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Archetype Analysis Of The Main Character In Marc Forster's Movie A Man Called Otto

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Abstract: Literature and film often use universal character patterns, known as archetypes, to explore deep psychological and social themes that resonate across cultures. Recent studies have applied Jungian archetype theory to analyze characters in various films, but few have focused on how these patterns shape emotional journeys in contemporary drama. This study aims to examine the archetypal dimensions of the main character, Otto Anderson, in Marc Forster's film A Man Called Otto by applying Carl Gustav Jung's archetype theory. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the research analyzes selected scenes, dialogues, and monologues to identify and interpret five key archetypes: Self, Ego, Persona, Shadow, and Anima. The findings show that Otto's character embodies all five archetypes, with the Ego (30,77%) and Shadow (23,08%) dominating his early isolation and emotional defenses, while the Self (11,54%), Anima (15,38%), Persona (19,23%) and emerge as he reconnects with others and moves toward healing. These percentages illustrate the varying influence of each archetype throughout Otto's journey, highlighting how his psychological transformation is reflected in the shifting dominance of these archetypal patterns. Compared to previous studies that examined archetypes in films such as Enola Holmes, Mcfarland USA, Encanto, The Dark Tower, and The Three Stooges, this research offers a deeper psychological perspective by focusing on the interplay of grief, isolation, and transformation within a dramatic context. The analysis demonstrates the value of archetype theory in understanding character development and highlights how A Man Called Otto reflects universal experiences of loss and resilience in modern cinema.

Keywords: Archetype, Main Character, Movie, A Man Called Otto

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is a form of art that uses language as its medium to express human thoughts, emotions, and experiences in creative and meaningful ways. It serves as a mirror of society, reflecting cultural values, beliefs, and conflicts while also exploring universal themes such as love, loss, and identity (Anderson & Smith, 2023). Through literature, readers gain insight into different perspectives and develop empathy by engaging with diverse characters and narratives. It is a vital tool for communication and education, shaping both individual understanding and collective consciousness. Literature is broadly categorized into three main types: poetry, prose, and drama, each with distinct features and purposes. Poetry is a literary form that emphasizes aesthetic qualities of language, such as rhythm, sound, and symbolism, to evoke emotions and create vivid imagery. It often uses meter, rhyme, and figurative language to express ideas in a condensed and powerful way, as demonstrated in Amanda Gorman's inspiring poem The Hill We Climb (Lee, 2022). Prose is the most common form of literature, written in ordinary, straightforward language without metrical structure. It is used to tell stories, describe events, or explain ideas in a clear and organized manner. Examples include novels, short stories, and essays, such as J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, which builds immersive worlds and complex characters through detailed narrative (Brown, 2024). Drama is a form of literature intended for performance, where stories are told through dialogue and action performed by actors. It combines spoken words with gestures, expressions, and stagecraft to bring characters and conflicts to life before an audience. Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet remains a classic example of drama's power to portray intense human emotions and social issues (Johnson,

2023). Each literary form enriches human culture in unique ways, with drama offering a dynamic and immediate experience that will be explored further in the next section.

Drama is a literary genre that presents stories through performance, combining dialogue, action, and visual elements to convey human experiences and emotions directly to an audience (Miller & Davis, 2022). Unlike prose and poetry, drama is designed to be enacted on stage or screen, making use of actors' expressions, gestures, and movements to bring the narrative to life (Clark, 2021). This performative nature allows drama to engage multiple senses, creating a more immediate and immersive experience compared to other literary forms. It often focuses on conflict and character development, exploring themes such as love, power, tragedy, and social issues in a way that deeply resonates with viewers both emotionally and intellectually. According to Roberts (2023), drama's unique strength lies in its immediacy and ability to create a shared experience between performers and audience, fostering empathy, reflection, and social awareness. The structure of drama typically includes acts and scenes, with dialogue driving the plot and revealing character motivations, while stage directions guide the physical and emotional expression of the story (Taylor, 2020). This combination of spoken word, physical movement, and visual storytelling distinguishes drama from other literary forms and makes it a powerful medium for storytelling and cultural expression. In this study, drama serves as the key framework for analyzing the main character in A Man Called Otto, as it allows for a comprehensive understanding of how narrative and character are communicated through performance.

