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THE MOON AND THE SUN AS LITERARY ARCHETYPES

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Abstract

This article examines the nature of the images of the moon and the sun as literary archetypes, their mythological, philosophical, and aesthetic origins, and their functional-semantic potential in the literature of different periods. The concept of the archetype is interpreted on the basis of C. G. Jung’s views on the collective unconscious and primordial images, as well as N. Frye’s theory of archetypal criticism. The study considers the moon and the sun not merely as landscape elements or poetic ornaments, but as archetypal images that shape the ideological and compositional system of a literary work and express such categories as the psychology and destiny of the protagonist, love, life and death, knowledge and ignorance, consciousness and the unconscious, time and eternity. Literary works featuring images of the moon and the sun are analyzed, and the semantics of their archetypal meanings are identified. At the same time, the study demonstrates that these meanings are neither fixed nor immutable in literary texts; rather, authors may invert, juxtapose, or individually reinterpret archetypal meanings within their own poetic systems. In particular, it is argued that in *Frankenstein*, the sun and the moon represent two different psychological dimensions of the archetype of light; in *Romeo and Juliet*, they embody the opposition between love and instability; in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Sol and Luna express the relationships between consciousness and the unconscious, masculinity and femininity, order and transformation; in *Moby-Dick*, the sun functions as an ambivalent symbol of cosmic and divine power; while in Alisher Navoi’s epics,



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the moon and the sun represent beauty, perfection, and divine love within the framework of classical Eastern poetics.

Keywords: archetype, literary archetype, moon, sun, mythologeme, symbol, Jung, Frye, mythopoetics, light, darkness, love, fate, life, death, consciousness, unconsciousness, classical literature, modern literature.

Introduction

A review of literary history reveals that certain images, symbols, and motifs have repeatedly appeared in literary works belonging to different peoples and historical periods. Images such as water, the tree, the mountain, the cave, the sea, the road, fire, the bird, the mother, the hero, the shadow, the night, the sun, and the moon have manifested themselves in various forms throughout the vast aesthetic experience of humanity, from mythological thinking to modern literature. However, their recurrence is not merely coincidental. These images embody profound layers of meaning associated with humanity's long historical experience, its relationship with nature, its religious and mythological perceptions, and its psychological needs.

From this perspective, the moon and the sun are among the most ancient and universal images in the history of literary thought. From the earliest periods of human history, the sun was perceived as a source of life, warmth, light, and existence, whereas the moon, owing to its phases, association with the night, and mysterious nature, became associated with time, change, femininity, spirituality, and the unknown. These natural phenomena subsequently evolved into mythological images and, later, into literary-archetypal models.

C. G. Jung associates archetypes with recurring psychic traces of humanity's collective experience. An especially important aspect of his reflections on the sun



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is that its daily rising and setting constitute a repeatedly observed experience of humanity, which provided a basis for the emergence of numerous variants of the “solar hero” in literary and mythological thought. Jung similarly relates the phases of the moon to recurring imagistic experiences. Thus, the physical existence of the sun and the solar archetype are not identical phenomena. The solar archetype is rather a system of meanings historically attributed to the sun by humanity. Likewise, the lunar archetype is not simply the celestial body itself, but a complex of mythological and psychological meanings formed through humanity’s relationship with the moon.

In literary studies, the systematic investigation of archetypal images developed particularly through the work of N. Frye. His *Anatomy of Criticism* established a theoretical model for studying literature through recurring systems of myths, symbols, images, and genres. For Frye, the archetype is one of the recurring images and communicative forms that connect different texts with one another. Therefore, this article examines the moon and the sun not merely as symbols, but as literary archetypes that are repeatedly activated in different texts while being enriched with individual poetic meanings by each author.

Methods

This article employs archetypal, mythopoetic, comparative-typological, hermeneutic, and semantic methods.

The archetypal method is used to identify the common semantic core of the moon and sun images that recurs across different texts. In this regard, a distinction is made between the specific meaning of a particular image in an individual literary work and its general meaning formed within historical and cultural memory. The mythopoetic method serves to identify the connection between the images of the moon and the sun and ancient mythological perceptions. Through the



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comparative-typological method, the study examines how the same archetype has been employed for different artistic purposes in various periods and national literatures. The hermeneutic method makes it possible to reveal the contextual, symbolic, and philosophical meanings of these images.

