

# The Archetype of the Anima and the Phenomenon of Anima Projection in Wilkie Collins's *Basil*

Wilkie Collins'in *Basil* Adlı Eserinde Anima Arketipi ve Anima Yansıtma Olgusu

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## Abstract

First published in 1852, Wilkie Collins's sensation novel *Basil* offers a very fascinating portrayal of anima projection through the story of an aristocratic young man against the backdrop of Victorian England. The protagonist of the novel falls head over heels in love with a mysterious dark lady called Margaret after a chance encounter on an omnibus. Following a hasty marriage with strange conditions, he spends a whole year in her company – neglecting his own family – until he discovers that he was deceived by Margaret who had been having an affair with her father's clerk Mannion. This article argues that the intensity of the connection Basil feels for Margaret can be attributed to what the Swiss psychiatrist C.G. Jung called anima projection. Jung defined the archetype of the anima as the feminine element in a man and suggested that it was knowable only through projections that contained our own psychic contents. When we project our anima or animus on to a person, our perception of that person is fundamentally altered. As Basil's case aptly illustrates, when the anima is projected, it is almost impossible to recognize it in us since it appears outside of us, embodied in another human being. Drawing on insights from Jungian psychoanalysis, this article will examine the archetype of the anima and the phenomenon of anima projection in Wilkie Collins's *Basil*.

**Keywords:** Wilkie Collins, Jung, Victorian Novel, archetype, anima

## Öz

İlk kez 1852'de yayınlanan Wilkie Collins'in sansasyon romanı *Basil*, Viktorya Dönemi İngiltere'sinin arka planında aristokrat bir genç adamın hikayesi aracılığıyla, anima projeksiyonunun çok etkileyici bir tasvirini sunar. Romanın başkahramanı, bir omnibüste tesadüfen karşılaştıktan sonra Margaret adında gizemli, esmer bir kadına sırlıslık aşık olur. Tuhaf koşullarla alelacele yapılan bir evliliğin ardından, kendi ailesini ihmal ederek, tam bir yılını onun yanında geçirir, ta ki babasının katibi Mannion'la ilişkisi olan Margaret tarafından aldatıldığını öğrenene kadar. Bu makale, Basil'in Margaret'a karşı hissettiği bağın şiddetinin İsviçreli psikiyatrist C.G. Jung'un anima projeksiyonu adını verdiği olguyla açıklanabileceğini öne sürmektedir. Jung, anima arketipini bir erkekteki dişil unsur olarak tanımladı ve bunun yalnızca kendi psişik içeriklerimizi içeren yansıtma yoluyla bilinebileceğini öne sürdü. Animamızı ve animusumuzu bir kişiye yansıttığımızda, o kişiye dair algımız temelden değişir. Basil'in yaşadıklarının da gösterdiği gibi, anima yansıtıldığında onu kendi içimizde tanımak neredeyse imkansızdır çünkü bizim dışımızda, başka bir insanda vücut bularak ortaya çıkar. Jungçu psikanalizden elde edilen bilgilerden yararlanan bu makale, Wilkie Collins'in *Basil* isimli eserindeki anima arketipini ve anima yansıtma olgusunu incelemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Wilkie Collins, Jung, Viktoryen Romanı, arketip, anima

Successfully combining the conventions of the gothic tradition with domestic and urban realism, Wilkie Collins's sensation novel *Basil* (1852) critiques Victorian morality to expose its hypocrisy and inner tensions. In *Basil*, Wilkie Collins employs Henry James's technique of "the turn of the screw" as stated in Bentley's Miscellany: "the hero of the tale sees a pretty

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*CUJHSS* (ISSN 1309-6761) Jan 2024 Special Issue, 32-41. Received Oct 4, 2023; Accepted Dec 20, 2023

