




**A Jungian Reading of Jarallah Alhumaid's A Wild
Herb's Sorrows**

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Abstract:

This paper conducts a Jungian analysis of the short story collection, *A Wild Herb's Sorrows*, written by the prominent Saudi writer, storyteller, and poet Jarallah Yousif Alhumaid (1954 - 2022). It focuses on the protagonist, Matar Abdulrahaman. The analysis centers on the persona and the shadow, two concepts pioneered by Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), the Swiss psychiatrist and the founder of analytical psychology. It explores how these psychological aspects shape Matar's identity and influence his social interactions. Jung posits that the persona represents the public facade individuals present to the world, while the shadow embodies repressed and unconscious aspects of the psyche. The title of Alhumaid's work metaphorically aligns the overlooked wild herb with the common man's struggles, symbolizing their intrinsic value despite societal neglect. Each story in the collection delves into Matar's emotional struggles, portraying him as a poor man in his thirties navigating love, loss, and self-discovery. His persona, often conflicting with his shadow, prompts introspection into morality, motivations, and life's purpose. Divided into two sections, the paper examines Matar's loneliness, escapism, and misanthropy as expressions of his persona while the second section delves into his inner struggle manifested through dreams, psychological projections, and narrative fabrication.

keywords: Carl Jung, persona, shadow, archetypes

قراءة يونغية لأحزان عشبة برية لجارالله الحميد

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ملخص الدراسة:

تقدم هذه الورقة تحليلاً يونغياً لمجموعة القصص القصيرة "أحزان عشبة برية" للكاتب والشاعر السعودي، جارالله بن يوسف الحميد (1954 - 2022)، بتسليط الضوء على شخصية بطل الرواية مطر عبد الرحمن، فيركز التحليل على مفاهيم مبدئي القناع والظل لكارل جوستاف يونغ (1875-1961)، الطبيب وعالم النفس السويسري، ومؤسس علم النفس التحليلي، ويستكشف كيف يشكل هذين الجانبين النفسيين هوية مطر ويؤثران على تفاعلاته مع المجتمع. يفترض يونغ أن القناع يمثل الواجهة العامة للفرد الذي يقدمها ويظهرها للمجتمع، بينما يجسد الظل الجوانب المكبوتة ولا الواعية للنفس. يجاذي عنوان عمل الحميد مجازياً بين العشبة البرية المهملة ونضالات الرجل العادي المتمثل في مطر، مما يرمز إلى قيمتها الجوهرية على الرغم من الإهمال المجتمعي، فتتعمق كل قصة في المجموعة في صراعات مطر العاطفية، وتصوره رجلاً فقيراً في الثلاثينيات من عمره يبحر في الحب والخسارة واكتشاف الذات، وصراع مع قناعه، الذي غالباً ما يتعارض مع ظله. تنقسم الورقة إلى قسمين، وتبحث في وحدة مطر وهويته وكراهيته للبشر كتعبيرات عن قناعه، بينما يتعمق القسم الثاني في صراعه الداخلي الذي يتجلى من خلال الأحلام والإسقاطات النفسية وتلفيق الأحداث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كارل يونغ، القناع، الظل، أنماط الشخصية

A Jungian Reading of Jarallah Alhumaid's *A Wild Herb's Sorrows*

This paper attempts a Jungian analysis as the primary reading and aims to analyze Jung's concepts of the persona and the shadow in *A Wild Herb's Sorrows*, a collection of short stories by the Saudi writer Jarallah Alhumaid. The protagonist's views of himself and his relations with his society are explored through the lenses of these two concepts. Jung's theory of the persona and the shadow plays a crucial role in his broader concept of individuation, a central concept in analytical psychology. According to Jung, individuation "means becoming an 'individual,' and, in so far as 'individuality' embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could, therefore, translate individuation as 'coming to selfhood' or 'self-realization'" (Jung, 1966, p. 238). This transformative journey toward self-realization extends beyond adolescence and continues throughout one's life. As individuals progress, they gain a clearer sense of self, separate from their parents and the external world. Jung emphasizes that this process is essential for achieving a fully developed identity, self-awareness, and a sense of purpose. It transcends mere conformity to societal norms and cultural expectations (Jung, 1966, p. 209). Throughout life, people may lose touch with certain aspects of their true selves due to societal pressures, family upbringing, and personal experiences, but with individuation, individuals are encouraged to reclaim and integrate these neglected aspects with newly acquired knowledge and experiences. It resembles assembling a fragmented puzzle, where each piece contributes to the whole.

However, individuation has three stages: the persona, the anima, and the shadow. (Neumann, 2014, p. 350). According to Jung, "The persona is a complicated system of relations between individual consciousness and society, fittingly enough a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and, on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual" (Jung, 1966, p. 264). However, the anima (in men) and the animus (in women) are archetypal figures that embody qualities typically associated with the opposite gender. Integrating the anima and animus involves acknowledging and embracing these inner opposites. For men, it

means connecting with their feminine side; for women, it is about embracing masculine qualities. This integration fosters creativity, empathy, and a deeper understanding of relationships, hence a more balanced psyche (Jung, 2014). As for the shadow, it represents the unconscious, repressed, and hidden aspects of personality, including our dark impulses (aggression, envy, and selfishness) and creative potential. It is the repository of our unacknowledged desires, fears, and suppressed emotions. Successfully confronting and integrating the shadow is essential for achieving wholeness and authenticity.

