THE INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN JUNG’S THEORY OF “COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS,” ARMENIAN FICTIONAL PROSE, AND THE PRESENT SOCIETY’S MENTALITY

by

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# **Abstract**

Various short stories written from 1880 to 1930 by famous Armenian writers Nar-Dos, Shirvanzade, and Muratsan have an impact on the Armenian nation even now. Mostly on the subconscious level, those writers have focused on unordinary themes such as physical, psychological and mental abuse, violence and suicide. Each of the selected 6 short stories represents dramatic events within the Armenian families, depression, tragic finales due to certain traditional prejudices, and suicidal behaviors. Armenians read and examine these short stories until now, and they are affected by them. The concept of the "collective unconscious" presented by Jung and the consequences of particular psychological factors exist in the Armenian society until now. Armenian fictional prose affects the current Armenian mentality in terms of subconscious choices and the specific lifestyle Armenians choose. This capstone project examines the connection between psychology and Armenian literature, mainly addressing Jung’s theory of the “collective unconscious” to several Armenian short stories similar to each other. It investigates three writers’ biographies, introduces the psychoanalysis of the main characters from the short stories, and explores the influence those stories have on the current Armenian society’s mind.

# **Introduction**

The themes of violence and suicide are highly relevant and widespread in different Armenian short stories from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. Armenian fictional prose affects its society even now. Various Armenian classic writers either deliberately or unintentionally have created a central theme, an idea centered on all-consuming tragedy and depression within Armenian families and Armenian reality. This fact has a profound impact on the way Armenians live and behave themselves inside and outside of their families so far. Various researches and debates show that literature and psychology have always been interconnected. Every short story people read throughout the generations influences the readers one way or another, as they absorb and interpret these stories each in his own way. Eventually, the impact made by short stories becomes an essential factor in a person’s way of thinking.

Oftentimes, people do not really appreciate or give meaning to the role of the literature. They treat it as something ordinary and insignificant to their lives. In Armenia, people read short stories written by a few classic Armenian novelists in schools or on their own, they learn how to analyze them, but never dig deeper in order to understand the real ideas, meanings, purposes, and true interpretations of the artists who created the fictional prose at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. It is common that Armenian novelists create and use alike themes, patterns, moods, plots, and characters. It seems like they intentionally wrote about the same things with the same perspectives, which is really odd and raises lots of questions. It is essential to discover and examine this issue by focusing on the concept of the “collective unconscious” proposed by Jung to introduce the consequences of the short stories on the current Armenian mentality.

The themes of violence and suicidal behavior described in Armenian fictional prose from 1880 to 1930 have a profound impact on the current Armenian mentality. Each generation is under a similar impression made by particular famous Armenian short stories. The concept of the "collective unconscious" and the repercussions of certain psychological elements existent in the Armenian society then and now, influenced by that same literature, continue to form our way of thinking and functioning. This capstone aims to present a psychological analysis of the main characters from six different Armenian short stories. By understanding biographies of Nar-Dos, Shirvanzade, and Muratsan, the impact their short stories have, as well as closely observing Jung’s theory of “collective unconscious,” present-day Armenian mentality can be explained from a new point of view.

# **Literature Review**

Armenian classic novelists, such as Shirvanzade, Nar-Dos, and Muratsan implemented similar techniques in their short stories written at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. They focused on such themes as psychological and physical abuse in the Armenian families, depression that leads to the suicide of the main hero, violence, and very tragic finales. Nowadays, people read, analyze and write papers on these short stories. Subconsciously, they are affected by the plot, brutal themes, suicidal behavior, uncontrollable and angry temper of the heroes in the short stories. Such readings impact their way of thinking and living as literature is directly connected to the creation of the society and to the formation of a certain mentality. These Armenian writers either intentionally or unintentionally have created a principal idea, subject in their stories which specifically concentrates on dramatic events, unhappy endings, distress, and suicides. Consequently, several short stories written within a 50-year period can influence people’s psychology even now and serve as a concrete example in terms of their subconscious lifestyle choices. Each generation understands and interprets every story in its own way, however, it is clear that besides many historical factors, psychological and biographical aspects of writers and the overall impact of society and societal institutions have a much more profound effect on their writing styles and themes they select to compose.

## **Psychology and Literature**

As Jung (1978) claims, each artist creates his work through personal experiences, either intentionally or not. At the same time, he discusses specific cases when personal causes are not really influencing the work of art, thus contradicting himself by looking at the issue from different perspectives. Therefore, a further question is whether psychology can explain the real motives behind any creative work and the person who created it in the first place. Most of the times, the artist cannot even notice the impact of his personal intentions when he deeply emerges in the creative process. He thinks he has the freedom to write about anything, but it is not the case. His conscious is definitely regulated and guided by the unconscious. The writer has all sorts of images in his subconscious and he transforms them into his work over and over again, mostly without understanding why he is acting that way. The primary idea of Jung’s research is that individuals are not able to implement their powers if they do not have the assistance of the “collective representations called ideals.”

