

THE EXPLORATION OF SHADOW AND ANIMA IN OTTO ANDERSON'S INDIVIDUATION PROCESS IN A *MAN CALLED OTTO* FILM (2022)

Davina Anandira Kuswantari

Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

davinaanandira.22015@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Abstract

The study explores the role of Shadow and Anima archetypes in Otto Anderson's individuation process in the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022). It seeks to understand how Otto's Shadow and his Anima are expressed in his daily life with his neighbors, and how his individuation is expressed as a result of integrating his Shadow and Anima. The study is based on Carl Jung's analytical psychology and uses the concepts of archetypes (Shadow and Anima) as the primary theoretical framework. The study is qualitative and uses the Jungian analysis of film as a method of interpreting the film narrative, dialogue, and monologue as primary data. Secondary data sources consist of scholarly literature on Jungian theory and film studies. Data were gathered by repeated watching, close reading of the subtitles, screenshots, and thematic coding of scenes depicting the Shadow projection, the Anima influence, and the stages of individuation, and then analyzed by mapping the data to Jung's concepts. The findings indicate that Otto's Shadow, which is based on traumatic events, manifests in several ways including suicide attempts, unintegrated grief, denial of reality, and rudeness toward others. In contrast, his Anima is activated first by Marisol and the caring neighborhood community, which gradually restores Otto's ability to empathize, nurture, and take responsibility for relationships. In general, the study demonstrates that individuation for Otto is not about forgetting loss, but rather is about the integration of his Shadow and his Anima into a unified sense of Self. The discovery highlights the psychological complexity of characters in modern films, revealing the potential of Jungian analysis in exploring the unconscious mind within popular film genres.

Keywords: *Individuation, Psychoanalysis, Jungian, Shadow, Anima*

Introduction

Personality is a psychological construct that explains habitual ways of thinking, acting, and emotional patterns, shaped by both biological and environmental factors (Corr & Matthews, 2009). It involves a dynamic interaction between conscious activities and deeper, evolved structures of the human mind, especially Jung's archetypes—universal patterns like the Shadow, Anima, and Animus found in our collective unconscious—which determine how we see and respond to the world (McLeod, 2025). The real significance of these structures emerges through individuation, a lifelong Jungian process of psychological integration that requires facing unpleasant truths about our masks and depths to achieve wholeness (Jones, 2011; Stein, 2019). The process entails integrating the conscious, personal unconscious, and collective unconscious to realize the true self, with a critical stage of facing and internalizing the Shadow—the hidden aspects of personality—that is resisted but essential for self-knowledge (Jung, 1976; Schultz & Schultz, 2016). Neglecting this inner complexity leads to a disintegrated personality that is influenced by social personas, while successful individuation balances internal conflicts between conscious and unconscious aspects, as well as opposing forces like the Anima and Animus (Fordham, 1966; Roesler, 2013). Finally, individuation leads to self-realization and emotional stability (Khadiri et al., 2022).

The concept of individuation is especially significant in the study of the psychological crises and recovery stories found in contemporary narratives, such as in *A Man Called Otto* (2022). The film follows Otto Anderson, a 63-year-old widower living in Pittsburgh, who has grown bitter while mourning the death of his wife, Sonya, and is planning suicide as a response to deep isolation (Ubarry, 2023). His initial rudeness and antisocial inflexibility reflect an ego dominated by an unresolved Shadow, manifested as repressed grief and anger that fragments the psyche (Bahri et al., 2025). Otto's isolation is disrupted by new neighbors—pregnant Marisol, her husband Tommy, and their daughters—whose constant care slowly pulls him out of depression. His flashbacks to the accident that caused Sony's disability and their lost child bring back his suppressed grief, while interactions with Marisol, from teaching her to drive to assisting her family, soften

his rigidity and reintegrate him into the community (Ubarry, 2023). In this way, Otto's journey illustrates a movement from psychic fragmentation toward potential wholeness, making his transformation an insightful case for Jungian analysis.

The individuation process of Otto is worthy of analysis because it offers an insightful Jungian lens for analyzing psychological transformation from isolation to wholeness through the integration of the Shadow and Anima archetypes. Otto's initial dominance by the Shadow—manifested as cynicism, grief, and compulsive control after his wife's death—signals an existential crisis in which the Ego is struggling to integrate suppressed negative aspects of itself (William & Dodson, 2025; Psychologs Magazine, 2023). The emergence of the Anima is signified through his relationship with Marisol, who represents the inner feminine aspect of empathy, nurturing, and emotional connection that breaks through Otto's isolated ego (Sheposh, 2024). Both archetypes are essential since integrating the Shadow results in increased self-awareness and the avoidance of projection onto others, while the expression of the Anima allows for balanced relationships and the connection of the Ego with the depths of feeling in the unconscious (Psychologs Magazine, 2023). This staged process not only reflects Jung's model of confronting unconscious elements for psychic unity, but also illustrates how Jungian psychoanalysis, especially the concept of archetypes and individuation, can be used to analyze contemporary film (Rizakiah et al., 2018).

Carl Jung's analytical psychology, particularly the concepts of Persona, Shadow, Anima, Self, and individuation, has been applied to several literary works. Yuwananto et al. (2022) analyzed Persona and Shadow in Osamu Dazai's *No Longer Human*, finding that the individuation crisis occurs when the Shadow is more dominant than the Persona, while Gunanda & Puspita (2022) examined *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, where the main character Kevin lacks balance between his Persona and Shadow and has completely identified with his Shadow. Similarly, Annisa et al. (2025) explored the psychological dimensions of Achilles in *The Song of Achilles*, examining the inherent tension between the Persona and the Shadow. Manyang et al. (2025) further discussed the conflict between social Persona and the emergence of Shadow as resistance through the body



in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*. Lastly, Tabasum et al. (2025) addressed *The Road*, in which Shadow, Anima, and Self play crucial roles in the moral survival of the characters and the search for meaning in a dystopian world. These studies demonstrate the applicability of Jungian theory in character analysis, but most of them are limited to printed novels and written texts from Japanese, Western, and South Korean contexts. Consequently, there is a lack of research on the application of a Jungian approach to contemporary cinematic media, especially concerning complementary archetypes in the psychological recovery of elderly characters. This study aims to fill the gap by employing Jungian film analysis, which involves the analysis of film narratives in terms of the collective unconscious, archetypal symbols, and individuation processes (Morozow & Hockley, 2017).

