

Characteristics of the Shadow Archetype Represented by John Wick in *John Wick: Chapter 4*

Muhammad Ikhsan Ramadhani Arrazzak

English Study Program, Law and Business Faculty, Universitas Duta Bangsa Surakarta

ikhshanramadhanabc@gmail.com

Winarti

English Study Program, Law and Business Faculty, Universitas Duta Bangsa Surakarta

winarti@udb.ac.id

Aris Hidayatulloh

English Study Program, Law and Business Faculty, Universitas Duta Bangsa Surakarta

aris_hidayatulloh@udb.ac.id

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan mendeskripsikan karakteristik *Shadow archetype* yang direpresentasikan oleh John Wick dalam film *John Wick: Chapter 4* (2023) berdasarkan perspektif psikologi analitis Carl Gustav Jung. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teori *Shadow archetype* Jung sebagai landasan analisis. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik observasi dan dokumentasi terhadap adegan, dialog, dan tindakan yang menunjukkan karakteristik *Shadow archetype*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa John Wick merepresentasikan empat karakteristik utama *Shadow archetype*, yaitu *violence*, *aggression*, *impulse*, dan *brutality*. Keempat karakteristik tersebut tampak melalui kecenderungannya menyelesaikan konflik dengan kekerasan, menghadapi musuh secara langsung, mengambil keputusan secara spontan, dan menggunakan kekuatan yang ekstrem. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa karakteristik tersebut membentuk John Wick sebagai sosok antihero yang kompleks secara psikologis serta menunjukkan representasi sisi gelap kepribadian manusia dalam film kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: shadow archetype, karakteristik, john wick, antihero, analisis film

Abstract

This study aims to identify and describe the characteristics of the Shadow archetype represented by John Wick in *John Wick: Chapter 4* (2023) through the perspective of Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method using Jung's Shadow archetype theory as the analytical framework. The data were collected through observation and documentation by identifying scenes, dialogues, and actions that reflect the Shadow archetype. The findings reveal that John Wick embodies four dominant characteristics of the Shadow archetype: violence, aggression, impulse, and brutality. These characteristics are consistently portrayed through his tendency to resolve conflicts with physical force, actively confront enemies, make spontaneous decisions driven by emotion, and use extreme and uncompromising violence. The study concludes that these four characteristics construct John Wick as a psychologically complex antihero whose dark side is inseparable from his identity. Furthermore, this research contributes to the application of Jungian archetypal theory in film studies and provides a deeper understanding of the representation of the dark side of human personality in contemporary cinema.

Keywords: shadow archetype, characteristics, john wick, antihero, film analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Films serve not only as a medium of entertainment but also as a representation of various human experiences and psychological realities (Faber & Mayer, 2009). Through characters and plotlines, films are able to depict the inner conflicts, moral dilemmas, and personality dynamics experienced by individuals. In the development of modern cinema, the protagonist is no longer always

portrayed as a figure who is entirely good or entirely evil. Instead, many contemporary films present morally complex and ambiguous characterization of the figures who possess both heroic qualities and destructive tendencies. The complexity of such characters makes film an important subject of study from the perspectives

of literary psychology and film studies (Turner, 1999).

One widely used approach to uncovering the psychological dimensions of a character is Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology (Jung, 1968) proposed that humans possess a collective unconscious containing universal patterns known as archetypes. Archetypes are innate psychological structures that recur in mythology, literature, and film, and influence the way humans think, act, and understand life experiences (Jung, 1968). Among the various types of archetypes proposed by Jung, the Shadow archetype is a particularly important concept because it represents aspects of the personality that are repressed, rejected, or unrecognized by the individual. According to (Jung, 1959) the Shadow encompasses traits such as aggression, violence, impulsivity, selfishness, and destructive tendencies that often conflict with social values and individual consciousness. However, the Shadow is not viewed solely as a source of evil, but also as a natural part of the human personality that holds untapped potential and strength (Kechan & Ismail, 2022). (Fordham, 1978) further explains that the Shadow is not merely a collection of negative qualities but also a source of inner conflict that shapes an individual's psychological development.