Jung (1978) compares the collective unconscious with Freud’s personal unconscious by focusing on primordial images or archetypes, which can be a figure or a process existing in the history and surfacing whenever the author’s fantasies come alive and later, appear on the paper. In his earlier research, he defines the role of the archetypes with regard to the collective unconscious, which directly addresses the psychological aspects of any literary work in terms of the author’s mental state. Archetypes are no more than just instincts. The notion of the collective unconscious highlights the presence of “definite forms in the psyche that are present always and everywhere.” (Jung, 1936) If there is an archetype of tragedy, depression, constant violence, the principles so harsh that can lead to the suicide of a faultless person if writers continue writing about that in a certain period of time, what does that mean? One generation is influenced by the earlier generations and all the people have the same thoughts, opinions, the same way of thinking, analyzing and interpreting things that can always be changed, but people do not like changes, especially Armenians. Thus, in the Armenian literature, one can witness numerous kinds of similarities in the writing styles of the novelists. As Jung (1936) argues, “a whole nation is reviving an archaic symbol and this mass emotion is influencing and revolutionizing the life of the individual in a catastrophic manner.”

In contrast to Jung, Hoffman (1957) suggests a Freudian approach when analyzing the literary texts. His research is based on Freudian concepts of Id, Ego, and Superego, additionally, he highlights the importance of the personal unconscious rather than the collective unconscious. The essence of Hoffman’s argument is demonstrated in the significance of repression which can cause pain but also be a tremendous help in taking care of the psyche, which is displayed in the literature one produces. The same literature itself can be analyzed in terms of the psychic system and a definite behavior of a person. The most important thing to do in the writing process is to loosen up the ego and not try to control the regression process, which is totally natural. Each creative person knows about the regression, they wish for it. They tend to distinguish their desires and to present them to a much more intricate extent. As most of the writers aim attention at “family-centered literature”, Freud’s concepts are more beneficial to fit in the noteworthy analysis of individuals within the society in general. We can identify ourselves with the past, but it does not mean we must stay in the past, because every person invariably and systemically changes, consequently people should not ignore the explicit role of the “specific intelligence of our times.” (Hoffman, 1957)

While Hoffman is concentrated specifically on Freud’s notions about Id, Ego, and Superego, Paris (1997) drives the further development of psychological methods in order to discover the behavior of characters and the real people. He applies the Horneyan approach by analyzing several famous books in terms of their true meanings and provides his own exploration on the author's mental analysis. Each psychoanalytic theory contributes to the understanding of literary work and vice versa. Psychoanalytic theories construct the characters’ behaviors, life situations, choices, goals, whereas the literature illustrates the amount of reality of those experiences. Additionally, a huge part of any study on the relationship between psychology and literature is in the infantile experiences of the author. This book explains Karen Horney’s and Freud’s similar opinions on the vitality of childhood memories and incidents on the origins of the author’s writing patterns. Although Horney suggests that adults cannot simply repeat the same actions they did when they were children, however, the character of an adult writer is deeply rooted in the layers of the childhood as well as in the puberty. Thus, writers tend to create characters similar to them or to people whom they have constantly encountered during their lives. Overall, there is always a “triangular relationship between literature, theory, and the individual interpreter.” (Paris, 1997)

## **The Relationship of Literature and Society**

According to both Merrill (1967) and Albrecht (1956), society is reflected within the literature and the latter is a subject of a sociological examination. Merrill quotes Albrecht in his essay, by introducing a hypothesis that literature either reflects the society or it has an impact and, subsequently, “shapes” the society. Although most writers use their imagination when writing short stories or a novel, they illustrate the role-taking activity within their works of art, which clearly represents the reality we live in, as all of us has our own roles in the current society and it truly demonstrates the typical human behavior. A large number of existing studies in the broader research have examined the interconnection of literature and sociology. Both are designed to talk about people and to provide sufficient information on understanding human nature.

Merrill (1967) thoughtfully brings up Henry James’s quote to prove his point, “The novel does attempt to represent life.” He further argues that the novel provides a perspective on presenting people like actors who play numerous roles, something that a sociologist cannot do.

Most of the times authors are inspired by the real events that have taken place in their childhood or somehow that have witnessed certain situations, which later found their place in the writing.

For many and many generations, readers have been identifying the fictitious characters, comparing them with the real ones, making assumptions on the basis of the book, questioning whether the characters of their favorite books can exist in real life or not. Can the personages of the books be even more “real” than the people we encounter every day? If we are continuing reading about them, we play make-believe, support and suffer with them, how are they different from us? Thus the society described in the fiction is a representation of the real-life society, whether the author intended it to be that way or not.

Research done by Albrecht (1956) can only be considered as one of the first steps towards a more profound understanding of literature in the sense of reflecting common values. His studies are limited to only American literature and society, which gives the basics of this issue, however, need to be expanded in order to analyze Armenian literature and society as well. He addresses several questions on cultural norms, values and their interrelationships with the literature in the context of short stories read by “large audiences.” He acknowledges three general assumptions about the literature and society by observing the reflection theory. Literature in the past and in the present always reflects cultural standards and purposes. Short stories, respectively, represent different kinds of reading levels, therefore distinctive types of people within the model of the American family. Lots of evidence and studies prove that short stories constitute the spirit of the cultural norms and significances of the American family. However, the existing study has many problems in representing only the American side of the story. The essay has been previously assessed only to a very narrow extent because he concentrates on the ideals of the American families described in the American short stories printed in American magazines. This question needs to be broadened and viewed in the non-American, more specifically, Armenian context.

