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Modern Mans Conflict with His Collective Unconscious: A Psychoanalytical Study of Ford Madox Fords Characters in *The Good Soldier*

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Abstract: *With its publication in 1915, Ford Madox Fords novel The Good Soldier (2002) unveils several layered visions of shifting attitudes of the modern era. It bears deep and intriguing commentary on the social and psychological situations during the period of transition when the world was heading toward the First World War. This article aims to undertake a study of this novel in terms of how it brings forth modern mans psychological conflicts by effectively revealing the stark contrast between the characters social appearance and their internal desires. It intends to investigate the workings of personality archetypes that Fords characters unintentionally adopt in this novel with an exclusive theoretical underpinning of Carl Jungs Collective Unconscious and his Archetypes of personality. The study finds out how individuals suffer psychologically when society undergoes transitions and how it affects their social relationships. The purpose of this study is to highlight the fact that Fords characters are having unbalanced archetypes because of the deterioration and disillusionment prevailing in Pre-war modern society. It makes their personalities confused and to behave ambiguously and unconventionally, consequently causing their relationships to collapse and their lives to suffer.*

Key Words: Archetypes, Collective Unconscious, The Good Soldier, Persona, Shadow

Introduction

Ford Hermann Hueffer at birth and later Ford Madox Ford was an experimental and innovative English writer of the twentieth century. His father Dr. Francis Hueffer; a German immigrant who settled in England in 1869, was an author and a music critic for *The Times*. This connection, however, instilled in him a sense of inferiority because his German immigrant status did not provide him with any privilege to recount himself to a regarded background during the period when everyone was searching for ones concrete roots. Such conflicts are significant to understand his characters in this novel as many of his critics consider this novel as autobiographical and that Ford borrowed from his real-life experiences while creating this novel.

The Good Soldier (1915/2002) gives great insight into questions regarding complicated relationships, personal desires, and betrayals. It revolves around two couples who claim to be exemplary friends; John Dowell and Florence who were Americans, and Edward Ashburnham and Leonora, who were English. In the course of the story, the narrator John Dowell figures out the terrible reality hidden behind the perfect manners of the good people revealing both Edward and Florence as feigning heart disease for the sake of their illicit desires. Leonora, who knows the reality, does not inform Dowell explicitly for the sake of her status and identity. Eventually, both Edward and Florence commit suicide being unable to face or handle the real world.

The ambiguous and unreliable narrative structure of this novel corresponds to the pre-war period of a confused and disordered atmosphere. We know that it was a period of a radical break with old traditions and ideals. The feudal system was getting replaced by industrialism. People were internalizing new values and trends more inclined toward individualism. However, they were also confused about that particular rhythm of life that was getting vanished with the new wave of modernism. With this transition, not only did come there a huge gap between man and nature but also within the personality of a modern man; that is between his natural needs and modern demands. Ford tried to register this transition in his novel.

Material and Methods

Whether it is the unique stylistic features or the unconventional subject matter, the diversity of interpretations and criticism by scholars and critics determines the significance of this novel and makes Ford one of the pioneers of modern fiction. This novel provides scholars with a vast scholarship to investigate. However, the initial reception of this novel was intensely critical. The critics did not much appreciate this *Tale of Passion* (1915/2002) with its uncustomary portrayal of the rapidly transforming attitudes and the materialistic approach of modern society. Unlike Jane Austen's upper class, Ford's upper class represents the darkness hidden behind the white cloak of the good people. Martin Stannard (1995) quotes a critic in his preface to the novel who claimed that this novel was more useful to the pathologist than to any decent British reader in search of an account of the joys and sorrows of normal human life (p. ix). Dianne D. Berger (2017) reveals *Outlook* judged it unsavory and found it inconceivable that an Englishman would behave as described in the book. It was certainly unattractive for many to read such an explicit unfolding of the declined human morality about the class which has always considered itself superior and morally upright. Ford was indeed aware of himself going away from the mainstream while illustrating the unattractive side of society through his novel. In his letter to Lucy Masterman, written in 1913, Ford stressed to forget about Piers Plowman, Shakespeare, Keats, Yeats, Morris, the English Bible, and remember only that one lives in a terrific, untidy, indifferent empirical age,

where not one single problem is solved and not one single accepted idea from the past has any more magic (as cited in Ludwig, 2016, p.55). It shows that for Ford, rather any specific class or people, it was the period, the age of discontentment which compelled him to go against the conventional standards.

