

Representing the Individuality of the Marsh Girl in *Where the Crawdads Sing*

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Abstract

*This study explores the individuality of Kya, the Marsh girl, in *Where the Crawdads Sing*, through Carl Jung's concepts of the Collective Unconscious and Archetypes. By analyzing the archetypes of the self, shadow, persona, and animus, the research highlights how these elements contribute to Kya's journey toward individuation. The narrative portrays Kya's struggle against societal rejection and her utilization of the natural world for solace and creative expression. Her path to self-discovery is fraught with physical and emotional pain, yet it ultimately leads to a profound transformation. The character's development underscores themes of resilience and self-reliance, illustrating how Kya's connection to nature and inner strength enables her to transcend her circumstances and achieve a distinct sense of individuality. Through this exploration, the study provides insights into the psychological processes of individuation, emphasizing the significance of integrating the unconscious and conscious aspects of the psyche. Kya's story serves as a compelling example of the transformative power of embracing one's true self amidst societal and personal challenges.*

Keywords: *archetypes, individuality, Jung, Kya, Marsh, nature*

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Introduction

The development of an individual's personality depends on the individuation process. According to Jung (2019), individuation involves the process of self-realization, life's purpose, and the way to find oneself. A person may have an unstable self-image and unclear self-awareness if they do not go through all stages of the individuation process. When an individual becomes overly biased towards one feature and neglects to develop other crucial components of their personality, it gives rise to personality disorder (Ewen, 2014).

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Where the Crawdads Sing (Owens, 2018) serves as an illustration of the occurrence of the individuation process. The novel provides information on surviving as the protagonist, Kya Clark, goes through the individuation process and establishes her individuality. Crawdads are crayfish that appear to sing metaphorically and perform their crayfish-like activities only when no humans are around. Born on October 10, 1945, in North Carolina, Kya Clark, whose full name in the novel is Catherine Danielle Clark, was abandoned by her mother right from her childhood. Resultantly, Kya is forced to live with her violent father, but eventually, everyone abandons her, including her father, brother, and friend, Tate.

Kya acquired the skill of living alone in Marsh and constantly hiding there because she is certain that no one will find her and she will be protected. Tate left her when she fell in love with him, and eventually, she lost faith in people and became disillusioned. Interestingly, when Tate abandoned her, Kya was already dating Chase and was also suspected of murdering him (Owens, 2018). The novel depicts the story of a lonely individual who learns to accept abandonment, fulfils her goals, and satiates herself even in the most challenging circumstances. The compelling plot and wonderful characters in this novel made it not only addictive to read, but its unique work also presented alienation, loneliness, and despair in a real and poignant way. The protagonist of the novel repressed and disregarded her feelings until it got to the point where she found a way to get out of the situation.

The Theory of Personality by Jung (1964) is based on the idea that all people possess a collective unconscious, a shared pool of knowledge and experiences inherited from our ancestors. This collective unconscious is made up of archetypes, which are universal symbols and patterns that are found in all cultures. Jung described that these archetypes influence our behaviour and shape our personalities. He believed all people have a set of psychological functions, such as thinking, feeling, and intuition, used to interact with the world. He also held the opinion that the conscious and unconscious parts of the psyche are in constant conflict, which is the source of psychological growth and development. Jung asserts, “The primitive past becomes the foundation of the human psyche and guides and influences our behaviour today. Jung claimed to have identified many archetypes but focused primarily on four. Jung referred to these archetypes as the Self, Persona, Shadow, and Anima/Animus” (McLeod, 2018).

Not only did Kya manage to endure abuse on her own, but she also managed to live independently, make her own decisions, and ultimately administer justice. In every terrible way, she was her own woman. She decided who should be with her, when, and whether to reprimand or penalize those who mistreated her. Chapters of Kya's story alternate between 1969, when retired male football player Chase Andrews is discovered dead beneath an abandoned fire tower, prompting investigators to investigate his death as possibly being a murder. Kya was called "The Marsh Girl" by the locals. The last section of the narrative depicts her trial after she is charged with murder. Even more shocking is the storyline twist in the novel's last chapters. Tate discloses that Kya was a local poet by the name of Amanda Hamilton, and it also turns out that Kya murdered Chase when he tried to rape her.