## **Interpretation and Meaning of Literature**

Literature can also be viewed as a tool of history and demonstrate historical events’ impact on social changes. Both of them are involved in making the process and changing the whole society, as literature cannot really exist without history. As Panikkar (2012) begins with a short review of the literature regarding historical events, both illustrate reality and what is not really considered as a reality. Most of the times, writers rely on history, they found their sources of inspiration within the real historical events, people that changed the course of history. They tend to exaggerate, add something of their own, however, the main source is the history. We could argue that there is no literature which does not include particular elements of history, especially the history of a certain nation the writer belongs to. Literature accomplishes the idealistic and complicated portrayal of social changes, relations, experiences. It manifests the ideologies of a certain time period. Both literature and history capture the central implications of social metamorphosis. We can find the elements of history in every book, the role of history is undeniably powerful, if not vital. When examining the relationships between literature and history, the most important thing to remember is that social change always occurs on three levels, which are the individual’s life, the life of the society and the existence of an institution.

In addition, Taylor (2014) stresses the importance of the interpreter of a literary work, as there are many ways a reader can understand what the author intended to say. According to Paul Grice, whose ideas Taylor brings up, there are natural and non-natural meanings in order to convey certain literary texts. How the interpreter gets the message within the text is the fundamental mechanism of either natural or non-natural meaning. It is significant to comprehend and differentiate the writer’s intentions when creating stories associated to real life events, even though the reader’s interpretation may not always correspond to the writer’s initial interpretations if there was any kind of an interpretation at all. Thus, oftentimes when reading the same book each person has his/her opinion and it is different from the others’ opinion. It means that the reader, as an interpreter grasps the idea of a certain literary work by merely guessing the author’s intentions, which can differ, as each of us has quite a unique imagination. That is the reason why interpreters should always remember the issue of natural and non-natural meanings, that is the intended messages of the author and the meanings they give themselves.

So far this discussion proceeds to a much thorough exploration of the Armenian literature and the current society, as well as a more complete examination of Jung’s collective unconscious. I am applying Jung’s theory specifically on the Armenian literature within the 50 years by narrowing down on three Armenian writers who described similar events and presented very much alike beginnings and endings in their short stories. Moreover, I try to understand how those short stories really affect our mind and our mental state. On the whole, the most essential question to be answered is why did Shirvanzade, Nar-Dos, and Muratsan decide to write short stories about suicides, physical and psychological abuse? Was it the influence of their biographies to concentrate on the violence depicting it so vividly or maybe some definite Armenian historical events influenced them? Overall, I have drawn certain perspectives, viewpoints, ideas on which I base my own projections and analysis of this topic by being more specific and concentrating more on my thesis statement.

# **Research Questions and Methodology**

Why did several Armenian classic writers repeatedly concentrate on tragedies in Armenian families and have the same writing style, patterns, themes, mood in their short stories? Is the phenomenon of the “collective unconscious” inevitable?

Can reading Armenian literature really affect our psychology in terms of subconscious lifestyle choices we make?

This research seeks to answer these three main questions. The capstone project resolves and explains the role and the significance of Jung’s “collective unconscious”, the distinctive psychology of Armenian classic writers and their personages, and the interrelationship, the importance of the past and present Armenian society together with their mentality.

I have chosen six Armenian short stories that are very similar to each other and have done textual and literary analysis using three theories relevant to the main research question and the thesis statement. After introducing the topic, its relevance, and after stating the reasons behind the decision of choosing particularly this theme to write and elaborate on, I have divided the capstone into three sections. In each of them, I have thoroughly described every theory and demonstrated how my own thoughts, as well as the capstone project, were based on those theories.

At first, I wanted to analyze the biographies of three main writers, to show the relationship between their lives and the short stories they wrote. The main goal was to find a specific connection between their childhoods and its effect on their writing style or some similar aspects of life between their heroes and themselves. This part of the capstone also revealed the intentions of the authors and gave certain explanations regarding the subject matter, plot development, creation of the characters, establishment of the definite atmosphere in each short story. Afterward, my goal was to present the psychoanalysis of those authors, additionally, to introduce the psychoanalysis of various violent or suicidal characters in a given work.

I found similar patterns to understand the relationships between the writers’ personality, inner fears, desires, goals and the personages they created for some reason. The primary aim was to analyze why did they create such complex, depressive personages and how they were related to the society then and now. I conducted a thorough investigation to implement Jung’s theory of “collective unconscious” in this section as well because it is the basis of the whole project. My goal was to narrow down this theory within the framework of Armenian literature and its impact on the Armenian society. I detected the patterns, compare and contrast the similarities between all the stories and drew my own conclusions with reference to the subconscious choices, similar writing styles, similar themes and moods, suicidal and depressed characters, all the three authors included in their writings.

 Furthermore, I implemented Marxist literary criticism in order to understand these short stories through social work, institutions and cultural systems. This capstone also viewed the short stories on the basis of the authors’ social class and their dominant ideologies. The literature has inevitably been affecting the people who read it, consequently, it has assisted in the regulation of the society even after many years the texts were first written. Thus, by analyzing the purposes behind certain short stories, I reflected upon the society and comprehend their mentality, which was similar to the mentality of the personages created by the authors who, by the way, also had the same mentality.

I was going to demonstrate and, eventually, prove that the scenes of physical and psychological abuse, suicides, tragic ends, the depressive environment within these short stories were not the consequence of some historical events, although they have had a certain influence as well. The principal intention was to disclose the inner world of the writers, to interpret their works from a much different angle, which would have been rather unusual from the standard ways people are used to interpreting them in school. My analysis led me to the better awareness of this issue, the realization of the initial motives and feelings of the creative writers, as well as the connection between the past and the present Armenian society.

