

The Return to the Womb or the Gaia of Meaning: Mother Tongue*

Vegerîna Malzarokê yan jî “Gaia”ya Ramanê: Zimanê Zikmakî

Ayhan Tek**

ABSTRACT:

The mother tongue has a very strong relationship with mind, psychology and “mother archetype”. It is assumed that the individuals who have a strong relationship with their mother tongue in their personal and social lives have a strong psychological disposition. Especially in the context of Jung’s mother archetype theory, it is observed that people who face fear and similar traumatic situations take shelter in the archetype. In this study, we will focus on six different cases related to mother tongue in the context of Jung’s theory. As will be manifested in the six cases, the mother tongue has great impact on human psychology. The results point to mythological archetypes. It is observed that there is a desire to return to the mother’s womb as a symptom in people who have detached from their mother tongue. Concordantly, this study focuses on the trauma behind it and the returning process of those individuals who have severed their ties with their mother tongue.

Key Words: mother tongue, mother archetype, Jung, womb.

PUXTE:

Zimanê dayîkê tîkiliyeke xurt di gel hiş, derunî, refleksên şexsî û “arketîpa dayîkê” heye. Kesên ku di jiyana xwe ya şexsî û civakî de tîkiliya xwe û zimanê dayîka xwe baş saz kirine, ji aliyê derûniyê ve jî bingehê saxlem dişên ava bikin. Bi taybet jî li dor çarçoveya nêrîna Jung û teoriya wî ya li ser arketîpa dayîkê, kesên ku dikevîne

* The previous shorter version of this article was published in *Nûbihar* (a Kurdish literature magazine) in Kurdish (Geverî 2014). The current manuscript is revised and extended by a sixth case of Lady Behiye.

** **Dr., Muş Alparslan University, Department of Kurdish Language and Literature.** / Dr., Zanîngeha Muş Alparslanê beşa Ziman û Edebiyata Kurdî.
e-mail: ayhangeveri@gmail.com.

rewşên wekî travma û tirsê, xwe dispêrine arketîpa dayîkê. Di vê xebatê de em jî dê li gor wê teoriya Jungî, li ser şeş waqeyên cuda rawestî ku ew waqî têkildarê rabiteya di gel zimanê dayîkê ne. Herwekî ku ji wan waqeyên me numûne dane de jî diyar dibit ku cihê zimanê dayîkê di derûniya insanî de gelek xurt e ku ew têkilî jî mîtolojiyê heta arkhe û arketîpên girîng diçit. Loma piştî travmayan xwestina vegeşîna bo malzarokê çawa semptomê bit, piştî qutbûna têkiliya ligel zimanê jî daxwaza vegeşîna bi zimanê dayîkê çêdibit. Ji ber wê jî di vê gotarê de em li ser waqeyên mirovên ku têkiliya wan û zimanê dayîka wan qut bûne sekinîn. Herwisa kesên ku zimanê xwe yê eslî jibîr kirine û paşî piştî travmayekê ew ji nû ve vejandine, di vê gotarê de bûne mijara sereke.

Bêjeyên Sereke: Zimanê dayîkê, derûnasî, arketîpa dayîkê, Jung, malzarok.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Swiss psychologist and the founder of Analytical Psychology, Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), in his work *Four Archetypes* mainly concentrates on the “mother archetype”, and displays several archetypes for many other complexes as a basis. According to Jung, the mother archetype is not a psychological/psychoanalytic complex in itself. Rather, it is a complex that can be a source of psychological trauma because this archetype is based on strong mythological roots. According to Jung, like all the other archetypes, the mother archetype has different realizations. It might appear as a mother, grandmother, mother-in-law, Virgin Mary, Demeter, and Sophia. “The goal of the desire of salvation” transforms into places like paradise, city, homeland and heaven,” birthplace and shade “field, garden, rock, cave, tree, a deep well and uterus (Jung, 2004: 14-15).”