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girl in an omnibus and he goes to his doom" (Pykett, 2005, p. 26). As I will further argue in this article, Basil's strong sexual attraction to and subsequent obsession with Margaret as well as his deep emotional attachment to his sister Clara can be attributed to what the celebrated Swiss psychiatrist C.G. Jung called "anima projection." According to Jung, anima (the feminine element in a man) and animus (the masculine element in a woman) are essential building blocks in the psychic structure of every man and woman. In the words of his follower Marie Von Franz: "the anima is a personification of all feminine psychological tendencies in a man's psyche, such as vague feelings and moods" (qtd. in Sanford, 1980, p. 12). Anima is knowable only through projections which are "mirrors in which we see the reflection of our own psychic contents" (Sanford, 1980, p. 11). In the course of the novel, it is gradually revealed that the protagonist is baffled by his conflicting attachment to two opposite types of women. He is powerfully drawn to the attractive and seductive Margaret represented as the dark woman and to his sister, the virtuous and modest Clara, represented by the fair woman in his dream. As Stewart (2018) suggests, Margaret and Clara exist in the novel as doubles and "both women represent very different sides of womanhood for Basil" (p. 101). This also explains why Basil cannot find complete satisfaction with either Clara or Margaret but rather he wants to interact with and experience all sides of womanhood by means of his relationship with both women. Drawing on insights from Jungian psychoanalysis, this article will explore the archetype of the anima and the phenomenon of anima projection in Wilkie Collins's *Basil*.

Jung wrote extensively on the importance of the unconscious psyche and how we often neglect it at our own cost. In his words: "we lack knowledge of the unconscious psyche and pursue the cult of consciousness to the exclusion of all else. Our true religion is a monotheism of consciousness, ... coupled with a fanatical denial that there are parts of the psyche which are autonomous" (qtd. in Wilhelm, 1962, p. 111). Archetypes reside in the unconscious and therefore remain - for the large part - outside our conscious awareness. Archetypes also make up the basis for instinctive behavior patterns that are common to all humankind, and are represented in human consciousness in certain typical ways (Sanford, 1980, pp. 6-7). As Sanford suggests, knowledge of the anima and the animus remains elusive because "[t]hese psychic factors within us are usually projected. Projection is a psychic mechanism that occurs whenever a vital aspect of our personality of which we are unaware is activated. When something is projected we see it outside of us, as though it belongs to someone else and has nothing to do with us. Projection is an unconscious mechanism" (p. 10). When we project our anima or animus on to a person, our perception of that person is fundamentally altered. Men usually project their anima onto women since women mostly carry for them the image of the feminine element in them. As Basil's case aptly illustrates, when the anima is projected, it is almost impossible to recognize it within the self since it appears outside of the self, embodied in another human being. In this sense, projection acts like a mirror that carries the unconscious psychic contents.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was assumed that a novel should preferably have a moral message. In this vein, Basil states that he is telling his story because he hopes it can serve as a warning to his readers at the start of his confessional narrative. He explains that his father was a very proud man and that during his youth, he received the kind of education that was most suitable to the young men of his age: public school, and then college followed by a liberal education. Although he studied law and his father wished for him to have a position in the parliament, Basil was more interested in literature and the world of arts. Nevertheless, he completed his university degree having earned himself a reputation as a reserved and indolent man.

Basil also mentions how deeply his relationship with his father affected the formation of his character. His profoundly class-conscious father cared deeply about his children but he was always reserved and distant. Basil says: "I believe in his own way he loved us all; but we, his descendants, had to share his heart with his ancestors—we were his household property as well as his children" (Collins, 1862, p. 8). Thus, Basil felt that there was always something lacking in this relationship. One can surmise that this distant and reserved relationship probably cast a long shadow over Basil's future relationships with women.<sup>1</sup> His elder brother Ralph, on the other hand, was a dandy and their father decided that it would be best for him to get a job in foreign service and live in Europe. Basil also had a sister named Clara who was clearly favored by their father who treated her like a duchess.

Describing Clara, Basil states: "In form of face, in complexion, and—except the eyes—in features, she bears a striking resemblance to my father. Her expression, however, must be very like what my mother's was. Whenever I have looked at her in her silent and thoughtful moments, she has always appeared to freshen, and even to increase, my vague, childish recollections of our lost mother" (pp. 18-19). These words reveal that Clara is more than a sister for Basil who sees in her traces of both his father and mother and thus also associates her with his childhood. Given the fact that his mother is dead and his distant father kind of "absent," the warm and affectionate Clara acts as a surrogate caregiver for him. The very strong emotional attachment Basil feels towards Clara is enhanced by her superior character and unique charm. Although Clara would not be considered a dazzling beauty, "The greatest charms that my sister has on the surface, come from beneath it [...] There was a beauty about her unassuming simplicity, her natural—exquisitely natural—kindness of heart, and word, and manner, which preserved its own unobtrusive influence over you, in spite of all other rival influences, be they what they might. You missed and thought of her, when you were fresh from the society of the most beautiful and the most brilliant women" (p. 20).