As Armenians read and learned about these classic short stories when they studied in schools and even after that, it means that above mentioned short stories had been affecting their way of thinking, mental state, and their psychological condition. They were constantly influenced by these narratives, generation after generation, it is like an endless circle of the same things discussed and written about in the short stories. That might have been the reason behind the authors’ similarity in writing and establishing the mentality which immediately concerned the readers. People did not understand or pay attention to this seemingly trivial detail, however, this factor had a huge impact on the Armenian mentality back then and has even now. This was the other essential component of this capstone project that I was going to investigate efficiently and with great attention.

By doing such a detailed and complex analysis of each theory, I gained the knowledge necessary to establish my own thoughts regarding these issues and illustrated the psychological conditions of the authors who subconsciously wrote about the same things over and over again during the same period of time. I hoped to discover a certain type of resemblances in their childhoods and their lives overall, to see their real motives, what really drove them, how they tried to encompass all of their feelings into these short stories and how that process was affected by society, which eventually led to the fact that later on, these stories themselves started influencing that same society. Therefore, it was a reciprocal procedure and an interrelated action.

# **Research Findings and Analysis**

Each and every short story partially consists of reality. When we read some of the most famous Armenian short stories, we can relate to them as the main characters are always very similar to the people we encounter in our lives on a daily basis. In each of the short stories, there is a common archetype, as proposed by Jung. Usually, there is a typical Armenian family, where the husband gains all the control, the wife is obedient and endures all the possible hardships, the children never can do what they want to do, they suffer from the constant fights inside their homes. Eventually, sooner or later thoughts about suicide are shaping into reality.

There are various short stories written within the fifty-year time span by the following writers, Shirvanzade, Nar-Dos, and Muratsan. All the stories are based on a standard, Armenian reality. The plot may vary, but the main ideas behind the events going on within the stories have one definite purpose: to demonstrate Armenian families the way they are, to present the true values regarding the marriage, premarital affairs, love, parent-children relationships.

Shirvanzade’s “Namus” (1885/1950) is a love story where, in the end, the protagonist commits suicide because he loses the love of his life. The father of the young woman decided to engage her daughter with the son of his best friend when they were little children. After some years passed, the guy came and kissed the girl before they were married, her father freaked out, beat her nearly to death, then she was forced to marry another. After some unfortunate turn of events, the new husband killed his wife and the guy committed suicide.

Nar-Dos’s “Our Neighborhood” (1889/1978) is a collection of short stories, each of them is more dramatic and tragic than the previous one. Husbands physically abuse their wives and children, relatives terrorize each other, children are afraid of their own parents, parents kill their newborn babies, everybody is unhappy, no one knows how to get out of that hell.

In Muratsan’s “The Rich People Are Having Fun” (1884/1960), the girl has sex before marriage, then he refuses to marry her and she commits suicide. This theme is one of the most relevant ones, as in Armenia society that is the ultimate sin a young woman can commit, before getting married to someone her parents must decide for her. Everything should decide parents, even if it would be the worst decision ever. The children, especially girls, should never argue or state their opinion in front of elderly people because they know what is best for everybody. Children read all the short stories starting from middle school, they are subconsciously influenced by them. Eventually, that fact leads to a certain type of mentality that has been being formed then and continues to have a huge impact until now.

The most interesting fact is that above-mentioned writers did not exaggerate or make up the plots of the stories. Everything is described very vividly and has actually happened thus technically these writings can be considered as non-fiction. All the cruel rules, norms of the society which controlled, dominated people without any will or bravery, forced young women and men to become victims. The most important things are to never let out what was going on inside the families, nobody was allowed to get informed about the real situation, which was most of the times terrifying and hard to imagine. People, especially in Armenia, tend to overvalue the opinions of the community, neighborhood, friends and even strangers.

In “Namus”, which is an Armenian word for the “tradition of honor,” the most essential factor for the girl’s father was that others might know that the fiance of his own daughter had kissed her before the marriage. He was literally humiliated, he wanted to die as his pride and the pride of the family he had created was in danger, his good and errorless name, reputation in the neighborhood was jeopardized. He did not care about his daughter or wife or someone else’s happiness, besides his own. Consequently, he was not the one who paid for all his mistakes, her daughter died because of him and his selfishness. Overall, kiss and other forms of physical contact before marriage is highly disapproved, which is clearly highlighted in almost every short story.

In Nar-Dos’s “The Killed Dove” (1898/1971), the main protagonist gets pregnant without the marriage, and, as a result, kills her own baby and wants to commit suicide. In “Zazunyan” (1890/1971), the married woman falls in has an affair with the friend of her husband, however, in the end, her lover (Zazunyan), commits suicide. In “The Artist”, the young man is a talented musician, he wants to go to Italy, become famous and enchant the woman he loves with unrequited love. No happy end here either, he commits suicide. Such scenarios are very consistent and rather disturbing. You can never fully understand, evaluate or enjoy these stories, especially at a very young age, when your mind is not completely developed when you are a confused teenager with raging hormones.

Reading about the same things over and over again creates some sort of a pattern in our heads. According to Marxist literary criticism, literature can be understood through society and the society itself is very much influenced by the literature. Certain alike short stories can shape the life as it is described within the pages, which consequently, can become the normal and standard way of living. If children read short stories about psychological, physical violence, suicides they subconsciously become interested in such kinds of themes, they start thinking that if literary heroes can do so and get away with that, why can't they be the same? All the institutions in Armenia, our cultural system, norms are mostly based on the literature.