Jung states that the mother archetype does not always have to be the real/biological mother, but rather it can be understood as the manifestations related to the mythological and archetypal origin:

My own view differs from that of other medico-psychological theories principally in that I attribute to the personal mother only a limited aetiological significance. That is to say, all those influences which the literature describes as being exerted on the children do not come from the mother herself, but rather from the archetype projected upon her, which gives her a mythological background and invests her with authority and numinosity. (Jung, 2004: 16)

Some of the manifestations of the archetype point to “rebirth” and “resuscitation”, which is related to the “uterus.” In this relationship, the thing that comes up is the bond between the child and the womb of the mother, as it is argued by the prominent psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Freud’s theory on this matter is named the “Oedipus Complex.” This concept has been found in Greek

mythology since time immemorial. It is visible in the relationship between Khaos and Gaia (earth, land, place, mother¹).



The picture of Oedipus' story.

According to the myth, King Oedipus gets into a competition with his father and doesn't want his mother to get close to him. For this reason, Oedipus believes his father is a problematic case and in the end, he kills his father. Therefore, Freud named the psychological condition after him.

There is no doubt that the theory behind this archetype is based on the love of the son toward his mother and the competition with (castration of) his father. This theory has been considered by many theorists such as Lacan. Lacan's theory with respect to this matter is called "Le désir de la mère." The competition occurs between Uranus and his son Kronos and afterwards between Kronos and his son Zeus. That's why Kronos puts his sons into the Gaia/ womb when he realizes he doesn't like them. Kronos takes his mother's scythe and cuts off his father's testicles just to take his father's throne and his power. That's why, "every" son fears his father and thinks that his authority will take away his manhood. But Kronos was also afraid of his throne being taken away by his sons one day, as he did to

1 It would be better to translate the word "gaia" into Kurdish as "cia". This, in turn, not only establishes the connection between "mother" and "place/world/universe" but it also clarifies the sound change from "d" to "c" in the word "dayik" (mother) and in some other place words. For instance, in some eastern provinces of Turkey (i.e. Mardin and Van), people say "cia" instead of saying "dayik" for mother; e.g., "cia min" (my mother), "cia te" (your mother), or "Ciyarbekir" instead of "Diyarbekir". Pronouncing "d" as "c" cannot be considered as a simple coincidence, because the mother of the child ("cia") is also his/her homeland ("cî[h]").

his father before him. Eventually it happens, and Zeus defeats his father with the help of the other gods. This mythological competition including the story of Oedipus forms a strong basis for understanding this archetype.

The competition between father and son is not only a mythological subject. It can still be seen in modern theories and appears as a symptom of many psychological illnesses. Therefore, just like the father, there is also a desire of the son for his mother (*Le désir de la mère*), and the mother is the primary object for the son's desire. At the beginning he does not realize the difference between himself and his mother. He believes his mother and himself are one. That's why the son thinks that the mother is the source of his desire, and the father is the owner of authority, penis, power and strength, and he owns the mother. According to his thoughts, this competition between him and his father arouses some fears and makes him think that he should protect himself from his father's authority. This fear of his father's authority brings up some other elements, such as castrating his father or returning to his mother's womb- or his mother's place.²

This article focuses mainly on the relationship between mother and womb, and how this relationship appeared and is structured. In order to understand this thoroughly, we have to look at some psychic examples of the "mother archetype" and "returning to mother's womb." In the next section, six cases are given to exemplify this issue.

II. CASES

Case 1: Saddam Hussein (1937-2006): Saddam Hussein, the fifth president of Iraq, is a well-known figure to the Kurdish people. During his era, he was known as a fearless, powerful, clever and authoritarian leader. But after the invasion of Iraq by the USA and breaking down of his country and his removal from power, he ran away from the US armed forces for 8 months. Finally, on December 13, 2003 he was captured in a pit near the village of Al-Dawra, close to Tikrit. How did the US armed forces know that he was hiding underground in the village? After arresting the closest man to Saddam, Muhammad Ibrahim Omar Al-Muslit (known as Fat Man), he confessed where Saddam was hiding. The place where Saddam was found was also his hometown. In other words, Saddam was captured in the same place he was born.³ What kind of a clue can this provide us in understanding the value of "mother's place"? To start with, Saddam was hiding

2 "Odyssea ve Odysseus'un Psikanalitik Serüveni": <http://www.anatoliantcraft.org/content/view/1519/31/>

3 "Operation Red Dawn": http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Red_Dawn

around 8 months (maybe 9) in his maternal place: he felt safe in there and trusted that place, which can be associated with the mother archetype and its relationship with gaia/shelter. It means that Saddam, rather than the whole country, trusted his native territory, his homeland, his motherland, meaning that he trusted his mother. Fear, shock, anxiety, etc. are psychological conditions and the solution to them is protection in the safe environment of mother and her womb.⁴ As a result, we can compare the mother archetype with Saddam's capture because the place where Saddam was captured was his safest place, his hometown, his Tikrit.

