

Jung's Archetypal Study of Characters in Good Country People

Yanling Yang, Hang Zhou
Beijing Forestry University, China

Abstract

As one of the most talented woman writers in the southern American literature of the 20th century, Flannery O'Connor has a keen insight into the gloom of human nature. In *Good Country People*, she reveals the mental confusion and distortion of human nature in the southern America. Based on Jung's prototype theory, this paper attempts to explore the different stages of the prototype development of the anima and animus represented by the characters in the novel. From the internal image of the individual spirit in the collective unconsciousness, it finds out that the prototype of characters' inner spirit may be presented in a special way or projected onto the external opposite sex. The individual cannot balance the internal features of the opposite sex. Therefore, the inner archetype presents the influence of both brightness and darkness, and it reveals the rich connotation and great tension of the characters.

Keywords

Flannery O'Connor; *Good Country People*; Anima/Animus; Prototype Theory.

1. Introduction

1.1. A Brief Introduction to Flannery O'Connor and *Good Country People*

Flannery O'Connor was an eminent American Southern female writer in the 20th century. She is well acclaimed for her exploration of dark side of human nature and deep concern of sufferings of common people. Her short stories deal with various themes, and are highly praised by celebrities ranging from writers, critics to theologians: novelists such as Saul Bellow and Raymond Carver, poets such as Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell, scholars like Thomas Morton. (Yang 15).

She was the three-time winner of O. Henry Awards for best story. Her story collection *The Completed Story* published after her death was awarded National Book Award. The 60th anniversary of founding of National Book Award was held in 2009, and *The Completed Story* was also awarded Best of the National Book Award. Therefore, many critics regard O'Connor as "the most remarkable novelist in the South" (Getz 26) As a part of *The Completed Story*, *Good Country People* can be regarded as a classic story. What's more, Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon remark *Good Country People* is "the best story that she has ever written" (O'Connor 939).

1.2. An Introduction to Psychoanalysis

The psychoanalytic movement originated in the clinical observations and formulations of Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud, who coined the term psychoanalysis. Freud's free-association technique provided him with a tool for studying the meanings of dreams, slips of the tongue, forgetfulness, and other mistakes and errors in everyday life. From these investigations he was led to a new conception of the structure of personality: the id, ego, and superego. (Hu 69)

However, early schisms over such issues as the basic role that Freud ascribed to biological instinctual processes caused onetime associates Carl Jung, Otto Rank, and Alfred Adler to establish their own psychological theories. Other influential theorists, including some who introduced significant departures from Freudian theory or technique, included Melanie Klein,

Karen Horney, Ronald Fairbairn, Harry Stack Sullivan, Donald Winnicott, Erich Fromm, Erik Erikson, and Heinz Kohut. At one time psychiatrists held a monopoly on psychoanalytic practice, but later nonmedical therapists also were admitted to psychoanalytic training institutes.

Later developments included work on the technique and theory of psychoanalysis of children, pioneered by Klein and Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud's daughter. The Freudian tripartite division of the mind into id, ego, and superego became progressively more elaborate, problems of anxiety received increasing attention, and explorations of female sexuality were undertaken. (Hu 98) Psychoanalysis also found many extra clinical applications in other areas of social thought, particularly anthropology and sociology, and in literature and the arts.

1.3. An Introduction to Carl Jung's Archetypal Theory

When coming to the term archetype, one can find that it was used by many scholars in ancient time. In Jung's *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, he quoted that the term is found in Irenaeus who viewed it as the world's creator shaping things from archetypes outside him. God is called archetypal light by *Corpus Hermeticum*. According to Jung, archetype appears in the works of Dionysius the Areopagite several times.

In Jung's archetypal theory, there are, among others, several archetypes which have got due attention since their appearances. The paper would like to apply anima/animus archetypes to analyze the characters in *Good Country People*.