Basil remarks that, unlike many modern women who have lost their capacity to be delighted in a hearty and womanly way, Clara is not contaminated by "the wretched trivialities and hypocrisies of modern society." In stark contrast to such calculating and contrived women who are drenched in an air of affectation, Clara is a "fresh, innocent, gentle, sincere" woman "whose emotions are still warm and impressible, whose affections and sympathies can still appear in her actions, and give the color to her thoughts" (p. 21). Basil's rather lengthy description of Clara is worth quoting at some length since it not only gives hints regarding the depth of his affection and attachment to his sister but also shows how Clara provides a strong contrast with Basil's future wife Margaret who clearly resembles the kind of modern woman that Basil criticizes here. Although Basil mentions that women like Clara "possess that universal influence which no rivalry can ever approach" and that "[Clara] eclipsed women who were her superiors in beauty, in accomplishments, in brilliancy of manners and conversation" (p. 21), he will himself be fatally drawn to the opposite kind of woman almost as soon as he meets her. Although Basil would consciously want to be with a woman like Clara, a woman who would be "right" and safe for him, he unconsciously desires and yearns for someone with very different characteristics.

Hoping to find inspiration for a historical fiction he is trying to write, Basil decides to take a ride on an omnibus. While on board, he is suddenly struck by the dazzling beauty of a girl who gets on the omnibus with her mother. As stated above, this attractive stranger is quite literally the opposite of Clara: she is dark, full of vitality and has the vibe of an enchantress.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the important role fathers play in child development, see *The Importance of Fathers: A Psychoanalytic Re-evaluation* edited by Judith Trowell and Alicia Etchegoyen (2002).

Basil expresses the strong emotions he feels overwhelmed by right after seeing this girl in the following manner:

As soon as the latter had seated herself nearly opposite to me, by her companion's side, I felt her influence on me directly—an influence that I cannot describe—an influence which I had never experienced in my life before, which I shall never experience again. From the time when she entered the omnibus, I have no recollection of anything more that occurred in it. I neither remember what passengers got out, or what passengers got in. My powers of observation, hitherto active enough, had now wholly deserted me. (p. 30)

Basil's inability to fully capture and express the meaning of this fateful encounter in words reveal that he – almost immediately – falls under the spell of some archetypal force. This unprecedented “influence” he refers to is so strong and overwhelming that the young man feels completely lost and unhinged. It is as if this force has instantly possessed him, robbing him of his powers of observation as well as other ordinary cognitive capacities. Regarding the anima and its projection, Jung wrote:

The anima, being of feminine gender, is exclusively a figure that compensates the masculine consciousness. ... The persona, the ideal picture of man as he should be, is inwardly compensated by feminine weakness, and as the individual outwardly plays the strong man, so he becomes inwardly a woman, i.e. the anima, for it is the anima that reacts to the persona. But because the inner world is dark and invisible to the extroverted consciousness, and because a man is all the less capable of conceiving his weaknesses the more he is identified with the persona, the persona's counterpart, the anima, remains completely in the dark and is at once projected. (qtd. in Chouinard, 1971, p. 52)

The strong magnetic sexual attraction Basil feels when his anima is projected in this way leads to powerful psychological ties with Margaret who carries that projection. The woman who wields this mysterious influence is vividly described in the following words: “She was dark. Her hair, eyes, and complexion were darker than usual in English women [...]. The fire in her large dark eyes, when she spoke, was latent. Their languor, when she was silent — that voluptuous languor of black eyes—was still fugitive and unsteady. The smile about her full lips (to other eyes, they might have looked too full) struggled to be eloquent, yet dared not” (p. 31). As shown in this quote, the dark lady almost instantly becomes the object of Basil's erotic fantasies and sexual longings because she carries his anima projection. And since she carries this projected psychic image, she has considerable power over him.