Ford's experimental and rambling narration in this novel has been a widely discussed subject by critics since its publication. Frank G Nigro (1992) calls this novel a cubist novel while commenting upon its narrative style saying that through its narration this novel attempts to mirror contemporary art for creating a pictorial and cubist novel. With different perspectives and viewpoints, critics have been questioning the trustworthiness of Dowell's narration. Theodore Dreiser (2017) considers Dowell "a cold narrator", a dispassionate and unemotional one for he does not throw profound light upon the novel's events of significantly heightened emotions and keeps the readers' mind unclear (as cite in Smith, p.95-105). Similarly, Mark Schorer (1963) labels Dowell as an unreliable narrator and gives the responsibility to Ford for intentionally creating an unreliable narrator to color his version of events. According to Schorer Ford creates such a narrator either to highlight or ridicule the immoral ways of modern society (as cited in Wiesenfarth, p.39-49). Samuel Hynes (1972) however appreciates Dowell's struggle to discover reality in the limited given circumstances. For him, the character of Dowell and his narration is an authentic description of a modern man's weakness or disability to understand the realities of life. Similarly, Michael Levenson (1984) establishes that Dowell gradually emerges as a moral character by keeping on moving forward while reanimating the ethical sense by the end of this novel. He also finds Dowell successful in reporting the whole story out of distorted pieces of information.

Ford's novel widely invests in matters related to the decline of human nature and hypocrisy in social relationships. The characterization of this novel is a subject also significant and much complex as the narrative structure is. This novel and its characters reflect that Ford had much to say about the anxieties and frustrations of a modern man. In response to the critics who accused Ford of propagating liberated love through the sentimentalist portrayal of Edward

Ashburnham, Sara Haslam (2002, p.55) asserts that Ford is not advocating free love or taking an amoral stance, rather he is attempting to show how life is and the reality of polygamous desire. While for Robert Green (1981, p. 223) Ford's novel is a struggle between retrospective idealism and gritty unsympathetic materialism.

The present study draws particularly on the patterns of the personality archetypes in Fords characters. For this purpose, his characters are closely analyzed based on the psychic motivation behind their dubious conduct under the theoretical framework of Carl Jungs Collective Unconscious and Archetypes of personality. Jungs collective unconscious is the inmost level of the human psyche encompassing the accumulation of inherited experiences that are universal, thus repeated relatively by each generation. These experiences become a part of the human psyche in the form of images. The images of these inherited universal experiences are called archetypes. So according to Carl Jung, our collective unconscious is the repository of those archetypes that channel our actions during our social interactions and dealings. There are four major archetypes of personality proposed by Carl Jung. However, the present study focuses exclusively on The Persona, and The Shadow to use as the theoretical lens for the characters analysis. According to Jung, the persona is our public face. It is a mask that we wear to play different roles and to appear reasonable in front of others. It helps in going smoothly through the diversity of roles an individual has to play in society. The shadow is the dark side of our personality. Our instincts, desires, and animalistic features which we want to hide from the external world accumulate in this archetype (Schultz, 2015).

The presence of these archetypes is recurrent in each individual. This paper will initiate the discussion by examining the role of the characters collective unconscious in perpetuating their persona and shadow archetypes. For this purpose the following research questions have been framed:

- (i) What role do spatial and religious conflicts play in complicating the characters relationships in the novel?
- (ii) How Ford brings forth the concept of the death of religion during the modern period in this novel?

