



A Roadtrip into the Heart of the Land

A Literary Jungian Analysis of Shadow's Journey
of Individuation in Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*

A Master Thesis

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Chapter 1: The Process of Individuation	9
Chapter 2: Wednesday Hides in Shadows	23
Chapter 3: A Decaying Anima.....	39
Chapter 4: The Self is Waiting.....	49
Conclusion	60
Works Cited	63

Introduction

Shadow stepped over the chain.

He looked around, peering into the darkness.

His skin prickled.

A voice [Wednesday] from behind him, in the shadows, said, very quietly, “You have never disappointed me.” (Gaiman 530)

Recognition of the shadow [...] leads to the modesty we need in order to acknowledge imperfection (Jung, *Undiscovered* 73)

Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods* (2001) is the story of Shadow Moon and Mr. Wednesday. It tells the story of how these two characters meet, how they influence each other, how they die, and eventually how only one is brought back to life, more powerful than before. The protagonist in this story is called Shadow, and the other operates from the shadows. The shadow is of course one of C.G. Jung’s most famous psychological concepts. Various scholars (Rauch 2013; Gardner 2015) have noted connections between Gaiman’s and Jung’s work and by calling the protagonist Shadow it seems as if Neil Gaiman is inviting a Jungian reading of the book. But within a classic Jungian framework, “the shadow” is “one of the unconscious psychic factors that the ego¹ cannot control” (Stein 106), and therefore is hardly ever represented in fiction as the central character of a narrative. As this thesis will explain in the subsequent chapters, the shadow of a protagonist is often projected upon the antagonist of the story. By naming the protagonist Shadow it would seem that Gaiman experimented with

¹ In “Aion,” Jung defines the ego as “the complex factor to which all conscious contents are related. It forms, as it were, the centre 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” (139).

this classic Jungian concept that denotes those aspects of the human “personality that would ordinarily belong to the ego if they were integrated, but have been suppressed because of cognitive or emotional dissonance” (Stein 106). The shadow, significantly, “contains more than something merely negative”; it harbors “potentialities of the greatest dynamism, and it deepens entirely on the preparedness and attitude of the conscious mind whether the irruption of these forces and images and ideas associated with them will tend towards construction or catastrophe” (Jung, *Undiscovered* 75). Due to the relevance of the protagonist being named Shadow, and the presence of various other archetypal figures within the narrative, I decided that the best way to analyze the exact function of the pro- and antagonist in this multiple award-winning fantasy novel is to apply Jungian theory as a critical framework. To be more specific, I will analyze Shadow’s journey as a journey of individuation: “the progressive development of consciousness through the life span” (Stein 168). As the fantasy writer Ursula LeGuin argues, “[most] of the great works of fantasy are about [...] the journey to self-knowledge” (65). The Jungian individuation process will be explained in chapter one. For this introduction I will mention that it has three key components that correspond with three key elements in a Jungian analysis: the shadow, the anima, and the self.

To mirror this division in the process of individuation I have split the story of *American Gods* into three acts independently from how Gaiman divided the story. The first act of the story takes place between the start of the story and the blacksite where Shadow is tortured and from where he is consequently rescued. The second act starts from that escape and lasts until the death of Mr. Wednesday by Mr. World’s hands. The third act lasts from that moment until Shadow stops the war between the new gods and the old gods. I consider the remainder of the story as an epilogue.

This thesis will be divided into four chapters, of which three will coincide with my division of the story into three acts. Chapter 1 will explain the key elements of Jungian theory

and criticism relevant to this thesis, and will show how these elements are interwoven into fictional texts. By examining Jung's psychological terms in a broader cultural context it is possible to develop a critical framework that allows them to function as critical tools with which to explore the Jungian characteristics of *American Gods*. The close-textual analysis of the novel is conducted in the other three chapters. Chapter 2 will explore how the key components of the Jungian idea of the shadow correlate with both the character Shadow as well as Shadow's own "shadow": Mr. Wednesday. I will mostly focus on events of the first act to explore the concept of the shadow as it is represented by Wednesday, though I will allude to other acts as well. The second act contains several female characters who each represent some aspects of what Jung termed the anima: "subjective personalities that represent a deeper level of the unconscious than the shadow" (Stein 126). One character actually pretends to represent it. In chapter 3, I will analyze the role of these women in the story and how they interact with Shadow. Finally, in chapter 4, I will explore the Jungian concept of the self, "the goal of individuation" (Rowland, *Jung* 33), which is not simply a conscious sense of individuality, but a knowledge of "the numinous, potential, unconscious nature of every person" (Rowland, *Jung* 33). That chapter will discuss how Shadow attains access to the self. In order to explain Shadow's coming into awareness of the self, I will analyze the relation between the self and the world tree. After that the chapter will explore the underworld and Shadow's journey through it. Finally, when Shadow understands the elements that represent this central Jungian concept, he is capable of applying it to save lives. As Stein has pointed out, a person who has come into awareness of the self is "not egotistical and narcissistic, but rather philosophical, having a wide perspective, and not personally reactive or easily thrown off balance" (152); signs of a fantastic hero.

Overall, this thesis will show that Shadow goes through the process of individuation and learns to accept his past and embrace his future. In the first act of the story Shadow

becomes aware of Wednesday's existence and becomes partners with him. Shadow also learns of Laura's betrayal which haunts Shadow's thoughts whenever he sees her before he finally is capable of letting her go. In the second act his conscious engagement with the anima allows Shadow to come close to other women such as Sam Black-Crow who helps Shadow's ego to find the truth that will be revealed in the final act. In this act Shadow learns of the relation between himself and Wednesday and this truth opens his eyes for other truths in his life such as the ritualistic sacrifices in Lakeside. Shadow finally forgives Laura and she is laid to rest, he gives flowers to Sam Black-Crow, and he settles his debt with Czernobog.

Before moving on to the analysis of the novel, it is useful to briefly summarize the plot. Shadow Moon is released from prison early to grief for his recently deceased wife Laura Moon. On his way to his hometown he becomes acquainted with Mr. Wednesday, an incarnation of Odin, and a leprechaun called Mad Sweeney who gives Shadow a golden coin. Shadow eventually agrees to work for Wednesday and they travel across the United States to meet up with various acquaintances of Wednesday. Before leaving his hometown to travel with Wednesday he tosses the gold coin in Laura's grave which brings her back to life, even though her body continues to decay. Some of the gods that Shadow meets are Anansi, Czernobog, Bast, Anubis, and Easter. Shadow is eventually captured and tortured by spooks who take their orders from Mr. World. However, he escapes with the help of Laura who came to rescue him and killed his captors in the process.

Eventually, Shadow ends up in a place called Lakeside which becomes his base of operations where he lives and spends time between travelling with Wednesday. During these travels he learns of Wednesday's, and the other old gods, desire to stay alive and relevant. Shadow also learns of the new gods who wish for the old gods to disappear to ensure their own survival. After some time in Lakeside he learns how Wednesday met Mr. World to parlay for the survival of both sides of the conflict. Instead, Wednesday is betrayed by Mr.

World and shot, effectively killing him. Part of Shadow's contract with Wednesday includes holding Wednesday's vigil should he die and even though their allies ensure that Shadow does not have to do this he goes through with it by his own volition.

Shadow is hung from the world tree in Virginia to watch over Wednesday corpse for 9 days and he dies as a result. Shadow travels through the underworld whereupon he learns the truth that Wednesday is his father and that Shadow is part of Wednesday's plan to return to power. Easter brings Shadow back to life to travel to where the two sides are clashing after Wednesday's death broke tension into all-out war. When Shadow arrives he tells both sides how they are similar and how they are both conned by Wednesday and Mr. World, who turned out to be Loki. He tells them that this escalation of the conflict was planned by Wednesday and Loki to ensure Wednesday's rise to power, and Loki would feed on the resulting chaos. Both sides return home and Wednesday fades away. Loki is killed by Laura who asks Shadow to send her on her way as well. Shadow takes the gold coin from Laura who is laid to rest. Shadow settles outstanding debts and solves a mystery in Lakeside before departing the United States. He ends up in Iceland for a bit where he meets another incarnation of Odin and Shadow realizes that he has had enough of gods for a while. Shadow leaves and keeps on travelling.

Chapter 1:

The Process of Individuation

Carl Gustav Jung was an experimental psychiatrist between 1900 and 1909. After that time, however, his attention shifted to other matters and “he began to immerse himself in the study of mythology” (Dawson 270). This shift in attention started a career for Jung that would lead him to become a textual critic, as much as a practicing psychiatrist. All of his major ideas are inspired by a variety of texts. As such it would seem that these Jungian ideas are applicable to texts as well as people with which Jung busied himself with in the early years of his career (Dawson 270). The idea of appropriating aspects of Jung’s psychological insights for the study of literary texts is known as Jungian literary theory. The specific part of Jungian literary theory that will form the critical framework of the analysis of *American Gods* is the idea that the psychological process of individuation can be appropriated to study character development within a literary text.

Before actually analyzing the protagonist’s development in *American Gods* it is useful to explain several concepts related to individuation, as developed by Jung throughout his psychological, philosophical and literary critical endeavors that will be necessary in the analysis of the novel. This will be followed by an explanation of the individuation process and what it entails. The first concept that needs to be discussed is that of the archetype: “Archetypes are inherited structuring patterns in the unconscious with potentials for meaning formation and images” (Rowland, *C.G. Jung* 226). This means that an archetype is the frame of an idea, an image, but formless and empty on its own. Archetypes can manifest themselves in many forms such as male, female, or non-human. They are the containers of the opposites inside a human’s psyche: an example of this in popular media is the image of an angel and a

devil on either shoulder of a character representing the conflict of good and evil as they influence a choice that has to be made (figure 1).



Figure 1 - The archetypes for listening to one's moral compass and consciously ignoring it.

Archetypes and Archetypal images are often confused with each other and used interchangeably even though they are not the same. In the chapter “Instinct and Archetype,” Walker writes that the images of the archetypes are used by Jung to prove that the archetypes exist on a psychological level of experience. The archetypes themselves are the result of millennia of human psychological evolution: “These archetypes [Jung] describes as ‘psychic residua of numberless experiences of the same type,’ experiences which have happened not to the individual but to his ancestors, and of which the results are inherited in the structure of the brain, *a priori* determinants of individual experience” (Bodkin 1). As a result of the age of these archetypes, the images that they produce are just as ancient: the mother, the father, the child, the hero, and the trickster, for instance. According to Walker, “Archetypes prepare and prompt human beings to react instinctively and spontaneously to the presence of parents, of children, of male or female lovers, and so on” (10). What this means is that when a human becomes a parent, they recognize their child not only because they gave birth to it, but because the child fits into the image of the child archetype that evolved alongside humanity

in what Jung called the collective unconscious, and that they grew up with when they were a child themselves.

The collective unconscious is another important Jungian concept that needs more explanation. The collective unconscious is separated from the personal unconscious by the nature of the individual. The personal unconscious exists as the contents that was once conscious in the mind of a person, and have then retreated in the unconscious due to repression or being forgotten. However, the content of the collective unconscious has never been acquired by individuals and owes its existence solely on hereditary traits: “[The] content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of archetypes” (C.G. Jung, *Archetypes* 42). This means that the collective unconscious is as old as the concept of archetypes and exists because of it.