To start with, readers of Alhumaid's *A Wild Herb's Sorrows* can well figure out that the protagonist is portrayed as a complex and multi-dimensional figure throughout the narrative. Matar Abdulrahman represents both the Persona, the public image that someone displays, and the Shadow, the frequently suppressed elements of one's character as outlined in Jung's theory. The title of Alhumaid's *A Wild Herb's Sorrows* suggests a collection of stories about a wild herb, often seen as an unwanted and overlooked plant in a garden. However, this plant has immense value and is used for medicinal purposes, just like the common person who appears insignificant to some but has his or her worth and value. The stories in the collection use the wild herb symbolically to represent the common man's struggles. Muhammad Alamari (2002) claims that *A Wild Herb's Sorrows* is "The deafening scream in the stagnant pool calling for justice and the support of marginalized people and intellectuals, and restoring dignity to human beings through justice, freedom, and the right to live" (p.18). The wild herb represents the common man, constantly battling against the forces of nature and society to survive and thrive. Alhumaid's collection features narratives in which the protagonist, Matar Abdulrahman, faces emotional challenges. Alhumaid's compelling and evocative writing style blends poetic language with raw and authentic descriptions that deeply affect and immerse readers in the protagonist's fears and dreams. Matar Abdulrahman is a poor man in his thirties living in the carpenter's neighborhood. He was born in a village eighty kilometers away from the city. He is unemployed and wanders the night with no clear direction or motivation. This is perceived as a lack of choice and a reflection of man's bleak realities in the modern world.

To explore Matar's persona, which is often at odds with his shadow as these two opposing forces clash throughout the stories, this paper is divided into two sections: the first section examines the aspects of Matar's persona depicted through his lonely life, escapism, and misanthropy as he struggles with his own identity and the social standards imposed on him; the section examines Matar's shadow and his internal conflict as vividly illustrated through his dreams, psychological projections, and fabrication of narratives.

The protagonist's persona in *A Wild Herb's Sorrows* manifests three aspects: loneliness, escapism, and misanthropy. The gripping narrative of the stories explores the profound impact of loneliness and isolation that Matar Abdulrahman experiences and the harrowing consequences on his sense of self and relationships with others. While his escapism seems to be a harmless way to cope with his misanthropy, it ultimately only worsens his problem. By avoiding reality, he solidifies his negative worldview and distances himself from the opportunity for personal growth.

Matar Abdulrahman faces social exile and is ostracized from his community. He feels like an outsider wherever he goes, and people seem to avoid or ignore him. This makes him feel lonely, isolated, and unwanted. It appears that the loneliness Matar experiences is often an outcome of his environment, setting, or people around him. Matar "does not work as a night guard, and he does not work either as a cop. However, he lives in the carpenter's neighborhood and is known for roaming the night" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 27). His constant wandering alone during the night suggests that his loneliness and isolation are likely to be exacerbated by the fact that he is jobless and surrounded by desperate people who exile him. His father once advises him to leave the neighborhood because the town people "hate [him] as much as they hate the dust storm" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 30).


The fear and hatred of dust storms is indeed a common phenomenon, often rooted in the potentially harmful effects and disruptive nature. For some people, dust causes dread and uneasiness, as it is often associated with allergies and other health risks. The dust storm symbolizes the unleashing of nature's fury,

overpowering everything in its path¹. In *A Wild Herb's Sorrows*, Matar does not have the mighty power of the dust that disrupts the world, but he is seen as an outsider and an unwelcome intruder whose presence disrupts the status quo and causes conflict. Dust can also be a symbol of emotional drain and exhaustion. However, the curse inflicted on Matar places him in opposition to the positive implications of his name, associated with renewal, abundance, and cleansing, potentially subjecting him to drought, turmoil, or adversity.

Matar's sense of loneliness is also intensified as he visits places that provoke sad memories when "he remembers the dust, he asks the hotel's old concierge: 'Is there dust in this city?' the hotel's concierge says: 'yes, plenty my son, but people here are used to it'" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 30). He realizes that he is increasingly isolated as the people he encounters in these places seem distant and indifferent to his presence. At the airport on his way home, he finds himself without any familiar faces in sight. However, he consoles himself by offering a self-directed morning greeting that "evokes memories of the desolate gray grasslands of the wilderness" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 36).

