



Exploring the Disposition of Juana's animus in *The Pearl* of John Steinbeck

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Abstract:

The representation of human psychology has never failed to get the attention of critics when they find interesting fictional characters trying to reflect reality. John Steinbeck, an American author, portrays life-like characters in his realistic novels. One of his literary works, *The Pearl* is a striking novel published in 1947. The story concerns with a tragedy of a pearl diver named Kino and his wife, Juana. The story is spun around the themes of greed, poverty, power politics, exploitation, and so on. Juana, the female protagonist of the novel *The Pearl*, carries paradoxical traits in her, unlike the other women of her community. Her difference is observed and amplified in the story and that demands to be understood using Carl Jung's archetypal concept of *animus*. Thus, in order to appreciate her design as in the hands of Steinbeck, this research article aims to render a psychological character study of Juana to understand her better in her cluttered colonial situation.

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Keywords: Female character, paradoxical trait, psychology, *animus*.

DOI Number: 10.48047/nq.2022.20.22.NQ10401

NeuroQuantology 2022;20(22):4023-4030

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (283), observes Simone de Beauvoir in her seminal text, *The Second Sex*. She explains that a child of the female sex is a girl at birth and she is tuned by her society to become a woman as she grows, to take up responsibilities at home. This transition of a female life from that of a girl to that of a woman does not happen overnight. It takes culture and society along with familial upbringing to make her fit into the role of a woman. At one point in history, women's education focused on transforming girls into women. This involved teaching them needlework and sewing, music and dancing, mannerisms and etiquette, arithmetic skills, reading and writing skills, housekeeping skills and the like. All of these main streams had the intention to please the world of men by making it as the center of a woman's life. A girl was equipped to become a wife, a mother, a home maker and win the hearts of the household with her well pleasing polite

manners.

For a woman to act and be the angel of the house is seen as a demanding commandment since the evolution of mankind. The idea of *eternal feminine*, as explained by Beauvoir, was imposed on every woman since time immemorial. It was this polite, obedient, and submissive role that a woman was expected to take up, which made Beauvoir think and pass her observation that women are made into women. The adherence of women to the ideology of *eternal feminine* is prevalent in the society till date. Juana, the protagonist of the select novel, *The Pearl*, is also shown as one such typical woman with the qualities of *eternal feminine*. She is a realistic representation of a woman, who has become one due to her social conditioning and she plays her part exceptionally well.

Literature, the reservoir of social recordings, also offers examples of various virtues of women. Geoffrey Chaucer introduces the binary face of womanhood in



the characterization of the Nun and the Wife of Bath in his masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales*. The Nun is crafted to have well pleasing manners and politeness and has, somehow, found her purpose in celibacy, while Alison, marrying multiple times is identified as the Wife of Bath. The prelude of these women, before they begin their tale, is exemplary of their nature and character. It is interesting to note that women of such extremely opposite nature also had their representation in literature. Even then, literature could not give a reason for their behaviours.

In order to undertake such a thought-provoking endeavor, John Steinbeck attempts to step into the mindscape of a woman and unravels his exploration to the reader through the woman is tic portrayal of Juana in *The Pearl*. Steinbeck is an American author and Nobel Prize winner of the year 1962. He was famous during the Great Depression and his writings show cased reality and earned sympathy for fellow beings as sufferers due to various causes. He was praised as a writer of "naturalistic novels with proletarian themes" (Bauer 1). He deals with realism in a way more realistic manner.

In order to find out the secret behind the mental mechanism of a woman, the study of the human mind i.e., psychology, is opted. Peter Barry introduces psychoanalytic criticism as "a form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature." (69-70). In doing so, Carl Jung's theories are studied in detail. His concept of *collective unconscious* leads one to explore the aspect of *animus* in a woman.

Animus is an archetype that concerns with the unconscious masculine shade of a woman. It is assumed to lead a woman in her rational actions rather than emotional ones. This research article aims to decipher and understand the *animus* aspect of Juana and tries to reason out and justify her nature and her witty actions that are depicted in the novel.

John Steinbeck published this novel, *The Pearl* in 1947. The story deals with a pearl diver and his misfortune, which begins with a scorpion stinging his son and losing

the infant in the end. More so, as the novel progresses, he loses his identity in his community owing to his uncontrollable greed that over powers him at the sudden appearance of a large pearl. The inspiration of this story is hinted at a Mexican folklore from LaPaz, Mexico.