Case 2: Muammar Qaddafi (1942-2011): Muammar Qaddafi was the president of Libya and called himself "The King of African Kings". Like Saddam, he ran away after the rule of his government was taken away from him. But his death was cruel because he was lynched. What is important to us is that after the resistance started on July 21, 2011, he ran away to Sirte and hid himself there. Sirte was his home as well as his birthplace. According to the information that was given to the *New York Times*⁵ magazine by Mansour Ibrahim Dhao (one of the closest men to Qaddafi), Qaddafi was hiding there with his son Motassim and some of his men (Fahim 2011). One day they were attacked, and in the end his cook and some men were wounded. After that, the decision was made; they will either die there or they will move to another safe place. Qaddafi made the decision to leave there. He found a place; near his birthplace. "*Colonel Qaddafi decided it was time to leave, and planned to flee to one of his houses nearby, where he had been born.*" At first Qaddafi comes to Sirte, his birthplace, and because of the "fear" after they were attacked, he narrowed his surroundings and kept himself closer to his mother place and her womb – i.e., the place he was born.

Whether the need for protection or keeping oneself safe; both Saddam and Qaddafi came to an end in their birthplaces. The similarity of the location is not a coincidence. As it supports the theory of the mother archetype, its value becomes more evident. That is why the adventure of mankind is related to his journey and finding his "arche." Although those leaders were cruel, ultimately they are human beings and at the time of fear and shock they threw themselves into the lap of their mothers, their wombs. According to the mythological point of view, everything that comes from Chaos and Gaia goes back to the womb. Therefore, during escape, the symbols of daily life and those of mythological metaphors are similar

-
- 4 It is very interesting that in Colemerg (Hakkari) province, when kids fight, in order to scare each other they swear that "I will put you back where you came from", or "I will put you back to your mother's vagina", or they say some other bad words related to the mother and her womb.
- 5 "In His Last Days, Qaddafi Wearied of Fugitive's Life": http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/world/africa/in-his-last-days-qaddafi-wearied-of-fugitives-life.html?_r=0

and in harmony. As can be understood from Odysseus and Oedipus, homeland and the womb are shelters. The symbols and metaphors are very similar in Saddam's and Qaddafi's stories. So the mythological stories result in returning home and their "tomb" becomes their "womb."⁶ No place can be as protected, safe and dark as the uterus. As the shelter where Saddam hid himself; dark, protected and "underground"!

Case 3: This picture is a good example because at the end of our research I came to this conclusion: in an orphanage in Iraq, an orphan girl draws her mother's picture with chalk on the ground, and takes her shoes off and assumes the fetal position, she lies on her mother's womb (Tasby 2014).⁷ The most interesting point here is; the girl lies in the fetal position on the picture, probably because of fear or some other psychological symptoms; loneliness, desolation, desperation... trusting her mother, her womb. Because for a child, the most protected and secure place is her mother's womb, and the position which protects her from danger is the fetal position as the girl demonstrates on her mother's image.⁸



The Healthiest Shelter; Mother Tongue

Gaia is place, land, womb, soil and tent but it is not only specified for these particular locations. The examples we have shown are mostly physical symbols, but the relationship between the mother archetype and the womb also relies on something else, and that is the language of the mother-one's mother tongue. The place or location does not only appear in traumas, shock and fear. The boundaries

6 Interestingly, there are many coincidences in language; in English, the pronunciations of "tomb" (grave, the place of dead, cemetery,) and "womb" (root, base, uterus) are similar.

