At midlife one tends to see life differently; in that, the meaning and purpose of the first half of life begins to fail us... and our whole agenda changes. Reaching midlife for many of my clients brings with it feelings of fracturing, alienation and lustiness. This paper is a reflective examination of how midlife changes bring out what Jung emphasized about the anima's role: as that factor in the male psyche responsible for the process of projection, not just for projections of and onto women- but all projection.
INTRODUCTION AND INITIAL REPRESENTATION

"Now is the winter of our discontent" are the opening words of Shakespeare’s play Richard III; a king portrayed as a discontented man who is unhappy in a world that hates him. The final scene of Act 5 is Richard’s total destruction as a character and man is when he wakes up from his sleep. Richard describes himself as “… unfinished, sent before his time into this breathing world, scarce half made up”. He is internally confused, and unable to understand himself. It is as if the mirror which he so often plays for other characters has been turned onto himself. Thus he speaks:

As a counsellor facing midlife I awoke from my 49-year slumber, internally confused, yet left with a sense that I’m needing to get to know my “other half” – my feminine side, but also that I actually have ‘become’ her in some ways. It’s a type of surrender; a knowing that somehow I am both male and female at my deepest levels. I'm not aware of a male or female part operating within me at different times; they both are just who I am. And so my challenge was and is to look more boldly at myself, my practice, and how integration of the anima might influence how I companion the Other.

A DEFINITIONAL INQUIRY OF THE ANIMA

As the terms anima/animus often creep into usage into reflections on my practice, I deem it useful to conduct a brief definitional inquiry. The usual meaning of soul—a word literally synonymous with anima—is on the order of “the spiritual, rational, and immortal part of man which distinguishes him from brutes,…and…renders him a subject of moral government.” (Webster’s Universal Unabridged Dictionary, p. 1581) Pettifor (1998) explains it more simply: “The anima is the female soul image of a man, the animus the male soul image of a woman. That is the simplest definition, and one which many struggle with, since Jung seems quite absolute in defining a person’s soul image as gender opposite”: from this we get a hint of its bipolar nature and volatility, later described by Jung.

Beebe’s (1984, 278) definition posits the anima more like a projection, “I find it helpful to think of the anima as the emotional attitude a man takes towards anything he reflects upon” and Ann Belford Ulanov (1992, 25) sees it more like a psychic structure, “The anima…forms a bridge, across which the contents of the Self come to address the ego. These questions seem to issue from another-personified as an anima…figure - who says, in effect: You must deal with me, respond to me, even if it is to reject me, but here I am and you cannot escape.” There is even a definition by Hillman (1987,
73) which describes both as “archetypes of the psyche.” Jung, himself, came to think of the anima as manifest in four developmental stages and viewed it as “the personification of the inferior functions which relate a man to the collective unconscious” (CW 18: 187), and also “the characteristic face turned towards the unconscious (CW 6: 808).”

**OCCURRENCES OF ANIMA IN MY INTERPERSONAL PRACTICE**

I’ve encountered many instances in couples counselling that is best described by a snippet of Shelby’s (1987) prose, entitled *Anima: A Short Story*:

On the sill of a side window stood two ceramic figurines: Tony, a colt, and Twinkle, a calf. His mother would reach up and take Tony down. She would show him the colt, pointing out its features and telling him a little about colts. They had mommies called mares and daddies called stallions. They liked to play in grassy fields, and they grew up to be horses that people ride. Then she would let him touch Tony. That was a special moment, touching the precious cool and glazed surfaces of that which his mother loved and of which she spoke with such caring. The figurine was cradled in the hand which also cradled him and touched him with tenderness. Her fingers were long and graceful. Her nails were well-manicured; the half-moons of each were distinct, the trimmed portion accurately cut and symmetrical. In the image of her hand holding the figurine was born in his heart feelings of perfection, beauty, tenderness, femininity, delicacy, and reverence for all that was fragile. He came to know his heart in this way, and into his hand passed the spirit of his mother and the feminine.

