

Miguel Street in the Perspective of Jungian Analytical Psychology

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Abstract

British writer of Indian origin Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001 for *Miguel Street*, his acclaimed work, for which he won the Maugham Literary Award for this collection of short stories. This work portrays a large group of marginalized people with psychological imbalance and eccentric behavior by describing the minutiae of life and the mental world on Miguel Street in Port of Spain, the capital of British colonial Trinidad. This paper will apply the theories of Jungian analytical psychology such as archetypes and complexes to provide psychological explanations and support for those marginalized people. Archetypes like persona and shadow and complexes like poet complex and hero complex are mainly theoretical foundations used in this paper.

Key words: *Miguel Street*; Persona; Shadow; Complex

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INTRODUCTION

Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul (August 17, 1932 - August 11, 2018) was an English writer of Indian origin whose major works include *The Mystic Masseur*, *The Middle Passage: The Caribbean Revisited*, *The Masque of*

Africa and more than 30 other novels, travelogues, and correspondences. He has won several prizes, including the Nobel Prize for Literature, the British David Cohen Prize for Literature, the Italian Nonino International Literature Prize, the Jerusalem Prize for Literature, Man Booker International Prize, and the Somerset Maugham Prize. In 1959, he won the Maugham Prize for his masterpiece named *Miguel Street*. Through his narration of stories of the small characters who are living in Miguel Street in this novel, Naipaul reflects the lack of discourse and living space of the colonized people and the concern for their identity, in addition to indicting the psychological distortion under the oppression of the mental and physical space they suffered. These minor characters are in a state of resistance and searching for positions of themselves. The lack of physical and psychological space leads them to become marginalized people. The reasons for the psychological distortion of these marginalized characters are divided into two parts. The first part is external factors such as social and historical reasons. These people are anxious for survival plight caused by their tragic experiences in the colonized state. And the other part comes from internal factors, like the influence of the unconscious on the mind which is the influence of the archetypes in the collective unconscious and the influence of the complexes in the personal unconscious. The following things will be talked about: the impact of the content of the archetypes on the ego; the neurological symptoms resulting from the conflict among the archetypes when they cannot be reconciled; and the personality imbalance resulting from the assimilation of the complex to the ego, etc.

Most of the studied perspectives are from the postcolonial perspective which mainly focused on the mental pressure and cultural identity of the colonized people. This article focuses on the inner spiritual world of the characters in the novel. It will explore the influence of unconscious archetypes and complexes in the mind

on human behavior and psychology. Characters in this novel like Popo, B Wordsworth and Big Foot, all of them have no clear perceptions of their own identities. And they are all abnormal and behave very strangely. From the perspective of Jungian analytical psychology, this ambiguity about one's identity comes from the influence of complexes and archetypes in the unconscious content. After the conscious ego understands and accepts the complexes and archetypes, they finally figure out the question of who they really are. Then they have a clearer perception of their own identities and get rid of the psychological imbalance and stop odd behaviors.

1. THE PERSONA AND SHADOW OF "RICH CARPENTER" POPO

Popo is the main character in the second story of this novel, and the story presenting the reader with a character who is in a conflicted state of mind and behaves in an insane manner revolves around him and his carpentry business. His identification with and swaying from his identity as a carpenter, his imitation and abandonment of the rich man's way of life, and his madness and resistance to his carpentry work demonstrates the dynamic balance between his ego and the persona and shadow of his personality.

According to Richard Bilsker (2014) who is specializing in Jungian studies, persona is a fake personality and disguise which stands as a compromise between the individual and society. (p.47). And it is an external image that is accepted by others in accordance with social moral norms. Contrary to the persona, shadow is something one hates and refuses to be. And it is a moral problem which challenging the whole complete personality. Most of them are not accepted and repressed by the ego. Like embarrassing or unsatisfactory part or the dark side of oneself, these are contents of shadow. And they are repressed in the collective unconscious field. The over-identification of Popo's ego with the persona causes him to lose himself, and the concealment and denial of the shadow eventually leads him to present his animal side. He is unable to balance the equilibrium relationship between these two archetypes and the ego after personality differentiation which resulting in a state of transient psychological imbalance. Popo's shadow, persona and ego reached a consensus and was in a balanced state after the stripping of the persona and the re-recognition of the shadow. It propelled him to the positive side of development.