Archetype theory is a concept in literary and psychological studies that describes universal symbols, characters, and patterns found across cultures and stories (Vogler, 2021). An archetype represents a typical role or image that recurs in myths, literature, and art, serving as a model for characters or situations that resonate deeply with human experience (Campbell, 2020). According to Jung (2019), archetypes are part of the collective unconscious, meaning they are inherited and shared by all humans, influencing how we perceive and interpret stories. These archetypes function as fundamental building blocks of the human psyche, shaping behavior, emotions, and thought patterns. In literature and film, archetypes appear as recognizable characters, themes, or motifs that help audiences connect with the narrative on a subconscious level. Common archetypes include the hero, who embodies courage and growth; the mentor, who provides guidance; the shadow, representing hidden fears or negative traits; and the trickster, who challenges norms and provokes change (Vogler, 2021). Archetype theory helps to identify the roles characters play in a story and explains how a single character can embody multiple archetypes at different points, reflecting the complexity of human nature (Campbell, 2020). This flexibility allows stories to explore universal themes such as good versus evil, transformation, and self-discovery through familiar patterns that resonate across time and culture. In this study, archetype theory provides a framework to analyze the main character in A Man Called Otto, revealing the psychological layers behind his actions and development and offering insights into the universal human experiences portrayed in the film.

The choice to analyze *A Man Called Otto* as a drama is motivated by the genre's unique ability to portray complex human emotions and social conflicts through performance and narrative. Drama, as a literary and performative form, offers a rich medium to explore characters' psychological depth and interpersonal relationships in a way that resonates directly with audiences (Miller & Davis, 2022). This film, released in 2022, tells the story of Otto Anderson, a widower struggling with grief, loneliness, and a sense of purposelessness after the death of his wife (Wikipedia, 2025). The narrative unfolds through Otto's interactions with his new neighbors and his internal struggles, highlighting themes of loss, healing, community, and

redemption. The drama's focus on Otto's emotional journey and social engagement makes it an ideal subject for archetypal analysis, as it vividly illustrates how universal psychological patterns manifest in individual experience. According to Jungian theory, archetypes such as the shadow, persona, and self are reflected in characters' behaviors and transformations, providing insight into their inner conflicts and growth (Jung, 2019). In *A Man Called Otto*, the protagonist's initial bitterness and isolation represent the shadow archetype, while his gradual openness and connection with others reveal the emergence of the self and anima archetypes. By examining this drama through the lens of archetype theory, this study aims to uncover the deeper psychological meanings embedded in Otto's character and the story's broader message about human resilience and connection.

Primary Data

Script:

Neighbor: "Hey Otto, are you coming to the community meeting tonight?"

Otto : "No, I don't want to be bothered."

Neighbor : "You should get out more, it might help."

Otto : "I just want to be left alone."

This dialogue shows that Otto really wants to stay away from social activities. His direct refusal to join the community meeting shows that he is emotionally closed off and does not want to connect with others after his loss. His words reflect deep pain and disappointment, making social contact feel too hard or even scary for him. Otto's behavior acts like a shield, protecting him from more emotional pain by keeping people away and staying alone. From the view of Jungian archetypes, Otto's statement "I just want to be left alone" this dialogue shows Otto facing his Shadow archetype. The Shadow is the hidden part of the self that holds dark or painful feelings, like grief, anger, or sadness. Otto's wish to be alone means he is stuck in this shadow state, hiding his weak points and feelings he hasn't dealt with. Jung says that to grow and heal mentally, a person must accept and understand their Shadow. Otto's isolation is an important step in his personal growth, where he needs to face his inner struggles before he can become whole and balanced (the Self archetype).