The novel sets on by describing the usual morning routine of Kino. Kino is a pearl diver by occupation. He is deeply familiar with the sea and its music. His wife, Juana, is also pious about her communal music and the magic of the sea. She appears all through the story, and captures the attention of the reader with a series of her silence and discourse. This couple have a son named Coyotito. His name serves as a pun in the tale as his name Coyotito resembles that of acoyote. The author uses this name is as an irony that deserves attention.

This small family's peace is distorted one morning when the baby is stung by a scorpion. As the father stands immobile due to the shock, the mother rushes to help her son with first-aid and tries to soothe the crying baby. She sucks out poison from the baby's fresh wound and seeks out medical help from a doctor against her own racial prejudices. The couple's poverty and racial identity fail to fetch the required help from the doctor. In order to obtain treatment for his ailing son, Kino dives into the sea searching for a pearl so that he could pay for his son's medical treatment. The magic and the music of the sea provide him with a huge pearl and his onlookers are astonished by the catch. As he returns shore, he witnesses the improvement in his son's health and secretly rejoices over his fortune. Juana's traditional medicine wades away the infant's sickness slowly.

The news of the discovery of "the Pearl of the World" (Steinbeck 11) reaches everyone and some are envious of his luck while some resent and try to fool him of his fortune. As some conspire to rob him of his pearl, the story takes a gloomy turn. Greed seeps into the hearts of the neighbours, kith and kin, strangers in the city, pearl dealers and buyers, and robbers. The peace of the sea shore turns murky in its air and music. The author observes Kino seething at everyone because of suspicion and Juana is made to

notice the influence that the pearl has on her husband gradually.

With a dark figure's failed attempt to steal the pearl, Juana confirms the pearl's presence to be unlucky. Kinochidesher for her folly and is determined to sell the pearl and to secure a bright future for his son by providing him education, and he also day dreams of marrying Juana in a church wearing new clothes. Kino's greed robs him of his sleep. Juana realizes this, but feels helpless to either warn him or stop him. The next morning the couple visit the local pearl dealers in the city to sell the pearl for a great fortune. They are fooled ruthlessly and Kino sees through their bully and mockery. He pledges to sell his pearl for a large sum in the capital and takes his leave. The pearl dealers regret their fool play for not being able to get their hand on Kino's fortune. That night, more thieves ravage Kino's hut. Kino vows to protect the pearl with his life for the betterment of his family.

The music of the sea becomes unpleasant and muffled. Juana identifies darkness hiding in the pearl, which has the power to destroy her family. Her warnings are not heeded and her attempt to throw away the pearl against the will and strength of her husband ends in vain. While returning to their hut, she finds that her husband has killed a man and she has a change of heart to save her husband from the crime of murder. The couple rush to their hut to save their son and hatch a plan to flee from their habitat. Their hut is searched and burnt by thieves and they have no other choice but to hide themselves in Kino's brother's house and they leave that night to the capital.

The next day, they are followed by three men. They intend to kill this small family and loot the large pearl from them. After securing his wife and son in a cave at a cliff, Kino reaches down to kill those three men. During that dispute, one of the hunters among the three men, fires at the cave mistaking Coyotito's muffled cries to be that of a coyote pup. This shot kills the baby. Kino kills all the three men in the scuffle and the couple return to their place carrying the baby's corpse like a small bloodied bundle. Taking a one last look at the pearl and realizing all the misfortune it has brought along with it under the guise of

greed, Kino throws it back into the bottom of the sea, as he is remorsefully reminded of Juana's warning concerning the pearl that it would destroy the family.

This novel, *The Pearl*, is structured to be a parable that highlights the impact of greed in a poor man's life. Ironically, greed affects Kino, a poor fisherman, and does not touch the hypocrite doctor, who refuses to treat the poor people as they would not pay him for his treatment anyways. As a moral tale, this novel deals with themes such as greed, poverty, hunger, differences in the consumption of food between the rich and the poor or rather the settlers and the natives, and the like. It also does not fail to unravel the fact that ignorance of the natives leads them to their exploitation.