Another way to look at collective unconsciousness is to compare it to collective consciousness. In her book *The Language of the Night*, Jungian fantasy writer Ursula Le Guin states that the collective consciousness is what our ego looks at when it needs to compare itself with something: our ego looks outside itself towards other people and their actions and words. This, however, would hollow out our ego and allow it to become empty. Instead, our egos should look inward instead of outward. By looking inward we see the collective unconsciousness where we can find true community (63). The relation between the collective unconscious and archetypes establishes the idea of cultural images. Some images are incredibly common, such as the idea of a god. The archetype of a god is a frame and formless. What this means is that a society has a base idea of what a god is, like a coloring book that has not been touched yet. Basic ideas for a god are already in this coloring book, such as a god is all-knowing and has supernatural powers. However, the quantity of gods and the nature of them have yet to be determined. The idea of a god is a frame and a society fills the emptiness inside it with their own ideas. However, every religion has its own

interpretation of what their god is. Some examples of gods in various cultures are Ra, Horus, and Bastet in Egyptian pagan culture, Odin, Thor, and Loki in Norse pagan culture (see Sykes), and Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades in Greek pagan culture (see Morford & Lenardon). These cultural images have proven themselves so powerful that they are still known to this day even if they are no longer worshipped. For example, in 2002 a videogame was published as a spinoff to *Age of Empires*. This game is known as *Age of Mythology*. This game added the gods of three major pagan mythologies to its game play: the Greek gods, the Egyptian gods, and the Norse gods (Figure 2). Another example is the Disney/Marvel film *Thor: Ragnarok*. This film plays with the concepts such as Valkyries, the Odinson's, and the idea of Ragnarok. Yet, this film has its roots in Norse pagan mythology (figure 3). These ideas of gods are still known to the public due to usage of their imagery within new media today. In Norse Mythology, Gaiman explains that he was introduced to figures like Odin and Loki by "reading the adventures of the Mighty Thor as depicted by American comics artist Jack Kirby" (Norse 11). While Irina Rață, Mathilda Slabbert, and Leonie Viljoen have explored Gaiman's *American Gods*' connections to mythology, the focus in this thesis will be on the archetypal function of Gaiman's myth-inspired characters.

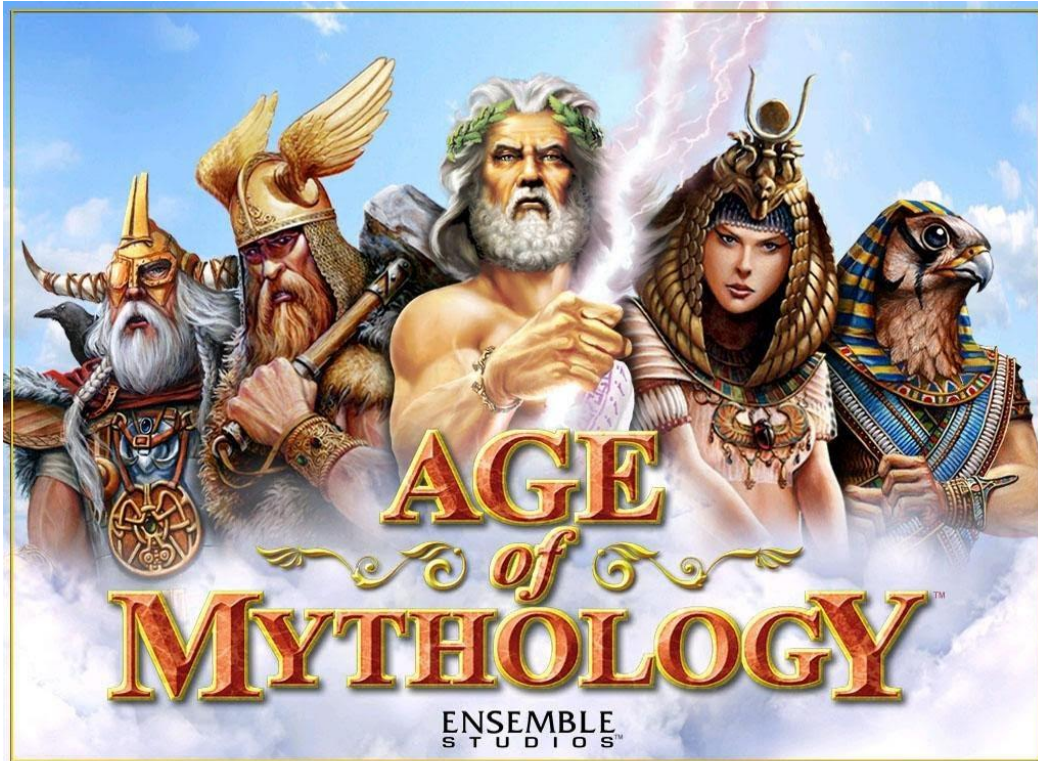


Figure 2 - The popular game released in 2002 which featured the three previously mentioned cultures as playable factions with a focus on gaining favor of the gods.



Figure 3 - The recently released *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017), featuring the reimagined characters of Thor, Loki, Odin, Hela, Surtur, and the Valkyries of Scandinavian myth in a Hollywood film based on a Marvel graphic novel.

The ego is at “the center of consciousness” (Young-Eisendrath 316). It is at the heart of the conscious process. However, it does not include the entirety of it. This means that the ego is in charge of the conscious actions that a person takes. The ego is our own “little private individual consciousness” (Le Guin 63). The ego receives guidance from several other functions in our brain and these help the ego make decisions for us. The ego is connected to the other processes that happen in the human mind: the processes of the unconscious.

The psyche is the term used by Jung when he describes the entirety of a person’s conscious and unconscious mind (Fordham 147). This term is also often used to describe the events inside a person’s mind in general, such as how a person’s psyche changes when experiencing certain events, such as an unexpected action. For example, someone who needs to go to work will become annoyed if he becomes stuck in traffic. This changes his psyche and he will arrive at work agitated. This agitation influences this person’s actions: he could become more snappy and annoyed with his fellow coworkers. Yet, when he returns home after a grueling day at work his child will give him a painting he made and this person’s psyche will change again to a more happy state. The psyche is not an archetype like the shadow or the self. However, the archetypes of the unconscious do affect the psyche.

The last important term to be discussed is the persona. This is an archetype used by most humans to interact with the world: “The process of civilizing the human being leads to a compromise between himself and the society as to what he should appear to be and to the formation of the mask behind which most people live” (Fordham 47). One encounters this often in children and in the way that caretakers teach them about manners in certain gatherings. One has to wear a suit to a funeral and be sad. One should not embarrass one’s parents in front of friends or business partners. These personas can be mistaken for individuality; however, they are not. A persona is a mask used by a person to show to the outside world, or to specific social gatherings. As a result many people will use the same or

similar personas: a teacher appearing intelligent or a civil servant appearing correct (Fordham 48). These personas are universal and part of the collective unconscious, and in a way “people choose the roles for which they feel best fitted, and to this degree the persona is individual, but it is never the whole man or woman” (Fordham 48). As such the persona can never be a complete substitute for individuality.

After discussing some of the important terms of Jungian theory it is important to turn to the process of individuation itself. The process of individuation is coined by Jung as a process through which a person or character develops themselves into a fully developed healthy individual. Stein describes individuation as “the total experience of wholeness over an entire lifetime – the emergence of the self in psychological structure and in consciousness” (171). For this process to occur “the ego is continually deconstructed by the archetypal processes of the unconscious” (Rowland, *C.G. Jung* 227). In other words, the ego is constantly unmade, remade, and transformed by forces outside of it. These forces include interacting with the outside world and all its archetypes. Individuation is the process that allows a person to achieve inner growth and inner healing (Robertson 44). The further a person has travelled on the road of individuation the more he will become psychologically whole and healthy. They accept and understand their inner archetypes, shadow, persona, and anima/animus. This makes them stronger as they become more complete.

This process involves the interaction between the opposites in the human psyche. Some examples of these types of opposites are good and evil, man and woman, light and darkness, and old and young. These opposites are opposed to each other in a form of tension that influences a human’s psyche. A person cannot go down a scary and dark cellar without also thinking about how bright it is outside of the cellar. The opposites of light and darkness affect the person walking down the stairs of the cellar. These opposites are important to the concept of the individuation process as a person has to come to terms with them.

The goal of this process is for the individual to obtain a whole and complete psyche; which has a healthy connection between the consciousness and the unconsciousness. In order to obtain this accomplishment the tension between opposites needs to be solved. The character has to accept both sides of these tensions and, without giving one preferential treatment over the other, accept them as their own. A character has to come to terms with these opposites or they cannot succeed in the process of individuation. When a character fails to settle the tension between these opposites they will favor one over the other. This in turn pushes the ignored opposite trait into the shadow which incorporates it as their own and thus strengthens it. The shadow is an archetype that will be explained below. When a character pushes such a character trait away and into the shadow they actively push the trait from their ego. When this happens they separate themselves from elements of their own personality, which in turn is unhealthy as they become less complete by doing so.

The individuation process is split into three legs of a journey, according to Jung. Robertson explains that “Jung singled out three [archetypes] for special attention, since he felt they represented sequentially the stages of the individuation process” (44). These stages are: **1)** meeting and acknowledging the shadow, which Jung described as “the most accessible [...] and easiest to experience,” archetypal encounter, which involves “recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real” (“Aion” 145); **2)** encountering and accepting the anima/animus, which Jung described as “a psychopomp, a mediator between the conscious and the unconscious and a personification of the latter” (“Aion” 154); and **3)** discovering the self, defined by Jungian psychologist Anthony Storr as “a new centre within the psyche which [is] neither conscious nor unconscious but [partakes] of both” (81). Each of these archetypes are encountered on different levels in the psyche. This is why confronting them and learning of them and accepting them is important in the process of individuation. Without learning of the psychological processes that occur in the layers of one’s own

conscious and unconscious, one cannot learn of the processes that occur deeper in one's unconscious, which hinders the development into a healthy and whole individual.

The shadow is the archetype that represents "personal traits which have been ignored or denied" by the individual in question (Robertson 44). In the process of interacting with the world and society one chooses to show a persona and push undesirable character traits away from this persona down to the shadow. The shadow is the archetype of the voice in one's head that "wants to do all the things that we do not allow ourselves to do" (Fordham 49). An example of this is how someone would love to rob a bank because they know that money is important in a capitalist society. However, this human would hold their desire back because they know that society frowns on people robbing banks, instead of accepting that they have this desire and dealing with it appropriately. By suppressing this desire they could damage their persona. This desire ends up in the shadow as a result.

An element of the shadow is that it can be personified; in other words, projected onto another person. This happens when we come in contact with someone we have an irrational hatred for: "we should suspect that we are actually disliking a quality of our own which we find in the other person" (Fordham 49). What happens in these situations is that this person recognizes, unconsciously, a quality that they have repressed themselves. To call back on the example of the bank robber: if one person has repressed the desire to rob banks than he might have an irrational hatred for bank robbers who are successful. It might even seem to this person that these bank robbers are flaunting their success.

The shadow is a personal element of an individual. People have their own versions of the perfect personality and all those desires and emotions that do not fit that ideal personality are expelled to their shadow: "It follows that the narrower and more restrictive the society in which we live the larger will be our shadow" (Fordham 50). If the persona is adjusted to the reality of the society, than it only makes sense that a more rigid and strict society demands a

cleaner persona which in turn forces more desires and emotions to be undesirable and repressed into the shadow.

The archetype of the shadow is often depicted as an antagonist in fiction, a force to literally be confronted (Stevens 248). The confrontation with the shadow can have various different outcomes: whether this confrontation is by killing Dracula, in Bram Stoker's eponymous novel (1897), by succumbing to the devil's manipulations in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1674), or failing to throw the One Ring into the volcano in *Lord of the Rings* (1954).² In the process of individuation this confrontation is the first step: confronting the shadow which has incorporated every personality trait and opposite that the character failed to accept. The protagonist can continue to the next step only if this confrontation is successful. Otherwise the ego could be destroyed. Le Guin adds, significantly, that when it comes to the relationship between the ego and the shadow – protagonist and antagonist – neither of them, without the other, can approach the truth” (61). They need each other.