She dwelt in him in two places: his hands and his heart. In the length and slenderness of his fingers, he saw her hands. In the width and strength of his palms, he saw his father’s. His hands brought him much pleasure. They were visible manifestations of his heart, exhibiting for all to see the qualities hidden within him: strength, tenderness toward fragility, grace, subtlety of movement that portrayed nuances of emotion, compassion, nurturing, decisiveness, playfulness, tenuousness, abiding steadfastness. In his heart he cultivated rarer forms of the same characteristics.

“Odd”, he thought to himself, opening the book to the section on Wordsworth, “how all along I have considered that I have the body of a man and the heart of a woman.”

That was what he meant when he said he felt her move within him. A gesture, a response, an emotion, a sensitivity would reveal her presence to him. He remembered making a vow to himself never to forsake that within him that allowed him to feel the pain of others and the beauty and fragility of life.

Leaving his reflections, he shifted his attention to the book in his hand. A title had caught his eye, and he thoughtlessly turned the pages until it lay before him. Scanning the lines of *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollection of Early Childhood*, his eyes were caught by the following:

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There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.
Whether is fled the visionary gleam?
W here is it now, the glory and the dream?

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.

Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.
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Without asking himself “why”, tears came to his eyes, and his hand moved to his chest to give comfort to whatever feelings of pain and joy moved deeply within that mystery he had come to know as his heart.
Struggling to hold back the tears, I see many men discovering what seems unfamiliar. As their companion, I struggle with them; with the “pain of joy moving deep within the mystery”. I yearn for unity, first within myself, and then with the Other, to realize the concomitant sense of fullness, the integration of the psyche, not polarized, but whole – free to love, to feel and find relatedness. But, as Watsky (2001) aptly points out, “Paradoxically, given that the anima has been understood as the archetype in males that governs relatedness, when a man seems most thoroughly in the grip of compulsive projections, most single-mindedly determined to reduce existence to a few fanatically loved or hated fetish objects, he likely has been possessed by the anima - albeit in a primitive state.” This becomes increasingly evident as I sit with men in midlife purgatory and marital crisis.

**WHY DOES INTEGRATION OF ANIMA SEEM IMPORTANT?**

Jung’s writings speak into my soul about a polarity within:

> Every man carries within him the eternal image of woman. . . . This image, the anima, is fundamentally unconscious, an hereditary factor of primordial origin . . . an imprint or 'archetype' of all the ancestral experiences of the female, a deposit, as it were, of all the impressions ever made by woman. . . . the anima is bipolar and can therefore appear positive one moment and negative the next; now young, now old; now mother, now maiden; now a good fairy, now a witch; now a saint, now a whore. (*Collected Works*, 17:388, 9i:356)

> My life’s mirror portrays to me that the first half of my life was a differentiation of the primary sexual identity and macho ego roles (as in Erickson’s theory of psychosocial development). At midlife, however, there arose a deeper call for “wholeness” -- a clarion call to integrate the opposite energy, the anima, as a move towards that wholeness. It likely comes from the individuation process that is propelling my psychic growth. The "under-developed" must be developed if we are to become fully functioning people. At the most basic and simplistic level, I need to begin developing a capacity for relationship and to do so, I must come to terms with my emotions, vulnerability, and needs: at midlife, most men Jung claims, are called to nurture [instead of nurture, I would substitute “be more receptive”].

