Exploring the Shadow and Trickster Archetypes: An Analysis of Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* and Amy in *Gone Girl*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the main characters, Alex in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and Amy in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*, through a Jungian perspective. Both characters exhibit complex and multilayered personalities, embodying the darker aspects of human behavior while employing cunning and manipulative tactics to achieve their goals. Through a comparative analysis, this study examines how Alex and Amy navigate the boundaries of societal norms, challenging conventional morality and evoking a sense of ambiguity and unpredictability. Drawing on textual evidence and psychological frameworks, the paper explores the ways in which these characters embody the shadow archetype, representing repressed desires and impulses, as well as the trickster archetype, characterized by William J. Hynes's description of the common trickster features. By examining the nuances of their actions, behaviors, and motivations, this study seeks to illuminate the complex interplay between the shadow and trickster archetypes in literature and their implications for understanding human psychology and societal dynamics. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the human psyche and the complexities of literary characterization within the context of Jungian theory and mythical symbolism.

Keywords: A clockwork orange; gone girl; psychoanalysis; the shadow; the trickster.

INTRODUCTION

In the compelling realm of literature, our strong interest in fictional characters goes beyond simple storytelling, it extends to an actual desire to unravel the mysteries of their thoughts, behaviors, motivations, and desires. Whether we sympathize with them or detest these characters, understanding their intentions becomes a journey of narrative fulfillment and even self-discovery. Carl Jung's collective unconscious and archetypal concepts serve as a guiding light on this journey, providing a universal language that transcends cultural boundaries. Through Jung's depth psychoanalysis, fictional characters are not mere players in the narrative but embodiments of timeless symbols found within the collective unconscious. This exploration deepens our understanding of characters and evokes emotional responses, raising a strong connection between the reader and the narrative. As we explore both conscious and unconscious motivations, Jungian archetypes become keys to unlocking the complexity of human behavior and societal norms that shape characters' actions. "Jung is important for arguing that psychic creativity is the foundation of who we are, how we think, and the ways in which we connect to our world" (Rowland, 2019, p. 2). Hence, literature becomes a transcendent exploration of the human psyche.

Literature has long served as a mirror reflecting the complexities of human experience, offering readers insights into the human psyche through storytelling. Within the vast landscape of literature, certain novels become popular and captivate readers with unforgettable characters. *A Clockwork Orange* and *Gone Girl* are among the novels that intrigue readers and are not only admirable works of literature but also cultural phenomena that have left a memorable mark on readers around the world. Their complex characters not only captivate readers and spark public discourse but also catch the attention of notable directors such as Stanley Kubrick and David Fincher, who direct film adaptations of these novels. Both novels present Alex and Amy's struggle against societal pressures and the complexities of human behavior, their representations offer a mirror in which to reflect on readers' own experiences and struggles. Exploring these characters and their journeys through a Jungian analysis can provide insights into their deeper psychological dimensions, the symbolic meaning they portray for readers, and the universal patterns they embody. As Jung states, "It is obvious enough that psychology, being a study of psychic processes, can

be brought to bear on the study of literature, for the human psyche is the womb of all the arts and sciences" (Tacey, 2012, p. 258). To Jung, psychology and literature are inherently connected and the human psyche serves as a starting point for all artistic and scientific works. Jung himself highlights the idea that literature is the reflection of the human psyche and captures the complexities of human experience through the art of storytelling. Hence, psychology provides a valuable framework to analyze and understand literature. Just as literature offers insights into the workings of the human mind and heart, psychology offers concepts for interpreting works of art so that readers can explore beyond the surface of the narrative and engage with the underlying psychological layers of the story. This deeper understanding can enrich the readers' appreciation of the text and its significance in the context of human experience.

Jung (1981) also believes that ancient myths, narratives, and legends are not just tales of gods and heroes but reflections of human psychology. In other words, early civilizations do not just observe nature, rather they perceive it as a reflection of their inner world. For instance, when they see the sun rise and set, they do not just see a natural phenomenon they interpret it as a representation of a god's journey and a hero's fate. This way of interpreting nature as symbolic of inner experiences is important to human consciousness and has been a part of civilization for thousands of years (p. 5-6). Hence, to him, myths are universal archetypal structures that are deeply rooted in the individual's collective unconscious and their existence cannot be denied. "One could almost say that if all the world's traditions were cut off at a single blow, the whole of mythology and the whole history of religion would start all over again with the next generation" (Jung, 1956, p. 25).