Significance of the Study

This qualitative research aims to contribute to the struggle of an abandoned child and how she manages to achieve her place in a patriarchal society and—tends to explore the problems faced by the protagonist Kya—under Carl Gustav Jung's Theory of Personality, mainly covering the steps taken by Kya to achieve her individuality. For people who want to know more about the exploitation of women in a patriarchal society, this study is one of the examples which holds great significance. Theoretically, it aims to provide knowledge about the struggles of individuals to achieve their goals and status in society. On a practical level, this study provides a deeper understanding of the issue and encourages people to speak up and take a stand against those who exploit them.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the strategies employed by Kya to achieve her individuality within the context of Carl Jung's Archetypes.
2. Analyze *Where the Crawdads Sing* to identify key moments related to Kya's development of individuality.

Research Questions

1. How does Kya embody Carl Jung's Archetypal concepts such as "Hero" or "Self" in her quest for individuality?
2. How does *Where the Crawdads Sing* depict the key moments in the protagonist Kya's development of individuality?

Literature Review

The psychological approach, as defined by Ellis et al., (2009) is a method for examining the psychological characteristics of a literary character and author. The psychological method of literary criticism demonstrates the personality of the author or character on an individual basis. It suggests that the writer and the persona are human beings with emotions and desires that are intricately linked to the natural world. Endraswara (2013) asserts that the distinction between psychology and literature lies in the latter's emphasis on the individual human being, while the former concentrates on humans as fictional creations of literature (p. 99). Despite being two separate disciplines, psychology and literature are both concerned with the inner lives of people. These two fields of study complement each other to offer a thorough knowledge of the human soul.

Jung asserts in *Psychology and Literature* (Jung, 2023) that psychology is the study of psychic processes that can help with literary studies and that psychology is centered around the human soul, which is the foundation of all sciences and arts. A crucial factor in both psychology and literature is analysis of human personality. Literature and psychology are closely related since both disciplines examine the innermost qualities of human emotions and personalities (pp. 217–218) in *Where the Crawdads Sing* (Owens, 2018), some moments illustrate the protagonist's process of self-individuation in relation to Jung's psychological theory to shed light on the problem itself.

Jung's analytical philosophy examined the nature of the mind, including consciousness and unconsciousness. There were two types of unconsciousness: the collective unconscious and the personal unconscious. In the collective unconscious, an archetype or genetic predisposition exists to perceive the universe in these shapes. According to Jung, the unconscious is unrelated to the ego, whereas the conscious is the image of the self. In a

mentally stable individual, the ego functions as an unconscious self in a supporting role. While reasonable people are cognizant of their environment, they also give themselves permission to see their unconscious self (Tomi-Ann & Feist, 2018).

The term personal unconsciousness describes any perception that an individual suppresses, ignores, or subtly experiences. According to Jung (1964), each person has his own unconsciousness that is shaped by their experiences. Not all memories stored in the personal unconscious are easily retrieved; others are harder to access, and some are even outside the conscious realm. Carl Jung's psychoanalytic theory states that the process of individuation changes an individual in the direction of wholeness and greater understanding. Individuality is associated with a journey where the main goal is to find one's true self. Jung first used the concept of individuation to characterize a person's quest to understand himself. According to Jung, individuation is the point at which a person recognizes their individuality, and it happens when the conscious and unconscious selves of an individual come together.

According to Gieser (2019), individuation happens in the second half of life when consciousness starts to gradually distance itself from itself; comprehension can only occur at that point. This shift usually occurs when a person reaches the ages of 35, 26, 27, and occasionally even older (p. 267). Furthermore, Fordham (1956) claimed that individuation occurs in middle-aged individuals, or what Jung calls those in their second half of life, particularly in those who have experienced a variety of life transitions, including entering the workforce, raising a family, and attending school (p. 78).

