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Failure of Integrating the Self in Robert Eggers' *The Lighthouse* (2019)

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Letter of Recommendation

Garima Khattry has completed her thesis “Failure of Integrating the Self in Robert Eggers’ *The Lighthouse* (2019)” under my supervision. She carried out this research study from **April 2024 to October 2024**. I hereby recommend this thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled “Failure of Integrating the Self in Robert Eggers’ *The Lighthouse* (2019)” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Garima Khatri, has been approved by the undersigned Members of the Research Committee

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Failure of Integrating the Self in Robert Eggers' *The Lighthouse* (2019)

Abstract

This study scrutinizes the film, The Lighthouse (2019), directed by Robert Eggers, in light of Jungian archetypal theory. Owing to the movie being considerably recent, and of an ambiguous, surreal nature—which makes it pliable to most any kind of interpretation—the few scholarly attempts at interpretation may have derailed because the two-hander quality of the cinema has been foregone to focus on the minor motifs; namely, the mermaid. Along with the plot's pre-existing ambiguity, the deviation added to the confusion of what the film could possibly be trying to communicate. This study ventures to bridge the gap by focusing on examining the conflict between the two characters. The researcher opines that instead of taking Thomas Wake and Ephraim Winslow (also known as Thomas Howard) at face value, they need to be seen as symbolic representations of each other's shadow archetypes; the Senex and the Puer Aeternus, respectively. The screenplay also supports the notion as they are named 'Old' and 'Young'—hence, reflections of each other. Thus, the film is interpreted to be playing out entirely within the psychic domain of one 'Thomas'. The concept of the archetypes and individuation as introduced by Jung, and refined by Marie-Louise von Franz, create the theoretical framework of this research; that is then applied to the textual analysis of the film, in tandem with the script. It was found that despite the friction between Wake and Winslow, they still wanted to find a middle ground—so as to begin the process of individuation. However, the failure to establish sustained amicability led to failure of individuation, and in turn, the integration of the self.

Keywords: Archetypes, Individuation, Psyche, Representation, Self.

Introduction

After receiving much acclaim with the debut of *The Witch* (2015), Robert Eggers went on to direct a mesmerizing maritime madness set against the bleak backdrop of a desolate island in the late 1800s—or, otherwise known as *The Lighthouse* (2019). The monochrome film's dive into psychological horror and grotesque violence, laced with meticulous attention to historical details and the addendum of the symbolic, further solidified Eggers' reputation as a master of atmospheric storytelling. The borderline caricature dialogue holds true to the time as it is based on real-life journals of lightkeepers, which then, coupled with a 1.19:1 aspect ratio, reminiscent of early cinema, further adds to the sense of claustrophobia, confinement and bizarreness.

The plot follows two lighthouse keepers, Thomas Wake (played by Willem Dafoe) and Ephraim Winslow (played by Robert Pattinson), who are tasked with maintaining a remote New England lighthouse for four weeks. The actors' performances capture the characters' simmering tensions and unravelling psyches with haunting intensity, which in turn captures and enthrals the audience. The relationship between Wake and Winslow can be characterized as a foul dance of wits—which eventually escalates to brawn—that barely disguises contempt with exaggerated cheer. Harsh weather conditions, isolation, never-ending toil, and liquor quickly take a toll on the duo, leading to a downward descent into madness and paranoia. As the days pass, and their grip on reality begins to slip, the line between truth and hallucination blurs, culminating in a surreal and visceral climax that leaves viewers questioning what is real and what is mere illusion.

Despite the fertile versatility of its interpretative possibilities, there is not much scholarship to be found on the motion picture. *The Lighthouse* defies easy

categorization by blending elements of horror, psychological thriller, and dark comedy into a singularly unnerving, eerie and unforgettable experience. The difference in perception, supernatural-mythic elements, and the blending of fantasy and reality, all cause unreliable narration to take place, which leave gaps in understanding and an almost sentient refusal to allow the pinpointing of a solid interpretation. As such, this research is an attempt to contextualize and make sense of the film that seems resistant to being known.

This research scrutinizes the friction between the two characters, Winslow and Wake, from the film, *The Lighthouse* by Robert Eggers, in light of Carl Gustav Jung's ideas on Analytical Psychology. Although both characters are foils to each other, Winslow will receive a little more focus, since he is the protagonist and as such, his point of view takes center stage. The manifestations of his unconscious are a sight to see when he is made to interact with Wake, who is his superior; in age, experience, and post. At a glance, it is easy to condemn Winslow due to his seedy past but Wake is not a wholly trustworthy figure either, as his stories have more holes than a coral.

Origins, Development and Significance of the Screenplay

The conception of the film can be traced to the unfinished short story written by Edgar Allen Poe—which is of the same name save for having a dash. Scholars largely accept that the story was unfinished due to Poe's sudden death, rather than the author aiming for a deliberate abrupt ending, which would signify the mysterious end of the paranoid lighthouse keeper (Mabbott 1388). Upon reading Poe's "The Lighthouse", one can easily notice the reverberating themes of loneliness, isolation and madness, like an incessant billowing foghorn. However, finding similarities between the contents of the story's plot to the film's screenplay, is a fool's errand. The drastic

differences occur because the tale was only a loose starting point taken up by Max Eggers, brother of Robert Eggers.

In a detailed published interview by the *Rolling Stone*, the Eggers Brothers reveal that the idea was initially a ghost story inspired by Poe's 'lighthouse', which then changed trajectory when they incorporated the famous Smalls Lighthouse Incident in Wales. It intrigued Robert Eggers, who says, "The younger of the two has a shady past. The older man dies and his coworker thinks he'll be blamed for it. The ending is pretty similar to *The Telltale Heart* — it's a realistic tale with a folkloric bent" (Fear np). The real-life horror aspect lies in the decomposing arm of 'Old' being tossed back and forth by the winds, which was akin to a beckoning motion. 'Young' had actually stashed the corpse in a crude coffin, but it was torn to pieces by stiff winds. So, he was subjected to this gory scene for the remainder of his stay on the rock. Him being driven mad and 'unrecognizable' at the end of his stint was almost like a twisted form of poetic justice. This historical incident in 1801 was gruesome enough to enforce a change in the policy from the standard two to three lighthouse keepers on the roster.

The Incident gets weirder but fact seems to be stranger than fiction after all. The two Welsh lighthouse keepers were both named Thomas; the older and the younger one having their last name as Griffith and Howell, respectively. In the film, after a long night of having too much to drink, Ephraim Winslow reveals his true identity to be Thomas Howard. It was for this reason that the previous paragraph had referred to them as 'Young' and 'Old'—the final script refers to our characters as such, instead of by name. The director explained, "And because they were both named 'Thomas', I thought this could be an interesting two-hander about identity. It's about many other things but that's how it began" (Oscars 2:53-3:05). The tragedy is

so outlandish that certainly, the name aspect could not have been left out, as it added another layer of uncanniness.

Furthermore, this particular psychological perspective of them being mirrors to each other does not seem to have been explored as deeply as it should be. Eggers admits in another interview, “For better or for worse, my brother and I are fairly Jungian-inclined.... And being Jungian-inclined, it inspires themes and motifs in the story.... I hope it’s a movie where both Jung and Freud would be furiously eating their popcorn” (Jacobs np). This admission more or less cemented the particular direction that the researcher was tentative about, which will be discussed in the later chapters. Additionally, the influences of Herman Melville, John Milton, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Louis Stevenson, H.P. Lovecraft, Sarah Orne Jewett, and many other writers can be seen in the dialogue and themes of the screenplay. As this is still only the introductory section, I would like to highlight just Stevenson’s novella *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. It is interesting to note that the 1886 gothic horror centres around a man who happens to have a sort of split personality disorder. This is not to definitively say that Thomas Wake and Thomas Howard are a plain two in one scheme, rather the hinting of it cannot be ignored as Eggers has explicitly emphasized the psychological themes in the movie that is set in the 1890s.

Circling back to Poe, and ending this preface, let it be known that one of Robert Eggers’ first ventures into film was an adaptation of “The Tell-Tale Heart”. So, with that tidbit, the other obvious influences, and the intense research that has been done for the creation of *The Lighthouse*, it would not be a stretch to assume the literary and artistic merit of the film. Truth be told, this is the preliminary reason behind the researcher choosing the film as a primary text. Research can only be as good as the choice of primary text, and the researcher does her best to give it justice.

