

CONNELL'S PERSONA, SHADOW, AND ANIMA IN SALLY ROONEY'S *NORMAL PEOPLE*

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Abstract

This study examines the manifestation of Carl Jung's archetypes of Persona, Shadow, and Anima in the character of Connell Waldron in Sally Rooney's *Normal People*, as well as how his individuation process unfolds through his evolving relationship with these three archetypes. The objectives of this study are to identify how the Persona, Shadow, and Anima manifest in Connell's character and to examine the progression of his individuation through the integration of these archetypes. This research employs psychoanalytic literary criticism grounded in Jungian theory, using a descriptive qualitative method. The primary data consist of dialogues, internal monologues, and narrative descriptions taken from the novel, while the secondary data are drawn from relevant theoretical and academic sources. The findings reveal that Connell's Persona manifests through two social roles, the popular student and the loyal friend. Beneath these masks, his Shadow consists of repressed insecurity rooted in class difference, internalized shame, and guilt over the death of his friend, Rob. Meanwhile, his Anima emerges through the vulnerability and tenderness that surface only within his relationship with Marianne Sheridan. Connell's individuation unfolds gradually across three stages: he confronts his Persona at university by reconnecting with his authentic self through literature, integrates his Shadow by consciously choosing therapy and medication, and integrates his Anima by transforming sporadic emotional outbursts into a conscious form of care for Marianne. This study concludes that Rooney portrays individuation not as a sudden transformation, but as a quiet and ongoing process shaped by deliberate choices and the presence of meaningful relationships.

Keywords: *Persona, Shadow, Anima, Individuation, Normal People*

Introduction

In our daily lives, we rarely show the world every part of who we truly are. People naturally carry different versions of themselves, shifting and adapting depending on the social situations they find themselves in (McAdams et al., 2021). Beneath these different versions of the self lie deeper patterns that shape how people think, feel, and behave, patterns that Jung referred to as archetypes (Stevens, 2006). Jung (1969) identified three archetypes that are particularly central to the structure of the psyche: the Persona, the Shadow, and the Anima. Together, these three archetypes form a complex inner world that a person does not always fully understand or accept (Jung, 1969). However, when these archetypes are consciously confronted and integrated, they cease to be sources of internal conflict and instead become pathways toward psychological wholeness (Chorna, 2025). In Sally Rooney's *Normal People*, this complex inner psyche is most vividly explored through the character of Connell Waldron.

Normal People stands as a defining work of contemporary fiction by the Irish author Sally Rooney, who has been identified by *The New Yorker* as the “first great millennial novelist” (Collins, 2018). Published in 2018, the novel won the Costa Book Awards and the British Book Award for Book of the Year in 2019, confirming its high literary value. The story follows the four-year relationship between Connell Waldron and Marianne Sheridan, beginning in their secondary school in County Sligo. Despite both being highly intelligent, they occupy opposite ends of their school’s social spectrum: Connell is a popular athlete with a wide circle of friends, while Marianne is a wealthy but lonely outcast frequently bullied by her peers. As they transition to Trinity College Dublin, their social positions shift, and their lives drift together and apart through cycles of miscommunication and emotional uncertainty. Through this evolving relationship, Rooney quietly charts the gap between who her characters appear to be and who they really are beneath the surface.

The psychological complexity at the heart of the novel can be illuminated through the theoretical framework of Carl Jung. Jung (1968) divided the unconscious into two levels: the personal unconscious, a private reservoir of an individual’s unique memories

and repressed feelings, and the collective unconscious, a universal dimension of the mind shared by all human beings (Hauke, 2006). This shared space is filled with archetypes, or ancient patterns that influence how people think, feel, and act (Stevens, 2006). Among these, three archetypes stand out as central to a person's inner and outer life: the Persona, the Shadow, and the Anima (Andries et al., 2024). The Persona functions as the social mask a person wears to meet the expectations of the world while concealing their inner self (Jung, 1966). The Shadow carries the repressed fears, burdens, and feelings of inferiority that the conscious ego refuses to acknowledge (Jung, 1953). The Anima represents the inner feminine side of a man's psyche, carrying the emotional depth and relational qualities he typically suppresses in favour of his masculine social exterior (Jung, 1969). Together, these three archetypes form the foundation of this study's analytical framework.