Several previous studies have analyzed archetypes in films, each with distinct focuses and methods. Sobari (2020), in the study titled "An Analysis of Hero's Journey and Archetype Theory by Christopher Vogler on Main Character in Enola Holmes (2020) Movie," used Christopher Vogler's hero's journey and archetype theory to examine Enola Holmes' character development through twelve stages of the hero's journey, identifying archetypes such as the hero, mentor, and shapeshifter that support her transformation. Pangestu and Julianti (2021), in "An Analysis of Archetype of Main Character Jim White in Mcfarland USA Movie," applied Jungian archetype theory to reveal multiple archetypes in Jim White, including the wise old man, great mother, hero, and self, emphasizing how these archetypes reflect his personality and leadership. Widiyanti, Husen, and Zesika (2022), in their article "The Element of Archetypes that Focused on The Character of The Film Encanto (2022)," analyzed how archetypes like animus, persona, hero, great mother, wild old man, and shadow shape the characters in Encanto, highlighting the cultural and social influences on archetype development within a family context. Alfa Rina and Samanik (2023), in the thesis "Situational Archetype Analysis on Main Characters in Nikolaj Arcel's The Dark Tower Film," focused on situational archetypes such as departure, initiation, and return, explaining how these narrative patterns build character motivation and plot progression in a fantasy setting. Bahri, Sungai Simbolon, Simanjuntak, and Sitanggang (2024), in "Archetype Analysis of the Main Characters in The

Three Stooges," explored comedic archetypes like the self, persona, ego, and shadow, demonstrating how these archetypes influence humor and character dynamics. Compared to these studies, the current research on A Man Called Otto combines Jungian archetype theory with a focus on emotional and social themes in a drama genre, offering a deeper psychological analysis of grief, isolation, and healing in the main character's journey.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Archetypes are universal patterns or symbols that exist in the collective unconscious, a concept introduced by Carl Gustav Jung in analytical psychology. These archetypes are inherited and shared by all humans, shaping how we think, feel, and behave across different cultures and time periods. Unlike learned behaviours, archetypes are deep psychological structures that appear in myths, stories, dreams, and art, reflecting common human experiences. Examples of archetypes include the Hero, the Shadow, the Mentor, the Caregiver, and the Outcast, each representing essential roles or themes in life and storytelling. Jung explained that archetypes are like empty templates that gain meaning when expressed through individual experiences and cultural contexts. For example, the Persona archetype represents the social mask people wear to interact with society, while the Shadow contains hidden or rejected parts of the self. These archetypes influence personality development and how characters are portrayed in literature and film, providing a framework to understand human nature and behaviour on a deeper level. The researchers aim to conduct a deeper analysis of his character or personality through the archetypal approach. According to Jung (1981), archetypes can be categorized into several components: a) self, b) ego, c) persona, d) shadow, and e) anima and animus.

The Self archetype represents the integration of both unconscious and conscious parts of the psyche, serving as the core of personality around which other archetypes revolve. It guides the individuation process, harmonizing hidden creative energies with conscious intentions to form a balanced, authentic self. For example, in Life of Pi (2012), Pi Patel's journey at sea leads him to reconcile fear, faith, and survival instincts, achieving inner harmony. This balance illustrates the Self as the center of his personal growth and selfrealization.

Pi Patel: "I have a story that will make you believe in God."

Richard Parker (symbolic presence): [silent but powerful]

Pi Patel: "To choose doubt as a philosophy of life is akin

to choosing immobility as a means of transportation."

These exchanges reflect Pi's conscious decision to embrace faith and courage, integrating his fears and beliefs to survive and grow.

Ego is primarily linked to the conscious mind and human desires. According to Jung, the ego is the center of awareness, perceiving and interacting with the external world, while unconscious elements lie outside its scope (Feist & Feist, 2008: 103). For example, in the film The Pursuit of Happyness (2006), the interaction between Chris Gardner and his son Christopher reveals the ego's role in managing desires and reality.

Christopher: "Dad, why don't we have a home like the other kids?"

Chris: "I'm working hard so we can have one soon. We just

have to keep going."

Christopher: "But I'm hungry and tired."

In this dialogue, Chris's ego negotiates between his conscious desire to provide for his son and the harsh reality of their homelessness. His awareness of both his needs and limitations exemplifies the ego's function in balancing desires with external circumstances.

The persona is the public mask or social role individuals adopt to present themselves differently from their true selves. Schultz (1387: 122) explains that this archetype helps people adapt to societal expectations. Adam Adamski (2011) views the persona as both an archetype and a personality structure that encourages conformity to social norms. Prokopniuk (1998) adds that a well-formed persona is flexible, balancing inner personality with social demands while protecting individuality. For example, in The Devil Wears Prada (2006), the interaction between Miranda Priestly and Andy Sachs shows Andy adopting a professional persona to fit into the high-pressure fashion world.

Miranda Priestly: "That's all."

Andy Sachs : "Yes, Miranda."