Literature Review

Since its theatrical release a little over five years ago, only a handful of scholarly papers on *The Lighthouse* (2019) were written; and of them, fewer were related to the topic at hand. Similarly, few film critics have written on the cinematic piece. Perhaps it is the very ambiguous nature of it that deters would-be interpreters. Nevertheless, out of the literature perused, the researcher found Philip Hayward's paper "Merlerium", published in the *Shima* journal, the most helpful resource for a deeper understanding of the film. It is indeed a testament to his expertise in writing about nautical literature as he discussed the issue of the shifting cultural impression of folklore in cinema; specifically, centered on the anatomy of the mermaid in *The Lighthouse* and the implications of the corpus. The following is Hayward's conclusion:

The graphic anatomical representation of the mermaid.... mark a novel twist in the considerable corpus of mermaid themed film, television and video.

Indeed, it might be asserted that the mermaid's presence as the materialisation of an *anima* – rather than as a credible person capable of speech and relationship building – is key to her dramatic impact and associative lustre in the film. (Hayward 210)

Compact, concise and intertextual with Hayward's previous works—which will not be discussed here due to deviation from relevancy—his article is a goldmine of information that aided the researcher in the writing of this thesis. The aspect of music and sound design, which had sneakily escaped my notice, was covered by him.

Having said all that, although he began the 'anima' conversation, the nitty-gritty of the dynamic between our two main characters was not given enough limelight. One could argue that Hayward's paper simply is not about that, but the intertextuality with

his previous works is worthy of both appreciation and mild annoyance. I trust the reader to see the issue of a closed *anima*-based interpretation that may be promoted unwittingly, despite the disclaimer: “*The Lighthouse* resists simple decoding in terms of the articulation of its mythological referents and the deployment of these in service of the narrative” (Hayward 210).

Of the literature reviewed, I am under the impression that Hayward wrote the first research paper on the movie; therefore, due credit must be given. Still, either this influenced other scholars to follow the same pattern, or they had the idea on their own. It is after all, no secret that the Eggers brothers are interested in Jungian psychoanalysis (page 4), and it is also apparent from the content. American poet and author, Dennis Patrick Slattery, who happens to have worked extensively in the Jungian school of thought, opens his film review with the Swiss psychotherapist’s positive opinion on cinema. It is stating the obvious but all film reviews were published before Hayward engaged.

Slattery primarily compares the story-telling to that of Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, but not before hinting at this: “As in a similar archetypal situation, two men are ferried onto a spit of land with a lighthouse where they will tend to it for 4 weeks” (Slattery 310). ‘Archetype’ is the keyword that caught my attention because it seems that there are not enough papers discussing our two characters in light of Jungian archetypes. Foils? Yes. Possible Shadows to each other? No. For example, echoing Hayward, Anupriya Dasgupta from the University of British Columbia, emphasizes the body of the mermaid:

The development of Winslow and Wake’s relationship indicates that the struggle driven by queer desirability is not created by the monstrous body but is simply brought to light and revealed by the monstrous body. The abject

body of the mermaid, then, is not creating horror and is not a monster in the sense that she subjects Winslow to pain, but her body is there to remind Winslow of his own corporeality so he may reckon with his deepest anxieties and challenge them. (Dasgupta 93)

Elaborating on the extract above, Dasgupta takes the route of the abject body being a symbol of non-normativity that challenges the audience's views on existentialism. It is a reminder of our corporeality and thus, mortality. Winslow was equal parts disturbed and fascinated by the creature's genitalia, as perhaps the viewers were as well.

Though a riveting perspective, if external factors were to be scrutinized, and given the causal label for the downward spiral of our lightkeepers, then the slaughter of the seabird should also be given due consideration; which is inadequately addressed in Dasgupta's paper. Also, this is not to undermine the importance of embodiment, as symbolism can only take root when we give shapes to the abstract, however, it begs the question, should the weird body be so meshed with the understanding of the mind? In a psychological film, surely the characters' motives, behaviors, reactions, patterns, and internal mechanisms come first, rather than a non-human body that may even just be fancy?

Half-answering my concern, Mulyadi Hoar and Christy Tisnawijaya's article published on *Paradigm: Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, explores the power relation between the seamen, in light of Michel Foucault's theory. Leaving out the supernatural elements was a smart move on their part, as doing so made it grounded and lasered in on how the supervisor (Wake) dominated, subjugated and exploited his assistant (Winslow). At the same breath, the nuances of the film were lost, but there is no room for complaint as the dynamic between the two main characters was finally being put at the forefront. Power relations in a literal work

setting can be contextualized in the psychological frame, if the two characters are taken to be each other's shadow.

Manohla Dargis, in a *New York Times* review, drew the conclusion: "The story in "The Lighthouse" is thin enough to invite plentiful interpretations about masculinity, homosocial relations and desire, even if its more suggestive theme is Wake's punishing exploitation of Winslow" (Dargis np). Hoar and Tisnawijaya have already covered the 'exploitation of Winslow', and other academics, reviewers, interviewers have touched on the homoeroticism and toxic masculinity. Dargis also points out how the director successfully blends the physical and the mental space; which makes it difficult to exactly say what is or isn't real. Earlier in the introductory section, I had mentioned how the film seems to resist interpretation due to unreliable narration and ambiguity.

Ignacio Arnedillo Cazcarro, in his dissertation from Universidad Zaragoza, also agrees on the ambiguity of the text, explicating the following: "The happenings in *The Lighthouse* are difficult to interpret, if possible at all.... the characters' mental states also help maintain a degree of uncertainty that allows for different interpretations on what the film is about open to debate. Here[,] madness certainly keeps the film from being fully interpreted, and the characters' behavior is far from logical" (Cazcarro 9). The allure of a complex text lies in the challenge of understanding it. Cazcarro claims madness is the cause of the multiplicity of meaning, and goes on to provide many possible interpretations of *The Lighthouse*. Though a noteworthy line of thinking, when a text is deemed ripe for any kind of meaning making under the sun, there may be a danger of not having a convincing, or borderline forceful, interpretation—worse would be the dismissal of the whole primary text.

In her review published in *Cineaste*, Katherine Connell seems to have such grievances, “I suppose sometimes a tentacle is just a tentacle, but it would be more interesting if all these images stood for something vital” (Connell 49). This thesis might not elaborate on the Lovecraftian tentacles, but surely it has something to say on the possible deeper, psychological, mythical meaning of the film. The concern regarding the entire fiasco being just a hodgepodge of meanings, and in the end amounting to nothing is understandable. However, the dismissal of a well-researched craft because it refuses to be tamed easily, seems a bit rash. Perhaps, akin to the sea itself, the answers lie in the deep; after all, in my opinion, it is more of an art film than a commercial film.

Connell further expresses her doubt: “Is this supposed to be the takeaway: that it all might have been a hallucination?” (Connell 48). I do not agree that it was ‘all’ a hallucination, rather it was ‘all’ really happening—in a way that can be understood, should we just shine the light a different way. The blanket ‘everything was a dream’ interpretation is lazy in my view and adds nothing to the discourse. Maybe we need to view the happenings in the film as metaphorical rather than simply marooned, macho men going mad on turpentine.

In this way, the literature review helped me pinpoint the research gap. Though Hayward comes close to my study, his focus is on mermaid, whereas, mine is on the two lead characters, Winslow and Wake. Deriving insights from Carl Gustav Jung, the present study sheds light on how these two characters are shadows of each other.

Statement of the Problem and Hypothesis

Based on the literature review, minor aspects of the film—in this case, the mermaid motif—have been discussed in lieu of focusing on the main characters, Thomas Wake and Ephraim Winslow, a.k.a. Thomas Howard. Even if some

explorations of a primary text may be too on the nose, the basics need to be thoroughly researched. In the pursuit of creating a unique research paper, one may ignore the key players; when in reality, it is the bare bones that will support the further fleshing out of the body of work. It would be judgmental to assume that it is easy—hence, less useful—to write research centered on the wickies’ relationship to each other.