Main part

Before analyzing the archetypes of the moon and the sun, it is necessary to identify their common and distinctive semantic features. The sun generally activates the meanings of life – light – knowledge – consciousness – creation – power – authority – divinity – masculinity – fatherhood – hope – renewal, whereas the moon is more commonly associated with night – mystery – intuition – spirituality – femininity – the unconscious – change – instability – dream – imagination – time – death and rebirth.

However, this semantic distribution is not rigid. Indeed, one of the strengths of literature lies in the author's ability to transform the traditional meaning of an archetype. For instance, the sun does not always symbolize goodness. It may become a symbol of excessive power, destruction, scorching heat, or blind authority. Likewise, the moon may represent not only mystery or femininity, but also danger, instability, loneliness, or death. Therefore, it is more appropriate to understand an archetype not as a ready-made "dictionary" of meanings, but as a potential field of meaning activated within a particular context.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is one of the important works in which the archetypal nature of the moon and sun images can be traced consistently. A specialized study of the novel analyzes the images of the sun, moon, and fire on the basis of archetypal criticism, particularly Frye's theory. Researchers demonstrate that these images of light are connected with the psychological transformations of the characters and the development of the plot. In the novel,



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light is not merely a physical phenomenon; it functions as a metaphor for the problem of knowledge and existence. Victor Frankenstein strives for knowledge. His passion for knowledge initially approaches the positive aspects of the solar archetype—knowledge, discovery, creativity, and light. However, the novel inverts this archetype. The pursuit of knowledge becomes a chain of light → discovery → creation → loss of control → darkness. Thus, Shelley’s principal artistic innovation lies in questioning the traditional formula of the solar/light archetype as “knowledge = goodness.”

In the work, the opposition sun = conscious knowledge, moon = mysterious and uncertain perception is established. These two archetypes also deepen the relationship between Victor and the creature he creates. Victor perceives himself as a “creator.” He attempts to appropriate the creativity and power associated with the sun. However, the creature he creates is more closely associated with nocturnal, lunar, and dark spaces. Consequently, the sun and moon together constitute an archetypal system expressing humanity’s creative impulse and the uncontrollable consequences of that impulse.

In Shakespeare’s works, the images of the moon and the sun possess particular poetic significance. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the sun and moon directly enter the center of the poetics of love. Romeo compares Juliet to the sun: “It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.” Here, the archetypal meaning of the sun is light, life, beauty, and renewal. For Romeo, Juliet is not merely a beloved; she is a “source of light” that brings new meaning into his existence. Researchers also emphasize the importance of the astronomical relationship between the sun and the moon in this metaphor: as the sun, Juliet displaces the image of the “moon” associated with Romeo’s former love, Rosaline. Shakespeare further develops this image:

sun = Juliet = new love = life;

moon = former love / instability = mutability.



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Juliet, however, fears that Romeo's love may remain changeable and therefore refers to the moon as the "inconstant moon." This is a highly significant poetic detail because the phases of the moon signify its constant change. Juliet is concerned that love may be as changeable as the moon. Thus, Shakespeare draws upon the semantic associations of the lunar archetype: change – instability – cyclicity. By the end of the tragedy, however, the sun also loses its initial positive meaning. Juliet refers to the "garish sun." As a result, the boundaries between light and darkness, life and death, become blurred. This corresponds to the overall idea of the tragedy: love initially appears as the light of life, but subsequently becomes intertwined with death. Throughout the work, Romeo and Juliet are repeatedly represented through images of the sun, moon, and stars. Thus, in *Romeo and Juliet*, the sun and moon archetypes create a three-stage poetic movement: the birth of love → the transformation of love → the eternalization of love.