7 see: (Tasby 2014) <http://guardianlv.com/2014/01/orphans-of-war-the-smallest-victims-graphic-video/>

8 Of course, here, being a girl is important, it means, if we observe Lacan and Freud, there might be some discrepancy. However, in this photo, there is only the function of protection and safety of the uterus, not the escape like Oedipus.

of mental and emotional places are determined by one's mother tongue, as Ludwig Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) says: "The boundaries of my mother tongue are the boundaries of my world." Just as the womb, motherland or birth place shelters us and symbolizes protection, so does our mother tongue. When one's life is in danger (as in the case of Saddam and Qaddafi), a physical place is created, and there is a will to hide there to feel secure. This is also the case with respect to mother tongue, such that when someone would like to hide in an emotional and mental world, that world is the world of the mother tongue, meaning "the boundaries of one's world." All in all, there is no difference between the womb and the mother tongue.

Case 4: Giyasettin Emre (1919-2008): Giyasettin Emre was elected as the first independent deputy of Mush (Muş) in 1954. During the preparation process of his book (Emre 2006), we had the opportunity to meet and talk many times. He was an understanding and experienced person. We have heard a lot about his memories and many times we talked about his days in Yassiada. Sheikh Giyasettin comes from an important family, and went to a Kurdish school (Medrese). He was the son of Sheikh Ma'rouf and the grandson of Sheikh Fethullah Werqanisi (d. 1899). He learned a lot from traditional schools, but did not write anything in Kurdish. What matters in his story for the sake of this article is the following: After the military strike on May 27, 1960, he was arrested with Adnan Menderes and taken to the prison at Yassiada. During their captivity, he tried to give hope to President Menderes that he was not going to be hanged. But after Menderes was hanged, Sheikh Giyasettin was afraid for his life, too. He thought he was also going to be hanged, but he wasn't, and after one year he was acquitted. What he had relied on in the psychological atmosphere of the prison was, of course, the womb or the mother tongue. With the fear of hanging in mind, Sheikh Giyasettin wrote a Kurdish book: *Rênasî* ("Pathfinding"). He finished that book in the early 1960s in Yassiada, but after 6-7 years, he re-wrote it with Arabic letters, and in 1999, he gave the book to Zeynelabidin Zinar so that he could print it in Stockholm (Emre 1999). The importance of *Rênasî* is neither its context or that it's written in Kurdish. Sheikh Giyasettin had not written anything in Kurdish until that time in prison. In such a psychologically complex situation, he had searched for his "arche" and relied on his mother's womb, in other words, his mother tongue. Writing something in Kurdish language may not have been a conscious choice for Sheikh that time, but once again, the mother tongue is not only a safe zone, but also a natural and an easy reflex, that choice is a mental and an emotional protection which has strong roots in a man. The child embraces his mother. Therefore, Sheikh Giyasettin, intentionally or unintentionally, has reached for his mother tongue and taken it as his companion in prison. At this point of discussion, we

can say that there is no difference between the case of Sheikh Giyasettin and those of Saddam and Qaddafi. The focus in all three cases is the “fetus” and there is no difference between the birthplace and the mother tongue.

The famous linguist and theoretician, Noam Chomsky, has proposed a theory about the concept of “language”, according to which the acquisition of language (grammar) of a child takes place in his mind while he is in his mother’s womb. That means, “human beings are born with an innate “blueprint” for language, what we referred to earlier as Universal Grammar. Children acquire language as quickly and effortlessly as they do because they do not have to figure out all the grammatical rules, only those that are specific to their particular language” (Fromkin 2011, 19).” As Chomsky says, a child is born with a universal grammar and this deep knowledge is innate. Chomsky’s theory suggests that the concept of language is a biological entity and it passes through the genes. As a child sucks milk from his mother’s breast, he also receives his mother tongue from her. At this point, we are going to talk about another case.

Case 5: Muhammad Hamidullah (1908-2002): A famous scholar and academician who is mostly known by his works on Hadith and Siyar (The biography of Prophet Muhammad), Mohammad Hamidullah worked as a teacher in many famous universities. He translated the Surat al-Fatihah of the Quran into Kurdish for the first time in academic history.⁹ For our work, we are interested in the following case of Muhammad Hamidullah: He was born in Pakistan and his mother tongue was Urdu. Since he worked in an academic environment in Europe, he learned nearly twenty languages, but he mostly used Arabic and English, and therefore he had forgotten his mother tongue. He used twenty languages but he abandoned his own language. But one day, Hamidullah had a heart attack and he was taken to the hospital. When it was noted that his condition was getting worse, he was taken to Florida in the United States. He had another heart attack there, but he survived and when he opened his eyes, he started to talk to the nurse in Urdu unconsciously, and he forgot all the other languages he used to know. All those foreign languages had suddenly been lost in his mind and his mother tongue was resurrected; as we mentioned before, the mother archetype is the place of “relief” and “being reborn.” Hamidullah’s case supports Chomsky’s theory, which is about the biological side of the mother tongue as well as the “mother archetype.” As Antti Jalavayi puts it: “My mother tongue is like my skin,

