

ADAM REED'S INDIVIDUATION PROCESS IN THE ADAM PROJECT (2022)

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Abstract

This study analyzes Adam Reed's individuation process in The Adam Project (2022), directed by Shawn Levy. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this research applies Carl Jung's theory of archetypes to analyze Adam Reed's psychological growth as portrayed in the film. The problem statements guiding the study are: 1) How are Jung's archetypes reflected in Adam Reed's journey? and 2) How is the individuation process of Adam Reed portrayed in The Adam Project (2022)? The objectives of this study are to explain the archetypes reflected in Adam Reed's journey and to examine the individuation process of Adam Reed. The findings indicate that Adam's persona masks his unresolved grief, his shadow embodies guilt and anger, and his anima reflects his capacity for love and empathy. Although he makes progress in integrating these aspects, he does not fully achieve the Self, the final stage of individuation. However, his confrontation with grief and emotional growth indicate significant psychological development. This study contributes to the understanding of individuation in film narratives and offers insight into Adam Reed's character through Jungian analysis.

Keywords: individuation, Carl Jung, The Adam Project, Jungian archetypes.

Introduction

Individuals often face challenges or make mistakes that shape their personalities and offer valuable lessons. Sometimes, people wish they could revisit the past to make different choices, especially when faced with regret. Time travel narratives explore the desire for second chances and the impact of past decisions. Films like Back to the Future

(1985) and *Interstellar* (2014) show how past actions affect the future. To understand this, it is important to analyze how characters' emotions are influenced by what they see that reminds them of past experiences or choices.

Psychoanalysis plays a significant role in understanding characters' emotions and struggles. Using this theory, authors may examine characters' traumas and hidden motivations. For instance, one interpretation of Farida Susanty's novel *Dan Hujan pun Berhenti* uses Carl Jung's theory to explore Leo Strada's individuation and experience coping with depression (Raihan & Kurniawan, 2023).

Personality development is a complex process influenced by internal, external, and experiential factors (Caspi & Roberts, 2001). This process shapes how people interact with the world and perceive themselves and their surroundings. In *The Adam Project* (2022), Adam Reed's journey portrays this development as he confronts his past, meets his younger self, and faces the psychological impact of his choices.

This study examines adult Adam Reed's individuation process, a key concept in Jungian psychoanalysis. Individuation involves integrating the conscious and unconscious parts of the psyche to achieve self-realization and balance. By exploring this process, the analysis shows how individuals reconcile inner conflicts and embrace their full selves.

Literary Review

Psychology of Literature

Psychology is one of the fascinating and complex disciplines. The term "psychology" comes from the Greek words "psyche" and "logos," which mean soul and science (Putri et al., 2021). According to the American Psychological Association, Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and behavior (Canguilhem, 2016). It refers to the study of human behavior, including all interactions, character traits, and personality traits.

According to Wellek and Warren (1963), literary psychology encompasses the study of writers as personalities, the creative process, psychological types in literature, and the impact of literature on the reader (Aras, 2015). This approach allows the reader to gain deeper

insight into the psychological aspects of the characters, exploring the motives, emotions, and subconscious forces at play in the narrative..

Carl G. Jung's Psychoanalytical Theory

Carl Jung (1875–1961) was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who worked with Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. However, Jung eventually developed his distinct psychological theories. He was greatly influenced by Freud's ideas about the unconscious, particularly Freud's concepts of the personal unconscious and the role of unconscious motives in shaping behavior. However, Jung disagreed with Freud's theories, especially with a strong emphasis on sexuality as the primary driver of human development (Hall & Lindzey, 1957).

In a book entitled *Introduction to Theories of Personality*, Hall explains “Jung’s view of personality is prospective in the sense that it looks ahead to the person’s future, line of development and retrospective in the sense that it takes account of the past” (Hall & Lindzey, 1957). Based on the quotation, Carl Jung's view of personality considers both the past and the future in understanding a person. Jung's perspective looks ahead, focusing on the individual's future potential and the path their development will take over time. At the same time, it also looks backward, considering how past experiences, especially those from childhood, influence the present personality.

In addition, Jung's theory sees the psyche as made up of multiple interconnected elements, each playing a role in the overall functioning and development of the personality. Hall also explains that according to Jung, the personality or psyche consists of some principal: the ego, the personal unconscious and its complexes, the collective unconscious and its archetypes, the persona, the anima or animus, and the shadow (Hall & Lindzey, 1957). The three main psyche were the ego, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious.