The next fascinating factor concerns with the author's representation of individual and community as the reflection of each other. There is no space for privacy in the lives of these fisher folk. When Kino finds the pearl, the news reaches the doctor, the priest, the pearl dealers, and the paupers sitting before the church. The doctor, with his keen yet haughty observation, easily finds out Kino's only choice of hiding the pearl will be beneath the sand inside his hut. Be it kith or kin or strangers, everyone alike has a word to contribute about the lives of every other in their community. This portrays the participation of the society in the lives of individuals from a naturalistic and realistic angle. Similar to this, Adaninggar also observes that the concept of groupism is significant in the novel and further, traces the role of the people who are dominant and silence the voice of the less privileged. The native people are denied access to western education and healthcare. They are deprived of urgent first-aid for deadly stings due to their indigenous race and poverty. Such findings are thus found in her article titled, "Critical Analysis of Steinbeck's *The Pearl*: Power and Silenced Voice".

In continuation, Kanchana, a research scholar, deals with group behaviourism in particular in her article titled, "Tracing the theme of group behaviour in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*". She identifies groupism to be both

constructive and destructive in its nature. The influence it has on individuals is profound. When the community cheers Kino for catching the greatest fortune of his life, he feels elated and that prompts him to start his daydream about his promising future. When a message has to be communicated, it is this group that amplifies the voice of an individual and makes it heard. The following scene from the novel explicates the same; The screams of the baby brought the neighbors. Out of their brush houses they poured - Kino's brother Juan Tomás and his fat wife Apolonia and their four children crowded in the door and blocked the entrance, while behind the mothers tried to look in, and one small boy crawled among legs to have a look. And those in front passed the word back to those behind - "Scorpion. The baby has been stung." (Steinbeck 4)

Anything that happens in the life of Kino and Juana is shown as the representation of the plight of the native community. This leads one to the next theme that is found in the text, morality. The morality of the characters in the story is so corrupt that they hardly feel guilty of their wrong doing. The doctor does not feel guilty for being a quack to extract the pearl from Kino, the pearl dealers do not feel guilty for trying to fool a poor man, the priest does not feel guilty for demanding tithes whereas he is expected to enquire about the health of the baby and sincerely pray for his quick recovery. Moreover, stealing and coveting for a neighbour's property are not seen as a sin. Killing each other is also justified to an extent for selfish gains. The paupers at the church entrance are the reality checkers in the novel as they predict the actions of the other characters based on their corrupt nature.

Yet another theme that demands closer attention to the injustice imposed towards the ailing child is, ignorance. Juana is capable of curing her son with homemade herbal medicine that she picked up from her traditional community. Despite that, she is awed by the western treatment that the doctor provides for the child. His refusal to treat the baby when he was stung by the scorpion and later, his self-indulgence to treat

the baby reveals the reason to be very clear that the doctor is not concerned about the health of the baby, instead he is concerned only about acquiring the pearl from the ignorant couple. Juana wants her son to survive and thrive against the poison of the scorpion and this mind set is preyed on by the doctor ruthlessly.

Contrary to her, her husband grows suspicious of his mysterious treatment. The health of their child deteriorates only to improve to the medicine given by the doctor. However, Kino's suspicion is not given much importance in the novel. His opinion is referred to like a passing comment. "Kino knelt beside his wife. "So the doctor knew," he said, but he said it for himself as well as for his wife, for his mind was hard and suspicious and he was remembering the white powder." (Steinbeck 17). The ignorance of the natives is thus used by the educated people to exploit them. By doing so, they aim to keep their luxurious lifestyle without compromise. The doctor's cutlery and choice of finest cuisine demonstrate this exploitation of the native owing to their ignorance. His sense of dedication to heal the sick infant is marked with irony in these lines, "The doctor finished his chocolate and nibbled the little fallen pieces of sweet cake. He brushed his fingers on a napkin, looked at his watch, a rose, and took up his little bag." (Steinbeck 17).

Steinbeck uses a simple storyline to deal with serious and honest crises that prevail even in the contemporary society. The only person who is not affected by the lust of the pearl is Juana. Her infatuation with the pearl is rationally cross-checked time and again by her husband's change in his nature. She sees a stranger evolving out of her husband and warns him of the upcoming disaster that will eventually destroy the family. Both Kino and Juana live with the music and the magic of the sea. As Kino is distracted by the music of the pearl, meaning the greed it filled him with, Juana is immersed with the music of the sea, the music of harmony, the song of the family. She is optimistic, strong-willed and even anticipates their future because of the presence of the pearl. Kino daydreams and falls into following the music of the pearl, whereas Juana is clear sighted

before the illusion of the pearl.

