

BİR İNCELEME ÇALIŞMASI: FLANNERY O'CONNOR'IN *A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND* ESERİNDE PERSONA VE GÖLGE ARKETİPLERİ

Melike Sultan ÇİÇEKLER

Lecturer, Kahramanmaraş İstiklal University, Kahramanmaraş, Türkiye
melikesultan.cicekler@istiklal.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0001-8285-287X

Özet

Flannery O'Connor'ın *A Good Man is Hard to Find* adlı eseri, Carl Gustav Jung'un arketip teorisi çerçevesinde psikoanalitik bir yaklaşım kullanılarak, özellikle Persona ve Gölge arketipleri üzerinden analiz edilecektir. Büyükanne, ahlaki bir maske takarak kusurlarını gizleyen Persona arketipini temsil ederken, Misfit karakteri, insan doğasının rahatsız edici gerçekleriyle yüzleşen Gölge arketipini simgeler. Bu iki karakterin etkileşimi, görünüş ile gerçeklik arasındaki gerilimi gözler önüne serer. Jungcu kavramlar ışığında, bu çalışma O'Connor'ın sahte ahlak anlayışını nasıl eleştirdiğini ve iyi ve kötü kavramlarının karmaşıklığını nasıl sorguladığını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Carl Gustav Jung, persona arketipi, gölge arketipi, Flannery O'Connor

A REVIEW STUDY: THE PERSONA AND THE SHADOW ARCHETYPES IN FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S *A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND*

Abstract

Flannery O'Connor's *A Good Man is Hard to Find* will be analyzed through a psychoanalytical approach, specifically using Carl Gustav Jung's archetypal theory, particularly the Persona and the Shadow. While the Grandmother represents the Persona, hiding her flaws behind a mask of morality, the Misfit embodies the Shadow archetype, confronting disturbing truths about human nature. The interaction between these two characters highlights the tension between what is on the surface, namely appearance, and reality. By applying Jungian concepts, this paper aims to explore how O'Connor critiques false morality and challenges the complexity of the good and the evil.

Key words: Carl Gustav Jung, persona archetype, shadow archetype, Flannery O'Connor

1. INTRODUCTION

The human psyche is like a deep ocean, containing both the darkest and brightest aspects of humanity. Individuals may project an untrue version of themselves by exaggerating behaviors and discourse to conceal their true character. For example, someone may constantly brag about their accomplishments and possessions to cover up feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. However, when they demonstrate kindness and empathy towards others during times of need, their true character emerges. Carl Gustav Jung, a renowned psychologist, theorized that our authentic selves are often hidden beneath layers of societal expectations and personal insecurities. In this study, Jungian archetypes are applied to the main characters in Flannery O'Connor's *A Good Man is Hard to Find* by Flannery O'Connor to explore the contrast between intentions and actions, using Jungian concepts as a guide to navigate the complexities of human nature.

Flannery O'Connor is widely regarded as a key figure in 20th-century Southern Gothic literature, a genre characterized by “irrational, horrific, and transgressive thoughts, desires, and impulses; grotesque characters; dark humor, and an overall angst-ridden sense of alienation (Bjerre, 2017). Her works are known for their exploration of grotesque characters, moral dilemmas, and the dark undercurrents of human nature. *A Good Man is Hard to Find* is one of her most famous short stories, reflecting the key elements of the Southern Gothic genre. This particular story, exemplifies O'Connor's ability to probe deeply into the human psyche while challenging conventional moral binaries. To explore the unconscious mind and its impact on behavior, Sigmund Freud founded psychoanalysis in the late 19th century. International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis defines the term “psychoanalysis” as follows:

Sigmund Freud himself provided the most complete, and now most classical definition for his invention, psychoanalysis: “Psycho-analysis is the name (1) of a procedure for investigating mental processes which are almost inaccessible in any other way, (2) of a method (based upon that investigation) for the treatment of neurotic disorders and (3) of a collection of psychological information obtained along those lines, which is gradually being accumulated into a new scientific discipline” (1923a [1922], p. 235). This definition, intended for the Encyclopedia Britannica, is still widely used today by many psychoanalytic training institutes. (Mijolla, 2005, p. 1362)