The first is the ambivalence of recognition and denial of the carpenter's identity, reflecting the process of over-identification and switchover of Popo's ego with the persona. As a kind of identity for external communication, persona will be used in different situations. Ego can replace different personas at any time to fit in different

occasions. People can have many personas. For example, one has a school identity at school and social identity in society and so on. Popo claims to be a carpenter. Although his only work is a small shed that has not yet been built, he is very proud of his job and is still banging away all day long. Here the author uses the third-person perspective to carry out an unreliable narrative, which not only reflects Popo's lack of skill and technique as a carpenter, but also reflects his insistence on his own identity. This insistence is his identification with the carpenter persona. After "I" wrote a sign for Bogart's tailor store, Popo asked me to write one for him, and often stood in front of the sign. Popo's act of positioning himself as a carpenter as an identity reflects his ego's identification with this persona.

While people who didn't know him came to this sign and consulted for some carpenter works, he was a bit diffident. He said this was other carpenter's sign and the carpenter has moved away. He only wears carpenter persona and shows to people who knows him. When it turns to unnecessary situation which he doesn't need to pretend to be carpenter, he will take off the mask. Under this situation, it's unnecessary for him to pretend to be carpenter in front of strangers, so he just take off the persona and recognize he is not a real carpenter. This ambivalence of wavering identification and denial of the carpenter's identity pointed out the answer to the unreliable narrative on the one hand. He is indeed not a real carpenter. And on the other hand, it pointed out the dynamic relationship between the ego and the persona. When ego needs persona as an appearance to present to others, it will do things that looks like a fixed character to perfect its persona, and when the ego does not need the persona, it denies it or strips it away.

Secondly, the imitation of the rich person's life reflects the ego's identification with the "rich person" persona. Over identification with the persona(over-reliance on one's identity) can lead one to live as a false himself and even to engage in strange and exaggerated behaviors to maintain this mask (Papadopoulos, 2019, p.87). Popo is not a popular person in the Miguel Street, because people think he is too arrogant. His behavior of drinking rum in other people's eyes is showing off. But his own explanation about this is that getting up early in the sun and drinking some rum is very comfortable instead of showing off. Except that, Popo is also considered to be a sissy man because he relies on his wife to earn money to pay for family expenses. Although there are lots of gossips about him from surroundings, he doesn't care about what people think about him. From the multiple narrative voices, it can be inferred that rum is not a luxury item in Miguel Street. The explanation of his behavior is that he is not showing off but imitating the way rich people drink. In fact, he is identifying himself with the mask of "rich people" and feels that he should act like a rich person should do. Living in a colonized place, most

of the villagers' perception of rich people came from the influence of the colonists. It seems like they don't have to work and have plenty of times to enjoy the sunshine leisurely and drinking. That's the impression that Popo has towards rich man. He finds the common ground between him and rich people that is both of them have plenty of time. Because his wife is working and pays for the family expenses, he doesn't need to work. So he imitates the way rich people drink to pretend to be rich. People are trying to hide true themselves and pretend to be someone else when they acknowledged specific personas. Shen Heyong (2012) pointed out that persona and shadow correspond to each other. We tend to hide our shadow and tend to modify and dress up our persona. Once we use beautiful persona to decorate our psyche and hide our true self under this mask, our shadow will turn to darker and darker. If the conflicts between these two are not be solved, it will bring disorders and chaos to our psyche(p.68). Popo's identification with his "rich person" persona makes him unpopular on Miguel Street and rejected by residents, and his inner inferiority sense and repression part (shadow) becomes even darker as he clings to his identity as a "rich man".

