



The Archetype of the “Grumpy Old Man”: Individuation and Wholeness in Fredrick

Backman’s *A Man Called Ove*

Shabrina Almaira¹, Zuhrul Anam²

^{1,2}English Literature, Universitas Negeri Semarang

Article Info	Abstract
<p>Received: 2026-04-29 Revised: 2026-05-20 Accepted: 2026-06-07</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Archetypes, Character transformation, Depression, Despair, Grief, Individuation, Wholeness</i></p> <p>DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.10356</p> <p>Corresponding Author: Shabrina Almaira shabrinaalmaira@students.unnes.ac.id English Literature, Universitas Negeri Semarang</p>	<p><i>This study examines the psychological transformation of the main character in Fredrik Backman’s novel A Man Called Ove through the lens of Carl Jung’s individuation theory. The research aims to explain how the individuation process enables an individual to overcome chronic loneliness and depression following the loss of a loved one. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the study analyzes narrative data, dialogues, and monologues categorized into Jungian archetypes: Persona, Shadow, Anima, and Self. The results demonstrate that Ove’s journey toward psychological wholeness begins with the failure of his defensive personas to resolve his inner suffering. This failure exposes his shadow, manifested through deep despair and repeated suicidal impulses. The findings further reveal the emergence of the anima, triggered by social interactions. This process culminates in the realization of the Self, where Ove achieves a supraordinate totality of the psyche, transitioning from isolation to communal belonging and social altruism. The study concludes that the individuation process allows for the transcendence of grief, leading to a state of psychological peace and a meaningful final legacy.</i></p>

1. Introduction

Mental health has become an increasingly important concern because it significantly influences an individual's quality of life and overall well-being. Among various mental health disorders, depression should receive greater attention. According to WHO (2025), approximately 280 million people globally experience depression. This condition is one of the most common psychiatric conditions that is a major cause of illness globally, many sufferers experience recurrent or even chronic depression (Lam, 2018).

As stated by the National Institute of Mental Health (2024), the phenomenon of depression in life is often caused by various factors such as drastic and negative life changes, trauma, or high stress level. Symptoms of major depression are divided into physical (somatic) and emotional (non-somatic) symptoms. Physical symptoms consist of sleep disturbance, weight or appetite disturbance, bad concentration, decreased energy, and psychomotor changes. In contrast, emotional symptoms consist of loss of interest, feelings of worthlessness, persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness, and thoughts of death (Tolentino & Schmidt, 2018).

The novel *A Man Called Ove* (2014) by Fredrik Backman illustrates chronic sadness, social isolation, and psychological transformation in late adulthood. The novel tells the story of Ove, a 59-year-old man known for his rigid adherence to routine, his harsh attitude, and social isolation. The sadness and loneliness that Ove feels reflect the deep collapse of his ego after the death of his wife, Sonja. She was the only source of color and meaning in Ove's black-and-white world. Ove's inner struggle is marked by despair that leads to a series of suicide attempts, symbolic of dissolving an ego that no longer finds purpose in his life.

However, this path of despair is disrupted by constant social "disturbance" from his neighbors, especially Parvaneh. Through interactions with his surroundings, Ove is forced to confront his buried 'Shadow' and reintegrate his capacity for empathy. Ultimately, the novel depicts a gradual process of individuation, in which Ove begins to move from a state of stagnant isolation toward a sense of self-acceptance and deep community connection.

Previous studies on Fredrik Backman's novel *A Man Called Ove* have focused on Ove's introverted personality (Natalia, 2018) and his psychological conflict through Lacan's psychoanalytic criticism (Agustian, Assiddiqi, & Fauzi, 2025). Additionally, other studies highlight the portrayal of aging and the impact of grief on Ove's emotional health (Aathira & Poongodi, 2021), as well as the role of community support in his recovery process (Sharma, 2024).

Although previous studies provide valuable insights into Ove's characterization and the external factors that shape his sadness, they tend to view his isolation and recovery as relatively static conditions, without examining the internal psychological dynamics that accompany his transformation. This study contributes to filling this gap by examining Ove's character transformation as a dynamic psychological process, exploring his movement from deep sadness to self-acceptance and wholeness formed through the friction between rigid isolation and

the demands of social interaction, which slowly fostered the awareness that he was valued and needed within his social environment.