Freud's theories, over the years, have evolved and expanded, leading to the development of various schools of psychoanalysis. Jung later developed Analytical Psychology, diverging from Freudian theory by introducing the concepts of the conscious mind (ego), the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious (Jung, 1959). His definition of the conscious mind is “the function or activity which maintains the relation of psychic contents to the ego” (Jung, 1943, p. 6). This makes it clear that the ego then is the conscious mind. Briefly, the conscious represents the conscious mind because it comprises the thoughts, memories, and emotions that a person is aware of. It is the level, where an individual makes decisions, learns, and obtains wisdom: “the ego forms the center of the consciousness; and, in so far as this comprises the empirical personality, the ego is the subject of all personal acts of consciousness” (Jung, 1959, p. 14), writes Jung in his work *Aion*. Thus, the ego is largely responsible for feelings of identity. Moreover, the personal unconscious is “the most decisive qualities in a person and can be perceived only by others, or have to be laboriously discovered with outside help” (Jung, 1959, p. 5) and Jung re-describes it as “a more or less superficial layer of the unconscious” (Jung, 1955, p. 3). It is possible to conclude that the personal unconscious is a collection of repressed memories and neglected information. These experiences may encompass ignored childhood

memories or traumatic memories that the mind has suppressed or excluded from conscious memory. Lastly, the collective unconscious, where the archetypes are found, is the deepest and darkest side of the psyche. Jung believed that regardless of the culture that they are born into or the time period in which they live, all people can identify with the content of the collective unconscious. It is the most original and controversial contribution to the personality theory (J. D. Singer, 1968). As mentioned earlier, it is in this state that the archetypes* are found. Jung points out that “the archetypes most clearly characterized from the empirical point of view are those which have the most frequent and the most disturbing influence on the ego”(Jung, 1959, p. 8). Also, he writes that “the archetype of the self is met with everywhere in mythology as well as in the products of individual fantasy”(Jung, 2008, p. 147) summarizes that the archetypes are seen in many cultures which have cultivated many myths independently of one another and which feature similar characters and themes. Among from his many archetypes, Jung focused on four of them: “prominent aspects of oneself that one needs to become aware of in such a situation are the persona (the "I" one presents to the outer world), the inner contra sexual (anima or animus) and the shadow (attitudes and inclinations that have either been repressed or never been conscious)” (Sharp, 1996, p. 65), and the Self. These archetypes, for Jung, form the human psyche as they are present within the human race from the primitive past, by directing and influencing the present behavior. Mueller writes in his paper, *Jungian Analysis*, the followings:

There are at least two ways of approaching a literary work of art from the stand point of psychology: first, by simply analyzing the characters through their words and actions as real people; and second, by treating the work as a dream turned inside out, in which each character is a facet, or refraction, of the dreamer's personality.(Mueller, 1978, p. 74)

From this point of view, this paper will analyze the short story to delve into the characters' dialogues and behaviors by focusing merely on the Persona and the Shadow, as they play a crucial role in O'Connor's narrative. Yet, a brief summary of the short story should be given to understand the paper better in terms of Jungian psychology.

The story takes place in Atlanta, where a grandmother is trying to convince her son, Bailey whom she lives with among with his three children and wife, to go to east Tennessee instead of taking a trip to Florida. She tries to convince him by showing a news on the paper that if they travel to Florida, they might encounter with a criminal, who has escaped from prison, who calls himself The Misfit. The real reason of her not wanting to go to Florida but to east Tennessee is not to protect her family, as she announces, but secretly wants to see her relatives. The father, Bailey, is of an aggressive man, his wife is rather naïve and passive, the elder son John Wesley, aged eight, is rather rude, and his younger sister June Star, is even worse than her brother. The last child is a baby, and the grandmother's attitude, according to her, is moral, yet she is critical and a deceiver. The Misfit, as the name suggests, is an outsider, entitled to prison, but morally wiser than the grandmother when he speaks, but not in his actions. The story continues by taking a trip to Florida in their car, but the climax is when the grandmother convinces her son to stop nearby Toombsboro, because she remembers a house that she wants to detour. She actually lies about the house having a secret panel, so the children take her side and they all convince the father to go there. On their way they have an accident and The Misfit and his men see the incident and come near them. Killing two members of the family at a time, The Misfit and the grandmother have a conversation, where the grandmother tries to convince him