1. Consciousness (Ego)

The ego is the part of the mind that includes all the thoughts, feelings, and sensations that human aware of at any given moment. This awareness functions to interact with the outside world and make decisions. According to Hall, the ego is responsible for one's feelings or identity and continuity, and from the viewpoint of the person himself, it is regarded as being at the center of the personality.

We understand the ego as the complex factor to which all conscious contents are related. It forms, as it were, the center of the field of consciousness; and, in so far as this comprises the empirical personality, the ego is the subject of all personal acts of consciousness. The relation of psychic content to the ego forms the criterion of its consciousness, for no content can be conscious until it is represented to a subject.

(Jung, 1976)

2. Personal Unconsciousness

Personal unconsciousness consists of memories, emotions, and experiences that were once conscious but have been repressed, suppressed, forgotten, or ignored due to their emotional weight or perceived insignificance. As Hall explains in his book *Introduction to Theories of Personality* "...consists of that were one conscious but which have been repressed, suppressed, forgotten, or ignored and of experiences were too weak in the first place to make a conscious impression upon the person" (Hall & Lindzey, 1957).

3. Collective Unconsciousness

Jung's concept of collective unconsciousness proposes that, alongside the personal unconscious unique to each individual, there exists a shared level of unconsciousness among all humans. This collective unconsciousness contains inherited memory traces from ancestors, including both human and pre-human history. These inherited patterns, known as archetypes, influence human experiences and emotional responses, often without awareness (Hall & Lindzey, 1957).

Archetypes

Jung's concept of archetypes refers to universal, inherited mental structures within the collective unconscious that influence how human perceives and experiences the world. There are many archetypes in psyche but only several archetypes that influences in achieving individuation (Pamungkas, 2021). The archetypes include core patterns like the Self, Persona, Shadow, and Anima/Animus (Jung, 1933).

1. Self

As quoted by Feist in *Theories of Personality* 7th edition, it states "Jung believed that each person possesses an inherited tendency to move toward growth, perfection, and completion, and he called this innate disposition the self" (Feist & Feist, 2008). In Jungian psychology, the Self refers to the innate tendency within each person toward growth,

wholeness, and psychological completion. It is the central, organizing principle of the psyche, encompassing both conscious and unconscious elements.

Jung believes that the Self is the goal of the process of individuation, where the individual moves toward greater self-awareness and integration of all aspects of their personality, including the Shadow, Persona, and Anima/Animus. As explain in, according to self can only be achieved for person beyond fifty years above or middle age.

2. Persona

The persona, or mask, represents another version of ourselves presented to the world. According to Jung (1950/1959):

A physician is expected to adopt a characteristic 'bedside manner', a politician must show a face to society that can win the confidence and votes of the people; an actor exhibits the style of life demanded by the public." (Feist & Feist, 2008).

Jung's quotation highlights how people in different roles like physicians, politicians, or actors adopt specific personas or social identities to meet societal expectations and fulfil their roles.

The persona is a social mask that helps individuals fit into particular contexts or professional environments, but it is not the whole of who they are. Over-identifying with the persona can lead to a loss of authenticity, as the deeper, more complex self (the Self) becomes repressed. Balancing one's persona and true self is essential for psychological well-being and achieving wholeness.

3. Shadow

The Shadow archetype, as defined by Carl Jung, represents the parts of human's personality that are rejected or fail to acknowledge, including hidden fears, desires, and perceived negative traits. According to Jung (1951/1959), "The shadow consists of morally objectionable tendencies as well as a number of constructive and creative qualities that we nevertheless, are reluctant to face" (Feist & Feist, 2008).

Thus, the Shadow includes both socially unacceptable tendencies, such as negative emotions and traits that society rejects, as well as constructive and creative qualities like passion, creativity, and assertiveness that are being suppressed. While confronting and integrating the Shadow can be uncomfortable, it is essential for psychological growth and self-actualization. Embracing the Shadow

allows become whole, and integrate both the dark and light aspects of personality. This process leads to a more authentic, balanced, and creative life.

4. Anima/Animus

The "anima/animus" is the opposite of human sexuality such as the unconscious feminine side in men and masculine tendencies in women (Jung, 1933). The concept of the anima and animus refers to the unconscious opposite of an individual's gender identity.