In this brief exchange, Andy's shift from uncertainty to composure reflects her developing persona as a competent assistant, enabling her to navigate the demanding workplace despite her originally more relaxed nature.

d. The Shadow archetype represents the deeper, unconscious part of the personality that contains repressed weaknesses, desires, and instincts. It is often associated with the darker, hidden aspects of oneself that are rarely acknowledged but must be confronted to achieve holistic self-awareness. The shadow is frequently linked to negative traits such as anger, jealousy, or vengeance, which can exert a powerful influence on behavior if left unexamined. For instance, in the film Fight Club (1999), the protagonist's alter ego, Tyler Durden, embodies his shadow. Tyler represents the repressed aggression, anarchistic impulses, and desires for freedom that the protagonist suppresses in his everyday life. The conflict between the protagonist and his shadow self-highlights the necessity of facing and integrating the shadow to attain psychological balance.

Tyler Durden: "It's only after we've lost everything that

we're free to do anything."

Narrator : "I am Jack's smirking revenge."

Tyler Durden: "The things you own end up owning you."

These lines reveal the protagonist's struggle with his shadow—his suppressed desires for rebellion, freedom, and self-destruction—which must be acknowledged for true self-awareness.

e. The Anima and Animus are archetypes representing the feminine side in men and the masculine side in women, respectively. They symbolize the inner opposite gender qualities that balance the psyche. Jung believed these archetypes influence emotions and relationships deeply. For example, in the film Mulan (1998), Mulan exhibits animus traits such as courage and strength, traditionally seen as masculine, while also embracing her feminine side. This balance helps her succeed and grow, showing how anima and animus shape personal development and identity.

Fa Mulan: "My name is Mulan! I did it to save my father."

Chi-Fu: "High treason!"

Captain Li Shang: [steps forward] "A life for a life. My debt is repaid."

Yao, Ling, and Chien-Po: "No!"

This scene shows Mulan's courage and strength (animus traits) as she reveals her true identity, while also embracing her vulnerability and honor (feminine qualities). Captain Li Shang's response reflects respect and understanding, symbolizing the balance and integration of anima and animus in their relationship and personal growth.

Archetype theory is frequently used by critics, audiences, and readers to analyze and evaluate literary works, including films. Key archetypes such as the self, ego, persona, shadow, and anima/animus are commonly applied in the study of movies. Previous research has been done to help improve, compete, develop, and stimulate archetype analysis in literary works such as (1) Raka Adam Pangestu & Defi Julianti. 2021. An Analysis of Archetype of Main Character Jim White in Mcfarland USA Movie. Journal of English Education, 1 (3): 196-202. (2) Anastasia Chika Alvina & Gaguk Rudianto. 2023. Exploring Archetypal Patterns of the Main

Character in Maleficent Movie. Linguists: Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching, 9(2): 282-293. doi. (3) Olgafira Bilqisthy. 2023. Jung's Archetypes of Persona and Shadow Reflected on Ingrid in Ingrid Goes West (2017) Film. Final Project, English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Communication Science, Sultan Agung Islamic University, Semarang. (4) Ani Widiyanti, Sthela Oktavia Husen, Ardetia Lara Zesika. 2022. The Element of Archetypes that Focused on The Character of The Film Encanto (2021). Culturalistics: Journal of Cultural, Literary, and Linguistic Studies, 6(2): 18-29. (5) Nadyatul Fatihah & Ali Mustofa. 2022. Archetypes & Self-Realization in Disney's Cruella (2021) Movie: Jungian Psychoanalysis. Tell: Teaching of English Language and Literature Journal, 10(1): 36-48.

An archetype in a movie has been widely studied. However, this research takes a different approach by examining not only the main character's personality but also their dialogues and monologues. The analysis uses Carl Gustav Jung's five archetypes: self, ego, persona, shadow, and anima/animus. The study includes both the interpretation of the findings and their theoretical and contextual discussion. The researchers chose to study *A Man Called Otto* because it is a well-known film from recent years that continues to attract audiences.

3. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the primary character in A Man Called Otto based on Carl Jung's theory of archetypes. As Pope and Mays (2006) argued, and as contemporary researchers such as Roesler (2023) and Miller (2024) uphold, qualitative approaches are suitable for examining psychological meaning in everyday contexts like films. The researchers viewed the movie attentively and chose applicable scenes and dialogue that illustrate Otto's behavior. These were grouped into five general Jungian archetypes of Self, Ego, Persona, Shadow, and Anima/Animus. The analysis integrated context (story of the film) and theory (Jung's concepts), enabling the researchers to interpret how Otto's behavior demonstrates profound psychological patterns. The method demonstrates how qualitative analysis and archetypal theory may be integrated with each other to describe character development in modern movies. This method allows for a more perceptive examination of the character's psychological change in terms of performance and dialogue. By bridging scenes with archetypal attributes, the analysis indicates how Otto's conflict and growth inside equate to collective patterns of human experience.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the movie A Man Called Otto (2022) directed by Marc Forster, Carl Jung's archetypal theory is used to analyze the main character, Otto. The focus is on five main archetypes: Self, Ego, Persona, Shadow, and Anima/Animus. Otto is a grumpy widower who goes through changes as he interacts with his neighbors and remembers his past. This analysis shows how he moves through different archetypes during his journey.:

No	Archetype	Number	Percentage (%)
1	Self	3	11,54
2	Ego	8	30,77
3	Persona	5	19,23
4	Shadow	6	23,08
5	Anima and Animus	4	15,38

Total 26 100

The data above shows the dominance of the Shadow and Anima/Animus archetypes, which reveal the internal transformation Otto undergoes. The following is a detailed discussion of each archetype.

1. Self

Time/duration: (01:43:15 - 01:45:30)

The dialogues:

Otto: "You and your family brought life back into this house.

Into this street. Into me. I used to think I had nothing left to give.

But you reminded me that I still have something to offer.

Thank you... for saving my life."

Otto's letter shows that he has reached a moment of psychological wholeness. His message to Marisol reflects how he has emotionally healed and begun to reconnect with life. He now sees himself as someone with purpose and connection. His words, "you brought life back into me," clearly reflect this emotional transformation. According to Schlegel & Hicks (2022), the Self is the full expression of one's identity, achieved when a person accepts both their past and present selves. It is the final point of inner integration in Jungian psychology. Theoretically, this moment shows that Otto has completed his individuation process he has accepted his pain, opened up emotionally, and found meaning beyond loss. Contextually, this scene is powerful because Otto began the story wanting to die, believing he had no value left. By the end, he acknowledges that helping others gave him a new identity. The Self in this case is not just about self awareness, but about understanding one's role in the world. Otto has gone from being emotionally closed off to becoming someone who gives love, guidance, and legacy.

2. Ego

Time/duration: (00:04:55 - 00:05:50)

The dialogues:

Otto :"I want six feet of rope. Not five, not five and a half. Six.

Why is that so difficult?"

Cashier : "I'm sorry sir, we just -"

Otto : "Of course you are. Everyone's always sorry, but

nobody gets anything done."

Otto's strict attitude toward a seemingly small issue reflects how dominant his ego has become. When he says, "I want six feet of rope. Not five, not five and a half. Six. Why is that so difficult?" it's not just about the rope it's about his need to control something in a world that feels out of control. This strong reaction to a minor inconvenience shows how his ego clings to logic, rules, and precision as a way to maintain emotional balance. According to Moghaddam & Tondrak (2020), ego helps people make sense of their surroundings and create stability. For

Otto, enforcing specific details becomes a defense mechanism a way to avoid dealing with deeper emotional pain caused by the loss of his wife. While his second line, "Everyone's always sorry, but nobody gets anything done," also shows his frustration, it's the first dialogue that truly captures how his ego dominates his way of thinking. Contextually, this moment sets up Otto's journey: from someone who hides behind control, to someone who slowly learns to let go, connect, and grow.

3. Persona

Time/duration: (00:12:20 - 00:13:00)

The dialogues:

Neighbor : "Good morning, Otto!"

Otto (flatly) : "What's good about it?"

Marisol : "You're always so grumpy. But I know you

have a good heart in there somewhere."

Otto : "You must be mistaken."

Otto displays a persona of being cynical and withdrawn in order to avoid emotional involvement with others. When he replies "What's good about it?", it reflects the mask he wears not because he is truly angry, but because he wants to distance himself from social interaction. He uses a cold attitude as a form of protection against the pain and loneliness he has felt since the loss of his wife. According to Roberts & Wood (2021), the persona helps individuals adjust to social environments, but if someone relies on it too much, they can lose connection with their true self. In this context, Otto rejects a warm greeting because he is not yet ready to open up. However, over time, his relationship with Marisol leads him to gradually remove this mask and show who he really is.

