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A JUNGIAN FUNCTION-BASED CHARACTER STUDY OF JOHN BRENNAN IN *THE NEXT THREE DAYS*

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ABSTRACT
This article analyzes the character of John Brennan from the movie The Next Three Days (2010) using Carl Jung's theory of psychological types and insights from scholars such as Marie-Louise von Franz, John Beebe, and Lenore Thomson. It focuses on four key functions – Introverted Intuition (Ni), Extraverted Thinking (Te), Introverted Feeling (Fi), and Extraverted Sensing (Se) – and uses both script-based and theoretical analysis to explain how these functions appear in John's actions, decisions, and personality. The integration of expanded Jungian perspectives deepens the understanding of Brennan as a quiet but deeply driven and visionary character.

KEYWORDS: *Film; Jung; Mbti; Intj; Psychological Functions*

1. INTRODUCTION

Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology, proposed a model of personality grounded in eight psychological functions—Thinking, Feeling, Intuition, and Sensing, each in either introverted or extraverted form. These functions were later elaborated by notable Jungian scholars such as Marie-Louise von Franz, John Beebe, and Lenore Thomson.

Jung believed that these functions are part of how people perceive the world and make decisions. Everyone has a dominant function, supported by auxiliary, tertiary, and inferior functions. In film characters, these functions often shape the way they solve problems, show emotions, and interact with others.

This paper applies Jung's model to the character of John Brennan in *The Next Three Days* (Haggis, 2010). Brennan is an English literature professor whose wife is arrested for a murder she insists she didn't commit. When legal efforts fail, he makes a drastic decision to break her out of prison. This decision and the process that follows show Brennan's deep inner world, his precise planning, his loyalty, and his ability to act under pressure. All these reflect the psychological type known as INTJ (Introverted Intuition, Extraverted Thinking, Introverted Feeling, Extraverted Sensing).

This article focuses on four core psychological functions and explains how each one plays an important role in Brennan's character. The goal is to understand how Jungian psychology can help us analyze fictional characters more deeply, especially those with strong internal motivations and quiet, complex personalities.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to film analysis. The main data source is *The Next Three Days* (Haggis, 2010), supported by the shooting script (Haggis, 2009). Specific scenes and lines spoken by the main character, John Brennan, are selected for analysis. These are compared with Jung's theory of psychological types and expanded commentary from von Franz (1971), Beebe (2004), and Thomson (1998).

By matching Brennan's actions and thoughts with Jungian functions, we can see how his personality structure influences his decisions throughout the film. This method is especially useful for analyzing characters who do not often express their feelings or thoughts directly, as Brennan does not.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Introverted Intuition (Ni): Prophetic Pattern Recognition

Introverted Intuition (Ni) is Brennan's dominant function. Jung (1971) described it as a way of seeing internal images and future possibilities. These images often come from the unconscious mind and may feel symbolic or mysterious. Von Franz said that Ni types are often in touch with big changes that are about to happen and can sense what others do not see. Beebe added that Ni can help people see the deeper meaning behind events.

In the movie, Brennan's use of Ni is most visible in his escape plan. Before he takes action, he creates a complete mental map of how the escape will happen. This plan includes everything from jail schedules to city maps to fake passports. His wall at home becomes a visual representation of this vision:
"John backs away from the wall to see it covered in a spiderweb of notes." (Scene 77)
His intuition helps him anticipate each problem before it happens. He sees patterns in information and connects ideas that others might miss. He even trains himself to break into a car, unlock a jail door, and pass through airport security—based on what he expects will happen, not just what he knows.

In another scene (Scenes 51–52), Brennan sees a vision of Lara's hand reaching for glue. She is not really there—it is a hallucination—but it shows how his unconscious mind brings symbolic help when he is most desperate. This fits von Franz's

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idea that introverted intuition draws from archetypes in the collective unconscious.

3.2 Extraverted Thinking (Te): Structure in Service of Ideals

Extraverted Thinking (Te) is Brennan's secondary function. Jung (1971) explained that Te helps people organize the outside world through logic and efficiency. Von Franz noted that Te types often rely on facts, but their actions can still be guided by deep personal values.

In Brennan's case, Te is used to give structure to his Ni-based vision. Once he sees how the escape might work, he uses logic to organize each step. He reads books about prison escapes, calculates travel times, practices quick actions, and plans his family's movements down to the minute. He even plans how to hide money in a park for later use.

His conversation with Meyer (Scene 31) shows how he uses logical arguments to defend his belief in Lara's innocence. But it also shows that his logic is guided by a personal truth. Even when others doubt him, he continues to build his plan based on what he knows in his heart.

"She would have to be a psychopath! … Everyone fights with their boss!" (Scene 31)
His Te supports his Ni: he does not plan for its own sake. He plans because he has seen a possible future and wants to make it real.

3.3 Introverted Feeling (Fi): Silent Moral Conviction

Introverted Feeling (Fi) is Brennan's third function. Jung said that Fi creates strong internal values, but they are not easily shared. Von Franz explained that Fi is often quiet but very powerful. Lenore Thomson said that Fi is like an inner flame that helps guide our actions.

Brennan rarely talks about his feelings. He doesn't say much about why he is doing what he's doing. But his actions speak loudly. In Scene 92, Lara is ready to give up, but Brennan keeps encouraging her:
"Something will happen. I promise."
In Scene 32, Brennan keeps smiling to make Lara feel better, even while he is crying:
"John keeps the smile plastered on his face, but now tears run down his cheeks."
Fi is also seen in his relationship with his son. He takes time to help Luke write letters to Lara and tries to keep their bond strong, even when the family is breaking apart. These actions show that Brennan's choices are driven by deep, quiet emotional values.

3.4 Extraverted Sensing (Se): Sensory Awareness and Physical Grounding

Extraverted Sensing (Se) is Brennan's fourth function. According to Jung, Se helps people notice what is happening in the present moment. It involves being aware of sights, sounds, and movements. Lenore Thomson wrote that Se can help people enjoy life and stay grounded.

In the early part of the film (Scenes 2–4), Brennan is playful and affectionate with Lara. He enjoys small moments, like joking at dinner and kissing her in the car. This shows his ability to be present and enjoy life.

Later, Se helps him carry out his escape plan. He notices important physical details, like the sound of a gate, the position of security cameras, or the way a guard walks. He also observes how long a door takes to close or what kind of elevator is used (Scene 98). These sensory observations help him act quickly and adjust his plan in real-time.
Even though Se is his weakest function, it plays an important role in helping him succeed.

4. CONCLUSION

John Brennan is a powerful example of how psychological functions shape behavior and decision-making. His dominant function, Introverted Intuition, gives him a vision of what is possible. His Extraverted Thinking helps him plan and act on that vision. His Introverted Feeling keeps him loyal to his family and values, and his Extraverted Sensing allows him to observe and adapt to the real world.

Using Jung's theory and insights from von Franz, Beebe, and Thomson, we can better understand Brennan's deep motivation and emotional strength. Although he does not speak much or express emotions openly, he is driven by a strong inner world. His actions show how a quiet, thoughtful person can take bold steps when guided by vision, logic, values, and awareness.

This kind of character study not only helps us appreciate the depth of film characters like John Brennan but also shows how Jungian psychology remains a useful tool for exploring human behavior.

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