Therefore, this study explores the Shadow and Anima in the individuation process of Otto Anderson in *A Man Called Otto* (2022) through a Jungian psychoanalytic lens. It focuses on how Otto's rigid, dark aspect (Shadow) and the transformative feminine side (Anima) are part of his journey toward wholeness, as revealed in plot, dialogue, and monologue. By examining Otto's everyday interactions with his neighbors, particularly with caring figures like Marisol, this study explores how unconscious aspects shape his psychological growth from isolation to community reintegration. In light of this framework, the following research questions are formulated: 1. How does Otto manifest his Shadow and Anima in his daily interactions with his neighbors in the film? 2. How is Otto's individuation represented in the film as a result of integrating his Shadow and expressing his Anima? Given these questions, the objectives of this study are presented: 1. To analyze how Otto manifests his Shadow and Anima in his daily interactions with his neighbors in the film, and 2. To examine the representation of Otto's individuation as a result of integrating his Shadow and expressing his Anima. This study is expected to bridge the application of analytical psychology and film studies with insights into how the integration of archetypes aids the process of grieving and finding wholeness in contemporary cinema.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design as it aims to interpret meanings, archetypal patterns, and psychological development in the film *A Man Called Otto*. Creswell (2014) defined qualitative research as a method that focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning of how individuals or groups make sense of social or human issues. Qualitative research methods employ descriptive data to describe human experiences and psychological phenomena in the form of words and images of observable characters. It examines Jungian concepts of archetypes, especially Shadow and Anima, and individuation in the context of the protagonist's psychological transformation in *A Man Called Otto*.

The study utilizes a Jungian analytical psychology approach with a primary focus on the concepts of Jung (1968), which are archetypes—the Shadow and the Anima/Animus—and the process of individuation as the primary analytical framework to explore protagonist's psyche's journey toward wholeness. This structure allows an analysis of the person's ability to engage with the unconscious aspect and to integrate the repressed aspects of the Self. Jung (1964) states that films can serve as modern narratives, bringing the collective unconscious up to the screen, making the film text an appropriate one for archetypal analysis.

The primary data source is the 2022 film *A Man Called Otto* directed by Marc Forster, accessed via Netflix with a duration of approximately 126 minutes. Indick (2004) suggests that cinematic texts can show archetypal structures and psychological processes through character changes, symbols, and narrative progression. This film specifically deals with themes of grief, cynicism, and transformation in late adulthood. Dialogues, monologues, and pivotal scenes with the main character Otto Anderson are highlighted to support the Jungian themes of Persona, Shadow integration, Anima encounter, and movement toward the Self. Secondary sources were also collected through an examination of related literature from scholarly websites and databases, such as academic papers, journal articles, and books on Jungian film analysis, archetypal criticism, and psychological studies of aging. These resources are used to enrich the

analysis of the film, offer critical insights, and build the theoretical and contextual framework of the research (Bowen, 2009).

The data collection technique concentrated on the subtitles—the textual base of interpretation—and scenes featuring the film’s protagonist, Otto. A careful approach, involving a series of steps to identify archetypal aspects and individuation stages, has been implemented. First, the film was watched to ensure deeper understanding of the storyline. In qualitative film research, repeated viewing is employed to identify themes, patterns, and important sequences (Bordwell & Thompson, 2020). Second, the dialogue and monologue were closely read to determine the specific action that reflects the research questions. Third, the film was paused, screenshots were captured, and notes were taken on relevant scenes related to Otto, which portray the Shadow projection, Anima influence, and individuation.

Thereafter, data analysis was conducted in order to correlate the data with Jungian theory. Relevant evidence gathered from the primary data was first organized thematically for the initial classification and then categorized into subchapters according to the research objectives to form a coherent event. The organized data was then analyzed and evaluated in-depth through the concept of archetypes based on Jungian theory to draw a detailed analysis on how they illustrate the concepts such as Shadow confrontation and Anima integration. Afterwards, the entire findings from each subchapter were summarized and interpreted within the Jungian framework to conclude the protagonist’s individuation process.

Findings

Manifestation of Shadow

In Jungian psychology, the Shadow is the repressed, dark side of the psyche. It holds traits, desires, and memories that the Ego rejects (Jung, 1959). In *A Man Called Otto*, the Shadow dominates Otto’s life after Sonya’s death. It manifests in self-destructive acts, emotional withdrawal, and denial of reality (Stein, 1998). This subchapter examines four key forms of Otto’s Shadow: his sequence of suicide attempts, his unintegrated grief, his rejection of the present, and the traumatic roots that shaped it. Each form shows how

the Shadow rules Otto before the Anima breaks through.

1. Sequence of Suicide Attempts



Figure 1. Knotted rope hangs from the ceiling.

00:12:42 - 00:12:57

The figure demonstrates a knotted rope that is hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the room. This is the climax of Otto's technical preparations—from vacuuming the carpet to dressing in a formal black suit and spreading newspapers over it. The rope marks the final phase of desperation in which Otto believes his work is over and the only rest lies in the escape he had so carefully planned for himself. This physical action with the rope is an external expression of the psychological struggle that Otto is going through. Otto's first suicide attempt reflects a Shadow complex that has possessed the Ego, providing the clearest evidence that his Shadow has displaced conscious control (Serebrennikova, n.d.). As Jung notes, when the Shadow is repressed, it forces the Ego toward dissolution to end suffering—a demand Otto fulfills through self-destruction (Perry, 2015). Since Sonya's death, Otto has hidden his grief, anger, and vulnerability behind his Persona of a grumpy, rigid old man. Within his Shadow lies a profound emptiness and a death wish that he resists through obsessive attachment to minor details in his surroundings. According to Jung, mental health requires the integration of the Shadow; Otto, however, allows his Shadow to govern his logic (Kamal, 2024). His carefully planned suicide thus represents a paradox: the Ego's last attempt to keep control over what

remains uncontrollable—death and loss—by rationalizing self-destruction. This meticulous planning is, in fact, the Ego's projection of order onto internal emotional chaos. Unable to confront his internal darkness emotionally, Otto externalizes it physically through the rope. This resulted in his unsuccessful suicide attempt, where the rope he had tied to the roof structure could not hold his weight and eventually broke, throwing him to the floor and causing the damage to the ceiling.

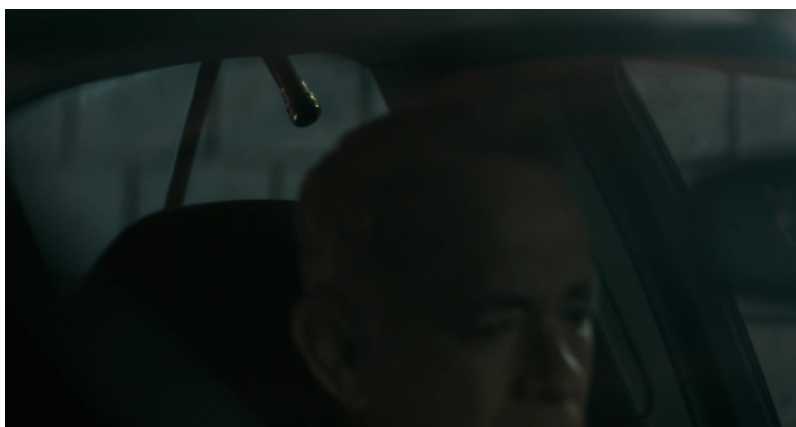


Figure 2. Otto inhales his car's exhaust fumes.

