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From Repression to Wholeness: A Jungian Analysis of Anima Integration and Individuation in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter

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Abstract

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's (1967) The Scarlet Letter, Arthur Dimmesdale, a minister in the church of New England, commits adultery with Hester Prynne but hides his sin from the public. He thinks that revealing the secret will mar his name and fame in the society. He is afraid of losing his reputation in his congregation and among his colleagues. From a Jungian lens, Dimmesdale strives to look pious and holy in the eyes of the public that is symbolic of overdeveloped persona. However, overdeveloped persona is achieved at the cost of suppressing the anima. Anima, in Jungian psychoanalysis is 'the spring of life'. When Dimmesdale loses connection with Anima; the spring of life, his personality becomes lop-sided and his life turns into hell. However, through the process of individuation, connecting to the spring of life leads to wholeness in the personality and happiness in the life of Dimmesdale.

Keywords: Anima/Animus, Persona, Individuation, Conscious and Unconscious

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Abstract

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's (1967) The Scarlet Letter, Arthur Dimmesdale, a minister in the church of New England, commits adultery with Hester Prynne but hides his sin from the public. He thinks that revealing the secret will mar his name and fame in the society. He is afraid of losing his reputation in his congregation and among his colleagues. From a Jungian lens, Dimmesdale strives to look pious and holy in the eyes of the public that is symbolic of overdeveloped persona. However, overdeveloped persona is achieved at the cost of suppressing the anima. Anima, in Jungian psychoanalysis is 'the spring of life'. When Dimmesdale loses connection with Anima; the spring of life, his personality becomes lopsided and his life turns into hell. However, through the process of individuation, connecting to the spring of life leads to wholeness in the personality and happiness in the life of Dimmesdale.

Keywords: [Anima/Animus](#), [Persona](#), [Individuation](#), [Conscious and Unconscious](#)

Introduction

Arthur Dimmesdale, in Nathaniel Hawthorne's (1967) *The Scarlet Letter*, is a minister in the church of New England. He is deemed holy and spiritual by his religious followers. In the eyes of the public, he is a symbol of perfection and God's glory. However, in reality, he is the worst sinner. He commits adultery with a beautiful woman but longs to speak the truth before the public. He hides his secret

from the public as it will mar his name and fame in the eyes of people. This is important and full of meaning from a Jungian point of view because Dimmesdale's overdeveloped persona leads to the suppression of his anima which according to Emma Jung, (1971) is "as an image of connection with the spring or source of life" His blind conformity with the church leads him to lose his connection with the spring of life and his personality becomes persona possessed. Jung,



(1964) calls anima the soul in man, and the one who does not integrate the very aspect of the psyche suffers from the loss of the soul.

Dimmesdale thinks too much about his public image which is why he does not show his dark secret to the world. It highlights his overdeveloped persona that leads to suppression of the anima on the unconscious level.

Research Questions

1. How does Dimmesdale's overdeveloped persona result in anima suppression?
2. What is the effect of anima suppression on the personality of Dimmesdale?
3. How does the acceptance of anima lead to individuation in Dimmesdale's personality?

Literature Review

Since its publication, *The Scarlet Letter* has been interpreted and analyzed from different perspectives. It has been recognized as one of the finest works of American literature. Christian Jacobi (2001) discusses the novel from the perspective of confession and concealment. Hester Prynne confesses her crime while Dimmesdale keeps it a secret. It represents the goodness of Hester and the duality of Dimmesdale. Although, he vehemently speaks about the confession of sin, when he is addressing his fellow brethren. However, when it comes to practice, he does not accept his sin. It paves the way for his deterioration which ends in his death. Kathrine Gerbe (2007) interprets different meanings associated with the scarlet letter A. It has different meanings for Hester, Pearl, Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, and the intolerant Puritans. Richard Kopley (2003) finds the influence of Poe on *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne was deeply interested in the writings of Poe; especially his tales. The *Scarlet Letter* reflects that Hawthorne seemed to be influenced by the tale of Poe as is evident in minute details, the working of imagination, and the method that he implies in the novel.