> Emma Jung’s (1956, 81) writings also help me to understand how the anima makes certain demands on me. She writes of its influence and, as such, intrigues me more and more with the functioning of the anima than its hypothetical psychological structure:

> She is a psychic factor that insists on being considered, not neglected as is the general tendency, since a man naturally likes to identify himself with his masculinity.... What matters to a woman is the personal relation, and this is true also of the anima. Her tendency is to entangle a man in such relationships, but she can also serve him well in giving them shape -- that is she can do so after the feminine element has been incorporated into consciousness. As long as this element works autonomously, it disturbs relations or makes them impossible.”
Here the anima becomes a necessary mediator for and a crucial aspect of *individuation*; something Carl Jung coined “…the ‘relativization of the ego’, referring to a type of self-awareness whereby one recognizes that one's conscious sense of identity is but one component of the psyche. Where she acts on men as their internal other, the anima can mediate the discovery. This is how she serves... *as the bridge to the unconscious*... That is the foremost manifestation of the anima's process, but she acts upon us as well by way of dreams, visions, fantasies, memories, moods, and, I also would assume, physical sensations.” (Watsky, 2001) And so my search for the proverbial bridge continues…

**A MAN’S QUEST FOR SOUL AT MIDLIFE -- REFLECTIVE INQUIRY OF THE ANIMA**

*’Midway this way of life we’re bound upon, I woke to find myself in a dark wood, where the right road was wholly lost and gone.’* (Dante’s *Inferno*)

At midlife one sees life differently; in that, the meaning and purpose of the first half of life begins to fail us… and our whole agenda changes. Reaching midlife for many of my clients brings with it feelings of fracturing, alienation and lost-ness. Split from our instincts, alienated from our true selves, many simply lose their way. Midlife can be experienced as a traumatic falling apart of the identifications with which the individual has held them together. The crisis can take the shape of the “empty nester” syndrome, redundancy or job loss, separation and divorce, major illness or death of a loved one.

Jung himself experienced the midlife transition as an intense emotional turning point in his life, calling it a ‘confrontation with the unconscious’. Confronting the monstrous chaos of the unconscious, says Jung, takes patience, acceptance, and great courage – such confrontation always requires sacrifice (to make sacred) – a conscious relinquishing of ego consciousness as the guiding force and an acceptance of one’s fate and submission to it. *So I begin this inquiry by asking, can the anima help me to confront my unconscious, in order to teach me more about myself and hence serve me in a positive manner to extend consciousness and deepen awareness for day-to-day counselling practice?*

Murray Stein (1983) in his book *In Midlife: A Jungian Perspective* formulated three main features of the midlife crisis/transformation/passage to deepen self awareness. The first transition, says Stein, requires some crisis that cuts the person off from the known ways in which s/he controls his/her thinking, feeling and acting. He calls this first transition *separation*. What needs to be separated from in the first phase of the midlife transition is an earlier identity, the *persona*. In this period of psychological upheaval and turmoil our bonds to parents, society, friends and professional colleagues become frayed and undone. We want freedom. We cry for depth and meaning. The soul cannot be contained at midlife.
The ego needs to let go of this attachment before it can be encouraged into the second transition, namely entering liminal space. ‘Liminality’ means what is “at the threshold” (from the Latin limen) and is the territory of the mythological trickster Hermes. Able to travel between the worlds and a trickster who loves to destabilise what is known, Hermes slips in when we are least expecting him, and pulls the rug of safe expectations out from under our feet. This second transition involves some meeting with an aspect of our unconscious – some power previously excluded or shunned. To go through liminality, the person needs to ‘find the corpse’ and then to bury it – to identify the source of pain and then to put the past to rest by grieving, mourning and burying it. But the nature of the loss needs to be understood and worked through before a person can move on.

The third transition according to Stein, called reinstatement, is the return to life with changed consciousness. This may be the most difficult part of the task because in the face of denial, it is difficult to stay true to what is known inside. Having first accepted that we are lost, we learn to see in a new way. It is a falling out of believing that we can be masters of the universe and a beginning of understanding what it means to “do life on life’s terms”, the quintessential definition of maturity. As Au (1990, 23) so eloquently puts it, “… healthy self-acceptance cannot be based on denial or projection. Maturity will elude us as long as we try to disown unattractive parts of ourselves and project them onto others. Maturity comes when we stop blaming God for making us the way we are.”