00:40:40 - 00:45:43

The scene demonstrates Otto's second suicide attempt, which is deliberately planned: he channels exhaust fumes into the cabin using a hose. In the empty garage, Otto sits silently in the driver's seat, waiting for the toxic gas to fill the cramped space, hoping to die quietly. This reveals Otto's determination to reunite with his late wife after his first failed attempt; he selects the car, a deeply personal possession, as the site to end his life. However, his neighbor at that moment knocks on the garage door to request help. Otto's attempt fails once more as he ultimately chooses to assist his neighbor. In Jungian terms, this interruption signals the emergence of the Anima through external demand (Stein, 1998). The Shadow, manifesting as despair and the drive toward death, seeks to dissolve consciousness entirely (Jung, 1959). Having failed to hang himself, Otto, burdened by loneliness, turns with greater urgency to another means of escape. Yet

the neighbor's appeal functions as an archetypal call, pulling Otto back into relational responsibility. As exhaust fumes fill the cabin, Otto appears to drown in his inner darkness, seeing death as the sole path to peace, but the knock at the door forces a momentary reintegration of his social Persona.



Figure 3. Otto stands in the middle of the railway tracks.

00:56:00 - 00:57:45

The scene presents Otto's third suicide attempt at a train station, where he has deliberately positioned himself on the railway tracks to be struck by an oncoming train. In this harrowing scene, Otto stands in a trance, facing his imminent death, wishing that the train's impact would end the emotional suffering he has endured alone. However, this plan is again disrupted when a man on the platform attempts to pull Otto back from his desperate act by reaching out and pulling him onto the platform. As the roar of the train approaches, Otto is overcome by fear and grasps the man's outstretched hand, returning safely to the platform. From a Jungian perspective, this scene illustrates the struggle between the Shadow and the Ego (Perry, 2015). Filled with despair and grief, Otto's Shadow has driven him to regard death as the only solution to his suffering. Yet his fear and acceptance of a stranger's hand indicate that the Shadow has not yet wholly dominated his personality (Ar Rayyani & Nugroho, 2025). This repeated failure compels him to continue confronting the world, gradually initiating the process of individuation in

which he must learn to accept his dark side without destroying himself (Bahri et al., 2025).



Figure 4. Otto holds the gun he owns.

01:24:40 - 01:31:10

The scene reveals Otto's final, desperate suicide attempt, in which he sits in an empty room with plastic-lined walls—his final preparation to minimize the consequence of his death. Otto, with an empty yet resolute expression, holds a long-barreled gun, preparing to shoot himself. However, just as he is about to carry out the act, the outside world interrupts his attempt once more: Malcolm, his neighbor, knocks at the door. This reinforces the film's narrative structure: every time Otto attempts to withdraw into death, the presence and needs of others pull him back to reality. From a Jungian perspective, this moment shows how Otto's Shadow has driven him into complete isolation from the social world (Jung, 1959). The plastic lining covering the room symbolically represents the barrier between the Shadow and the collective unconscious; Otto intends to die without leaving any trace for others. The choice of a gun expresses the aggression and sorrow repressed within his Shadow (Maretha et al., 2025). Yet Malcolm's knocking symbolizes life's intrusion, forcing the death wish to retreat (Academy of Ideas, 2015).

2. Deep Sorrow



Figure 5. and Figure 6. Otto mourns at Sonya's grave.

00:23:39 - 00:25:16

Beneath Otto's rigid Persona lies a Shadow full of unintegrated grief, laid bare at Sonya's grave. As Jung claims, unprocessed grief never disappears; rather, it descends into the Shadow and decays, turning mourning into pathology. The scenes portray a deeply emotional moment as Otto visits Sonya's grave, where the headstone inscribed with "ANDERSON" remains his sole tangible link through which he channels his profound longing. "Nothing works when you're not home" conveys the existential emptiness he endures; without Sonya, Otto can find neither meaning nor purpose in his world and remains suspended in grief. Otto's mournful expression as he addresses the grave reveals that, though known as a grumpy old man, he lowers his defenses and acknowledges that a part of himself was buried with his late wife.

From a Jungian perspective, the profound grief displayed at this grave is intimately tied to Otto's repressed Shadow (Aubrey, 2022). Otto had been projecting his anger and rigidity onto the external world as an ego defense, yet in Sonya's presence, the Shadow that contained the vulnerability, despair, and helplessness he had repressed finally surfaced (Martin, 2025). This indicates his Shadow has consumed his psychic energy, leaving him unable to envision a future; his wish to reunite with Sonya directly fuels his suicide plans (Gittins, 2024). Thus, this scene functions as the emotional background of the Shadow complex and demonstrates that the suicide attempts stem not from mere bitterness but from unbearable loss.

3. Rejection of Reality

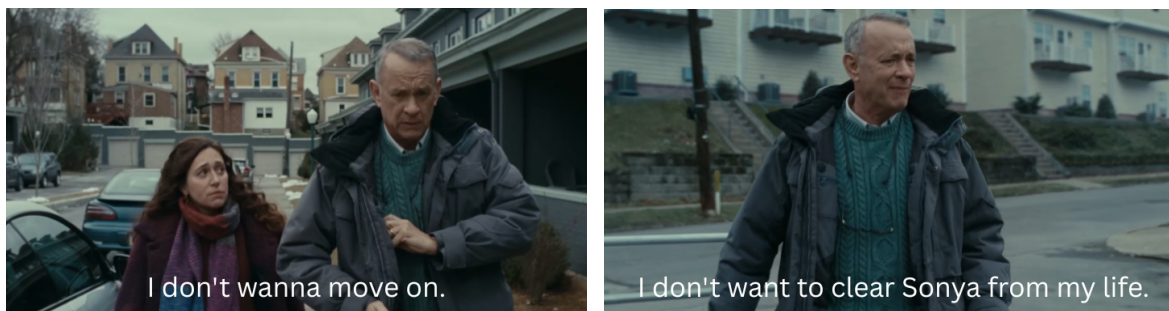


Figure 7. and Figure 8. Emotional tension arises between Otto and Marisol.