According to Carroll (2017), individuation emerged in the mediaeval ages as a result of people being compelled to face their subconscious and give up the habits and principles that had governed them for the majority of their lives. Compared to Freud, Jung had a more optimistic and less deterministic view of human nature as Jung holds the opinion that personality consisted of both learned and intrinsic traits. Furthermore, according to Jung, a person consciously chooses to give up their old way of life and start a new one, complete with all of its ramifications. It takes a long time to go through the individual process, and one cannot go through it without suffering psychic agony (pp.166–167).

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According to Fordham (1956), every person's journey through individuation is distinct and may experience several symbolic encounters, which could manifest as important events or dreams. It might be challenging to discern whether ominous images in dreams that seem to wish for something are the self, a shadowy aspect of the dreamer, or both. Forecasting perception is one of the hardest challenges on the path to individuation. Dreams are frequently so nuanced and intricate that deciphering their meaning can be challenging. The only thing to do in a scenario like this is to put up with the discomfort.

Individualization includes defining oneself, achieving one's potential, and being oneself. The natural and intrinsic drive to become an individual can be enhanced or impeded by outside influences, such as the difficulties of parent-child interactions, as well as the availability of economic and educational opportunities. The conscious and unconscious minds are connected through active imagination. According to Chodorow (1997), poets, dancers, musicians, and dramatists can express their vivid imagination as the poetry makes what is concealed in the text clear. Language allows the unconscious to become conscious. Writing poetry is a way to stay alive and connected to oneself, much like a patient would work for a creative approach to their issues with the help of a therapist. On the other hand, human language allows people to discover their thoughts and memories and mould their minds to one kind of truth.

On the other hand, the often uncomfortable and exhausting awareness suggests that people will never fully fulfil real perceptions and emotions through the capacity to communicate themselves (O'Neill, 2002). By becoming aware of what is typically unconscious, one unifies one's life and develops answers for ill-defined issues. Archetypes bring the conscious and unconscious together to create something whole and complete and are frequently seen in literature, arts, and dreams as the "normal and essential intermediate stage between unconscious and aware cognition," they would be the media, according to Jung (Dobie, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

Jungian archetypes are a set of universal, mythical characters that are an important part of Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious. These archetypes represent

fundamental human motifs of our experience as we evolved; they are the psychic counterpart of instinct. “The Collective unconscious is an impersonal part of the human mind that is “inherited and shared” with other people” (Shiraev, 2017). Jung defined the personal unconscious: “the materials here are of a personal nature in so far as they have the character part of acquisitions derived from the individual’s life and part of psychological factors which could just as well be conscious” (Jung, 1959). In the second part of this statement, “the materials here are of a personal nature” Jung refers to the psyche’s repression of characteristics from consciousness into the unconscious for one or more reasons. The archetypes are as follows:

The Self: The integration of conscious and unconscious elements in the personality. The ego unites the opposing parts of the psyche by encompassing both the social unconscious mind and the personal unconscious mind (Tomi- Ann, Feist & Feist, 2018, p. 178).

The Shadow: The dark, hidden side of the personality, representing the unconscious and repressed aspects of the self.

The Anima/Animus: The feminine/masculine aspects of the personality, representing the inner opposite gender.

The Persona: The mask we wear in public, representing our social roles and expectations—the individual’s “social mask” or public image (Jung, 1959).

The researcher employs Carl Gustav Jung’s Psychoanalytic theory regarding the individuation process and focuses on the main character in the film. A person’s identification of their personality comes during the stage of individuation. It occurs when a person merges their conscious and unconscious states. The character must acknowledge the primary archetype in order to successfully complete the individuation process. The concepts of persona, shadow, anima/animus, and self are all involved in the process of individuality (Hull, 2017). The researcher utilized this approach to explain Kya’s individuation process. This study expects to investigate the character’s persona, shadow, animus, self and dream using this hypothesis.