In modern action films, the Shadow archetype is often represented through the character of the antihero (Alvina, 2023). Unlike traditional heroes, who are synonymous with morality and self-sacrifice, antiheroes are portrayed as figures with understandable goals, yet they employ harsh and violent means to achieve them. Antihero characters demonstrate how the dark side of humanity can coexist with human values, thereby creating psychological complexity that is fascinating to explore (Rahmad, 2024). Therefore, the concept of the Shadow archetype offers a relevant theoretical framework for understanding antihero characters and the behaviors they exhibit within a film narrative. Unlike the traditional hero, the antihero is a protagonist who lacks many of the conventional heroic qualities such as moral perfection, idealism, or unwavering virtue. Instead, antiheroes are often portrayed as morally ambiguous figures who possess personal flaws, inner conflicts, and unconventional methods of achieving their goals. Despite these imperfections, antiheroes remain central protagonists whose actions continue to drive the narrative and often evoke audience sympathy because their motivations are understandable and psychologically complex (Vaage, 2016). Rather than representing absolute goodness, the antihero occupies a moral space between heroism and villainy, making this character type increasingly

dominant in contemporary literature and cinema. From the perspective of Jungian analytical psychology, the antihero can be understood as a character whose personality is strongly influenced by the Shadow archetype. The Shadow contains repressed instincts, aggressive impulses, and destructive tendencies that are generally rejected by consciousness but continue to influence human behaviour (Jung, 1959). Unlike conventional heroes who symbolize moral ideals, antiheroes frequently express these unconscious aspects through violence, impulsive actions, and morally ambiguous decisions while still pursuing objectives that audiences may perceive as justified. Consequently, the antihero becomes an appropriate narrative representation for examining how the Shadow archetype operates within modern cinematic characters.

Contemporary action cinema has increasingly shifted from portraying morally flawless heroes toward presenting protagonists whose psychological complexity reflects the realities of human nature. Rather than embodying absolute virtue, modern protagonists often display contradictory qualities that combine courage with violence, empathy with revenge, and morality with personal conflict. This transformation has encouraged scholars to examine action films not merely as entertainment but also as psychological narratives that explore unconscious motivations and internal struggles. Consequently, archetypal criticism has become increasingly relevant because it provides a framework for explaining how these psychologically conflicted characters symbolize universal aspects of human personality.

One of the most prominent antiheroes in contemporary cinema is John Wick in *John Wick: Chapter 4* (2023). This film not only succeeds in capturing the audience's attention through intense action but also through its portrayal of a complex protagonist. John Wick is depicted as a former hitman struggling to gain his freedom and confront his past. However, throughout his journey, he consistently exhibits actions dominated by violence, aggression, impulsive behavior, and a tendency toward brutality. These characteristics indicate a strong manifestation of the Shadow archetype within him, making John Wick a relevant subject for analysis through the lens of Jungian analytical psychology.

Various previous studies have examined the application of Jung's archetype theory in film and literature (Mashuri & Rasiah, 2024). Similar findings were reported by (Bahri et al., 2025), who demonstrated that archetypal analysis can effectively reveal psychological development and internal struggles experienced by film characters. Some studies focus on identifying various types of archetypes, such as the persona, shadow,

anima/animus, and self, while others discuss the antihero character through approaches centered on characterization and narrative structure. Nevertheless, most of these studies remain limited to archetype classification or discussions of a character's moral ambiguity in general. Research that specifically identifies and describes the characteristics of the Shadow archetype in the main characters of modern action films, particularly John Wick in *John Wick: Chapter 4*, remains relatively limited. Thus, there is still a research gap that opens up opportunities to examine more deeply how the characteristics of the Shadow are represented through the main character's actions and behavior.

Based on these issues, this study uses Carl Gustav Jung's Shadow archetype theory as a foundation for analyzing the character of John Wick in *John Wick: Chapter 4*. This study aims to identify and describe the characteristics of the Shadow archetype as represented through John Wick's actions, behaviors, and psychological tendencies throughout the narrative. It is hoped that this study will provide a deeper understanding of the construction of antihero characters in contemporary films and contribute to the development of literary psychology and film studies, particularly in the application of Jung's archetype theory to uncover representations of the dark side of the human personality.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design using Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology approach (Neuman, 2014). The qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on interpreting the meanings, symbols, and psychological representations portrayed through the characters in the film. (Peter, 1995) states that psychological criticism seeks to uncover hidden motivations, unconscious desires, and internal conflicts represented through literary and cinematic characters. According to (Creswell, 2014), qualitative research aims to understand and interpret the meanings embedded in a social or human phenomenon. In this study, films are treated as narrative texts containing psychological representations that can be analyzed through the actions, dialogue, and behavior of the characters.

This study specifically employs Carl Gustav Jung's Shadow archetype theory as an analytical framework to identify the Shadow characteristics represented by the character John Wick in the film *John Wick: Chapter 4*. The study focuses on four primary characteristics of the Shadow: violence, aggression, impulsivity, and brutality. The focus of this study is the character of John Wick as the protagonist in the film *John Wick: Chapter 4*,

directed by Chad Stahelski and released in 2023. The research data consists of dialogue, actions, behavioral expressions, and scenes that demonstrate the characteristics of the Shadow archetype (Boggs & Petrie, 2008) in the character of John Wick.