Gary Cranford (2012) highlights allegorical elements in the novel. He writes that the novel is a religious and philosophical allegory. He uses parables from the Bible and philosophizes them. In these parables, metaphors, images, and symbols there is a hidden meaning and message that makes *The Scarlet Letter* a religious and philosophical

allegory. Claudia Johnson (2009) highlights problems faced by women in the Puritan society of New England. Her focus is Hester in particular and other women in general. She argues that Puritan society treated women badly. It considered women inferior to men, therefore giving them a lower place in society.

Discussion

Persona and anima are complementary parts of the psyche. The former is our social identity while the latter is the unconscious part of the male's psyche, when they are in consonance and harmony, then the personality is balanced. Persona, indeed is a vital part of our psyche and conscious persona, which is our requirement; because through it we interact with the outer world,

so, it becomes part and parcel of our personality but its overdevelopment or unconscious development causes problem. Although, the persona is a complimentary part of one's personality, however, when the persona gets overdeveloped then personality becomes lop-sided and imbalanced. Dimmesdale pushes anima and represses it in order to further polish his persona and appear as respectful and honorable in the gaze of society. In this context Terence Martin (1983), a romantic critic, in his book, *Nathaniel Hawthorne* says that Dimmesdale suffers from "devious pride" (p. 113) that does not let him surrender an identity that brings praise and admiration of his congregation and veneration of his colleagues. He does not want to lose this respect and esteem by confessing his sin. As Hawthorne (1967) describes him, through a townsman while Dimmesdale is standing on the scaffold and pushing Hester to reveal the name of her partner. "She hath raised a great scandal, I promise you, in godly Master Dimmesdale's church" (72). He shows himself as pious and godly before the people and hides his reality behind the mask which is grim and objectionable in the society. Jung (1979) in *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* asserts the same opinion about that type of character, "The persona is that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others think one is" (420).

When the persona becomes dazzling, the more he feels the distance from the unconscious and the more he loses connection with the inner self the more he feels weaker. As he gets inwardly weak the

more he becomes outwardly vulnerable because there is no connection between the conscious and unconscious aspects of the personality as Jung (1979) puts it in his "Two Essays of Analytical Psychology" that persona is "the ideal picture of a man as he should be" (p.390). However, when the persona becomes exaggerated the anima becomes weak. Outwardly, one poses to be strong, rational, and brave but inwardly becomes frail, irrational, and cowardly. These qualities are called anima traits and "it is the anima that reacts to the persona" (p.390). Therefore, when one identifies oneself with persona, it leads to rejection of the anima. To the people, one looks like a hero but in reality "our hero comes under the heel of his wife's slipper" (p. 390). Dimmesdale's identification with his persona leads towards inner femininity, when he is alone, he thinks about his crime which tears him apart because he is unable to bear the pain of his guilt. He meditates that when the townspeople hear his confession, they will be prone to think that if a godly and saintly minister can commit such a crime then what will happen to their souls, which are not as pure as that of Dimmesdale? Several times he stepped into the pulpit to reveal the "black secret of his soul" (137) but his inner femininity never lets him do so. In solitude, anima takes hold of the minister and under the spell of inner feminine, he confesses his guilt which he longs to speak before the public. He thinks about himself and that people fancy that he is a "miracle of holiness" and "the mouthpiece of Heaven's messages of wisdom, and rebuke, and love" (137). In the eyes of people, the ground on which he walks is holy and sacred. Old members of the church believe that he will go to Heaven before them, without even being asked a single question, but in reality, he is never meant to be as he seems to be. He ponders and says to himself that he who is wearing the black garments of a priest, the one who performs baptism and listens to the confessions of dying men and is considered a symbol of holiness and grace, is "utterly a pollution and a lie" (p.137). He deems himself seraphic, being above common humanity, but in privacy, he realizes that in the depths of his heart and soul, he is a beast in the garments of a priest. He considers himself a devil's disciple in godly clothing.