Although Matar tries to fit in, his efforts never seem good enough. He tries to make friends, but people are always quick to dismiss him and treat him with indifference, and this loneliness becomes terrifying. In one instance, he gathers the courage to approach the hotel's old concierge and asks him to stay and chat. Unfortunately, the man, unable to comprehend Matar's uniqueness, finds him weird, and hastily leaves. This interaction between Matar and the elderly concierge serves as a powerful reminder of Matar's struggle in a world that often rejects what it cannot understand. The pain of being

Dust storms have been depicted in literature as symbols of adversity, chaos,¹ and environmental degradation. In John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, the dust storm refers to the sheer force of nature and its devastating consequences on the characters and their journey. The air became thick with the acrid taste of dirt and despair as the wind howled with an otherworldly fury: "Every moving thing lifted the dust into the air: a walking man lifted a thin layer as high as his waist, and a wagon lifted the dust as high as the fence tops, and an automobile boiled a cloud behind it" (Steinbeck, 1992, p.81).



deemed strange or different is deeply felt as he stands alone in the street, contemplating the urban solitude enveloping the cityscape and inwardly remarks: “The city is yellow, much like my face” (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 32). He compares himself to the city and highlights their similar yellow hue. The yellow color represents their shared sense of loneliness and abandonment. Another instant occurs in “The Flood,” Matar compares his loneliness to the stagnant and motionless atmosphere of a thick and suffocating “shuaib”¹ and at another time to a single sea foam that moves alone and leaves behind the social life of the city (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 51). His loneliness is inevitable, like the cold and dry sands of the “shuaib,” which engulfs him with isolation and abandonment.

While Matar embraces escapism to deal with his detachment from others and the social environment, it only temporarily diverts him from his harsh reality. His sense of escapism manifests his constant travel, confusion, and search for something unattainable. Throughout the short stories, Matar is portrayed as a solitary traveler. He often travels alone from one country to another and stays in various hotels. His constant travel raises questions about whether he is running away from something, searching for something, or simply looking for adventure. It is most likely that Matar leaves his city because he feels ostracized and disconnected from those around him. People he meets associate him with negative labels such as “dust” and “thief.” Such negative associations perpetuate his feelings of isolation and create within him a desire to flee to another place. Despite his travels to different places, he never forms any lasting connections nor finds any real sense of belonging.

Matar’s escape to nature proves futile as it furthers his sense of estrangement due to various physical and emotional barriers preventing him from connecting with the natural world. In the short story “Matar Abdulrahman’s Sorrows and Joys,” Matar seeks companionship and refuge in the vast sea. He expects the sea to answer his questions about life, thinking it will hold the universe’s secrets and tell him what he is meant to do with his life. However,

Means “gully” which is a narrow valley or channel with steep sides, made by a ¹ fast-flowing stream (*Cambridge Dictionary*, 2023).

the sea is overwhelmed by the weight of Matar's secrets and pains as if carrying a burden on its shoulders. Matar's sharing his secrets with the sea, going through the experience of almost drowning, and then surviving symbolizes his failure to find the solace and refuge he seeks in nature. Nevertheless, his ultimate disappointment arises from the realization that the sea, with its secretive and mysterious nature, cannot always offer what he seeks. As he reflects, the experience proves to be "harsher than a spit" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 35). Moreover, in the short story "The Flood," nature's rejection of him is so intense that even the water of the river makes him ill, as asserted by the pharmacist, who contends that "the river elicits such reactions from unfamiliar individuals" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 60).

Matar's escapism is present in his state of confusion, distraction, and perpetual loss in daydreams, providing him with the means to build his ideal world within the confines of his mind. Matar's confusing reality with fantasy leads the readers to question their understanding of the protagonist's reality through his experiences. Matar frequently escapes to sleep and fantasizes about traveling to at least one hundred cities, if not more, and believes he is in love with a woman who has a hundred different names. His obsession with such a dream grows, forcing him to seek interpretations from strangers. For example, in the short story "A Wild Herb's Sorrows," he asks the hotel's old concierge about his dreams, only to be met with the latter's dismissing it as "just a dream," warning him not to believe it (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 22). He then questions the barber, who denies any knowledge about dream interpretations, claiming that "those who pretend to interpret dreams are actually dishonest" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 23). However, disappointed with the barber's reply, Matar continues his search for answers for his dream and eventually turns to an elderly woman who says, "You harbor affection for a singular woman, yet attaining her is improbable" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 24). Matar's confusion is portrayed through his memory loss and his constant disorientation and inability to make sense of people and events that take place around him. In "The Flood," Matar's delayed response to the hotel employee's request to inspect his identification agitates and annoys the employee, "nearly prompting a physical altercation" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 54). Matar's tardy reaction reveals his confusion and the

impatience of the hotel employee adds additional tension to the scene and highlights the pressure placed on Matar to comply quickly and unconditionally. The whole scene foreshadows the consequences of non-compliance and adds an element of danger to the situation.