The primary data source for this study is the film *John Wick: Chapter 4*, along with its English subtitles, which were used to ensure the accuracy of the dialogue and the context of the scenes. Supporting data sources include books, academic journals, and articles discussing Carl Gustav Jung's archetypal theory specifically the Shadow archetype as well as previous research relevant to antihero characters and film psychological analysis.

Data collection in this study was conducted through documentation and observation of the film *John Wick: Chapter 4*. The data collection process began with repeated viewings of the film to gain a deep understanding of the plot, characterization, and context of each scene involving the character John Wick. Next, the researcher identified scenes, dialogues, and actions that represent the characteristics of the Shadow archetype. Relevant data were then recorded, and dialogues related to the research focus were transcribed to facilitate the analysis process. After that, all collected data was classified based on the Shadow archetype indicators used in the study, namely violence, aggression, impulse, and brutality. The process of coding and categorizing the data was conducted systematically by grouping the findings according to the four Shadow archetype indicators: violence, aggression, impulse, and brutality (Saldaña, 2016). To strengthen the analysis and interpretation of the data Film elements such as dialogue, mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and sound are important narrative devices that help construct meaning and shape audience interpretation (Bordwell, D. and Thompson, 2004). In addition, this study applies the principles of qualitative content analysis to identify and interpret patterns related to the representation of the Shadow archetype (Krippendorff, 2013). The researcher also gathered various reference sources, such as books, scientific articles, and previous studies related to Carl Gustav Jung's archetype theory as well as studies on antihero characters in films. Drawing upon Jung's concept of the Shadow archetype, this study focuses on four dominant characteristics that frequently emerge as manifestations of the unconscious dark side, namely violence, aggression, impulse, and brutality. Although these characteristics are conceptually related, each represents a distinct psychological tendency that contributes to the construction of morally ambiguous characters.

Understanding these characteristics is essential for explaining how the Shadow archetype is represented through the behaviour and actions of contemporary antiheroes, particularly in action films.

Violence is commonly understood as the intentional use of physical force to inflict injury, destruction, or death upon another individual. Within the framework of Jung's analytical psychology, violence may be interpreted as one of the outward manifestations of the Shadow archetype, reflecting primitive instincts and destructive energies that are normally suppressed by consciousness (Jung, 1959). Rather than functioning solely as an act of physical aggression, violence represents the emergence of unconscious impulses that surface when individuals confront threats, fear, or intense psychological pressure. In literary and cinematic narratives, violence often becomes a symbolic expression of unresolved internal conflict, revealing how repressed aspects of personality influence external behaviour.

Aggression refers to behaviour intended to confront, dominate, or harm another individual either physically or psychologically. From a Jungian perspective, aggression originates from instinctual drives stored within the unconscious mind and constitutes one of the fundamental characteristics of the Shadow archetype. Jung (1959) argues that unconscious impulses continue to influence human behaviour despite being restrained by moral values and social expectations. Consequently, aggressive behaviour may emerge when individuals encounter situations that threaten their identity, survival, or personal goals. In film narratives, aggression frequently serves as an external representation of internal psychological conflict, illustrating the struggle between conscious self-control and unconscious instinctual forces.

Impulse is defined as the tendency to act spontaneously without extensive deliberation or consideration of potential consequences. Within Jung's analytical psychology, impulsive behaviour reflects the influence of unconscious desires and instinctive reactions that temporarily override rational judgment. The Shadow archetype contains primitive psychological energies that encourage immediate responses to perceived threats or emotional experiences (Jung, 1959). As a result, impulsive actions often reveal hidden motivations and emotional conflicts that remain outside conscious awareness. In cinematic representations, impulsivity contributes to the psychological complexity of characters by demonstrating how unconscious instincts shape critical decisions during moments of conflict.

Brutality refers to the excessive and merciless use of force that exceeds what is necessary to

overcome an opponent or resolve a conflict. Unlike violence, which broadly denotes the use of physical force, brutality emphasizes the intensity, cruelty, and absence of restraint in violent actions. From the perspective of Jung's Shadow archetype, brutality represents the fullest expression of destructive unconscious energy, where primitive instincts dominate moral judgment and self-control (Jung, 1959). This characteristic illustrates how repressed psychological forces may emerge in extreme situations, resulting in behaviour that transcends conventional ethical boundaries. In action films, brutality often symbolizes the complete release of the Shadow, revealing the darkest dimensions of a character's personality.

