

ARCHITECTONICS OF MEMORY IN THE PROSE OF S. AFLATUNI: CONSTRUCTION OF PLACES OF MEMORY AND CULTURAL REMINISCENCES

Zaytuna Rustamova

1st Year Master's Student Chirchik State Pedagogical

University Tashkent Region, Chirchik City

+998 99 443 20 60

rustamova.zaytuna.f@mail.ru

Abstract

The article explores the architecture of memory in S. Aflatuni's prose. The aim is to identify memory structures through imagery, space, and symbols. The study applies theories by Nora, Assmann, and Ricoeur. Novelty lies in the interdisciplinary approach.

Keywords: Memory, mnemonics, fragmentation, narrative, architecture, culture, images.

Introduction

АРХИТЕКТОНИКА ПАМЯТИ В ПРОЗЕ С.АФЛАТУНИ: КОНСТРУКЦИЯ МЕСТ ПАМЯТИ И КУЛЬТУРНЫХ РЕМИНИСЦЕНЦИЙ

Рустамова Зайтуна Фаррух кизи

Магистрант 1-го курса Чирчикский государственный педагогический
университет Ташкентская область, город Чирчик

+998 99 443 20 60

rustamova.zaytuna.f@mail.ru

Аннотация:

В статье рассматривается архитектура памяти в прозе М. Афлатуни. Цель – выявление структур памяти через образы, пространство и символы. Установлена связь с теориями Норы, Ассманн и Рикёра. Новизна – междисциплинарный подход.

Ключевые слова: память, мнемоника, фрагментарность, нарратив, архитектура, культура, образы.

Introduction

Research relevance. Memory in literature is increasingly regarded not only as content but also as a form-shaping "architecture" of the text. However, the analysis of mnemonic structures in Central Asian prose remains fragmented.

S. Aflatuni's novella *Clay Letters, Floating Apples* vividly demonstrates how locations are transformed into symbolic repositories of both collective and personal memories. Identifying the principles behind this "memory architecture" can deepen our understanding of mnemonic techniques in the postcolonial literature of the region.

The methodological framework of this study is based on P. Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*, A. Assmann's theory of communicative and cultural memory, and P. Ricoeur's dialectic of memory and forgetting.

The aim of the research is to identify the architectural model of memory in Aflatuni's novella through the analysis of spaces, symbols, and narrative structures.

Main Body

As Mikhail Bakhtin notes, "Every literary work possesses its own topography of memory, where the past and present intertwine in a complex web of meanings" [3, pp. 168–170]. The narrative of the novella is constructed from "modules" of memory, each linked to the next not chronologically but associatively [6, p. 55]. For instance, after a description of ruins, the protagonist suddenly recalls a family ritual:

"...we drink water and read these notes. The children yawn. My wife wipes her face with a dry handkerchief" [1, p. 130].

Such mundane details "glue together" a mosaic of fragments, creating a cohesive yet fluid space of memory.

The entanglement of temporal layers is accentuated through abrupt transitions—from the 21st century to the era of the Great Migrations, from rain to broken legends. A vivid example is the protagonist's gaze at a spinning toy in the rain:

“...he looked up, where right under the downpour the spinner was proudly twirling. Then he took a few steps... People were catching the rain in buckets” [1, p. 135].

In Aflatuni’s prose, memory is not a passive repository of events, but a living architecture in which each location—from a pottery workshop to abandoned ruins—becomes a point of intersection for personal and collective narratives. As E.F. Shafransky observes: “Through the imagery of clay tablets, floating apples, and sandy expanses, the author constructs ‘sites of memory’ where the word takes on material flesh and ‘preserves the breath’ of past generations” [7].

Based on the classical theories of P. Nora (*lieux de mémoire*), A. Assmann (communicative and cultural memory), and P. Ricoeur (the dialectic of memory and forgetting), we analyze how the author transforms the text into a dynamic system of mnemonic markers [5, pp. 22–25; 6, pp. 48–50]. The fragmentary structure, reminiscences, and nonlinear leaps in Aflatuni’s prose turn each narrative module into a mnemonic bookmark.

In analyzing Aflatuni’s prose, one must note that memory functions as the central constructive principle, realized as a kind of architectural space. The narrative is built through associative modules, where the motifs of clay, apples, and sand resonate with Central Asian myths and Biblical allusions.