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* represents one of the most complex and theoretically rich manifestations of the moon and sun archetypes in his oeuvre. Studies have demonstrated that the opposition between Sol and Luna, that is, the relationship between the sun and the moon, constitutes the mythological-cosmological structure of the work. In these studies, Theseus is associated with the sun-Sol, while Hippolyta is associated with the moon-Luna. This opposition is connected with such binary relationships as masculinity and femininity, consciousness and the unconscious, reason and imagination. This dimension is already present in the title of the work itself: summer – solar energy, night – the moon and the unconscious, dream – a psychological process beyond the control of consciousness. Thus, the entire composition of the work is structured around a movement from the sun to the moon, from day to night, and from consciousness to the unconscious. Here, the moon is not merely a celestial body in the night sky.



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It is associated with love, magic, instability, transformation, imagination, the unconscious, femininity, and reproductive power.

Studies have noted that the image of the moon in this work functions as a symbol of change and transformation, while its phases represent the cycle of birth – death – rebirth. This is particularly connected with the transformations experienced by the characters in the forest. Athens is a space of order and social control. The forest, by contrast, is a space of night + moon + magic + the unconscious. Once the characters enter the forest, their previous social and psychological states undergo transformation. Thus, the lunar archetype functions as a mechanism of transformation. At the end of the work, order is restored. Consequently, the opposition between Sol and Luna ultimately leads to a reconciliation of opposites. In this respect, the work approaches Jung's principle of the "integration of opposites." The study likewise connects the Sol/Luna opposition with the alchemical coniunctio-the union of opposing forces.

Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* features a highly complex and ambivalent semantic representation of the sun. The symbols of the sun and fire in the novel have been the subject of separate scholarly studies. Paul Miller demonstrates that Melville employs the images of the sun and fire in connection with ancient mythology, Zoroastrianism, and Jewish religious traditions. At the core of the solar archetype lie the meanings of the source of life and divine power. However, in *Moby-Dick*, these meanings acquire an ambivalent character. The sun signifies not only life + energy + divinity, but also scorching heat + excessive power + danger. Melville therefore employs the solar archetype not simply as a symbol of "goodness," but as a symbol of humanity's encounter with an overwhelmingly powerful cosmic force.

Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* is particularly important for analyzing the lunar archetype from a thematic perspective. One aspect should be



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emphasized in particular: the moon in the title of the novel is not merely a decorative image. It constitutes part of the central metaphorical structure representing Strickland's rejection of his everyday, material, and social existence and his pursuit of art and his inner calling. The origin of the novel's title is also associated, in Maugham's own explanations, with the contrast between the "moon" in the sky and the "sixpence" lying at one's feet. In a later letter, Maugham further explains the metaphor in terms of looking toward the moon while failing to notice the sixpence lying on the ground. Here, the moon = a distant ideal, while the sixpence = everyday material reality. Thus, the lunar archetype in the novel activates the semantics of dream – higher purpose – art – spiritual freedom.

Strickland's life undergoes a transformation that cannot be explained through ordinary social logic. He abandons his family, career, and material stability in pursuit of painting. For him, the "sixpence" represents the practical value of everyday life, whereas the "moon" represents an incomprehensible and distant ideal that nevertheless exerts a powerful attraction upon him. In this respect, the title of the novel itself expresses the protagonist's inner conflict: material necessity ↔ spiritual need.

In the works of Alisher Navoi, the images of the moon and the sun constitute one of the most ancient and active archetypal layers of classical Eastern poetics. The title and plot structure of *Sab' ai Sayyor* itself are connected with cosmic imagery. In Navoi's poetics, there is an organic relationship between the human being, nature, celestial bodies, and spiritual perfection. In the epic, the images of the moon and the sun are frequently employed to express the highest degree of beauty. For example, in Navoi's texts, the "moon" and the "sun" often appear together, elevating the beauty of the human face to a cosmic scale. Images such as "O'rtanib ko'kda ham quyosh, ham oy" ("Both the sun and the moon burning



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in the sky”) can also be found in Sab’ai Sayyor. Here, the moon and the sun are not merely astronomical bodies; they function as measures of beauty.