Since projection happens outside our conscious awareness, Basil has no clue regarding why he feels the way he feels. Jung observes that individuals often confuse their projected anima or the animus with the real person, and this confusion leads to many complications. In his words:

This state of being fascinated by another and wholly under his influence is well known under the term “transference” which is nothing else than projection. However, projection means not only the transference of an image to another person, but also the activities that go with it, so that a man to whom the animus image has been transferred is expected to take over all the activities that go with it, over all the functions that have remained undeveloped in the woman in question, whether the thinking function or the power to act, or responsibility towards the outside world. In turn the woman upon whom the man has projected his anima must feel for him, or make relationships for him, and this symbiotic relationship is

in my opinion the real cause for the compulsive dependence that exists in these cases. (qtd. in Emma Jung, 1985, p. 10)

Basil follows the girl and finds out that she lives in Hollyoak Square. He meets a tradesman's boy and after questioning him, learns that the girl is a linen draper's daughter. When Basil considers the big class difference between her and himself as well as the objection his family would have to a possible relationship he might have with her, he feels miserable. Still, unable to stop obsessively thinking about her, Basil even forgets his rendezvous with his beloved sister Clara. As Emma Jung (1985) remarks: "The anima as a rule is projected first upon a real woman; this may lead the man to enter upon a relation with her that he might otherwise find impossible; on the other hand, it may also result in his becoming much too dependent upon her, with the fatal results described above" (p. 82). Emma Jung's observation sheds light on Basil's predicament after he meets Margaret. On the one hand, he reasons that this relationship would be "impossible" due to the class difference between them. Yet on the other hand, the pull he feels is so strong that he cannot imagine being without her. Due to his conflicted state, he feels intensely agitated and frustrated.

Soon after meeting this mysterious enchantress, Basil sees what might be called a "Big Dream" that provides important insights into his psyche and reveals his inner turmoil. This is hardly surprising since most psychic contents, especially the anima and the animus, appear in a personified form in our dreams and fantasies. Basil refers to this dream as an "ordeal" because the feelings and sensations contained in the dream are dense and heavy. The dream also shows that Basil is clearly at an important crossroads: on the one side there is the "thick woods" associated with "dark secret depths" unfathomable to the eye. On the side above the woods, he sees the high hills over which hang beautiful bright clouds. As he still stands on the plain looking around, he sees a tall woman with black flowing hair coming towards him from the wood. It is significant that this dark woman's robe is of the dun hue of the vapour and mist which hung above the trees, which represents her ambiguous and enigmatic nature. When Basil looks to the other side, towards the hills, he sees another woman dressed in a "white, and pure, and glistening" robe descending from their bright summits: "Her face was illumined with a light, like the light of the harvest-moon; and her footsteps, as she descended the hills, left a long track of brightness, that sparkled far behind her, like the track of the stars when the winter night is clear and cold" (p. 47). This second woman, who emerges from the bright summits, is clearly an embodiment of purity and virtue as symbolized by her white robe and illumined face. Leaving a trail of bright light as she walks, she is strongly contrasted with the first woman who came out of the woods, commonly associated with danger and wilderness.

Unlike this shiny, angelic woman who remains in the distance, the dark woman coming from the woods swiftly approaches Basil, never pausing on her path: "Her eyes were lustrous and fascinating, as the eyes of a serpent—large, dark and soft, as the eyes of the wild doe. Her lips were parted with a languid smile; and she drew back the long hair, which lay over her cheeks, her neck, her bosom, while I was gazing on her" (p. 47). This description perfectly illustrates the danger posed by this woman who is clearly of Lilith's brood.<sup>2</sup> She is voluptuous and sensual, and her eyes express a striking duality as being both serpentine and doe-like. While Basil remains hypnotized by the magnetism of this dark woman, he feels as if a light were shining on him from the other side. When he turns to look, he sees the woman from the hills beckoning him away to ascend with her towards the bright clouds

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<sup>2</sup> Lilith is cited as the first wife of Adam in Mesopotamian and Judaic mythology. She is said to have been banished from the Garden of Eden for not obeying her husband Adam and is often envisioned as a sexually wanton demonic figure.