For men, the anima represents the feminine aspects of their personality, while for women, the animus represents the masculine qualities. These archetypes are essential for psychological growth and balance, and the process of individuation requires integrating these opposite traits in a healthy way. By recognizing and accepting these unconscious, opposite-gender traits, a person can achieve a more complete, authentic sense of self and develop a deeper psychological wholeness.

Individuation

Individuation is a central concept in Jungian psychology, referring to the process by which an individual integrates the conscious and unconscious parts of their psyche to achieve psychological wholeness. Jung defines individuation as the lifelong journey of becoming the person one truly is, beyond the societal roles and expectations imposed by external forces (McLeod, 2023).

The goal of individuation is to achieve a balanced integration of various aspects of the self, which leads to the realization of the Self, the central archetype of unity and totality. There are three main steps in the process of individuation (Pamungkas, 2021; Zuhro, 2020), the steps are as follows:

1. Dissolving or Decreasing Persona

As cited in Zuhro (2020), Schultz mentioned the first step in the process of individuation is dissolving or decreasing the persona, which refers to the social mask used by individuals to interact with others. Pamungkas (2021) added that individuals who are too strongly identified with the persona tend to lose their true identity and only live to fulfil society's expectations. The process of individuation requires the individual not to deny the persona, but to develop it while maintaining a close relationship

with the original, hidden self. In other words, individuals must begin to become oneself (Zuhro, 2020).

2. Aware of the Shadow

The second step in the process of individuation is that individuals should accept and be aware of their shadow (Pamungkas, 2021). Shadow is often hidden by the persona because individuals tend to want to show their good side to others. As explained by Zuhro (2020), to achieve individuation, individuals must be aware of and accept the existence of the shadow without giving in to its destructive influence. The shadow should not be denied or completely eliminated, but rather integrated into the personality to achieve balance.

3. Accepting Anima/Animus

The third step is accepting psychological bisexuality, which involves recognizing and balancing the masculine and feminine aspects of the individual. Schultz explains that a man must recognize and express his anima while a woman must integrate her animus (Zuhro, 2020). According to Zuhro (2020), this process is difficult because gender stereotypes often limit the full expression of a person's personality. However, this step is crucial for achieving psychological harmony and continuing the journey toward individuation.

As a result of these three steps, an individual will achieve the self, which symbolizes the integration of a whole and harmonious personality. An individual who successfully reaches the self has unified both the conscious and unconscious aspects within themselves, thus achieving a level of psychological perfection.

Methods

The research method used in this research is qualitative research. Based on Creswell 1998, qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem.

The object of this research is a film titled *The Adam Project* (2022), directed by Shawn Levy. The film provides subtitles and visual representations that support analysis. The types of data used are primary data, which is collected from the film's dialogue, and secondary data, which is taken from books, journal articles, and online sources related to Jung's theory, especially individuation and archetypes.

The method of collecting data in this research is observation. The procedures include watching the movie and reading the subtitles, identifying the relevant data, classifying the data, and selecting the data that will be analyzed.

After the data is collected, it is analyzed through the following steps: displaying the data, explaining the data, and interpreting the data by applying Carl Jung's psychoanalytical theory.

Findings and Discussions

This section discusses the psychological journey of Adam Reed in *The Adam Project* (2022) through Carl Jung's theory of archetypes and individuation. Adam's transformation involves three main archetypes: persona, shadow, and anima, which correspond to key stages in the individuation process.

The Archetypes of Adam Reed Reflected

Persona

Adam's persona manifests in his sarcasm and emotional detachment, especially as an adult. He uses humor as a defense mechanism to hide grief over his father's death and guilt toward his mother.

A scene happened in Adam parents' bedroom when the adult Adam searched for clothing because he got shot and his clothes got bloody. In this scene, the two Adams shared a conversation:

Adult Adam : I used to love this jacket.

Young Adam : Dad did too. I keep waiting to wake up and miss him less, but that hasn't happened yet. Do you still miss him?

Adult Adam : Missed him while he was here.

(*The Adam Project*, 2022, 00:23:32 - 00:23:43)

This scene takes place in Adam's parents' bedroom when the adult Adam searched for a change of clothes. While searching through the wardrobe, the adult Adam found a jacket he used to love. The young Adam admitted that he was still deeply missing his father. He then asked the adult Adam if he felt the same way. The adult Adam responds, "Missed him while he was here," revealing his complicated feelings about their

father, who was often emotionally distant despite being physically not present. The adult Adam sheds his cynical persona by recognizing his grief and love for his father. By admitting “Missed him while he was here,” the adult Adam reveals the missing of his relationship with his father.