As I face squarely my own personal mid-life crisis, I’ve become increasingly curious about many aspects of the anima. For example, how does the anima colour my perceptions and how it might influence how I individuate and, subsequently, how I would counsel the Other. Put another way, if I understand Jungian psychology correctly, as with most truly unconscious components of our psyche, we rarely encounter anima first as an inner factor but only as a kind of mask that we unconsciously “hang” upon another person. Consequently, from a couples counselling point-of-view, newlyweds never see one another for who they really are -- they fall in love with their own unconscious image and believe it is their partner. If this is so, then “falling in love” with my spouse (and theirs) was no real relationship at all, but only a hopeless illusion. Real relationship with a real person can only begin when we learn to “withdraw” the projection. At first blush, this theory might appear as a wise and sober, but I agree with Haule that it has it limitations. Firstly, Haule admits Jung’s theory seems to leave the partner out of the picture... s/he is only there as a "hook for our projection"; they merely catalyzes an intrapsychic process in us: “Surely this inner work must be done, and by both parties. But the mask metaphor addresses only the earliest stages of the love relationship: infatuation and disillusionment. Ultimately, the integration of anima is held out as a vague goal, though nothing is said about what this might mean in practice”, says Haule (1993, 2).

Jacobi (1973) helps me to see another side to the anima. We need to see that the individuation process is, above everything else, a process of wholeness -- primarily one of uniting opposites. Jung (1978, 20) wrote that the anima represents "functions which filter the contents of the collective unconscious through to the conscious mind". Thus when the ego seeks to find the inner Self, Jacobi
insists it must look through the anima which *colours its perception in many different ways*. This puts a different spin on the anima and takes me to a place in my inquiry where I must concur with Haule in his position:

Considerations such as these have led me to reimagine the anima as a lens rather than as a mask. As a lens, my anima brings my beloved into focus and allows her to be who she is and to change as she needs to change, while a mask is a rigid, single image that demands my beloved conform and remain static. A lens clarifies our blurry vision and brings out details (eyeglasses, magnifying glass, microscope); it allows us to project (movie projector, slide projector); and it serves our memory (camera, camcorder). If we hold a lens too close to or too far from our eye, we obscure the image of our partner. Thus lenses may be misused. We may also keep a single slide in our projector and cast it onto every woman or man that we meet, very much like a mask. But the mask metaphor assumes that all erotic meetings distort the world, while the analogy of the lens assumes that anima and animus are potential assets that can assist in our appreciation of the truth and depth of our encounters. When it obscures our vision, we are abusing our anima lens. We need to learn to get the right distance from it and not to cling to specific forms but to allow the living reality of our beloved to move and change. (Haule, 1993, 3)

Yet another wondering is whether the anima can bring *my* Self into focus as well? If the anima is indeed a lens, that brings both companion / client (and husband/wife) into focus simultaneously, must it be trained on the realm in which we are not wholly separate? Is it the anima that brings the *Self* field into sharp focus? “Living connection with the Self field gives one a numinous foundation in life”, says Haule (1993, 4), “and when it is absent, one feels profoundly cut off. The Self field is always a significant influence upon who we are and how we feel. Most of our lives are passed in ignorance of this dimension of our psychic life because we are afraid of it or because our attention is too much taken with the events of consciousness and the pressures of the persona field.” My counselling experience has shown me that we become interested in the Self field only when we feel our life depends upon it – as when we find our coherent sense of Self fragmenting – like at midlife transitions or during traumatic times. But, as one of the goals of this exercise is to “deepen our awareness of self as a major creative resource offered in redemptive service to the Other” (Brown, 2005, Into), if the anima could help *me* to connect to this numinous foundation Haule speaks of, quite possibly it could be used in relational engagement in the service of, and in order to, empower the Other.