Furthermore, the resistance and abandon of the carpenter's work reflects the dynamic process of ego's acceptance and repression with shadow. Shadow has both positive and negative sides, it will present creativity and vitality in the depths of the unconscious when it not threatened or provoked, and it will also bring violence and chaos when it repressed by ego during a long time. Although Popo was constantly busy, he didn't make any outstanding masterpieces so far. He didn't have carpenter skills to produce any works but he never quit. The motivation provided by shadow makes Popo energetic. The instincts and energies in the shadows have a primitive uncontrolled bestiality, in addition to being able to bring vitality. This bestial nature of the shadow is repressed when the ego is highly identified with a certain persona. Excessive repression of the shadow will make it burst out unexpectedly at certain moments and have an impact on human emotions and behaviors. Popo's shadow bursts out after a long term repression.

He doesn't have carpenter skills and income. Thus his wife eloped with a gardener for this reason. These are all contents that make him feel dissatisfied and ashamed which he doesn't want to recognize and talk to people. These unsatisfied and shamed contents are his shadows. His ego tries to repress these shadows which made him lost motivation. "Popo's workshop no longer sounded with hammering and sawing. The sawdust no longer smelled fresh, and became black, almost like dirt. Popo began drinking a lot, and I didn't like him when he was drunk. He smelled of rum, and he used to cry and then grow angry and want to beat up everybody." (V.S. Naipaul, 1987, p.16) He desperately wanted to numb

himself with alcohol to suppress his shadow. But due to repression of shadow in a long term, it exploded. Popo became a violent person with animal attributes. Jung pointed out that shadow would burst out through over-repression. Then the positive nature of the personality was suppressed, resulting in the ego playing a mainly negative or inopportune role. And in Jung's view, once the shadow is activated, it will be full of emotions and take on an autonomous life of its own which will beyond the control of the ego (Papadopoulos, 2019, p.82). Later Popo went to find his wife and injured that gardener in Arima. His violent behavior was the result of the explosion of shadow which was repressed for a long time. And intense shame caused him to lose his creativity and vitality in the previous time and showed strong animal and destructive nature.

Popo came back to Miguel street after he beat that gardener who abducted his wife. He seemed like a different person because he became more diligent and more irritable. "Pope wasn't the same man when he came back to us. He growled at me when I tried to talk to him, and he drove out Hat and the others when they brought a bottle of rum to the workshop" (Naipaul, 1987, p.18). Rum is a symbol of shame which reminds him of betrayal of his wife. After knowing that his wife eloped with someone else because the poor life they are living, Popo desperately tries to make himself rich. He tears off his mask of "rich person" and admits the truth that he is really poor, and begins to try to eliminate this sense of shame(shadow). For this reason he used the method of stealing to decorate his house in order to make his wife believe that he is becoming rich. He thought his wife left him is because of money. Truck after truck to bring new furniture to their home, he took them apart and reassembled them to decorate his new home. It's easy for people to fall into immorality to do something illegal for building wealth in a short period of time in order to prove something. Popo also did so out of the dive force of desire. In order to make his wife change her mind, he chose to steal other people's new furniture and tools to used on his own house. He was also imprisoned for this reason.

After he was released from prison, he really worked by his own craft instead of stealing other people's furniture. He finally became a carpenter with craftsmanship and ability. The return of his wife made him eliminate his dark side of shadow, and finally won his wife's understanding and companionship. Popo really grew from making something "without a name" to being able to produce furniture with a name. Finally, after the over-identification with the shadow and persona, the explosion of the shadow, and the stripping away of the persona and the reawakening of the shadow, Popo's shadow, persona and ego come to a consensus and are in a state of balance. The balance of his psyche pushes him forward to the positive side

and provides motion for his work. Popo psychologically reached a state of balance and his behavior also returned to normal which made him grow into a real carpenter.