01:21:10 - 01:22:08

The scenes illustrate the emotional conflict between Marisol and Otto when Marisol offers to help Otto pack Sonya's belongings. With good intentions, Marisol attempts to help him move on from his grief by offering to clean the hallway and pack his late wife's coat and shoes. However, Otto perceives this as a direct threat to his last remaining physical connection to Sonya. The exchange reveals his intense opposition, as he declares he had no life before Sonya entered his life and will have none after her death. His anger peaks when he shouts at Marisol to "stop talking," revealing how threatened he feels by others' attempts to help him move on. From a Jungian perspective, Otto responds defensively due to his unintegrated Shadow (Jung, 1959). Otto's grief remains unintegrated, repressed in his Shadow, and he is gripped by an intense fear that releasing Sonya's belongings will erase his identity (Bahri et al., 2025). He suppresses the reality of his wife's death by clinging to her possessions, keeping grief locked in his Shadow. By asserting "I am something," Marisol attempts to pull Otto out of that darkness and into a renewed social reality. However, since Otto still regards the outside world as an intrusion upon his grieving, he projects his anger onto Marisol as an ego defense to remain within the comfort of his internally sustained grief (Perry, 2015).

4. Roots of the Shadow: Traumatic Events



Figure 9. The bus accident involving Otto and Sonya.

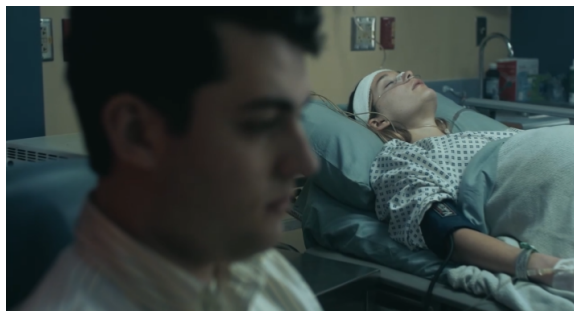


Figure 10. The consequence: Sonya paralysis and loss of the baby.

01:28:38 - 01:30:40

The primal scene is the bus accident where Otto's psyche fractured, giving birth to the Shadow that now governs him. As Jung noted, trauma is not merely an event but a psychic explosion that disintegrates the Ego, forcing unbearable impacts into the Shadow where they harden into a complex (Krüger, 2024). The scenes portray the tragic consequences of a bus accident that transformed the lives of Otto and Sonya. Their bus, while returning home from vacation, slipped off the road and overturned. At the time of the accident, Sonya was six months pregnant; the accident left her paralyzed and resulted in the loss of their unborn child. This moment initiates Otto's suffering and his transformation into a cynical and grumpy man, as he watches his anticipated future collapse in the wreckage. From a Jungian perspective, this accident constitutes a trauma that violently shattered Otto's happiness and hope, forcing his overwhelming guilt, anger, and grief into his Shadow. Unable to integrate these effects, he repressed them, and they subsequently manifested as aggression toward the outside world (van Driel, 2022). This trauma shaped a Shadow that perceived the world as unjust and chaotic, driving Otto to resist this chaos through an extreme obsession with rules and order. When Sonya died several years later, this repressed Shadow overwhelmed his ego, leaving him to believe that death was the only path to reunification with Sonya.



Figure 11. Sonya's death from cancer.

01:41:15

The scene depicts a poignant moment in which Otto grips Sonya's hand in her final moments in the hospital bed. Sonya's death from cancer delivers the decisive blow that shatters Otto's world, leaving him in profound desolation. His clasped hand signifies Otto's desperation to cling to the last source of meaning in his life. After this moment, he finds no reason to remain in a world he now perceives as meaningless. From a Jungian perspective, Sonya's death causes Otto's ego to collapse under the weight of his Shadow (Jung, 1959). Sonya had served as a counterbalance to Otto's rigidity, and her death released the despair, rage at fate, and emptiness long repressed in his Shadow. Otto subsequently projects this darkness into his surroundings, intensifying his grumpy old man Persona. His suicide attempts represent the Shadow's extreme demand to dissolve the Ego in order to end his suffering. Thus, the sequence functions as the final stage of the Shadow complex: it demonstrates that when the object sustaining the Ego dies, the Shadow demands the Ego die in exchange (Serebrennikova, n.d.).

Manifestation of Anima

The Anima is the feminine aspect of the male unconscious. According to Jung, it carries qualities like care, connection, intuition, and creativity (Akhazarova, n.d.). When

integrated, it softens the rigid ego and guides the psyche toward wholeness (Stein, 1998). In *A Man Called Otto*, the Anima erupts through Marisol and forces Otto to engage with life again. This subchapter traces three stages of Anima's work: its sudden irruption as a disruptive neighbor, its gradual integration as Otto becomes a caregiver, and its role as a threshold where action turns into conscious reflection. These stages map Otto's shift from isolation to connection.

1. The Feminine Irruption: Anima as Neighbor



Figure 12. and Figure 13. Marisol gives Otto some food.

00:18:38 - 00:33:44

The scene when Marisol shows up at Otto's door with a box of homemade food is the Anima's irruption into his ego-constructed exile. For Jung, the Anima initially does not exist as an internal image but is projected onto another woman; Marisol, with her maternal warmth, insistence, and persistence, becomes the object of that projection (Akhazarova, n.d.). Although Otto receives her cynically, the act dissolves the isolation he constructed following the death of Sonya. The food, which is symbolic of domestic care, revives the feeling function that has been buried with his wife and forces a connection where there was only refusal (Jeffrey, 2025). When Marisol returns with another container, the repetition exploits the crack created by the initial offering and represents the compulsive nature of the projected Anima (Jeffrey, 2025). If the first meal was a surprise, the second is an ongoing attack on the threshold Otto had closed off to others, slowly breaking down the walls he built to keep grief in and protect himself from the outside world. In taking the food again, Otto unwillingly performs a ritual of taking in the other—literally internalizing

care (Eve, 2008)—which reanimates his numb feeling and introduces a contradiction the Shadow cannot fully shut out. Thus, Marisol does not just feed Otto; she reanimates his feeling function and insists that the Ego acknowledge life beyond grief, opening it to empathy—a condition necessary for individuation (Bahri et al., 2025).



Figure 14. and Figure 15. Jimmy tells Otto the truth about Anita and Reuben.

01:35:48 - 01:36:08

Jimmy revealing Anita's Parkinson's diagnosis to Otto is a third irruption into Otto's self-made isolation. This time it comes not with food but with truth. Anita and Reuben hid the diagnosis to spare him more grief after Sonya's death. In Jungian terms, both hiding and revealing the truth are part of the Anima (Krüger, 2024). Anita acts as the mother side of Otto's projected Anima: she shields him from pain, playing the same caring role Sonya once held. Jimmy, as the messenger, delivers the irruption: unwanted news that breaks into Otto's isolation. For the Shadow, ignorance is safety; for the Anima, truth is connection (Jeffrey, 2025; Beebe, 2013). The shock creates a conflict Otto cannot solve. He had hated the neighbors as outsiders and judged the world as cruel, but he finds out they hid Anita's illness out of pity for him. This turnaround breaks the Shadow's main rule that nobody cares. The Anima, as Jung says, helps people connect; here the whole community becomes a collective Anima that makes Otto feel. Therefore, the news does not only inform Otto but also wakes up his numb feelings with guilt, thanks, and care. The Anima, once tied to Sonya and buried in sorrow, now works through Anita and the neighbors. This collective irruption is the second step of psychic dissolution: the Ego,

faced with undeserved kindness, loses its right to completely shut out others. Being open to others' suffering is a condition required for individuation (Bahri et al., 2025).

