

Unveiling the Collective Unconscious: A Jungian Reading of Prophetic Vision in Tahereh Mafi's *Shatter Me*

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Abstract

This paper offers a Jungian psychoanalytic reading of *Shatter Me*, a young adult dystopian novel by Tahereh Mafi. It focuses on the psychological evolution of Juliette, the protagonist, who transitions from repression and isolation to empowerment and self-actualization. Based on the ideas of Carl Jung—collective unconscious, archetypes, the Shadow, and individuation—the analysis interprets the symbolic language and inner struggle of the novel. The repeated motifs, such as Juliette's visions of a bird, symbolize her unconscious desire for freedom and transformation. Her changing relationships, particularly with Warner and Adam, take Juliette's psyche through the integration of polarities within her. The paper also explores how Mafi's stream-of-consciousness style and fragmented syntax mirror Juliette's fractured mental state. Ultimately, this approach positions *Shatter Me* as more than a dystopian romance; it becomes a psychological allegory that reflects timeless struggles of identity, emotional trauma, and inner unity.

Keywords: Carl Jung, Archetypes, Collective Unconscious, *Shatter Me*, Juliette, Prophetic Vision, Shadow, Individuation, Young Adult Fiction

Introduction

Shatter Me by Tahereh Mafi is a decaying dystopia ruled by the Reestablishment. Juliette Ferrars is a young girl with a lethal touch who lives an isolated existence after being deemed dangerous. Though totalitarianism and revolution are dealt with under the cover of the plot, at its heart is a highly introspective novel. The fractured narrative voice, hallucinations, and symbolism bring attention to the interior world of the main character. Juliette's identity crisis is a manifestation of response to social repression as much as it is a psychological transformation in the sequence of archetypes(Jung). This essay describes Juliette's evolution in Jung's collective unconscious, situating her in the contemporary Hero figure with a trajectory towards individuation.

Methodology

This paper uses a psychoanalytic literary critical method based on Carl Jung's analytical psychology. The research utilizes core concepts in Jungian theory — such as the collective unconscious, archetypes, the Shadow, and individuation — to consider the internal transformation of the heroine, Juliette, in *Shatter Me*. Close analysis and symbolic interpretation of textual attributes like stream-of-consciousness, fractured narrative, and repeated symbols are undertaken in the paper. This study is grounded in foundational Jungian texts including Carl Jung's *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*(Jung), Anthony Stevens's *Jung: A Very Short Introduction*(Stevens), and Robert Segal's *Theorizing About Myth*(Segal), which inform the symbolic and psychoanalytic framework applied throughout. The analysis is interpretive and qualitative and addresses how emotional development, trauma, and integration are depicted through literary form and character psychology.

Jungian Framework: Understanding Archetypes and the Shared Unconscious

Carl Jung's analytical psychology states that human beings inherit an individual collective unconscious—a symbolic reservoir of experience common to all cultures and all periods (Jung 4). In this shared context reside archetypes: universal blueprints such as the Hero, the Shadow, the Anima/Animus, and the Self. These internal actors guide our dreams, myths, and individuation. Jung posits that individuation—becoming a fully realized psychologically complete individual—happens when an individual consciously incorporates these unconscious figures. Literature tends to externalize this process, giving readers the privilege of observing symbolic struggles, changes, and integration through character development. Within this paradigm, *Shatter Me* transcends speculative fiction—it reflects the interior journey of the self towards wholeness.

Juliette's Archetypal Journey

Juliette's narrative begins in total isolation, physically and emotionally cut off from mankind. Her initial state is that of the unconscious self—broken into pieces, repressed, and alienated. The writing process mirrors this: sentences are deleted, grammar is broken, and metaphors overflow (Mafi). These disruptions are more than stylistic; they correspond to her psychological disintegration. Juliette's inability to speak normally signals a mind inundated with repressed horror, shame, and emotional trauma.

