

The logo for "John Wick: Chapter 2" is displayed in a stylized, metallic blue font with a glowing effect. The words "JOHN WICK 2" are in a larger, bold font, and "CHAPTER 2" is written below it in a smaller font. The background is black with a blue horizontal stripe.

# Semiotic Analysis

**The Signifier:** The film "John Wick: Chapter 2," directed by Chad Stahelski.

**The Signified:** "John Wick" is the name of the title character, played by Keanu Reeves. This is the sequel to the first film, "John Wick."

**Paradigmatic Analysis:** This film, though illogical in many ways, follows a simple pattern of opposition: Strong versus strongest. Nearly every villain/enemy in the film is a technically skilled fighter, bodyguard, or fellow hitman, and therefore should be difficult to defeat. John Wick, however, consistently bests every enemy that comes his way, though it is not easy. He is the strongest, but that doesn't mean he can't get hurt (and get hurt he does).

**Auteur Theory:** This film, along with its predecessor, is a bit of a marvel. The films were written, directed, and produced by stunt people. This gave them a decisive advantage when filming action scenes. The film's wild, outlandish stunts are only possible because of the ingenuity and skill of stunt people. The editing and camera movements during fight scenes are exceptional, and truly the singular vision of the director, Chad Stahelski.

**Denotation:** The film denotatively represents "John Wick: Chapter 2," a sequel to the first film.

**Connotation:** The film connotatively represents a continued stylistic statement for action films, bringing a higher level of technical craft, style, and fight choreography to the genre, piggybacking off the success of the first film.

**Codes:** The film's rules are pretty simple: Don't take John Wick's stuff, and he won't kill you. Once any character becomes his enemy, there is a wave of destruction headed their way. As far as moral grounding, the film requires viewers to look at the events of the film through the somewhat noble intentions of the title character. John Wick is not a moral character overall, but acts within the rules of a bloodthirsty vigilante archetype. The film does not ask viewers to agree with this point of view, but rather to observe it.

**Index:** The film's sign is its protagonist's name, John Wick. His name is used throughout the movies to establish his reputation (and infamy). The title logically leads one to believe that the film is a sequel to the first film, and again focuses on John Wick.

**Images:** The film is shot very well, with exciting action scenes, beautiful set pieces, and an array of colorful shots. Here are some examples:



This shot, which occurs during a gunfight in a mirror maze, showcases not only the film's technical mastery (mirrors make filming much harder), but also a strong sense of the style of the film. The colors in every scene are deliberate and beautiful, and this scene features one of the best examples of this. Yes, it is an action sequel, but artistically, this film stands out.



This shot is an example of the film's beautiful locations. The film was shot mostly in New York and Rome, and many of the shots they choose to showcase the settings are breathtaking.



This shot showcases the film's cinematography, which is stellar as far as action movies go, and shows John Wick shadowed and mysterious, a constant theme in the film. His nickname among the organized crime world is "The Boogeyman," and this shot certainly bolsters that.

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**Metaphor:** The film has many story-related, visual metaphors, including John Wick's dog(s), his weapons cache, and his car. His first dog was a gift from his deceased wife, because she knew he'd need a friend after she died. In the first film, that dog is brutally killed, and that's what sets off John Wick's initial rampage. At the end of that film, he receives another dog, a pit bull, as a gift. That dog, in the second film, represents John's connection to his past, and serves as a reminder to help keep him grounded. His weapons cache, in the first film, is buried in the cement in his basement, and after the death of his wife and dog, he breaks the cement with a sledgehammer and gets his guns. In the second film, he reburies the cache, adding another layer of cement. When this cache is buried, John Wick feels that he is "retired." When he breaks it out again, he is "working again." His car, another important item from the first film, is stolen from him by the man that killed his dog, and he kills an entire crime family to get it back. However, he does not find it. At the beginning of the second film, though, he finally locates it, only to crash it when trying to escape. The car, like the weapons cache, is a reminder to John that he wants to retire, but as long as the car is wrecked/stolen and his weapons cache is unburied, he can never retire.