Therefore, the issue lies in the considerable lack of research which focuses on the dynamic between Wake and Winslow. The direct cause of confusion and ambiguity may lie in the fact that their interactions are taken at face value. The script has named Wake as ‘Old’ and Winslow as ‘Young’. I claim that they are the archetypes of one person—owing to the fact that they are both named Thomas—and, Pilot Rock is a metaphor for the psychic domain; in which the two archetypes need to come to a resolution for individuation, and the eventual integration of the self.

Research Methods and Theoretical Framework

The data collection for this research hinged on online resources like JSTOR, Google Scholar, and YouTube, as the approach is wholly qualitative and library based—both, the physical and the electronic kind. In this study, the primary text, the reviewed literature, audio-visual interviews, and theoretical texts on Jungian psychology, form data. Tracking down an author’s credentials for validity was a major point, even though said credentials may or may not have been directly mentioned in order to have better cohesion. A qualitative research approach is appropriate for the proving of the hypothesis because the primary text is a fictional film—meaning, it is a literary genre. The tone might seem condescending but there is no dancing around the fact that the Humanities conducts most of its research by way of qualitative approach; which entails close-reading and textual analysis.

In order to identify the similarities and the differences, the script was consulted and read in tandem while re-watching the film. It was found that most of the sea-shanties had been scrapped during production, and that there are a few golden, enlightening key points which aren't explicitly stated within the movie. One such prominent point being the original names of our characters: 'Old' and 'Young'. This vital information admittedly shaped the hypothesis for this study. Besides all of that, the script and the film more or less align in terms of dialogue; therefore, it may be found in this thesis that the quoting is done interchangeably. The congruency does not allow for demarcation—in other words, the quoted dialogue from the script, cited in this research, are most likely found in the movie. In addition to the close-reading of the script, the visuals were also analyzed with the help of basic cinematographic concepts.

Near the end of the literature review section, it was stated that the allure of a complex text lies in the challenge of understanding it. The rationale behind the selection of *The Lighthouse* (2019) as a primary text is simply, the thirst to know. The first viewing had quite literally stolen my sleep, as I remember spending hours poring over every forum and online discussions of the movie that I could find. Yet, I was still not any closer to finding out what exactly the text was trying to communicate. It seemed to me that a deeper dive was needed—one that was beyond the scope of simple fan forum discussions.

Therefore, relevant ideas of Carl Gustav Jung, and his fellow associate, Marie-Louise von Franz, have been drawn on to construct a theoretical framework for this study. The direct admission of the Eggers brothers' interest in Jung, and the earlier stated hypothesis, reinforced the direction. The Swiss psychologist has a tremendously huge body of work that is not required in its entirety for the purposes of

this study. In his lifetime, he had frequently lamented the misinterpretation of his works, so in honor of his memory, I attempted to balance his direct words and books by other Jungian psychoanalysts. For the sake of convenience and common sense, let's begin with Jung's explanation: "The term 'archetype' is often misunderstood as meaning certain definite mythological images or motifs. But these are nothing more than conscious representations.... The archetype is a tendency to form such representations of a motif—representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern" (Jung et. al. 67).

Upon close inspection of the quote above, it can be gleaned that 'archetypes' are the inherent structures of the symbolic and the abstract. Myths that differ across cultures can share the same values, lessons and morals. In analytical psychology, dreams are said to have similar recurring themes as myths—in other words, they are telling a story. The human psyche is divided into the conscious and the unconscious; and the unconscious into the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. An archetype arises from the collective unconscious, and takes shapes that only the dreamer can fully understand. The underlying meaning of the "primordial image" holds more significance than the image itself. Nevertheless, Jung observed recurring motifs that represented their corresponding archetypes, of which just so happens to be the child archetype and the wise old man archetype (Jung 183).

The scholar's first actual dip into Jungian theory was through Daryl Sharp's *C.G. Jung Lexicon* (1991), which is a relatively short but comprehensive glossary of Jungian terms and concepts. It directly quotes choice volumes of *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, that were printed under the Bollingen Series XX, by Princeton University Press; of which, Volume 9 Part I *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* will also be referred to, for the objectives of this study. But to finish off

the beginning point first, the researcher found in the guide, the exact wording—from a trusted source—that was eluding her, and preventing her from solidifying the main argument: “*Puer Aeternus*. Latin for ‘eternal child,’ used in mythology to designate a child-god who is forever young; psychologically it refers to an older man whose emotional life has remained at an adolescent level, usually coupled with too great a dependence on the mother” (Sharp 109). Regarding the relevance of the idea of the *Puer Aeternus*, the researcher has hypothesized that Winslow and Wake are shadow archetypes to each other. Let it be known that she does not mean to claim a person can be boxed into an archetype; the notion is ludicrous as humans—subsequently, fictional characters—are not one-dimensional. It is not contradictory to state that it is simply for the goals of this research that the characters, their attitudes, and actions towards each other, are taken as symbolic representations. This clarification seemed to be a requirement as the textual analysis might come off as ‘humanizing’ what should be abstractions.

That said, Howard is the textbook example of the *Puer Aeternus*, though he is no god, child or hero. He is a murderer-on-the-run who attempts to appear as a grown, mature, strong and silent type; but with the film’s progression, the occasional cracks in his Winslow persona eventually split open to reveal his true dark nature. Though the *Puer* does not intrinsically stand for being emotionally volatile and resenting authority, it is in his nature to seek freedom and embody the vitality of a child. It is plainly a case of being too indulgent of one side, hence inviting trouble for yourself. Howard’s initial interest in the Light, which develops into fascination, and gradual fixation—thanks to Wake doggedly guarding it as well—points to his mother complex. This is a short example of the form of exploration the study can take, and a reiteration of the disclaimer in the paragraph above. An archetype does not have a

persona nor a complex, but when analysing a human-like character, a few inconsistencies may be apparent. This is the primary limitation of this research.

A shadow archetype is, in layman's terms, the opposite of any archetype. As the cliché goes, two sides of the same coin. Wake is 'Old', Howard's boss and a pseudo-father figure; everything that 'Young' wants to embody but cannot:

The [P]uer's shadow is the [S]enex (Latin for "old man"), associated with the god Apollo—disciplined, controlled, responsible, rational, ordered.

Conversely, the shadow of the [S]enex is the [P]uer, related to Dionysus—unbounded instinct, disorder, intoxication, whimsy. Whoever lives out one pattern to the exclusion of the other risks constellating the opposite. Hence individuation quite as often involves the need for a well-controlled person to get closer to the spontaneous, instinctual life as it does the [P]uer's need to grow up. (Sharp 110)

From the excerpt above, it is safe to say that Thomas Wake is the *Senex* to Thomas Howard's *Puer Aeternus*. However, much like how Howard represents the negative manifestation of the *Puer*, Wake is no exception with his near constant antagonism towards his junior; after a perceived slight. He has a jealous obsession regarding the Light—going so far as to calling it his wife—and outright bullying his assistant into submitting to the unfair duty allotment. Keeping aside Howard's lack of redeeming qualities, he is still subjected to the wrongly justified mistreatment by the archetype of the wise old man, who is ironically reputed as charitable and a guide to the hero motif.

The Jung Reader (2012), is prescriptive undergraduate reading for those new to analytical psychology, which was referred to for deeper comprehension—albeit I had stumbled upon it a little too late, for I had foolishly believed I should go straight to the source instead of 'taking shortcuts'. The insights on Jung's most important

works are appreciated, and prompted a realization that seeking other experts' opinion is not being a 'lazy' student. Apologies, if the narration seems too personal, as the researcher is of the opinion that honesty is in line with the spirit of academia. The real-life struggles in the formation of this thesis should also be listed here.

As a novice at Jungian analysis, it seemed prudent to primarily focus on the last work Jung conceived prior to his death in 1961, *Man and His Symbols* (1988); since it was aimed at 'the average reader'. The book's coordinating editor, John Freeman, who wrote the introduction, had said as much and went on to say: "Jung himself selected as his collaborators in the work Dr. Marie-Louise von Franz of Zurich, perhaps his closest professional confidante and friend" (Jung et. al. 11). Indeed, though the end product was sadly not seen by Jung, it is trusted in its authenticity as Franz oversaw the completion of the project based on express instructions. Her work builds on Jung's, and is an established psychoanalyst of her own right. Hence, from the book, Franz's essay, "The Process of Individuation" and Jung's, "Approaching the Unconscious", will be utilized for theoretical support.