Although violence and brutality both involve the use of physical force, they represent different levels of behavioural intensity. Violence refers generally to the act of inflicting physical harm or using force to resolve conflict, whereas brutality emphasizes excessive cruelty, mercilessness, and the disproportionate use of violence beyond what is necessary. Similarly, aggression differs from violence because aggression reflects the psychological tendency or motivation to confront or dominate others, while violence represents the behavioural expression of that tendency. Meanwhile, impulsivity functions as the psychological mechanism that encourages spontaneous action, often becoming the catalyst for aggressive or violent behaviour. Therefore, these four characteristics should not be understood as isolated concepts but as interconnected manifestations of the Shadow archetype that collectively reveal the unconscious dimensions of an individual's personality.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the analysis was conducted repeatedly by revisiting each selected scene several times to ensure that every interpretation remained consistent with the narrative context. Rather than focusing solely on isolated dialogue or visual action, the researcher examined each scene holistically by considering character motivation, cinematic context, and narrative progression. This iterative analytical process helped minimize subjective interpretation and allowed each identified characteristic to be supported by multiple narrative elements, including dialogue, character behavior, and visual representation. Such procedures are consistent with qualitative content analysis, which emphasizes systematic interpretation of textual and visual data through continuous comparison and categorization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on an analysis of the film *John Wick: Chapter 4*, it was found that the character of John Wick embodies the Shadow archetype through

four primary characteristics: violence, aggression, impulsivity, and brutality. These four characteristics recur throughout the film via John Wick's actions, dialogue, and decisions. From the perspective of Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology, these characteristics are manifestations of personality aspects residing in the unconscious and are often repressed or hidden by the individual (Jung, 1959). Although the Shadow is often associated with negative traits, its presence in John Wick not only reveals a dark side but also serves as a defining element of his identity and the very essence of his existence as an antihero.

Violence as a Characteristic of the Shadow Archetype

The most dominant characteristic of the Shadow within John Wick is violence. From the beginning to the end of the film, John Wick is portrayed as a figure who resolves nearly every conflict through physical action and the use of weapons. Various fight scenes demonstrate how violence becomes his primary response to the threats he faces. The violence he commits is not only defensive in nature but also serves as a means to achieve his goals and maintain his existence in the world of hitmen.

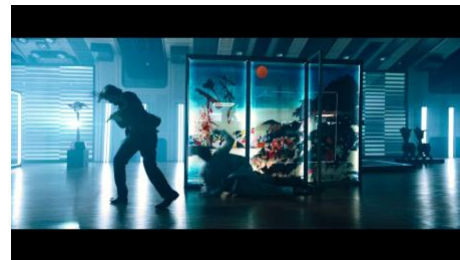


Picture 1. The film opens in Morocco, where John Wick tracks down and kills The Elder to start a war against the High Table. (00:05:32).

This scene shows that John Wick chooses violence as his primary means of resolving the conflict. He does not negotiate or seek other alternatives, but instead immediately kills The Elder to achieve his goal. According to Jung (1959), the Shadow contains primitive and instinctual drives that are repressed by consciousness. John's actions in this scene represent how violence have become an inseparable part of his psychological identity. The representation of violence in John Wick: Chapter 4 is not merely a narrative device used to create action sequences, but also serves as a psychological expression of the character's inner conflict. Throughout the film, violence functions as a language through which John communicates his resistance against the oppressive power of the High Table. His repeated engagement in lethal

confrontations demonstrates that violence has become deeply internalized as a coping mechanism developed through years of living as an assassin. In this context, violence is no longer portrayed as an occasional reaction to danger, but rather as a fundamental component of John Wick's identity.

From a Jungian perspective, the persistence of violent behavior suggests the continuous emergence of unconscious elements that have not been fully integrated into consciousness. The Shadow archetype contains instinctual energies that seek expression, and when these energies dominate an individual's actions, violence may appear as a natural response to external challenges. John Wick's inability to detach himself from violent confrontation illustrates how the Shadow remains active and influential throughout the narrative, shaping both his decisions and interactions with others.



Picture 2. The battle at Osaka Continental showed John defeating many opponents using a variety of weapons. (00:43:00).

Instead of avoiding conflict, John consistently chooses to confront and attack his opponents directly, even when alternative solutions might be available. This behavior reveals an aggressive tendency that has become deeply embedded in his way of thinking and acting throughout the narrative. Rather than waiting for threats to approach him, John often takes the initiative to pursue and engage his enemies, demonstrating a strong desire to dominate situations and maintain control over the challenges he faces. From a Jungian perspective, this aggressiveness can be interpreted as a manifestation of the Shadow archetype, which contains repressed instincts and powerful unconscious drives. The Shadow encourages individuals to assert themselves through domination, resistance, and direct confrontation when facing obstacles or threats. Therefore, John's aggressive actions not only function as a practical means of survival but also reveal the influence of the darker aspects of his personality, which continuously shape his decisions, interactions, and responses to conflict.