The life experience of the character Ove in the novel *A Man Called Ove* aligns with Individuation Theory. Based on Jung (1959), in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, defines individuation as the process of forming oneself into a whole and indivisible psychological unity. He argues that human wholeness does not rely solely on the conscious ego but rather on the individual's success in integrating elements of the unconscious, which, although often unrecognized, actively influence human behavior.

Furthermore, Jung (1966) emphasizes that the Individuation process aims to achieve "realization" that occurs through a purely natural process that can unfold even without the individual's conscious knowledge or assistance, sometimes emerging forcibly despite internal resistance. Jung's framework involves the integration of several archetypes, namely persona, shadow, anima-animus, and ultimately the self (Tumengga, Azi, & Masri, 2023). These archetypes provide an analytical framework for interpreting Ove's psychological journey toward wholeness. The main focus of this study is to explain how the individuation process helps individuals overcome loneliness, depression and find meaning in life caused by individual death based on Jung's theory as reflected in the story.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore and interpret the complex psychological transformation represented in *A Man Called Ove*. The method is used to investigate a phenomenon in depth and holistically, through the collection of rich narrative data with a flexible research design (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). It is characterized by the use of nonnumerical data in the form of words, visuals, and observations to understand and describe the experiences, meanings, processes, and purposes of an event being researched (Jason & Glenwick, 2016). Within this approach, this study concentrates on narrative, dialogues, and significant events that portray Ove's psychological condition and illustrate his character transformation through the individuation process.

Primary data in this study were collected from various chapters of Fredrik Backman's novel *A Man Called Ove*, consisting of narratives, dialogues, and monologues that describe emotional dynamics, self-isolation, and social interactions that trigger Ove's character transformation. The data were selected based on their relevance to the research focus, particularly excerpts portraying grief, depression, loneliness, internal conflict, interpersonal relationships, and moments of psychological change. Secondary data obtained from various journal articles, books, and websites related to internal conflict, depression, and the individuation process.

Specifically, Carl Jung's theory of the individuation process serves as the theoretical framework to guide the interpretation of the findings. To ensure the credibility of selected data and interpretations, the researcher conducted repeated close readings of the novel and validated the findings through relevant secondary sources before proceeding to data analysis.

The data were analyzed using Carl Jung's theory of individuation and followed the three stages of analysis proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing & verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher identified, selected, and categorized relevant data from dialogues, monologues, and narratives in the novel that reflected aspects of Jung's archetypes.

For example, Ove's repeated suicide attempts after the death of Sonja were coded as despair, which were then interpreted as manifestations of the shadow archetype shaped by grief, loneliness, and unresolved emotional suffering. In the data display, the reduced data is organized into structured tables to facilitate interpretation, allowing the researcher to classify the data based on the persona, shadow, anima, and self-archetypes. Finally, in the conclusion and verification stage, conclusions are drawn based on the identified patterns and continuously verified by referring to the textual evidence and theoretical framework to ensure their validity and consistency.

This study employed qualitative descriptive analysis, which is characterized by describing phenomena being researched systematically and accurately based on facts (Furidha, 2023). By implementing Jung's individuation process, it allows a person to achieve wholeness, which is reflected in the harmony between their mind, emotions, and behavior (Saputri, 2024). This analytical process enables the researcher to examine how the archetypes function in shaping the character's transformation. Ultimately, the results of this analysis will be used to address the research question and provide a more profound understanding of how the individuation process shapes the character's psychological development within the narrative.

3. Result

The findings of this study examine how Ove's psychological transformation unfolds through a dynamic process of individuation, in which each archetypal stage contributes to his development and growth. According to Jung (1959), individuation is a process of achieving psychological wholeness through the integration of conscious and unconscious aspects of personality.

This process involves recognizing the persona as a social mask, confronting and accepting the shadow, integrating the anima/animus, and ultimately attaining the Self as the unified totality of the psyche (Schultz & Schultz, 2005). The findings of this study identify textual evidence corresponding to each of these stages in Ove's character development, presented in the following sections.