Paraphrasing Franz regarding the vagueness of definitions, due to which the Jungian approach has been subjected to bad press, she retorts with how critics forget the very nature of the material; feelings cannot be measured nor put neatly into boxes (Jung et. al. 164). Freeman too had addressed the upwards-circling nature of the explanations in the introductory chapter, that is characteristic of Jung and his associates, and reassures the reader that it is not obscure for long. Franz provided a definition for the individuation process (cited below), before speaking on the 'vagueness' of terms, then again 'defining' it with respect to the layers of the human psyche. The reasoning behind the slew of background information is for better clarity and disclosing the limitations of the study. One might go through this research work,

read *Man and His Symbols*, and eventually find that complex psychology seems to be too amorphous and chimera-like, unlike other schools of thought which have fixed, drawn out, detailed definitions. The following is one definition of individuation provided by Franz, in which she attempts to explain the process in terms of recurring dreams, and the psychological implications of them:

Thus our dream life creates a meandering pattern in which individual strands or tendencies become visible, then vanish, then return again. If one watches this meandering design over a long period of time, one can observe a sort of hidden regulating or directing tendency at work, creating a slow, imperceptible process of psychic growth—the process of individuation. (Jung et. al. 161)

Individuation is an on-going, life-long process of internal refinement. Some might justifiably draw the conclusion of it being a convoluted way of saying, ‘know thyself’. But the process of individuation cannot be simply reduced to ‘knowing thyself’, when one is themselves unknown of the shadows and complexes that lie in their personal unconscious—and that is without factoring in the collective unconscious! I do not think it is too much of a stretch to assume that the average Joe tends to be unaware of their darker tendencies, and Howard fits the bill. Although, he is particularly violent and actively denying the truth of his past, in privacy, his dreams and hallucinations taunt at his good conscience, calling him a murderer. In the extract above, it is clear that dreams are signs—or nudges, if you will—that one needs to face what is on the inside, understand it, overcome it, and grow further. Well, the refusal to do such is rejecting the “call”, hence rejecting individuation, and in turn, the integration of the self. Franz has the following to say about that:

The actual process of individuation—the conscious coming-to-terms with one’s own inner centre (psychic nucleus) or Self—generally begins with a

wounding of the personality and the suffering that accompanies it. This initial shock amounts to a sort of “call,” although it is not often recognized as such. On the contrary, the ego feels hampered in its will or its desire and usually projects the obstruction onto something external. That is, the ego accuses God or the economic situation or the boss or the marriage partner of being responsible for whatever is obstructing it. (Jung et. al. 166)

The passage above sums up the crux of the theoretical methodology perfectly. As Howard stands for being the *Puer*, it can be inferred that he resists stillness and taking a good hard look at himself. Meanwhile, Wake thinks he can do no wrong as he is older, and therefore wiser and more mature. Both of their bullheadedness prevents a successful individuation. One may exclaim that if they are shadows to each other then it is in their nature to butt heads. However, as they are stationed together in Pilot Rock to watch over the Light—as opposed to being watched by it, which is exactly what ends up happening—it is their job to work together and find a middle ground, in other words, grow together. Obviously, that does not happen sustainably, and while on the subject of the Light, the researcher deems it to be a symbol of the Self. Them fighting over the Light is akin to the two archetypes seeking dominance for control of the whole psychic being. The justification for this bold claim will be discussed at length in the textual analysis.

Again, as stated in the introductory section of this thesis, because the film mostly follows Winslow’s point of view, he is the unspoken protagonist—which means to say this study focuses on his experiences a bit more, compared to Wake’s. It is also because Franz’s collection of lectures titled *The Problem of the Puer Aeternus* (1970), proved to be useful for the characterization of Winslow as said archetype.

Unfortunately, for the *Senex*, no comprehensive research like the lecture collection was found by the researcher. This is another limitation of the study.

Textual Analysis

In 22 seconds of the commencement of the film, the menacing orchestral opening colors the black screen, which is then accompanied by the iconic foghorn that is an ever-looming presence within the film. The sounds of gulls, waves and the whirring of machinery can be heard. Though man made, the lighthouse's horn sounds like a primitive warning of what is to come—a war cry. Rhythmic clanking of the boat chains, coupled with the background low strings heighten anxiety, and create a claustrophobic tension. The world seems to close in on the two men standing side-by-side, at the edge of the ship. Upon my first ever watch, I had mistaken their proximity and the sharing of the view—as seen in figure 1 below—to be a sign of good companionship.



*Figure 1. First sighting of the main characters [source: screenshot of *The Lighthouse* 00:01:58]*

Shrouded in fog, stands the lighthouse on Pilot Rock. The background music gives out a noir, eerie feel with its incessant droning. In the figure above, Thomas

Wake (right) and Ephraim Winslow a.k.a. Thomas Howard (left), can be seen setting their sights on the light. In this textual analysis, I will be switching between the latter's real name and alias, based on the image the character tries to project and/or comes across as. Howard is his real name and so, who he really is—an insecure, volatile, decadent, man-child—whereas, Winslow is the stolen identity that stands for brooding, mature masculinity, and a worthy hard worker; in other words, a persona; but still Howard at his core.

Paraphrasing Daryl Sharp, 'persona' originally meant a mask used by actors, and according to Jung, it refers to the 'I', the ideal facets of ourselves which we show others. But the dangers of attaching our identity to the persona, all the while not enriching our inner self, can lead to neurosis (Sharp 97-99). It is symbolically ironic how Howard did not even bother to create his own persona; he would much rather brutally kill and appropriate another man's 'I-ness'. Of course, the grander scheme of Howard being the *Puer Aeternus* is not forgotten, but the glaring issue had to be addressed as done in the previous chapter. Some may argue both characters experienced neurosis—well, that is true to some degree, however, Howard experiences it more because there is definitive proof of him being guilty, which is unearthed to Wake. For now, let us allow the setting of the stage.

Indeed, Wake and Winslow are to be surrounded by water for the remainder of this movie—both, literally and as a motif. The whole point is that they are stuck with only each other; so, they can either settle their differences, or die trying. As seen in figure 1, the two of them are moving towards an island, isolated from civilization. This is a metaphor for going deep within the unconscious and the unknown, as water is one of the most common symbols for it (*Collected Works* 18). The sea, the dirty water in the cistern, the downpour of rain after slaughtering the seabird, white paint,

alcohol, fluids from the genitals—of arousal, excremental, and the non-human kind—are all different forms of the same fact that they are being tested within this psychic scape; and watched, because the unconscious never sleeps. The ocean perceived as the primordial womb of the world, and the lighthouse as the phallic symbol, creates an interesting line of thought because in contrast, the Light is referred to as ‘she’ and compared to Wake’s spouse (*The Lighthouse* 00:33:03-00:33:13).



*Figure 2. Winslow (left) and Wake (right) staring at the leaving ship and/or at the audience [source: screenshot of *The Lighthouse* 00:02:54]*

That tangent aside, figure 2 is the first front-facing view of the characters. Their stiff, confrontational stance and dead-stare screams ‘manly men’, which comes across as goading us into a fight. Despite figuring out that they were looking at the retreating steamboat—not breaking the fourth-wall—this still-shot of their penetrating gazes leaves quite an impression because it was as if they were looking at the audience, and being looked at in turn. The silence between the audience and the characters is that of appraisal. Seeing them from the boat’s point of view, can be interpreted as the ‘real world’ also moving away. This perspective shift is a clever trick to immerse the viewers further, and signify the characters now being deep within

the trenches of the psychic reality. The tangible world has dissipated, and the unpredictable island will not be merciful, as neither is nature.

