
The Power of Myth: Unpacking Trauma in Orhan Pamuk's *The Red-Haired Woman*

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Abstract : Greek and Persian mythology have complete authority over the characters in the novel *The Red Haired Woman* (TRHW), which has a unique plot structure. Cem, the main character in the novel and his spouse are acutely aware of the myth's repetition in their own lives. The primary cause of the alterations in their mental state is their belief in myth. Orhan Pamuk eloquently describes the traumatic state of some of his characters in *The Red Haired Woman* (TRHW). Each person experiences pain and fear as a natural part of existence. Suffering is a persistent pain that can be recognized by a person's unspoken past life. One's previous life is the source of their current pain. As a businessman, Cem leads a nice existence, but as an adult, he has no one to help or mentor him. Trauma is a type of altered mental state. The protagonists' unhappy experiences from a previous existence serve as the foundation for their altered mental states. The underlying cause of the current trauma is the anguish from the past. Trauma is an emotional reaction to a life experience that was unanticipated. The three factors—fatherlessness, unintentional murder, and childlessness—are the main sources of misery, and they subsequently exacerbate the agony that results in traumatic neurosis. Reenacting an event while thinking about it repeatedly is known as traumatic neurosis. The current study examines specific psychological states as well as the protagonist's reactions to a number of traumatic events. Pamuk masterfully demonstrates how myth can become a cause for trauma, shaping the human experience and influencing our perceptions of fate and destiny. This paper examines the novel *The Red Haired Woman* from a psychological standpoint.

Keywords: Trauma, Collective Unconscious, Myth, Memory Distortion, Traumatic Neurosis, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Introduction

The Red Haired Woman (TRHW), written by Orhan Pamuk and translated into English by Ekin Oklap, offers a fresh perspective on the well-known myth stories of Europe and Persia. Mythological stories significantly influence Cem, the protagonist of Orhan Pamuk's book *The Red-Haired Woman*, and eventually his suffering. Pamuk skilfully examines the intricacies of fate, human nature, and the inevitable nature of trauma by fusing contemporary storytelling with ancient tales. Greek and Persian mythology have complete authority over the

characters in the novel *The Red Haired Woman* (TRHW), which has a unique plot structure. Cem, the main character in the novel and his spouse are acutely aware of the myth's repetition in their own lives. The primary cause of the alterations in their mental state is their belief in myth. Orhan Pamuk eloquently describes the traumatic state of some of his characters in *The Red Haired Woman* (TRHW). Each person experiences pain and fear as a natural part of existence. Suffering is a persistent pain that can be recognized by a person's unspoken past life. One's previous life is the source of their current pain. As a businessman, Cem leads a nice existence, but as an adult, he has no one to help or mentor him. The three factors—fatherlessness, unintentional murder, and childlessness—are the main sources of misery, and they subsequently exacerbate the agony that results in traumatic neurosis. Re-enacting an event while thinking about it repeatedly is known as traumatic neurosis.

The Collective Unconscious: A Jungian Perspective

Myths are typically passed down orally from one generation to the next. These myths from the past are ingrained in people's unconscious collective memory, which prompts them to make the same snap decisions in situations that are similar to those from the past. The protagonist of the book frequently reads and considers myth stories, which helps him identify with them. By comparing and reiterating the myths, readers can examine how the novel has developed as a new narrative. Cem has a strong obsession with myths, particularly those involving Oedipus, Shorab, and Rustum. The suffering caused by a father unintentionally killing his son in Shorab and Rustum and a son killing his father in Oedipus are the events that have an impact on Cem. Before turning in for the night, Cem reads these myths every day. He identifies with the suffering son who murders his father and connects himself to the mythological figures. His adult accident had a severe impact on his mental health. He suppresses the guilty for himself and never tells anyone about the previous incident. Reading myth stories makes him feel guilty of murder, and as a result, he frequently recalls the accident.

According to a Jungian perspective, Cem's choices and actions were impacted by the collective unconscious, a shared repository of human archetypes. Beyond merely being literary devices, the tales of Oedipus Rex and Rostam and Sohrab predict Cem's fatal course by appealing to universal human emotions and experiences. Pamuk emphasizes the age-old conflict between tradition and modernity by using father-son connections to reflect the east-west divide, which exacerbates Cem's internal conflict.

Absent Fathers, Lasting Trauma:

Cem's complicated relationship with his father and the absence of a stable paternal figure contribute to his emotional turmoil. Without a strong paternal influence, Cem struggles to define himself and find his place in the world. Cem's difficulties in forming healthy relationships, particularly with women, may stem from his insecure attachment style, shaped by his fatherlessness. Psychologist says that the self-concept begins to deteriorate when a father leaves his child suddenly and the child feels insecure. It affects the child physically and mentally. The child will try to hide its fear, anxieties and resentments. The structure of Cem's brain is filled up with confusion and nobody is there to give him care. He feels miserable and stressed. Cem hates his unproductive father and even wishes to forget him. As an adult without a father, Cem experiences a really difficult circumstance. He yearns for parental guidance. He is lonely. Mental discomfort results from this loneliness. Psychological studies demonstrate that loneliness has detrimental effects on the mind. Emotions that surface during loneliness include fear, worry, melancholy, emptiness, lack of confidence, and helplessness.