Construction of the Persona

A persona is one of the central concepts that plays a crucial role in the individuation process. According to Jung (1966), the persona refers to a social mask that individuals adopt in society with the intention of meeting societal expectations. In Ove's character, this study identified three personas displayed: the persona as a rule enforcer, the persona as the traditionalist mechanic, and the persona as an unpleasant old man. Each persona serves as a behavioral pattern through which he presents himself to his social environment.

1. Persona as a Rule Enforcer and Guardian of Order

The first persona identified as a rule enforcer and guardian of order, this persona is established from the novel's opening, where Ove is described as "*the kind of man who points at people he doesn't like the look of, as if they were burglars and his forefinger a policeman's flashlight.*" (p.1), immediately framing him as a figure who enforces discipline within its community. This persona is further reinforced through his habit of monitoring the parking area in his neighborhood to ensure everything is running according to the rules. "*Ove didn't really care who was parked in the guest parking area, of course.*

But it was a question of principle. If it said twenty-four hours on the sign, that's how long you were allowed to stay. What would it be like if everyone just parked wherever they liked? It would be chaos." (p.6). These findings reflect the authoritative role he plays in his community, consistent with his previous position as chairman of the Residents' Association, indicating that rule enforcement has become a core component of his social identity rather than merely a functional responsibility.

2. Persona as the Traditionalist Mechanic

The second persona identified in this study is Ove's persona as a traditionalist mechanic reflected through the narrative and his interactions with others, which reveal his resistance to modern technological advancements and preference for conventional methods. When the new chairman of the Residents' Association proposes installing security cameras to monitor the garbage room and parking area, in order to enhance security. Ove was the only resident who disagreed, rejecting internet-based surveillance in favor of his own daily inspections. "*The daily inspection was more effective anyway. You knew who was doing what and who was keeping things under control.*" (p.7).

His resistance toward modern technology is further illustrated in his conversation with an electronics store assistant when he insists, "*I want a computer! A normal bloody computer!*" and refuses the terms "*laptop*" or "*tablet*" (p.1). In both situations, Ove consistently maintains an image of himself as a competent figure based on his familiar, conventional systems rather than modern ones.

3. *Persona as an Unpleasant Old Man*

The third persona identified is Ove's persona as an unpleasant old man, reflected in his hostility and social withdrawal. When a stray, blood-stained cat lay in his yard, Ove shouts *"Clear off! ...Ove doesn't even look at it. He goes right into his house and slams the door."* (p.42). This behavioral pattern is collectively recognized by those around him. *People said he was bitter. Maybe they were right. He'd never reflected much on it. People also called him antisocial.* (p.28) This narrative reinforces previous evidence describing how Ove's hostile behavior shapes the community's perception of him as bitter and antisocial.

Although aware of these labels, he remains apathetic and feels that he does not need to reflect on himself to gain a favorable impression from others. While these three personas consistently define Ove's social behavior, the repressed emotional content beneath them begins to surface in private moments marking the transition to the manifestation of the shadow.

Manifestation of the Shadow

Manifestation of the shadow is an important stage in individuation, as it reveals the repressed or rejected aspect of an individual that still emerges, either directly or indirectly, such as traits or characteristics that do not align with one's self-image (Jung, 1959). In Ove's character development, the shadow functions to reveal the repressed aspects of his personality that surface under emotional pressure. The manifestation of the shadow exposes emotions that he concealed from others, therefore providing a more profound understanding of his actions and personality. This study finds the shadow manifests in two distinct forms: despair and ego vulnerability in private moments, and destructive impulses expressed through repeated suicide attempts.

1. *Manifestation of Despair and Ego Vulnerability through the Shadow*

Ove's shadow emerges most transparently during his private moments rather than social interactions. When he visits Sonja's grave, his behavior was very in contrast to his public image. There, he speaks to her as though she were present. *"Nothing works when you're not at home." She doesn't answer. Ove fingers the plants. "I'm tired of it, just rattling around the house all day while you're away."* (p.26). The absence of any response did not stop him from continuing to talk about what was happening in his life lately, revealing the depth of his loneliness and emotional dependence.