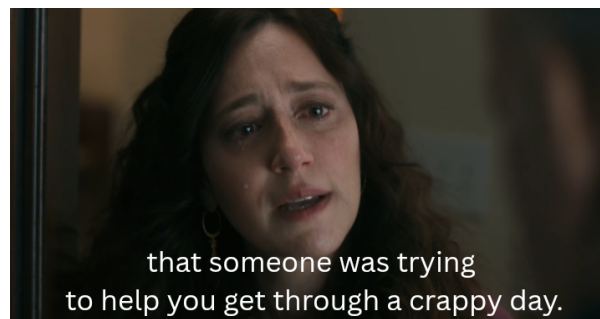


Figure 16. and Figure 17. Marisol urges Otto to accept support and help from others.

01:38:23 - 01:38:48

The last irruption into his self-made isolation is Marisol challenging Otto about his way of thinking. She says, "You think your life is so hard because everybody's an idiot and you have to do everything on your own, right? But guess what? You can't. No one can." In this monologue, Marisol calls out Otto's belief that he must carry every burden by himself and see others as outsiders. She tells him that nobody can live without help from others. She also apologizes in case her efforts to help him, such as talking about things concerning Sonya, offend him. She is angry, but it comes from care, which turns compulsive. She cannot watch him ruin himself anymore. In Jungian terms, this is a direct irruption of the projected Anima (Jeffrey, 2025). The Anima, tied to emotions and human relationships, was buried after Sonya died. The harsh reality that Marisol brings cracks the wall Otto constructed to defend himself. Being told that people still care in spite of his rudeness forces him to face the part of himself that he buried in grief. This irruption completes the first stage of psychic dissolution (Eve, 2008). After this, Otto's outer shell is cracked enough for real change to begin.

2. The Integration of the Anima: Otto as Caregiver

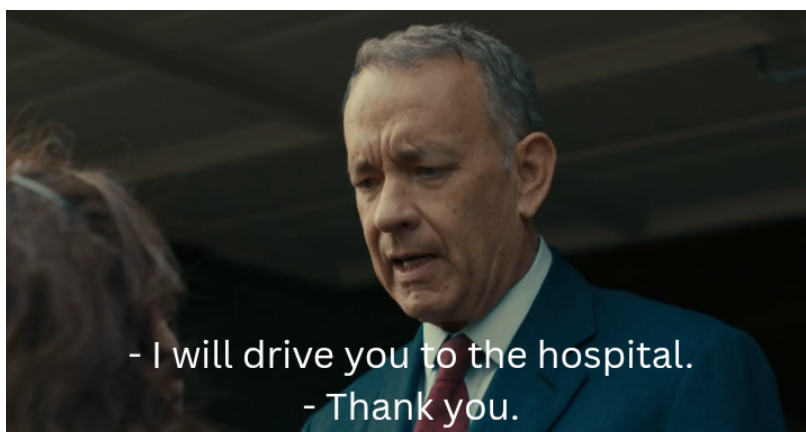


Figure 18. Otto helps Sonya get to the hospital.

00:40:40 - 00:45:43

The first act of integration is shown after repeated irruptions. When Tommy falls down the stairs, Marisol asks Otto to help her get to the hospital as an emergency. At first, Otto is harsh and insults Marisol for not having a driver's license at her age, but he cannot ignore her panic and begging. Otto sets his ego aside and agrees to drive. This choice shows he still has a human side that cares for people in need. In Jungian terms, this is the integration of the Anima into the Ego (Akhazarova, n.d.). After his neighbors treat him with care during the five irruptions earlier, Otto's caring side begins to reappear. Now he does what the Anima wants: connection. He stays with Marisol. Unlike the earlier irruptions where the Anima broke into him, now he chooses to act on it. Helping Marisol is a sign that his ego dissolution is entering a new stage (Perry, 2015). The Shadow no longer fully controls the Ego. The Ego can now serve the Anima. This real act of taking a neighbor to the hospital drives his individuation, as he regains his lost humanity by caring for others in need.



Figure 19. Otto volunteers to help Sonya drive.

01:04:13 - 01:08:43

This scene shows the second act of integration. Otto arrives at Marisol's house with a serious face and tells her to get ready for a driving lesson with him. This help is voluntary, unlike the emergency drive to the hospital. He chooses to do it. Even though he calls Tommy and Marisol "idiots," his action shows real concern. He even offers to replace her husband and others as her teacher because he cannot stand seeing her fail to learn from them. Deep down, he has a human side that cares for his new neighbor. From a Jungian perspective, this step is a deeper integration of the Anima (Akhazarova, n.d.). Once Otto's isolation is broken open by Marisol's food and kindness, the caring side of Otto begins to act on its own. The Anima is no longer breaking in—it is now used by Otto to build real bonds. Teaching Marisol to drive is nurturing, patient, and future-focused, which are core qualities of the Anima (Jeffrey, 2025). Marisol's continued care and the neighbors' attention also help him loosen the Shadow's hold. By choosing to help without being forced, Otto takes another step in his individuation. He is becoming a caregiver, and he regains his lost humanity by doing so.



Figure 20. Otto assists in looking after Abbie and Luna.

01:13:58 - 01:17:38

This scene shows the third act of integration. Marisol asks Otto to watch Abbie and Luna so she and Tommy can have time together before their baby is born. At first, Otto looks awkward and uneasy about watching kids, but he does not say no. He agrees. This choice proves that behind his hard face, Otto has a human side willing to help his neighbors in need. In Jungian terms, the integration of the Anima reaches its deepest point when Otto agrees to watch the kids (Akhazarova, n.d.). This caring side was first brought out by Marisol's warmth, food, and tears during the earlier irruptions. Now Otto no longer reacts or teaches—he nurtures. Watching children is the most intimate act of care so far. It demands patience, gentleness, and trust, which are core values of the Anima. Unlike the emergency drive or the driving lessons, this task puts Otto inside the home, in a family role. By choosing to do it, he loosens the Shadow's hold even more. The Ego now serves connection, not isolation. This is a clear move into individuation. He opens himself to care, trust, and social bonds and reclaims the humanity he lost when Sonya died (Eve, 2008).