Winslow's countenance cracks first, as he shifts from side-to-side, ill at ease and already wincing at the blast of the foghorn. Wake juxtaposes him by being the picture of serenity and ease. The old-salt is unperturbed at the blaring and cracks an imperceptible smile as he makes his way into the lodging. But Winslow looks on—as if, longingly, mournfully, at the only medium to the outside world. His eyes darting hither and thither, coupled with fear, seem to call for help that is not coming. The reason for such apparent discomfort can be explained by the following feature of the *Puer*: “The one thing dreaded throughout by such a type of man is to be bound to anything whatever.... There is always the fear of being caught in a situation from which it may be impossible to slip out again” (Franz 2). Howard fears being trapped in any situation that he cannot get out of. His constant changing of jobs and drifting from place-to-place—upon hearing of, Wake rightly quips, “On the run?” (Eggers 32)—is proof of his fear. Now, one might say it is quite human to not want to be tied down, however, this is a man who did not grow emotionally past his adolescence, and lacks the maturity to handle working under hard conditions, in spite of it being the late 1890s; which may sound biased and stereotypical but is true. By Jove, of course it wouldn't be a walk in the park to upkeep a beacon for seamen far off coast!

Young man came upon this stint by misjudging it as easy money: “I read a man could earn six hundred and thirty—I read one *thousand* dollars a year if he's willing to tend a light far off shore... the further away, the more he earns. I read that, and hell, I says, yessir. Work. Save my earnings” (Eggers 33). It sounds all well, and good, and noble, except he does not really want to work. In all honesty, initial viewings had me sympathizing with Winslow but that is the skill of Eggers'

storytelling. He is enticing us to side with Pattison’s character by presenting him as a poor guy who has always had it rough with terrible higher-ups. Never mind that the death of the lumberjack foreman was premediated, and Howard was very close to slitting Wake’s throat as he slept. Additionally, he ignored the “call of individuation” by failing to keep his temper in check towards the seagull, and creating a macabre mess of its innards on the cistern.



*Figure 3. Howard about to slit Wake’s throat after not being able to break into the Light nor find the logbook [source: screenshot of *The Lighthouse* 01:05:41]*

It would be safe to say that most of the times, conflict sparks when the two are in the same frame. In the beginning, it was something as inane—no less rude—as flatulence to the face, which then gradually and exponentially escalated, until it was a full-blown crime scene. The first direct argument was incited by Wake accusing Winslow of “neglecting his duties” (figure 4 below). Preceding that, they had already gotten off on the wrong foot when the latter rejected the former’s toast. Interestingly enough, although it is bad luck to leave a toast unfinished, it is a much worse omen to toast with water—that which Winslow unwittingly did out of hubris: “Tradition is that the object of a toast with water will die by drowning” (*Mess Night Manual* 5). Then,

by the end of the film, we can assume his fate based on the curse cast by Wake; for Winslow to be smothered and drowned by the sea-king Triton, until no one even remembers if there was one named such. It is grimly ironic how he had casted it for one specifically named 'Winslow', yet it still hit the mark because Howard was so desperate to be anyone but himself. His lack of self-control and temper were undesirable traits that even he knew at the back of his mind, were not for the better; still, his refusal to face himself and listen to the *Senex*, caused his downfall.



Figure 4. Winslow's receiving a verbal lashing from Wake [source: screenshot of The Lighthouse 00:27:28]

Not getting along is an understatement when it comes to the Thomases, and in this case, they do not mesh well together no matter how hard they try, because they are constantly shifting the blame on each other. Especially Winslow is guilty of deflecting and blame shifting. It seems to have always been a habit of his because he badmouths his previous supervisor for also calling him a 'dog'. Being called this phrase triggers a deeply emotional response from him that he, throughout the movie, attempts to hide until he cannot any longer. Wake is admittedly not receiving as much flak as Winslow is, due to the missing of, beyond a shadow of a doubt, proof that he

murdered his one-eyed junior. The vague dialogue may procure the impression that Winslow did not commit the heinous crime, but his killing streak begs to differ. Halfway through the film, he decided on murdering Wake because he was not getting his way, and in the climax, coolly wedges an axe in the oldie's skull. Anyone sane does not simply resort to murder when faced with difficult situations. The 'vague' confession by Howard is as follows:

And I had 'im handy and helpless. Alone. Too far downstream. And I wanted to do 'im in. I admit I did. Seein' the back of his head. One swipe of the cant hook'd be all. Uh it was... I-I didn't... I didn't... I did not. The day was long as hell on that drive. I was lead-tired. I admit it. But I saw him slippin', not me. And we saw the jam comin'. And I stood and he slipped. He shouted up. And I-I just stood there. "Tom, you dog!" I just stood there, is all. Just stood and watched 'im git swallowed down by them logs. (*The Lighthouse* 01:14:14-01:15:33)

Howard admits to craving to do the real Winslow in, however, he keeps going round and round in circles, denying any responsibility of the crime. He finishes off with saying he didn't kill him, but he didn't help him either—both ways, he is a killer. It is like he insists on staying in la-la land, where everything is right as rain, and especially his actions. The *Puer* with this form of narcissistic thinking cannot conceive the concept of consequences and constructive criticism. The Jungian psychotherapist agrees on this: "The one thing he absolutely refuses is responsibility for anything, or to carry the weight of a situation" (Franz 3). And the refusal is the due to the implications of the admission. To admit one is wrong means that everything is not ideal. This would have cracked Winslow's psyche beyond repair because he is so wrapped up in playing the perfect persona. It is of the utmost importance to remember

that the movie follows Winslow's point of view, therefore, one should be wary of falling into the rose-coloured glasses trap. The character himself is not self-aware and refuses to take responsibility, so how can one expect him to be truthful with the narration? That he has indeed been breaking his back at work.



*Figure 5. The view of one room being divided into halves parallels the Thomases being two sides of the same coin [source: screenshot of *The Lighthouse* 00:05:21]*

Thomas means 'twin'—the *Puer Aeternus* and the *Senex* archetypes are shadowy twins. Once more, the characters are symbolic representations of the archetypal images, which inherently embody opposing forces from the collective unconscious. So, when they are in the same frame, there is bound to be conflict; and it is artfully presented by Eggers with a mirroring motif. If not mirroring and face-to-face, then side-by-side—figure 1 and figure 2 is one example of the side-by-side, which I understand as an invitation to the viewers to play a game of spot the similarities and differences. Figure 5 is the most prominent mirroring scene in the film, which symmetrically halves their shared sleeping space. The significance of it being the sleeping quarters is not lost as this is a psychological movie that deals with the unconscious—where, dreams and fantasy are said to arise from.



Figure 6. The first dinner; another mirroring motif with a mini-Light in the centre
[source: screenshot of *The Lighthouse* 00:07:54]

Wake feels right at home, and comfortable enough to occupy a bed and urinate on the side. Alongside the fart on Winslow's face, this as a blatant show of dominance (Eggers 4). Flatulence is hardly a show of wisdom, and as the plot progresses, it is experienced that Wake's brand of wisdom has mostly to do with waxing mythic poetics and superstitions. It can indeed be dubbed an experience because I still remember the awe I felt at the 'silly old man' uttering his first dialogue in a deep, sombre voice: "Should pale death with treble dread / make the ocean caves our bed, / God who hear'st the surges roll, / deign to save the suppliant soul" (*The Lighthouse* 00:07:10-00:07:22). A proper homage to divinity before the commencement of the stint is fair, and quite *Senex* like, but as mentioned earlier, Winslow turns down the toast and Wake orders him to 'do as he is told' rather than follow the guidelines. The picture above is a snapshot of Wake getting angry at Winslow for refusing the toast. Jung's following observation is particularly relevant here:

The wise old man appears in dreams in the guise of a magician, doctor, priest, teacher, professor, grandfather, or any other person possessing authority. The

archetype of spirit in the shape of a man, hobgoblin, or animal always appears in a situation where insight, understanding, good advice, determination, planning, etc., are needed but cannot be mustered on one's own resources. The archetype compensates this state of spiritual deficiency by contents designed to fill the gap. (*Collected Works* 215)

With respect to Jung's insights above, Winslow definitely needs to have his spiritual deficiency fulfilled; however, Wake also represents the dark aspects of the *Senex*, characterized by demanding subservience and having dogmatic beliefs. He seems to be a man of God, because he asks Winslow later if he prays, in order to wheedle out his religious beliefs. After being caught red-handed in attempted murder (figure 3), Winslow is only blathering but this one statement—from the script, which matches the film dialogue, except for the last sentence—does actually fit for Wake: “You ain’t even human no more. Workin’ apart from folks so long. What’d you lose?” (Eggers 65). The gift of discernment and meditation in solitude is heavenly but too much of it can make the *Senex* energy having person harsh, embittered and inflexible. This is exactly what was going on with Wake acting as he did towards Winslow. Along with the archetype coming with authorial power, it also has the favor of the sea. This particular *Senex* is a pan-like character, who happens to be nautically inclined, in my opinion. Nearing the end of the film, during the fist-fight, his appearance shifts rapidly—from the real Winslow, to the mermaid, to a sort of withered coral wearing merman; deemed *meerwunder* by Philips Hayward in his paper (207-208).