Anima is a Latin word for soul or breath of life, which animates and is described as the soul in man

or archetype of life. Venus, Persephone, Ariadne, and others are personifications of anima archetype. Naturally speaking, anima and persona are complementary to each other, and as long as the persona is careful of the unconscious anima and its due rights, then things go well but neglecting the rights and its urges results in discard within the personality. Dimmesdale suffers from the loss of soul because he has neglected an integral part of his psyche. As Harry Levin, (2004) says "his internal anguish, projected against the sky in a gigantic

A" He lacks the ability to integrate his anima and bears the pangs of its discard. He thinks about himself that he is an untrue man and "to the untrue man, the whole universe is false" (p.139). He wants to live happily and believes that if the "anguish in his inmost soul" (p.139) is gone, he will be happy. Dimmesdale suffers due to the suppression of anima and he suffers because he is unable to bring the contents of the unconscious into the conscious realm of the psyche. Daryl Sharp's (2001) point of view in, *Digesting Jung*, clicks with the situation of Dimmesdale, that when you connect to the inner woman it leads to blessing. However, when anima is rejected it "can be fatal" (p. 44).

Intellectual persona results in sentimental anima, as Daryl Sharp (2001) comments that when a man has no relation with his anima, he becomes moody, sentimental, and violent. Analysts call this being anima possessed" (41). Dimmesdale, a religious member of the church, who possesses remarkable merits and wisdom, yet he is prone to be touchy, jealous, restless, unadjusted, sentimental, moody, and violent. His listlessness is visible in his walk when he is traveling in the forest, he is unable to take further steps and he desires that he must stop walking and lie under a tree in the forest and die. His anima makes him aware of what he actually is and what he pretends to be, so under the influence of anima, in different moods when he thinks about himself and fears whether the grass will appear on his grave or not. He is enraged by small talk when asked to answer some questions by Chillingworth. Dimmesdale asks him that from where he has gathered these weeds to cure him of this disease, to which he replies that he has gathered these weeds from a grave on which nothing was written and the weed grew up on his heart, signifying that he had done some great sin but not revealed it. Dimmesdale replies that maybe

he had desired to confess but not had the courage to say it openly in public and would confess this on the Day of Judgment when all the secrets of the world were disclosed. He further says that these types of men shrink to speak the secrets of their fellow beings because they believe that they will be considered foul, filthy, and corrupt in their eyes. Here Chillingworth says that they fear to bear the shame of their guilt and their care for humans and passion towards the obedience of God is but "a ceremonial toy", and if they want to praise God, then these men must not lift their hands heavenward for glory. Then he asks Dimmesdale to reveal his "trouble in the soul" (p. 131) so that he may be able to diagnose his bodily disease. At this, Dimmesdale replies that he will not reveal his dark secret to an "earthly physician". It is a disease of the soul and can be cured by a "physician of the soul". That physician of the soul is the one to decide, whether to kill or cure this ugly priest. You should not interfere in this matter.

Anima's rejection leads to self-pity and the person considers himself to be most miserable and wretched. Arthur Dimmesdale is unable to accept the "ghost land" Of his psyche and always pities himself whether alone or in the company of men. In his conversation with Hester, he tells Hester that he is unable to find peace because of his crime, and he is unable to speak before the public and says that what he sees is despair. His life is of hypocrisy and he is the most miserable.