In *Normal People*, Connell Waldron embodies this psychological complexity with remarkable depth. His Persona manifests through two carefully performed social roles. The first is the popular student, whose academic ability, athletic talent, and social likability earn him widespread admiration among his peers. The second is the loyal friend, who suppresses his own honest judgment in order to maintain solidarity with his peer group. Beneath these masks, his Shadow carries three deeply repressed psychological burdens: insecurity rooted in his perception of class and social inferiority, internalized shame about his own identity, and guilt over his irreversible moral failure towards his friend, Rob. Meanwhile, his Anima finds expression through the vulnerability and tenderness that surface exclusively in his relationship with Marianne Sheridan, revealing an emotional depth his social world has never permitted him to access.

Several previous studies have applied Jungian archetypal theory to literary characters. Tampubolon (2023) analyzed the Persona, Shadow, and Anima in Victor Hugo's *The Man Who Laugh* through Soul Theory, focusing primarily on static motivational classification. Andries et al. (2024) examined how Persona, Shadow, and Anima drive acts of self-sacrifice in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Tumengga et al. (2023) traced the individuation process of the protagonist in *I, Tonya*, culminating in the Self archetype as the final marker of completion. Syaputri et al. (2024) conducted an

archetypal analysis of a female protagonist in *Gone Girl*, identifying a dominant Shadow archetype. Azzahra and Mustofa (2026) examined a male protagonist's individuation in an Arabic novel, also concluding with the Self archetype. Regarding *Normal People* specifically, Rahayu and Suprayogi (2023) explored the Persona and Shadow across three characters: Connell, Marianne, and Alan, but omitted the Anima entirely and did not examine the individuation process. These studies show that Jungian archetypes have been productively applied to a wide range of literary characters, yet a clear gap remains. No previous research has examined the Persona, Shadow, and Anima together within *Normal People*, nor traced how Connell's confrontation and integration of these three archetypes drives his process of individuation.

Building on this gap, this study argues that the Persona, Shadow, and Anima manifest distinctly within Connell's character, and that his gradual confrontation and integration of these archetypes drive his journey toward psychological wholeness. Guided by this argument, the study addresses two research questions: (1) how are the Jungian archetypes of Persona, Shadow, and Anima manifested in the character of Connell Waldron, and (2) how is Connell's process of individuation depicted through his evolving relationship with these three archetypes. Correspondingly, this study aims (1) to examine the manifestation of the Persona, Shadow, and Anima in Connell Waldron's character, and (2) to examine the progression of Connell Waldron's individuation through the integration of his Persona, Shadow, and Anima.

Method

This study employs psychoanalytic literary criticism as its analytical approach, applying Carl Jung's theory of archetypes through a descriptive qualitative method. The primary data of this study is Sally Rooney's *Normal People*, from which textual evidence is drawn in the form of dialogue, internal monologue, and narrative description related to Connell Waldron. Secondary data are gathered from academic books, journal articles, and previous studies that support the interpretation of the primary text.

The data collection process began with a close reading of the novel to identify passages relevant to the scope of this study. The collected data were then classified

according to their relevance to Connell's Persona, Shadow, and Anima. The analysis itself follows a two-step procedure that corresponds to the two research questions. First, the study examines how the Persona, Shadow, and Anima manifest within Connell's thoughts, behaviors, and social interactions, supported by relevant Jungian citations. Second, the study examines the progression of Connell's individuation by analyzing how he confronts and integrates these three archetypes across the narrative. The results of both steps are then synthesized to answer the research questions.

Findings

3.1 The Manifestation of Connell's Archetypes

3.1.1 Connell's Persona

Jung (1966) describes the Persona as a mask that a person wears to project a certain image to others while concealing who they truly are on the inside. Rather than reflecting a person's genuine self, the Persona is a role carefully constructed to meet the expectations of the social world. For Connell, this manifests through two distinct social roles he performs consistently across different social contexts. Driven by the need to maintain his social standing and meet expectations of those around him, he carefully adapts his outward behavior to match the demands of his peer group. The following discussion examines how these two Personas manifest within Connell's character.