above. From her outstretched hand comes long thin rays of trembling light, which calm wherever they touched him. However, the woman from the woods still comes nearer and nearer, until Basil feels her hot breath on his face. He says:

Her eyes looked into mine, and fascinated them, as she held out her arms to embrace me. I touched her hand, and in an instant the touch ran through me like fire, from head to foot. Then, still looking intently on me with her wild bright eyes, she clasped her supple arms round my neck, and drew me a few paces away with her towards the wood. I felt the rays of light that had touched me from the beckoning hand, depart; and yet once more I looked towards the woman from the hills. She was ascending again towards the bright clouds, and ever and anon she stopped and turned round, wringing her hands and letting her head droop, as if in bitter grief. The last time I saw her look towards me, she was near the clouds. She covered her face with her robe, and knelt down where she stood. After this I discerned no more of her. (p. 48)

Unlike the fair woman from the hills whose energy is soft and calm, the dark lady is assertive, seductive and acts like a predator. Reminiscent of the seductress in John Keat's famous poem "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," she makes bold moves to clearly seduce the young man who does not have the power or the will to resist her charms. She looks directly into his eyes, and her "wild bright eyes" are said to have some kind of magical power. She even initiates physical contact, clasping her arms around his neck and even starts drawing him towards the woods. The woods – where this dark lady seems to belong – traditionally represent the unknown, the unfamiliar and danger. Yet it is as if Basil is spellbound, he shows no resistance whatsoever to the advances of this seemingly alien and dangerous woman. As Basil surrenders to the influence of the dark woman in a state of enchantment, the now grief-stricken woman from the hills – who is associated with divine light – leaves him for good. This symbolizes the choice Basil's unconscious has already made for him: he will be increasingly estranged from his sister and will allow himself to be swayed by the powerful influence of the dark woman. Whereas Margaret represents the shadow aspect of Basil's anima, Clara represents the idealized female. Although Basil gives in to the irresistible charms of the dark feminine, he also finds himself drawn to the angelic type of woman who has a strong character but does not display it with overt actions and words. Usually such female characters are idealized as 'the angel in the house,' but they lack the magnetic appeal of women like the exotic Margaret.

This interpretation is supported by the very end of the dream which shows that Basil is compulsively drawn to the woman who carries his feminine image (anima):

For now the woman from the woods clasped me more closely than before, pressing her warm lips on mine; and it was as if her long hair fell round us both, spreading over my eyes like a veil, to hide from them the fair hilltops, and the woman who was walking onward to the bright clouds above. I was drawn along in the arms of the dark woman, with my blood burning and my breath failing me, until: we entered the secret recesses that lay amid the unfathomable depths of trees. There, she encircled me in the folds of her dusky robe, and laid her cheek close to mine, and murmured a mysterious music in my ear, amid the midnight silence and darkness of all around us. And I had no thought of returning to the plain again; for I had forgotten the woman from the fair hills, and had given myself lip, heart, and soul, and body, to the woman from the dark woods. Here the dream ended. (p. 49)

From Lilith to Circe and the Sirens, mythology offers many examples of women who have great seductive power, and can lure men with their extraordinary charms into a state of

unconsciousness. Then, once the men are seduced, these “cruel” women destroy them. In other words, their deadly anima power emasculates men who are rendered powerless. This is exactly what will happen to Basil in the hands of Margaret who is in reality a very cunning, greedy and hypocritical young woman. She weaponizes her beauty and sexuality to lure the rich and noble Basil into her net, and then tears his heart to pieces without any pangs of conscience. In his essay on Collins and masculinity, Kucich (2006) refers to Basil as “one of the most antiheroic, debilitated male melancholics in Victorian fiction” and suggests that this novel “is the earliest Victorian novel to portray the dangerous feminization of male identity that occurs when melancholia is divorced from narcissistic power” (p. 127). Indeed, what Basil suffers in the hands of Margaret is so devastating and brutal that the young man becomes emotionally damaged for life despite the fact that he survives the ordeal.