The second step in the process of individuation is the confrontation with the anima or the animus. These concepts lie in a deeper part of the unconscious than the shadow. These concepts are so deeply imbedded in the unconscious that they are in fact part of the collective unconscious (Fordham 52). The anima or animus relates to the complementarity in a person's psyche (Rowland, *C.G. Jung* 225). In other words, the anima or animus reflects an element which is used to improve or emphasize the qualities the ego already has. A person of the male gender has an anima which takes the form of a female figure that denotes the feminine mode in the masculine gender. The animus is similar to the anima; however, it takes the form of a male figure inside a person of a feminine gender that denotes the masculine mode. While

² An example of a scholar analysing Sauron and Voldemort as shadows can be found in Ramaswamy's "Archetypes in Fantasy Fiction: A Study of J. R. R. Tolkien and J. K. Rowling." Margaret Atwood has also analysed Batman's nemesis, The Joker, as a Jungian shadow figure in her essay "Flying Rabbits: Denizens of Distant Spaces" (29).

Jung's gendered schema of anima and animus has received criticism from feminist theorists, Rowland explains that "after Jung, the animus and anima have undergone considerable revision and elaboration. Both have been equally considered to possess positive and negative poles. These gender archetypes have been regarded as functioning actively or passively and have been described as changing in function as an individual matures and individuates" (*Jung* 50). She goes on to show how Jung's wife, Emma, turned to Jung's anima/animus scheme in order to point out that "women must not languish, but 'lift themselves' to dismiss [patriarchal] society's denigration" (*Jung* 50).

The particular image of the anima as female and the animus as male is striking when one considers that the shadow of people are the same sex as them. A male has a male shadow and his anima is a female. A woman has a female shadow and her animus is a male. (Fordham 52). The anima and animus reveal a particular element of the human psyche, one that says that no matter how masculine a man is, or feminine a woman, there is always a core of the opposite sex in them. Even the most masculine of men will find moments which reveal qualities associated with the female sex and vice versa. For example, a male can have a tender moment with their child, or a female showing signs of aggression that is described as "unladylike." According to Jung, it is the anima and the animus that helps us understand the opposite sex: the collective image of a woman helps a man understand a woman and vice versa (Fordham 52). After one understands their own anima/animus, one can apply this knowledge for further endeavors. For instance, "Emma Jung is clear that a woman needs to take control of the animus if she is ever to find her own authoritative self" (Rowland, *Jung* 51).

It is important to note that the anima and animus are images of men and women, and that these images are archetypes. They are not real people and "in no way [represent] the real character of an individual [man or] woman" (Fordham 53). These images only become

tangible through actual contacts during the course of a person's life. The first image of the anima is often the mother, and the first image of the animus is often the father. These images of the parents are then projected on other people. Men will often find themselves in trouble with the women with whom they cross paths by "projecting their own inner picture of woman on to someone very different" (Fordham 53). These issues potentially result in troubled relationships with people of the opposite sex.

According to Fordham, "both the animus and the anima are mediators between the conscious and the unconscious mind, and when they become personified in fantasies, dreams, or visions they present an opportunity to understand something of what has hitherto been unconscious" (58). When these images become personified it allows the person to interact with them and to understand these unconscious aspects of themselves that are mostly hidden. This second stage of the journey into individuation is more difficult than the first. A shadow is easy to point out as he is an obtrusive force. The anima and animus, however, are elusive (Fordham 59). When someone is on this stage of the process for individuation they will find that the anima and animus do not fully incorporate into the consciousness as the shadow did in the previous step. The anima and animus will always have a piece of themselves that remain "shrouded in mystery in the dark realm of the collective unconscious" (Fordham 59).

The self is found during the final leg of the individuation journey as it is "the archetype of wholeness and transcendence" (Robertson 44). This is the goal of every person and character, to be whole: "The self [...] can include both the conscious and the unconscious" (Fordham 62). This is not an easy thing to do for an element of the human psyche, as the ego would collapse under the pressure of both the conscious as the unconscious. The self is the center between the conscious and the unconscious, born from hardly-won values in the consciousness, and power in the unconsciousness (Fordham 61). The lessons learned from the confrontations with the shadow and the anima or animus leads a

person down the path to this center of the personality, “the inner-most nucleus of the psyche” (Von Franz 196).

The self is also home to all the opposites in the human psyche, unifying them inside itself: consciousness and unconsciousness, good and bad, light and darkness, for example. The self transmutes these opposites by unifying them (Fordham 62). However, for a person to reach the stage of individuation in which they become aware of the self they have to suffer through considerable trials. For starters, one has to accept the inferiorities in one’s nature, such as the shadow. After that matters as irrationalities and even the chaos inside oneself have to be addressed (Fordham 62). After these types of trials a person becomes one with the self and truly accepts one’s personality and all its flaws. This allows for “renewal of life, a creative *élan vital*, and a new spiritual orientation by means of which everything becomes full of life and enterprise” (Von Franz 199). According to Fordham, “[the self] consists rather in the awareness on the one hand of our unique natures, and on the other of our intimate relationship with all life, not only human, but animal and plant, and even that of inorganic matter and the cosmos itself” (63). In other words, by accepting the archetype of the self a person accepts one’s nature as it really is, the good and the bad. A person also accepts their position in the world alongside animals, plants, and inorganic matter. This acceptance leads to inner peace and a sense of transcendence which is the goal of the individuation process.

The next chapters of this thesis will apply the Jungian psychological framework outlined above as a critical tool to analyze Gaiman’s *American Gods*, in particular to analyze the protagonist of the text, provocatively named: Shadow Moon. He starts off a new life at the start of the book when he is released from prison, and throughout the book he encounters a variety of characters in various shapes, some human and some non-human. Some of these characters help him along in the process of individuation. Others try to prevent Shadow from accomplishing this process. By the end of the story, Shadow has become aware of and

accepted the self and achieves a level of inner peace and accepts his place in the cosmos. The main archetypes of the individuation process are also present in this text as well as other archetypes that Shadow meets. The shadow, the anima, and the self are all present in this book. The beauty of this novel, and the Jungian literary analysis of it, is a link between a protagonist by the name of Shadow and a Jungian archetype that is called the shadow. In *American Gods*, however, these are not the same. It is Wednesday who represents the shadow to Shadow. While Shadow's shadow is absent in his life Shadow is violent and, as Laura points out, not fully alive (Gaiman 370). It is when Wednesday and Shadow meet that Shadow's personality changes until the inevitable domination by the shadow, as Wednesday dies and convinces Shadow to die as well in honor of Wednesday. As Le Guin has written: "What is a body that casts no shadow" (64).

Chapter 2:

Wednesday Hides in Shadows

Neil Gaiman's choice to name the protagonist of *American Gods* Shadow was provocative. As explained in the previous chapter, within Jungian psychology the shadow is the dark and repressed side of an individual's personality. While Gaiman has never clearly stated his reason for naming the protagonist Shadow, there are three possible explanations for Gaiman's choice. The first one is based on aesthetics. From this perspective, there is no "deeper reason" behind Shadow's name. Gaiman chose the name simply for its Gothic connotations. Shadow is a dark character and his name mirrors this darkness. Here Gaiman can be said to follow the influential fantasy novelist Roger Zelazny, one of whose dark heroes is called "Jack of Shadows." Even if Shadow's name is merely aesthetic, within a Jungian critical framework, the protagonist of Gaiman's novel, can still have a shadow as antagonist. Due to the events that transpire in the story, it makes sense to declare the character Wednesday as Shadow's shadow: Wednesday reveals himself to be the antagonist in this story. The second possible reason for naming the protagonist Shadow is related to Shadow's personality as a passionate person. Within a Jungian framework, a person ruled by his or her passions and instincts is dominated by his or her shadow (See Jung, "Aion" 144-8). The third possible reason is that the character of Shadow is in fact another character's shadow. In this context, Shadow is the Jungian shadow of the character Wednesday, a reverse of the previous statement in which Wednesday is a shadow. Le Guin points out that in the meeting between ego and shadow, the ego "confronts his dark self at last, but instead of asserting equality or mastery, he lets it master him. He gives in. He does, in fact, become the shadow's shadow" (61). By placing the position of the shadow-figure in the position of the protagonist, Gaiman can be said to follow

Le Guin's insight in the reciprocity of ego and shadow figures within Jungian inspired fantasy literature.

Le Guin has pointed out that "when the shadow returns the man in middle life, he has a second change" (61). The first sentence of *American Gods* is: "Shadow had done three years in prison" (Gaiman 3). Before the novel opens, Shadow has stood in contrast to the values of mainstream society, which led to incarceration, from which he is about to be released. The reader learns that Shadow was "sentenced to six years for aggravated assault and battery" (Gaiman 13). Shadow's incarceration is shortened due to good behavior. Storr explains that individuation "is essentially a process that takes place in the second half of life" (81), after a person has reached full maturity and has established themselves in life. By opening the novel with the protagonist's release from prison, Gaiman established a clear past life for his character and a new one that he will embark on. Shadow admits that his actions were stupid and claims that he has learned his lesson when he talks to an officer who reviews his case (Gaiman 8). This has two possible meanings, however: Shadow has learnt his lesson and vows not to break the rules of society anymore, or he has learnt his lesson and vows to not get caught in future. Other than the fact that Shadow was imprisoned for aggravated assault the reader learns very little of his life before and during his incarceration. Instead the understanding of Shadow gained by the reader is extracted entirely from his words and actions starting at the final moments in jail. Such as keeping his head down and complying with the jailors. The warden tells Shadow that his wife, Laura, is dead and he will be released that afternoon. Shadow is also a man who vowed never to return to prison.

Shadow is clearly at a cross roads in life, and metaphorically reborn, at this early part of the novel. Shadow's old life has been shut off with his time in prison, the death of Laura, and his old job no longer being available to him. The reader is told who Laura Moon is and her importance in Shadow's life. The reader is also told about Shadow's life living in

embassies in Europe as well as how the people around him started calling him Shadow because he simply followed people. The reader is told of Wednesday and his relationship with Shadow's mother after the second act of the novel. However, the process of individuation starts for Shadow when he leaves prison and is confronted by Wednesday for the first time. With Wednesday and Low Key Lyesmith, who was Shadow's cellmate for most of Shadow's incarceration, he is exposed to godly forces that influence his journey of individuation. "Jung believed that mental existence was a continual dialogue with archetypal forces in the unconscious; that subjectivity was the result of unconscious processes shaping the ego. This continual psychic narrative he called 'individuation'" (Rowland, *C.G. Jung* 11). Two of the important archetypal forces in this story are Low Key as the trickster, and Wednesday as the shadow. In the case of *American Gods*, Shadow's personal journey makes up this narrative. He is physically capable of communicating and interacting with these archetypal forces as they take physical shape in this novel: the shadow, the anima, the trickster, and others. As Shadow progresses throughout the story and interacts and learns from these characters he becomes a more complete person.

Shadow is the protagonist of the book. However, Wednesday is equally important. He is introduced to the reader and to Shadow while Shadow is still in shock and unclear on the exact details on Laura's death. Instead, when Wednesday speaks to Shadow he seems to know more about Shadow than Shadow knows of himself. He knows that there is no job waiting for Shadow at his old home of Eagle Point. In fact, Wednesday knows that there is no home for Shadow anymore at Eagle Point. The element of Shadow's lack of roots is convenient for Wednesday as he needs Shadow to eventually die for him to ensure the loyalty of other gods to Wednesday's war. The war between the old gods and the new gods would satiate Wednesday's hunger for power and he is willing to have all the gods killed for this

desire. Wednesday is the antagonist in *American Gods*, even though the reader only learns of this function in the third act of the novel.

Shadow and Wednesday meet for the first time on a plane heading for Eagle Point. Their first interaction has Wednesday tapping his watch to Shadow symbolically as Shadow walks past him. Shadow interprets this as the old man chastising him for delaying their flight. After some coincidences Shadow ends up in first class next to Wednesday who, after the flight takes off, points out that he, personally, was waiting for Shadow. As Le Guin points out, the shadow represents not only “the hateful, the evil [that] exists within himself,” the shadow is also “the guide of the journey to self-knowledge” (65). Shadow is late in his meeting with Wednesday who has been waiting for him ever since he discovered Shadow’s existence and realized his value.