People worship Armenian writers, they constantly admire their abilities to compose perfect poetry and very realistic short stories. Teachers usually assign the bulk of Armenian short stories during the summer and winter breaks. As a result, starting from middle school, children read and learn how to behave themselves according to those short stories. The society, the way parents treat their children, control their fates, people living in the same neighborhood judge each other, comment on every small thing, gossip about the most things. It’s an endless circle that has an impact on present Armenian society and mentality as well. It is like all the characters in these short stories aim to become such monsters, willing to sacrifice everything for their own reputation, valuing unhappiness more than happiness.

All the characters eventually choose death instead of life, as it is the only way to escape the prejudices, mockery, contempt, hatred of the people around them. Oftentimes, those people who were supposed to care about the person the most, relatives, best friends, even parents became enemies if a person decides to do something according to his own will, not listening to others, just following his own desires and goals. Girls cannot be on their own, they should always obey their fathers, uncles, brothers, and husbands in the future. They do not have anyone to trust, tell their most sacred secrets, the only solution for them is to commit suicide, especially when they fall in love and get pregnant, as they are more afraid of their own fathers than death itself.

It seems like all the personages want to break free. Usually, in all the stories people have specific principles, they should live and exist only based on those moral principles. Decency, in all spheres of life, is very much appreciated by Armenian families. In the end, victims of the ruthless society and its rules, stay alone, resisting life, endeavoring to fight against the whole world, however, they are not able to do so because they are all alone. Disappointment leads to decisions which cannot be escaped and each character finds his own way to deal with these problems.

Some people might argue that those women or men who made the choice to kill themselves are in fact weak and already dead inside. When there is no capability to desire for something anymore when the character realizes that there will not be any future where he can find his own path, be independent of all the pressure and reprimands, he prefers to establish his own rules. Furthermore, they have already been ready for such a finale because subconsciously they have known that the only key to freedom is suicide. Maybe that is the reason why all the characters are being strong and seemingly positive on the outside, however, deep inside of their minds, they are certain that there is only one way which can end all their tortures and misery. That is suicide. Suddenly two realities are emerging on the surface. Outside reality becomes very distinct and far-away. All the previous methods, ways become obsolete.

Nowadays, we are witnessing real-life events that were described in those short stories many years ago. Occasionally, we read in the news that husbands had beaten up their wives, sometimes those women just die because of the domestic violence. Just like that. Oftentimes, women do not understand or do not want to understand that their husbands will never change their behavior. In most of the cases, women stay with their husbands for the sake of the family, especially the children. By doing so, they became victims of their own choice, after some years, they are still with their husbands. The mere thought of going away, leaving the place that they have to call “home”, taking the kids and just running away, scares them to death. Thus, many and many young women prefer to be unhappy but stay married, rather than try to become happy without the horrible marriage.

There are even worse situations. Sometimes, those women may even consider their husbands to be right, as they have all the privileges to abuse them both physically and emotionally. Under these circumstances no one, not even the parents of the wife, can convince her to divorce the husband because she herself chooses to stay, being consciously aware that her husband must do however he wants to, as he is the leader of the family. Therefore, the wives should be obedient, subservient, and never independent from their husbands. The male characters in the short stories written by Nar-Dos, Muratsan, and Shirvanzade are often quite rude, unconfident, insecure, and dissatisfied. Mostly they are losers, who have not achieved anything in their lives and are ready to blame everyone except for themselves. The most accessible victims of such tyranny are wife and children. Wives will do anything in order to protect their offsprings, while, at the same time, children can provoke their father so he will not go after their mother. That is one of the reasons behind the strong bond between a mother and a child in the Armenian family.

The proof of the vital difference between a man and a woman in Armenia can be detected from the very beginning of the wedding ceremony. When the couple enters the church, the priest asks a man, “Are you willing to be the master of this woman?”, the man responds, “Yes.” Then the priest asks a woman, “Are you willing to be obedient to this man?”, the woman again replies in the affirmative. The man becomes *the master*, while the woman obtains the role of an *obedient* one.

One of the short stories written by Nar-Dos in “Our Neighborhood” is exactly about this. The mother-in-law of the young woman beats her because she had taken two lumps of sugar instead of one. Then, when her husband came home and was informed about that, he continued his mother's work until the young woman dropped dead. During his trial, he said, “What was the big deal? I just kicked her.” It is not just this particular story. Nar-Dos has written about physical abuse in almost all of his short stories and in each of them, the wife either dies or just prefers to stay silent and do nothing about it. Husbands do not feel sorry; they do not apologize or are not punished in any way at all.

The influence of those short stories is present up until now. Back then young women were getting married either because their parents were forcing them to or they were just “kidnapped” by their husbands. Although they knew that they were going to be kidnapped as everything was prearranged, however, there was not any time to really know the person before marrying him. It was forbidden to speak with your fiancé, to laugh, hold hands or kiss. As a result, young people were creating a family together without having the slightest idea who is the person with whom they are supposed to spend the rest of their lives.

Nowadays, in many Armenian villages, the same thing happens all over again. Parents are deciding their children’s fates, they find their offspring unworthy of having their opinion, especially their daughters. All of that is going way back to the times when these short stories were written. As a matter of fact, these stories are not fiction, they are creative nonfiction. All of these scenarios, personages had happened in the past, moreover, they are happening right now. The reality itself impacted all the three writers to write their short stories on such depressing themes.