3.1.1.1 Popular.

Connell's Persona is most clearly represented in his role as a popular student, a social mask that is carefully constructed and managed that impacts how he is perceived by others. According to Jung (1966), the Persona is a mask that makes a definite impression on the other in order to hide a person's true nature. Parkhurst and Hopmeyer (1998) define popularity as being liked by peers, which can be demonstrated by having academic achievement, athletic skill, and physical attractiveness. For Connell, these are the qualities that he embodies and effectively demonstrates in his school setting.

“He’s studious, he plays centre forward in football, he’s good-looking, he doesn’t get into fights. Everybody likes him. He’s quiet.” (Rooney, 2018, p. 55)

From the passage above, Connell embodies precisely what Parkhurst and Hopmeyer (1998) describe as popularity, since every quality Marianne lists (academic ability, athletic skill, good looks, and likability) corresponds directly to the qualities they associate with being popular. What is most striking here is that none of these traits are presented as Connell's private experience of himself. They are listed entirely from the outside, as a kind of social inventory of qualities his peers have come to associate with him. In Jungian terms, this is precisely the function of the Persona, a mask carefully shaped to meet the expectations of one's social world, concealing whatever lies beneath it (Jung, 1966). For Connell, this image of effortless, well-liked popularity is not simply something he has, but something he performs, whether consciously or not, in order to be accepted within his social environment.

What makes this moment so analytically significant is that Marianne's description exposes a gap between Connell's public image and whatever lies beneath it. Jung (1969) further warns that the Persona is who a person is not in reality, but whom both they and others believe them to be. This is exactly what happens here. Marianne's observation shows that the Persona does more than simply shape how Connell's peers see him. It actively conceals a version of him that neither his peers, nor perhaps Connell himself, has had to confront. For Connell, this popular image is the mask that he will eventually need to look behind in order to grow beyond it, making this moment less a portrait of who Connell is than a portrait of who he has learned to appear to be.

3.1.1.2 Loyal

Connell's Persona is also represented in his role as a loyal friend among his peers. Loyalty is one of the defining characteristics of a good friendship, which is demonstrated by a person's willingness to stand by and support their friends despite criticism from others (Berndt, 2002). Jung (1966) suggests that the Persona is not a real part of a person but rather a construction of external demands and expectations. For Connell, his role as a loyal friend is most evident when Marianne condemns the actions of his peers.

“Connell made the face he always made when she criticised his friends, an inexpressive

frown. Not in the same way, he said. They have their own interests. I don't think they'd be reading books about racism and all that. . . . Yeah, they do a bit of that, he said. I'm not defending it, I know they can be annoying. . . . Most of it wouldn't, he said. They do some stuff that goes a bit over the line and that would annoy me obviously. But at the end of the day they're my friends, you know. It's different for you." (Rooney, 2018, p. 34)

From the passage above, Connell embodies precisely what Berndt (2002) describes as loyalty, since he continues to defend his friends even as Marianne criticises them. What is most striking here is that his defence is not confident or wholehearted. He hedges almost every statement, acknowledging that his friends can be irritating and that some of their behaviour crosses a line, yet he still ultimately defends them on the grounds that they are his friends. In Jungian terms, this is precisely the function of the Persona, a carefully maintained image projected to others while concealing what a person privately feels underneath (Jung, 1966). For Connell, defending his friends here is not simply an honest expression of loyalty. It is a role he performs because his social position requires it of him.

What makes this moment so analytically significant is that Connell's reaction is described as "*the face he always made*," which suggests this is not a one-time response but a repeated pattern. Jung (1966) argues that when a person becomes too closely identified with a social role, the Persona stops being something consciously performed and instead becomes automatic. This is exactly what happens here. Connell's final remark, "*it's different for you*," is particularly showing that he is fully aware his social world operates by different rules than Marianne's, yet his Persona still requires him to maintain the appearance of unquestioning loyalty regardless. For Connell, the role of loyal friend has been worn for so long that it no longer registers as a performance at all, which is precisely what Jung (1969) warns happens when a person becomes lost inside their own Persona.