Research Methodology

The methodology used for this research is content analysis, focusing on the exploration of the individuality of Kya in *Where the Crawdads Sing* (Owens, 2018). Specifically, the analysis centers on Jungian Archetypes, examining themes of survival, coming of age, violence, and self-reliance.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data gathered was arranged and subjected to critical theory analysis in order to determine how these archetypes served as methods that enabled Kya to express her individuality. Drawing links to the Jungian Archetypes under investigation, the analysis included pattern, theme, and character development identification. This approach allowed us to understand the self-individuation process, as shown in the movie.

Findings

Where the Crawdads Sing (Owens, 2018) is a coming-of-age story about a young girl named Kya, who is abandoned by her family and left to fend for herself in the Marshlands of North Carolina. Despite the odds, she survives and learns to thrive in her isolated environment. Through her journey, Kya discovers her own strength and resilience and learns to trust and love again. The novel follows Kya as she navigates the complexities of growing up and finding her place in the world. It is a story of courage, resilience, and hope. The novel is a beautiful exploration of the power of the human spirit and the importance of finding one's own path in life.

The story follows Kya's journey of self-discovery and her struggles to survive in a hostile environment. Hull (2017) believed that there are three powerful archetypes that one must rely upon, i.e., the persona, anima/animus, and shadow. According to Gieser (2019), individuation occurs in the second half of life when consciousness starts to somewhat separate itself. This change typically occurs between the ages of thirty-five and thirty-seven or possibly later (p. 267). In addition, Fordham (1956) claimed that middle-aged persons, or what Jung refers to as those in their second half of life, particularly those who had entered

several points in their lives like schooling, careers, and families, are capable of individuation (p.78).

In addition, Jung (1964) asserted that a person consciously chooses to abandon his old way of life and live a new one, with all its repercussions. It takes a long time to finish the individual process, and it is impossible without experiencing psychic pain. Several harsh truths must be accepted before the process can move forward. This is a lengthy and tedious process that cannot be completed without causing psychological pain (pp. 166-167). Kya Clark, the protagonist of *Where the Crawdads Sing*, struggles with poverty, abandonment, and isolation throughout her childhood and middle age. As a young girl, Kya is abandoned by her family and left to fend for herself in the Marshlands of North Carolina. Despite her difficult circumstances, Kya is determined to survive and build a life for herself. She eventually learns to hunt, fish, and forage for food, finding solace in the natural world. Kya also struggles with loneliness, as she is isolated from the rest of the world and has no friends or family to turn to for support; consequently, she is often the target of ridicule and bullying from the people in her small town.

Schultz et al., (2016) stated in *Theories of Personality* that in order to complete the individuation process, one must employ several strategies, which are as follows:

Animus: The strategy or first step in Kya's process of achieving her individuality is to become aware of the animus. Animus is the male side of a woman. Kya Clark reveals her masculine side, where she rides Pa's boat alone. Little Kya: I had been out in the Marsh plenty of times with Jodie, but never alone (Schultz et al, p.11).

The above dialogue suggests the animus journey of the protagonist, Kya; after riding the boat, she feels brave. She also did not mention that she rode Pa's boat, but she did ask Pa to go fishing with her. Her father laughed right away and told Kya that she was a girl. Kya Clark does not have a mother to support her as she grows and develops because Ma left her when she was a toddler, and she continues to live with Pa for a longer time. As a result, her mannerisms, characteristics, and attire suggest a masculine side. She was advised to wear a skirt as she was a girl. "You have to wear a skirt, as you are a lil girl". Kya also adores her masculine side as an adult. She would dress and accessorize differently than the other girls in

her circle. Despite this, she was barefoot, wore a white T-shirt, and had cut-off jeans - portraying her animus.