Aggression as a Characteristic of the Shadow Archetype

In addition to violence, the character of John Wick also exhibits a high level of aggression. This aggression is reflected in his initiative to pursue and confront enemies without hesitation. Although in some situations he is on the defensive, his actions often escalate into active attacks against those who threaten him. This aggressive attitude indicates that John Wick does not merely react to conflict but consciously chooses confrontation as a means of resolution. The representation of violence in John Wick: Chapter 4 is not merely a narrative device used to create action sequences, but also serves as a psychological expression of the character's inner conflict. Throughout the film, violence functions as a language through which John communicates his resistance against the oppressive power of the High Table. His repeated engagement in lethal confrontations demonstrates that violence has become deeply internalized as a coping mechanism developed through years of living as an assassin. In this context, violence is no longer portrayed as an occasional reaction to danger, but rather as a fundamental component of John Wick's identity.

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The persistence of violence throughout the narrative also reinforces John Wick's role as an antihero rather than a conventional heroic protagonist. Unlike traditional heroes who often seek reconciliation or peaceful solutions whenever possible, John consistently relies on lethal force as his primary strategy for overcoming obstacles. Nevertheless, the film carefully frames this violence within a context of survival and resistance against an oppressive organization, allowing audiences to perceive his actions as understandable despite their destructive nature. This narrative construction demonstrates that the Shadow archetype does not necessarily transform an individual into a villain but instead reveals how unconscious instincts may become dominant when external circumstances continuously demand violent responses.



Picture 2. John accepted Katia's condition that he kill Killa Harkan in order to regain his status in the Ruska Roma family (01:14:25).

Aggressiveness is reflected in John's initiative to engage in direct confrontation whenever he encounters obstacles or threats. Rather than waiting to be attacked or seeking ways to avoid conflict, he frequently takes the offensive and actively pursues his targets. This behavior demonstrates that aggression has become a fundamental aspect of his character and a primary strategy for dealing with challenges. Throughout the film, John repeatedly chooses to face danger head-on, even when doing so places him at significant personal risk. His willingness to initiate confrontation suggests a strong determination to assert control over situations that threaten his freedom, survival, or personal objectives.

From a Jungian perspective, aggressiveness can be understood as a manifestation of Shadow energy that motivates individuals to resist obstacles and defend their existence. The Shadow contains instinctual drives and primitive impulses that are often hidden beneath conscious awareness but continue to influence behavior. When confronted with danger, these unconscious forces may emerge in the form of aggressive actions aimed at overcoming perceived threats. In John Wick's case, aggression functions not only as a practical means of survival but also as an expression of the powerful psychological energy stored within his Shadow.

According to Jung's theory, aggression is one of the key aspects of the Shadow because it is closely associated with impulses that are frequently suppressed by social norms, cultural expectations, and moral standards. Society generally encourages individuals to regulate aggressive tendencies in order to maintain social harmony and acceptable behavior. However, these impulses do not disappear; instead, they remain within the unconscious mind and may surface under particular circumstances. John Wick's actions illustrate how such repressed energies can emerge when an individual is exposed to extreme pressure, continuous threats, and intense conflict. Therefore, his aggressiveness represents not only a response to external challenges but also a reflection of the unconscious forces that shape his

personality and influence his decisions throughout the narrative.

Furthermore, John Wick's aggression should not be interpreted solely as uncontrolled hostility but also as a psychological defense mechanism developed through prolonged exposure to violence and continuous threats. Having spent much of his life within the assassin underworld, aggressive behaviour has become an adaptive strategy that enables him to survive hostile environments. From this perspective, aggression functions both as an instinctive response emerging from the Shadow and as a learned behavioural pattern reinforced by repeated experiences. This dual function further illustrates the complexity of Jung's Shadow, where unconscious impulses and environmental influences interact to shape individual behaviour.



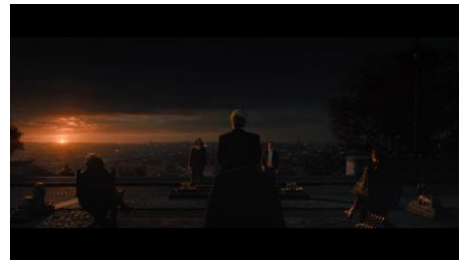
Picture 4. The battle around the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. John continues to fight off the bounty hunters and the Marquis's troops as he makes his way to the duel (01:56:23).

Instead of avoiding conflict, John consistently chooses to confront and engage his adversaries directly whenever he faces threats or obstacles. Throughout the film, he rarely demonstrates a willingness to retreat, negotiate, or seek alternative methods of resolving disputes. Rather, he actively pursues his opponents and responds to challenges with decisive and forceful action. This behavior reflects an aggressive tendency that has become deeply embedded in his way of thinking and acting, shaping the manner in which he approaches both personal and external conflicts. His repeated preference for confrontation suggests that aggression is not merely a situational response but a fundamental aspect of his personality and survival strategy.