2. “MIMIC” WORDSWORTH AND HIS POET COMPLEX

Jung (2020) considered the content of the personal unconscious as “complex” which is a group of psychological contents formed by the aggregation of personal past experiences (p.4). Each complex originates from an archetype. And as the product of a split mind, complex is mostly caused by traumatic experiences, emotional shocks, moral conflicts, and other similar things which made part of the psyche “wrapped up” and became a cluster with emotions (Jacobi, 2018, p.46). Jung described complex as imagery group with emotional tone which has instability and autonomy. Complexes are not under the control of the conscious but can cause disturbances and anxiety to the conscious field. As a result of psychologically generated defenses against trauma and moral conflicts, complexes carry psychological energy and have motivational effects.

William Wordsworth is a famous English romantic poet. In the sixth chapter of this novel named “B Wordsworth” in *Miguel Street*, there is also a Wordsworth who is especially fond of imitation. This imitation comes from the domination of the poet complex, which is reflected in emotions and behaviors. Through the understanding of his poet complex and the releasing of his own trauma, B. Wordsworth finally ceased to be a false imitator of others and grown into a true poet.

B Wordsworth claims to be a poet and the brother of the famous poet “White Wordsworth”. With a “poet complex”, his imitation of the famous romantic poet William Wordsworth is mainly in his stereotypical dress, disguised accent and comical behavior. Except that, his way of “crying of everything” is extremely similar to William Wordsworth’s creative ideas. William Wordsworth believed that “all good poetry is the natural outpouring of strong emotion” and emphasized that “nature is the source of human joy and wisdom”. For B. Wordsworth, he cried at the sight of everything. He made his living by writing poems but seldom sold them out. He was in great distress but he continued to sell his poems all the day. Strangely enough, he would cry over anything even a small flower such as a petunia. When people asked the reason why he cried, he didn’t know but prevaricated with a confusing sentence that was “you will know it when you grow up”. “Crying” is an emotional tone. But if this emotional tone without a cause, it can be explained by “complex”. Some scholars stated, “A complex is a collection of imagery and thoughts clustered around a core that originates from one or more archetypes and has a consistent emotional tone. When complexes come into play, they carry emotions

and influence behavior, whether or not a person is aware of them” (Samuels, Shorter, & Plaut, 2021, p.41). For his crying, it can be understood as a ridiculous act of shallow imitation of the famous poet Wordsworth, or as a concrete manifestation of the emotional power of the complex embodied in external behavior. The emotional outburst of the complex is not without a cause, and the answer to B Wordsworth’s “crying” can be found in the origin of the complex.

Wordsworth’s poet complex has two causes. The first one is the influence of the poet archetype. This influence reflected in his admiration and esteem for the famous poet “William Wordsworth” in previous history. Another one is his own traumatic experiences. According to the story told by B Wordsworth, it could inferred that his traumatic experience hurts him a lot. The trauma of losing his wife who was pregnant was the cause of his complex. The story he told is about a couple both are poets waiting for the birth of their baby. The boy poet loved words, and the girl poet loved the flowers of the meadow. They are waiting for the arrival of the little poet, but the little poet does not appear. Because death takes the mother and child away. B Wordsworth’s behaviors of “weeping” and fondness for observing insects are not only an imitation of the William Wordsworth, but also a legacy left by traumatic experience. It is poet complex that makes him do something incomprehensible and cannot control his emotions.

Complex belongs to personal unconscious field which is between collective unconscious field and conscious field. It originates from an archetype (collective unconscious content) but will appear in the conscious field sometimes. Shen Heyong (2012) pointed out that the complex forms and accumulates unconsciously and has its own laws. Thus it cannot be controlled by conscious but manifest itself as an alternative protagonist of our personality and ego when it expands to a higher level (p.72). “Once the complex is triggered and has its effect, it has a strong emotional impact on people’s psychology and behavior even a dominant role. Strong emotions of love or hate, happiness or sadness, gratitude or anger, etc., always accompany the touch and function of the complex. Thus we are often no longer able to behave rationally as we are, but are completely taken over and controlled by the complex” (Shen, 2012, p.72). B Wordsworth cannot able to express his rational ego because it is completely controlled by the poet complex. In addition to being emotionally controlled by poet complex, B Wordsworth’s behavior is also governed by it. The complex drives B Wordsworth to keep writing poems as a source of human inspiration. He kept on writing poems although he never sold single ones. He still continued to sell his poems all day long. He told “me” he was writing the greatest poem in the world and would pour a month’s worth of experience into a single line of poetry, which he hoped