3.1.2 Connell's Shadow

In Jungian perspective, the Shadow represents a part of the personality that a person consciously chooses not to reveal to others because they are not willing to see that part of themselves (Jung, 1968). This Shadow is an unattractive counterpart that lives in the back of the

Persona. In the case of Connell, behind all the Personas that he works so hard to perform in public, he constantly sacrifices his genuine feelings. Driven by the external expectations and a need to fit into his surroundings, he buries his true self deep within his subconscious mind. Consequently, the following discussion will provide a comprehensive analysis of how Shadow manifests within Connell's character.

3.1.2.1 Insecurity

The most visible manifestation of Connell's Shadow is his insecurity rooted in his perception of social and class inferiority. As Maslow (1942) observes, to be a psychologically insecure person is to live in a state of constant restlessness and continually to feel inferior to others. Within the Jungian framework, this kind of insecurity does not just lie on the surface of a person's awareness. It sinks deeper into the psyche and becomes part of the Shadow, the part that the conscious mind is unwilling to acknowledge (Jung, 1953). This hidden insecurity suddenly comes to the surface when Connell asks Marianne whether her family knows that they are dating. Upon her silent headshake, Connell immediately responds:

"Not that you have to tell them. Maybe they'd disapprove of me anyway. They probably want you going out with a doctor or a lawyer or something, do they?" (Rooney, 2018, p. 106).

From the passage above, Connell's insecurity as a Shadow manifestation is powerfully portrayed through his own words, spoken before any external threat has even presented itself. Connell embodies what Maslow (1942) describes as an insecure person, someone who is persistently burdened by a deep sense of inferiority and an inability to feel at ease within the social world. This insecurity is deeply rooted in his perception of the social and class gap between himself and Marianne. While Marianne comes from a wealthy and socially established background, Connell is a working-class young man who has always been aware of the distance between their worlds. In Jungian terms, this kind of inferiority does not simply float at the surface of a person's awareness but sinks deeper into a part of the psyche that operates beneath conscious recognition. Jung (1953) describes this part as the Shadow, the hidden and repressed side of the personality that quietly stores everything the conscious self refuses to own. This class inferiority is what Connell has been carrying in silence for years within his Shadow.

What Connell says in response to Marianne's silence is therefore not a rational concern but an involuntary disclosure, the Shadow finally breaking through. This moment is precisely what Jung (1960) warns about, when the Shadow content is held out of consciousness for too long, it does not stay contained but eventually breaks through in an unguarded moment. This breakthrough is most visible in Connell's word choices. When he says that Marianne does not have to tell her family about them, he quietly places himself as someone whose presence in her life does not need to be announced, which is driven by his insecurity. His specific mention of a doctor or a lawyer further exposes the Shadow at work. These professions represent the exact categories of class stability and financial security from which Connell feels excluded. His Shadow has absorbed them as the measure of his own worth. In short, everything Connell says in this moment points that his insecurity is no longer a conscious thought but an automatic force that has taken over his words without his awareness. Just as Jung (1969) observes, once the Shadow is activated, it moves automatically on its own terms. In this moment, Connell's insecurity has done exactly that, surfacing not through deliberate reflection but through the quiet and devastating act of talking himself out of his own deserving.

3.1.2.2 Internalized Shame

Another striking manifestation of Connell's Shadow is his internalized shame. According to del Rosario and White (2006), internalized shame begins with an unbreakable belief that there is something wrong with the person and that the person is unworthy, which then becomes a part of them over time. From a Jungian perspective, this kind of shame is a deep sense of inferiority that the individual represses within their Shadow (Jacoby, 1996). This corresponds directly to Jung's (1953) claim that the Shadow holds all of the unconscious negative aspects and weaknesses that the conscious ego refuses to acknowledge. Jung (1953) also cautions that the longer such feelings go unrecognized the stronger and more intense they will get. For Connell, this internalized shame is never addressed openly. Instead, it builds up in his mind until it surfaces with quiet devastation during his internal reflections.

"Everyone must have known there was something wrong with him. He felt a debilitating shame about the kind of person he'd turned out to be." (Rooney, 2018, p. 287)

From the passage above, Connell embodies precisely what del Rosario and White (2006) describe as internalized shame in the way he processes his own identity. What is most striking here is that Connell does not feel ashamed of something he has done. He feels ashamed of what he is as a person. The phrase "*something wrong with him*" is not a reflection on a specific mistake but a total judgment on his personhood, where the self becomes the object of shame rather than the behavior. In Jungian terms, the Shadow acts as the repository for all the dark burdens and inferiorities the conscious ego refuses to recognize (Jung, 1953). This is precisely where Connell's internalized shame has been quietly stored, building up without his conscious awareness for so long that it has become inseparable from his sense of self.