In *A Clockwork Orange*, a modern classic by Anthony Burgess, and *Gone Girl*, a contemporary novel by Gillian Flynn, we encounter protagonists seemingly worlds apart. Burgess introduces readers to Alex, a fifteen-year-old teenager whose desire for violence and rebellion against societal norms pushes him into a dystopian landscape where his free will is taken for a certain period of time, while Flynn presents Amy Elliott Dunne, a character in her early thirties whose intelligence and manipulation drive the novel's intricate plot. Both characters embody aspects of the shadow and trickster archetypes, challenging societal norms through their creative and destructive actions. While numerous

studies have explored the themes of identity and the human psyche in literature, the specific focus on the shadow and trickster archetypes within the context of novels from various eras remains largely unexplored. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the portrayals of these archetypes in *Gone Girl* and *A Clockwork Orange*. Focusing on these particular novels will offer a perspective on the complexities of identity construction and moral ambiguity in literature. To our knowledge, such a comparative analysis of the shadow and trickster archetypes in these specific novels has not been undertaken before, making this study a unique contribution to the field of literary analysis.

Despite the apparent differences in setting and narrative context between these two novels, both protagonists portray obvious elements of the shadow and the trickster archetypes since they both struggle with their inner selves under societal expectations and they both embody their manipulative tactics. This study seeks to analyze Alex's struggle with his inner self under societal expectations, particularly the expectations of conformity and obedience imposed by the oppressive government and social norms through the lens of Jung's archetype of the shadow. His actions, characterized by violence, manipulation, and rebellion against authority, reflect his disobedience of these expectations and his exploration of his darker impulses. Similar to Alex, Amy tackles her inner self under societal expectations, particularly those related to marriage and gender roles. Amy's manipulation and deception throughout the novel reflect her struggle with societal pressures and her attempts to assert control over her own narrative. Amy's actions, including orchestrating her own disappearance and framing her husband for her murder, demonstrate her willingness to manipulate others to achieve her goals. In the Jungian context, it is argued that both narratives can be seen as symbolic representations of the consequences of rejecting one's own negative personality traits and the inability to integrate the shadow into one's self.

This study argues that both Alex and Amy exhibit traits commonly associated with the trickster archetypes. Alex demonstrates his trickster-like nature through his wit, cunning, and ability to manipulate those around him. He overcomes various situations using his intelligence and charm, often deceiving others for his own gain and amusement. Similarly, Amy's cunning and strategic planning align with the traits commonly associated with the

trickster archetype. She controls various situations with a calculated and deceptive approach, often outsmarting those around her.

This study, then, explores and analyzes their portrayals of the shadow and the trickster archetypes of Alex and Amy, delving into their complexities and impulses, and examining how they confront their shadow aspects and trickster characteristics within the restrictions of societal norms. William J. Hynes' typology of trickster characteristics across a wide variety of mythologies provides a framework for understanding the complex nature of trickster figures in literature. These characteristics include trickster's ambiguous and anomalous, deceiver/trick-player, and shape-shifting abilities. Through the application of Hynes' typology, this study seeks to analyze Alex and Amy's actions and motivations, offering insights into the complexities of human behavior and the universal struggle for self-awareness within the limitations of societal norms.

RESULTS

These analyses suggest that although these novels are written in different periods and by authors who do not have much in common, the main characters both portray the symbolism of the shadow and the trickster in detail. The reason behind this is certainly the societal pressures on them. The exploration of Alex's shadow and trickster symbolism reveals the complex layers of his character in *A Clockwork Orange*. Through his embodiment of these archetypal elements, Alex embodies the complexities of human nature, the interplay between light and darkness, innocence and corruption, and order and chaos. His shadow side, represented by his capacity for violence and cruelty, reflects the repressed aspects of his psyche that emerge in response to societal pressures and inner conflicts. Conversely, his trickster persona illustrates his ability to deceive and manipulate others, often using cunning and wit to express through his wild world. Trickster's complexity lies in its ability to embody contradictory traits, such as order and chaos, truth and deception. These characteristics mirror Alex's embodiment of contradictory features that he blurs the lines. He is both intelligent and brutal, charming and manipulative, creative and destructive, smart and fool, sacred and profane while exhibiting the mythical trickster's characteristics as an ambiguous and anomalous, deceiver/trick-player, and shape-shifter. He manipulates the authority figures, the prison chaplain, and his droogs, to maintain power and control

over them. Together, these symbolic representations offer insight into the human condition, prompting readers to consider the blurred lines between good and evil, and the eternal struggle for self-awareness and redemption. At the end of the novel, Alex symbolically manages to integrate his shadow aspects to his self. Alex's journey serves as an agonizing reminder of the complexities inherent within each individual, urging readers to confront their own shadows and embrace the transformative power of self-discovery.