In Jungian psychoanalysis, anima serves as a looking glass for a man. It reflects the thoughts, emotions, passions, and feelings of a man. Consequently, man becomes conscious of unconscious desires, feelings, and emotions. Therefore, it can be said that anima leads to awareness of one's unconscious. Dimmesdale, living in rigid Puritan society was suppressing his anima like a forgotten weed but when he encounters Hester, she becomes a looking glass for him and he directly makes contact with her and falls in love with her but he is powerless to confess it before the public, that it would destroy his name in the society. Hawthorne says that there was something animal in the nature of Dimmesdale which he inherited from his parents. It was in his instinct to love and have sex but he was hiding it to look pious and godly in the eyes of people. Through Hester, Dimmesdale becomes conscious of his sin

and thinks that she has revealed her sin and living a peaceful life while he hides his sin and lives a life that is torturous, full of suffering and afflictions. While talking with Old Roger Chillingworth he sees Hester walking in the forest and says that it is good for the sufferer to show his guilt and bear the pain of his infamy and dishonor instead of hiding it under the veil of mock holiness, as Hester has revealed her sin and frees herself of pain because she has accepted the demands of unconscious and integrated her essential part, i.e. the anima what Dimmesdale feels in his heart and always keeps his hand on his heart, due to restraining his anima.

Dimmesdale is conscious of his persona but incapable of integrating the compensatory and supplementary part of his personality, the anima. When one looks at Dimmesdale's life, it becomes evident that in order to look angelic in the eyes of the public he has cut himself from the true source of life. As a result, he is unable to integrate his anima into his conscious life. However, anima appears in a different form, urging Dimmesdale to accept it. The suppressed anima of Dimmesdale appears in the dream and empowers him to accept it reveal his sin ahead of the community and achieve wholeness. In his dream, he sees that he is standing on the scaffold and all the people are looking at him that he is the same godly minister who stood at the pulpit and preached for God. He is the same pious minister who baptized their children. At night he asks Hester and Pearl to mount the scaffold and stay beside him. He says to Pearl and Hester that they were here before but he had no courage to mount the scaffold and confess his sin before the public. Tonight, they "will all stand three together" (p.144). Dimmesdale's dream reveals the demand of the unconscious that his sin should be revealed and made conscious but he fears confessing in the daylight because his persona would be recognized and the masses would know who he actually is. At that moment Pearl asks whether he will stay on the scaffold with them in the daylight, he says that he is unable to stand with them in the morning but he will stand with them together on the Day of Judgment. It symbolizes that dreams are never false and they show the hidden reality of the personality, which Dimmesdale does not want to realize in the daylight or in the conscious life of a person. As Jung (1979) says in his *Analytical Psychology and Education* dreams are natural phenomena that

reveal the unconscious. Dreams do not lie and do not deceive rather they bring to the limelight what has long been suppressed and rejected. Moreover, dreams "express something that the ego does not know and does not understand" (P.189).

Dreams way out the conscious conflicts by projecting those features that are concealed. Arthur Dimmesdale's dream points to the fact that has not yet integrated his anima. When he meets Hester in the woods, he embraces her (anima), which symbolizes that Mr. Dimmesdale strives to integrate his anima to achieve individuation and he believes that his dream is showing him the reality that he hides from the public for a long time. Hawthorne, [2001](#) very symbolically says "All the world had frowned on her—for seven long years had it frowned upon that lonely woman, -- and still she bore it all, nor ever once turned away her firm, sad eyes" (p.178). All these seven years make Dimmesdale seem to frown on his anima and push it back but now he recognizes it and asks her to advise him what to do. She says that he must give a proper portion to the neglected side of his personality, i.e. the unconscious, symbolized by the forest because in the forest one is free as in the unconscious. She says to Dimmesdale that living in town has made him weak and miserable. Therefore, they must live in the forest that promises freedom, liberty, and relief from the rules and regulations of society. Continuing life in the town will bring more wretchedness and decay while living in the forest will bring happiness and delight. Thus, "a brief journey would bring thee from a world where thou hast been most wretched, to one where thou mayest still be happy (p.180). The above passage symbolically points out that the human personality is not only the conscious aspect which is yet discovered as Jung in his *Man and his Symbols* says "consciousness is a very recent acquisition of nature and is still in an experimental state". The unconscious leads deeper and deeper which is dark and invisible but it brings joy and happiness to have made contact with your eternal and essential part, the anima. Dimmesdale himself recognizes that he had kept his anima, for seven years, and there was no moment of peace or happiness in his life, now he feels the joy of happiness and breathes freely, he further says that he considered that very aspect of happiness and joy to be dead in him but as he is to die so it is necessary that he must