it would be sung to the hearts of all mankind when it was finished. But when I asked him if he would be the richest man when he finished his greatest poem, he did not answer. Perhaps he was not sure whether he could finish the poem or whether the poem could move all mankind. He didn't sell a single poem, and he survived by singing calypso ditties. Writing poems for him was not to earn money to satisfy his material desires, but a kind of spiritual catharsis and expectation like creative desire. In Jung's view, this creative passion is an "unconscious command" similar to Plato's "divine possession" ecstasy, and this creative process is a living thing rooted in the human spirit. In the depths of the unconscious, Wordsworth desires to express his emotions and release his pressure through poetry, and he also hopes to find a place of resonance with human beings through poetry.

Repression and denial of the complex does not make it eliminate. It is only when we truly know and understand it does it lose its power to control us. B Wordsworth's awareness and understanding of his poet complex was achieved accompanied by a process which his lifetime is shorter and shorter. From the time he begins to confront the source of his trauma to the end of his physical life, he moves from "growing much older" to "growing old" to "death creeping up on his wrinkled face" to the final "voice breaking". Finally, he is able to admit his obsession with writing poetry and clearly recognize his own limitations and understanding his own poet complex. He also moves from being dominated by his complex and claiming to write the greatest poem in the world to recognize the dominant behavior of the poet complex and admitting that "the poem didn't go well." He accepted the crucial truth that his wife is dead and life is still gonging on. Then he told "me" the story is fake and not real in order to make me feel relief and not feel sad. He realized his life without beloved is just like an incomplete poem. He seemed not stick to the traumatic experience and found his ego through understanding his poet complex. At last he became a real B. Wordsworth instead of an imitator of William Wordsworth.

3. "COWARD AND BRAVE" BIG FOOT AND HIS HERO COMPLEX

Big Foot is a coward because he is easily getting frightened and running or hiding in fear when things go wrong. But he is also a brave man who even signed up to challenge the RAF boxing champion. He is a hero in the eyes of others but actually he is a coward. This contradictory behavior of cowardice and bravery is a pseudo-heroic behavior out of the state of ego-assimilation by the complex.

Hayao Kawai (2012) pointed that person will be powerful when ego assimilated by the complex. The power of complex created an invincible momentum and

created a false heroic image, and the power was provided by archetypal nature. In other words, it is because of the weakness of the ego that the person is kidnapped to act heroically (p.185). Big Foot looks fierce on the outside because his face is always gloomy, so people on Miguel Street are all afraid of him. But in reality he is not as brave as he looks on the outside because of his true inner cowardice. He has to take the opportunity that Trinidadians are afraid of his fierce appearance and sturdy the opportunity to disguise himself as a hero. However, under the assimilation of the hero complex, he became more and more pretentious. And with the encouragement of the Trinidadians, he challenged the so-called champion of the Royal Air Force boxing tournament and lost in a mess which became a laughing stock of Miguel Street.

There are three reasons why Big Foot acted as a fake hero: social reason, family reason, and hero complex reason. The first aspect is social reason. It urgently needed a hero to lead in the colonized Miguel Street, in other words, it urgently needed a hero's birth to become their spiritual support. Residents' calling for birth of hero provides an opportunity for Big Foot's hero complex. Big Foot became an object of awe for the residents of Miguel Street because of his large size and dark skin. They were honored to be able to have any kind of friendship with him. Residents of Miguel Street spoke of him with great pride because of his great fame. And because of his fame, people are very tolerant of his deliberate sabotage and pranks. Even Big Foot's intentional use of a rock to break the window of the Trinidad broadcasting building had good people pay his fine. When he was a bus driver, he drove passengers off the bus to take a shower in order to make fun of them. But people regarded his behavior as a sign of his hilarity. When he was a letter carrier, he always delivered the wrong mail. But people attributed his mistakes to the difficulty of the job. They said this job was hard and can easily made people do wrong things. The indulgent and laissez-faire of people on Miguel Street became one of the sources of Big Foot's pseudo hero image.