Folk myths, Sufi hymns, and Christian symbols coexist within a single textual fabric. The image of aggressive apple trees combines folkloric anthropomorphism with an ecological allegory:

“They say that in that hot summer, the trees’ minds grew cloudy... Wateeeer, wateeeer... Some apple trees... began to attack people” [1, p. 133].

This multi-layered textual fabric transforms each location into a *lieu de mémoire*, merging personal and historical narratives.

The theoretical core of the study is grounded in three key concepts. The first is Pierre Nora’s notion of *lieux de mémoire*—“sites of memory”—understood as “complex phenomena, at once material and symbolic, natural and artificial” [5, p. 25].

Following this logic, any space in Aflatuni’s text—whether it be the potter’s workshop, the ruins of an ancient city, or a village bathhouse—is endowed with the function of storing history and emotion. Already in the first scene, the protagonist confesses:

“Every evening before bed, I repeat these sounds. Sometimes I call my family, we drink water and read these notes” [1, p. 128].

Here, the clay tablet becomes not merely an object but an emotional artifact, materializing generational memory.

The second theoretical pillar is Jan Assmann’s distinction between communicative and cultural memory. The former refers to the transmission of meaning across generations within a time span of 80–100 years, while the latter preserves symbolic codes over millennia [2, p. 47].

As noted by researcher I.S. Yukhnova: “The imagery of water and apple trees in Aflatuni’s prose simultaneously evokes family tales, Sufi poetry, and Christian rituals, clearly illustrating the workings of cultural memory” [9, pp. 60–62]. In this context, symbols such as water, clay, and apple trees act as a seam between intimate family circles and a broader cultural matrix:

“The tree, the apple tree: gray as stone, you can touch all its branches—no leaves... And if there’s still a glass hidden in your pocket, best throw it away” [1, p. 132].

The drought of Central Asia echoes Biblical themes of lost abundance and Sufi visions of water as purification.

The third conceptual foundation lies in Paul Ricoeur’s idea of the dialectic of memory and forgetting, in which “to remember” and “to forget” are mutually constitutive processes shaping historical narrative and collective identity [6, pp. 48–50].

Ricoeur emphasizes that “memory is constructed through selection, and forgetting creates dramatic contrast.” In Aflatuni’s text, silences and omissions are intentional. A striking example is the rain scene, where the disappearance of a bird contrasts with the soaked surroundings:

“It was raining. The tree, having swallowed the water, turned black. Someone’s nimble hands had already whisked away the birdcage...” [1, p. 136].

When applying these frameworks to Aflatuni’s prose, it becomes clear that each narrative “node” functions as a mnemonic magnet. The description of the bathhouse, infused with the “dryish scent of water that soaked into the walls and soil,” turns it into more than a setting—it becomes a memory vault, connecting the protagonist and reader through a shared cultural dimension.

The repetition of key phrases and images serves as textual bookmarks. The author frequently returns to the motif of clay letters, introducing them in varied contexts:

“Clay letters preserved the breath...”

“Clay tablets rang with a muffled tone...” [1, p. 145].

The final lines, where the spinning toy reappears, invite the reader to “see the story through”:

“As long as I’m telling it, the spinner will keep turning... And you will watch” [1, p. 145].

Nora’s model of *lieux de mémoire* helps reveal how Aflatuni’s topoi become active participants in the narrative, rather than serving as mere backgrounds for action.

The fragmentary narrative structure manifests in the “mosaic” layout of the text, where flashes of memory are interwoven with literary and cultural reminiscences. The protagonist, reflecting on the shape of an apple, suddenly recalls his grandmother’s stories, then a line from an ancient hymn, followed by the image of classical painting. As literary scholar A.B. Didenko notes: “Such mnemonic markers function as bookmarks, helping the reader navigate the labyrinth of associations and ensuring the coherent perception of a fragmented narrative” [4]. The narrative’s nonlinearity, its transitions between past and present, and its integration of cultural strata from different epochs together produce a sense of temporal fluidity. The shift from the description of rain and a darkened tree to the disappearance of a bird illustrates not only a subjective experience of time but also Ricoeur’s principle that silences—the forgotten—are as essential as remembered details.

Symbols of water, clay, and the circle tie Central Asia to antiquity and religious archetypes, enriching the text’s cultural depth.