This vulnerability deepens in the following scene. *He looks at her for a long time. Finally, he puts his hand carefully on the big boulder and caresses it tenderly from side to side, as if touching her cheek. "I miss you," he whispers.* (p.27). Not only that, but Ove also brings pink flowers, which was his wife's favorite color. Both scenes present a stark contrast to his rigid and unpleasant old man persona, which is entirely absent here, replaced by a figure overcome by grief and longing. Thus, the graveyard functions as a private psychological space where Ove's persona is suspended and his shadow surfaces without social observation.

2. *Destructive Force of the Shadow and the Impulse for Wholeness*

As Ove's grief deepened, that shadow transformed from a sense of vulnerability into a destructive force, most clearly evident through his repeated suicide attempts. Ove's first suicide attempt is triggered when a neighbor mentions Sonja's name, which leads him to systematically arrange his suicide. "Then he goes into the living room, ties a noose in the rope, threads it through the hook, climbs up on the stool, and puts his head in the noose.

Kicks the stool away. Closes his eyes and feels the noose closing around his throat like the jaws of a large wild animal" (p.55). This highly systematic preparation indicates that the shadow has moved beyond emotional manifestation and progressed into behavioral domination. A second attempt followed deliberately.

"Fixes the plastic tube tightly over the exhaust pipe. Watches the exhaust fumes slowly bubbling out of the other end of the tube. Then feeds the tube through the open back window. Gets into the car. Closes the door. Adjusts the wing mirrors. Fine-tunes the radio one step forward and one step back. Leans back in the seat. Closes his eyes. Feels the thick exhaust smoke, cubic inch by cubic inch, filling the garage and his lungs." (p.81)

The precision of the rituals in both suicide attempts, particularly the details regarding the positioning of the mirror and the radio before his death, suggests that behind the image of a skilled mechanic lies a shadow side that feels incapable of fixing his life following his wife's death. Across both instances, Ove's impulse toward wholeness has been distorted. For him, reunion with Sonja through death becomes the only possible way to attain completeness. This destructive domination of the shadow ultimately shatters his psychological defenses, creating the conditions for the emergence of anima.

Integration of the Anima

In Ove's process of individuation, a crucial stage emerges through the recognition and integration of the anima. Jung (1959) defines anima as the unconscious weak side within a man, typically expressed through the projection of a feminine aspect who essentially serves as a complement and requires integration to achieve psychological wholeness.

Moreover, Jung argued the anima within a man manifests itself through moods and emotional responses that are derived from the subconscious. Based on the findings of this study, three forms of the anima's manifestation are identified: the external disturbances of the anima as a catalyst for life, the emergence of anima in Ove's empathy toward others, and the reinforcement of anima through the feeling of being needed.

1. *The External Disturbances of the Anima as a Catalyst for Life*

Anima entered Ove's life for the first time through an external figure who introduced him to qualities of care and emotional warmth that he could no longer generate within himself. There is a scene when Ove is annoyed by the incessant ringing of the doorbell. When he opens the door, he finds two young children carrying a dinner sent by Parvaneh as a gesture of hospitality toward Ove, their new neighbor.

The doorbell rings again. Ove turns around and stares at the bell as if it should be ashamed of itself. "What is it now?" he repeats as he throws the door open so hard that a three-year-old girl is flung backwards by the draft and ends up very unexpectedly on her bottom. Beside her stands a seven-year-old girl looking absolutely terrified. (p.16)

His reaction to this act of caring for others reflects the extent to which his withdrawn state resists any form of emotional contact. These external disturbances always happened at critical moments, one of which was when he was preparing to hang himself. Ove is stopped not by his own will but by persistent knocking at the door. He steps off the stool and walks toward it, while muttering "Does it really have to be so difficult to kill yourself without constantly being disturbed?" (p.45). The irritation he displays speaks for itself. Ove's reflex to the disturbance, indicating an unconscious movement to distance himself from self-destructive behavior that operates beyond the control of his conscious intentions.

2. *The Emergence of Anima in Ove's Empathy Toward Others*

The manifestation of the anima becomes more integrated, his responses begin to shift from defensive hostility toward empathy through his interactions with Anita who approaches him for help repairing her radiator.