incorporate the other side(anima) of his personality. Water being an animating principle, symbolizes the unconscious. Anima and their abode are near water ponds, sea shores, and brooks and they come to us from water. As Emma Jung (1957) says, "It is said of nymphs that they come to us from the water, and sit on the banks of the brooks where they have their abode". In *The Scarlet Letter* Hester is the representation of the anima of Dimmesdale, who lives near sea shore. She is the animating principle for Dimmesdale, who after establishing his connection with her comes to know himself, and his neglected part, what he constantly suppresses. When Hester is banished by society she does not leave it but goes and lives in the lap of nature near the seashore and develops a close tie with nature. She acts as a mediator for Dimmesdale, whose lop-sided personality is individuated after having met with his anima.

In Jungian psychoanalysis, individuation is a process that paves the way for psychological wholeness. In this process, one accepts the rejected, dark, and unwanted aspects of one's personality that lie in the personal and collective unconscious. Usually, these unwanted aspects are pushed to the farthest corner of the unconscious due to social pressure. Society, wants one to look perfect but the perfection comes at the cost of rejection of other parts of one's personality. However, these rejected parts of the psyche can be accepted. Conscious acceptance leads to individuation and the making of a psychologically balanced personality. Dimmesdale becomes conscious of himself by integrating the neglected part of his psyche; the anima, which is the mediator between the conscious and unconscious, guides the consciousness to make contact with the unconscious. Dimmesdale's personality gets individuated, when he assimilates that very portion of his character. On the day of the election sermon, everyone noted that, Dimmesdale as if endowed with enthusiasm, energy, and passion, which was previously dead in him. He has not put his hand on his heart and the power and strength was not of body but something internal, which stirred him to be revitalized. Even Pearl was amazed to see the change in minister and inquired her mother if he was the same minister, who met them at the brook. He mounts the scaffold and confesses that he is the partner of Hester, who sinned with her but not

revealed. Roger Chillingworth makes an effort to hold Dimmesdale from telling his secret but he says that now it has become conscious to me that I will confess it to the public. He calls Hester and little Pearl to the scaffold and acknowledges by saying:

People of New England! Cried he, with a voice that rose over them, solemn and majestic... ye, that loved me! –ye that have deemed me holy! –behold me here, the one sinner of the world! At last! – at last! – I stand upon the spot where, seven years since, I should have stood; here, with this woman, whose arm, more than the little strength wherewith I have crept hitherward, sustains me, at this dreadful moment, from groveling down upon my face! Lo, the scarlet letter which Hester wears! Ye have all shuddered at it... But there stood one in the midst of you, at whose brand of sin and infamy ye have not shuddered (p.226).

He says to the people that Hester was the aim of their disgust and humiliation because her crime was known, but they have mocked and ridiculed him because he was keeping it in the dungeon of his heart never to be disclosed, as it was considered detestable, foul and filthy. Now all of you must look at me as the symbol of disgust and dishonor.

Although they were of different nature, who yet belonged together, "have now in harmonious concord been united".

Conclusion

To sum up the whole analysis of *The Scarlet Letter* it can be said that the overdeveloped persona of Dimmesdale makes his personality one-sided and abnormal, the basis of discard, which gets exaggerated by neglecting the feminine principle: the anima, because it is considered foul, filthy, detestable, loathsome and full of vile disdain in the puritan society. By accepting the norms and mores of the society, Dimmesdale's unconscious side gets muffled up and he undergoes a severe terrain of sufferings and hardships. After realizing the true origin of his tilted personality, his declining health, and his restlessness, he integrates his anima and feels the balance in his personality. With the incorporation of anima into his conscious attitude hell turns into heaven, and he becomes a productive citizen, healthy and peaceful. His contact with the inner world makes him soft, flexible, and accommodative and he achieves psychic wholeness.

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