Basil’s dream is clearly prophetic and shows how Basil feels torn between his love for his sister and the dark lady. It further reveals insights into his inner conflict and reflects how his anima is projected on to two different women. Finally, it also foreshadows Basil’s fatal attraction towards the dark lady, like that of a moth to a flame. When he recalls this dream much later as a wiser and sadder man, Basil says: “It was enough [then] for me to dismiss as ridiculous from my mind, or rather from my conscience, the tendency to see in the two shadowy forms of my dream, the types of two real living beings, whose names almost trembled into utterance on my lips; but I could not also dismiss from my heart the love images which that dream had set up there for the worship of the senses.” As Pykett (2005) observes, “What the narrating Basil ‘knows’ is that the dream was at once a moral allegory, a kind of moral choice, and an expression of his unconscious desires. Basil has learned to see the dream as the acting out in his psyche of a battle between two different kinds of femininity, between flesh and spirit, between sexuality and family” (p. 175).

In his real life, Basil similarly rejects the path indicated by his sister and follows the dark lady Margaret. When he tells Margaret’s father Mr. Sherwin that he wants to marry his daughter, the latter suggests a curious agreement to Basil saying that they may get legally married on condition that their marriage will not be consummated until a year has passed. Neither would they be allowed to announce their marriage to the outside world during that time period. Unable to think soundly in his infatuated state, Basil accepts this strange arrangement and gets married. In the beginning of Part Two, Basil states: “An epoch in my narrative has now arrived. Up to the time of my marriage, I have appeared as an active agent in the different events I have described. After that period, and—with one or two exceptional cases—throughout the whole year of my probation, my position changed with the change in my life, and became a passive one” (p. 104). Indeed, throughout one long year, Basil remains mesmerized by Margaret who recklessly toys with him. He spends almost all of his time with her and gets increasingly alienated from his father and sister who both start worrying about him. Again, Basil’s unaccountable and illogical behaviors can be attributed to the fact that he feels helpless since he cannot resist Margaret who carries his anima projection. The influence she has over him is so strong that Basil acts like one who is possessed.

Although Basil is blinded by the woman who carries his anima projection and cannot see through her wiles and duplicity, he can see that Margaret is an ambitious young woman who wants to ascend to the highest degree in the social scale by means of her marriage to him. Several months into their marriage, he observes certain “unaccountable alterations of manner” (p. 154) which vex and irritate him. However: “I loved Margaret too well to be able to look philosophically on the imperfections of her character; I knew of no cause given by me for the frequent changes in her conduct, and, if they only proceeded from coquetry, then coquetry, as I once told her, was the last female accomplishment that could charm me in

any woman whom I really loved" (p. 154). As this quote indicates, the human reality of the individual who carries his anima projection for Basil is distorted by the projected image. Since the archetype of the anima is so numinous, it is charged with the kind of psychic energy that overwhelms Basil emotionally. Consequently, the projected image has an enthralling effect on him, and the person who carries his anima projection greatly attracts him. As Basil's misjudgment of Margaret shows, when the anima is projected, it can produce extraordinary attractions and mislead the man into thinking too much and too highly of his partner.

It is only after Basil discovers that Mr. Sherwin's clerk Mannion and Margaret had been emotionally involved for a long time and have plotted against him for their benefit that he gets out of his hypnotic state and sees that he was completely deceived about Margaret from the very beginning. It takes a terrible shock like this for Basil to withdraw his projection from Margaret and see her for who she really is. Recalling Margaret's actions and certain strange behaviors retrospectively, he says: "Now, no generous, trusting love blinded me to the real meaning of such events as these. Now, instead of regarding them as little weaknesses of beauty, and little errors of youth, I saw them as timely warnings, which bade me remember when the day of my vengeance came, that in the contriving of the iniquity on which they were both bent, the woman had been as vile as the man" (p. 175). His discovery of Margaret's deceit and the consequent (and sudden) withdrawal of his anima projection also take a huge toll on Basil's health, who falls into a state of delirium and is nursed back to health by his angelic sister Clara. During restless days and nights, he suffers from fever and is haunted by terrible visions of Mannion and Margaret: "I saw through the ghastly corruption of their faces the look that told me who they were—the monstrous iniquities incarnate in monstrous forms; the fiend-souls made visible in fiend-shapes—Margaret and Mannion" (p. 178). These visions clearly reveal the true nature of Margaret and Mannion whose deceit has deeply hurt and damaged Basil. It is significant that their moral depravity also becomes manifest in their monstrous forms which resemble fiends.