Matar's world, epitomized by the city and its inhabitants, bears hostility toward him, transforming him into a misanthropist. From an early age, he adopts a pessimistic view of humanity. This outlook fosters a sense of bitterness and resentment towards society at large, leading the protagonist down a path of cynicism and mistrust, "All that happened is that I came!! Oh, what foolishness!" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 17). Matar experiences a profound sense of disconnection from the world around him, feeling like an outsider who merely observes everything from a distance. For instance, in "Matar Abdulrahman's Suffering and Joys," he notices the peculiar assortment of items sold in pharmacies, such as frozen chicken, aphrodisiacs, and songs. Similarly, when he visits a restaurant, he witnesses people consumed by "an inexplicable sensation," suggesting they are consuming something "as cold as ice" (Alhumaid, 2010, p.30). Matar highlights the absurdity of modern life by painting a picture of a world where frozen chickens and aphrodisiacs are sold in pharmacies, and restaurants' food tastes strange. Matar's negative attitude towards the people around him can also be seen as a reflection of his fragmented psyche. His inability to communicate with others suggests a lack of empathy, further reinforcing his isolation due to his belief in the superficiality of interpersonal relationships, symbolized by them eating ice. Furthermore, Matar's perception of society drives him to adopt a profound sense of cynicism. In "Matar Abdulrahman's Sorrows and Joys," Matar meticulously delineates his townspeople's religious rituals on Fridays. In his words, "Friday is a white bright day, the smell of bakhour¹ (incense), the crowded souq (market), the prayers and the red beards" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 33). He sets himself apart from religious men who use henna to dye their beards reddish-orange, by specifying the color of their beards. Also, the difference

A substance that is burnt to produce a sweet smell, especially as part of¹ a religious ceremony (*Cambridge Dictionary*, 2023).

in the two parties' thoughts and views is highlighted by contrasting the red hues of their beards with the bright white Friday, which signifies serenity and peace. This perception of religious people creates a sense of conflict and tension within Matar as he struggles to reconcile his beliefs with those around him.

In Matar's town, it is common to see people blame their misfortune on their sins, believing that God is testing or punishing them. In "The Flood," he describes the town as resounding with complaints regarding the intolerable circumstances. After four consecutive days of power outage, a furious elderly man contends that this is "a manifestation of divine wrath" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 55). Matar's cynical attitude towards religious people may be seen as a critique of the conservative values and beliefs often associated with organized religion. He perceives that religious people are often dogmatic and unwilling to engage in open-minded, critical thinking. In the same story, Matar claims that "people might not readily forgive one for informing them that Asia is indeed a continent, as they have long held the belief that it is merely a village in India" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 57). However, examining religious people characterized by their different appearances can be interpreted as pertinent to Jungian notions of individuation within the narrative framework of Matar's quest for self-realization and psychological integration. This recognition of the unacceptable aspects of human behavior constitutes a critical phase in the individuation process, facilitating Matar's engagement with the intricacies of his own psyche while negotiating the inherent conflict between societal norms and individual principles. Through Matar's observation of these religious figures' distinct appearance, parallels emerge with his own journey of individuation because he struggles with issues pertaining to identity, ethics, and personal authenticity. Hence, Matar's different views are considered challenging and threatening to his society's traditions and social norms. Any endeavor to contradict the prevailing beliefs is deemed futile.

Matar is aware that his rejection of the established norms and ideas and his criticism of the status quo will be met with resistance and opposition. His awareness of the rejection of his ideas brings forth the power dynamics that underlie his society's norms and traditions. He recognizes that those in power are often unwilling to



accept dissenting opinions and criticism and that these challenges to established norms can be difficult to overcome. As a result, he stops trusting people and avoids any social interaction. This reluctance to trust and assist others is highlighted in “A Wild Herb’s Sorrows” when a stranded driver requests Matar’s help pushing a broken-down car on a rainy day. Matar quickly flees the scene despite the plea, leaving the driver puzzled and abandoned (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 20). Matar’s hasty departure and visible perspiration reinforce his decision to refrain from helping others in the future.

Matar’s lack of trust in people is also viewed as a sign of emotional trauma from the world around him. While Jung does not provide a single, concise definition of trauma, he discusses its effects on the psyche in various writings. He believes that trauma results from various sources, including childhood experiences, interpersonal conflicts, and existential crises. Jung emphasizes the importance of understanding trauma within the context of the individual’s personal and collective unconscious (Jung, 2012). For Jung, trauma is often understood as an event or experience that causes significant psychological distress or disruption to an individual’s sense of self and worldview. This means that a certain traumatic experience activates Matar’s persona, influencing his thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Additionally, Jung believes that unresolved traumas could manifest symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and neurosis and could hinder the process of individuation—the journey toward self-discovery and integration. Matar’s trauma originates from an experience in which he is involved in a physical clash despite assuming a passive role in its initiation. In “Matar Abdulrahman’s Sorrows and Joys,” Matar receives a hard blow to his face during a tumultuous fight with individuals from his neighborhood. However, to his dismay, his brother does not come to his aid that day. Consequently, Matar is accused of theft from the community, though the circumstance of the incident is not given, “perpetuating their perception of him as a thief” (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 34). The portrayal of Matar’s mistrust highlights the importance of empathy and compassion, especially for those struggling with their own emotional pain. Jung’s conceptualization of empathy emphasizes its transformative potential in facilitating psychological development and fostering

interpersonal bonds (Jung, 1990). In this regard, empathy serves as a catalyst for personal growth by enabling individuals to explore and integrate aspects of their own psyche that may have been previously unrecognized or overlooked.