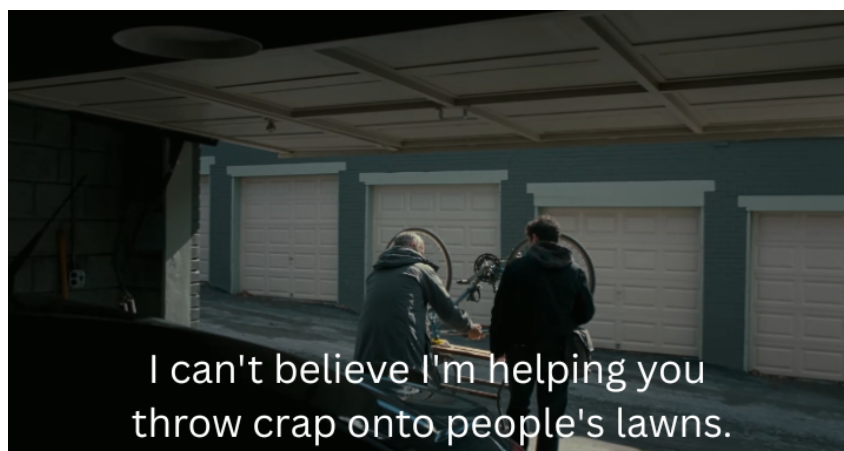


Figure 21. Otto helps fix Malcolm's bike.

01:18:00 - 01:19:00

This scene shows the fourth act of integration. Otto helps Malcolm fix his broken bicycle in front of his garage. Even though he first complained about Malcolm's paper route, calling it "throwing crap onto people's lawns," he still offers his skills to adjust the derailleur so it stops rattling. Otto not only fixes it but also gives Malcolm a set of wrenches so he can be self-reliant. This choice shows the care and kindness beneath Otto's tough, cynical face. Helping Malcolm reveals that the integration of the Anima has reached a skill-based stage (Akhazarova, n.d.). His skill, once used to judge others as "idiots," is now used to serve connection. After Marisol's food, tears, and honesty broke into his isolation, the nurturing side of Otto could act through his hands. Unlike earlier acts, this help is not urgent or domestic—it is technical. By choosing to use his skills to build someone up instead of tearing them down, Otto loosens the Shadow's hold on his ego (Perry, 2015). Through this action, he rebuilds his bond with the community. This is another step in individuation. He regains his humanity by sharing what he knows rather than hiding behind it (Eve, 2008).



Figure 22. Otto lets Malcolm stay temporarily at his house.

01:31:36 - 01:32:27

This scene shows the fifth and final act of integration. Otto lets Malcolm stay at his house. Although Otto used to fire back that his house was “not a hotel,” he changes his attitude when he discovers Malcolm was kicked out by his father. Seeing Malcolm tired and lost, Otto chooses to offer him the sofa to sleep on. This act shows Otto cares about him. This choice proves Otto is open-minded. He does not judge Malcolm for being transgender—he supports him as a person in need. In Jungian terms, letting Malcolm stay is the final stage of Anima integration (Akhazarova, n.d.). Otto can open his home now because Marisol’s care unlocked the nurturing side that isolation had buried. Giving shelter is the most selfless act of care so far (Jeffrey, 2025). It requires trust, safety, and acceptance, which are essential aspects of the Anima. Unlike earlier acts, this help costs Otto both his privacy and control. The Shadow wants walls and rules; the Anima wants open doors and human bonds (Eve, 2008). By choosing to let Malcolm in, Otto drops his rigid ego. The wall around his house—and his psyche—comes down. This completes the integration phase. He is ready for the threshold, where individuation truly begins. He restores his humanity by making room for others, as he once did for Sonya (Bahri et al., 2025).

3. The Threshold: Beginning of Individuation

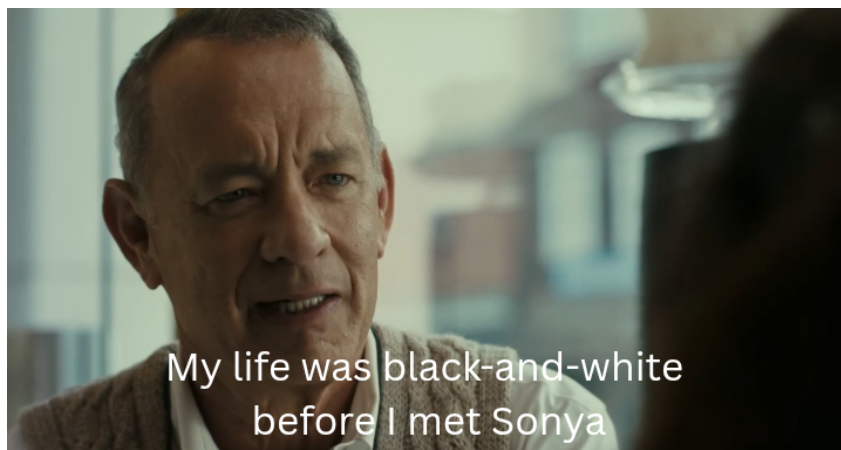


Figure 23. Otto begins to open up to Marisol by talking about Sonya.

01:09:12 - 01:13:55

This scene shows the threshold. Otto begins to open up to Marisol in the bakery and talk about his life with Sonya. He even says, “My life was black and white before I met Sonya.” She made his life colorful. But when the talk turns to sensitive topics like children, Otto gets uneasy and asks Marisol to go home. This proves he has started to face his past trauma, but he still needs time to heal and open up fully (Wijaya & Kurniawati, 2025). In Jungian terms, Otto’s willingness to talk about Sonya is a key sign that the Anima is shifting from action to consciousness (Jeffrey, 2026). In the previous act he manifested the Anima: he drove, taught, cared, fixed, and sheltered. Now he names it. Sonya was the outer carrier of Otto’s Anima. By saying her name and his grief, Otto tries to reconnect his rigid ego to the feelings of love he buried after she died. This is the threshold moment. He stands between the old self, ruled by the Shadow, and the new self, called by the Anima (Slettevold, 2025). Stepping back when it gets too painful is natural. A threshold means standing between two rooms. Even though he pulls back, this effort to tell his story is central to individuation. He is learning to hold his soft side in words, not just in acts. This is how his life becomes whole and balanced (Perry, 2015).

The Individuation



Figure 24. Otto realizes and admits his mistake.