This gesture and the following conversation about how Shadow is an ex-convict, his wife is dead, and there is no job waiting for him back home confirms that there is a link between the two characters because Wednesday dominates Shadow with his knowledge of Shadow’s personality and life. After the conversation, in which Shadow rebuffs Wednesday and asks him to leave him alone, their plane makes a small stop at a minor airport. Shadow decides to leave the plane at this minor stop, before the plane makes it to Eagle Point, his destination. Shadow checks whether Wednesday follows him and it appears that Wednesday has remained in the plane as it takes off. Shadow proceeds to rent a car in order to drive to Eagle point. After a while he makes a pit stop at Jack’s Crocodile Bar to eat. When he goes into the restroom to relieve himself he finds Wednesday next to him ready to resume the conversation they had on the plane: “So, [...] you’ve had time to think, Shadow. Do you want a job?” (Gaiman 27). Wednesday is not taking no for an answer to his proposal. This makes sure that these two characters stay together for long periods of time; Wednesday has found his shadow and he has no desire to lose him.

Wednesday gives out a few hints to Shadow when they first meet: “Let’s see. Well seeing that today certainly is my day – why don’t you call me Wednesday? Mister Wednesday. Although given the weather, it might as well be Thursday, eh?” (Gaiman 24). If Shadow was knowledgeable in Norse mythology he would be aware that Wednesday is telling Shadow his real name. Wednesday – the day of the week corresponding to Odin/Wodan (Gaiman, *Norse* 13) – is the Americanized version of Odin of the Norse pagan pantheon. Gaiman explains that while the pop-culture Odin is often “wise and noble” (*Norse* 11), the Odin of Norse mythology is “brilliant, unknowable, and dangerous” (*Norse* 12); he is also “cunning” and “devious” (*Norse* 23), “is the god of cargoes and of prisoners” and has “brought war into the world”; he “travels from place to place in disguise, to see the world as people see it” (*Norse* 22).³ Low Key is Gaiman’s version of Loki: “the most wily, subtle, and shrewd of all the inhabitants of Asgard,” who has much “darkness inside him” and “anger... envy... lust” (*Norse* 24). In the novel, Thor, “Odin’s son” who is “straightforward” and “good-natured” (Gaiman, *Norse* 23) is mentioned to be dead by suicide, which highlights the dark character of Gaiman’s mythological landscape. Odin “has different names in every country” (Gaiman, *Norse* 22); apart from getting the chance to shout his true name out loud when he is in a barren version of Valaskjalf, Odin prefers to be called Wednesday. This is related to the nature of the gods as they are in America and how they are outside of it. There is an Odin present in America as Wednesday, and there is at least one other Odin in Iceland who Shadow meets in the epilogue of the story.

To be an Americanized version of a god means to be separate from one’s original peer. At the end of every chapter there is an additional story, mostly disconnected from the

³ Daniel McCoy explains that in contrast to Odin’s reputation within much contemporary popular culture as “an eminently honourable ruler and battlefield commander,” he was originally associated with “the raw, chaotic battle-frenzy [...] that permeates any such struggle,” which dovetails with Gaiman’s alignment of Wednesday as the personification of Shadow’s aggressive tendencies, discussed below.

main plot. A number of these additional stories are prefaced with the phrase “Coming to America” (Gaiman 66). These are the stories that tell about how the gods made their way alongside their believers to America. The story at the end of chapter three reveals how a group of Vikings made their way to America and how they shared their stories about the gods with each other in this new land. They made an offering to Odin, and ravens landed on that corpse and the Vikings knew that their offering had been accepted (Gaiman 68). With their believers, the gods travel to far and distant lands. However, America turns out to be a hostile land for gods and belief is scarce: “They said [America] was a good place for men, but a bad place for gods” (Gaiman 586). These gods take similar imagery of their original versions to America but these personal elements change over time as they adapt to the material as well as spiritual poverty of America: Wednesday is a skinny and hungry old man, the Zorya sisters and Chernobog live in monetary poverty, and Bilquis works as a prostitute. This idea of different versions of the same gods is linked to Jung’s ideas of archetypes as we discussed in chapter one. “[Archetypes] are intrinsic, inherited *potentials* for certain sorts of images, meanings, or patterns of behaviour” (Rowland, *Jungian* 59). The way these gods are changed are inherent to the way that the American people process these archetypes of the gods, such as Odin as a hungry drifter.

Rowland explains that for Jung, within the individuation process, “the ego needs to develop an ever-deeper relationship within the mythical, numinous forces of the unconscious in order to make it a journey of meaning and value” (*Jung* 31). Within this Jungian framework, Gaiman’s turn to well-known figures from world mythology as analogues to the archetypal personifications makes sense.

One of the elements that a Jungian shadow has is the act of pushing their own desires. If Shadow is a Jungian shadow of Wednesday, then the first real account of Shadow pushing his desires through to Wednesday is in chapter two at Jack’s Crocodile Bar, when he has

demands for Wednesday before he agrees to work for him. It is at that location that Shadow agrees to work for Wednesday after initial hesitation. Wednesday gave Shadow mead, an alcoholic beverage made of honey wine: “The drink of heroes. The drink of the gods” (Gaiman 36). Here he makes the longest speech “he’d made in years” (Gaiman 38). A speech he attributes partially to the mead loosening his tongue. He tells Wednesday that he wants to do several things before he is willing to work for him, he wishes to say goodbye to Laura at her funeral, he wishes to take care of Laura’s possessions, and he tells Wednesday the salary he desires should they go into business together. Most importantly, Shadow tells Wednesday that he will hurt people in the event to protect Wednesday, however, he will not hurt people for fun and profit: “I won’t go back to prison. Once was enough” (Gaiman 38). This shows that Shadow is aware of his desires to inflict pain for fun, but after his incarceration of three years he is adamant to repress that side of his character. From experience, Shadow knows that his actions can have great consequences on his own as well as other’s well-being.

However, Shadow has to fight relatively quickly after agreeing to work for Wednesday. There is a third party in the bar, a leprechaun introduced as Mad Sweeney. He becomes inebriated as Shadow and Wednesday do business and eventually wishes to fight with Shadow because, as Shadow later learns, Wednesday bribed Sweeney for that purpose (Gaiman 218). Shadow refuses as he feels he has no valid reason to accept the fight. Sweeney calls Shadow a coward and proceeds to insult Wednesday. Wednesday in turn tires of Sweeney and tells Shadow to take care of him: “Shadow got to his feet and looked up into Mad Sweeney’s face: how tall *was* the man? he wondered. ‘You’re bothering us,’ he said. ‘You’re drunk. I think you ought to leave now’” (Gaiman 42). Shadow, who initially shows some hesitation for entering a fight due to the risks of returning to jail, accepts Wednesday’s command, showing the reader that Wednesday has influence over Shadow, and fights with Sweeney. Shadow quickly realizes that this is a test, set up by Wednesday. However, he is

unaware of the exact details of the test and what he is supposed to learn or show to Wednesday.⁴ After the fight Wednesday appears to be satisfied as he gives Shadow a beer and claps him on the back. Shadow passed the test: he can be violent when Wednesday asks him to. Shadow can give in to his violent impulses that are attributed to a shadow. He can obey Wednesday's commands even if they go against his survival instinct.

This event in Jack's Crocodile Bar establishes that Shadow is capable of giving into his dark side: his irrational urges towards the use of violence. However, this goes against the vow that Shadow has made to himself not to return to prison. In this instance, there is a reason why Shadow breaks his vow, which he will do again later in the novel. It is being in close proximity to Wednesday, which interferes with his journey of individuation. With one of the two characters being the other's shadow it stands to reason that one influences the other in the way that they act. The first two acts of the story involve Wednesday influencing Shadow to make sure that Shadow sacrifices himself for Wednesday when the times comes. In his role as Jungian shadow, Wednesday is toxic to Shadow, and by clearly manipulating the protagonist to fight Sweeney the reader is exposed to this function of the archetypal figure.

Up to this point the reader knows of Laura through the memories of Shadow as he holds on to them on his way to Eagle Point. At the funeral, however, Shadow and the reader learn of another side to Laura. Audrey Burton, widow of Robbie, a friend of Shadow, spits in the face of the deceased Laura during the funeral and explains to Shadow that she died performing oral sex on Robbie during the car crash. Shadow is unsure how to process this information as he refuses to talk more with Audrey. Within the Jungian framework, Laura Moon represents Shadow's anima. She represents his feminine side and her death makes Shadow unstable and incapable of individuation, at first.

⁴ Wednesday learns of the buttons that he can push with Shadow. Eventually this leads to him manipulating Shadow to sacrifice himself on the tree in Virginia to honour Wednesday.

This would have been a problem for Shadow, had he not tossed a coin in Laura's grave as a final gift to her. This golden coin that he won from Mad Sweeney in the bar fight has some unknown magical properties and Shadow unknowingly bestows these on Laura. As a result, the woman who represents Shadow's anima is still in the story as an undead with her intelligence and soul still intact and is more than willing to interact with Shadow. After accepting that his late wife is sitting on his bed he feels the need to create some distance:

“No,” said Shadow. “I think I'll stay right here for now. We have some unresolved issues to address.”

“Like me being dead?”

“Possibly, but I was thinking more of how you died. You and Robbie.”

“Oh,” she said. “That.” (Gaiman 59-60)

The reader later learns that Laura's death was manipulated and orchestrated by Wednesday and the trickster figure Low Key to make sure that she was out of the way. Thus depriving Shadow of a reason to live and in the process making him dependent on Wednesday. Her resurrection as an intelligent undead was uncalculated, as Wednesday later confesses, but the distance between Shadow and Laura here still helps Wednesday and Low Key in their plans to have Shadow kill himself and motivate the gods into fighting each other.

Laura's role will be expanded on more in chapter three of this thesis but her presence in the narrative and her function in the story serve Shadow in ways he understands and ways that he does not: “You've gotten yourself mixed up in some bad things, Shadow. You're going to screw it up, if someone isn't there to watch out for you. I'm watching out for you.” (Gaiman 63). As a female figure, “watching out” for Shadow, Laura is his anima, serving as his protector in a way. Shadow remains uncertain of the dangers to which he has been

exposed ever since he has come out of prison. Everyone else that Shadow meets, however, seems to be aware: in prison Sam Fetscher suggested that Shadow would be better off on the inside than on the outside (Gaiman 10). Laura, and (later) the Zorya sisters are also aware that something is wrong and that Shadow is in danger. When Laura leaves Shadow's motel room she reiterates that she will be looking out for him.

It is after Eagle Point that Wednesday tells Shadow his initial plan: they are to gather allies and go to an important place. The first ally they wish to gather is Czernobog. During the conversation between Shadow, Wednesday, Czernobog, and Zorya Utrennyaya, Czernobog asks Shadow whether he has a brother. "No," said Shadow. "Not that I know of" (Gaiman 79). Czernobog then tells him about the relationship between himself and his brother Bielebog:

"I have a brother. They say, you put us together, we are like one person, you know? When we are young, his hair, it is very blonde, very light, his eyes are blue, and people say, he is the good one. And my hair it is very dark, darker than yours [Shadow] even, and people say that I am the rogue, you know? I am the bad one. And now time passes, and my hair is gray. His hair, too, I think, is gray. And you look at us, you would not know who was light, who was dark" (Gaiman 79).

This quote does not just reflect on Czernobog and Bielebog but also on Shadow and Wednesday. Czernobog says that their relationship with each other, as well as with the world, became more complex. It is harder to keep them apart as they became more like each other. They both became gray old men as time passed. The same is true for Shadow and Wednesday. Their relationship is complex to both each other as well as to the rest of the

world (and the reader). Shadow knows that he is being tested in the restaurant with Mad Sweeney, but he (as well as reader), does not know in what way. Shadow is also more than once warned of dangers coming but he does not know where the danger is coming from.