Matar is not fond of city life, and his contempt for urban living is evident upon his relocation to a new city. Although Alhumaid's stories present diverse and realistic descriptions of the city, they revolve around the concept of repulsion. This elucidates Alhumaid's conception of the city as an unappealing place. This reveals the writer's concept of the city as a repulsive place (Althubiati, 2019). Althubiati further posits that the characters depicted in Alhumaid's short stories struggle with feelings of isolation within the bustling urban environment, implying underlying psychological complexities (p.213)¹. In "Matar Abdulrahman's Sorrows and Joys," the author uses vivid descriptions of urban living to create an oppressive and claustrophobic atmosphere that seems to aggravate the protagonist's mental anguish. Matar is quick to point out the city's flaws, including crowded streets, pollution, and the faces of the people. This perspective can be interpreted as a critique of contemporary urban living and its detrimental impacts on individuals and society. Furthermore, Matar's hatred of city life exposes many individuals' challenges in seeking a sense of belonging and connection within an urban setting. The anonymity and transience of city life make it challenging to form meaningful relationships and forge a sense of community, leading to feelings of alienation and disconnection. In "The Flood," Matar metaphorically likens the streets of the city to "an aged gigantic creature poised to engulf him" (Alhumaid 2010, p.

In Alhumaid's short story collection *Many Faces, the First of Which is Mariam*¹ (1985), the protagonist's repulsion toward the city is explicitly delineated through his internal reflections and obvious actions. As exemplified in the protagonist's statement, "Since that day, I have not loved the city and it has not loved me," the sentiment of mutual antipathy towards the city is underscored. Additionally, the manifestation of hatred is discernible in the protagonist's frustration, evident in his interactions and behaviors within the urban milieu, such as forcefully closing the door: "I left forcefully like the wind and slammed the door" (Althubaiti, 2019, p. 213).

59). By comparing the streets to an “aged gigantic creature,” the speaker conveys a sense of grandeur and overwhelming presence. The word “aged” suggests a sense of antiquity and perhaps decay, which emphasizes the long history and weariness of the city while the word “gigantic” evokes a feeling of immense size and power, which highlights the magnitude of the urban environment. Moreover, the employment of the metaphor underscores Matar’s perception of alienation and detachment from the urban locale. His vulnerability indicates his longing for a less complex and more genuine existence, which he perceives to be absent within the urban setting.

Ultimately, Matar’s self-presentation is attributed to the dominance of his shadow archetype. This signifies that the unconscious aspects of his personality exert significant influence over his conscious behavior and self-presentation. Matar’s unfulfilled needs are evident in his lack of romantic relationships, absence of companionship, social isolation, and sense of rootlessness.

Hence, while the persona is the social mask individuals present to the world, the shadow is “the repressed tendencies” of the unconscious (Jung, 1969, p.76). The shadow is often described as the negative aspects of one’s personality, the collection of undesirable qualities one tries to conceal, the inferior and primitive side of human nature, or even the other person within oneself. Essentially, the shadow represents the aspects of one’s being that one dislikes or feels ashamed of—it involves the primal and impulsive parts that one consciously hides from oneself and the world.

Understanding the shadow’s definition and elements lays the groundwork for understanding the complex layers that make up the unconscious and how it interacts with the conscious ego. The shadow, as depicted by Jung, consists of diverse characteristics ranging from personal idiosyncrasies to societal restrictions (Kellan, 2020). Personal experiences, traumas, and unacknowledged desires form the shadow, which creates a reservation of emotions and traits that the conscious mind rejects. This dynamic interaction creates a complex shadow of emotions, desires, and memories that often unfold through dreams, project unwanted traits onto others, and form fabricated narratives.

Jung stresses the symbolic nature of the shadow, often manifesting in dreams and fantasies as a component of repressed elements. According to Jung, dreams emerge from the unconscious psyche without conscious intervention; they are seen as pure reflections of the unconscious and are not influenced or falsified by conscious intentions or purposes (Jung, 1968). Therefore, they act as a direct channel to the unconscious, offering a medium for the shadow to cast its imagery. Shadow symbols in dreams and fantasies allow investigation of archetypal themes and universal symbols that transcend individual experiences. In this case, a dream becomes a valuable source of information about unconscious components seeking integration (Ladkin et al., 2018). Dreams lie outside one's control as impartial and spontaneous products of the unconscious psyche. They reveal untouched truths that exist within oneself. In Alhumaid's stories, Matar's dreams constantly engulf and haunt him in his sleep and wakefulness. For example, the boundaries between dream and reality are blurred in the first short story, "A Wild Herb's Sorrows." Matar provides the reader with no description of the woman he sees in his dream and how the dream starts and ends. In a seemingly waking moment, he asks himself about his beloved's name "and found that she had a hundred names..." (Alhumaid, 2010, p.18). His mind is consumed by thoughts of his beloved, whose name, he discovers, encompasses a staggering one hundred variations. Seeking solace in dreams' interpretation, he believes that his dream, adorned with lush green plants, carries a profound symbol of life and fortune. However, some of the plants in his dream were withered and dry. He forgets the profound truth that life encompasses vitality and decay, sweetness and bitterness, and shades of both vibrancy and muted tones. Another suspected dreamy state of Matar is when he finds the language "strange" and "damned at the same time," leaving him sounding "feverish" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 21) and incapable of expressing himself clearly to the hotel staff in his times of wakefulness. In the middle of the room, "he became alone...except for the strange dream. He turned around twice...and his head turned around! (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 21).