In an interview, Eggers said: “Then we realized, ‘Well, Prometheus and Proteus never hung out in any Greek myths before, but that seems to be what is kind of happening here,’ and Prometheus might be taking on some characteristics that he hasn’t in the past. But you know what? The classical authors did that all the time”

(Wilkinson np). The idea of Wake being a stand-in for Proteus lines up with Jung's idea of the *Senex* being a shapeshifting wise-spirit because the minor sea-god is the chimeric son of Poseidon (Hayward 200). Homer also happened to call Proteus, 'the old man of the sea'. Wake's ever-changing origin story that Ephraim complained about can also be explained with that lore because the spirit is literally a shapeshifter. The younger man had scoffed that Wake was telling "tall-tales", but the following information from *Encyclopedia Britannica* confirms that it is in the Greek figure's nature to speak in riddles:

Proteus knew all things—past, present, and future—but disliked divulging what he knew. Those who wished to consult him had first to surprise and bind him during his noonday slumber. Even when caught he would try to escape by assuming all sorts of shapes. But if his captor held him fast, the god at last returned to his proper shape, gave the wished-for answer, and plunged into the sea. (Britannica np)

When Winslow repeatedly attempted to uncover the secrets of the Light, Wake had him blocked in every step of the way. He was definitely not making it any easier for the lousy fool to acquire any kind of truth or information from him; probably because he saw him as unworthy—which he was. Figure 3 is the halfway breaking point of the twisted *Puer*, due to the dangerous brew of his nature, the endless chores, Wake's bossiness, and apparent craftiness in keeping the keys to the Light room safe. The fascinating bit is the part about the sea-god's noonday slumber. In the film too, Wake can be seen sleeping in the daytime and awake during the night. Indubitably, Winslow was unsuccessful in catching the trickster god, until he used brute force, and possibly sexual violence (*The Lighthouse* 01:33:16-01:35:40).

Winslow had to quite literally tie Wake with a rope, and dehumanize him by making him bark like a dog, to finally receive ‘the truth’ but not the one he wanted: “O what Protean forms swim up from / men’s minds and melt in hot / Promethean plunder scorching eyes / with divine shames and horrors / and cast them down to Davy Jones.... ancient / mutable / and unchanging as the she who / girdles ‘round the globe. / Them’s truth. And you’ll be punished” (Eggers 93). The Miltonian form of speech in the script translated well in cinema as the camera gradually made an extreme close-up into Wake (*The Lighthouse* 01:37:41-01:38:48). Even while being buried alive, he holds on to his dignity and majesty, which comes with his old-age and connection to the divine. In contrast, Winslow may be treating Wake like a ‘dog’, but he is acting like one, due to him being controlled by the rabid complex he has about the word. Wake is warning Winslow that this modern Promethean plunder—allowing his dark impulses to control him—will cost him dearly.

The mythic terror invoked culminates into Winslow being burned and cast out by the Light into Davy Jones Locker—or, quite simply, the mariners’ version of hell. Every time Wake monologued, it harkened back to the old traditions, epics and mythical folktales, which were sooth. The intensity of his delivery is only matched by Howard when he finds out that his wages were to be nil, but for the researcher, it is not quite as memorable due to the language difference and the contents. The shaking of the cupboard and screaming about farts is about the only clear impression she can recall of the younger man’s rant. The cause for this conjecture is to draw a distinct line between the way the archetypes are presented. Both characters are temperamental but they express it in the way one would expect their respective archetype to behave. The *Senex* takes a grave, baritone approach, while the *Puer Aeternus* screams, cries, punches and yells like a toddler. Both have tantrums befitting their archetype.



Figure 7. Reflection of Wake in the mirror hanging on the wall [source: screenshot of The Lighthouse 00:13:54]



Figure 8. Winslow looking at Wake sleep and the back of his head being reflected off the mirror characters [source: screenshot of The Lighthouse 00:14:16]

Figures 7 and 8, are put up as further evidence of the mirroring. They take turns being awake, much like how the unconscious mind is active when the ego-driven conscious sleeps. One may be familiar with the riddle of comparing daytime to youth, and night to old age and death. Along the same lines, waking Winslow may never see the back of his head—his personal unconscious—nor Protean Wake—who

can be tagged as the primordial force rising from the collective unconscious—so, he would have a difficult time with allowing individuation to occur. In both stills, the old man is closer to the camera and larger than life, his sense of self is strong, and his presence is undeniably there. In figure 7, being able to see Wake’s face on the mirror means that to some degree, he is capable of self-reflection; therefore, growth. The *Senex* is usually described as being used to living far away from civilization, and craving solitude above all (*Collected Works* 35). Additionally, it’s in his name as well, ‘Wake’ is more awakened, and acts as such for the most part.



*Figure 9. In childlike fashion, Winslow (centre) reaching for the light room, and Wake coming into frame (left) to stop him [source: screenshot of *The Lighthouse* 00:18:57]*

However, just because the grey-haired wickie curses eloquently, has tasked himself with guarding the Light, and claims to be married to it, does not automatically give him the privilege to push his assistant around. Even if the bitter verbiage may have been deserved in the case of Wake’s logs being true, wisdom lies in not reacting so rashly—particularly, in taken offense of one’s lobster cooking skills. Having Protean tendencies may cause the moodiness, but taking out your spontaneous feelings onto another, is not very spiritually evolved nor a quality of being touched by

divinity. Speaking of, though he may be interpreted as the gatekeeper of divine wisdom bestowed by the Light, he is blatantly hoarding it (figure 9). In fact, he is just as much of a truant and a rulebreaker as Winslow, owing to the outright barring of the other from tending to the Light. There is a difference between guarding the path to salvation and embracing it fully. Being envious of others' access to good takes from one's own blessings in life. Wake having repeatedly denied Winslow chances to look into the Light—and possibly redeem himself—and instead forcing continuous back breaking work onto him, invited darkness through murderous mutiny.



*Figure 10. The one-eyed seagull with his empty eye-socket towards the camera; foreshadowing Winslow's fate [source: screenshot of *The Lighthouse* 00:17:07]*

Besides, technically, lighthouses are meant to be a danger sign to vessels because they are deliberately built on hazardous waters and rocky coasts. In metaphorical terms though, the lighthouse and specifically, the Light, is dangerous because it psychically breaks—and even punishes—anyone who has not faced their inner demons first. The island itself is alive with constant reminders to both the characters of their complexes, which they need to address in order to be worthy of being accepted by the Light. As the mermaid motif has already been exhausted by

other researchers and is not as relevant to the study, the seagull will be discussed as one such reminder of their complex.

Figure 10 features the one-eyed seagull who has been following Winslow since he got to Pilot Rock. In the ending shot of the film, Ephraim is seen to be missing an eye on the opposite side, whereas, the gull's missing eye matches to that of the severed head he had happened to find in the lobster pot. The introduction section of this research had detailed the Smalls Lighthouse Tragedy, that had inspired *The Lighthouse's* screenplay. The problem of being unsure of Wake's innocence has already been touched upon. Granted there may be no solid proof or explanation, but this reaction—detailed in the script—by Wake towards Howard potentially killing a seabird is suspicious: “He’s shaken. Terrified. A shell of himself. More frightening than his outburst of anger was” (Eggers 21). It could either be that Wake murdered his second or that it was accidental; however, he is the one to have brought up killing a bird first. It may never be known for certain but the belief in omens and myths seem to drive him more.