**AN EXPERIENTIAL INQUIRY**

I decide to shift modalities and investigate images, poetry, some song lyrics and intersubjective responses -- reflecting deeply on these in order to help me better appreciate this “lens” analogy of the anima, and whether I could truly experience it as a two-way ‘filter’ for both the companion and the seeker? A first approximation or attempt was made during our class presentation session, where I presented some imagery done by various artists concerning what the anima might possibly represent to objective persons.
The following four enumerated images were displayed and I asked the viewers to simply write or sketch the first thing that comes to mind from each photo (unconscious free association) or to notice a more general sense of what their “deeper place of knowing” informs them of:

Appendix ‘A’ sports the feedback; the findings were sterling. Three of the seven responses claimed all images spoke to them in a similar way: what it meant to be fully human, complete, “naked and not ashamed”, integrated yet free; and in some instances, spoke of feminine power/control over the male and transcending libidinal desires. Others chose to contemplate the images separately. Obvious was the difficulty to put words (language) to what the viewers were experiencing. Global concepts like “contemplative, rugged adventure, inner ache, energized, breaking free” were bantered about with reckless abandon, but such broad concepts did little to help me put flesh to the analogy of anima as a lens.
I’m not surprised by their responses, though. I, too, find great difficulty expressing what I’m sensing when attempting engagement with the anima during companioning. I believe this might be synonymous to when the optometrist says to me, during an eye examination, “How does the chart appear to you – in focus?” As he flicks back and forth between lenses, I often get befuddled; and don’t know for sure how to describe what my mind’s eye perceives. I suspect seeing one’s Self ‘through the anima lens’ might be akin to this sort of a confusing state. If this is so, and we practice the “talking cure” (as Freud explained psychotherapy), then how can we appropriately relay what the anima lens quickens? My hunch is we do this through the parallel process (transference/counter-transference). It is likely in the connection “soul-to-soul” through resonance that “allows the living reality of our beloved to move and change” into focus.

I also wonder if our difficulty expressing what we see reflects how our psyche works together. One structure may compensate for the weakness of another structure, one component may oppose another component, and two or more structures may unite to form a synthesis. Compensation may be illustrated by the contrasting attitudes of extraversion and introversion. If extraversion is the dominant or superior attitude of the conscious ego, then the unconscious will compensate by developing the repressed attitude of introversion. Might this confusion result from repression by the ego preventing the unconscious becoming conscious?

Delving into the world of poetry, prose and song lyrics didn’t seem to clarify much more for me. I gravitate to modalities that seem to focus more on the midlife passage as symbolic of the path of individuation, or the path towards wholeness, the journey to the Self at the core of one’s being. Why? I suppose in the deepest sense, I believe the passage through the terrain of midlife is a spiritual or religious journey, and embodies a search for a new and deeper meaning, value and purpose in life. Jung discovered, after many years of treating patients in the second half of life, that “there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life”.

T.S. Eliot (1963, 208) in his poem The Dry Savages and Stein (1983, 26) in his book In Midlife: A Jungian Perspective both speak to the quest for soul at midlife:

"Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel and piece together the past and the future, Between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception, The future futureless, before the morning watch When time stops and time is never ending”.

T.S. Eliot

".... an old person is passing away. And until the pit of death is entered, the process of internal transformation cannot move to its conclusion, for at midlife, too, a new person is being born."

M. Stein

I’m beginning to view my “midlife crisis” not as a calamity, but as opportunities abounding -- to become "whole" at last but, in that, I must be willing to “die” so I can be "reborn":

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John 12:24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” 25 “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

I understood I must die to my false Self (that which has become egocentric) so that my psyche can be ‘reshaped’. Ultimately, midlife should take me to a new and deeper level of meaning… and at its close, I hope to find myself far better prepared to ‘plunge into life’; stronger, more mature, with a sense of my own power, more in touch with my Self, and determined perhaps, to undertake my God-ordained mission in life, with a renewed sense of faith, hope and purpose.