In the same story, the shadow takes the form of wild creatures and forms of life, which reflects Matar's distorted perception of humanity and his struggle with low self-esteem. Initially, the hotel's

elderly concierge accuses him of being delirious, dismissing his words as mere ramblings. However, the determined protagonist vehemently denies this accusation, insisting that his language is fantastical and cursed simultaneously. Alone in his hotel room, devoid of any external distractions, his mind is consumed by a vivid dream that appears to conjure another human presence, sharing the confines of the space with him. In dreams, therefore, the shadow “appeals as a person of the same sex as that of the dreamer” (Jung, 1964, p. 169). Throughout the story, Matar experiences a sense of disorientation. For example, turning around twice, his head seemingly “turned” or “rotated,” serves as a visual metaphor for how his delirious worldview blurs the lines between reality and dream. Interestingly, the last phrase of his head rotating twice is repeated twice in the story, emphasizing his constant inner struggle and twisted vision of the world.

In “Matar Abdulrahman’s Suffering and Joys,” the protagonist sees the old room attendant at night, who has “holes in his eyes,” as a nightmarish creature serving him tea and confessing his ten-year history of illness. Matar standing “alone waiting for something” and “anything” (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 31) evokes a sense of estrangement and isolation, which are enforced by his useless wait for an unknown thing. This absurd world in which he lives is populated by crocodiles, sleeping watchdogs, and his face’s weird reflection in a bathroom mirror. Another example is Matar’s transformation into “a strange bird” (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 33), which symbolizes his desire to break free from societal expectations. By becoming an unidentified creature, he distances himself from the real human world and its expectations, which gives him the freedom to escape and pursue his desires. According to Jung, dreams play a fundamental role in rebalancing one’s psychological well-being by generating dream content that subtly reinstates a state of overall equilibrium within one’s psyche.

“This is what I call the complementary (or compensatory) role of dreams in our psychic make-up. It explains why people who have unrealistic ideas or too high an opinion of themselves, or who make grandiose plans out of proportion to their real capacities, have dreams of flying or falling. The dream compensates for the deficiencies of their personalities” (Jung, 1964, p. 50).

Mentioning marriage in the story further underscores the pressure Matar goes through to conform to societal expectations. In his father's eyes, getting married would align with the traditional role of a man in society. However, Matar's shadow desires and tends to escape through a vision of his bird-like transformation, challenging these expectations, as he seeks to live a true life, rather than adhering to the codes imposed by the society's collective identity represented by the traditional Saudi "souq."

A persistent concern about sleep or the lack of it marks the stories of Alhumaid, as evident in the constant questioning of how and how much to sleep. "Do you sleep a lot? How? What are the herbs, Leaves, Flowers, Colors? Do you have sufficient justifications for permanently attending men's gatherings?" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 39). In the story "A Very Special Talk with You," this preoccupation reveals the shadow's restlessness. The interplay of sleeping, dreaming, and socializing becomes a catalyst for the shadow's antisocial behavior. It underscores the notion that human existence is defined by interacting with these fundamental aspects. If Matar stops communicating, he reduces himself to a wild, unidentified being, which is what the shadow does.

"As the products of imagination are always in essence visual, their forms must, from the outset, have the character of images and typical images, which is why...I call them 'archetypes'" (Jung, 1969, p. 518).

In "The Flood," dreaming and falling into a strange sleep again haunts the narrative and blurs the boundaries of reality. The story starts with Matar waking up to go back to sleep again. In the depths of the subconscious, Matar's shadow prompts him to envision himself and his beloved transforming into fish. Instead of dismissing the vision, Matar resorts to aspirin consumption to delve deeper into dreaming of her emerging from the aquarium and proposing marriage to him (Alhumaid, 2010). This bizarre dream distorts not only his authentic form but also his social role. Another fragment of the dream presents the beloved, no longer a fish but "a duck," while the narrator remains trapped "in the aquarium" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 62). The truth is that the presence of diverse aquatic creatures within the dream signifies a state of forgetfulness and vulnerability. Thus,

repressed elements within the unconscious that are incompatible with the conscious self-image exert influence through one's dreams.

The shadow, with its repressed and often contradictory elements (Brookes, 1991), may threaten the individual's identity and societal integration. Recognizing the possible disruption, the ego becomes defensive to maintain order and stability. This defensive function expresses itself in various ways, including projecting shadow elements onto external entities and avoiding situations that can expose an individual's undesirable self-image.

In Jung's words, psychological projection is

“an unconscious, automatic process whereby a content that is unconscious to the subject transfers itself to an object so that it seems to belong to that object. The projection ceases the moment it becomes conscious, that is to say when it is seen as belonging to the subject” (Jung, 1968, p. 60).

When one tries to confront one's own shadow, one becomes aware of certain qualities and impulses denied within oneself but can easily observe in someone else, a group, or an external entity. These may include selfishness, schemes, carelessness, cowardice, and an excessive attachment to material possessions.