As to the anima/animus, they are the inward faces of the opposite sex of men and women. (Jung 40) This pair faces are unconscious; they must present them by projecting to the outside world. By falling love in a woman, a man finds his anima, who personifies herself to a definite image in the real world; the woman he loves must possess some feminine characters of him which he is not being aware of; when a woman loves a man, she finds her animus, who has some male characters of the woman, from which she is unconscious. In contrast, when a woman turns to be disgust or annoying to a man, she fails to be the ideal image of him, thus an unfitting anima of him. When a man is nauseous to a woman, he is not fit for the image of her animus. Anima and animus account for the emotional life of men and women. (Jacobi 25)

1.4. Literature Reviews

In general, most of the research on *Good Country People* are limited to religious perspective studies, characters' image studies, text comparison studies and theme studies.

In recent years, the study of O'Connor's novels has been paid more and more attention to using prototype theory and methods. For example, Zhou Jing's *An Interpretation of Flannery O'Connor's Short Stories from the Perspective of Archetypal Criticism* analyzed O'Connor's novels in the context of Frye's archetypal criticism theory. It reveals the biblical literary themes of the novels through the interpretation of archetypal images. Some scholars focus on one of O'Connor's famous novels based on Jung's analytical psychology, such as Zhou Kena's *Good Country People from Jung's Analytical Psychology Perspective*, which analyzes the distorted personality of the protagonist through the collective unconscious and tries to point out the direction for the healthy development of personality. In addition, Cynthia Seel also uses archetypal criticism to interpret O'Connor's novels, such as *Ritual Performance in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor*.

There are various archetypal researches on O'Connor's novels, but these researches are still in the initial stage. Systematic researches need to be continuously strengthened. Through discussing anima and animus archetype of characters in *Good Country People*, this paper analyzes the different stages of the prototype development of the anima and animus represented by the characters and their impact. It intends to expand the study of *Good Country People* from the perspective of Jung's archetypal theory, so as to provide some enlightenment for the contemporary people to establish the correct development view of personality.

1.5. The Argument and Arrangement of This Paper

This paper intends to explore the different stages of the prototype development of the anima and animus represented by the characters and their impacts in *Good Country People*. The first chapter is about animus archetype of characters. The second chapter explores anima archetype of characters. Both of these two chapters are divided into two parts: the temperament of the opposite sex in a man or woman, and the influence of anima/animus' intention on characters. Therefore, a conclusion is given: Both anima and animus have four stages. Different characters in the novel shows the features of different stages. Furthermore, the inner archetype presents the influence of both brightness and darkness. Therefore, the animus/anima archetype needs to be correctly recognized, to promote people's healthy development, and then to make their individual personality more perfect.

2. Animus Archetype of Characters in Good Country People

2.1. The Masculinity of Women's Inner Spirit

Jung said that there is multiple animus within women. (52) In analytical psychology, Jung divided the development of the animus archetype into four stages. The changes of animus in the four stages are the manifestation of the inner psychological growth of women and the expression of women's transition from childish to mature. (Horney 20) The first stage is called the Hercules Stage. In Greek mythology, Hercules was a man of unusual strength. He overcame various difficulties with his great strength so he was honored as the first hero in myth. For Jung, the first stage of animus is reflected in the latent power of women. The second stage of animus is known as the Alexander Stage: Alexander was the brave emperor in ancient time. He had various great qualities, such as bravery. Alexander Stage is embodied in planning and action. The third stage of animus is called the Apollo Stage: Apollo symbolizes language and light, which is a guiding image like "expressing" and "teaching". The fourth stage of animus is known as the Hermes Stage, symbolizing creativity and inspiration.

In a letter to her friend Macaulay, Flannery O'Connor said: "I have given up the habit of reading elegant magazines since I decided not to be an elegant lady." (70) This is the expression of the animus intention within the writer. During her literary career, O'Connor dropped the word "Mary" from her first name. (Westling 11) This action was a sign of her inner strength and also reflects her high recognition of Jung's animus archetype theory. Therefore, in O'Connor's works, she unconsciously shows the inner animus archetype in the heroine.

In *Good Country People*, while raising Joy, Mrs. Hopewell managed a farm, and was responsible for the lives of many employees. Her husband left her early. As a woman, she was strong enough to support everything, revealing her hidden animus power, which is the embodiment of the first stage of animus.