What makes this moment so analytically significant is the way Rooney delivers it. The line "*everyone must have known*" is not spoken aloud but arises automatically from within Connell through free indirect discourse, giving the reader direct access to a thought he has never chosen to think but simply finds himself thinking. He is not reacting to anything anyone has actually said. He is authoring the judgment of everyone around him from inside his own mind, which is the Shadow operating at its most consuming. Jung (1953) warns that when the contents of the Shadow remain unacknowledged for too long, they do not fade but instead grow denser and more powerful, eventually surfacing not as feelings but as unquestioned truths about who one is. This is exactly what has happened to Connell. His shame has never been consciously confronted, and so it has accumulated silently within his Shadow until it becomes indistinguishable from his sense of identity itself. Jacoby (1994) identifies this as the most damaging consequence of Shadow-driven shame, where repressed unworthiness gradually stops feeling like an emotion and becomes instead the truth of who a person believes themselves to be. For Connell, the Shadow is no longer simply carrying his shame. It is speaking it back to him as fact.

3.1.2.3 Guilt

Another manifestation of Connell's Shadow is his guilt, which has arisen from an irreversible moral failure toward his friend Rob, who commits suicide. Tilghman-Osborne et al. (2010) define guilt as an emotional experience that arises when a person feels they have fallen short of their

own moral standards and holds themselves responsible for that failure. Within Jung's framework, the Shadow represents a part of the psyche that contains everything the conscious mind avoids acknowledging as its own because it is guilty of or undesirable (Jung, 1953). For Connell, this guilt has never been voiced or fully recognized. It resides in his Shadow, unspoken, until Rob's death forces him to confront it. This guilt surfaces during a therapy session, where Connell confesses:

"I guess I feel guilty now that I wasn't in touch with him more. . . . I never even replied to the last message he sent me. I mean, that was years ago, but I didn't even reply." (Rooney, 2018, p. 202)

From the passage above, Connell embodies what Tilghman-Osborne et al. (2010) describe as a person experiencing guilt, someone who feels they have fallen short of their own moral standards and holds themselves entirely responsible for that failure. For Connell, this moral failure is specific and irreversible. He never replied to Rob's last message, and Rob is now gone. There is no apology possible and no way to reach back across the silence he chose. In Jungian terms, this kind of moral failure does not simply fade when it is avoided. Jung (1953) describes the Shadow as the part of the personality that quietly carries the guilt a person refuses to consciously own, growing heavier the longer it remains unacknowledged. This unaddressed guilt over Rob is precisely what Connell's Shadow has been storing in silence, accumulating without his conscious awareness until it can no longer be contained.

What finally forces this guilt into the open is the permanence of Rob's death, which closes every possibility of repair and makes continued avoidance impossible. Jung (1960) cautions that a moral failing grows significantly heavier and more burdensome when it is pushed down rather than consciously faced. This is exactly what has happened to Connell's guilt over Rob. The hesitation in *"I guess I feel guilty"* reveals a person encountering this guilt consciously for what feels like the very first time, as though the emotion is so deeply buried that even naming it feels uncertain and unfamiliar. Furthermore, the repetition of *"I never even replied"* and *"I didn't even reply"* reflects the weight of a moral burden that has been circling inside him unspoken for years, refusing to settle even as it is finally being said aloud. Jung (1953) further argues that the Shadow holds on to the burdens that the ego refuses to deal with and that facing them requires

a great deal of conscious effort. In this moment, Connell is only just beginning to make that effort, giving voice for the first time to what his Shadow has long kept hidden.

3.1.3 Connell's Anima

According to Jungian theory (1968), the Anima is the feminine element within a man's psyche that assists in the development of his personality. This archetype acts as a psychological bridge that a man uses to help him balance his masculine ego by projecting this image onto the women around him. In the case of Connell, this internal archetype is seen in the way his emotional connection develops throughout the novel. Influenced by these primary figures in his life, he is constantly striving to grow his deeper emotions, and his ability to feel vulnerable in his intimate relationships. Consequently, the following discussion will provide a detailed analysis of how the Anima manifests within Connell's character.