"Can't your man sort out that kind of thing in his own house?" Rune's wife shakes her head mournfully.

"No, Rune has been really ill lately, you see. They say it's Alzheimer's. He's in a wheelchair as well. It's been a bit uphill. . . ."Ove nods with faint recognition. As if he has been reminded of something his wife told him a thousand times, although he still managed to forget it all the time. (p.52)

This unintentional emotional moment marked a significant turning point. Ove agreed to help not out of a sense of obligation but through an empathetic response triggered by his memories of Sonja. In this case, his relationship with Sonja served as a bridge that allowed his long-suppressed emotional capacity to resurface.

3. *The Reinforcement of Anima Through the Feeling of Being Needed*

The anima's integration deepens as Ove begins to feel needed by those around him, which is reflected in several important interactions with his neighbors. In one scene, Pervaneh interrupts his second suicide attempt to ask for a hospital ride because her husband had fallen off a ladder. Ove's sarcastic response, "Right. What a bloody surprise; you could see that one coming from a mile away..." (p.83).

Although at first he seemed reluctant to respond with that sarcastic remark, he eventually decided to help Pervaneh. Furthermore, this feeling of being needed becomes increasingly apparent when Pervaneh and Anita visit Ove's house. Anita told him in a very fragile voice that the authorities were about to come and take Rune away to be forcibly placed in a health facility.

"They say they'll come and pick him up this week, and that I can't manage to take care of him myself," she says, in a voice so fragile that it hardly manages to get past her lips.

"We have to do something!" cries Parvaneh, grabbing him. Ove snatches his arm back and avoids her eyes. (p.216)

In this scene, Ove's response pulls back and avoids her eyes yet does not walk away. The sense of being needed here operates on a higher level, no longer merely a technical matter but one of justice and humanity for Rune. Across both scenes, the escalating emotional weight of others' needs progressively overrides his impulse toward isolation, transforming his role from a man seeking death to one others rely upon for protection and action.

Realization of the Self

The Self represents the completion of individuation, characterized by the integration and harmonization of the conscious and unconscious aspects of personality (Schultz & Schultz, 2005). According to Jung in *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology* (1966), the self is defined as a supraordinate totality of the psyche, consisting of both the conscious and the unconscious, which are not necessarily in opposition but rather complement each other to form a whole.

Furthermore, Jung (1959) explains that the self is a supraordinate personality in which the ego functions only as a part of the whole, and it is often experienced not as a subject but as an object due to its unconscious components. Based on the findings of this study, the realization of the Self in Ove is manifested through three progressive stages: The Integration of the Self through Social Altruism, The Realization of the Self through Communal Belonging, and The Transcendence of the Self through the Final Legacy.

1. *The Integration of the Self through Social Altruism*

One of the key moments reflecting Ove's social altruism occurs when his initial reluctance to engage with others gradually develops into a deliberate willingness to empower and protect his community. In one scene, he voluntarily teaches Parvaneh to drive. *Ove nods, puts on his safety belt, and makes himself comfortable. "Now, push the clutch down and do what I say." And that afternoon Parvaneh learns to drive. (p.188).*

This quotation highlights a significant change in Ove, in that he no longer views his interactions with Parvaneh as a nuisance but rather as an activity he undertakes voluntarily to equip his neighbor with the essential skill of driving. The same authoritative tone previously used to enforce parking rules is now directed toward empowering his neighbor; what once functioned as a mechanism of control has been redirected into an act of care. Ove's social altruism becomes even more evident in the following scene, where government officials insist on forcibly taking Rune to a care facility on the grounds that Anita is unable to care for him on her own.

"And who's going to take care of him, Anita?" he asks rhetorically, shaking his head. Then he takes a step forward and gestures for the three nurses to follow him into the house. "I'm going to take care of him!" answers Anita, her gaze as dark as a burial at sea. The man in the white shirt just continues shaking his head as he pushes past her. And only then does he see the shadow rising up behind her. "And so will I," says Ove. (p.238)

This declaration symbolizes that Ove has transcended his own personal interests entirely, he no longer cares about his suicide plan, his focus has now shifted entirely to justice for Rune. This time, Ove's stubbornness and assertiveness are directed toward protecting others, not toward distancing himself from them, as demonstrated by his commitment to caring for Rune together with him. The same stubbornness that once positioned him as a social antagonist now redefines him as a protector.