Impulse as a Characteristic of the Shadow Archetype

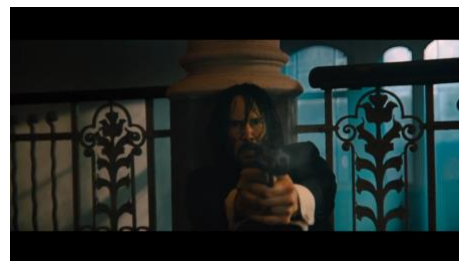
Another characteristic observed is impulsive behavior. John Wick frequently makes spontaneous decisions without considering the long-term risks, especially when faced with threats to his freedom or safety. His decision to continue fighting the High Table organization and confront a vastly superior enemy force is an example of how emotional impulses and personal instincts influence his actions. From a psychoanalytic

perspective, such behaviour may also reflect instinctual drives emerging from the unconscious mind, which (Freud, 1923) describes as fundamental forces influencing human action.



Picture 5. After successfully surviving a series of attacks in Paris, John Wick must reach the top of the Sacré-Cœur steps before sunrise so that his duel with the Marquis can take place (02:13:22).

This scene exemplifies impulsive behavior, as John's decision to climb the stairs again is driven more by emotional impulses and personal instincts than by rational consideration. Logically, his severe injuries and exhaustion should have led him to consider giving up or finding another way. However, a subconscious urge to gain freedom and end the conflict with the High Table overpowered his actions. From Jung's (1959) perspective, such impulsive behavior can be understood as a manifestation of the Shadow that emerges when unconscious drives take over the decision-making process. The Shadow drives the individual to act spontaneously to fulfill the most basic psychological needs, even if the actions are high-risk.



Picture 6. John saved Mr. Nobody's dog from Chidi's attack, even though doing so risked making his own situation worse (02:12:10).

John's decision to save the dog was made spontaneously in the midst of a highly dangerous situation. This action demonstrates that impulses are not always destructive, but rather subconscious responses that arise without planning. This scene also highlights the complexity of the Shadow, as spontaneous impulses can lead to both positive and negative consequences. The impulsive actions demonstrated by John Wick reveal the complexity of the Shadow archetype. While impulsivity is often associated with irrational or reckless behavior, the film illustrates that spontaneous decisions can also reflect deeply rooted values and

emotional instincts. John's decision to help others despite significant personal risk suggests that unconscious motivations may produce actions that are not entirely destructive. This finding supports Jung's view that the Shadow contains not only negative tendencies but also hidden potentials that can contribute to personal development.

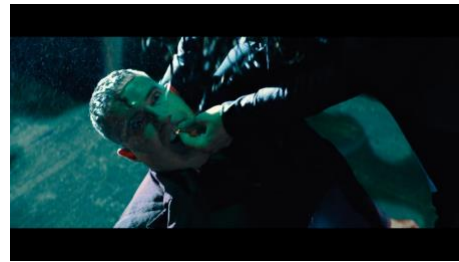
Moreover, impulsivity contributes significantly to the unpredictability of John Wick's character. His tendency to act without extensive deliberation creates dramatic tension and reinforces his image as an antihero who operates according to personal convictions rather than social expectations. As a result, impulsive behavior becomes one of the defining characteristics that distinguishes him from conventional heroic figures commonly found in action films.

In addition, impulsive behaviour contributes to the dynamic pace of the film by creating uncertainty regarding John Wick's next actions. His spontaneous decisions frequently alter the direction of the narrative and force both allies and enemies to react unexpectedly. From a psychological perspective, this unpredictability reflects the influence of unconscious processes operating beyond rational deliberation. Jung emphasizes that unconscious contents often emerge suddenly when emotional tension becomes overwhelming, making impulsive behaviour an important indicator of the Shadow's continuous influence over conscious decision-making.

Brutality as a Characteristic of the Shadow Archetype

The final characteristic identified is a tendency toward brutality. Unlike "violence," which refers to violent acts in general, "brutality" in this study refers to the intensity and manner in which John Wick carries out these acts. The film features various scenes depicting the extreme and uncompromising use of force against his opponents. The way John Wick confronts his enemies shows that he aims not only to defeat them but also to ensure that the threat is completely eliminated. The portrayal of brutality in John Wick: Chapter 4 also highlights the gradual erosion of conventional moral boundaries within the protagonist's world. As the narrative progresses, John increasingly relies on extreme methods to overcome obstacles and survive relentless threats. The intensity of his actions suggests that brutality has become normalized within the environment he inhabits, reinforcing the notion that prolonged exposure to violence can reshape an individual's perception of acceptable behavior.

From the perspective of archetypal psychology, brutality may be interpreted as the most visible manifestation of the Shadow because it represents the release of repressed destructive energy in its purest form. Unlike ordinary violence, brutality involves a level of force that exceeds practical necessity and reflects the dominance of instinct over restraint. Through this representation, the film demonstrates how unresolved psychological conflicts can transform into extreme behavior when the Shadow is allowed to govern an individual's actions.