The second reason is the influence of the family by osmosis. It is the traumatic source of the complex. Complex is caused by traumatic experiences such as emotional blows, moral conflicts, and other similar things. The hero complex originates from the heroic archetype. For Big Foot, the materialization of the heroic archetype is his dad. Big Foot's father was a police officer who died to quell the black disturbance in the oil field, which to some extent gave him a great influence and became one of the sources of his hero complex. And by the reason of his father's violent beating, Big Foot took violence as a way to show his masculine and regarded it as heroic behavior. He even said that he will beat them to death when he had children in the future. The trauma and incorrect educational concept and approach brought by his family

made Big Foot to link heroic and violence together. His own stature and strength is the basis of violence, and his recognition about violence drives him to be violent. The influence of family reason is also one of the reasons for his pseudo-hero.

The third reason is the assimilation of Big Foot's ego with the heroic complex. Complexes are existing in unconscious field and they have more freedom on action. Thus their assimilate power is very strong. Jung (2018) pointed out that "When complex assimilates with ego, one's personality will temporary and unconsciously changed." (Translated by Guan, p.69). When "I" almost got beaten up for asking an American soldier for gum, Big Foot rescued me and the Yankee instantly gave in and walked away. His heroic behavior is not the way he is but the assimilation of ego by hero complex. The reason why his ego is assimilated by hero complex is that he wanted a hero to protect him in his childhood. Big Foot was bullied by his peers because of his small stature when he was a child. At that time, he was weak and timid. Once he was assimilated by the hero complex, the raging power of the hero complex in the unconscious dominated his behavior. Different with the former behavior which is avoiding and fleeing when he met something wrong. This time he saved me from being bullied by American soldiers. The hero complex gives him the power to do things that match the hero's identity. Later, as his ego continued to be assimilated into the hero complex, he began to learn to box. And after defeating many pugilists, his exploits were touted by sportswriters as a "great success" and the people on Miguel Street were not afraid of him. He became the pride of the town. In order to perform as the hero again, he went to challenge a boxer who claimed to be the winner of the RAF boxing tournament. Unfortunately, he failed. Then he cried like a child, the louder he cried, the sadder he sounded. But the most ironic thing is that his opponent is not actually any professional boxer.

Big Foot's ego is assimilated by the hero complex in the unconscious so he cannot governed his own behavior. Because he can not judge the situation, the consequence in the competition is failure. After the failure he finally begins to have a clear recognition about his own abilities. It can also be said that the awakening of the ego. He began to realize the hero complex and admitted his own cowardice. He is no longer in the guise of a grand hero look, but accepts his cowardice inner side. He cried like an ordinary person because of failure. From the bottom of his heart, he accepted his own imperfection and admitted the cowardice. He does not live in a world of falsehoods touted by others and no longer perfunctory about his work after he moved from Miguel Street. He found a job and was a labourer in a quarry in Laventille. Recognizing his hero complex, Big Foot soberly knows that he is not a hero. And his ego began to function to make him find true self.

SUMMARY

Naipaul's Miguel Street is a realistic and ironical novel to reflect distortion and struggle, growth and helplessness of the abnormal mental state of the characters under colonization on Miguel Street. Owing to historical background, they are lacking of discourse and having blurred identities. The threat of survival and the spiritual emptiness are the external causes which can explain for their abnormal mental states. While the influence from unconscious archetypes and complexes are internal causes of their disordered mental states. This paper gives voice to these abnormal marginalized people from the Jungian analytical psychological perspective with the theory foundation of archetypes and complexes. And it explored from influences of archetypes and complexes to explain those people's contradictory behaviors and uncontrolled emotions. By recognizing the archetypes and complexes, Popo, Wordsworth, and Big Foot were able to have a clear perception about their unconscious contents. They solved their psychological problems and stopped contradictory behaviors to grow into someone with a clear perception of their identity and a fulfilling spiritual world.

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