

Animus Possession: Are you a ball busting bitch?

In preparation for our Anima and Animus Module on the Conscious Living Programme, I re-read Marie Louise von Franz book “Animus and Anima in Fairy Tales”[1]. Whilst it is a fascinating read, I can’t say that I enjoy reading her, since her writing style is very difficult to follow.

I decided to extract the invaluable information from “Animus and Anima in Fairy Tales” into two concise posts that explains the process of integrating the Animus and Anima. This post, part one of two, is the exploration of the integration of Animus and next month I will post one on the integration of the Anima.

Jung makes the following statement about the Animus and Anima:

The “soul” which accrues to ego-consciousness during the opus has a feminine character in the man and a masculine character in a woman. His anima wants to reconcile and unite; her Animus tries to discern and discriminate. [The Psychology of the Transference,” CW 16, par. 522.]

In the classic version of Jungian psychology, the Anima is the man’s internal other, and the Animus is the woman’s internal other. In other words, if you are physically a woman, you will have an inner Animus, a masculine image which guides and shapes the way you relate to men and the world at large. Marie Louise von Franz does base her interpretation of Fairy Tales on this classical version of the Anima and Animus theory. Whilst Post Jungian theory is in line with Post Modernity and more ambivalent about gender, the classical model is still incredibly useful and interesting. The information and knowledge that Marie Louise von Franz extracts from the Fairy Tales is fascinating and enlightening.

As this post focus on the woman’s relationship with her Animus, what needs to be understood is that this masculine image is unconscious, and has his roots in the relationship she had with her father. A woman’s experience of her personal father puts the flesh on the inborn archetype of the Animus and both defines her attitude towards men and the functioning of her inner masculinity. In Jungian psychology, the first step to individuation is integrating your shadow. After that follows the integration of the Anima and/or Animus.

Animus Possession

We all know at least one woman who has become possessed by her Animus. She is a ball busting bitch. These woman walk around with stinkwood penises, beating both men and woman over the head with it, insisting that they know it all and know it all better than everyone else! This Animus Hound is never wrong. She knows everything. She inflicts an unstoppable, unconscious flow of talk on others, in which she has an unyielding conviction.

The Animus hound usually suffers from a weak and uncertain feminine image and a damaged instinct. Her mother was not available either emotionally or physically. This makes her vulnerable to Animus possession. This woman has a negative image about her femininity and is usually highly critical and judgmental of other woman. She herself is vain, false and jealous, but is not aware of it and projects it out, labelling others as vain, false and jealous.

The Animus in this woman has one goal, and that is to pull her away from life and cut her off from it. He prevents this woman from entering a spiritual life and keeps her focused on the material physical world. She suffers from a Will to Power, a psychological imbalance which affects her relatedness to others and the world in the most insidious way. When the feeling life (Eros) is missing, the result is someone who pursues and values only the intellect, resulting in a stiff attitude, lacking warmth and feeling.

She has no heart.

She is cut off from her instincts, unbalanced and destructive. She can only relate to men sexually and confronted with a relationship, she asks the wrong questions. Instead of thinking about whether she loves him or cares for him, she asks herself whether she should sleep with him now or tries to work out the best way to manipulate him.

The Animus is critical and harsh and he constantly whispers to this woman that she is a failure, that she can't amount to anything and that it is too late now anyway. He criticises those around her and points out their flaws and mistakes.

The Animus often attacks the woman's creativity by instilling doubt about the validity of her ideas and her ability to implement them. He also sows the seeds of doubt and suspicion. The Animus loves getting stuck on small things and making it into big things in order to hold back life and prevent growth. He is an expert on making mountains out of molehills. Like a dog with a bone, he picks and analyses and comes up with various intimations of what is going on, wasting an enormous amount of psychic energy.

Furthermore, this woman craves life and like the proverbial vampire, she will suck it from whomever, even her children.

Being this woman is not easy, it is a hard and unforgiving existence – a dog eats dog world.

Integrating the Animus

Easier said than done, the integration of the Animus involves humility and sacrifice. Women need to sacrifice their magical power that they have over men in order to individuate. This power will keep her focused on her prestige persona and clinging to this power is her Animus' hold over her. Since the Animus involves the Will to Power vs Eros (feeling), facing the Animus head on is futile. The woman must cleverly outwit and avoid him. Women cannot fight the Animus by killing him, they can only catch him and escape. The internal conflict that the Animus creates is overcome by

walking out of it.