3.1.3.1 Vulnerability

The most obvious manifestation of Connell's Anima is his vulnerability, which only arises in his relationship with Marianne. Brown (2012) describes vulnerability as being open to feeling deeply and being emotionally exposed without the usual defenses. Within the Jungian framework, the Anima represents the emotional and feeling aspects that a man normally suppresses in order to present himself as a man in social situations (Jung, 1954). For Connell, this emotional depth remains largely unconscious until Marianne brings it up.

"I like you so much, Marianne said. Connell felt a pleasurable sorrow come over him, which brought him close to tears. Moments of emotional pain arrived like this, meaningless or at least indecipherable." (Rooney, 2018, p. 34)

From the passage above, Connell embodies precisely what Brown (2012) describes as vulnerability in the complexity and depth of what he feels in response to Marianne's words. What is most striking here is that Connell does not simply feel happy or moved. He feels something he cannot explain or describe, a sense of sadness that is pleasurable, a grief that is not sad but pleasing. According to Mayor (2015), vulnerability and emotional sensitivity are more commonly associated with feminine traits than masculine ones, as women tend to experience and express

emotions more openly than men. In Jungian terms, these are precisely the qualities carried by the Anima, the feminine side of a man's psyche that houses the emotional and feeling depth the masculine ego typically suppresses (Jung, 1954). In this moment, Marianne becomes the one who unlocks this suppressed emotional depth within Connell, bringing it into consciousness for the first time.

What makes this moment so analytically significant is that Connell does not choose to feel this way. The emotion arrives without warning and without explanation. Jung (1966) argues that when a man's emotional and feeling qualities are consistently denied and pushed down in favour of his masculine exterior, they accumulate in the unconscious and eventually seek expression through unexpected emotional experiences. This is exactly what happens here. The fact that this emotion nearly brings Connell to tears is particularly significant. He finds himself on the verge of crying without fully understanding why, which shows how unfamiliar and unconscious this emotional depth truly is. The Anima is not simply giving Connell a feeling. It is introducing him to an entire emotional register that his masculine social world has never permitted him to enter. For Connell, Marianne becomes the figure through whom this hidden emotional depth is finally released, making his vulnerability in this moment not a weakness but a direct manifestation of the Anima finding its voice.

3.1.3.2 *Tenderness*

Another manifestation of Connell's Anima is his tenderness, which comes out clearly in his most intimate moments with Marianne. Kalawski (2010) identifies tenderness as a basic human emotion which is closely linked to love and empathy, in which a person feels true care and warmth toward another. Within the Jungian framework, the Anima triggers a man's capacity for love, causing him to experience rich and life-giving emotions that he would otherwise never experience (Sanford, 1980). For Connell, this ability remains dormant until it is awakened by Marianne:

"I would never hurt you, okay? Never. You make me really happy. I love you. I'm not just saying that, I really do." (Rooney, 2018, p. 159)

From the passage above, Connell embodies precisely what Kalawski (2010) describes as

tenderness in the warmth and reassurance he offers Marianne. What is most striking here is that Connell does not simply state his feelings as a fact. He repeats himself, insists, and reassures her, as though the words alone are not enough to convey what he feels. According to Tufail & Poletta (2015), tenderness has traditionally been coded as a feminine emotional trait. In Jungian terms, these are precisely the qualities carried by the Anima, the feminine side of a man's psyche that houses the capacity for warmth, care, and emotional generosity that the masculine ego typically restrains (Jung, 1953). In this moment, Marianne becomes the one who draws out this suppressed capacity for tenderness within Connell, allowing it to be expressed openly for perhaps the first time.