The prudence that Juana possesses is admirable and deserves a closer study from Jung's concept of the *animus*. Harry J. Stead explains *animus* thus, "Jung believed that nested inside the shadow are the qualities of our opposite gender. The anima is the archetypal type that expresses the fact that men have a minority of feminine equalities; and the animus expresses the masculine qualities within women." (1). Juana, as a married woman, has shades of both masculine and feminine qualities in her. Her situations bring out one shade over the other and aid her to handle them to the best of her ability. Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, talks about the art of characterization. A character should be designed with the measure called the golden mean, meaning that a character should have a fine balance between virtues and vices. He should not carry an extremist attitude, for instance, he should not be both ignorant and idiotic in terms of education or be haughty of his education as both will ruin him making him lose his balance. Striking a balance between the two, a character should know when to use the learned knowledge and be wise with prudence. That is the nature of golden mean that Aristotle appreciates and approves of in a character. Having this as the background, the function of Juana's *animus* is assessed.

To start the analysis with the feminine shade of Juana is found to be suitable because of her sex. Juana, as a woman, incorporates her individuality in her community. She embraces the songs and the music of the sea and holds them sacred. She prays frequently and she is pious in her religious beliefs. Her synchronization of songs with life is portrayed as something that is so natural in an indigenous woman. An excerpt from the novel substantiates her enthusiastic spirit as and when the song of the family resounds is shared for reference.

The Song of the Family came now from behind Kino. And the rhythm of the family song was the grinding stone where Juana worked the corn for the morning cakes....

...

Juana sang softly an ancient song that had only three notes and yet endless variety of

interval. And this was part of the family song too. It was all part.

Sometimes it rose to an aching chord that caught the throat, saying this is safety, this is warmth, this is the *Whole*. (Steinbeck 2)

As a wife, she is obedient and submissive. She does not complain over the lack of food or money or sophistication in her hut. She cooks early in the morning and feeds the family. She soothes and takes care of the baby all by herself. She knows how and when to coax her baby. She is aware of the traditional medical knacks in giving first aid and has a bold presence of mind to carry them out with discretion. She is overprotective as well. She is calm and composed and lives out every day without much fuss. She understands Kino better and Steinbeck observes, "Juana watched him with worry, but she knew him and she knew she could help him best by being silent and by being near." (Steinbeck 29). Thus, she is smart and vigilant. She respects her instincts and her instincts prove to be correct most of the time.

Unfortunately, she is unheard or silenced often, because she is a woman in the family. Even the only time she tries to resist her husband's obsession with the pearl is brutally suppressed by Kino when he thrashes her at the seashore before committing the unavoidable murder.

Her decision to stick with Kino in his escapade marks her maturity and foresight of wifehood. She is strong-willed and her determination explains that in the referred lines;

"Juana," he said, "I will go on and you will hide. I will lead them into the mountains, and when they have gone past, you will go north to Loreto or to Santa Rosalia. Then, if I can escape them, I will come to you. It is the only safe way."

She looked full into his eyes for a moment. "No," she said. "We go with you." "I can go faster alone," he said harshly. "You will put the little one in more danger if you go with me."

"No," said Juana.

"You must. It is the wise thing and it is my wish," he said. "No," said Juana.

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He looked then for weakness in her face, for fear or irresolution, and there was none. Her eyes were very bright. He shrugged his shoulders helplessly then, but he had taken strength from her. When they moved on it was no longer panic flight. (Steinbeck 41)

As a mother, she prefers western medical care even against her racial prejudices. She reveres the doctor for his treatment and does not doubt him an inch like her husband. Despite being a new mother having Coyotito as her first born, she seems to be into the process of mothering. Motherhood's transformation in Juana surprises her husband the most. His observation is added for reference, Kino had wondered often at the iron in his patient, fragile wife. She, who was obedient and respectful and cheerful and patient, could bear physical pain with hardly a cry. She could stand fatigue and hunger almost better than Kino himself. In the canoe she was like a strong man. And now she did a most surprising thing. "The doctor," she said. "Go to get the doctor." (Steinbeck 4)

For a feminine woman like her, her expression of masculine traits is also outstanding.