2. *The Realization of the Self through Communal Belonging*

The psychological transformation of the Self is not only visible through Ove's intimate personal gestures but also resonates outwardly, altering the collective perception of his entire community. This is evident in Ove's connection with Parvaneh's child, who is celebrating her birthday. *The girl, who is now an eight-year-old, stays in the hall, touching the iPad box with amazement.*

As if she hardly dares believe that she's actually got it in her hands. Ove leans towards her. She looks around to make sure no one can see; then she smiles and gives him a hug. "Thanks, Granddad," she whispers and runs into her room. (p. 255). The label that is given to Ove signals that he no longer sees himself as an individual isolated from his social environment but has instead found a sense of belonging

and emotional connection within the community around him. This internal shift also mirrored externally by a change in community perception. "*The neighbors are saying he's been "like a different person" these last days, that they've never seen him so "engaged" before.*" (p. 255) a direct inversion of the "bitter" and "antisocial" labels established at the novel's beginning.

3. *The Transcendence of the Self through the Final Legacy*

Ove's death and the letter he leaves behind mark the final stage of his individuation. This time it was not by suicide, as he had repeatedly attempted, but peacefully in his sleep due to an enlarged heart.

Adrian gets the Saab. Everything else is for you to take care of. You've got the house keys. The cat eats tuna fish twice per day and doesn't like shitting in other people's houses. Please respect that. There is a lawyer in town who has all the bank papers and so on. There is an account with 11,563,013 kronor and 67 öre. From Sonja's dad. The old man had shares. He was mean as hell. Me and Sonja never knew what to do with it. Your kids should get a million each when they turn eighteen, and Jimmy's girl should get the same. The rest is yours. But please don't let Patrick bloody take care of it. Sonja would have liked you. Don't let the new neighbors drive in the residential area. -Ove (p.266)

In his will, Ove provided detailed instructions regarding the distribution of his estate, the care of his cat, and even some of the small quirks he did during his lifetime. He also gave clear instructions that he wanted his funeral to be held simply without a crowd and that he wanted to be buried next to Sonja's grave. The presence of both tenderness and strict adherence to rules within a single document illustrates the integration at the core of his individuation.

The rigidity and his restored emotional capacity no longer conflict but rather complement one another. Interestingly, even though Ove requested a simple funeral without a crowd, around 300 people attended his funeral. This confirms that his impact on the community extended far beyond what his persona had ever permitted him to acknowledge.

4. Discussion

The three personas identified in Ove's character, such as rule enforcer, traditionalist mechanic, and unpleasant old man collectively reflect Jung's (1966) idea of persona as a social mask that individuals adopt in society with the intention of meeting societal expectations. Critically, this study found that Ove's personas are not adaptive responses to his social environment but rather constructions driven by grief. He maintains each persona to preserve identity, authority, competence, and emotional distance after Sonja's death.

Ove's continued performance of the rule enforcer role even after losing his formal position as chairman aligns with Jung's (1959) view that the persona

reflects a person's social role or profession. However, even though he has lost his formal role, he continues to exhibit the same behavioral patterns. This indicates that the persona has shifted from a social function to a psychological survival mechanism. The mask of discipline gave him a sense of control and authority amid his crumbling personal life, allowing him to maintain the image of an individual who still has important duties and responsibilities.

Similarly, his persona as a traditionalist mechanic functions to protect his image as a knowledgeable and competent man in a modernizing world. Rather than adapting to technological advancement, Ove insists on preserving familiar systems. In this sense, his resistance to technological advancement means maintaining the perception of competence that his grief has otherwise threatened.

However, this persona makes him perceived as outdated and stubborn by those around him, further deepening his isolation rather than resolving it. Ove's indifference toward his community's negative perception, combined with his consistently hostile behavior, further reflects the function of the persona as a social mask that conceals unconscious impulses from the shadow (Azzahra & Mustofa, 2026).