01:36:35 - 01:37:03

A turning point occurs when Otto realizes that grief made him harsh and isolated from others. He acknowledges that grief overcame him so completely that he failed to notice his neighbors' concern, and with humility he apologizes and commits to help Anita and Reuben save their home from Dye & Merica. This is not merely moral correction but evidence that the Ego no longer dominates the psyche (Jung, 1959). Throughout the narrative, Otto's ego has been governed by the Shadow, expressed as rigid control, self-punishment, and rejection of others, because unprocessed grief left no room for relation. When Otto acts for his neighbors, he subordinates the Ego to a larger center—the Self—and thus opens a path out of isolation. In terms of Jungian theory, this scene marks a significant stage of individuation: the psyche's movement toward a whole Self (Jung, 1959). By shedding the angry role of the neighborhood enforcer, which he used to hide his pain, he reintroduces the repressed feeling function into consciousness. Jung argues that when feeling is absent, it activates the Anima in negative form (Perry, 2015); thus, Otto's early aggression toward Marisol and other women was the Anima's shadow side. His confession and commitment to others are the first positive manifestations of the Anima as care. By acknowledging his faults and serving the community, Otto reintegrates Anima and Shadow; discipline remains but no longer serves self-isolation. The outcome is a

balanced Self that can hold control and compassion, past and present, without being defined by loss (Eve, 2008).

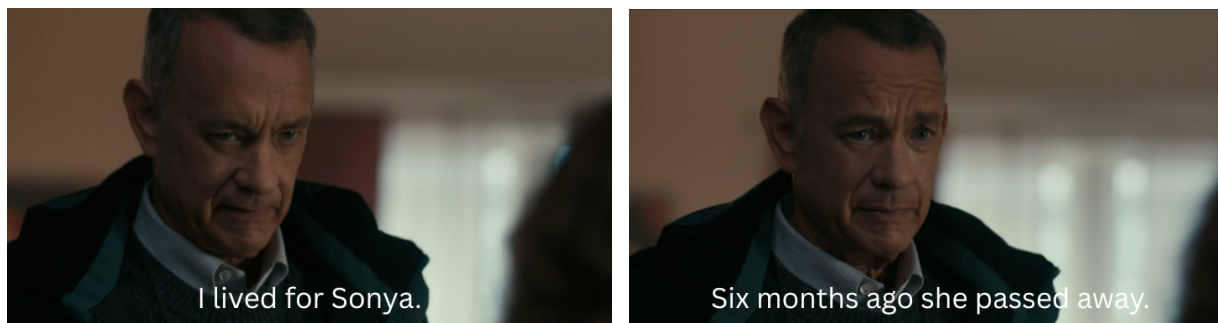


Figure 25. and Figure 26. Otto tells Marisol everything about Sonya and himself.

01:39:18 - 01:41:23

A deeper change occurs when Otto shares with Marisol the tragedy he has hidden. He describes the bus accident that left Sonya paralyzed, the loss of their unborn baby, and his anger at the people who worsened their struggle. By expressing grief he kept a secret from the world, Otto extends trust to Marisol; they barely know each other, yet her consistent attention has already broken his isolation. This disclosure is not a mere release. It shows that content from the personal unconscious is willingly brought into ego-consciousness, a precondition for individuation (Jung, 1959). Otto previously only acted out grief through suicide attempts and aggression. Now he names it. In terms of Jungian theory, this disclosure is an important stage of individuation: the Ego stops defending against painful content and starts to take it in (Akhazarova, n.d.). By naming his anger and his love for Sonya, Otto brings the thinking and feeling functions that grief had split back together. Jung states that trauma can often form a complex that takes over the Ego. The complex was acting on its own when Otto attempted suicide repeatedly. Talking about the trauma returns agency to the Ego and allows the Anima's feeling function to connect the inner pain with the world (Krüger, 2023). His realization that Sonya wants him to "keep living" shows that Anima is no longer projected as a lost object of the past but internalized as a voice guiding him toward life. Thus, Otto builds an identity no longer tied

to grief alone but organized around relation and responsibility.



Figure 27. and Figure 28. Otto comes to see baby Marco and gives him a baby crib.

01:48:17 - 01:48:47

A key transition happens when Otto visits Marisol and Tommy to see their baby, Marco, and brings the crib he made for his unborn child who died in the bus accident. His presence is a conscious decision to return to social life, but the crib makes the action symbolic, not merely social. Otto performs what Jung calls a symbolic act by giving an object filled with personal loss to a new life. The unconscious can turn literal grief into something usable by the living (Wijaya & Kurniawati, 2025). He is not forgetting his child but allowing the unrealized future of his child to become Marco's real future. This is the Ego's conscious involvement in its own healing. The scene shows a late stage of individuation where symbols replace symptoms (Jung, 1968). Previously, Otto's grief appeared as symptoms: strict rules, suicide notes, and anger. Grief is now a symbol—the crib—which holds the past and future, death and birth. This gift helps Otto revive the Anima as a connection, the principle of bonding, which was inactive during the control of the Shadow. The Shadow does not disappear; its discipline remains in Otto's skill as a builder and guardian, but it now serves life rather than denial (Perry, 2015). Abandoning ego-isolation to congratulate a neighbor on his child's birth shows the Self has gained enough balance to hold opposites: Otto can grieve and be nurturing, recall and renew, without falling apart (Eve, 2008). This individuation is not about perfection but about the ability to live the full range of the psyche in community (Bahri et al., 2025).



Figure 29. Marisol and her family visit Sonya's grave.

01:50:04 - 01:50:46

When Otto invites Marisol and her family to visit Sonya's grave, it is a significant shift in his individuation process, moving from a state of isolation in grief to an openness to feeling and relating. He opens Sonya's grief to others, suggesting that he is starting to accept the loss without being consumed by it, a process of becoming a more whole self through pain, memory, and relationship, as explained in Jungian terms (Brodersen, 2023). This integration is evident in Otto's invitation of others to join his private grief as he begins to relate to the Self beyond the "widower" role. Otto's earlier actions were influenced by his fixation on Sonya's death and a detached, defensive attitude, but this act is a sign of his softening of the hard shell he had constructed around his sorrow, a symbol of his past love with his present community, and a gesture of him no longer being closed off from others. This softening is similar to what Jung referred to as the disintegration of the rigid ego complex, which opens up new relational content in consciousness to promote psychic development (Vanderbergh, 2025). Thus, the scene also marks a change in his emotional growth: he is no longer just the solitary widower who keeps to himself but a man who can open himself up to others, allowing them to be part of his memory and his healing (Naza & Murtiningrum, 2025).



Figure 30. Marisol helps Otto pack Sonya's belongings.

01:51:02 - 01:51:20

The scene where Marisol helps Otto pack Sonya's belongings can be interpreted as a significant moment in Otto's individuation, as he begins to open up to relationships and change. According to Jungian psychology, individuation refers to the integration of unconscious contents and disconnected parts of the psyche into the conscious Self (Jung, 1966). Sonya's belongings represent her emotions and her past, so when someone else touches and arranges them, Otto is not entirely stuck in the past. Jungian analysis would indicate that at this moment, Otto starts to accept the loss, and it enters his conscious life rather than remaining a rigid identity. This movement is a reflection of what Jung called the “union of opposites” or “integration of opposites”—the integration of detachment and openness, past, and present, within the psyche (Giobbi, 2023). Marisol's addition also adds warmth, functionality, and humanity to a place that was once filled with sadness and loneliness. So the scene is a subtle but important transition in Otto's mind from detachment to healing, from taking in to a more balanced self (Gayatri et al., 2025).