In “A Wild Herb's Sorrows,” Matar's repressed shadow forces itself out of him and takes control of his personality for some time, causing him to behave in an anti-social and rude manner. Matar's perception of reality takes on a hostile quality as he envisions the women of the city as diminutive beings who exhibit aggressive behavior while they speak. “Oh God, the city was full of young women...but they were rough...and they used their fingernails to speak!!” (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 18). They are depicted as wielding their nails as weapons to speak. These actions suggest a demeanor that is not only rude but also harsh. However, it is worth considering that this unsettling perception reflects Matar's shadow exhibition. The aggressive and harsh behavior attributed to the depicted individuals may not necessarily reflect their true nature, but rather Matar's own internalized negative traits that he projects onto them. Another example depicts one aspect of Matar's shadow—a deep sense of insecurity. “The story's hero stood facing himself...suddenly his form looked odd!!” (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 20). This feeling arises from his inability to fully accept and acknowledge

the shadow, resulting in a constant struggle with low self-esteem. He perceives himself as an embarrassing, weary, enigmatic, and even deranged entity, not even a human being. This negative perception permeates his entire psyche, facilitating the projection. As a result, it significantly influences his worldview. Throughout the story, Matar finds himself struggling with conflicting emotions as he encounters that deranged, "odd" entity in a state of semi-delirium triggered by a dream, undisclosed to the reader. His shadow assumes a sarcastic voice in that state, suggesting that Matar maintains relationships with multiple women instead of committing to just one due to his incapability of true love and commitment. The shadow also dismisses Matar's observation of "a wild herb crying" as a mere illusion that should be disregarded, which suggests a tendency to invalidate and discredit Matar's perceptions and experiences. It is worth noting that labeling himself as "mad" and "mysterious" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 19) is indicated twice in one story, emphasizing Matar's sense of insecurity and self-doubt. Another example occurs in "Matar Abdulrahman's Suffering and Joys," where his laughter in front of the mirror and the uncertainty surrounding its cause (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 30) suggest the presence of the shadow that makes him perceive himself as something strange or unknown.

According to Jung's theory, neuroses arise when individuals are unable to confront and accept certain archetypal aspects of their unconscious. Instead of integrating these unconscious elements into their consciousness, neurotic individuals continue to project them onto other people or objects. In "Matar Abdulrahman's Suffering and Joys," Matar's perception of the tea set as "scared like little animals" and the hiding shadow of "objects in the dirty corner" further showcases the projection of his fears and anxieties onto the external world (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 30). In other words, he externalizes his internal struggles and perceives them as existing outside of himself. This projection is a defense mechanism that allows him to distance himself from his own emotions and confront them indirectly through external stimuli.

Lack of awareness regarding the presence of the shadow can lead to chaos in one's life, such as frequently playing the victim in every situation and constantly complaining. The shadow of Matar in "A

Very Special Talk with You” is unhappy about being human and, hence, being part of society.

“You, against your will, consist of several things, your full name, the color of your clothes, your wallet, the cities you have traveled to the newspaper you constantly read, whether you love or hate the sea. Do you constantly forget? Do you suffer from night blindness? Do you use cod liver oil?” (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 37)

By highlighting the elements imposed by society, like having a given name, tribal customs, a financial status determined by that, and hobbies dictated by his lifestyle, there is a suggestion that Matar may feel trapped or constrained by societal expectations. This could be how he mentions feeling sick and potentially even “pretending to be sick” (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 37) to reject or distance himself from these perceived limitations. The shadow continues the monologue of constant complaints and finding faults in the outside world. It states how painful it is to follow social codes, which feels like walking “barefoot and with the head exposed” (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 38). Matar’s shadow makes him feel disheartened as he perceives himself as insignificant and diminished in the eyes of others. The shadow also represents Matar’s longing as an adult to return to a state of innocence and freedom, where he is exempt from societal rules and expectations. However, this desire to be “little” (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 38) can evoke a sense of embarrassment as it contradicts societal notions of adulthood and the responsibilities that come with it. This contradiction elucidates his tendency to adopt a victim mentality and voice endless complaints. “So, whatever form it takes, the function of the shadow is to represent the opposite side of the ego and to embody just those qualities that one dislikes most in other people” (Jung, 1964, p. 173). Under these circumstances, Matar’s shadow manifests an unfeeling and pessimistic intellect, projecting his passivity and reluctance to understand social norms, thereby portraying them as rigid and intolerant to his differences.

Thus, deep in his unconscious mind, Matar’s shadow impacts his emotions, thoughts, and behaviors and exceeds conscious control through psychological projection. Consequently, Matar frequently projects his shadow onto others, erroneously attributing undesirable traits to them, like fear, insecurity, and passivity, instead of recognizing their existence within himself. This lack of awareness

about the shadow's presence contributes to Matar's inner turmoil and disorder, evident in his melancholic existence.

When faced with potentially unsettling revelations, the ego's defensive mechanism takes the form of fabricated narratives. It builds complicated stories to maintain a coherent self-image and keep the individual from the discomfort of confronting repressed elements. The need to fabricate narratives is rooted in its desire for self-preservation (McAdams, 2008). The ego protects itself and the individual from the destabilizing effects of acknowledging the shadow by creating stories that match existing beliefs and societal standards (Iliopoulos, 2020). These made-up stories protect against internal conflicts and act as a societal mask, ensuring compliance with expected societal norms, which is what Jung describes as an individual's tendency to psychologically detach from behaviors, emotions, and thoughts one perceives as risky or harmful.