His hostile attitude, like shouting at the cat, slamming the door, and remaining apathetic toward social labels is a mechanism for maintaining emotional distance, effectively preventing others from accessing the sadness and despair beneath his facade. Overall, the simultaneous maintenance of three distinct personas points to a layered defense structure. This complexity implies that his grief requires a more intricate psychological defense than a single social mask can provide. His indifference to social labels, his rejection of modernity, and his excessive hostility are not signs of psychological stability, but rather of an impending collapse, which creates the conditions for the eventual emergence of the shadow.

The two-stage manifestation of the shadow in Ove's character from private vulnerability to destructive dominance reflects Jung's (1959) concept of the shadow as the "true face" hidden behind the persona. In Ove's character development, the shadow functions to reveal the repressed aspects of his personality that surface under emotional pressure. The manifestation of the shadow exposes emotions that he concealed from others, therefore providing a deeper understanding of his actions and personality. Ove's visit to Sonja's grave and his behavior there reveal an emotional dependence and longing that are completely hidden in his public persona. This aligns with Saputri (2026), who states the shadow is often associated with experiences of loss, failure, and a persistent sense of incompleteness which is clearly reflected in Ove's condition.

In Ove's case, the loss of Sonja and his failure to find a purpose in life were the main triggers for these destructive impulses. The tragic scene depicts the moment when Ove's ego can no longer maintain his strong and disciplined social mask, causing him to be dominated by his destructive shadow. As stated by Zuhro (2020), the shadow archetype produces unpleasant ideas, emotions, and actions that are often socially unacceptable internally in terms of both consciousness and behavior.

A dynamic evident in Ove's systematic suicide preparations, which stand in direct contradiction to his public persona as a disciplined enforcer of order and competence.

Furthermore, Ove's destructive impulse toward wholeness, his attempt to reunite with Sonja through death, represents a crucial theoretical point. Rather than integrating the shadow through conscious acknowledgment, Ove attempts to resolve this tension through his suicide attempt. This distinguishes Ove's case from the manifestations of the shadow identified by Azzahra & Mustofa (2026) in their analysis of character Yasin, in which the shadow emerges not as a destructive impulse but as a true twin figure representing unfulfilled life possibilities. In Yasin's case, the shadow triggers self-reflection through conscious dialogue and confrontation.

In contrast, rather than confronting his shadow, Ove surrenders and considers death the only possible path to wholeness. However, this collapse of defenses also becomes a turning point, as the dominance of the shadow eventually opens the way for the emergence of the anima and renewed social connection.

The three-stage progression of anima integration in Ove's character from unintended interruptions to empathetic recognition, and culminating in active protection reflects Jung's idea that anima within a man manifests itself through moods and emotional responses that are derived from the subconscious (Jung, 1966). In Ove's character development, the Anima serves as an emotional bridge connecting his withdrawn and isolated state to involvement with the outside world.

This finding aligns with Amni & Zamruddin (2026), who observe that anima integration in male characters frequently involves confronting traits in tension with socially constructed ideals of masculinity particularly empathy and emotional sensitivity. However, what distinguishes Ove from characters analyzed in other Jungian literary studies is that the integration of the anima here occurs not through romantic projection, but through communal intervention. Anita and Pervaneh's family as external figures through whom anima-related qualities such as care and emotional warmth gradually enter his life.

This communal mechanism has been observed, even though from a different theoretical lens by Sharma (2024), who notes that Parvaneh functions as a unifying force that transforms isolated neighbors into an extended family through persistent engagement. While Sharma's analysis foregrounds community dynamics rather than Jungian individuation, her observation is consistent with the present study's argument that the distribution of anima catalysts across multiple figures, rather than concentration in a single romantic figure, proves more effective in dismantling Ove's grief-driven psychological defenses.

Furthermore, the detail that Ove consistently resists each anima-catalyzed moment before ultimately complying is analytically significant. His resistance reflects not merely behavioral stubbornness but ongoing tension between his dominant persona structure and the emerging anima. Critically, Anita's fragile voice

and Pervaneh's desperate pleas did not simply trigger a practical response in Ove.