9 In 1980’s, Hamidullah let his student, Ihsan Sureyya Sirma translate the Surat al-Fatihah, the opening surah of the Quran.

and the foreign languages are like my clothes! I can change my clothes, but I cannot change my skin."¹⁰

Case 6: Behiye Yabasun (1958 -): Lady Behiye (or Behiye Hanım) was born in an aristocratic family in Tatvan, Bitlis.¹¹ Since her father was a well-known man in Tatvan, she grew up with the rules and discipline of her family environment. Her father was a very rich man, who owned lands and animals, thus the grooms and housekeepers worked for him. Lady Behiye ran away with Menaf the son of their servants, and married him. Behiye and Menaf were rejected by her family because they had eloped and married without permission. The family members were also not allowed to meet with them. After Behiye and Menaf eloped, they settled in Van.

Behiye Hanım spoke only Kurdish until she escaped with Menaf. However, after she got married and settled in Van, she gradually forgot her Kurdish and started to use Turkish instead. As a matter of fact, when she became a mother, she communicated in Turkish with her children and none of her children knew any Kurdish.

Years later her husband went to Trabzon and married another woman without her knowledge. Behiye Hanım divorced her husband when she found out about his relationship and marriage. The children also expunged their father from their lives. This was the second trauma Behiye suffered after her escape from home and rejection by her family. In addition to the fact that she had eloped with the son of her family's housekeepers and then he in turn ran off with another woman, the biggest pain in her life was "motherlessness." From the day she escaped, her mother was forbidden to meet with her, and she missed her mother very much. Behiye, who had not seen her mother since the elopement and dreamed about her for years, also left her native language in her father's house, and did not speak Kurdish, having almost forgotten it.

Behiye underwent an operation in 2013, at a hospital in Adana. Menaf had settled in Adana and heard that his ex-wife was hospitalized, so he visited her without their children knowing. This visit was very heavy for Behiye Hanım, who was still in love with her husband. As a matter of fact, Behiye, who suffered an attack

10 see: http://www.egitimsen.org.tr/ekler/7890458a4b805fac66ae66fca01a5b7_ek.pdf

11 I received all this information about Lady Behiye from her daughter Pınar Yabasun. I interviewed her on February 11, 2018 in Van. What I wrote about her mother here is based on the information that Pınar Yabasun provided. I am grateful that she agreed to the interview/to share this valuable information with me.

on the plane while she was returning to Van, was taken to the Yüzüncü Yıl University Research Hospital. After this crisis, a new life for Behiye began, and the subject of our article is related to this new life. She no longer remembers her children and she has completely forgotten her Turkish. She began to speak Kurdish again, although she had not used it since she went away from her mother. Behiye forgot everything such as how to eat, how to go to the bathroom, etc. She turned into a baby, but she remembered everything about her mother, and started to talk as if she had never forgotten her mother tongue. Moreover, she no longer understood Turkish. She refused her children's help and did not accept any treatment.

Behiye's wish was to see her mother again. When her family became aware of her condition, her mother came to Van and stayed with her for a month. Her dream had come true. Behiye behaved like an aggressive child until she saw her mother. It was as if she was reincarnated as a child with the arrival of her mother. In fact, we might say that her mother gave birth to her again within one month. Her mother gave back all that she had given to her before. Behiye started eating from her mother's hands and could use the bathroom again, was raised by her mother again within a month. She spoke only Kurdish to everyone during this process, remaining faithful to the connection we established here between the mother tongue and the mother's womb. She had never actually forgotten the language that her mother taught her: She just needed to recover what she already knew.