* The Merriam Webster dictionary defines that “the archetype comes from the Greek verb *archein* (“to begin” or “to rule”) and the noun *typos* (“type”)”(Definition of *ARCHETYPE*, 2024).

that he is a good man, thus he does not have to kill anyone. The Misfit agrees that he was a good man, but does not give up killing them at the end.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The Character Analysis

The relationship between the family members is contradictory, as they do not symbolize a happy and united type, but a deceitful and toxic one. The main reason for this complex relationship is due to the grandmother's interference and criticisms towards the others. She claims to be a moral and religious lady, but her actions show the opposite. The reader is aware of the fact that all the actions she takes and the dialogues that she has with the rest of the characters imply that she is a hypocrite, and a dishonest and selfish person. The hypocrisy is seen throughout the story; in the beginning when she gives a big speech about conscience to Bailey, but acts differently when she sneaks her cat, Pitty Sing, to the car, being aware of the fact that her son hates traveling with it. The second dishonesty happens when she lies about the secret panel in the house, and later remembers that she recalled the location wrongly, but kept silence as not to anger her son. The third one is when they encounter with The Misfit and she begs to him not to kill her son and his family, but not to kill her by trying to represent herself as a true lady with virtues. The father figure, Bailey, is not a happy nor a talkative man. He is, most of the time, silent and aggressive. He does not do the talking when the family meet with new people, but it is the grandmother who takes on this duty. He is unprotective against his own family when The Misfit and his men start killing them. The wife, is a repressed figure, with a naïve face, but a masculine fashion, when compared to the grandmother, who dresses in bright colors and wears a hat. She is like her husband; not a talker. Her only active actions are to put the baby to sleep, or she sleeps herself or calls the children by her side. She leaves the dominant woman character to her mother-in-law. John Wesley, the eight years old son, is a stocky and rude boy with glasses. He often challenges his grandmother and ignores her most of the time with rude comments. Although being rude, his innocence is seen when he asks why The Misfit is carrying a gun, unaware of the fact that he will kill his family. June Star, the younger daughter, is a sassy girl and even ruder than her brother. Her rudeness is seen towards her challenges with her grandmother as well as in her dialogues with other people. June Star and John Wesley, are the representations of the present people who are not as polite as the past, as the grandmother says. The Misfit, although being the unlikely source of spirituality, or moral guidance, questions the existence of life and shares anecdotes with the grandmother, who assumes to be morally superior.

2.2.The Persona Archetype

June Singer summarizes the analytical psychology of Carl Jung by means of archetypes briefly in this sense:

The archetypes belong to the deeper layers of the psyche, the unconscious. Since they are unconscious, we cannot observe them directly, but we can see their manifestations everywhere about us in the form of archetypal images and symbols. These images and symbols lead us from the known to the unknown, as we seek to better understand ourselves.(J. Singer, 1994, p. 133)

The grandmother character embodies the persona archetype. She is not of an unusual figure, everyone from different backgrounds and cultures can identify with this character. Anthony Stevens defines the universality of the archetypes as they “possess the dynamic property of seeking actualization in the reality of life- that is to say, in the behavior and personality of the individual as the life cycle unfolds within the context of the

environment”(Papadopoulos, 2006, p. 85), demonstrates that the grandmother is an universal archetype, using the religious mask/persona[†] when interacting with the others. Jung describes his persona as mentioned below:

Whoever looks into the mirror of the water will see first of all his own face. Whoever goes to himself risks a confrontation with himself. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely, the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the *persona*, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face.(Jung, 1955, p. 20)

Thus, the persona -distinct from our inner self- is an identity that we project onto others. It is a kind of a public image; an attributed social and certain role such as mother, father, or an artist. As it is an idealized image, it is not a true reflection of one's self. Jung believes identifying oneself too much with the persona can lead to inner conflicts and a repression of individuality that can be resolved through *individuation*, which is the “becoming of the self”(Jung, 1955, p. 35). The grandmother puts on the persona, or the social mask, of a devoted Christian lady. It is clear every time within her speeches or dialogues she has with either the strangers or with her family, and the acts that she takes. The first examples of the evidence that she is putting on the persona of a good Christian lady will be given in three perspectives; by her speech, her acts and her physical appearance, respectively.