The game of checkers after this conversation continues with this theme of graying colors. Shadow played with white and Czernobog played with black: “[Shadow’s] flat, round pieces were the color of old, dirty wood, nominally white. Czernobog’s were a dull, faded black” (Gaiman 80). Just as in the previous paragraph the characters are represented as fading from black and white distinctions into less-defined shades of gray, this game of checkers also plays with the idea of what was once a clear distinction between black and white becomes dull and unclear with age. The game takes two rounds and both players win one. The result of this is that Czernobog will join Wednesday and Shadow and help “in their madness” (Gaiman 84). The flipside is that because Shadow also lost he will have his brain beaten out of him by Czernobog after this “madness” is over. The interesting detail to the checkers game is that Czernobog played exactly the same in the second game as he did in the first, which allowed Shadow to defeat him as he was capable of changing strategies in the second round. Not only are these gods old and dulling, but they are also stuck and rooted in their ways.

To emphasize: the process of individuation requires that opposing elements within the self are integrated and united. Rowland states that “[archetypal] images of the self are divine” and that the process of excluding negative elements such as those related to the demonic underworld hinders the journey into individuation (*Jungian* 61). Instead, to become truly individuated, one has to integrate the bad with the good, the positive with the negative. One has to merge opposites to become whole.

The following morning Wednesday decides that they will rob a bank and in the car towards a bank Shadow starts to echo Wednesday’s manner of speech and hates himself for doing it (Gaiman 106). This shows the reader that Shadow and Wednesday are very similar,

at least more similar than Shadow is currently comfortable with. When the preparation for the bank robbery continues Wednesday asks Shadow to think of the word snow to make it inconvenient for people to be outside. Shadow is initially unaware of what Wednesday desires of Shadow but he plays along anyway and starts thinking of snow in great detail:

Snow, thought Shadow, in the passenger seat, sipping his hot chocolate. Huge, dizzying clumps and clusters of snow falling through the air, patches of white against an iron-gray sky, snow that touches your tongue with cold and winter, that kisses your face with its hesitant touch before freezing you to death. Twelve cotton-candy inches of snow, creating a fairy-tale world, making everything unrecognizably beautiful... (Gaiman 107)

This passage and another similar one on the same page precede a snowstorm that, had Wednesday not stopped Shadow from continuing, would have immobilized the city (Gaiman 108). Shadow is confused when he realizes that snow is about to hit Chicago all of a sudden because he thought of snow, as he never had this type of power before. Shadow realizes now that since he has made contact and stayed with Wednesday he has become more powerful. This, as it would turn out, is exactly why Wednesday needs Shadow. Wednesday offers Shadow power that he did not have before they met and Wednesday is hoping that this power will help him in his endgame.

When Shadow pieces together that they are about to rob a bank, he interjects to Wednesday with: "I'm not going back to prison. [...] I thought we had agreed that I wouldn't be doing anything illegal" (Gaiman 108). Wednesday replies that there will be no return trip to prison, because Shadow will only be guilty of "aiding and abetting, a little conspiracy to commit, followed of course by receiving stolen money" (Gaiman 109). This seemingly

convinces Shadow as he goes along with Wednesday's plan, even though Shadow risks being arrested again and incarcerated for allowing himself to go along with Wednesday's plans.

Wednesday agreed that they would not do anything illegal and here he convinces Shadow to go along with him in an act of questionable legality.

Wednesday has power over Shadow as Shadow does not resist Wednesday when he explains to Shadow that they would be stealing money. This power comes from the link they share as each other's shadow. They enable each other in their deepest desires: Wednesday yearns for a return to full power at any cost, and Shadow has a penchant for violence that comes natural to him, even though society has rules against this with incarceration as penalty. Wednesday's influence over Shadow is only strengthened by their kinship as Shadow is the son of Wednesday. Shadow is the son of a god of war. This adds to the violence in Shadow's personality.

The plan to rob a bank involves Wednesday playing a security guard whom people happily give their money to because the ATM machine and the night deposit slot are made to look like they are out of order. In the possible event that someone wishes to verify Wednesday's security clearance they are tricked into calling a phone which Shadow would answer. Shadow would pretend to be Wednesday's boss and confirm that Wednesday is where he is supposed to be and he is allowed to handle the amounts of money that is being handed to him. Both men take to their new temporary identity with impeccable efficiency: Wednesday even "appeared somehow to have gained himself a paunch" (Gaiman 111), and Shadow does not miss a beat in his improvised performance when a police officer calls him to verify Wednesday's identity as a security guard:

Shadow found himself warming to this identity. He could feel himself

becoming Andy Haddock, chewed cheap cigar in the ashtray, a stack of

paperwork to get to this Saturday afternoon, a home in Schaumburg and a mistress in a little apartment on Lake Shore Drive. (Gaiman 114)

It is easy for both men to become someone else, to quickly fill in the details of a life that does not exist, like Shadow's persona having a wife and a mistress. It is easy for both men to play with breaking the law, at least when they are in each other's company. Their desires are amplified and accessed with ease as they are close to each other.

At the end of the first act Shadow is separated from Wednesday and the other old gods and is kidnapped by spooks. These spooks are the collective personification of the conspiracy theories in which unknown shadowy men arrive and suppress the truth. A relatively recent but poignant image of this concept are the Men in Black in their titular films in which they suppress the truth about extra-terrestrials (figure 4).



Figure 4: Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith in Men in Black (1997)

These spooks introduce themselves as Mr Stone and Mr Wood and they are unable to tell Shadow which organization they are with. This is because they are with a conspiracy theory that has endured in the collective unconscious of the people of the United States for a long time. Anansi has an interesting view on them at the end of the story:

“Those helicopters,” [Shadow said]. “The ones that took away the bodies, and the injured.”

“What about them?”

“Who sent them? Where did they come from?”

”You shouldn’t worry yourself about that. They’re like valkyries or buzzards. They come because they have to come.” (Gaiman 546)

It is during this time in captivity with the two spooks that several key characteristics of Shadow reveal themselves. Shadow contemplates fighting back as the spooks torture him, but he restrains himself. However, the way in which he restrains himself is significant: “*I’m bigger than either of them*, [Shadow] thought. *I can take them*. But they were armed; and even if he – somehow – killed or subdued them both, he’d still be locked in the cell with them. (But he’d have a gun. He’d have two guns.) (*No.*)” (Gaiman 148). There are two voices in Shadow’s head. One is advocating to reciprocate with violence, and the other is advocating restraint. These are like the previously mentioned angel and devil on the shoulders. Shadow chooses to endure and not make matters worse for himself and he is left alone until Laura reappears in Shadow’s life and complicates Wednesday’s plans. Shadow has developed the insight, as described by Ursula Le Guin, “that you can’t blame everything on the bad guys with the black Stetsons” and need “to take responsibility for [your] acts and feelings” (65). This is a key realization in the encounter with the shadow that allows the protagonist to continue his journey of individuation towards wholeness: “the fullest possible consciousness of all that comprises one’s own personality” (Hart 97).

To summarize, Shadow and Wednesday share a complicated bond with each other. When Wednesday finally finds Shadow he makes sure that Shadow has no one else to turn to

and is practically forced to join Wednesday in his plan. Wednesday intends for Shadow to die for him which would strengthen Wednesday's presence in the United States. When these two men are together Wednesday starts influencing Shadow: he starts exerting supernatural abilities, such as controlling the weather, and he becomes violent even though he promised himself he would never return to jail. It is the appearance and influence of Laura, in the role of Shadow's anima that ends up interfering with Wednesday's plan and helps Shadow to begin to see the truth. It is Laura, therefore, as Shadow's anima, who is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 3:

A Decaying Anima

After the events on the blacksite the story moves into its second act. The reader is now aware of the majority of main characters in the story and of the relations that they have with each other. In the second act of the story Shadow moves to and from a variety of locales during which he comes into contact with another Jungian archetype: that of the anima. The next paragraph will explain how the anima makes her quick re-entrance into the story at the end of act one, and the start of act two. She then proceeds to influence Shadow's journey into individuation by helping him gain insight into his own personality and warning Shadow of Wednesday.

It is during Shadow's time in captivity with Mr. Stone and Mr. Wood on the blacksite that Laura Moon makes her second appearance and proves to be a wildcard to Wednesday's plan. Laura arrives to save Shadow from the agents and kills them in the process. When she wakes Shadow up, to tell him that he has to move, he initially thinks that the last three years had been a bad dream and that he is still living the good life that he had before prison. When he touches Laura he is brought back to reality as his undead wife tells him that the blood she is covered in is not hers: "It's easier to kill people, when you're dead yourself," she tells him. "I mean, it's not such a big deal. You're not so prejudiced anymore'" (Gaiman 151). When Shadow takes umbrage with this statement she retorts that he is welcome to stay here and wait for the morning crew to continue interrogating him. Laura hands Shadow a coat, hand-warmers, foot-warmers, and as many candy bars as the coat can be stuffed with. As she is doing this Shadow takes notice of the golden coin around Laura's neck. The same coin that Shadow tossed in Laura's grave at her funeral.

When they leave the blacksite, which turned out to be inside an abandoned train, Shadow asks how she found him: “She shook her head, slowly, amused. ‘You shine like a beacon in a dark world,’ she told him. ‘It wasn’t that hard’” (Gaiman 152). Laura is linked to Shadow in more ways than just his dead wife, and Shadow is more than just a widower because Laura is attracted to him in supernatural ways. The gold coin that Laura has around her neck drives Laura in her intent to protect Shadow, as the coin is described as protection by Zorya Polunochnaya (Gaiman 90). The coin combines with Laura’s love for Shadow and her status as an anima and she becomes Shadow’s protector.

As was already discussed in chapter one, the anima is the feminine nature of a man, or the archetype of the feminine (Emma Jung 46). Shadow’s anima will have character traits that he attributes to women (Stein 126). The first most important female in any person’s life is the mother. This means that the anima often will have traits attributed to the mother, such as the desire to protect. In this case Laura is capable of murder because she will do anything to protect Shadow. Laura’s willingness to commit murder saves Shadow from potential future torture. Laura is capable of murder to protect Shadow, whereas Shadow actively has to reject his own violent tendencies. He would not have needed Laura to rescue him if he allowed himself to kill, which almost happens in the previous quotation where Shadow is tortured and he thinks of ways to attack his torturers. In the quote that was brought up in a previous paragraph, Shadow is being beaten by the two spooks and thinking of ways out. While he is examining the odds of turning the tables on the two spooks with violence he notices that he could make it work. However, his conscience says no at the end and he endures his beating. The anima arrives and saves him not soon after by killing the two men that Shadow did not.

The fact that Laura is capable of murder without a second thought gives Shadow’s anima an interesting element. Because of his mother’s early death and Laura’s betrayal Shadow is disconnected from his anima. As this thesis will explain below, Laura’s physical

state represents Shadow's connections with his anima, and her capacity for murder adds to the initial disconnection between them that Shadow needs to overcome in order to progress.

A final point to explain from this event is the dream Shadow has when he falls asleep after the beating that Stone and Wood gave him: "He was fifteen again, and his mother was dying, and she was trying to tell him something important, and he couldn't understand her" (Gaiman 149). Dreams are important in Jungian criticism because it is in dreams that the dreamer is exposed to numerous symbols (Barz 112). In contrast to Freud, who believed dreams to be "a cover for a repressed wish, disguised so as to find its way into expression" (Hart 96), for Jung a dream "is a statement of fact, of the way things are in the psychic household. Its tendency is to furnish to consciousness a picture of the psychological state that has been overlooked or disregarded" (Hart 96). In this dream Shadow, and through the protagonist's dream also the reader, receives a clue about a twist that will happen further on in the story, but without foresight it is impossible to know that Shadow's mother is trying to tell her teenage son that he has a father in the United States and any other potential details that she might know of Wednesday. As this paper explained above, the mother represents the first image of the anima that a child will have: "[The] mother was the bearer of the first anima image for the male child" (Rowland 34). Shadow's mother represents an image of an anima for Shadow, but by appearing in his dream she alerted Laura, who represents his current anima, of his predicament. Which in turn allowed her to find Shadow and save him, earlier than Wednesday would have liked.