- (iii) What circumstances lead to Dowell and Leonoras suffering from the inflation of persona condition?
- (iv) What role does the shadow archetype play in Edward and Florence s suicide?

Discussion and Analysis

I - Effects of Transition Period on the Characters Collective Unconscious

Ford in *The Good Soldier* (1915/2002) describes his characters as belonging to different spatial and religious backgrounds. Edward Ashburnham; the protagonist of this novel and the good soldier of the title, is a soldier in the British Army. He belongs to a rich Protestant family of feudal setup having Branshaw Manor in Fordingbridge. His wife Leonora belongs to a middle-class family of Irish Catholics. The narrator John Dowell belongs to a wealthy upper-class American family from Philadelphia. His wife Florence is from Connecticut however her ancestors were from Fordingbridge, the place now belongs to Edward Ashburnham. This geographical description is important as it sheds light on many issues related to the conflicts of identity prevalent in that period of transition.

In the novel, the narrator while narrating about Florence's feigning heart disease says, that the only main idea of her heart, which was otherwise cold – was to get to Fordingbridge and be a county lady in the home of her ancestors (Ford, 2002, p. 63). Florence's collective unconscious becomes visible here. Her desire of having a European establishment and a husband having an English accent (Ford, 2002, p. 56) indicates her identity crisis unfolding that she wants an identity that is constantly rooted in her ancestors who came from Fordingbridge, and the Branshaw Manor which is now owned by Ashburnham. This identity crisis was the sheer outcome of the early modern period during which people were being bombarded with rapidly changing ideas about modern trends and modes of life. She desperately wants to repossess that identity occupied in her collective unconscious. To reach her destination, she marries Dowell and uses her as a tool to take her out of Connecticut, America, whereas to avoid any marital interference she feigns the condition of a heart patient.

The relationship between Edward and Leonora

is likewise a complicated one. The model couple (Ford, 2002, p. 7), as the narrator introduces them, is having their identities confused between their different geographical as well as religious backgrounds. Through their relationship, Ford seems to highlight many significant issues related to religion which are symbolically suggestive of Nietzsche's concept of the "death of god" during the modern period. Initially, Leonora's collective unconscious is strongly connected with her Catholic identity. The narrator states that before her marriage "she had never spoken to a person except for a priest" (Ford, 2002, p. 94). Her devotedness and faithfulness to her religion also inspire Edward and he announces building a Catholic church in Branshaw Manor to give homage to his extremely pious wife. He does even plan to become an emotional Catholic (Ford, 2002, p. 99) as Dowell declares in the novel. Leonora, however, considering it a costly and impractical proposition, rejects the proposal suggesting that she could perfectly well drive from Branshaw to the nearest Catholic Church (99). Ford here seems to unveil the reality of those having religious devotion during that period. The cold and insensitive response from Leonora proves to be the base of Edward's disillusionment with his wife which gradually cultivates into an unsympathetic hatred. But Leonora's Catholic virtuousness, which gets declined earlier, arises again on the question of producing a Protestant child. Petrifying for the religion of her children, she decisively restrains herself from 'sinning' by producing a Protestant child. On the other hand, Edward who himself was ready to convert to Catholicism also disallows any Catholic heir claiming that his loyalty to the traditions of his family would not permit him to bind any future inheritors of his name or beneficiaries by the death of his ancestors (Ford, 2002, p. 103). So Edward's approach here is also connected with his collective unconscious occupied by his loyalty to his family traditions rather than any religious affiliation. This brings to light the fact that in actuality it was the chaos that has spread in the modern world with the ongoing replacement of people's centuries-old traditions that has made them confused between their traditions and religion. For their ambiguous personal conflicts, both are using religion as a toy causing situations symbolically referring to the death of god. This is how Edward and Leonora's illogical

and immature religious strife causes chaos in their own lives and deterioration in their relationship.