Different from Mrs. Hopewell's internal animus archetype, the presentation of Joy's animus is mainly reflected in the way of projection to the male who gets along with her. Pointer came to Mrs. Hopewell's home to sell books. Before he left, he had a brief conversation with Joy. Although they spent a short time together, Joy was attracted by his temperament. For Joy, when she met Pointer, the latent animus archetype was activated and projected onto pointer. It also meant that Pointer was the choice of Joy's potential animus.

People always dedicate themselves for the animus or anima hidden in the unconscious. Joy is a typical example. On their first meeting, she agreed to pointer's invitation for a picnic after a few moments of conversation. "She even had put some Vapex on the collar of it since she did not own any perfume." (O'Connor 23) After Pointer kissed her in the barn, "the girl at first did not return any of the kisses but presently she began to and after she had put several on his cheek, she reached his lips and remained there, kissing him again and again as if she were trying to

draw all the breath out of him.”(O’Connor 27) Although “she was always careful how she committed herself,”(O’Connor 28) she told Pointer that she loved him. This was the verbal instruction given to her by her inner animus. Then the animus manifested itself directly in behavior. At Pointer’s request, after a fierce struggle with her heart, the girl took off her prosthetic limb, the part of her soul. At this moment, she revealed the most secret part for animus, which meant that she had dedicated herself. This moment is the presentation of the third stage of animus within her, the Apollo Stage symbolizing love and divinity.

Different women show the animus archetypal image hidden in their hearts to varying degrees. Under the control of the animus archetype, a variety of different psychology and behavior are presented. The different stages of animus archetype are integrated into the inner temperament of two women in the novel. At the same time, animus has a profound impact on their lives.

2.2. The Influence of Animus’ Intention on Characters

Jung believed that the animus archetype was full of psychological energy, guiding us in terms of inner emotions. In the communication with the outside world, females’ inner animus presents the images of both bright side and dark side, thus producing both positive and negative influences. Animus prototype becomes the source of creativity, but at the same time it becomes the creator of darkness, releasing destructive power. Some women’s potential animus exerts positive power to give her the courage to protect the people around her, such as Mrs. Hopewell and Mrs. Freeman. Some women’s potential animus exerts positive power to inspire great creativity such as Joy. However, some women are conquered by the animus after a fierce struggle with the inner animus. Therefore, women’s inner animus intention has a profound impact on their life.

In the novel, Mrs. Hopewell was able to balance her inner animus archetype and make it exert a positive influence. Unlike traditional women, Mrs. Hopewell has been brave and tough most of the time, acting as a male role in social life. Her latent animus made her know how to restrain and how to be rational. When other employers couldn’t stand Mrs. Freeman’s bad habits-- “Mrs. Freeman always managed to arrive at some point during the meal and watch them finish it” (O’Connor 4), she had kept Mrs. Freeman four years. Because she was rational and did not argue with Mrs. Freeman, there was less friction in her life, which kept the farm running. Therefore, Mrs. Hopewell’s inner animus archetype was more of a positive influence.

In contrast to the positive influence of Mrs. Hopewell’ animus, the influence of the animus archetype on Joy is two-sided. Joy’s inner animus prototype gave her courage, wisdom and strong creativity. She used the power of knowledge to challenge the social restrictions on women. Finally, she won the degree of doctor of philosophy and the recognition of the society, which earned her the respect of others. However, Joy’s inner animus intention also shows a negative impact. She was arrogant and rude to her mother: “the large hulking Joy, whose constant outrage had obliterated every expression from her face, would stare just a little to the side of her, her eyes icy blue, with the look of someone who had achieved blindness by an act of will and means to keep it.” Besides, she also showed a pessimistic attitude towards life. She always wore a six-year-old skirt, and she thought it was interesting.

The animus archetype is hidden in women’s unconscious and is closely related to the development of women. It can promote women to communicate with their inner self and cultivate women’s resolute character, to make up for the female appearance of weak. (Xu 35) The animus archetype needs to be correctly recognized by women, to promote their healthy development, and then to make their individual personality more perfect.