While her children were searching for ways to learn Kurdish to communicate with her, she showed how strong the mother archetype was. The fact that she started speaking her mother tongue again when she came back to life in the presence of her mother is an important indication that explains and supports the other examples listed above. In Freudian psychoanalytical theory, there is a relationship between the mother's womb and the complexity of the male child, but in the case of Behiye, there is no asylum in the mother archetype with regard to her mother tongue. In terms of reincarnating and restoring life, the "mother" seems to be the primary feeder as she was in her womb. Her mother was the only means of communication, since she spoke the mother tongue. In a sense, it is possible to say that the language which she grew up speaking provided life energy to her again. The first link between the outside world is the umbilical cord extending to the mother's womb and the other link is the mother tongue, as is the case in Behiye's post-illness situation, which can be described as her second birth with Kurdish.

All Behiye's traumas started when she was deprived of her mother, and after her illness, she forgot everything, remembering only her mother and mother tongue, Kurdish. This shows us the power of the bond between the mother archetype and the mother tongue, and supports the claim of this article. Behiye's case supports our thesis but it also goes beyond the topic of neurology, philology, and

psychoanalysis (Tek, 2018). Further research is needed to understand other scientific facts behind this case thoroughly.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it has been proposed that these six cases strengthen the importance of the mother archetype which Jung established in his theory. These cases also clarify the psychological relationship between a man and his mother/womb/birthplace. Moreover, they explain the value of the mother tongue and its mental and emotional foundation. It is already obvious in all points how significant one's mother tongue is. It is evident that the return to one's native language means returning to one's mother tongue as well as returning to the womb, the home, the homeland. Homeland means mother, it is the place of one's origin. Returning there can only be possible with one's mother tongue, because language does not only resolve the feeling of fear and create an emotionally and psychologically protective environment; it also builds one's personality and identity. That is why the mother archetype cannot exist without the mother tongue. The mother tongue is the "house of thought" referred to in the Holy Quran. "Adam" was together with God (Allah) in innateness. God taught His word to Adam: "We taught the names of things to Adam." The thought process and meaning exposition starts with this ability to name things.

Those who have cut their ties with their mother tongue are also deprived of searching their archetype. They are less likely to recognize this fact unless they get into trouble, or experience fear or a shock. It seems to be the reason why people who are exiled from their homeland feel themselves closer to their mother tongue and would like to return to their birthplace, their mother's place. Safe and secure.

IV. REFERENCES

Printed Resources

- Emre, Gıyaseddin. (2006). *Medreseden Meclise, Meclis'ten Yassıada'ya*. Istanbul: Kent Yayınları.
- Emre, Xiyaseddîn. (1999). *Rênasî*. Stockholm: Weşanên Pêncinarê.
- Fromkin, Victoria; et al. (2011). *An Introduction to Language*. Boston: Wadsworth.
- Geverî, Ayhan. (2014). "Vegerîna Malzarokê yan jî "Gaia"ya Ramanê: Zimanê Zikmakî." *Nûbihar*. Vol: 128. Pp. 5-10.
- Jung, Carl Gustav. (2004). *Four Archetypes*. Taylor&Francis e-Library
- Tek, Ayhan. (2018). Interview with Pınar Yabasun. Van. (11 February 2018).

Electronic Resources

Anadilde Eğitimin Düşünsel Gelişimi ve Önündeki Engeller:http://www.egitimsen.org.tr/ekler/7890458a4b805fac66ae66fca01a5b7_ek.pdf (Date: 04.08.2014).

Kareem, Fahim. (2011). "In His Last Days, Qaddafi Wearied of Fugitive's Life." *New York Times*.http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/world/africa/in-his-last-days-qaddafi-wearied-of-fugitives-life.html?_r=0 (Date: 08.01.2019)

"Odyssea ve Odysseus'un Psikanalitik Serüveni": <http://www.anatoliantcraft.org/content/view/1519/31/> (Date: 08.01.2019)

"Operation Red Dawn": http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Red_Dawn (Date: 04.08.2014).

Tasby, Brandi. (2014). "Orphans of War: The Smallest Victims." <http://guardianlv.com/2014/01/orphans-of-war-the-smallest-victims-graphic-video/> (Date: 08.01.2019)