In classical Eastern poetics, the beloved’s face is widely compared to the moon, while her beauty is compared to the sun. In Navoi, however, this comparison does not remain merely an aesthetic ornament. It is connected with the concepts of perfection and divine beauty. At this point, the sun acquires the meanings of absolute light – perfection – greatness, while the moon signifies grace – beauty – reflected light. The simultaneous use of the moon and the sun unites two dimensions of beauty: the sun = active light; the moon = reflected light. This distinction is particularly important in the mystical poetics of the classical East. The human being is not an absolute source of light. Rather, the human may be interpreted as a being that receives and manifests the reflection of divine light. For this reason, the image of the moon in Navoi’s poetics approaches not only the concept of beauty, but also the notions of reflection, *tajalli* (manifestation), and spiritual light.

In the epic *Layli and Majnun*, the images of the moon and the sun constitute important archetypal devices within the poetics of love. Navoi did not create *Layli and Majnun* merely as the story of the love between two human beings. Literary sources have particularly noted the existence of both outward and inward meanings in the epic and the connection of the characters of *Layli and Majnun* with divine love. Within the epic’s internal system of meaning, *Layli*’s image rises above the level of a mere embodiment of physical beauty. It acquires meaning along the trajectory of beauty → ideal → divine beauty. At this point, the lunar archetype becomes a particularly effective poetic device. The moon establishes the following chain: the beloved’s face → beauty → reflection → the manifestation of divine beauty. The sun, meanwhile, can more strongly represent the pole of absolute light and supreme perfection. Thus, an opposition emerges:



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the moon = reflected beauty; the sun = absolute beauty/light. Majnun's love, in turn, transcends the boundaries of ordinary human affection and rises to the level of an aspiration toward absolute beauty. In this respect, the moon and sun archetypes aestheticize the epic's central philosophical movement-the ascent from outward love to inward, spiritual love. The events of the epic likewise develop through oppositions such as spring and autumn, light and darkness, and life and death. Therefore, the moon and the sun here become not merely metaphors of physical beauty, but archetypal images expressing the metaphysical path of love.

The works analyzed demonstrate that the moon and the sun often function not separately, but as an archetypal pair. At times, their combination generates a new meaning. The fundamental characteristic of the moon and sun archetypes is therefore not merely that they are "opposites," but that they complement one another semantically.

Based on the works examined, five principal functions of the solar archetype can be identified:

1. Life-giving power. The sun represents the biological foundation of nature and human existence.
2. Knowledge and consciousness. In *Frankenstein*, light and the sun are associated with the pursuit of knowledge.
3. Beauty and perfection. In Navoi's poetics, the sun becomes a measure expressing the highest degree of human beauty.
4. Authority and power. In *Moby-Dick*, the power of the sun and fire becomes connected with humanity's aspiration toward absolute power.
5. Renewal. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the sun represents the entrance of new light into Romeo's life through Juliet's appearance.



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The lunar archetype, in turn, performs the following principal functions in the works analyzed:

1. Mutability. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the changing phases of the moon are associated with the instability of love.
2. Femininity. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the relationship between Luna and Hippolyta activates the feminine semantics of the lunar archetype.
3. The unconscious. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the nocturnal setting and the image of the moon are associated with dreams, magic, and psychological transformation beyond conscious control.
4. The ideal. In *The Moon and Sixpence*, the moon symbolizes the aspiration toward an ideal beyond everyday material existence.
5. Beauty and reflection. In Navoi's poetics, the moon serves to express a reflected, subtle, and spiritual form of beauty.

If an author merely repeats an archetype in exactly the same meaning as before, the image may remain at the level of a conventional symbol. Artistic individuality, however, begins with transforming the meaning of the archetype. For example, Mary Shelley transforms the sun into a symbol of the ambivalent power of knowledge. Shakespeare associates the sun with love and life, while connecting the moon with changeability and mystery. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the moon and the sun are placed within a system of masculinity/femininity and consciousness/unconsciousness. Melville enriches the life-giving power of the sun with the ambivalence of cosmic danger and power. Maugham transforms the moon into an ideal symbolizing the search for the meaning of life. Navoi incorporates the moon and the sun into the poetics of beauty, perfection, and divine light. Thus, the same archetype acquires different functional significance in different authors.