Juliette's relationship with Warner is central to bringing her Shadow in. The Shadow, as outlined by Jung, holds what we deny or push beneath the surface—usually aggressive behavior, shame, or lusts that are antithetical to our sense of ourselves (Jung). Warner, vulnerable and manipulative, forces Juliette to confront these parts of herself. Her early self-loathing becomes acceptance of sorts, a sign that she is integrating her darker aspects of the mind. Adam, on the other hand, offers security and also her resistance to change. He is a comfort zone of idealization—safe but claustrophobic.

As Juliette begins to learn about her power and gain control over her body and voice, her disintegration in the interior begins to cohere. She no longer deletes her thinking and starts to articulate it firmly. This language reconstitution within the text is a sign of her psychological rebirth. Her emergence is an archetypal Hero's quest: departure from the familiar world, initiation through ordeal, confrontation with the Shadow, and return with greater self-awareness. But in contrast to traditional male heroes whose journeys are material pursuits, Juliette's process is inner, affective, and symbolic.

The Bird Symbol and Prophetic Vision

Juliette's repeated dream is one of a bird with golden wings. On its surface, it appears to be a literary device, but from a Jungian interpretation, it has more symbolic meaning (Jung). In alchemical and psychological mythology, birds are symbols of transcendence, the soul, or Self pursuing wholeness (Stevens). Juliette's desire to touch the bird with her hands is her unconscious yearning for freedom from psychological and societal constraints.

These pictures are a sort of prophetic vision, characteristic of Jungian psychology, whereby the unconscious communicates in words of images and dreams. The bird is her inner companion, urging her toward self-actualization. With the passage of time, Juliette internalizes the symbol—her thinking, action, and decisions more and more reflect the image of the bird. She ditches fear and opens up to change, which means she has undergone successful individuation. Rather than being rescued from others, she comes to be able to interpret her own visions and symbolism, affirming her growing autonomy.

Comparative Reference

Juliette's odyssey has the Classic Hero myth structure but diverges psychologically. Unlike Oedipus or Beowulf, who confront external monsters, Juliette is confronted with

interior monsters—shame, rejection, and fear of her own power. She becomes changed not of shape but of consciousness.

Modern analogues are found in characters like Katniss Everdeen (*The Hunger Games*)(Collins), Tris Prior (*Divergent*)(Roth), and Jane Eyre(Brontë). Like them, Juliette's power is emotional depth and not physical strength. She does not merely defeat an enemy but transforms. Jane Eyre's (Brontë) transgression against emotional suppression is exactly like Juliette's transgression against being imprisoned. The emotional numbness of Katniss yields to vulnerability and wholeness, which is exactly like Juliette's surrender to inner truth. These comparative figures underscore a shift in how literature imagines heroism—not as conquest, but as inward reconciliation.

Language, Trauma, and the Female Psyche

Mafi's experimental style—especially the strikethroughs and erratic punctuation—serves as an aesthetic representation of trauma. Juliette's fractured narrative parallels how trauma is processed: non-linearly, with silence, contradiction, and repetition (Mafi). Each crossed-out sentence reveals a suppressed thought clawing to surface. This aligns with Jung's concept of the 'complex'—emotionally charged groups of ideas residing in the unconscious (Segal).

Juliette's opening monologue is one of unworked-through complexes of unworthiness and guilt. As she heals, her narrative becomes more articulate and assertive, mirroring the growing ascendancy of the ego over such complexes. The dynamics between trauma, language, and healing become clear. Juliette doesn't simply survive trauma; she retells it, thereby restoring authorship to her own narrative.

Conclusion

Underneath the dystopian spectacle and love entanglement, *Shatter Me* is a deep psychological fable. Juliette's transformation is not just a battle against outside tyranny but an

internal battle for identity and integration. Her fractured speech, prophetic dreams, and symbolic relationships are transformed into instruments for individuation. This book reaffirms that YA fiction has profound psychological significance, acting both as mirror and guide to readers confronting their own traumas. Through Jungian interpretation, Juliette is not a standard heroine but a spiritual archetype of becoming — one who heeds the call of her inner bird, accepts her darkness, and derives power from wholeness(Jung). Her story becomes a testament to the universal quest for individuation and self-integration.

Conflict of Interest: The corresponding author, on behalf of second author, confirms that there are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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