Discussion

This study serves as a theoretical contribution to film studies and literary criticism by employing the Jungian psychoanalytic concepts of the archetype and the process of individuation as analytical tools. The focus is not on the creation of new psychological theories but on how the concepts of Jung's Shadow and Anima can reveal the characterization of Otto and the depiction of internal psychological conflict in cinema (Rizakiah et al., 2018). In analyzing Otto, the study extends literary and film criticism by demonstrating how psychoanalytic theory can be applied practically to interpret complex emotional and psychological elements in film narratives. Moreover, this study can be used as a concrete case study in applying Jungian theory to the development of characters in films (Widiyanti et al., 2022). It can be used as a reference for other students and researchers interested in using psychological models in analyzing media so that interdisciplinary analysis can become more accessible without shifting the main focus from film and literature studies.

The study explores the relationship between the Shadow and Anima archetypes and the individuation process of the protagonist in the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022) from the perspective of the Jungian psychoanalytic approach. It examines the process by which Otto confronts his Shadow and integrates his Anima to understand his path to self-realization as depicted in the film. This study focuses on Otto's characterization as the central character and concentrates on how the two archetypes—Shadow and Anima—illustrate his psychological development throughout the narrative. Therefore, the findings of this research are limited to Otto's characterization in this film and are not applicable to other characters, films, or real-life situations without further investigation. The delimitation is necessary to keep the study analytical and theoretically consistent within the framework of Jungian psychoanalysis. Moreover, the study is further limited to the Shadow and Anima archetypes in the context of Otto's individuation and does not include other possible Jungian archetypes such as the Persona, the Wise Old Man, or the Self. Gender roles and the construction of masculinity in Swedish-American culture have also not been discussed in depth, even though they have the potential to influence Otto's expression of

grief and acceptance of the Anima. These gaps provide opportunities for future studies to offer a more comprehensive view of Otto's individuation from multiple theoretical and methodological perspectives.

The study suggests that Otto has an initial Shadow that is characterized by grief, trauma, and a death wish, but that repeated interaction with Marisol and the neighborhood helps to activate his Anima and bring him toward individuation and reconnection. The overall finding is that his isolation is not his permanent state but is slowly dissolved by care, responsibility, and grief. Specifically, the study confirms certain patterns throughout the scenes that are discussed. Otto's multiple suicide attempts are seen as proof that the Shadow is very active and driving Otto to self-destruction, and his grief over Sonya is portrayed as being untouched and a source of his despair. The bus accident and later death of Sonya are cited as the traumatic roots of his psychological breakdown. In contrast, Marisol's repeated care, food, honesty, and practical help activate Otto's Anima. This leads to a gradual change in Otto from refusing and detaching to helping, teaching, and protecting others, which the study reads as signs of individuation.

At the same time, the study reveals some thoughts that are either implicitly or explicitly presented in subsequent scenes. Otto is not depicted as permanently closed off, nor is he always rude or mean, as he shows that he can care for others later in his life. He is not just a bitter and self-destructive figure, either; he starts to apologize, to explain himself, and to reconnect with his surroundings. He has been convinced that he can survive without others, but Marisol keeps telling him that he does need others, and his previous assumption of the world being just cruel is undermined by the kindness and support he finds among the neighbors.

Beyond these confirmed and disconfirmed aspects, the overall analysis indicates that the later scenes mostly validate the analysis, since the study establishes a consistent theme of Otto's suffering and the slow nature of his recovery; the part that does not hold true is that Otto's earlier self-image and isolation are not static but are challenged and changed by the events of the story.

In deeper terms, the analysis reveals that Otto's mental journey is an intricate process of individuation according to Jungian psychoanalysis. Otto's Shadow is a reaction to Sonya's death. This is seen in his suicide attempts, which are not an attempt to end his life but a denial of Sonya's death. His prolonged grief is the foundation for the Shadow side of his personality: cruel, stubborn, and mistrustful of a cruel world. This Shadow has a long history, originating with the trauma of not being able to have children, getting laid off, and finally, the death of Sonya, the final straw. So, Otto's Shadow is not inborn but an inner wound that has turned into a mask of cynicism to shield him from further hurt.

But Otto's individuation journey is not over with his Shadow. His Anima plays a vital role. Otto's Anima is represented by Marisol, his new neighbor, who personifies the feminine: life, warmth, care, and the healing chaos. Otto initially resists this feminine irruption as an intrusion on his obsessive tidiness, but he gradually begins to adopt its values. The integration of Anima happens when Otto goes from wanting to die to becoming a caregiver for Marisol's family and the community. He begins to care, listen, and even smile. This is the point of individuation where Otto's hard ego begins to open and accept the parts of himself that he has been denying. He no longer lives for the past with Sonya but finds meaning in his relationships with his neighbors.

Overall, Otto's individuation is not attained by leaving Sonya but by integrating two aspects of his personality: the pessimistic Shadow and the optimistic Anima. Otto is not "healed" by returning to his previous state but by becoming a whole person. He is still upset by life's misfortunes, but this time, he is justified. He still longs for Sonya, but no longer in an unrealistic and destructive way. The analysis shows that recovery from trauma does not happen by forgetting the emotional scars but by being brave enough to accept the presence of one's own darkness and the disturbing presence of the "other" and to choose to stay in the world for the sake of others. In this way, Otto's narrative is a case study in the lifelong process of individuation from fragmentation to wholeness.

Based on the analysis of the manifestations of the Shadow, Anima, and Otto's individuation process, there are several recommendations for further studies. First, a comparative approach could be taken in future research. The individuation process in

Otto, triggered by the trauma of loss and mediated by the Anima, could be compared with that of other male characters in literary works or films who experience similar losses, such as Carl Fredricksen in *Up* (2009) or B. J. Habibie in *Habibie & Ainun* (2012). This comparison would contribute to our understanding of both the universal and cultural aspects of coping with the Shadow and integrating the Anima among middle-aged men.

Second, in terms of methodology, future studies could use audience reception approaches to explore how readers or viewers of different ages and cultures perceive Otto's transformation. Do they find Otto's individuation process realistic, inspiring, or idealistic? Since the current findings are limited to textual analysis, audience perceptions would expand our understanding of the narrative's psychological impact on the public. Therefore, future research should not only extend the analysis to characters in literary works but also examine the text's influence on the audience's own individuation process.

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