Picture 7. The fight with Killa Harkan in a Berlin nightclub. After a long and hard fight, John finally killed Killa in a very brutal way. (01:28:46).

The brutality portrayed in this scene is evident not only in the act of killing itself but also in the intensity, determination, and ruthlessness with which John carries it out. Rather than simply neutralizing his opponent or ending the confrontation as quickly as possible, John employs overwhelming force to ensure that the threat is completely eliminated. His actions reveal a complete absence of hesitation, demonstrating a willingness to use extreme violence whenever it is necessary to achieve his objective. Throughout the confrontation, he exerts his full physical and mental strength, showing no signs of mercy, compassion, or restraint toward his opponent. This level of brutality goes beyond ordinary violence because it reflects an uncompromising approach to conflict in which victory becomes the sole priority.

From a Jungian perspective, when the Shadow archetype dominates an individual's behavior, the actions that emerge are likely to transcend or disregard moral boundaries in pursuit of a specific objective. The Shadow contains repressed instincts, primitive impulses, and destructive energies that are typically restrained by social values and conscious self-control. However, under conditions of extreme pressure, conflict, or survival, these unconscious elements may surface and exert a powerful influence over behavior. In this scene, John's brutality can be interpreted as the manifestation of those hidden forces, allowing instinctive drives to take precedence over moral considerations. His willingness to inflict severe harm without hesitation illustrates how the

Shadow can shape an individual's responses when faced with significant threats.

Furthermore, this scene highlights the psychological complexity of John Wick as an antihero character. Although his actions are undeniably brutal, they are portrayed within the context of his ongoing struggle for survival and freedom. As a result, the audience is confronted with the paradox of sympathizing with a character whose methods are morally questionable. This duality reinforces Jung's idea that the Shadow is not merely a source of negativity but an inseparable aspect of human nature that can influence thoughts, emotions, and actions. Therefore, the brutality displayed by John Wick serves as a powerful representation of the Shadow archetype, revealing the extent to which unconscious dark impulses contribute to the formation of his identity and behavior throughout the film.



Picture 8. The fight with Killa Harkan in a Berlin nightclub. After a long and hard fight, John finally killed Killa in a very brutal way. (02:10:26).

This scene demonstrates an exceptionally high level of violence and the use of extreme force. John not only defeats his opponents but also annihilates them in a spectacular and highly destructive manner. Within the framework of the Shadow archetype, this brutality reflects the release of the dark energy that has long been an integral part of John Wick's identity as a legendary assassin. This scene depicts exceptionally extreme violence in which John does not merely incapacitate his opponents, but completely destroys them without any room for mercy. The intensity of his actions goes beyond the need for self-defense, demonstrating an unwavering determination to eliminate every threat with full force. The methods he employs reflect how violence has become an inseparable part of his identity and his approach to conflict.

From the perspective of the Shadow archetype, this brutality is a manifestation of the release of dark energy that has long been at the core of John Wick's identity as a legendary hitman. According to Jung, the Shadow harbors primitive impulses and destructive instincts hidden beneath the conscious mind. When these subconscious forces

emerge, a person's behavior can become extremely extreme, transcending both social and moral norms. John's actions in that scene demonstrate how the Shadow can take control, forcing him to act without mercy when faced with obstacles.

The portrayal of brutality also reinforces the cinematic image of John Wick as an individual whose identity has become inseparable from violence. Although the narrative occasionally reveals his desire to escape the assassin world, every confrontation gradually draws him back into patterns of extreme behaviour that define his past. This recurring cycle illustrates Jung's notion that unconscious aspects of personality cannot simply be eliminated but must instead be acknowledged and integrated. Because John repeatedly confronts external threats without fully resolving his internal psychological conflict, brutality continues to emerge as one of the strongest manifestations of the Shadow throughout the film.

Moreover, the findings indicate that the four identified characteristics do not function independently but interact to construct a coherent psychological profile of the protagonist. Violence, aggression, impulse, and brutality complement one another in revealing how unconscious drives shape John Wick's decisions, relationships, and methods of confronting conflict. This interconnected representation supports Jung's assertion that the Shadow is composed of multiple repressed aspects of personality that collectively influence human behaviour rather than operating as isolated psychological tendencies.

Overall, the findings indicate that the four identified characteristics violence, aggression, impulse, and brutality should not be understood as isolated psychological traits. Instead, they function as interconnected manifestations of the Shadow archetype that collectively shape John Wick's personality. Violence serves as the primary means of resolving conflict, aggression motivates proactive confrontation, impulsivity drives spontaneous decision-making, and brutality reflects the extreme intensity with which these impulses are expressed. Together, these characteristics construct a psychologically consistent representation of the Shadow, demonstrating that John Wick's identity is inseparable from the unconscious forces operating beneath his conscious intentions.