Instead, they penetrate the soft side of Ove, which he had long concealed, thereby destabilizing the core of his rigid personality. Jung (1959) emphasizes that the Anima requires integration for the individual to achieve wholeness. Through repeated emotional interruptions and relational involvement with others, the anima gradually transforms Ove's defensive hostility into empathy, care, and social responsibility. As these emotional capacities become more integrated into his conscious behavior, Ove moves closer to psychological wholeness, paving the way for the realization of the Self.

Ove's Self realization demonstrates that individuation is achieved not through the elimination of psychic conflicts, but through their gradual integration into a more unified and meaningful sense of self consistent with Jung's (1966) conception of the Self as a totality in which conscious and unconscious elements complement one another. Interestingly, this integration does not erase Ove's former traits such as his authoritarianism, technical precision, and stubbornness. Instead, these traits are redirected from self-protective rigidity toward communal protection and care.

For instance, when Ove gives Pervaneh's child an iPad as a birthday present, this scene represents more than just character development, but a symbolic resolution of the traditionalist persona established at the beginning of the novel. Ove willingly engages with the technology he once rejected, doing so as an act of affection rather than out of compulsion. Equally important is Ove's statement, "And so will I" when government officials arrive at Anita's house and attempt to forcibly take Rune to a care facility. It is a moment in which his characteristic stubbornness, previously used to enforce rules and maintain distance, is consciously redirected to defend the rights and dignity of others.

This marks the point where the integration of the persona, the shadow, and the anima coalesce into a unified sense of self. Ove's assertiveness no longer conflicts with his restored emotional capacity but operates in harmony with it. In this way, he demonstrates that his persona has been integrated rather than abandoned. This harmony is further reflected in the community's shifting perception from "antisocial" to "engaged" confirming that Ove's Self-realization is not confined to his inner world but extends outward into his relationships and community.

Moreover, the last instruction in his will "*Don't let the new neighbors drive in the residential area*" indicates that Ove's process of individuation does not culminate in a complete transformation of his personality, but rather in the integration of his true self with the aspects of himself that he has long suppressed. This distinguishes his life journey from models of individuation that imply drastic personality changes, and instead demonstrates that individuation operates as a process of integration without eliminating identity.

This supports the view that the realization of the Self requires individuals to overcome the dominance of the persona, confront and accept the shadow, and integrate the anima or animus as part of the unconscious psyche (Feist, Roberts, &

Feist, 2021). Finally, approximately 300 people attended his funeral, despite his request to be held simply without a crowd. Their presence showed that even though Ove had physically passed away, his influence and significance remained alive in the lives of those around him. Thus, the legacy he left behind is not only material but also emotional and social. This represents the transcendence of the self, where Ove's sense of wholeness is not only achieved internally but also continues through the positive impact he left on his community.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Ove's character development in *A Man Called Ove* aligns with Carl Jung's concept of individuation, illustrating his psychological transformation from despair and self-destructive isolation toward wholeness and renewed meaning in life. The findings reveal that Ove's individuation process unfolds through the gradual integration of key Jungian archetypes that shape his psychological development. Initially, Ove constructs various personas as defensive social masks to preserve authority, competence, and emotional distance following the loss of his wife.

However, these personas fail to resolve his inner suffering and instead conceal the repressed despair and vulnerability manifested through the shadow, particularly in his grief, emotional dependence, and repeated suicidal impulses. The emergence of the anima then functions as a catalyst for emotional reawakening, as Ove's interactions with his neighbors, especially Parvaneh and Anita, gradually restore his empathy, relational attachment, and sense of being needed. Through this emotional reintegration, Ove begins to reconnect with life and transcend the destructive impulses that once dominated him.

Ultimately, the realization of the Self marks the culmination of Ove's individuation, reflected in his social altruism, communal belonging, and lasting impact on his community. Significantly, Ove's death occurs not through the suicide he repeatedly attempted earlier in the novel but through his enlarged heart, symbolizing that his life no longer ends in despair but in psychological peace and completion. Therefore, this study concludes that Ove successfully undergoes the individuation process, as his psychological transformation demonstrates the integration of conscious and unconscious elements into a unified self. His journey affirms Jung's view that individuation enables individuals to move beyond fragmentation and suffering toward psychological wholeness and meaningful existence.

6. References

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