4. Shadow

Time: 00:25:46 – 00:27:10

The dialogues:

Otto: "You people can't do your jobs right!...

She should have never fallen!"

Nurse: "Sir, we did everything we could."

Otto: "Don't lie to me! You let her die!"

Otto's anger in this scene isn't just aimed at the hospital it comes from deep grief and guilt over losing his wife. When he says, "You let her die!", he's really expressing the pain he's been holding in. He lashes out because it's easier than admitting how broken he feels inside. His grief, regret, and helplessness turn into rage. This is Otto's darker side not because he is cruel, but because he is in pain. According to Taylor & Kim (2023), the shadow is a hidden part of the self that often carries unresolved emotions and trauma. When ignored, it can surface in intense or destructive ways. In Otto's case, this moment marks the beginning of healing, as he can no longer keep his sorrow buried. Gradually, he will have to face this part of himself to move forward.

5. Anima and Animus

Time: 00:42:10 - 00:44:00

The dialogues:

Marisol: "Why do you always push people away?... Let us help you now."

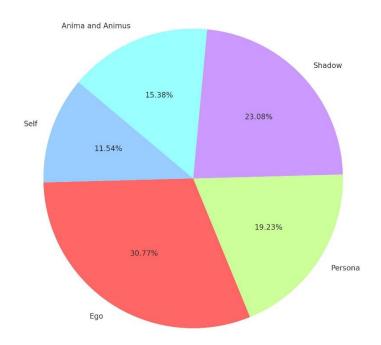
Otto: "I didn't help you. I just did what anyone should do."

Marisol: "No, you did more. You care, even if you pretend you don't."

In Jungian theory, the Anima represents the emotional, caring side within men. Marisol reflects Otto's Anima warm, honest, and persistent. Her line "Why do you always push people away?" confronts Otto's emotional walls and urges him to open up. Otto's denial "I didn't help you" shows his discomfort with vulnerability. But when Marisol says, "You care, even if you pretend you don't," it forces Otto to face the feelings he hides. This moment marks a shift his Anima begins to surface. At the same time, Marisol also embodies Animus traits strong, assertive, and unafraid to challenge Otto. Through this dynamic, Otto starts reconnecting with his emotional self and moves toward healing.

5. CONCLUSION

This research began by establishing the significance of literature and drama in reflecting universal human experiences, with drama chosen for its unique power to portray emotional depth and social conflict. Archetype theory, particularly Jung's framework of Self, Ego, Persona, Shadow, and Anima, was introduced as a lens to understand character complexity in literature and film. The analysis of *A Man Called Otto* was motivated by the film's focus on grief, healing, and human connection, making it an ideal subject for archetypal exploration. Previous studies have applied archetype theory to various genres, but this research stands out by centering on the emotional transformation of a single protagonist within a contemporary drama. Through a qualitative descriptive method, the study examined Otto's dialogues and behaviors, identifying key archetypal patterns that shape his psychological journey. The literature review reinforced the relevance of archetypes in character analysis, while the primary data highlighted Otto's initial resistance to social engagement as a clear sign of the Shadow and Persona at work.



■ Self ■ Ego ■ Persona ■ Shadow ■ Anima and Animus

The results revealed that Otto Anderson's character embodies all five major Jungian archetypes, but with distinct prominence: the Ego appeared most frequently at 30,77%, followed by the Shadow at 23,08%, the Persona at 19,23%, the Anima at 15,38%, and the Self at 11,54%. This distribution illustrates how Otto's early isolation and defensiveness are dominated by the Shadow and Persona, while his gradual openness and healing are marked by the emergence of the Self and Anima. Compared to previous studies, which often focused on multiple characters or situational archetypes, this research provides a more nuanced look at the evolving interplay of archetypes within a single individual. The findings confirm that Otto's journey is a process of individuation, as described by Jung, moving from fragmentation toward psychological integration and wholeness. Overall, this study demonstrates the value of archetype analysis for understanding character development and the universal themes of loss, resilience, and transformation in modern cinema, affirming the continued relevance of Jungian theory in contemporary film studies.

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