Within her, the Animus possessed woman has two opposing forces, being the Animus and the negative Anima (her inferior shadow perception of herself). These two forces in her can balance each other out by pitching them against each other. Through this conflict between her shadow and her Animus, can and she can make the connections within herself and the world. This is the power of the integrated Animus – consciousness and a connection with herself, her passions and her values.

In life, women are often presented with a situation to overcome this Animus possession. The opportunity to get out of the complex, usually triggers the neurosis. Once the unconscious complex is activated, nothing can stop it. But when the ruling attitude is inappropriate (Animus possession), it will result in the failure of the opportunity and the consequence is a loss of libido, a depression. This is an indication that the current approach and attitude is no longer valid and needs a new approach. To constellate this new approach, reflect on the following suggestions for dealing with Animus Possession.

Here are some guidelines for dealing with typical Animus experiences.

The Critical Animus:

When the Animus is arguing and criticizing, the right approach to deal with this, is to say to the Animus, “Since you are so opinionated about what is wrong with others, let’s look at my shadow”. These two opposing forces, the shadow and the Animus, results in consciousness. This consciousness allows her to discern what her own ideas and opinions really are, and the difference between her feminine ego and masculine Animus.

The Animus Hound possession:

Animus possessed woman suffer from a tremendous flow of unconscious, blind talk in which they have a righteous conviction in. The question a woman must ask is “Do I really believe that?” At every turn, she needs to confront her opinions through reflection.

The Attacking Animus:

The Animus can torture a woman, feeding her ruminations and thoughts about failure. To step out of this internal conflict, the best way is to say to the Animus, “Ah, you are right, it is too late, I am a failure, so let’s not speak about it anymore”. This allows the energy to move forward and not to dissipate in the internal conflict and the woman is left alone to try her hand at whatever she is doing anyway.

The Inflated Animus:

Being Animus possessed implies inflation, since the Animus is an archetype and belongs to the collective unconscious. The standards used by the Animus are collective standards and no individual is able to attain them. The benchmark the Animus uses to criticise is too high for a normal human being to live up to. The Animus always knows better, but in assuming this position the woman is only inflating her own abilities. When she finds herself saying or thinking “You should be doing

this” with herself or others, it would be wise to counteract this Animus position by taking on a humility and admitting that you don’t know everything, that you may very well be a failure.

The Suspicious Animus:

The Animus is very adept at falsifying information or feeding the woman suspicions. Something really nice or sweet may happen, but then much later, for example that evening, she will reflect on an event and she starts reading into what happened and was said and becomes suspicious and doubtful. This Animus laughs at feelings and think that they are a weakness. Be aware of this Animus tactic and don’t let him break down positive experiences. Again, the approach would be to agree with him, he may be right, but you would like to believe that it was a positive experience anyway. The woman must reflect on how she feels about others and make her feelings and emotions conscious.

The Destructive Animus:

The Animus attacks what is good and the germs of new ideas by criticising the woman’s ability to implement them as well as the validity of these ideas. Again, the correct approach is to agree, but you are going to try anyway. The Animus is very critical of everything and everyone. He is usually right too, but when he is triggered and she is possessed, he is likely to be wrong by confusing her with stormy arguments and a misty confusing atmosphere.

The Impatient Animus:

The Animus is often very impatient, making the woman feel that she has to make up her mind immediately, to act straight away, instead of waiting for her psyche to bring forth the proper new development. The truth is that for women it often takes years for the new development to emerge. However difficult it is to stay within this space of tension, resist the temptation to move immediately and give your psyche time to process and create the solution. (Barring of course a situation that is life threatening)

The Animus is a demon who wants to pull the woman away from life, cut her off from it. That is why she must run away and not get trapped by it.

An integrated Animus

An integrated Animus allows the woman to be actively and creatively enterprising. This woman is able to take up new ideas and new movements and they often at the forefront of the new zeitgeist.

She engages life and does not hide from it behind false bravado and intellectual verbosity. She is spiritual and intellectual and confident in her own knowledge and wisdom.

This wise women has a healthy attitude towards disappointment. She risks being hurt in relationships without the bitterness, and with a well-developed sense of humour. She accepts that life consists of both growth and decline and embraces it.

Living fully and embracing life with passion and conviction is the goal of individuation and

integrating the Animus is a huge part of this process.

Next month I will publish the second part of this series about the man's conflict with his Anima.

Until next time

Anja

[1] Von Franz, M. L. (2002). Animus and anima in fairy tales. D. Sharp (Ed.). Toronto: Inner City Books.