What makes this moment so analytically significant is that Connell's tenderness here is not calculated or performative. It surfaces almost despite him, in a repetitive declaration rather than a smooth one. Sanford (1980) argues that when the Anima awakens a man's capacity for love, it does so by flooding him with emotions he has rarely been permitted to feel, let alone express. This is exactly what happens here. The fact that Connell feels the need to add "*I'm not just saying that, I really do*" is particularly significant. He seems almost surprised by the strength of what he feels, as though reassuring Marianne is also a way of confirming the feeling to himself. The Anima is not simply giving Connell a feeling of affection. It is granting him access to an entire register of tenderness and care that his usual emotional reserve has never allowed him to voice. For Connell, Marianne becomes the figure through whom this capacity for tenderness is finally given words, making this moment not a loss of composure but a direct manifestation of the Anima finding expression through care.

3.2 The Individuation of Connell's Archetypes

This section will explore the second research question, in regards to the changing nature of Connell Waldron's individuation process in relation to his Persona, Shadow, and Anima. Jung (1960) describes individuation as a process in life leading to psychological wholeness that occurs only when a person is aware of and actively brings together the various and often conflicting parts of their personality. The following discussion examines how this progression unfolds through three interconnected dimensions: the confrontation of the Persona through

authentic identity, the integration of the Shadow through deliberate recovery, and the integration of the Anima through conscious care.

3.2.1 The Confrontation of the Persona Through Authentic Identity

The most obvious evidence of Connell confronting his Persona is his realization that he is no longer defined by the social performances he has long sought to perform. Throughout high school, Connell carefully performed the roles of the popular student and the loyal friend, hiding behind masks that protected his social standing. Jung (1966) argues that confronting the Persona begins when a person realizes the gap between the role they have been performing and who they truly are. At the university, without those comfortable masks, Connell slowly finds his way into something more truly his own through literature and true human connection. This eventually leads to a subtle but profound night after a literature reading at his college.

"Still, Connell went home that night and read over some notes he had been making for a new story, and he felt the old beat of pleasure inside his body, like watching a perfect goal, like the rustling movement of light through leaves, a phrase of music from the window of a passing car. Life offers up these moments of joy despite everything." (Rooney, 2018, p. 228)

Based on the passage above, it is clear that Connell is the person who has begun to move away from the Persona to return to his true self, it becomes evident that what is being described is precisely what Jung (1966) identifies as the moment a person starts to move outside of the Persona and connect with their authentic self. Throughout high school, Connell's identity was shaped by social performance, likability, loyalty, and seeing as the right thing to the right people. In university, those performances no longer exist. Within this space, Connell is simply expected to be open to ideas, honest in his thinking and speaking. This sense of safety and recognition allows the Persona to loosen its grip. From a Jungian perspective, the release of the Persona enables a person to reconnect with something deeper and more essential in themselves, which lay there all along behind the mask (Jung, 1969). This is exactly what the old beat of pleasure is. The word "old" is a significant word in an analytical context from a Jungian perspective, because it implies that what Connell is reconnecting with is not new, but original, a fundamental aspect of his identity that his Personas have been hiding for a long time. Writing, intellectual

honesty, and authentic connection are not things Connell learned at university. It is just who he is behind the mask. This is when the Persona lets go a little so that the truth is revealed.

3.2.2 The Integration of the Shadow Through Deliberate Recovery

The biggest sign of Connell integrating his Shadow is his choice to get professional assistance and take medicine to help his psychological healing. Jung (1969) argues that it takes a lot of moral effort to confront the Shadow and that the integration starts with the conscious decision to rather engage with what has been avoided than let it continue to operate unchecked. For Connell, therapy and medication are an act of choosing to look at his Shadow instead of to ignore it.

"The medication is doing its chemical work inside his brain now anyway, no matter what he does or says. He gets up and showers every morning, he turns up for work in the library, he doesn't really fantasise about jumping off a bridge. He takes the medication, life goes on." (Rooney, 2018, p. 210)

Based on the passage above, it is clear that Connell's daily routine is described in a quiet and understated manner. This is not a dramatic change, but a gradual and steady process of integration. From a Jungian perspective, the Shadow integration does not occur in one go but slow, steady, and sometimes plain. The medication is working. He gets up, he showers, and he works. They are little and regular acts, but with a lot of psychological impact, as they are those in which Connell is choosing to operate and keep going despite the Shadow. Jung (1953) warns that if the Shadow content remains unacknowledged it becomes powerful over time, but here Connell has changed that. He has recognised his darkness enough to ask for help and this is the basis for integration. The detail that he does not really fantasise about jumping off a bridge is particularly significant. The word "*really*" is analytically important. It does not say the thought has entirely vanished. It says it no longer consumes him. The Shadow is still present, as it always will be, but it no longer controls him. This is what Jung (1969) calls the purpose of the Shadow integration, not to remove the negative energy or darkness, but to become conscious of it and know it and own it, but in a way that it does not go around as a destructive force.