Amy in *Gone Girl* embodies complex layers of psychological symbolism, particularly through her portrayal of shadow and trickster archetypes. Throughout the novel, Amy's shadow aspects are evident in her manipulation, deceitfulness, and her tendency to project her own insecurities onto others. This behavior reflects her inner turmoil and unresolved issues, which she externalizes onto those around her. Also, Amy's embodiment of the trickster archetype adds another dimension to her character, which demonstrates her ability to deceive and outwit her opponents to serve her own agenda. As a trickster, Amy challenges societal norms and expectations, employing cunning tactics to manipulate her circumstances and the people around her. She embodies distinct contradictory characteristics, such as charming and manipulative, intelligence and deception, loving and calculating, victim and perpetrator while exhibiting the mythical trickster's characteristics as an ambiguous and anomalous, deceiver/trick-player, and shape-shifter as Hynes explains. She manipulates her husband, Nick, her family, her neighbor, her ex-boyfriend, authority figures, the public, and the media to maintain power and control. Together, these symbolic elements contribute to the complex portrayal of Amy as a character who tries to control the complexities of human behavior, often blurring the lines between light and darkness, truth and deception. Amy's characterization as a shadow and trickster figure demonstrates the multidimensional nature of the human psyche. At the end of the novel, Amy cannot manage to integrate her shadow self, rather she is consumed by it. This is an exploration of the darker aspects of human behavior and the intricacies of personal identity.

Considering these analyses, one could claim that what is common between these two novels is undeniably both the protagonists exhibit rebellious actions and challenge societal norms since they both live in a society full of conventions and unjust systems and they are trying to adapt to these systems, which demonstrates their shadow and trickster symbolism.

However, what is actually different in these novels is the fact that they present those rebellious behaviors for different purposes and with distinct consequences. Alex, as portrayed in *A Clockwork Orange*, embodies the archetype of the shadow, a darker, repressed aspect of the self that manifests in destructive behaviors and violent acts. His rebellion against authority and violent actions to punish others reflect his inner turmoil and the societal pressures that shape his identity. Furthermore, Alex's strained family dynamics contribute to his twisted moral compass, leading him to seek validation and power through his acts of violence. In contrast, Amy from *Gone Girl* represents the shadow archetype, repressed qualities that are deeply buried in the human psyche, through her manipulative tactics. While both characters rebel against societal expectations, Amy's rebellion is more calculated and self-serving. She rejects conventional notions of happiness and marriage, seeking to punish her husband, Nick, and deceive those around her to maintain control. Amy's portrayal is also influenced by the fictional character Amazing Amy, to whom she is constantly compared, adding multiple layers of complexity to her identity and motivations. Despite her privileged upbringing, Amy's family dynamics and disillusionment with societal norms drive her to seek fulfillment through unconventional means, placing her at odds with the world around her. While Alex and Amy both represent rebellious figures who challenge societal norms, their motivations, methods, and the consequences of their actions differ. Despite their differing approaches, both characters serve as compelling reflections of the complexities of human behavior and the tensions between individual desires and societal expectations.

This study emphasizes the importance of understanding the motivations and behaviors of characters who challenge societal norms it can be a significant source for future studies since it emphasizes the role of archetypal symbolism in literature and its implications for understanding human psychology and societal dynamics. Additionally, further examination of societal pressures and their impact on individual behavior allows for an exploration of the tensions between conformity and rebellion, shedding light on their consequences for personal identity and social order. Through this study, the intersections of gender, power, and identity in literature and society can be analyzed, particularly through the lens of characters like Alex and Amy who challenge traditional norms.