They did not just think of these plots off the top of their heads. Instead, Nar-Dos, Shirvanzade, and Muratsan took episodes from life, the basic reality and turn them into short stories, which are thoroughly discussed in every Armenian school, everyone knows about these particular short stories from a very young age. These are not just plain texts, devoid of any cultural, historical or social background. Their purpose and the purpose of their creators is not simply to entertain in the society but rather show them, as clearly as possible, the truth and the consequences of it.

We can see that everything happened for a reason, nothing was separate, the authors intentionally used this opportunity to make people see the world they live in, where young women could die because of their parents, husbands or the society which ruled everyone’s life both public and private. When a girl gets married in Armenia, her fate is already predetermined. This was the situation in the past, and the same cases are happening in the present as well. Even if the man has enough money to buy or rent a separate house for his new family, he refuses, as in most cases, newlyweds live with man’s parents. This tradition has existed for a very long time, and women do not have a voice on this subject. When she crosses the doorstep of his husband’s house, she does not become the lady of it, she becomes a servant. Everything her parents-in-law want her to do, she must obey, otherwise, her husband will treat her inadequately.

If the daughter-in-law does not treat her husband’s parents the same way she would treat her own parents, the dispute in the family is guaranteed. She must do all the chores, nurture children, the more children, the better. The husband and his family cherish the idea of having only boys, girls are not appreciated enough. In countless cases, a woman is forced to do an abortion if she is having a baby girl. Boys are the ones who will not disgrace the family name. Therefore, if a woman decides to get married and have a family of her own, the other members of that same family will not let her be in charge. She is not likely to find her place in the house where her mother-in-law commands and does everything based on her own choices, preferences, taste.

As I have mentioned before, one of the main themes that Armenian authors draw attention to is premarital relationships. The scenario is always the same, a young man seduces a poor, innocent girl, she loses her virginity and her pride, he refuses to marry her, she commits suicide, end of the story. Each of those girls chose to be dead, rather than to face their families, friends, and the overall community. They did not think of a life outside that little circle. Their own world was comprised of people who could not think outside the box, where insane rules were more important than a person's desire and happiness, even momentary. The main person who controlled a young woman’s life was first, the father. Then all the brothers had the responsibility to look after her. The mother’s role was almost as insignificant as her daughter’s. Women could not be as superior as men, even if they could, they should not. That is why Armenian men always dream of having a son, not a daughter. At least, three or more sons, then one daughter would be fine. It is a tendency very much familiar to everybody in Armenia, especially in the villages. Consequently, if a girl did something totally inappropriate, she jeopardized her family's reputation in the neighborhood or in the whole village, and that was a deal-breaker. If the man did something alike, he would probably get away with that because they were ready to take responsibility for their actions, as they were in charge of their own lives.

For example, in the short story “The Rich People Are Having Fun” by Muratsan, the young woman named Elena believed that her life was over, after she had sex with the man who was not her husband, he just liked her, invited to his house, took advantage of the girl, then let her go. He was not very honest of course, but on the whole, he did not do anything awful. She could have continued working in some other place, meeting new people, maybe move to another city. Instead, she committed suicide, as he refused to marry her and already had found another woman. The mere thought that she had slept with someone was so abhorrent for her that she did not have a will to live anymore.

 Moreover, in another short story “The Killed Dove” by Nar-Dos, the young woman Sara, gets pregnant after having sex with her young man in the forest. When she understands that he is not going to marry her, she kills her baby and is determined to kill him, too. She seeks revenge and is ready to do anything to achieve her goal. We can clearly detect the pattern in the actions of all these women who committed suicide or decided to live in horrible conditions, rather than continue living as if nothing happened. Nevertheless, premarital relationships are not the only theme that leads to suicide in Armenian literature. Some of the main characters kill themselves because of the failed ambitions, the cruelty of the society, the honor, shame, money.

The biographies of the authors and the short stories they write have a deep connection. Oftentimes, writers chose to portray characters alike to themselves or to someone very close to them. Analyzing the biographies of the Nar-Dos, Shirvanzade, and Muratsan can shed light on the relationship and the connection between their lives and the short stories they wrote. The Armenian mentality means from people to know everything about everyone and it is known that if a person lives in a certain neighborhood, he/she cannot escape gossips. Everybody seeks to know every little personal detail of a person’s life and it is very typical.

Michael Hovhannisyan, whose pen name was Nar-Dos, always preferred writing about reality. All the characters were taken from his life, he wanted to encapsulate the psychological conditions and the motives of his characters in order to understand the decisions that led them to death. According to Hovsepyan (1961), who wrote a book about Nar-Dos’s life and career, Nar-Dos was born in Tbilisi, a neighborhood called Avlabari. He was constantly inspired by the environment and the everyday life of that neighborhood, where people were acting like a one, big family. When he was a child, he was reading and listening to the old, national fairy tales and stories, thus getting acquainted with the neighborhood’s inner truths and beliefs. Nar-Dos always tells the truth to his readers, even if the truth is horrific or intolerable. He constantly looked for some realistic solutions to the problems, he wanted to describe simple people with their mundane problems, which can be resolved rather easily.

Nar-Dos was a great psychologist as well. All of his short stories encapsulate the Armenian nation’s truth and ideologies. As he was one of the Armenian writers who established and promoted the realistic literary-psychological movement in the Armenian literature, he concentrated on implementing this new phenomenon in his short stories. His aim was “to portray the ordinary people’s everyday life in the bourgeoisie city” (Hovsepyan, 1961). All the artistic descriptions were rather succinct, images were simple, the words were to the point and had a huge psychological effect, especially during the dialogues between the characters. One of the most interesting aspects was Nar-Dos’s choice of the characters, the variety of them. Each represented a distinctive, typically Armenian personalities familiar to Nar-Dos from his childhood. He did not use his imagination because he relied more on the day-to-day events and activities, he used reality and that was more entertaining for the readers than any kind of fiction. He witnessed all the dramas, fights between married couples, physical and mental abuses with his own eyes every day, all he had to do was just write about them as efficiently as possible. All of the short stories included in the “Our Neighbourhood” collection tell a story about poor, prejudiced families who strive to survive in this cold and ruthless world.