3. Anima Archetype of Characters in Good Country People

3.1. The Femininity of Men's Inner Spirit

As a prototype, anima is the inherent side of men. Just as there are multiple animas within a woman, there are multiple animas within a man. "The form of Anima is ever-changing, evoking the illusion of happiness and unhappiness, and the ecstasy of sorrow and love." (Yuan 13) The development of individual anima prototypes can be divided into four stages. "Mother" becomes the original carrier of this archetype, which echoes the deep psyche of the male. Therefore, the first stage of the Anima archetype is the Eve Stage symbolizing oedipus complex, in which the male projects his inner Anima archetype onto the "mother". The second stage is Helen Stage. Helen is the beauty of ancient Greece and the sex object that all men fantasize about. At this stage, anima changes. It is projected on the spouse like Helen. The third stage is the Maria Stage symbolizing the divinity of love. After the physical satisfaction, the male begins to pursue spiritual love. The last stage is the Sofia Stage, which symbolizes the source of spiritual creation. In this stage, anima is the inner spiritual pillar of the male, giving him unlimited inspiration and power.

Psychological archetypes represent certain inner desires of human beings, and the inner psychological needs of human beings drive the formation of archetypes. (Yuan 23) In *Good Country People*, the psychological needs of the Bible salesman form internal driving forces, thus reflecting the second stages of his inner anima development. "When a situation that conforms to a particular archetype appears, the archetype resurrects, producing a compulsion. It will act like an instinctive drive against all rational will, or creates a pathological conflict or a neurosis." (Jung 101)

In the novel, Pointer, the Bible salesman, came to Mrs. Hopewell's house. After seeing Joy for the first time, anima archetype hidden in his unconscious was activated. So, he cast an admiring look at Joy. For a man, the internal anima plays a great role in admiring a woman, because the woman's external temperament is in line with the anima image in the man's heart. That is to say, anima within the male provides the female image of the male fantasizes about. In the novel, Joy's external temperament is in line with Pointer's internal imagination. So, when Pointer saw Joy, "he was gazing at her with open curiosity, with fascination, like a child watching a new fantastic animal at the zoo." (O'Connor 21) He also praise Joy: "I see you got a wooden leg. I think you're real brave. I think you're real sweet." "Walk to the gate with me. You're a brave sweet little thing and I liked you the minute I see you walk in the door." (O'Connor 22) Besides, he tried to invite her to a picnic. The process of mate selection is a process in which the male's internal anima prototype is projected on the external object. The admiring gaze of Joy was the appearance of a potential Anima archetype in Pointer's heart, masking his inner lust. When Joy promised to go for a picnic together, he felt his heart was about to jump out. On the way to the picnic, the hidden anima lets off so much energy that Pointer kisses Joy without saying a word. Pointer's projection of anima now reveals the second stage of the anima which represents Helen Stage.

3.2. The Influence of Anima' Intention on Characters

Like the inner animus archetype of women, the hidden anima archetypes of men are also full of energy. Anima archetype deeply affects the male psychology and behavior. It is an implicit compensation for the male inner personality of the opposite sex, which needs careful attention and care. "The healthy development of anima can bring the deep integration of male personality and the qualitative leap in growth." (Zhou 19) In contrast, if the anima archetype is highly concentrated, the explosive power hidden in the archetype is released to fulfill its enormous potential, resulting in unanticipated results. "It will soften the men's character, making them irritable, irritable, moody, jealous, vain and uncomfortable." (Jung 58) The inner anima of a

male presents both positive and negative characteristics, thus having a profound impact on his life.

Different degrees of attention to the anima within the individual make it show different effects on the individual. Under the guidance of anima prototype, some men's hearts are occupied by anima, so that their rational life is controlled by sensibility. They are burdened with dark emotions, falling into chaos, conflict and pain. Other men are brave, aggressive, gentle and elegant, such as Pointer in *Good Country People*.