After a sit down with Dr. John Meteyard on 06 June 2005 (see APPENDIX ‘B’), I was able to reach some deeper conclusions about how midlife is hinged on a SPIRITUAL questing. To make sense of it all, I needed to revisit this concept of midlife as a journey, and be reminded yet again, that the integration of the anima is akin to the allegory of Parsifal and the quest for the Holy Grail. Parsifal finds the King wounded, and in order that he might find “healing” has to uncover the question as well as the answer. Parsifal has to go on his own journey in search of these before he finally discovers what we know now to be THE question, “Whom does the Grail serve?” and THE answer he discovers, “The King” of course. The King is healed, but eventually dies… as part of us needs to die before we can truly live.

Stein (1983) describes this journey much like the Israelites “wandering in the desert”; and in our desert we may lose hope and faith in the future. In fact, we are likely to feel that there is no future. The inner and outer experiences can assume a number of forms: there may be a strong sense of unfulfilled longing, romantic fantasies, and urges to escape, to find a spiritual path. We may receive messages from the unconscious, in the form of dreams, fantasies, intuitions and synchronistic occurrences, which can guide us to the place of our deepest sense of integrity (knowing). This is, at heart, a spiritual quest. There are no concrete answers. One must simply go through it. And so, the deeper purpose of this journey to find the question and answer to our Quest, to integrate with our anima and travel to places of uncertainty, is ultimately to be reunited with our Self, or psyche. At
midlife we find yet another opportunity to “go on our own Quest”, to connect with a larger, collective or “spiritual” purposes in our life.

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Companionsing is all about the “journey within”; walking with the Other as s/he find their deeper places of knowing, and offering a sense of hope eternal; I see this next phase of my development as crucial to becoming a much needed “wise old [wo]man.” As we begin to see ourselves and others more clearly and together urge forward to find and express a new sense of Self, we both begin to feel free enough to unfetter ourselves from attachments of the past, and begin building a new psychic identity. In Jungian terms, the goal of midlife is to free the Self (soul), and this can only be done if one is prepared to let go of one's youthful identity, to take risks, to step out and courageously explore new horizons. As I see it, letting go first requires us to see more clearly what it is that needs releasing, and what to avail oneself to in future. This is only possible by seeing our Self clearly and truthfully through the anima.

Moreover, integrating the anima should help bring emotions into focus. The Self field is an emotional domain, more primitive than imagery, something that is felt in the body like a tuning fork resonating at a specific frequency. The imagery of a lens and seeing is, therefore, very much metaphorical… in the same way we often hear companions say we see deeply into someone’s soul or the way a seeker might be heard saying they felt accurately seen by another… the peculiar “seeing” of the anima lens is what is referred to as ‘figuratively speaking’.

By providing perspective on the events that take place in the Self field, the anima, seen as a lens, brings into focus the unconscious foundation of our personal lives -- as well as the interpersonal field in which psychic life is embedded. A là Jacobi (1973), it is only when we become conscious of the shadow, the anima, the archetypal spirit and the Self, that the unconscious foundations become sufficiently ‘exposed’ for individuation to proceed further.

It is often at midlife, when life becomes untenable, the movement is toward an inner journey, when we seek out and find the Inner child and become like that child, when we see our defensive walls for what they really are, and we notice vividly our wounded-ness and the trajectory it set us on, that the anima (and animus) can reveal what is happening within and between individuals … and enable us to “escape the solipsistic slant of Jung’s mask metaphor”, so that as companions we can talk psychologically and pragmatically about interpersonal (parallel) processes within a contemporary psychodynamic framework.

Finally, companionsing is undoubtedly an interpersonal process. Even when we imagine that its aim is solely to guide the other to their place of deeper knowing, we nevertheless assume that this journey requires some kind of dialogue. Imagined as a mask, the anima often blocks dialogue and distorts interpersonal dynamics. Envisioned as a lens, the anima may indeed assist.