Laura is the wild card in this story because she interferes with Wednesday's plans and will eventually be the downfall of Wednesday and Loki. Wednesday's desires require Shadow to be isolated and dependent on Wednesday but Laura's revival and interference weakens Wednesday's hold over Shadow's actions. It is Laura who allows Shadow to get a better grasp over his own soul through their conversations. Laura captures Shadow's soul and

his desires, which is what Stein mentions in his book about how an anima can hold these qualities (Stein 139): Shadow is struggling with life after learning of Laura's death and Laura's undead state reflects this. After the battle in the third act of the book the reader sees how Shadow is at peace with himself and is ready to let Laura go.

When Shadow leaves the blacksite and makes his way to his next destination, Cairo, he meets up with a female hitchhiker named Sam Black Crow. Sam does not have a big role to play, but her role is just as important, if only because she acts as an answer to Laura's sin: betrayal. This dynamic between Laura, Shadow, and Sam will be discussed in more detail in later paragraphs. Shadow agrees to give Sam a ride to her aunt's. While they are on the road Shadow talks about his past to a complete stranger and we learn how Sam responds to Shadow: carefully, but interested. This means that Sam can tell that something is wrong with Shadow but that there is something underneath it all that makes Shadow trustworthy. Sam is young and represents a younger generation. The way she talks, her interests, and the ways with which she tackles the problems on her path all point to this. Yet, at the same time she tells Shadow that she has some Native American blood in her and that she is proud of this heritage, even when her father ignores her for being a half blood. Sam is a bridge between the old American culture and the new one. She is proud of her Native American blood: a heritage that belongs to the people that lived in America before immigration happened and other cultures arrived. However, her lifestyle and education represent the future of the country: smart, courageous, and willing to listen and learn. Shadow responds well to her and interacts with her cordially.

After dropping Sam off at her aunt's place, Shadow arrives at a motel to sleep. He turns on the television to fall asleep to and after some channel surfing he ends up at the *Dick van Dyke Show*. He sets the television to shut down after 45 minutes and he himself is slowly falling asleep to an episode he does not remember ever seeing and which has a weird tone

problem. It is when the scene on the television devolves into a male character punching a female character in the face and the latter character crying in small, helpless sobs that Shadow is wide awake again and loudly exclaims: “What the fuck is this?” (Gaiman 174). The channel transitions to *I Love Lucy* and Lucy ends up talking directly to Shadow. Lucy, or Media, as she would later be recognized, wants Shadow on her side, the side of the new gods in the main conflict of the story between the new and the old Gods, and she is willing to give Shadow whatever he wants. Media is the god of the television, she is worshipped by millions as Americans sacrifice their time to her. She explains to Shadow that she is “the little shrine that family gathers to adore” (Gaiman 175). Her speech ends when the sleep timer of the television cuts it off, but the last offer Media gives Shadow stays with him for the remainder of the book: “You ever wanted to see Lucy’s tits?” (Gaiman 176).

Media is the female trickster. She is sent by Wednesday and Mr. World to waylay Shadow from his path of individuation and the act of offering nudity is the greatest hint to this. Shadow is incapable of receiving physical love from Laura after her death, due to her betrayal and her physical qualities. Media represents the temptation of betraying Laura in turn and falling deeper under the control of Wednesday and Mr. World. However, Media fails to understand what Laura represents: she is incapable of giving physical love to Shadow but she is still wanted by him. Stein mentions how the image of an anima is more complicated than simple physical attractiveness (147). Shadow declines because he has a deeper connection with Laura. Laura will in turn reveal truths about Shadow’s nature that will help him in his quest. An example of a truth that she tells Shadow is how he has never really been alive (Gaiman 370). What Laura means here with alive is not that he is dead, but that he lacked qualities that are associated with living, such as passion or desires. Le Guin describes this state of un-being as an ego caught up “the mass mind, which consists of such things as cults, creeds, fads, fashions, status-seeking, conventions, received beliefs, advertising, popcult, all

the isms, all the ideologies, all the hollow forms of communication and ‘togetherness’ that lack real communion or real sharing” (63). The truth about his previous un-life, reveals that Shadow needed the presence of his shadow and the guidance of his anima, in order to be awakened to the potential of becoming truly alive.

According to Jung, “the anima has an erotic, emotional character” (*Marriage* 174). In Cairo we meet another female who represents that part of Shadow’s anima. The funeral home in which Shadow stays holds three other people: Mr. Ibis, Mr. Jacquel, and a brown cat. These people are otherwise known as the Egyptian pagan gods Thoth, Anubis, and Bast. During his first night staying with these characters he has a dream he would never be able to fully recall. In this dream he has an intense sexual encounter with a woman in a leopard print skirt. He cannot see her face in this dream and she does not answer to his questions for her name. Her tongue feels like sandpaper when they kiss and her nails are intensely sharp as she scratches Shadow. Shadow manages to say that Laura will kill her, suggesting that in Shadow’s head he and Laura are still monogamous, even after her betrayal. The woman replies with “*Not me*” (Gaiman 214). After this sexual encounter, something changes in Shadow: “Somewhere in there, at the end of it, he took a breath, a clear draught of air he felt all the way down to the depths of his lungs, and he knew that he had been holding his breath for a long time now. Three years, at least. Perhaps even longer” (Gaiman 214). Shadow had not felt any physical contact with another woman since he entered prison. Bast and Shadow had an intense night of sex which comforted Shadow who was missing physical interaction with women. When Shadow wakes up in the morning he finds that the bruises of his encounters with Mad Sweeney and the spooks have disappeared, only to leave painless scratches behind. In Egyptian mythology, Bast, or Bastet, is known as the goddess of pleasure (Ikram 9). By having sex with Shadow she not only gave him a pleasurable experience he missed for years, she also healed him both physically as well as emotionally.

Bast's reply about how Laura would not kill her is revealing to her nature: Bast is another aspect of Shadow's anima. She is capable of healing Shadow physically whereas Laura is capable of protecting Shadow from getting hurt again. After three years of celibacy he finally felt physical love again and it strengthened the connection between his ego and his anima. Bast is another protector alongside Laura. She can accomplish acts that Laura is unable to. The most important act of protection is guiding Shadow in the underworld. This event will be explored in chapter four. The difference between Bast and Media is one of consent: Media is sent with ulterior motives to seduce Shadow to work for the enemy, Bast truly wishes to aid Shadow and Laura. Media is part of the Shadow and Bast is part of the anima.

On his way to Lakeside Shadow falls asleep in the bus in which he has another conversation with the buffalo man in the center of the earth. During this conversation Shadow asks the buffalo man, and the fire in the heart of the earth itself, why the voices in the earth chose Shadow of all people. Shadow mentions how he was not as great a husband as he thought he was. Shadow trails off from his own perceived inadequacies and redirects his words to a question: "How do I help Laura?" Shadow asked the buffalo man. "She wants to be alive again. I said I'd help her. I owe her that" (Gaiman 246). Shadow feels that he owes Laura a debt after their marriage. He shoulders the blame for Laura's infidelity. Shadow went to prison and could not be there for his wife who sought comfort in the arms of another. Shadow blames himself for the betrayal of his own wife. Shadow has lived his life as a hole in the universe (Gaiman 370). This is due to Shadow missing a shadow until Wednesday connects with him at the start of the book. Due to this disconnect with his shadow, Shadow is unable to connect to his anima either, as this archetypal construct is beyond the shadow. However, now that Shadow is connected with his shadow and his anima he wants to improve his relationship with Laura, even though she is a corpse. When Laura finds Shadow he has

chosen to do Wednesday's vigil which means that he has to preside over Wednesday's corpse for 9 days while hanging from the world tree. While Shadow is tied to the world tree he tells Laura to ask the caretakers of the tree for some water (Gaiman 467). This water ends up healing Laura temporarily and this reveals that Shadow's relation with his anima is healing as well.

When Shadow spends his first night in his new home in Lakeside he thinks about Laura and by doing so he is capable of seeing what she is doing at the same moment. As her family is celebrating Christmas she is staring in from the outside, incapable of entering the house. Laura's death did not just uproot Shadow's plans for his future; Laura's future has also been ruined. In her book *Animus and Anima*, Emma Jung states that "[it] is a fact that one's unconscious personality components (the anima, animus, and shadow), or one's inferior functions, are always those which the world finds offensive" (63). Laura knows that she cannot enter her mother's house because if she does she will only ruin their Christmas as well. Laura is a decomposing body: signaling a broken relationship between ego and anima, something that Shadow wishes to restore to normal. "Tears prickled in Shadow's eyes, and he rolled over in his bed" (Gaiman 257). He turns his thoughts away as he felt like a peeping tom and instead focuses on his own location in Lakeside. It is when Shadow is about to fall asleep that he thinks he can hear voices on the wind, after which the narrative cuts away from Shadow to Sam Black Crow: a woman who Shadow only met once, but already has a trusting relationship with. This suggests that there is hope yet for Shadow's anima.

Sam is visited by two other spooks named Mr. Town and Mr. Road. They found her to ask her about Shadow involving the disappearance of the first two spooks: Wood and Stone. They were killed by Laura earlier in the story, and Shadow is now suspected of this incident. It is during this conversation that Sam reveals both her loyalty to Shadow as well as a distrust of authority figures. The spooks mention how they know that Shadow gave Sam a

ride and bought her dinner but Sam vehemently denies this and tells them that she never met him, or that she could have forgotten him already. They make a point of threatening her: “Ma’am, it really is to your advantage to cooperate with us” (Gaiman 259). However, Sam simply replies by slamming the door in their faces. Sam stays loyal to Shadow even though they threaten her, but Laura cheated on him and became a decomposing body. By being loyal to Shadow Sam tells the reader that Shadow’s connection with his anima is healing.

It is during one of Shadow’s walks through Lakeside, after several journeys with Wednesday to a variety of locations, that Shadow meets Laura again. “‘Please don’t look at me,’ she said, from behind him” (Gaiman 367). Laura has been continuously decomposing as the narrative continued to the point that Shadow would have run away from her had he not spent time in a funeral home before he arrived in Lakeside. This is confusing as Sam’s loyalty to Shadow would suggest that Laura should be returning to life, not decomposing. A long period of time is spent in Lakeside and the trips with Wednesday allows him to manipulate Shadow to the point that his anima can no longer walk outside during the day without concerning looks from onlookers. Shadow’s shadow is attempting to sabotage the link between Shadow and his anima. Laura physical presence acts as a warning to Shadow and the reader that Wednesday is winning. Wednesday needs Shadow to be isolated, alone, and deeply dependent on Wednesday. Wednesday needs Shadow to sacrifice himself to bring Wednesday back to life after Wednesday dies according to his own plan. Shadow is falling under Wednesday’s spell and Laura, symbolizing the state of Shadow’s anima, will need to work harder to save Shadow and herself in the process.

When Shadow and Wednesday travel together they often talk about Wednesday’s living conditions and his lack of monetary funds. At one point Wednesday tells Shadow about the death of his son, Thor, by suicide. These talks have a simple effect on Shadow. He sympathizes with Wednesday, and when the time comes he will sacrifice himself for

Wednesday: “What the hell *else* can I do? They don’t sacrifice rams or bulls to me. They don’t send me the souls of killers and slaves, gallows-hung and raven-picked. *They* made me. *They* forgot me. Now I take a little back from them. Isn’t that fair?” (Gaiman 314).