DISCUSSION

Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* represents the shadow archetype mainly through his extremely violent acts. He embodies the darker aspects of human behavior, including violence, aggression, manipulation, sadism, and narcissism. He was born into an immoral world where the younager generation indulges in murderous violence. His disregard for societal norms and lack of empathy characterize him as the embodiment of the shadow and the trickster archetypes. Despite his delinquency, he is also smart and charming. On the other hand, Amy in *Gone Girl*, exhibits the shadow archetype through her manipulative and deceitful behavior under the disguise of her charm and perfection. Her ability to craft elaborate schemes and her willingness to harm others for personal goals demonstrates her shadow and the trickster symbolisms.

A comparative analysis of the backgrounds of the two main characters reveals distinct socioeconomic contexts, with fifteen-year-old Alex originating from a working-class background and Amy coming from an upper-class background. Alex's working-class background in *A Clockwork Orange* contributes to his rebellious nature and disregard for authority. Burgess depicts a youth subculture known as the "Nadsats," which is used to describe a group of teenagers who engage in violent behavior. The Nadsats, including Alex, are often associated with the Teddy Boys, a subculture of working-class British youth that emerged in the 1950s and is known for their distinctive fashion and tendency towards violence (Carpenter, 2010, p. 12). Alex does not have the same opportunities as the upper class, which is why he becomes an actual rebel in his environment, where violence and lawlessness are dominant. His actions, therefore, may stem from a sense of alienation and frustration with his social status. As Giri suggests, "Alex only resists the ruling-class people and government's domination through the help of ultra-violence, and nadsat language that is used to make counter-discourse of marginalized group" (Giri, 2018, p. 14). He skips school and spends most of his time in the Korova Milkbar and streets.

In contrast, Amy's upbringing in an upper-class environment in *Gone Girl* offers her access to resources, education, and societal privileges that shape her behavior. Amy has adapted to a life of comfort since she grew up with wealthy parents who are both child psychologists. She is a Harvard graduate, like her parents, who is a writer, the writer of

personality quizzes in a magazine. Her actions reflect a sense of manipulation and deceit, where she is used to getting what she wants and using her resources to control situations to her advantage stemming from her privileged background and the expectations placed upon her by societal norms. This socioeconomic distinction between Alex and Amy also demonstrates differences in their personal shadows and trickster traits throughout their narratives. Annis V. Pratt's (1992) interpretation of Jung's concept of the shadow suggests that men's shadows are characterized by disobedience and rebellion against societal norms, while women's shadows tend to reflect conformity to societal norms, accompanied by feelings of inadequacy and self-criticism for not meeting idealized standards of femininity (p. 161).

When considering both their socioeconomic backgrounds and the gendered shadow aspects of their behavior, it becomes evident how societal norms intersect within both Alex and Amy's experiences, shaping their interactions in their narratives. Alex's actions align with the characteristics of Jung's male shadow as Pratt suggests. As a fifteen-year-old boy immersed in a dystopian society, Alex rebels against societal norms and authority figures through acts of violence, disobeying the rules and people around him. His shadow may representatively manifest as a rejection of cultural norms, reflecting the antisocial tendencies associated with the male shadow archetype. In contrast, Amy might symbolically embody Pratt's description of women's shadows as socially conformist. Despite her cunning and manipulative behavior, Amy's actions are often driven by a desire to conform to societal expectations of femininity and maintain perfection. She meticulously crafts her public image to conform to traditional gender roles and societal ideals of beauty and success and hides her dark impulses from social norms behind a mask of femininity. In the context of Alex and Amy's characters, Pratt's observation explains how social norms and gender expectations influence their behavior and self-perception,

> [Women] punish themselves for any erotic feelings that spring from authentic, selfish, desire. Should the female hero fail to reproach herself, the author accomplishes the task for her in a disproportionately punitive denouement. We do not find men punishing themselves for their libido (or other normal human desires); quite the contrary, they celebrate their sexuality. Women's shadows, rigidly social in

content, fill them with self-hate for the very forces that should carry them toward greater development. (Pratt, 1992, p. 161)

While Alex, as a male character, demonstrates a rebellious and even celebratory attitude towards his desires, Amy, as a female character, internalizes social expectations and demonstrates self-hatred towards her own desires and actions and she even considers the idea of killing herself. As Amy states,

> I will sign up for a booze cruise – something to get me out into the deep end but nothing requiring identification. I will drink a giant ice-wet shaker of gin, and I will swallow sleeping pills, and when no one is looking, I'll drop silently over the side, my pockets full of Virginia Woolf rocks. It requires discipline, to drown oneself, but I have discipline in spades. (Flynn, 2012, p. 331-332).