"Men's loves reveal the psychology of anima prototype in the form of endless infatuation, overestimation, or misogyny." (Jung 57) Pointer's love shows two forms of anima. When he met Joy for the first time, Pointer showed a man's courage: he praised Joy, chatted with her actively, and showed his love for her with his actions. He "would dart a keen appraising glance at the girl as if he were trying to attract her attention". (O'Connor 16) All of these performances were the positive side of his inner anima. However, after dating in the barn, Pointer realized that Joy's real character is not what he fantasized about. Overestimation made him regret, so he abandoned Joy and left quickly.

The powerful anima takes on an element of irrationality within the individual. "It reinforces, exaggerates, distorts and deifies all emotional relationships between a person and members of the opposite sex." (Jung 58) Males need to understand their inner anima correctly. Then they should promote the integration of consciousness and unconsciousness. In the process, attention to the anima and its positive role needed to be paid. Finally, anima is encouraged to exert its positive power in the intercourse between men and women, to promote the individual to develop in a better direction.

4. Conclusion

As one of the most talented woman writers in the southern American literature of the 20th century, Flannery O'Connor had created many excellent short stories. Unfortunately, she was diagnosed with lupus erythematosus at a young age. (Gooch 33) She is also lucky. In those lonely days, she created many amazing works, so she regarded illness as a blessing. Feeling deeply about the disease, she made use of everything to show the misery. She once said, "I can only attract people who are wandering on the edge of madness." (15) As a result, many of the characters in her novel have various disabilities, wandering on the edge of loneliness and madness.

Jung's prototype theory reveals the real condition of human existence and some characteristics of human beings. It makes a comprehensive exploration of the good and evil in human heart and the original desire of human nature, in order to promote the healthy development of personality. The blending of psychology and literature has adapted to the needs of the development of the times. O'Connor is deeply influenced by Jung. To interpret *Good Country People* from the perspective of Jung's archetypal theory will open a new door for readers to know O'Connor and her novels.

In *Good Country People*, different characters reflect the diversity of anima and animas archetypes. In addition, the anima or animus prototype of the characters presents the dual influence in different stages of development. Through the prototype, the special complex of the Southern people of the United States at that time is shown. In the alienated society, everyone is alienated. Individual reflects deformed life in materialization and shows the human nature vividly. In the novel, O'Connor expresses her views on the alienated society, crying out for women's rights and for the return of humanity.

References

- [1] Getz, Lorine. *Literary Theologian: The Habits and Discipline of Being*. New York: E. Mellen Press, 2000.
- [2] Gooch, Bruce. *Flannery: A Life of Flannery O'Connor*. Little, Brown, 2009.
- [3] Jacobi, Jolande. *The Psychology of C.G. Jung 8*. Trans. Ralph Manheim. New Haven: Yale UP, 1973.
- [4] Jung, Carl. *Conscious, unconscious, and individuation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- [5] O'Connor Flannery. *The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor*. Macmillan, 1988.
- [6] *Collected Works of Flannery O'Connor*. New York: Library of America, 1988.
- [7] *The Complete Stories by Flannery O'Connor*. Jun Farrar, Straus & Giroux Inc, 2005.
- [8] Seel, Cynthia. *Ritual Performance in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor*. Camden House Press, 2001.
- [9] Westling, Louise. *Sacred Groves and Ravaged Gardens: The Fiction of Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor*. Athens. University of Georgia Press, 1988.
- [10] Hu Jingzhi, "A Course in Classics of Western Literary Theory", Beijing: Peking University Press, 2003.
- [11] Karen Horney, "The New Direction of Psychoanalysis", Shanghai: Shanghai Jinxu Articles Publishing House, 2008.
- [12] Xu Limei, Tong Lijun. "Twisted Mother-daughter Love, Mutilated Soul-A Closer Look at O'Connor's Short Story "The Kind Countryman"", published in "Literary Controversy" Issue 3, 2019.
- [13] Yuan Kejia, "An Introduction to European and American Modernist Literature", Guangxi: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2003.
- [14] Zhou Jing. "Interpretation of Flannery O'Connor's Short Stories from the Perspective of Archetype Criticism." Nanjing Normal University, 2019.
- [15] Zhou Kena. "Interpretation of "The Kind Countryman" from Jung's Analytical Psychology." Hefei University of Technology, 2017.