Wednesday laments his lot in life to Shadow in a variety of ways over time. Shadow takes the bait and starts to feel sorry for this old man. In the conversation outside Lakeside between Laura and Shadow she mentions how she received a call and had to hurry to Shadow’s side. Shadow replies how he did not call her, yet here she is, with a hunger to be besides Shadow. This desire is a form of protection that still lingers inside the gold coin. Shadow is in danger from Wednesday but he does not know it. However, the call went out and Laura came looking worse than ever and this tells the reader that Shadow is nearing death.

An element that I have quotes in previous paragraphs is Laura asking if Shadow is alive. She tells Shadow that during their marriage he could be man-shaped hole in the world; a shadow. He could be in a darkened room just sitting without a single shred of evidence that he was there. The final note about this in this conversation is that Shadow has to wait in Lakeside for Wednesday. Laura replies that that is not living. While Shadow waits in Lakeside on Wednesday to retrieve him for jobs he is effectively without his Shadow: not alive. Laura calling Shadow out on his state of un-life links their history together and his present state. Shadow simply waits and his journey into individuation grinds to a halt.

Chapter 4:

The Self is Waiting

The third and final act of the story takes place after Wednesday dies at the hands of Mr. World and the new gods. Shadow is compelled to make the final leg of his journey into individuation and journeys into the underworld. In this journey he gains the tools and the introspection to finally discover the self. To reiterate, the self, as it was explained in chapter one, can include both the consciousness and the unconsciousness (Fordham 62). This means that discovering the self means becoming fully aware of “the psyche in its wholeness, which includes both the ego and the totality of the unconscious (Edinger 34). While this is considered the “final goal” of the individuation process, this goal is in fact unattainable and should be understood rather as an ever-ongoing process. Shadow’s self is represented in *American Gods* by the cave that Shadow visits in his dreams, and now that he has accepted his shadow and anima, Shadow will learn to understand this center in the earth as the center of his psyche more fully. This thesis has yet to fully discuss the center of the world that Shadow visits. The first time this image appears is after Shadow is released from jail. He is sleeping in the plane when he dreams of “a dark place” (Gaiman 18) where a thing with a buffalo’s head and a man’s body stares at Shadow. However, as dark as this location is, there is also firelight bouncing off the walls. This recurring location with the buffalo man and the fire in the middle of the cave represents the self and the goal in Shadow’s journey into individuation.

The first person to talk to Shadow is the buffalo man. He talks about how “[changes] are coming [...] [there] are certain decisions that will have to be made” (Gaiman 18). Shadow has had zero interactions yet with any supernatural events or characters and is incapable of understanding why he is in a cave with the buffalo man. He asks the buffalo man where he is.

To which the buffalo man replies that he is “[in] the earth and under the earth [...] [you] are where the forgotten wait” (Gaiman 18). In other words, Shadow’s self is here, forgotten, and when Shadow travels alongside his path of individuation, and learns to acknowledge and cooperate with his Shadow and his anima, he will come back here and accept the words of the beings in the cave and accept his place in life. When Shadow does this he accepts the Jungian self. This happens at the end of the story when the buffalo man tells Shadow that he did well. Shadow took the words of the world and made them his own and by doing so he stopped the war (Gaiman 549). Shadow’s words were the truth: he talked about how the gods were sacrificial lambs to Mr. Wednesday and Mr. World, he talked about the land that they inhabited, and he talked about how all the gods share the fear of being forgotten (Gaiman 537-40).

This cave in the center of the earth parallels the depiction of the self that Jung himself came up with in 1928. During that year he recorded a dream he had in which he was walking with his friends through the streets of Liverpool during a rainy night:

[They] came upon an intersection that was shaped like a wheel. Several streets radiated from this hub, and in the middle of the intersection there was a square. While everything was dark in the surrounding area, this center island was brightly lit. [...] Later [Jung] interpreted this dream to mean that he had been given a vision of the center, the self [...] (Stein 156)

This is very similar to Shadow’s dream, with the dark walls in the cave and the bright fire in the center. As this vision of the cave returns to Shadow over the course of the story more details about the cave and its occupant will be made clear to him. For example: the second

time that Shadow enters the cave he notices more details about the buffalo man's appearance such as the color of his skin and the markings on his body.

After the events at Rock City, where the climax of the story takes place, Shadow has one last dream of the cave. In this dream he is congratulated by the buffalo man and the fire for making peace between both sides:

“You made peace,” said the buffalo man. “You took our words and made them your own. They never understood that *they* were here – and the people that worshiped them were here – because it suits us that are here. But we can change our minds. And perhaps we will.” (Gaiman 549)

These final words of the buffalo man and the fire tell Shadow that they are the most powerful being in this story. The only reason people and gods are allowed to live on the land is because the beings in the cave allow it. This means that they, the entities that represent the self, govern the images that Shadow sees. Shadow would not have started on his journey of individuation had he never met Mr. Wednesday. The self dominates the images that the ego encounters.

An important element of the previous quote is this line: “[you] took our words and made them your own” (Gaiman 549). Shadow has reached the point of his individuation in which he is in contact with the Jungian self. His journey to the underworld has left him altered and he became capable of seeing the truth of Wednesday's con and the disappearances of Lakeside. The details of the journey into the underworld will be discussed further down, but in summary: Shadow learned to accept the truth about his origins and what he truly wants in life. The price of this knowledge was his name, his heart, and his coin: these elements symbolize his past.

Speaking about the dream he had, Jung mentioned seeing a tree in the center of the square: “[while] everything was dark in the surrounding area, this center island was brightly lit. On it there grew a single tree, a Magnolia full of reddish blossoms” (Stein 156). In *American Gods* there is also an important tree: this tree is an Americanized version of “the world tree” (Gaiman, *Norse* 21) of Norse mythology: Yggdrasil. The world tree is a symbol of knowledge and cosmic life. It is a symbol that will outlive “ravages of time and cyclical ignorance” (Eek 524). The roots of the tree run deep through the earth all the way to the underworld, whereas the top of the tree reaches the heavens itself. The tree represents the universe, due to its size. This also makes the tree a symbol of psychic growth in Jungian theory: “it is in dreams frequently symbolized by the tree, whose slow, powerful, involuntary growth fulfills a definite pattern” (Von Franz 161). The relationship between psychic growth and trees in Jungian theory explains the results of Shadow’s journey while he is hanging from the tree in Virginia. Shadow has grown mentally after he is cut down and revived by Easter and Horus. Shadow is capable of ending the war.

Yggdrasil is not the only world tree in the stories of mankind. In *AG*, Czernobog mentions how his culture had a world tree as well: “[we] had one in my part of the world. But ours grew under the world, not above it” (449). This makes sense in the story as all pantheons are truth in the book. Other noteworthy world tree exists in Christianity, in Babylonian culture (Eek 526), and Egyptian myth among many others. This symbol of knowledge, unity, and life is one that is shared among people around the world. The tree is an archetype. The world tree plays a crucial part in the plot of Wednesday and he succeeds when Shadow performs the vigil for Wednesday’s body. Wednesday’s final words to Shadow are that “there’s power in the sacrifice of a son – power enough, and more than enough, to get the whole ball rolling” (Gaiman 531). There is power in the image, and Shadow’s act of sacrificing himself motivates the other old gods to finally accept Wednesday’s argument that

they have to fight the new gods. The other gods cannot stay passive after Shadow, a human, beliefs in Wednesday's words. Shadow has to be hung from the tree for nine days.⁵ This is an act that Shadow will not survive. It is at this moment, however, that Shadow feels alive: "[he] was alive. He had never felt like this. Ever" (Gaiman 460). This exultation of being alive is a consequence of the katabasis⁶ that Shadow is experiencing, described by Jung as "a descent into the cave of initiation and secret knowledge" (*Spirit* 139-140). Obertino explains that "[an] important consequence of katabasis is that libido can be freed and provide for the hero a taste of the world made fresh and new again" (154). Shadow is laughing with joy and delight as he hangs from the tree waiting for death to take him. His libido is restored as he waits. Shadow's words dovetail with Laura's when she asked him whether he is alive or not. Shadow could be an empty hole in the universe, but here his libido is restored and he shouts to the sky that he is here and alive (Gaiman 460).

In the period between the death of Wednesday and Shadow's hanging, Shadow experiences a compulsion to do what Wednesday told him to do in case of Wednesday's demise:

Wednesday's words were in his head with every step he took along the corridor, and he could taste the sour-sweetness of mead in the back of his throat. *You protect me. You transport me from place to place. You run errands. In an emergency, but only in an emergency, you hurt people who need to be hurt. In the unlikely event of my death, you will hold my vigil...* (Gaiman 448)

⁵ In *Norse Mythology*, Gaiman writes that Odin "hung from the world-tree, Yggdrasil, hung there for nine nights....He was alone there, in pain, the light of his life slowly going out. He was cold, in agony, and on the point of death when his sacrifice bore dark fruit: in the ecstasy of his agony he looked down, and the runes were revealed to him. He knew them, and understood them and their power. The rope broke then, and he fell, screaming, from the tree" (21-22).

⁶ Katabasis refers to the act of going down (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*).

Shadow's compulsive actions make perfect sense to him. He drank Wednesday's mead so he now has to obey every single term of the contract. This means that it is perfectly logical that Shadow will hang himself from a world tree. For a Jungian hero to enter the underworld a certain level of inner reflection is needed. Shadow will need to reflect on his past, the good elements of it and the bad. Shadow will reflect on his mother, his father, his life with Laura, and the act of violence that led him to prison. This reflection to enter the underworld can be felt as a loss (Hillman 52). As Shadow reflects on these elements he does actually lose part of himself: his name and his heart. Shadow feels incomplete and misses Wednesday's words in this period of time. Shadow has to be hung from the tree because he is already standing at the entrance of the underworld and is ready to enter this mode of reflection. Shadow is ready to let go of his past and become a better person.

During this process of hanging on the tree Shadow has several experiences. One of these is "a dark dream in which dead children rose and came to him, their eyes peeling, swollen pearls, and they reproached him for failing them (Gaiman 459). This dream ends with the image of an elephant hiding a mouse in its trunk. Later, after the conflict with Wednesday is resolved, Shadow will remember this dream and know that he realized, while hanging on the tree that the missing children from Lakeside are dead and their bodies are locked in the trunks of cars at the bottom of the lake the town is named after.

To Shadow "[it] seemed [...] that the tree reached from hell to heaven, and that he had been there forever" (Gaiman 461). The Yggdrasil of Norse mythology, as well as some other world trees from different pantheons, have this trait in which they reach to heaven and have roots in the underworld. Eventually, Shadow experiences the world as if he is this world tree and he feels himself drawing water from Urd's well, as well as commenting on the heaviness of the sky as it rests on his branches. This tree might stand in Virginia and might

not look like much, but it symbolizes Yggdrasil. Shadow has become one with a tree at this point and as Stein mentions: a tree is a symbol for the self. Shadow is getting closer to individuation (161). The tree itself is “the most beautiful tree Shadow had ever seen” (Gaiman 453). The other characters do not have this reaction to the tree because the tree is only representing Shadow’s self in this case.

The children that Shadow sees and the clues that he experiences eventually lead Shadow to Hinzelmännchen in Lakeside. Hinzelmännchen killed a single child every year as a sacrifice to himself and the town never realized what happened to those children. Shadow, who was not just an outsider but someone who is aware of the concept of gods, figured out the truth about the resting place of the children and followed the clues back to Hinzelmännchen. These images that Shadow experiences on Yggdrasil of the children looking at Shadow and the elephant hinting at the trunk are part of Shadow descending into the underworld, as described by Jungian scholar James Hillman: “[the] transition from the material to the psychical perspective often presents dream imagery of sickening and dying” (53). Not only did Shadow gain the clues necessary to solve a mystery he never completed, but the children themselves help Shadow down to the deepest reaches of his psyche by going into the underworld.