Furthermore, the vicious bludgeoning of the gull by Howard, then the terrible turn of the winds is a reference to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, wherein, the old seaman narrator recounts how shooting an albatross caused great misfortune to fall upon him and his crew. He had to carry the dead bird around his neck for a time, and only through repentance did he receive grace again. Now, it wouldn't be far-fetched to draw the scenario of Howard amused at the insinuation of him needing to repent bludgeoning the bird. Even during the makeshift confession (page 24), he denied murdering his foreman, so it did not come as a surprise when he did the same about killing the gull. The following is the dialogue from the script which is the same as in the film—

OLD: Will y'kill me like y'done that gull?

YOUNG: I didn't--

OLD: LIAR! YE MURDERING DOG! TWAS YE WHAT CHANGED THE
WIND ON US! (Eggers 89)

Most of the problems circle back around to the *Puer* refusing to apologise, admit his wrongs, and change for the better. Well, he shows up to the stint claiming to be a changed man but his first action upon entering the fray is to possibly steal whatever valuables he can find: “Then, YOUNG spots a fine DESK with a ship in a bottle on top. It’s rolled shut. He looks around, shifty eyed, to be sure no one is watching him... Instinctively, he passes his hand along the top of the desk to the LOCK. He jiggles it. Locked. Damn” (Eggers 3). Self-respecting, decent men do not go straight for handling expensive decorative objects, when they find themselves in a completely new setting. This is the first clue, besides the general discomfort on his face, when he arrives.



Figure 11. Tom peeping at a sleeping Wake from the roof's hole [source: screenshot of The Lighthouse 00:16:10]



Figure 12. Wake watching Winslow from the veranda of the lighthouse [source: screenshot of *The Lighthouse* 00:17:26]

The mirror imagery in the film has been covered at length; it is not only the physical scenes but also the characters' actions which mimic each other. In the figures 11 and 12, the spying aspect of their dynamic can be noted, which hints at the differing archetypes always prowling around each other—trying to anticipate the opposition's next move. Watching each other without letting the other know signifies distrust and tension between them. It is as if they are sizing each other up for an imminent fight, so they are looking for chinks on the armour.

Figure 11 is a homage to Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film *Psycho*, with Thomas Howard being a disturbed peeping-tom like Norman Bates; except he is indulging in his hypersexual tendencies by observing Wake involuntarily thrusting his hips in his sleep (Eggers 14). It has already been established that Young has snooping tendencies, which repeats itself as he exits the supply shed after calming his hormones (*The Lighthouse* 00:25:30). In this particular sequence, he witnesses Wake pleasuring himself with the Light. It is indeed a weird activity and the script describes the end of it as: "He pulls suspenders over his shoulders, as if getting dressed after a night with a

woman” (Eggers 22). Howard’s curiosity is piqued but he is forced to look from afar and hide in the dark of the night. Thus, the two Thomases are engaging in the same self-pleasuring activity, but in vastly different contexts. Wake is freely frolicking and basking in the Light (his self-proclaimed partner), whereas, Howard is having to hide around and finish his business inside (with a mermaid carving). The bizarre Oedipal house play is not lost on the researcher but the study needs to remain on course.

The central point is, in spite of the opposing nature and circumstances of the characters, both still want to achieve wholeness through reconciliation because they are the shadow archetypes of one individual named Thomas. Protesting the possibility would be falling for the literal differing backgrounds. The two characters have broken homes that fit perfectly together; one has/is what the other doesn’t/isn’t. For instance, no lifeboat aside, why would Wake follow Winslow, and even express concern for his well-being by asking for the dinner knife back? (*The Lighthouse* 01:20:53-01:21:18). If the old timer was so afraid for his life, then he could have kept himself hidden from the ‘madman’. And what reason does Winslow have for trusting Wake at all? The answer is: they want to trust each other and begin the process of individuation. The only problem is that it always seems to be cut short due to stubbornness and ego from both sides. A prime example is the tender drunk dance being thrown into a masculinity affirming match (*The Lighthouse* 01:10:42-01:12:01). Again, the oscillation back to being in each other’s arms is jarring but plausible because they do want to be close to each other. It is human nature to seek emotional security, and them being representative of shadow archetypes means that there is a want to achieve total inner harmony. The fact of the matter is that they are not the first archetypes to have been placed within this psychic domain for furthering the process of individuation;

which is why their replacement not showing up is highly concerning. Should the process stop altogether, the previous psychic growth also decays.



*Figure 13. Winslow lagging behind Wake; struggling to carry his 'baggage'. The leaving lightkeepers are carrying the 'baggage' together, symbolizing a successful individuation. [source: screenshot of *The Lighthouse* 00:02:35]*

A re-watch or two later, Figure 13 is the shot that first sparked the idea of the two men being a metaphor for psychic struggle rather than a literal one. The two unidentified previous lighthouse keepers, who have finished their 4-week-shift, can be seen returning with the 'baggage' being carried by the both of them. Colloquially, the term 'baggage' refers to the beliefs and feelings which influence one's thoughts and behavior. It has the connotation of trauma and unresolved issues attached to it. When a person has baggage, then they may not be as emotionally and mentally well-adjusted, as those who do not have it. This is not to say one can be totally free of stresses; because then that would mean total enlightenment. There are different types of baggage like ones related to parents, siblings, friends, employers, travelling, finance, gender-based, cultural-based and so on. A little before the still taken for figure 13, it can be seen that Winslow struggles to carry his baggage. That is because

he has much more repressed guilt about his sordid past compared to Wake, who has a very light load. Guilt, regrets and grief tend to make baggage heavier.



*Figure 14. Winslow feeling exposed after having told the truth of his sordid past [source: screenshot of *The Lighthouse* 01:17:45]*

The figure above is the snapshot of Howard’s highest horror coming true—someone finding out what is packed in his proverbial baggage. He is wearing clothes but ironically feels exposed, in comparison to a very naked Wake, who is shining light on him from his eyes, akin to the Light directly blazing above him. The ex-lumberjack is absolutely horrified and agape at being found out that he is not Ephraim Winslow. His persona has been shattered to pieces, and he is probably nauseated that it is his own foolish doing—a side effect of the alcohol. Wake’s stance is exaggerated to a comical degree, which is made stranger with the blaring brass orchestra screeching in the background for dramatic effect. Eggers has the following to say about the scene: “I’ll say—with shame—that particular shot is a rip-off of a Symbolist painter named Sascha Schneider. It’s an image called ‘Hypnose.’ My composition is different, but just like it stuck with you, it stuck with me! It seemed appropriate for this story” (Donaghey np).



Figure 15. Symbolist sketch Hypnose by Sascha Schneider

The inspiration is indeed appropriate for the story because where *Hypnose* seeks to lull and ensnare the naked man, in figure 14, Wake is grabbing onto Howard like a campy-cop to a wretched criminal. The latter is raising his arm in shock, and perhaps protection, from the shame of being discovered. Prior to this shot, Howard had found his doppelgänger tied up on the ground—it was his real identity being unearthed from the deep. This whole scene was expressing the start of a psychotic break for Howard, as he was so attached to living out the fantasy of being Winslow. Additionally, the background vastly differs between the sketch and the shot; the first one has lush, inviting foliage, whereas the second one is cold, wet, hard stone. The former one speaks more of infatuation, and the latter speaks more of external and internal prosecution.

But the truth need not be so unbearable because facing everything within oneself is the point of individuation. How can we reap the benefits of growing, be it

psychically and physically, if we do our best to avoid the growing pains? It is simply not in a seed's nature to not destroy its former self, in order to become that it was meant to be—a healthy green plant. In the film, *The Lighthouse*, Thomas Howard is especially operating in that misconceived way; he wants to have his cake and eat it too. One cannot claim to have changed without fully facing, accepting and letting go of the past. The Light plays a much bigger role in the movie, which goes beyond Wake and Winslow.