According to Tamrazyan (1978), Shirvanzade (Movsisyan Alexander) lived a difficult life as well which is vividly illustrated in each of his short stories. His family was very poor and he encountered countless difficulties from a very early age. His father was a strict and demanding man, very similar to Barkhudar from “Namus”, as the writer describes him later in his memoirs. Shirvanzade has learned to be straightforward with people from his parents. He chose to depict life as it is and be honest with the readers in his short stories. He portrays a typical Armenian family, where the most significant principle is following the rules. Each member of the family has a binding duty to obey those rules or they will get their severe punishment, no forgiveness, especially for women. As each man prefers to repeat over and over again, Armenian women are the reflection of the family. Everything they do, say, think can be either fortunate or disastrous for the entire family. If the child misbehaves, the father always blames the mother. If one day the wife gets too tired or ill and does not clean the house, makes dinner, the husband will scream at her, as it is her and only her duty to the chores. No Armenian man will even consider doing the dishes or polishing the furniture because his friends will think of him as a coward or not enough masculine.

Shirvanzade witnessed a rather dramatic and dark representation of Armenian families both inside of his own house and outside. His father valued the honor most of all, he constantly reminded his family members to never forget about the family’s impeccable reputation, as the society judges based on the reputation. As men were superior in all the families, they were concentrating on looking after their children’s behavior and deeds. Even when Shirvanzade was a little child, his childhood did not give him an opportunity to enjoy the company of his playmates or his picture books. In contrast to his father, Shirvanzade’s uncle was an irresponsible and dishonest man, and the two brothers were regularly fighting with each other because of the money.

In “Namus”, Shirvanzade meticulously demonstrates money’s harmful influence on the characters. He depicts the people he remembered from his childhood. Those neighbors, friends, relatives had one thing in common, all of them were devastated by the money, the question of honor and moral, and by people who disregarded rules. It was the time when bourgeoisie relationships were just forming within Armenian society. The old and new lives had their own advantages and disadvantages. Shirvanzade vividly recalls the first women in the neighborhood who refused to conform to commonly accepted rules. There were a few of them, however, those women were determined to fight against ignorance of a prejudiced crowd.

Armenian men are terrified of what other people would think of them and their families. This is a long tradition passed on from generation to generation for decades. If a woman contradicts her husband in front of strangers or in the street where everybody is watching one another, she becomes a traitor. She should always agree with her husband, as he is the master of the house, he is the one who provides for his family. This is another issue women cannot work. When the parents of a man and a woman decide to marry their children, it is already obvious that a woman will not work outside of the house. Men bring their wives home and regard them as their private incubators. Women should spend their first night with a person who is like a stranger to them. As it is mandatory for them to be virgins, they had never seen their partner naked.

 After the first night, everybody expects a woman to get pregnant. Nobody cares or pays any attention to the desires of the woman. Maybe she does not want to have a child straight away, maybe she wants to live for herself at first, enjoy her youth and adapt to the role of someone’s wife. Her own parents, the parents of her husband, close and far relatives, even strangers who just heard about their wedding constantly ask whether she is pregnant or not./ People ask rather uncomfortable questions about her woman’s body or possible illnesses she might have which can harm the baby. Armenians do not respect personal boundaries. If people live in the same neighborhood, they regard each other as one big family. Nobody ever thinks about the inappropriateness of discussing someone else’s life or secrets in public, it is just an ordinary talk for them with a cup of coffee. Shirvanzade illustrates similar situations in his short stories, where patriarchal morals, poverty, the vice of lechery, and misery destruct the whole society.

According to the Institute for Armenian Studies of Yerevan State University, Muratsan “didn’t accept the radical reforms and revolution, considered the church, family, national traditions and customs to be the base of the national identity.” He refused everything that was not relayed to the unity of the Armenian nation, he valued the principle of the “moral richness,” rejecting concepts that hinder the traditional lifestyle of the Armenian family. Muratsan was cautious of progressive reforms which threatened the foundations of Armenian identity, the Armenian Apostolic Church, family, culture, national customs, and beliefs. He chose to represent virtuous, honorable, unselfish, self-sacrificing individuals who fight against the immorality and debauchery. Muratsan was very poor, he had to become an accountant in order to make ends meet. He did not have enough time to write and was not able to fully dedicate himself to the process of writing. When he introduced his first historical drama “Ruzan” (1881), Muratsan turned into a famous writer. The rich Armenians promised to give the money to Muratsan so he could go abroad and continued his education. Nevertheless, they did not keep those promises, and Muratsan worked as an accountant for the rest of his life, writing short stories and novels in his spare time. His short story “Public Adoptee” (1884/1960), was based on Muratsan’s aforementioned biographical experience. The main character of this short story Gevorg tried to commit suicide as well, however, at the last minute, changed his mind because he did not want to leave his mother all alone in the world.