These findings also reinforce Jung's argument that the Shadow is not inherently evil but represents aspects of the personality that have been repressed or neglected. Throughout the narrative, John Wick does not commit violence merely for personal pleasure or malicious intent. Instead, his destructive behavior emerges within the context of survival, loyalty, and the pursuit of

freedom. This complexity differentiates him from a conventional villain and positions him as a modern antihero whose morality remains ambiguous. Consequently, the Shadow in John Wick functions not only as a destructive force but also as a psychological mechanism that enables him to endure continuous conflict.

Beyond contributing to Jungian literary criticism, this study also demonstrates that action films can serve as valuable objects of psychological analysis. Characters such as John Wick illustrate that modern cinema increasingly portrays protagonists with morally ambiguous personalities rather than idealized heroic figures. Consequently, understanding the Shadow archetype may help audiences recognize that destructive tendencies portrayed in fictional characters symbolically reflect universal aspects of the human psyche rather than merely representing acts of violence intended for entertainment.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify and describe the characteristics of the Shadow archetype represented by the character of John Wick in *John Wick: Chapter 4* through the perspective of Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology. The findings reveal that John Wick embodies the Shadow archetype through four dominant characteristics: violence, aggression, impulse, and brutality. These characteristics are consistently reflected in his actions, decisions, and interactions throughout the film, making the Shadow an integral aspect of his psychological identity.

The characteristic of violence is represented through John Wick's tendency to resolve conflicts by means of physical force and lethal action. Aggression is demonstrated by his willingness to confront and actively pursue his enemies rather than avoid conflict. Impulsivity appears in the spontaneous and emotionally driven decisions he makes, often without considering the long-term consequences. Meanwhile, brutality is reflected in the intensity and ruthlessness with which he eliminates threats, showing an uncompromising use of force. Together, these four characteristics construct John Wick as a psychologically complex antihero whose dark side is inseparable from his identity and survival.

From a Jungian perspective, the findings support the idea that the Shadow is not merely a representation of evil or immorality, but a fundamental and unavoidable aspect of the human psyche. In *John Wick: Chapter 4*, the Shadow archetype functions as a psychological force that shapes the protagonist's behaviour, motivations, and responses to the conflicts surrounding him. Therefore, this study contributes to the application

of Jungian archetypal theory in film analysis by demonstrating how the characteristics of the Shadow archetype are represented through a contemporary antihero character and how these characteristics enrich the psychological depth of modern cinematic narratives. In addition, this study highlights the continuing relevance of Jung's analytical psychology in interpreting contemporary popular culture. Although John Wick exists within the fictional world of action cinema, the psychological conflicts represented through his character reflect universal human experiences involving anger, fear, survival, and identity. Therefore, the Shadow archetype remains a valuable analytical framework for understanding how modern films portray the complexity of human personality beyond traditional distinctions between heroes and villains.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can be proposed. First, future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of Jungian analysis by examining other archetypes, such as the Persona, Hero, Anima/Animus, or Self, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological structure of film characters. Researchers may also investigate the interaction between multiple archetypes within a single character or compare archetypal representations across different films and genres.

Second, future studies may explore the representation of the Shadow archetype in other contemporary antihero characters to determine whether similar psychological patterns appear across modern popular culture. Comparative studies involving films, television series, or literary works could provide broader insights into the role of the Shadow in constructing morally ambiguous protagonists.

Finally, this study is expected to encourage readers and scholars to view film not only as a form of entertainment but also as a cultural and psychological text that reflects the complexity of human nature. By applying Jung's analytical psychology, audiences may gain a deeper understanding of how the darker aspects of personality are represented symbolically through cinematic characters and how these representations contribute to the construction of meaningful and psychologically rich narratives.

Furthermore, future research may benefit from integrating Jungian archetypal analysis with other theoretical perspectives, such as characterization theory, narrative analysis, or audience reception studies, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of antihero representations in contemporary cinema. Combining psychological and cinematic approaches would enable

researchers to examine not only the unconscious motivations of film characters but also the narrative techniques and audience interpretations that contribute to the construction of morally complex protagonists. Such interdisciplinary studies could further enrich discussions in literary criticism, film studies, and analytical psychology by demonstrating how archetypal patterns continue to evolve within modern popular culture.

In addition, the findings of this study may serve as a useful reference for students, educators, and scholars interested in applying Jungian

analytical psychology to literary and film studies. By demonstrating how the Shadow archetype is represented through a contemporary action film, this research encourages broader academic discussions regarding the psychological complexity of antihero characters and the symbolic meanings embedded within popular cinematic narratives. It is hoped that future studies will continue to explore the relevance of archetypal criticism in understanding the relationship between human psychology, storytelling, and contemporary visual culture.

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