3.2.3 The Integration of the Anima Through Conscious Care

The most significant evidence of Connell integrating his Anima is his warmth and emotional attention towards Marianne from the occasional moment to the conscious and continued way of being. Jung (1966) describes that Anima integration is about the man consciously incorporating his suppressed emotional qualities into his conscious personality. For Connell, this integration becomes visible in the consistent way he acts toward from day to day:

"Every day, in the ordinary activity of their lives, he showed patience and consideration for her feelings. He took care of her when she was sick, he read drafts of her college essays, he sat and listened while she talked about her ideas, disagreeing with herself out loud and changing her mind." (Rooney, 2018, p. 220)

Based on the passage above, it is clear that Connell willingly and consciously embraced his Anima. The words every day and ordinary activity are analytically significant. They convey that emotional care and attentiveness are not foreign or overwhelming to Connell. They are now merely his way of life. Jung (1966) argues that the successful integration of the Anima empowers a man to have a true and lasting emotional involvement, to transcend from unconscious reaction to conscious relatedness. Connell is no longer a man who feels tender without wanting to. He is a man who has decided to make tenderness a conscious choice, and he is making the choice every day, which is what the integration of Anima looks like in practice

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Connell Waldron's Persona, Shadow, and Anima are not isolated psychological traits but interconnected dimensions of a single, ongoing journey toward individuation. Carl Jung's archetypal framework, particularly the Persona, Shadow, and Anima, provides a productive lens through which Connell's psychological complexity becomes fully legible. His Persona constructed through the dual social roles of popular student and loyal friend, functions precisely as Jung (1966) describes as a carefully maintained mask that meets external expectations while concealing the true self beneath. Behind these masks, his Shadow accumulates three deeply repressed burdens: insecurity, internalized shame, and unresolved guilt over

Rob's death, all of which remain unacknowledged until the weight of suppression forces them into consciousness. Meanwhile, his Anima, carrying the emotional and relational depth his masculine social world has long denied, surfaces exclusively through his intimacy with Marianne, manifesting as vulnerability and tenderness that his public Persona would never permit.

These three archetypes do not operate independently but in direct relation to one another. Connell's Persona actively enables the accumulation of his Shadow, precisely because his masks require him to appear socially at ease and untroubled, he cannot afford to acknowledge the insecurity, shame, and guilt building beneath them. Similarly, his Anima can only surface within the private space Marianne creates, because his public roles leave no room for emotional exposure. This interdependence confirms Jung's (1969) understanding of the psyche as a dynamic system in which archetypes act upon one another, and it illustrates how Rooney uses Connell's social environment to sustain the very conditions that keep his inner tensions in place.

Regarding individuation, the findings show that Connell's journey unfolds gradually across three dimensions. He confronts his Persona at university by reconnecting with his authentic self through literature and intellectual honesty, shedding the performances that once defined him. He integrates his Shadow by making the deliberate and conscious choice to seek therapy and medication, turning toward his inner darkness rather than continuing to avoid it. He integrates his Anima by transforming occasional and involuntary emotional outbursts into a sustained, daily commitment to emotional care for Marianne. Taken together, these three movements confirm Chorna's (2025) description of individuation as a gradual reconciliation of internal conflicts rather than a single climactic transformation.

Future research could apply this same Jungian framework to Marianne Sheridan, whose psychological journey is equally complex, to provide a more complete picture of individuation within the novel's relational dynamics. Researchers might also explore other Jungian structures relevant to Connell, such as the mother complex, given his close relationship with Lorraine, or combine the Jungian framework with Marxist or feminist perspectives to examine how socio-political structures directly shape the archetypal



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tensions this study identifies. Comparative studies across Rooney's other works, such as *Conversations with Friends* and *Beautiful World, Where Are You*, could further examine whether these patterns of archetypal manifestation and individuation represent a consistent literary preoccupation across her fiction.

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