The first dialogue can be given from the beginning of the story when she tries to convince her son, Bailey, to give up the trip to Florida, but to east Tennessee:

“Here this fellow that calls himself The Misfit is aloose from the Federal Pen and headed toward Florida and you read here what it says he did to these people. Just you read it. I wouldn't take my children in any direction with a criminal like that aloose in it. I couldn't answer to my conscience if I did”. (O'Connor, 1977, p. 3)

“I couldn't answer to my conscience if I did” is the very first implication that the grandmother is using this persona to cover up her real character, because her intention is not to really save the children from the harm that they could get from The Misfit, but to visit her hometown so that she can “see her connections”(O'Connor, 1977, p. 3). Unfortunately, the grandmother does not have a good will, thus she is a contradictory character. A following example is when the family is on the road and the grandmother goes on and on talking about fields that they pass and how great her hometown is. The grandson is challenging her, so the grandmother uses these sentences:

"In my time," said the grandmother, folding her thin veined fingers, "children were more respectful of their native states and their parents and everything else. People did right then. Oh look at the cute little pickaninny!" she said and pointed to a Negro child standing in the door of a shack. "Wouldn't that make a picture, now?" she asked and they all turned and looked at the little Negro out of the back window. He waved. (O'Connor, 1977, p. 5)

This moment is actually a very clear point that gives a true reflection into the grandmother's inner self and the persona. She seems to be morally guiding the younger generation by giving a big speech about the past times, where suddenly she is distracted by an African boy outside. The discourse, i.e., the choice of the language is confusing, because within

[†] Originally the word persona meant a mask worn by actors to indicate the role they played.

religious beliefs each man is equal, but the adjectives and nicknames the grandmother is using are *pickaninny*, and *Negro*. She is also treating him like an object that you can take a picture of.

Among many others, the last example of the dialogue that she has that ensures her self-interest is when The Misfit makes his man take two at a time of her family to be murdered within the woods:

"Jesus!" the old lady cried. "You've got good blood! I know you wouldn't shoot a lady! I know you come from nice people! Pray! Jesus, you ought not to shoot a lady. I'll give you all the money I've got!" (O'Connor, 1977, p. 15)

"The old woman is an unfit vessel of grace"(Bethea, 2006, p. 246), as she calls The Misfit, Jesus, and when she tries to ensure him that she would not kill a lady. If she were of a true believer, one can say that first, she would pray for her family and later pray not to the criminal but to God, only.

Apart from the speeches, her actions should be delved into to analyze the Christian persona. The very first action that she contradicts with what she says is when she secretly hides her cat under her valise in the next morning when the family is about to begin their trip to Florida. Here, she is deceiving her own son, again, because she knows Bailey does not like to travel with a cat. Another example is when the family had just gotten out of Toombsboro and the grandmother recalls a house in a plantation that she used to visit. She wants to revisit it so hard that she lies about the house having a secret panel where the old owners kept their unfound silvers. Later, just a few moments before the car accident, she remembers that she was mistaken about the location of that house, but decides not to tell Bailey. The Christian persona is so embraced by the grandmother that she is well self-convinced that she is virtuous, but her true self shows within her actions that she is not.

The last evidence of her self-interest is the way she dresses:

The grandmother had on a navy, blue straw sailor hat with a bunch of white violets on the brim and a navy blue dress with a small white dot in the print. Her collars and cuffs were white organdy trimmed with lace and at her neckline she had pinned a purple spray of cloth violets containing a sachet. In case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that she was a lady. (O'Connor, 1977, p. 4)

She does not even take her hat off after the car accident. It seems like the grandmother still has her youth spirit, her true character does not match with her so-called beliefs and morality as she assumes them to be.