Edward, whose philosophy of life revolved around the feudal theory of an over-lord doing his best by his dependents (Ford, 2002, p. 102) represents a personality having a sentimentalist heart. He believes in the old feudalist traditions of kindness and bigheartedness. He loves to keep his heart open for his land stewards. He considers it obligatory to keep the centuries-old servants and lodgers of Ashburnhams contented with their landowners. He needs an atmosphere where he can express his love and generosity explicitly to everyone. Contrarily, Leonora's Irish sensibility considers Edward's sentimentalism as his mad generosity (Ford, 2002, p. 100). Leonora's Irish identity here also hints towards Ireland's Great Famine of 1845 during which whole of the Ireland suffered from a devastating period of starvation and diseases. Hence somewhere in her collective unconscious, we find the tinge of that starvation that causes her to behave materialistically. As the narrator declares that because she came from a family of small Irish landlords (Ford, 2002, p. 102), so for her, Edward's generosity for his tenants is nothing else but a total waste of money. Therefore the clash is not just between Edward's sentimentalist and Leonora's materialistic approach rather it is a clash between their collective unconscious which is occupied with their ancestral traditions and this clash eventually leads their relationship to implode.

II - Adoption to the Archetype of Persona

The persona, as described above, is the mask that we wear in public to fulfill various roles we are bound to perform in our lives. It is also necessary however to keep our real personalities intact and unaffected otherwise it would lead to a condition Jung calls inflation of the persona (Schultz, 2015, p. 110). It is a condition in which a person while following a persona forgets about his real personality. Hence despite playing that role he becomes that role consequently causing other aspects of his personality to get diminished. As persona does not reflect our true personality, when we follow it blindly we actually deceive our real personalities.

In this novel, all of the characters are wearing different social masks. However, by closely analyzing

their personalities according to the above-mentioned proposition we can propose that John Dowell and Leonora are suffering from inflation of the persona condition, whereas Edward Ashburnham and Florence are adopting their personas quite tactfully and in a balanced way. Both Florence and Edward pretend to be heart patient in front of everyone thus both have adopted this persona intentionally for the sake of their internal motives. Till her death, Florence is represented as having a very lively and vibrant personality playing different kinds of roles at the same time. Along with her fragile heart patient persona, Dowell described her as bright; and she danced over the floors of castle and overseas (Ford, 2002, p. 11) and she entertained with her conversations, as her hair was very nicely done, and she dressed very beautifully and very expensively" (Ford, 2002, p. 16). It indicates that she is following all of her personas very consciously and carefully. Her personas are under her control and she knows where to appear weak and timid and where to behave like a strong and bright lady. She is shown as a model of radiance and knows how to present herself as distinguished from others. The same is the case with Edward who also does adopt the persona of a patient for his illicit desires but he does not follow his personas blindly. Unlike Dowell, he is not deceiving himself regarding his feelings toward his wife. He admits that although he does respect Leonoras religious outlook however he never felt romantic toward her. Dowell admitted that he admired her for her truthfulness, for her cleanness of mind (Ford, 2002, p. 98). At the same time, he also wears a mask to show people that he is an ideal husband as Dowell reiterates them throughout the novel as the model couple, and quite good people and that their demeanors were quite perfect (Ford, 2002, p. 86). Edward is equally representing other aspects of his personality which were a source of attraction for women like Mrs. Baisal, Maisie Maidan, Florence, as well as Nancy, who fell in love with him.

On the other hand, Dowell is performing unknowingly an unwanted and perforce role of a male nurse imposed upon him by his wife Florence. Till her death, Dowell's entire job was to take care of her life. He regarded himself to be sedulous and a strained nurse (Ford, 2002, p. 6), and further stated "all the time, I was just a male sick nurse" (Ford, 2002, p. 49). At one point he even declared that he can find

his way blindfolded, thus he was sure that he had nothing to do in this world but left him with the habit of counting his own footsteps (Ford, 2002, p. 16). It reflects Dowell's stagnant position and his inflation of persona condition during which he had completely forgotten his real personality and only realizes this after Florence's death. He claims after her death that it was like recovering from an anesthetic (Ford, 2002, p. 72), and claimed to have dual personality, the one entirely unconscious of the other (Ford, 2002, p. 84). Hence it was only after getting rid of that perforce role that he realizes his real personality.