Shadow

Adam’s shadow consists of repressed guilt, unresolved grief, and anger stemming from childhood trauma. His relationship with his mother reflects these struggles. In one scene, he expresses guilt:

Adult Adam : She still hasn’t cleaned out his closet.

Young Adam : She’s not much of a housekeeper.

Adult Adam : Hey. You have her to take care of you. She has no one. You understand? Do you understand? She wakes up every morning with a broken heart and a closet full of his clothes and gets nothing from you but a fistful of crap, and not even, like, ten seconds of genuine empathy.

(The Adam Project, 2022, 00:22:50 – 00:23:26)

This dialogue strongly highlights the shadow of the adult Adam’s personality. In this moment, it can be seen the frustration and guilt that the adult Adam feels about his relationship with his mother following their father’s death. The repeated use of “Do you understand?” with increasing intensity indicates the depth of his frustration and anger towards the young Adam.

Anima

Adam’s anima is represented by his emotional openness toward his mother and his wife, Laura. His empathy surfaces the dialogue between the young Adam and his mother before he leaves with Derek shows that behind the sarcasm and rebellion, Adam still cares for Ellie.

Young Adam : Mom, wait.

Mrs. Reed : What?

Young Adam : Turn around. Make good choices, okay?

Mrs. Reed : Said the boy who got suspended. [chuckles] I love you, honey. (I love you too, Mom. More than I know.)

(The Adam Project, 2022, 00:05:45 – 00:06:00)

These dialogues highlight Adam's feelings and show his attention toward his mother. The young Adam shows his caring and love for Ellie when he asks to turn around to fix the zipper on his mother's dress. This scene also reflects Adam's anima which allows him to show tenderness and emotional connection.

Individuation Process of Adam Reed

The individuation process is an individual's psychological journey to integrate various archetypes to create a balanced self. Three key stages of the individuation process are:

Dissolving or Decreasing Persona

The first stage of Adam Reed's individuation process can be seen in his journey of dissolving or decreasing his persona. The persona represents the social mask individuals wear to meet societal expectations and protect themselves from emotional vulnerability. In a scene that shows some times in the past, the adult and the young Adam could meet their father:

Mr. Reed : I love you.

Adult Adam : I get it, Dad.

Mr. Reed : I don't think you do. I am proud of you.

Adult Adam : Okay.

Mr. Reed : I love you, son. Know that inside your heart. Know... Come here. Come here.

Mr. Reed : You're my boys, and you'll always be my boys. Throughout all time.

Adult Adam : I love you, Dad.

Mr. Reed : I love you, buddy. Don't carry this around anymore.

(The Adam Project, 2022, 01:28:36 - 01:30:16)

This scene takes place in Adam's family home after the time machine has been successfully destroyed. At that time, time was still in

the process of returning to its quantum, so both adult and young Adam were still in 2018, a certain period shown in the movie. There were only Louise Reed (Adam's father), the adult Adam, and the young Adam in the house. This moment of closeness forces Adam to confront the emotions he has buried for years. When Adam begins to cry and finally says, "I love you, Dad," it marks that he allows himself to be vulnerable and starts to let go of the pain and guilt he has carried since his father's death.

This change aligns with the first stage of the individuation process dissolving or decreasing the persona. By acknowledging his emotions and expressing his love and loss for his father, Adam is starting to decrease his persona.

Aware of Shadow

The second step of individuation involves becoming aware of the shadow. This step requires the individual to acknowledge and accept the darker, hidden aspects of themselves rather than denying or repressing them. In a scene, Derek Ellie Reed's coworker visited their house to return Ellie's scarf:

Derek : Oh, hey there, kiddo.
Mrs. Reed : Oh. This is my son, Adam. Adam, this is Derek.
Derek : Oh, hey, Adam.
Young Adam : Hello. You have a wonderful mouth mullet. You must be very proud.
Mrs. Reed : Oh my gosh, Adam. [laughs]
Derek : Never heard it called that before.
Mrs. Reed : Well, thanks again.
Derek : Sure. See you soon
(The Adam Project, 2022, 00:19:09 – 00:14:45)

The dialogue shows how young Adam used sarcasm and small acts of rebellion to show his emotional discomfort. When Derek was introduced, the young Adam reacted by pretending nice. The young made a sarcastic comment about Derek's mustache, calling it a "mouth mullet," and pointed at once glared at him. These actions show his dislike for Derek. Although the adult Adam recognizes that guilt and anger are part of who he is, he has not fully accepted or processed these emotions. This is indicated by the adult Adam's tendency to regret his past actions, but

not explicitly forgive himself or his mother. Therefore, the adult Adam does not fully accept and integrate his shadow.