2.3.The Shadow Archetype

In literature, the shadow is often presented as a villainous character. The shadow archetype within the story is The Misfit character. According to Jung:

The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form. It cannot be argued out of existence or rationalized into harmlessness. This problem is exceedingly difficult, because it not only challenges the whole man, but reminds him at the same time of his helplessness and ineffectuality. (Jung, 1955, p. 20)

Surely, The Misfit is of a villain, who is sentenced into prison for killing his own father, but he cannot remember whether he committed the murder or not: "I forget what I done, lady.

I set there and set there, trying to remember what it was I done and I ain't recalled it to this day. Once in a while, I would think it was coming to me, but it never come"(O'Connor, 1977, p. 14). As he unconsciously holds onto the shadow, he is at all times in conflict with what he believes in and what he actually does. As Jung explains above, although he knows the true path, namely the Christianity and morality when he speaks to the grandmother, who assumes to be a moral guide more than anyone she has encountered, he is in of a helpless place. He cannot give up murdering. His words are of good evidence that his true self is somewhere deeper and reflects itself within his discourse. He says he would "hate to have to"(O'Connor, 1977, p. 11) kill the grandmother, when she tells him that he "wouldn't shoot a lady"(O'Connor, 1977, p. 11). He also adds that he has come from a good family; "God never made a finer woman than my mother and my daddy's heart was pure gold"(O'Connor, 1977, p. 11). Jung points out that the shadow "is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real"(Jung, 1959, p. 8). The Misfit is as Jung points out is having delusions in a kind of way, so, he is committing the murders as if it is not such a big deal, because he is at the same time sharing his knowledge about Jesus and blaming others who are using "the papers" against him:

"Jesus thown everything off balance. It was the same case with Him as with me except He hadn't committed any crime and they could prove I had committed one because they had the papers on me. Of course," he said, "they never shown me my papers. That's why I sign myself now. I said long ago, you get you a signature and sign everything you do and keep a copy of it. Then you'll know what you done and you can hold up the crime to the punishment and see do they match and in the end you'll have something to prove you ain't been treated right. I call myself The Misfit," he said, "because I can't make what all I done wrong fit what all I gone through in punishment."(O'Connor, 1977, p. 15)

As one has to recognize the dark places of the psyche, The Misfit is incapable of doing so. It is as if the shadow has possessed his character. He does not use his birth name, even. He calls himself The Misfit, which represents that his own character is dominated by the shadow within. The Misfit is questioning the actions of Jesus and blames him for raising the dead, if it was even true. For him, Jesus has played with the balance of life and that the old lady should enjoy the last minutes "by killing someone or burning down this house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness"(O'Connor, 1977, p. 15,16). It is as if he is angry towards the religion and the way things work. He is questioning the life, way too better than the grandmother, but in the end cannot fight with his shadow, on the contrary, he becomes the shadow himself.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious suggests that every person carries within them a set of universal symbols and archetypes that shape their understanding of the world. In *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, Flannery O'Connor skillfully weaves Jungian archetypes into her characters, adding layers of psychological depth and complexity to their actions and interactions. The grandmother, embodying the persona archetype, clings to her self-righteousness and religious facade, presenting herself as morally superior while failing to acknowledge her own shortcomings. This 'mask' represents her desire to conform to societal expectations of goodness, but ultimately reveals her moral blindness. On the other hand, The Misfit represents the shadow—the darker, repressed side of human nature. His existential questioning and violent rejection of traditional morality expose the chaotic, destructive potential within all individuals.

The significance of these archetypes is crucial to understanding the characters' true motives. Jung's theory warns of the dangers of becoming overly identified with these unconscious symbols, as they can distort one's perception of reality and lead to a fractured sense of self. Both the grandmother and The Misfit suffer from this psychological delusion: the grandmother's passive lies and judgments blur her own moral compass, while The Misfit's obsessive questioning of life and death pushes him deeper into nihilism. These characters illustrate the duality that exists within every human being—the constant tension between light and shadow, good and evil. As O'Connor suggests, this duality is not easily resolved, but it remains a defining feature of the human experience, often distorting one's perception of truth and reality. Consequently, the interplay of these archetypes serves as a reminder of the complexity of human nature, where the lines between moral righteousness and moral decay are often indistinguishably blurred.

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