From the beginning, the story comments of her to be an acute observer. If she had acted before her husband, the scorpion would not have stung her son and the story would have ended within two pages without more complication and exaggerations. Her precision in taking decision is not given due credit until Coyotito is shot dead. She senses danger in the music of the sea once she observes the changing countenance of her husband. She also foretells the impending danger regarding the destruction of the family. The lines form the novel is given in order to highlight her precision. Now the tension which had been growing in Juana boiled up to the surface and her lip were thin. "This thing is evil," she cried harshly. "This pearl is like a sin! It will destroy us, "and her voice rose shrilly." Throw it away, Kino. Let us break it between stones. Let us bury it and forget the place. Let us throw it back into the

sea. It has brought evil. Kino, my husband, it will destroy us." And in the firelight her lips and her eyes were alive with her fear. But Kino's face was set, and his mind and his will were set. "This is our one chance," he said. "Our son must go to school. He must break out of the pot that holds us in." "It will destroy us all," Juana cried. "Even our son." (Steinbeck 20)

As a submissive wife, she is often not heeded or deliberately silenced. That does not stop her from speaking when she has to speak. She not only predicts danger, but also warns Kino about it. His refusal to acknowledge her foresight does destroy their son in the end. She is strong-willed too. When she realizes that Kino is not responding positively towards her warning about the pearl, she decides to get rid of it herself for the welfare of the family. The plan backfires though and she is hurt by her husband. Despite that, she tries to save him from the crime of murder and sticks with him all through the escapade. She refuses to agree with Kino's plan to separate and survive with the baby and chooses to be with him amidst death threats. She respects her promise of marriage with Kino and the reader sees her taking her side beside her husband at all times from waking up in the morning and going to bed at night.

Moreso, she is destined to throw the pearl away. Her act of asking Kino to do that in the end means that she wishes to be a submissive wife as usual and not hold him guilty or stupid for going against her warning. Thus, her maturity in handling marital life for the harmony of the family is reassuring in the novel. This scene beautifully sets the stage for conclusion and is given for reference. "Kino's hand shook a little, and he turned slowly to Juana and held the pearl out to her. She stood beside him, still holding her dead bundle over her shoulder. She looked at the pearl in his hand for a moment and then she looked into Kino's eyes and said softly: "No, you." (Steinbeck 47).

In contrast to Kino listening to the music of the pearl, Juana's ears are tuned to listen to the music of the sea, especially to the song of the family. She is thus over protective of her family. She tries to protect Coyotito



from the scorpion's sting, his temperature and swelling, and his hunger. She is equally considerate about Kino. She hardly condemns him for the loss of the child, but bears the loss along with him. This is unlike a woman's reaction to the loss of her child. It is in such instances that Juana's *animus* is heightened that she is clearer sighted as a woman rather than an emotional damsel in distress. She constantly tries to pass this vibe of the sea to her husband who is tormented by the music of the pearl. Only when he throws away the pearl does he feel relieved from the clutches of greed. "...the pearl was gone. And the music of the pearl drifted to a whisper and disappeared."(Steinbeck 48).

Juana is a young woman, who has mastered listening to the song of the sea and is well accustomed to the harmony of the life of the fisher folk. Her maturity in handling struggles has made her a character that balances Aristotle's concept of golden mean. She knows how to balance and maintain peace not only with herself, but also with her husband, amidst desperate and miserable situations. Her *animus* enables her to strike this balance and honour the knot of the marital bond better than both greed and loss that the pearl had to offer. Not every woman possesses this balance of golden mean because, several factors like unhappiness, disappointments, suppression, and loss of a child can drive her to the extremity of being hurt, unforgiving, arrogant, and mean.

Steinbeck has designed Juana in a unique way that she is significant and so, becomes the linch pin in the novel. Without her role, the novel cannot function as a whole. Reading Juana from Jung's concept *animus* allows one to understand the rationale behind her actions rather than condemning her as less sensitive, less considerate, and less emotional as a woman. She is rather more sensitive, more considerate, and more emotional, yet most practical in critical times of her life. Her logic and reasoning that works together for a greater good of her family is thus attributed to her *animus*. Her *animus* makes her bear the centripetal responsibility to hold not only her family, but also the plot of the novel towards unity.

Reading Juana from the perspective of psychoanalysis demands John Steinbeck to be praised for his mature contribution in the paradigm of realism writing.

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