The study of Leonoras character reveals that the only passion in her life is the desire for mastery (Ford, 2002, p. 98). She wants to equip herself with power and authority for the sake of her financial security and public face. Her persona which is aimed at appearing as a perfectly strong modern woman in front of the world has caused her to suffer from inflation of persona. She wants to show the world that she is a perfect woman and a perfect wife and for this purpose, she is trying to control everyone unknowingly that her scheming is only causing her matters to get worse. She is constantly confusing her identity as a modern and religious woman. During Edwards infidel life, she not only accepts his adulterous affairs with other women but rather takes advantage of his liaisons by controlling both Edwards financial and adulterous affairs. She schemes for Edwards secure affairs by arranging safe mistresses from upper-class families to avoid any financial damage to their fortune. Dowell tells his readers that Leonora was pimping for Edward (Ford, 2002, p. 49), thus playing with other women's lives too. Maisie Maidan's tragic death and Nancy's madness are also the consequences of her scheming and tricks. Hence her conduct reveals that the only passion in her life is her status in society, her appearance as a strong woman, and her materialistic gains. For this purpose, she denies all other roles of her personality.

III – Adoption to the Archetype of Shadow

The shadow archetype is the most sensitive and vulnerable of all the archetypes. As this is the darker side of our psyche where all of our instinctual desires reside, therefore we implement this archetype to hide our real desires from the world, considering them immoral. But this archetype is also significant as it gives us the power to realize our real

personalities. It makes us true to ourselves, and face the world without complexes. Its total suppression means one is suppressing all of one's instincts, and creativity resulting in the dryness and unresponsiveness of the total personality. However, its blind following can also be fatal when left unchecked. A person constantly living in his shadow and following his desires blindly would eventually be unable to live in the conscious reality of his life. Hence one needs to be carefully balanced and sensible regarding this mysterious archetype.

In this novel, we observe that Dowell and Leonora are suppressing their shadows by continuously repressing their instinctual desires. On the other hand, Edward and Florence are blindly indulged in fulfilling their illegitimate desires to the extent that they are completely unaware of their moral and social norms. Eventually, their personalities become so weak that when they have to face the reality, both commit suicide.

We have discussed earlier in detail that Dowell's unconscious persona has taken hold of his entire personality. The disposition of his confused and vague attitude and expressions throughout the novel highlight the fact that there is something absent in his personality. His character's study in light of his shadow archetype reveals that he is continuously suppressing his passions and so concealing his instinctual desires under his shadow. He admits after getting married to Florence that probably it was his own fault, what followed. In a hurry to get the wedding over, and afraid of her relatives finding he received her advances with a certain amount of absence of mind (Ford, 2002, p. 58) and then he further affirmed that her lying for some moment in his arms was also a sign of conscience. He fancied that, if he had shown warmth then she would have acted the proper wife to me but, because he acted like a Philadelphia gentleman, she made him thus he went with the part of being a male nurse (Ford, 2002, p. 59). It confirms the fact that his passionless and affectionless attitude motivated Florence to use their relationship for her sexual convenience. His dispassionate role as a husband consequently becomes the basis of their unconsummated marriage and makes Florence redefine her roles according to her desires, perpetuating absolute sexual freedom to herself. She becomes a mistress of Edward Ashburnham to get the status of a county lady of

Branshaw Manor and remains in this illicit affair for nine years while Dowell remains ignorant of this reality. However, her becoming exceedingly desperate for the fulfillment of her desires eventually takes her toward the situation where an individual starts losing control over his shadow. As Dowell recounts in the novel, that Florence called for more and more attention from him [Edward Ashburnham] as the time went on. She would make him kiss her at any moment of the day (Ford, 2002, p.70). We know that such a condition is dangerous for human personality because, as Jung has described, the individual loses his conscious mind and hence any crisis can lead him toward the worst circumstances. So, when she realizes that Edward Ashburnham is in love with Nancy and that Dowell has come to know of her past affair with Jimmy, it proved to be the determining influence in her suicide (Ford, 2002, p. 81).