# **Theory of “Collective Unconscious” Within the Scope of Armenian Literature**

Every artist creates art by either consciously or subconsciously, and both ways are present and accessible. According to Jung (1978), the personal conditions of the author are reflected in his own works of art, right in the middle of the creative process. At the same time, Jung contradicts himself saying that personal causes do not impact the work of art, as “a work of art is not a disease.” Psychology can endeavor to understand the man, but not always his creations. The artist is never free, he is constantly conforming to the unconscious, which also guides the conscious of a person. (Jung, 1978)

Nar-Dos, Shirvanzade, and Muratsan regularly focus on tragedies, dramatic events, suicides in their writings, as they have witnessed all of it at some point in their lives. They have created their works of art throughout the same period of time, from 1880 to 1930. The central theme in all of the short stories discussed above is the inevitability of the unhappy ending. They thought in an identical way and collectively developed the same themes with the same points of view. The goal was to depict the reality within the Armenian traditional families. Their short stories how the disadvantages of radical methods implemented by parents towards their children and the refusal of changeless prejudices accepted by society.

 As Jung proposed in his essay on “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious” (1936), some parts of our unconscious mind “have never been individually acquired, but owe their existence exclusively to heredity.” The collective unconscious is common to all individuals and it is in charge of numerous subconscious beliefs and impulses they possess. On the whole, this theory discloses the concealed abilities of our subconscious. It explains that each and every person is born with a certain type of knowledge and understanding of life. Humans share this collective information inside of their unconscious mind as a result of their connection with their ancestors. People do not absolutely know or understand exactly which thoughts and perceptions are linked to their collective unconscious, however, during the critical situations the collective unconscious can awaken.

According to Jung (1936), “the personal unconscious consists for the most part of complexes, the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of archetypes.” There are distinctive models of archetypes which include birth, death, the hero, the mother. Some archetypes encompass positive forms, while others consist of negative ones. The idea of the *archetype* “indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere” (Jung, 1936).

Eventually, maybe the existence of the collective unconscious and the archetypes will not allow thinking differently, to view things from other perspectives, to not be judgmental and prejudiced and survive in a small bubble. On the whole, the literature is an essential source of observation about groups of people in the process of communication and the principle of role-playing in the present society. Novels are “living sourcebooks,” which shed light on the actual vision about sociological issues, necessary changes, social structure, and the policies. (Merill, 1967)

In terms of Armenian classic literature, the theory of “collective unconscious” can be seen without any doubt. Nar-Dos, Shirvanzade, and Muratsan repeatedly concentrated on tragedies, suicides, abuses in Armenian families because it is all they have been witnessing during their lifetimes. They have depicted the reality, nothing more. They have inherited from their ancestors the Armenian form of depression and unhappy endings because Armenians have always suffered due to various reasons, such as wars, genocides, occupations, and being a part of the Soviet Union. Each generation of Armenian writers focused on describing the reality, portraying characters from their own lives, presenting everyday life, and a few people who refused to conform to all the rules. This habit passes from one generation to another, and people read short stories written in a similar writing style, containing similar patterns, themes, characters, plots, and mood.

The phenomenon of the “collective unconscious” is indeed inevitable because we do not choose our ancestors. We cannot control their thoughts, ideas, and images of their subconscious. We acquire a certain type of knowledge from them, which is rooted deep in our collective unconscious. If we narrow down the theory of “collective unconscious” to Armenian fictional prose and Armenian mentality, it is evident that these three writers lived and wrote their short stories in accordance with their own collective unconscious. They took the characters from their own childhood, adulthood, and showed the authentic image of the Armenian families and their inner conflicts.

Altogether, reading Armenian literature really affect people’s psychology in terms of subconscious lifestyle choices they make. Nothing has significantly changed. Those short stories were written many decades ago, nevertheless, they are still relevant in the Armenian society. Children get acquainted with these stories, which include domestic violence, suicides, abuse, broken fates, tragic events because of outdated biases. They grow up having these images in their minds, their subconscious is disturbed, they think and see in their own families that these lifestyles are very much appropriate for all the Armenians. As a result, they become just like their parents, and grandparents, inheriting all the components and characteristics defined in the collective conscious of their families, and the whole nation itself.

**Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

The themes this capstone paper discusses are of current interest and of great importance. I discovered an abundance of valuable and thought-provoking information on Armenian writers and their biographies which assisted me in my research. By doing thorough psychoanalysis of the main characters those authors have created in their short stories, I better understood Armenian culture, heritage, and its values. In addition, there were many other psychological theories suitable for analyzing these classic short stories and all of the themes they were consisted of. I specifically chose Jung’s theory on “collective unconscious” as it shed light on the reasons and motifs of selecting similar types of subjects to write about. Future scholars, researchers can expand upon this project by presenting the modern Armenian literature. The capstone has looked closely at only three writers and their short stories written at the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century. By introducing such a profound and elaborate work, I wanted to highlight the importance of the Armenian fictional prose on the current Armenian mentality within the framework of Jung’s theory on “collective unconscious.” This question raises various other questions. Nowadays, people may think or act differently, plenty of Armenians can disagree with the statements expressed above. The role of the family, women, children is in a constant change, and other scholars can examine this issue from the point of the view of modern writers. They can compare and contrast the situations within the Armenian families, traditions, prejudices, rules and the overall culture of the past with the present. Researchers have a chance to verify whether Jung’s theory is applicable to today’s Armenian literature and society or not. I hope this paper will be only the beginning of the interpretation and evaluation of Armenian fictional prose and its connection to Armenian mentality and our “collective unconscious.”

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