the structure of the novel, the dream functions both as a poetic device that complements real events and as a means of awakening the layers of archetypal memory” (Mammad, 2016, p. 112).

The restoration of memory in the novel “Day of Murder” progresses parallel to the non-chronological flow of time. The author intertwines the past, present, and future. This parallelism reflects the multilayered structure of memory: “The past is within the present, and the voice of the present echoes in the ear of the future” (Samedoglu, 1987: 188). Here, the merging of temporal

layers symbolizes that memory does not belong solely to the past but also serves as a constructive force for the future.

Toward the end of the novel, the restoration of memory results in the rediscovery of both individual and national identity. As the patient recalls symbols related to his past, ancestors, and people, he also regains his sense of self: “I remembered who I was – a man of this soil, this tree, this voice” (Semedoglu, 1987: 219). This confession signifies the completion of the restoration of archetypal memory. In Jung’s words, “Man becomes whole when he reconciles with his shadow” (Jung, 1968: 94). Thus, the novel’s conclusion can be interpreted as an “act of wholeness.” According to G. Ahmadova, “In ‘Day of Murder,’ the restoration of memory is presented both as the spiritual healing of the individual and as the revival of the nation’s identity” (Ahmadova, 2018: 83).

Conclusion

Psychoanalytic analysis revealed that symbolic and mythological elements in the novel—represented by archetypal figures such as Baba Kaha, Zülfüqar Kişi, and Doctor Mahmud, along with dreams and fantasy scenes—embody the protagonists’ inner conflicts and repressed states while also expressing their desires. These symbols are not only physical elements but also manifestations of the subconscious and collective unconscious encoded in the text. For example, the episode of Baba Kaha unites both the archetypes of fear and insight, portraying the psychological portrait of the protagonist. Zülfüqar Kişi and Doctor Mahmud symbolize the influence of social, civil, and historical norms, as well as suppressed instinctive motives and internal tension.

The analysis demonstrated that dream and fantasy scenes should be viewed not merely as physical occurrences but as clear expressions of internal psychological processes. The influence of the socio-historical context on the characters’ psyche also occupies an important place in the novel. Historical events, social norms, and interpersonal relations intensify the characters’ repressed unconscious conflicts and formalize their behavior. From this perspective, psychoanalytic analysis aims to explore not only individual psychology but also social and historical influences together.

In “Day of Murder,” the problem of restoring archetypal memory becomes one of the main ideological and structural foundations of the artistic text. The protagonist’s inner transformation represents a kind of re-actualization—rediscovery and reinterpretation—of collective human experience. In this sense, the novel serves as an exemplary literary work that demonstrates both the formation of individual identity and the enduring power of collective memory.

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