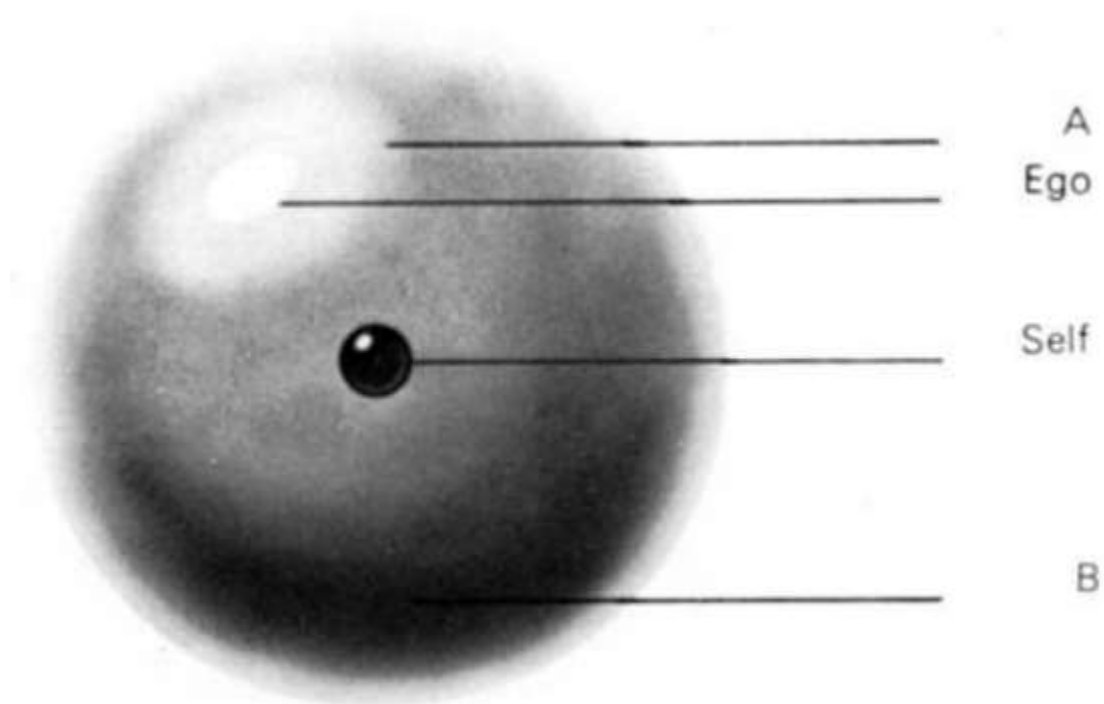


Figure 16. Illustration of the Ego and the Self by Marie-Louise von Franz, extracted from Man and His Symbols (1988). The original caption: "The psyche can be compared to a sphere with a bright field (A) on its surface, representing consciousness. The ego is the field's center (only if "I" know a thing is it conscious). The Self is at once the nucleus and the whole sphere (B); its internal regulating processes produce dreams" (Jung et. al. 161).

At the end of the previous section, the researcher had claimed that the Light was symbolic of the Self. Albeit a little off-track, figure 16 is a diagram to better aid the reader in visualising the concept of the Self. The Self is simultaneously the centre and the entirety of the psyche. One could compare it to the 'soul', but it is more of a regulatory system, that creates dreams. As claimed earlier, archetypes come and go,

but the Light always stays on Pilot Rock. It is an entity of its own, which shows remarkable sentience. For example, as shown below in figure 17, when Winslow murders Wake and clambers into the highest tower, the Light opens itself up without prompting.



*Figure 17. The egg-shaped structure which houses circular Fresnel lens [source: screenshot of *The Lighthouse* 01:43:43]*

Franz states that “round or square structures usually symbolize the Self” (Jung et. al. 163). So, the Fresnel lens fit the description of being representative of the Self. Now, it would stand to mention that the Light is no ordinary Light. When Winslow had earnestly asked, Wake had disclosed that his last assistant had gone mad: “He notioned St. Elmo did cast his very fire into it. Salvation, said he” (Eggers 20). Perhaps because Howard had not received the opportunity to see the Light firsthand, he was sceptical. Of course, as the film progressed, he also started to treat it as some kind of novelty that would cleanse him of his sins. But if the Light indeed was an all-knowing, kind and pure saviour, then why did it reject Winslow, and probably cause Wake’s last assistant to die? I reason that they could not withstand the fires of the truth. Wake, amidst his throes of passion, had called out its name as: “*Veritas...*”

(Eggers 37). One may say that he was simply obsessed with knowledge and being right all the time. However, if Wake and Winslow can be respectively read as Proteus and Prometheus, then, who is to say that *Veritas* is not the Roman Goddess of Truth personified?

Therefore, the Self symbolized by the Light of Truth burned Winslow and cast him down to the depths of Davy Jones because he had been given numerous chances to admit to his faults, yet he not only turned away but tightened his white-knuckled grip on falsity and make-believe—until he finally used the same grip to split open Wake’s skull. In some gruesome poetic justice, Wake’s obsession with the Light and keeping divine knowledge barred, split his head open so that he can no longer retain the information gathered. Knowledge is meant to be shared and Wake, more or less, failed as a *Senex*. Perhaps if he wasn’t so adamant about keeping the Light for himself, maybe Winslow would have also been open to listening to his stories and obeying his superstitions.

Then suppose the viewer’s humble burden is to take this film as a cautionary tale against lying. If Howard had cultivated an honest bone in his body, instead of always looking for shortcuts and lashing out in emotional outbursts when he did not get his way like a petulant child, he probably would have been judged as worthy by *Veritas*—even if Wake would probably never have allowed him near her. Nevertheless, the presence of the lighthouse is all encompassing because her foghorn can be heard no matter wherever on the island one may go; even through raging hurricanes. After all, the universal feature of Truth is her tune—it is a melody to the righteous and a screeching banshee to the guilty. Her sound can always be heard.

Another lesson would be choosing humility and humanity over hedonism. Winslow’s refusal to repent directly points to his hubris. The *Puer Aeternus* is a

beautiful, creative, artistic, imaginative, youthful energy to have, but in excess, it leads to delusions of grandeur and selfishness. Balancing the airy qualities of the *Puer* with the earthy wisdom of the *Senex* is the precisely the advice most could do with; because life gets dull with embodying too much of the ‘wise old man archetype’, and it can get out of control with allowing in only the energy of the ‘child archetype’.

Conclusion

To recap and conclude, the few existing scholarly papers on the film *The Lighthouse* (2019) were mostly found to centralise minor motifs; and while appreciated, I am of the opinion that in order to have a proper scholarly body of work for any literary text, the foundations should be made stronger so that there is a skeleton to flesh out. Working towards this, the present study has illustrated that Wake and Howard are shadow archetypes to each other within the psychic domain of Pilot Rock. Wake represents the wise old man (the *Senex*) and Winslow the perennial child (the *Puer Aeternus*). The main evidence is that they are both named Thomas, and the images presented on the silver screen show a mirroring motif. The characters’ independent actions and those towards each other, also reflect as if they are the same but different. The shadow archetypes need to reconcile their differences to properly begin the process of individuation, and eventually the integration of the self; but they fail at it miserably.

As the Eggers brothers are Jungian enthusiasts, perhaps indeed there is validity in my claim. As for the politics of the film, in my opinion, the film can be compacted into the words of George Bernard Shaw, “Wisdom is wasted on the old, and youth is wasted on the young”. Wisdom of old without the foresight to move with the time is useless, and ungrounded free-spirited youthfulness can very easily lead one astray from integrity. I hope that this film research, would work as caution to balance both

the archetypical energy of the *Puer Aeternus* and the *Senex* within us, so as to live a more balanced and better life.

At last, I would like to kindly remind that perfection exists only in the imaginary. By no means do I inflate this research to be more than quite simply a humble attempt at adding to the scholarly discourse of a movie I am fond of. That said, the film is still an amorphous, amoebous, ambiguous creature that is rich in interpretive possibilities because there were perspectives not considered since they were beyond the bounds of this study. Despite pre-existing research and the length of my study which say otherwise, there are still motifs and symbols that have not been explored in-depth. The Lovecraftian theme is one example of such. Therefore, going forward, I invite scholars who feel invigorated rather than intimidated by the complexity of the text, to take up the intellectual challenge of exploring other perspectives.

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