Accepting Anima

The third step in the process of individuation is accepting psychological bisexuality, which involves recognizing and balancing the masculine and feminine in a person. Adam Reed's interaction with his mother illustrates his journey toward accepting and integrating his anima.

A scene happened when the adult Adam, the young Adam, and Laura were in front of Laura's safe house in 2020, on the edge of a large lake. Laura started a conversation with great emotion that led adult Adam to a big decision to fix the timeline.

Adult Adam : If I go back and stop time travel, and that's an extremely big "if" with Sorian on my ass, we never meet. We never happen. We never happen, Laura.

Adult Adam : We did happen.

Laura : Every moment we ever had will always have happened. Even if we correct the time stream, somewhere in us will be the echo of this one. And we will find each other. I really believe that.

Adult Adam : What if we don't? What if... what if you're wrong? And you're probably wrong.

Laura : When am I ever wrong? Hey, hey.
[sobs]

Adult Adam : I can't do this again, okay? I can't do this again, please. I can't afford to lose you. Don't do this.

(The Adam Project, 2022, 00:45:53 – 00:47:26)

This scene shows the adult Adam's process of accepting his anima through significant emotional growth. Adam must face his deep fear of losing Laura for the second time. This fear reflects his resistance to emotional vulnerability and shows the softer side of Adam. When Adam says "What if we don't? What if... what if you're wrong?" it shows his feeling that he does not want to lose his wife, he is afraid of losing Laura.

Self Archetypes

The process of individuation, which leads to the realization of the Self, involves three key steps: decreasing Persona, aware of Shadow and accepting Anima. In the context of The Adam Project (2022), the character Adam Reed provides a compelling case study to analyze whether he achieves the Self or is still in the process of individuation.

In The Adam Project, Adam Reed exists in two timelines. The young Adam is 12 years old and lives in 2022. The adult Adam is around 40 years old and from the year 2050 but becomes trapped in 2022. The interaction between these two versions of Adam is a narrative device to explore his psychological development and progress toward the Self. The following dialogue happened when the young Adam found the stranger that actually the adult Adam who hiding in the garage after a power outage:

Young Adam : What are you doing in here?
Adult Adam : Mostly bleeding.[sighs] Wait, how old are you?
Young Adam : What?
Adult Adam : How old are you?
Young Adam : Twelve.
Adult Adam : [whispers] Twelve... Shit!
(The Adam Project, 2022, 00:08:58 – 00:09:14)

When the adult Adam realized that the little kid was twelve years old, the adult Adam's reaction was "Shit!." This moment highlights the adult Adam's realization that the kid he is talking to is the young Adam. The dialogue means that the young Adam is twelve years old and the adult Adam is around forty years old. This indicates that the adult Adam has not yet reached fifty years or above when the Self is achieved. This means that Adam is still in the process of individuation rather than having completed it.

While Adam Reed shows significant progress in the process of individuation, he has not yet achieved the Self. His interactions with his younger self, his mother, and the memory of his father show that he is beginning to decrease his Persona, aware of his Shadow, and accept his Anima. However, his unresolved guilt, lingering anger, and incomplete

emotional processing indicate that his journey toward the Self is still in process.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis, Adam Reed's journey in *The Adam Project* (2022) reflects several Jungian archetypes and elements of the individuation process. The findings show that Adam embodies the persona, shadow, and anima. His persona appears as sarcasm and emotional detachment, masking grief and vulnerability over his father's death. His shadow consists of unresolved anger and guilt, while his anima emerges through moments of empathy and tenderness in his relationships with his mother and wife. Although Adam does not fully reach individuation or the realization of the Self, he makes progress. He begins to confront his emotions, acknowledge his grief, and connect with his inner self. However, his inability to fully integrate his shadow suggests that his individuation remains incomplete.

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