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Another important function of the moon and the sun is the artistic representation of time. The rising and setting of the sun may signify the cycle of birth → maturity → decline → death. The phases of the moon, meanwhile, create the model of waxing → waning → disappearance → reappearance. Therefore, the sun and the moon connect the changing nature of human life with the cosmic cycles of nature. Jung likewise regards the daily movement of the sun and the phases of the moon as recurring phenomena in human experience that contribute to the formation of archetypal images. From this perspective, the moon and the sun are not merely natural clocks of time, but become the poetic clocks of existence.

Based on the works examined, the following generalizing model can be proposed:

Work	Archetype	Primary meaning	Artistic function
M. Shelley, Frankenstein	Sun	knowledge, creation, consciousness	Revealing the ambivalent nature of scientific passion
M. Shelley, Frankenstein	Moon	mystery, darkness, the unknown	Creating an atmosphere of the creature and fear
Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet	Sun	love, life, beauty	Idealizing the character of Juliet
Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet	Moon	instability, change	Expressing the changeability of love and tragic destiny
Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream	Sun	consciousness, order, masculinity	Representing social order and the realm of daylight
Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream	Moon	unconsciousness, magic, femininity	Creating a space of transformation and dreams
H. Melville, Moby-Dick	Sun	power, divinity, energy	Revealing Ahab's striving for absolute power



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S. Maugham, The Moon and Sixpence	Moon	ideal, art, dream	Expressing the conflict between material life and spiritual aspiration
A. Navoi, Sab'ai Sayyor	Sun	perfection, light, grandeur	Expressing beauty and cosmic perfection
A. Navoi, Sab'ai Sayyor	Moon	beauty, grace, reflection	Elevating the aesthetic ideal to a cosmic scale
A. Navoi, Layli and Majnun	Moon	beauty, reflection, love	Idealizing the character of Layli
A. Navoi, Layli and Majnun	Sun	absolute light, perfection	Representing the elevation from human love to divine love

As the table demonstrates, while the general archetypal core of the moon and the sun is preserved, their specific functions vary depending on the ideological content and genre of each work.

The moon and the sun are universal archetypes in literature, yet their meanings are not absolutely fixed. The principal semantic core of the sun archetype is associated with life, light, knowledge, consciousness, and creativity, whereas the core of the moon archetype is associated with change, mystery, intuition, night, femininity, and the unconscious. These two archetypes often function not separately but as an oppositional pair. A literary text does not merely reproduce an archetype; rather, it subjects it to individual poetic transformation. The images of the moon and the sun perform not only metaphorical functions but also plot-structural and compositional functions. These archetypes make it possible to portray the hero's inner evolution in parallel with the cosmic cycles of nature. In classical Eastern literature, the archetypes of the moon and the sun are often associated with beauty, divine light, and perfection, whereas in Western modernist and Romantic literature they are more strongly connected with consciousness, knowledge, spirituality, individualism, and existential conflict. A



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comparative study of the moon and sun archetypes makes it possible to identify typological connections between different national literatures.

Conclusion

The moon and the sun are images that have emerged from humanity's most ancient cosmic experiences and have acquired archetypal significance in the history of world literary thought over the course of a long historical development. Their universal nature is primarily associated with two phenomena that have been continuously observed in human everyday experience: the rising and setting of the sun and the phases of the moon. C. G. Jung likewise emphasizes the recurrent nature of the movements of the sun and the moon in human experience and argues that such recurring experiences provided a foundation for the formation of mythological and archetypal images.

In literature, the sun generally activates the semantic fields of life, light, knowledge, consciousness, creativity, divinity, and perfection. The moon, by contrast, evokes such meanings as night, mystery, spirituality, intuition, femininity, change, instability, dreams, and rebirth. However, these meanings are neither rigid nor immutable. A literary author transforms an archetype in accordance with the ideological and aesthetic requirements of the work.

The moon and the sun are not merely representations of nature or poetic embellishments in literature. They are universal artistic archetypes that connect humanity's ancient mythological memory with modern individual experience. Their power lies precisely in the fact that each new author recreates these archetypes in accordance with their own aesthetic and philosophical worldview. Thus, while the sun may represent life and hope in one literary work, it may become a symbol of excessive power and destruction in another; similarly, while



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the moon may symbolize beauty and grace in one work, it may represent instability, mystery, or loneliness in another.

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