As seen in her quote, the idea of killing herself as Virginia Woolf did, she becomes fed up with Nick's neglectful and inappropriate behavior towards her and feels trapped, so she makes a plan to get Nick to become her potential murderer and contemplates the idea of killing herself. Despite her efforts to seek revenge against her husband for failing to meet the expectations of a happy marriage imposed by societal norms, Amy's actions reveal her internal struggle and self-hatred.

Moreover, Amy plans to kill herself, this reflects her desire to escape from societal pressures since she does not want to conform to a certain role. Despite her intelligence and resourcefulness, she feels trapped by these expectations and sees suicide as a means of reclaiming control over Nick's and her own destiny. On the other hand, Alex's aggressive and hedonistic behavior is portrayed as a manifestation of his masculinity and rebellion against societal norms. He does not punish himself for his libido or violent tendencies, instead, he embraces them as expressions of his identity and autonomy. As seen in Alex's statement,

> This time they . . . had to submit to the strange and weird desires of Alexander the Large which, what with the Ninth and the hypo jab, were choodessny and zammechat and very demanding, O my brothers. But they were both very very drunken and could hardly feel very much (Burgess, 1972, p. 39)

Alex sees himself as Alexander the Large while raping the two innocent girls that he invited to his home. The terms "choodessny" and "zammechat" are Nadsat slang words used by Alex to describe his desires, which indicates that they are wonderful and remarkable. While Amy symbolically sees herself as Virginia Woolf with her pockets full of rocks, Alex perceives himself as Alexander The Large and celebrates his actions and desires as expressions of his autonomy and masculinity. Unlike Amy, he does not internalize societal norms or punish himself for his behavior. This further exemplifies Pratt's statement that men often celebrate their sexuality without encountering significant criticism and self-hatred.

Both Alex and Amy struggle with challenging family dynamics that contribute to their complex personalities and actions. For Alex, his family dynamics are characterized by a lack of authority. He perceives himself as independent and self-sufficient, believing that he should not be questioned about his actions. This attitude reflects a disconnect between Alex and his family, where he feels unsupported and misunderstood. This lack of parental guidance and supervision may contribute to his rebellious behavior and sense of autonomy, as he overcomes life's difficulties without much parental influence. In contrast, Amy's family dynamics revolve around the fictional character Amazing Amy, a seemingly perfect and idealized version of herself created by her parents. Amy grows up with constant comparison to this fictional character, which sets an impossibly high standard, placing pressure on her to live up to this idealized image. This dynamic likely promotes feelings of inadequacy and insecurity within Amy, as she struggles to meet the unrealistic expectations set by her parents and society. The presence of Amazing Amy may overshadow Amy's true identity, preventing her from fully embracing her self and leading to a sense of disconnection from her family and her own sense of identity. Consequently, both Alex and Amy's family dynamics contribute to their internal struggles and shape their perceptions of themselves and the world around them what is more these dynamics shape their behaviors, motivations, and interactions with others throughout their stories.

CONCLUSION

This study has presented research that explores the portrayals of characters Alex and Amy within the context of Jung's archetypes of the shadow and the trickster. Throughout the

analysis, the complexities of their characters have been delved into, examining how they exhibit their shadow aspects and trickster characteristics within societal norms. The trickster is examined as an ambiguous and anomalous, deceiver/trick-player, and shape-shifter, as proposed by Hynes in "Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Tricksters" and his trickster typology is applied to further analysis of Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and Flynn's *Gone Girl*. By examining their ambiguous and anomalous traits, their proficiency as deceivers and trick-players, and their adeptness at shape-shifting, insights have been gained into the depths of their actions, motivations, and behaviors. At the conclusion of this research, it is considered necessary to reflect on the broader meanings of the portrayals of Alex and Amy and their significance to human behavior and the complex balance between conformity and rebellion against society.

This study emphasizes the importance of understanding the motivations and behaviors of characters who challenge societal norms it can be a significant source for future studies since it emphasizes the role of archetypal symbolism in literature and its implications for understanding human psychology and societal dynamics. Additionally, further examination of societal pressures and their impact on individual behavior allows for an exploration of the tensions between conformity and rebellion, shedding light on their consequences for personal identity and social order. Through this study, the intersections of gender, power, and identity in literature and society can be analyzed, particularly through the lens of characters like Alex and Amy who challenge traditional norms.

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