Moreover, Tate, her Marsh friend, also embodies Kya's inner masculine energy, which helps her grow and develop as a person. Through his presence, Kya is able to confront her fears and insecurities and ultimately find her own strength and independence. Tate's dialogue reflects his role as Kya's animus. He encourages her to take risks and to stand up for herself by telling her, "You can do anything you set your mind to" (Owens, p. 9). He also helps her to see the beauty in the world around her, saying, "Look around you. There's beauty everywhere." (Owens, p.12). Through his words, Tate helps Kya find her inner strength and become the person she was always meant to be. He also helps her out by providing her with the list of publishers when he decides to leave for his college. "What's this? Asked Kya. It's a list of publishers, for all your drawing and notes...maybe you wouldn't have to dig mussels the rest of your life, replied Tate (Owens, p. 47). Tate is symbolized by Kya's ability to connect with her masculine side and embrace her own power and strength. He represents her inner animus, and his presence in Kya's life helps her find balance and harmony within herself. The Animus archetype of the Marsh girl is her courage and her willingness to stand up for herself. Despite her fear of abandonment and her distrust of others, she is brave enough to confront her fears and take risks for her life, which makes her eager to fight for what she believes in, even if it means going against the wishes of those around her.

Shadow: Jung (1964) asserts that humans conceal their dark side during the first half of life; the shadow is a tool for creativity. He also argues that shadows should be welcomed and formed rather than ignored, like with all parts of life. A method of individual development is becoming acquainted with oneself (Jung, 1964, p. 175).

The Jungian shadow is the part of the psyche that contains the repressed or unconscious aspects of the personality. In *Where the Crawdads Sing* (Owens, 2018), Kya's shadow is represented by her fear of abandonment, her mistrust of others, and her feelings of isolation. She is constantly struggling to keep her emotions in check, and her fear of being hurt again leads her to push people away. Chase, Barkley Cove's star and playboy, develops a romantic relationship with Kya, but actually, he is the embodiment of shadow in the story, as he is the

one who represents the darkness and danger instead of the love and passion that Kya must face. He is manipulative, dangerous, and a constant reminder of the dangers that Kya needs to overcome. When Chase slaps Kya and tries to assault her, she bravely defends herself, kicks him in the groin and says: “Leave me alone, Bastard! You bother me again and I’ll kill you” (Owens, p. 99). This is evident from the feelings Kya has displayed that the struggle to deal with a shadow is real. Unable to defend herself, she cries and curses the fact that Chase exists in her life. Chase Andrew, the symbol of Kya’s inner darkness, serves as a reminder of the importance of acknowledging and accepting one’s shadow self. By confronting her inner darkness, Kya is able to come to terms with her past and move forward in life. Therefore, with the passage of time, she no longer hides her emotions or imperfections and openly owns or disowns the things and people from her life.

Jodie, Kya’s brother, returns to the shack after a long absence from Kya and meets her when she is at the peak of her survival struggle. Kya inquires Jodie about his absence from the community of Marsh people and says, “I forgive me for leaving, but why did she abandon me and never came back? I’ve been waiting...all these years for her to walk down the lane”. (Owens, p. 83). Kya feels sorry that Ma left her, as she was aware that Ma had left because Pa was violent. However, Kya was perplexed about why her mother abandoned her rather than returning to ask Kya to live with her (Lailatussyifa, 2021). For Kya, her mother is a source of escape from Marsh, but she also never returns to Kya to save her. Then, Tate also leaves the town and betrays Kya, despite the fact that he is the sole hope of Kya’s life after her mother. Life offers her no solace and hope and when Tate returns, she feels an urge to close her eyes and let go of her Marsh life. Upon hearing that Tate has returned to Marsh, Kya, as an escapist, wants to flee, but she realizes that Marsh’s life is her lagoon and no longer needs to flee. Opposite to her wish, she curses Tate and throws a stone at his face to express her aggression, wildness, betrayal, and above all, her hopelessness: “Get out of my lagoon you dirty creep!” (Owens, p. 70).

Later on in the story, when Chase is found dead, Kya is charged with his murder and after the death of Kya, Tate finds evidence of Chase’s murder at Kya’s house among her secret belongings. Tate also finds a small package with a cotton strip wrapped around Chase’s necklace-the piece of evidence Kya had been concealing was the necklace Chase wore at the

time of his murder. This homicide demonstrates Kya's awareness of her dark side, i.e., her shadow. She does not even try to suppress it until her shadow or dark side of mind forces her to kill someone in her defense as she comments, "And sometimes, for prey to live...its predator has to die". (Owens, p.125). The predator here is Chase Andrew, who tries to harass and exploit her. Chase, being a manipulative and shrewd male figure, is a constant reminder of the dangers that Kya must overcome in society, and for that, she must utilize her animus and shadow capacities.