The character of Leonora is also depicted as strongly suppressing her shadow archetype. After her marriage with Edward, she, initially, is described by the narrator as being Edward's wife and her eyes followed him about full of truthfulness, of admiration, of gratitude, and of love and that her life with him was almost heaven (Ford, 2002, p. 98). It reflects that in the beginning, she does possess affectionate feelings for Edward yet she disallows to consummate her marriage because of her religious conflict with Edward. It is evident that she is holding back her emotions and instincts for the sake of a distorted assertion of her confused modern identity. On the other hand, Edward is a complete contrast to Leonora's character. He, being a sentimentalist, wants an atmosphere where he can display his heroism and generosity. When he does not find the desired response from his wife, rather suppressing his emotions and instincts he starts finding comfort from illicit means. It causes the total submission of his personality to his shadow archetype leading him toward becoming a serial adulterer. Dowell describes Edward's shadow overcoming his personality in the novel while narrating the Kilsyte case in which Edward was caught kissing a nurse-maid, he began to indulge in day-dream in which he approached the nurse-maid more tactfully and carried the matter much further. Occasionally he thought of other women in terms of way courtship---or, it would be more exact to say that he thought of them in terms

of tactful comforting, ending in absorption (Ford, [2002](#), p. 109). Eventually, he transgresses all the values of morality and social codes by indulging in excessive sexual affairs with Mrs. Basil, La Dolciquita, Florence and Mrs. Maisie Maidan. His mind urges him to follow his shadow for the sake of his passionate feelings making him forget his conscious reality. At times, he even repents over the propensity of his sexual liaisons, yet is unable to struggle with his own shadow. Therefore when he finds true love in the shape of Nancy, his being disgraced by Leonora in front of Nancy for his past liaisons, it turns out to be a serious crisis, leading him to commit suicide.

Findings

The above discussion confirms the main postulate of the study that the early modern period of transition influenced the collective unconscious of the people to the extent that it disturbed not only their personalities but their social relations and their lives too. The characters analysis in the light of their collective unconscious and their persona and shadow archetypes proves that the workings of their archetypes were not balanced. Dowell and Leonora were suffering from the inflation of persona state while Edward and Florence had gone deep in fulfilling their instinctual desires. Religion, which in the past had been a grand aspect of importance and significance, had now become merely a plaything to satisfy personal desires. Ford has brought to light the consequences of this chaos.

Conclusion

This study proved that the novel *The Good Soldier* (1915/2002) explicitly portrayed the deterioration of the social, moral, and psychological structures of the pre-war society of the modern era where pure love and true human relations seem to be replaced by temporal pleasures and materialistic gains. The above discussion reveals how this conflicted period makes Fords characters suffer psychologically in order to cope with the changing standards of the world alongside their internal desires. On the one hand, they want the fulfillment of their desires which are being controlled by their collective unconscious. On the other hand, they want to move with the flow which demands them to internalize completely a new and paradigmatically different mode of perception. To cope with all this chaos they are shown as taking for granted all the fundamental aspects of their lives. Everyone is shown exploiting his or her matrimonial relations, everyone is playing with each others feelings and emotions, and using religion as a tool according to their own myths created by their own minds. This clash between their collective unconscious and the arc of modernism aggravates their complicated states of mind. In the novel, the characters are either going through the unconscious state of inflation of persona or following their shadow blindly. Thus none of the characters is following his or her personality archetype in a balanced way causing their relationships to deteriorate and serious consequences to their lives.

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