Cem's feelings of guilt and shame, particularly regarding his father's death and his relationships, exacerbate his trauma. This recurring way of thinking about the past suffering is known as Traumatic Neurosis. Traumatic Neurosis results from this recurrent thought about the previous event. The novel's exploration of fate and destiny adds to Cem's anxiety, as he grapples with the consequences of his actions. Cem's trauma and inner conflicts threaten to disintegrate his sense of self, leading to feelings of fragmentation and disorientation.

Traumatic Memory Distortion

Cem's memories of traumatic events, such as murder of his father figure and his relationships, are fragmented and unclear, reflecting the distorting effects of trauma on memory. Traumatic memories are often emotionally intense, and Cem's recollections are marked by strong feelings of guilt, shame, and anxiety. Cem's recollection is impacted by his father's image. Although he wants to forget his father, his Master's actions cause him to relive his father's presence. His Master's visage intensifies the recollection of his father, who is missing. It is called as Traumatic memory distortion. Memory amplification is the term used to describe how the sorrow of fatherlessness intensifies when a person remembers his father.

Trauma can distort one's perception of reality, and Cem's experiences are filtered through his own subjective lens, influencing his understanding of events. Cem's traumatic experiences and distorted memories contribute to his identity crisis, as he struggles to reconcile his past and present selves. Cem's distorted memories and emotions affect his relationships, particularly with women, leading to complicated and often fraught interactions. The novel's exploration of fate and destiny adds to Cem's sense of inevitability, further distorting his perception of his experiences. Through Cem's character, Pamuk masterfully portrays the complexities of traumatic memory distortion, highlighting the lasting impact of traumatic experiences on one's psyche and relationships.

Traumatic Effects of Infertility:

Cem's inability to have a child with his partner contributes to his emotional distress and sense of inadequacy. The issue of infertility puts a strain on Cem's relationships, particularly with his partner and his son, Enver, whom he later acknowledges. In many cultures, parenthood is seen as a key aspect of identity and purpose. Cem's struggles with infertility may contribute to his identity crisis and sense of disconnection. Cem's feelings of guilt and shame related to his past actions and relationships may be exacerbated by his infertility. The uncertainty surrounding his ability to have a child may contribute to Cem's anxiety and sense of unease about his future.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

The act of unintentional leaving of the bucket in the well causes moral injury in Cem's psyche. In psychology, this mental pain is referred as moral injury. When he imagines that he kills his beloved father, the suffering becomes trauma. The grief of loss is exacerbated by the guilt of killing his own loving father figure, and for a few months, a fearful flame grows inside him. Cem becomes culpable as a result of the accident. Cem considers the possibility that the accident was caused by his negligence at work. Cem worries about the Mahmut's bad mental state and believes he is the only one to blame for his demise. According to psychologists, PTSD may develop as a result of this type of mental suffering. Since there is no solution to the issue, the anguish is intolerable. And also Cem's father abandons him, leading to feelings of insecurity and abandonment. Cem's relationships with the red-haired woman, Gülcihan, and his son, Enver, are marked by tension, guilt, and unresolved emotions. Though PTSD does not explicitly proved clinically with the character, but the problems impact Cem's relationships and mould his mentality, reiterating certain PTSD symptoms: Intrusive Memories, Avoidance and Hypervigilance. Cem's memories of traumatic events linger, affecting his thoughts and emotions. Cem's past experiences lead to avoidance behaviours, such as fleeing from situations that remind him of the trauma. Cem's state of heightened alertness is reflected in his obsessive thoughts about the red-haired woman and his son.

Pathogenic Reminiscence

Pathogenic Reminiscence refers to the painful, distressing memories that haunt the protagonist, Cem. These memories are rooted in his traumatic experiences and relationships, particularly with his father, Mahmut, and the red-haired woman, Gülcihan. Cem's pathogenic reminiscences contribute to his identity crisis, as he struggles to reconcile his past and present selves. Cem's distressing memories affect his relationships, particularly with women, leading to complicated and often fraught interactions. Cem's traumatic condition causes him to think

about the accident in a different dimension, and he is unable to process the fact that he killed his Master. He has terrible dreams and his inner voice speaks to him because of the accident, and whenever he reads or thinks about the myth, he remembers the unintentional crime. In these situations, Cem can realize the trauma, and even if he passes the scene of the accident, his stress level rises. The pain becomes unbearable when Cem keeps thinking about the incident, and it stops in his mind forever.

Trauma and the Inevitability of Fate

Traumatic incidents abound in Cem's trip, from his apprenticeship with Mahmut to his meetings with the mysterious red-haired woman, Gülcihan. The mythological stories that haunt him are uncannily similar to these encounters. The ancient strata of the human mind are symbolized by the well, a symbol of the womb, taking on a symbolic meaning. The lines between fiction and reality become more obscure as Cem negotiates his relationships and faces his fate, culminating in a tragic ending.

Conclusion

Thus Pamuk skilfully illustrates in *The Red-Haired Woman* how myth can contribute to pain, reshaping the human experience and affecting how one can view fate and destiny. The book provides a deep and peculiar meditation on the ability of myth to influence our lives by examining the intricacies of human nature. Through Cem's experiences, Pamuk explores the complex emotional and psychological impact of infertility, highlighting its potential to shape one's relationships, identity, and sense of purpose. In "The Red-Haired Woman," Pamuk masterfully explores the psychological trauma associated with fatherlessness, revealing the complexities of human emotions and relationships. Through Cem's story, the novel highlights the lasting impact of early experiences on one's life and the struggles of navigating identity, relationships, and fate.

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