These experiences on the world tree elevate Shadow closer to the self than before. He will learn how to approach and accept his shadow and anima. Stein mentions in his book how “[the] self ... is completely outside the personal sphere, and appears, if at all, only as a religious mythologem, and its symbols range from the highest to the lowest ...” (157). The tree is a religious symbol, and not just its revelation to Shadow, but also Shadow’s willingness to perform Wednesday’s vigil allows Shadow to approach the self. This tree is not simply a representation of the self but together with the center of the earth they represent the self to Shadow. These locations are where Shadow experiences the biggest emotional

growth and gains the revelations necessary to become a better person and end Wednesday's plot to have both the new gods and the old gods kill themselves which in turn would strengthen Wednesday.

The first person Shadow meets in the underworld is Zorya Polunochnaya: one of the three sisters living with Czernobog. She is the sister who gave Shadow the moon as protection after he lost the sun to Laura by throwing it into her grave. Both the sun and the moon are represented to Shadow by the coins that he plays with. The moon is returned to the Zorya sister who in turn changes it into a light source to help Shadow through the underworld. She is standing near the first fork in the road for Shadow. She explains how one path is for fine lies, and one path is for harsh truths: "I've come too far for more lies." (Gaiman 471). Shadow is ready to accept the world as it is. His travels and the revelations thus far have made Shadow ready to accept himself. The truths shown to Shadow are personal in nature. The first vision that the underworld shows Shadow is of Shadow sitting in the warden's office back in jail. The second vision Shadow sees is of the violent act that Shadow perpetrated and the resulting court case in which many truths are omitted, even though everyone knew of them. The third truth that Shadow sees is the death of his mother, a death he tried to escape from into a book, only to stop reading afterwards because: "What good were books, if they couldn't protect you from something like that" (Gaiman 473). The fourth vision is of a younger Shadow asking his mother about the identity of his father. The final vision and the harsh truth that Shadow sees and accepts is of his younger mother and a younger Wednesday dancing at a party and leaving it side by side: "Shadow buried his head in his hands, and did not follow them, unable or unwilling to witness his own conception" (Gaiman 475). Shadow has learned the truth: Wednesday is his father and his mother was unwilling to share this truth with Shadow. As a result of Shadow lacking this information he

was unable to connect with his father when he wanted to as a child. Shadow was also disconnected from the person who represents his shadow.

Before Shadow steps on the path of harsh truths, however, Polunochnaya tells him that he has to pay a price before he is allowed to continue. Shadow responds with "I'll pay it. What's the price" (Gaiman 471). The price is Shadow's real name, a name that is never given to the reader in the book. Shadow's real name is a symbol of Shadow's past: a past that Shadow had before he knew Laura, before he met the gods. In this past he was too immature to start his journey into individuation. To enter the underworld Shadow had to let go of his past, just as Frodo in *Lord of the Rings* (1954) and Aeneas in *Aeneid* (Obertino 160-61). Shadow has no qualms in giving away his name because he knows that he is not surviving this journey. As Shadow continues on the path of harsh truths he learns what his subconscious has to tell him, as discussed in the previous paragraph. When he later meets Bast she asks him if giving up his name to learn the truth was worth it. Shadow replies that it was a personal truth and he does not know whether his name was worth it or not.

Another element of the path of harsh truths that needs some further explaining is the liberty coin that returns to being a moon as Polunochnaya places it above Shadow's head to light his way through dark places. The liberty dollar has changed into the light of consciousness: a light that ensures that the ego remains intact as Shadow undergoes katabasis. As Shadow walks the path of harsh truths the moon continues to light his way, but after he meets Bast who tells him to take the path that makes him whole the light of the moon starts to waver. It does not take long, however, before Mr. Ibis, Thoth, with a lantern shows up to guide him further. The lantern is "in the shape of a crescent moon" (Gaiman 481). The protection from Polunochnaya evaporated at this point leaving Shadow in darkness, yet Thoth shows up with another moon to guide Shadow to his final challenge.

Shadow brings up an interesting point during the journey with Thoth: Shadow did not believe in the Egyptian gods, so why are they waiting for Shadow in the afterlife? Thoth answers to Shadow: “It doesn’t matter that you didn’t believe in us, [...] [we] believed in you” (Gaiman 481). Thoth explains to Shadow that he is psychopomp, an escort for the recently deceased to the afterlife. That makes Thoth the third and final psychopomp for Shadow. The first two psychopomps were Polunochnaya and Bast. The time that Shadow spent with Mr. Ibis, Mr. Jacquel, and Bast in Cairo allowed them to care for Shadow. Shadow encountered these characters and became better for it by working for them in their funeral home. He learned the finer details of death. This helped Shadow through the underworld as Polunochnaya, Bast, Thoth, and Anubis return to guide Shadow again through death.

Thoth leads Shadow to Mr. Jacquel, otherwise known as Anubis. He is the one who will judge Shadow. In this story Anubis is Shadow’s judge: “Shadow knew that all his faults, all his failings, all his weaknesses were being taken out and weighed and measured; that he was, in some way, being dissected, and sliced, and tasted” (Gaiman 481-82). This is parallel with how Mr. Jacquel performed an autopsy in their funeral home in Cairo in the second act of the book. In this case, however, Anubis performs an autopsy on Shadow’s soul: “We do not always remember the things that do no credit to us. We justify them, cover them in bright lies or with the thick dust of forgetfulness. [...] [Shadow] was a naked and as open as a corpse on a table, and dark Anubis the jackal god was his prosecutor and he prosecutor and his persecutor” (Gaiman 482). This ends with Shadow in tears after he is forced to recount all of his actions before his death “[for] in the underworld all is stripped away” (Hillman 43).

Shadow’s choice of afterlife is a point of contention for the process of individuation. Shadow is allowed to make his choice about where he wants to go by being given several doors. Initially he allowed Polunochnaya and Bast to choose the roads that he travelled. However, here he wishes to choose himself. Shadow chooses the absence of everything: “I

want to rest now, [...] [that's] what I want. I want nothing. No heaven, no hell, no anything. Just let it end" (Gaiman 484). Shadow seems exhausted of the journey that led up to his death. The judgment by Anubis have cancelled out any hope and despair that he had previously and leave Shadow as an empty shell (Hillman 44). Shadow happily walks through the door into nothing. However, for the process of individuation, this was the wrong choice.

Shadow chooses to disconnect himself from the outside world. This, however, is the wrong choice as separating oneself from the outside world weakens the ego (Knapp 82). He is forced to come back to life when Eater and Horus revive him. Bast mentioned to Shadow how there are no endings to life, not really. Bast tells Shadow here how he will never be done learning an experiencing life, which echoes Storr's point about individuation being "a spiritual quest or journey" (89). The process of individuation never truly ends. When Shadow is in the nothingness he fails to comprehend time: "He might have been there, been Nowhere, for ten minutes or for ten thousand years. It made no difference: time was an idea for which he no longer had any need" (Gaiman 510). In the afterlife time has no effect as the afterlife does not know change (Hillman 30). Shadow cannot grow in the Nothing as there is no time in the Nothing; there is no change, and therefore no individuation.

Shadow gains the knowledge of Wednesday's plans, Lakeside's secret, and his own parentage through the dreams of the center of the Earth and of his experience in the underworld. With this inner knowledge Shadow is capable of facing Wednesday, his shadow, and stopping a war before too many casualties happened. After stopping Wednesday he finds Laura, his anima, and proceeds to forgive her and let her go. Shadow became a better person through the events of the story and is capable of sorting his affairs because he has discovered the self: "the regulating center of his soul" (Von Franz 212).

Conclusion

To conclude this thesis we can see the journey that Shadow has undergone from being in prison to stopping a war for the hearts of people by understanding his Jungian self and relaying the words of the self to the warring factions. This thesis explained some of the important elements in Jungian literary analysis and proceeded to use these to analyze the story. When Laura talks to Shadow she calls him out how he was never fully alive before he went to prison (Gaiman 370). Only after leaving prison and meeting Wednesday does Shadow become alive again. The implication of this is that Wednesday represents Shadow's shadow and when these two men unite Shadow starts on his quest for individuation. Wednesday's plans for Shadow require Shadow to become isolated from the rest of the world because Wednesday needs Shadow to die for him so that Wednesday can flee from poverty and be powerful once again. However, the act of Shadow and Wednesday uniting sets Shadow's journey into individuation in motion and in turn the lessons he learns help him, eventually, to defeat Wednesday.

It is Laura who aids Shadow through the obstacles that Wednesday puts in his path. She saves him from becoming violent and giving in to urges that he has vowed never to do again after losing three years in prison. Laura is the wildcard to Wednesday's plan, she is unpredictable. Laura's physical state represent Shadow's anima: An undead corpse that is weak and fragile. Shadow proceeds down the path of individuation as he makes personal connections throughout the novel. Shadow meets with, among others, Mr. Nancy, Czernobog, Sam Black-Crow, Easter, Thoth, Anubis, and Bast. Each of these connections are due thanks to Laura's influence on Shadow and in turn Shadow's anima heals thanks to these connections until Laura is physically indistinguishable from human thanks to the water given to her at the Virginia tree.

It is at the Virginia tree that the final leg in Shadow's journey happens and he descends into the underworld. His sacrifice to honor Wednesday leaves Shadow happy because he feels alive for the first time in his life. It is in the underworld that he is fully tested as everything Shadow has ever done is shown to Anubis and "the storm of guilt and regret and shame" make shadow weep (Gaiman 482). After the judging by Anubis and revelations of the underworld Shadow comes closer to the self and his transformation to a new man after his resurrection proves it. When Shadow wakes up from death he sees and experiences the world as is he is seeing them for the first time: Shadow has been reborn closer to the self than before.

This connection to the self and the progress of Shadow's journey into individuation becomes clear when he confronts the climax of the story. Shadow becomes capable of diffusing a war for the heart of mankind by making both the old as well as the new gods listen to him. Shadow tells the gods a story that originates not just from within Shadow, but from within the cave, which represents Shadow's self, as well. This proves how far Shadow came in his quest: he stopped unnecessary bloodshed between two forces that have been manipulated into fighting each other by Mr. Wednesday and Mr. World by using the words of the land. There is a subplot in Lakeside involving the ritualistic murder of a young child every year that Shadow is capable of solving as well once he returned from the underworld and became capable of seeing the world in a different light.

By looking at the evidence that the text gives us and analyzing it through a Jungian literary framework we can establish that Shadow progressed through the quest into individuation and he became a better person for it. The truths that he learns from the self helped him to become better and Shadow became capable of accepting the traumas that he sustained throughout his life such as the death of his mother and Laura. Shadow completed his quest in *American Gods* but a consequence of this is that he is tired of gods and their

machinations. The postscript at the end of the novel establishes that Shadow will travel for a while longer before inevitably returning to the United States. However, at that point in the book Shadow seems to have paused his quest and is running away from America instead. Shadow will continue his quest eventually as the quest for individuation is never finished.

While a Jungian analysis of *American Gods* can highlight relations between literary analysis and psychological archetypes and ideas there are also limitations to following a Jungian critical framework. However, certain aspects of the novel remain underexposed. A feminist analysis on the female characters could lead to very different conclusions compared with my Jungian literary analysis which looked at them as representatives of the anima and shadow. Historical analysis of American culture is also absent from a Jungian literary analysis.

Further research on the novel could focus on the relationship between Shadow and Baldur, a character in Norse Myth that is destined to die due to Loki and whose death instigates Ragnarok. Other readings could focus on the characters and gods themselves and analyze them in a more historical setting and comparing them to older mythological stories. Easter says that she resurrected someone before she resurrected Shadow which hints at Jesus Christ's resurrection. Researchers could also look at the Native American influences in the novel and the Native American folk heroes who Shadow encounters. I also briefly hinted at Sam Black-Crow as a bridge between old and new which is relevant to the story as the conflict revolves around the new gods and the old gods fighting to remain relevant to the American Population.

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