Jung (1970) believed that the anima is a personified figure and remarked: "It is not we who personify [the anima and animus]; they have a personal nature from the very beginning" (p. 62). Since we have little knowledge regarding what is going on in our psychological landscape, the highly personified figures of the anima and animus appear to us on the outside, in the form of actual human beings. One could thus argue that Basil is ignorant of his inner feminine (anima) and projects it on to Margaret. It is this projection that complicates his relationship with her and creates illusions. Once Basil withdraws his projections from Margaret, he can finally see that behind her great beauty and charm was a terribly weak and fallen character. As long as his anima was projected on to her, he was unable to see the truth about Margaret. And as soon as Margaret no longer held the power of this numinous archetype, Basil's appraisal of Margaret became much more grounded in objective reality.

It is interesting to note that Margaret's lover Mannion, who clearly did not project his anima on to Margaret, had a much more accurate understanding of her true nature: "She had neither heart nor mind, in the higher sense of those words. She had simply instincts—most of the bad instincts of an animal—none of the good. The great motive power which really directed her, was Deceit. I never met with any human being so inherently disingenuous, so naturally incapable of candour even in the most trifling affairs of life, as she was" (p. 245). Unlike many others, including Basil, who were deceived by Margaret's beauty, roleplaying and charm, Mannion remained clear-sighted and literally saw through her: "Her showy person, showy accomplishments, and showy manners dazzled all eyes but mine—of all the people about her, I alone found out what she really was; and in that lay the main secret of



my influence over her” (p. 246). Mannion discloses his secret affair with Margaret and all these nasty details about her in a number of letters addressed to Basil. Although he remains shaken by Margaret’s betrayal and is disowned by his father after he confesses his secret marriage to him, Basil goes to Margaret’s deathbed and stays with her in her final hours.

Following all these shocks to his system, Basil moves to a sheltered villa with his sister Clara to lead a life of seclusion. He is devastated by the encounter with his shadow anima projection and seeks healing and tranquility in the company of his saintly sister. He remarks: “I have suffered too much; I have been wounded too sadly, to range myself with the heroes of Ambition, and fight my way upward from the ranks [...] Such shocks as I have endured, leave that behind them which changes the character and the purpose of a life. The mountain-path of Action is no longer a path for me; my future hope pauses with my present happiness in the shadowed valley of Repose” (p. 351). So his projected anima entangles Basil in fantasies, arouses his yearnings, and stirs up a terribly turbulent emotional life.

To conclude, Wilkie Collins’s novel *Basil* not only reflects the prevalent anxieties and concerns of mid-Victorian period, but also provides fascinating insights into the psyche of a conflicted man. As Pykett (2005) maintains: “Whereas traditional Gothic habitually puts its middle- or upper-class heroine at the mercy of a sinister ecclesiastical or aristocratic power, Collins’s modern Gothic entraps its upper-class male protagonist in a secular lower-middle-class world, whose power to trap and terrify stems in part from the hero’s inability to read it correctly” (p. 114). The famous writer Henry James once remarked that Collins’s widely recognized stroke of genius was, “to introduce into fiction those most mysterious of mysteries, the mysteries that are at our own doors” (qtd. in Cadwallader-Bouron, 2011, p. 64). As I have argued throughout, Basil’s strong attraction to both Margaret and Clara can be explained with reference to what C.G. Jung identified as anima projection. In the words of Sanford (1980): “A special instance of anima projection in masculine psychology comes from the problem of the ‘double anima.’ The anima often comes up in a man’s psychology as a double figure. The first anima image may draw a man to wife, family, and home. The second anima image draws a man into a world of emotionally toned experiences or images outside of the wife-children-home pattern” (p. 83). Because the projection happens outside his conscious awareness, Basil quite literally falls under the “spell” of both his Clara and Margaret and becomes hopelessly co-dependent. Whereas Clara’s influence over him appears to be supportive and benign, Margaret’s influence is dark and intoxicating. Yet the pull of the projection defies all logic and reason, and Basil is fatally drawn to the devouring dark feminine. A Jungian reading of the novel reveals that *Basil* offers a memorable portrayal of the deeper and highly complex psychic forces at play in human life.

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