Persona: Individual's 'social mask' and 'public image' are known as Persona (Jung, 1959). In addition, the individual needs to realize the true Self that has been concealed by peeling off the layers of the mask. The next step in reaching individuality is to weaken the persona to reach self-fulfillment. People who put on a persona or social mask too frequently cause them to have two personalities. "It was Chase? Wasn't it? Tell me what he did, Jumpin questioned. Jumpin, please! You can't tell anybody. (Owens, p.112). The quote demonstrates that Kya's persona has been diminished. Kya is a tough girl, and as an introvert, she does not discuss her problems with others, particularly regarding her relationship with Chase. However, later, Kya reveals that Chase's assault is the cause of her bruises. Even though Kya turns away after telling the truth to prevent her tears from flowing again, she has been trying to reduce her persona. "If we lose, we lose big, its life in prison or other. Mr. Milton, I won't say anything that implies guilty...I'll not go to prison" (Owens, p.115).

Kya is not guilty of her actions as she is a brave girl with the audacity to accept her dark and pure side. Kya does things to avoid using her persona too much. She does not utilize a deceptive defense to cover the way that she is guilty. The Persona archetype of the Marsh girl is her apparent strength and resilience. Despite her difficult circumstances, she is determined to survive and make a life for herself in the Marsh. She is resourceful, independent, and determined to make the best of her situation. The persona is the part of the psyche that contains the conscious aspects of the personality; in *Where the Crawdads Sing*, Kya's persona is represented by her intelligence and her ability to adapt to her environment. She is able to use her knowledge of the Marshlands to survive and even thrive in her new home. She uses her intelligence to solve her problems and make decisions that are beneficial to her survival and sustenance of the persona of a strong woman. In a nutshell, Kya is innocent

in her outlook on life and her interactions with others and is determined to make the best of her situation. With all the complexity of the character, she is both strong and vulnerable, and her innocence and resilience make her a powerful symbol of hope and strength. The awakening of her true self is the fruit of her constant struggle throughout her tedious life. The process of individuation takes place in her life very swiftly but remarkably, making her a tough, independent individual from a dependent little Marsh girl. Kya says, “I’m a firefly, I belong to the Marsh” (Owens, p. 87). The boldness of her tone indicates the complete acceptance of her true self and individuality after diminishing her persona.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher’s opinions are important in a qualitative investigation. Subjective biases might result from the varied interpretations of the evidence by various researchers. The way that the researcher interprets Kya’s development into a distinct character drives the study. Findings might alter if other researchers view things differently. Though the research analyses Kya’s growth using Carl Jung’s Theory of Personality and Archetypes, it does not investigate other possibly relevant psychological theories that could provide other viewpoints or interpretations.

Conclusion

The Marsh Girl in *Where the Crawdads Sing* (Owens, 2018) can represent the Jungian Archetype of the Hero. This archetype is often associated with innocence, purity, and a connection to nature. Kya is a symbol of these archetypes, as she is a young girl who has been abandoned by society and is living in the Marshlands of North Carolina. She is disconnected from the world, yet she is still able to survive and thrive in her natural environment. Nature became her mother and nurturer, which helped her find her way in life. Kya’s stern demeanour is also a symbol of resilience, through which she is able to overcome the obstacles that life throws in her way. Throughout the novel, Kya’s journey of self-discovery and growth is observed as she navigates the complexities of life and discusses how these Jungian archetypes help her to achieve her individuality and become a stronger person. The novel is a beautiful exploration of the power of the human spirit and the importance of finding one’s own path in life. The story of Kya’s life illustrates the power of independence. Since Kya was six years

old and raised herself mainly on her own, she had to deal with a lot of adult responsibilities when she was young and took into account what she learned from others, what she observed in her mother, and what she sensed in the natural world. Through all the trials and tribulations, Kya emerges as a heroic character after culminating in all the Jungian archetypal rituals and attaining her own individuality.

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