The fabricated narratives are not entirely false but are complex constructions that distort the truth and often involve selective reinterpretation of events, memories, and emotions to fit the individual's beliefs and societal expectations (Boag, 2014). They may portray an individual more favorably, highlighting their virtues, strengths, and accomplishments and downplaying the negative traits that could taint their identity and self-image (McAdams, 2008). Hence, the fabricated narratives reflect the ego's natural desire to maintain a positive self-image and shield the conscious mind from the truths behind the shadow.

Matar reconstructs complex narratives about his identity and behaviors to protect himself from this pain. Over time, he internalizes these stories and firmly believes in their truthfulness to the point where he unconsciously ignores any information that contradicts these beliefs. In "Matar Abdulrahman's Suffering and Joys," the shadow of Matar uses ego to generate stories that validate his needs for connection and belonging. He speaks of developing internal monologue, going on night adventures with people like him, and even traveling abroad. However, Matar experiences a sense of loneliness and estrangement throughout the narrative, which aligns with the shadow's impact on his psyche. To stress this, he claims being the only guest in the hotel, and requesting a "soldier to guard him from the brutal desert behind the window of his room."

(Alhumaid, 2010, p. 32). In the same story, it appears that Matar's claim of suffering pain for over "one hundred years" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 31) and his contradictory statement about surviving while maintaining good health suggests that his narrative may be a selective reinterpretation of a past prolonged sickness. Matar's narrative may serve as a way for him to construct his identity. By portraying himself as a survivor who has overcome significant challenges, he seeks validation, admiration, or sympathy from others.

Matar's narrative of the five-day downpour and the subsequent absence of the sun is another example. In the short story "The Flood," Matar stresses his sense of entrapment by reconstructing a complex memory of a downpour and likening it to the flood. Throughout this period, the doors of schools, hospitals, and other facilities remained closed. As a result of this occurrence, the townsfolk made numerous calls to the police as vast swamps formed, "swamped with discarded shoes and dead rats" (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 52). The shadow tends to associate that negative feeling of entrapment with the place. It exaggerates the natural elements present in that place, as evidenced by Matar's claim that the rain was falling in his head. This sense of entrapment is further emphasized in a narrative hinting at Matar's inability to be accepted by his society. In the same story, Matar's dilemma as a modern man echoes that of Eliot's Prufrock, who wanders the nameless city's streets at night, searching for a meaning for his existence. According to Matar's narrative, he embarks on a journey, this time through an unnamed ancient city. However, as he treads upon the aged streets, a hostile atmosphere reigns, "devouring" the streets like a voracious beast, seemingly insatiable (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 59). This process of reinterpreting his past experiences and associated feelings helps individuals align with cultural norms and expectations, safeguarding an individual from social isolation and rejection (McAdams, 2008).

In the "Solutions to The Mud Problem" story, Matar's narrative suggests his fear of societal judgment and attempt to portray himself favorably. The prospect of venturing beyond societal boundaries fills him with dread over potential consequences such as society's disapproval and judgment. In his narrative, Matar claims to have encountered a peculiar-looking stranger, one identified as "the man

with the broad mustache” (Alhumaid, 2010, p. 41), who resides in a wooden shack. Considering the stranger’s modest yet different dwelling, Matar advises him to get married and live in a mud house, subtly indicating his attempt to conform to societal norms. Ironically, Matar himself travels constantly and never settles with marriage. As an individual, Matar’s narrative probably helps him make sense of his experience and his inability to follow his own advice to others. “If an inferiority is conscious, one always has a chance to correct it. But if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets corrected” (Jung, 1969, p.76). In the case of Matar, his fear of judgment is deeply embedded in his consciousness, which explains his narrative fabrication. These inferiorities are subtly discernable in his storytelling, highlighting the complex nature of his character and the internal conflicts he faces.

In conclusion, exploring Jung’s concepts of the persona and the shadow in Alhumaid’s short stories collection *A Wild Herb’s Sorrows* provides a clear understanding of their hidden influence on the conscious life of Alhumaid’s protagonist. Matar’s persona, which manifests feelings of loneliness, the desire to escape, and misanthropy, often clashes with his shadow, demonstrating his insecurities in his dreams, psychological projection, and fabrication of narratives. This tension between these opposing forces leads to Matar’s failed individuation.

Examining Carl Jung’s two concepts of the persona and the shadow highlights modern man’s struggle in the Arab world, particularly in the Saudi setting as depicted in Alhumaid’s short stories collection. However, due to the limited scope of discussion and analysis, further exploration of Jung’s archetypal concepts could offer valuable insights into studying modern characters in Saudi literature, for instance, investigating the impact of unconscious conflicts on the psyche of modern women and children, two demographics often overlooked in literary Saudi studies. Such research could contribute to identifying specific structures of power and patterns of behavior within characters.

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