The identified “architecture of memory” in Aflatuni’s work demonstrates how literature can embody a complex system of personal and collective remembrance. Future research may explore comparative analyses of similar techniques in other Central Asian authors and examine the influence of digital media—hypertext, interactive platforms—on the evolution of literary *lieux de mémoire*.

This interdisciplinary direction offers a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of cultural encoding and the dynamic nature of memory in contemporary prose.

The repetition of key phrases and images serves as textual bookmarks. The author frequently returns to the motif of clay letters, introducing them in varied contexts:

“Clay letters preserved the breath...”

“Clay tablets rang with a muffled tone...” [1, p. 145].

The final lines, where the spinning toy reappears, invite the reader to “see the story through”:

“As long as I’m telling it, the spinner will keep turning... And you will watch” [1, p. 145].

Nora’s model of *lieux de mémoire* helps reveal how Aflatuni’s topoi become active participants in the narrative, rather than serving as mere backgrounds for action.

The fragmentary narrative structure manifests in the “mosaic” layout of the text, where flashes of memory are interwoven with literary and cultural reminiscences. The protagonist, reflecting on the shape of an apple, suddenly recalls his grandmother’s stories, then a line from an ancient hymn, followed by the image of classical painting. As literary scholar A.B. Didenko notes: “Such mnemonic markers function as bookmarks, helping the reader navigate the labyrinth of associations and ensuring the coherent perception of a fragmented narrative” [4]. The narrative’s nonlinearity, its transitions between past and present, and its integration of cultural strata from different epochs together produce a sense of temporal fluidity. The shift from the description of rain and a darkened tree to the disappearance of a bird illustrates not only a subjective experience of time but also Ricoeur’s principle that silences—the forgotten—are as essential as remembered details.

Symbols of water, clay, and the circle tie Central Asia to antiquity and religious archetypes, enriching the text’s cultural depth.

The identified “architecture of memory” in Aflatuni’s work demonstrates how literature can embody a complex system of personal and collective remembrance. Future research may explore comparative analyses of similar techniques in other Central Asian authors and examine the influence of digital media—hypertext, interactive platforms—on the evolution of literary *lieux de mémoire*.

This interdisciplinary direction offers a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of cultural encoding and the dynamic nature of memory in contemporary prose.

Conclusion

The conducted study demonstrates that memory in S. Aflatuni’s prose serves as a fundamental architectural foundation of the text. Through the application of the theoretical frameworks developed by P. Nora, A. Assmann, and P. Ricoeur, it was established that mnemonic nodes, cultural reminiscences, and a nonlinear narrative structure together form a dynamic model of collective memory.

The study recommends applying this approach to the analysis of literature focused on postcolonial identity and cultural transformation.

Future research perspectives include comparative studies of mnemonic mechanisms in the works of other Central Asian authors, as well as the investigation of how digital media (hypertext, interactive platforms) influence the evolution of literary *sites of memory*.

Список использованной литературы:

1. Афлатуни С. А. «Глиняные буквы, плывущие яблоки» // Октябрь. – 2006. – № 9. – С. 123–145.
2. Ассманн А. «Коммуникативная и культурная память» (Assmann, J. Communicative and Cultural Memory). – Берлин, 2011.
3. Бахтин М. М. «Вопросы литературы и эстетики». – М.: Художественная литература, 1975. – 502 с.
4. Диденко А. Б. «Проблема соотношения библейского и фантастического в романе С. Афлатуни “Поклонение волхвов”» // Литература в диалоге культур. – Ростов-на-Дону: Фонд науки и образования, 2018. – Вып. 4. – С. 70–74.
5. Нора П. «Места памяти» (Nora, P. Les Lieux de Mémoire). – Париж, 1984.
6. Рикёр П. «Память, история, забвение» (Ricoeur, P. Memory, History, Forgetting). – Чикаго, 2004.
7. Шафранская Э. Ф. «Буквы, Память, Язык: О русской транскультурной литературе» // Полилингвильность и транскультурные практики, 2023, № 1.
8. Юхнова И. С. «Русский культурный код в повести «Глиняные буквы, плывущие яблоки”». – Мировая литература на перекрестье культур и цивилизаций, 2015, № 2(10), С. 59–67.
9. Юхнова И. С. «Чужие сюжеты в прозе С. Афлатуни». – Международный журнал прикладных и фундаментальных исследований, 2017, № 52, С. 371–373.