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# The Role of the Animus in Anna Wulf's Psychological Transformation in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*

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## Article information:

**Manuscript received:** 14 Aug 2025; **Accepted:** 15 Sep 2025; **Published:** 16 Oct 2025

**Abstract:** This paper examines Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* through the lens of Jungian psychoanalysis, focusing on the role of the animus in Anna Wulf's psychological transformation. The novel portrays Anna's fragmented identity and creative paralysis, which are shaped by her relationships with men. By projecting her unconscious animus onto Michael, Paul, Tommy, and Saul Green, Anna experiences the destructive and creative aspects of this archetype. The analysis identifies three stages of her individuation process: suppression and domination (Michael/Paul), ambivalent destruction and guidance (Tommy), and integration through co-creation (Saul). Drawing on Carl Jung and Emma Jung's theories, the study argues that Anna's ultimate reconciliation with her animus enables her to achieve psychological wholeness and restore her creative voice. Lessing's narrative thereby offers both a feminist critique of patriarchal silencing and a symbolic representation of individuation, showing that liberation requires the integration rather than rejection of the animus.

**Keywords:** Doris Lessing; *The Golden Notebook*; Jungian psychoanalysis; animus; individuation; feminist literary criticism; archetypal criticism; creativity; psychological transformation

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## Introduction

Since its publication in 1962, Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* has provoked both acclaim and controversy. Its fragmented structure and multi-layered narrative have been interpreted as a reflection of Cold War politics, the feminist struggle, and the psychological conflicts of modern individuals. Lessing herself resisted being labeled a "feminist" writer, yet her depiction of women's intellectual and emotional struggles resonated strongly with second-wave feminist readers. At its core, the novel explores Anna Wulf's battle with inner fragmentation: as a woman, a mother, a lover, a writer, and a political thinker.

Central to this struggle is Anna's relationship with men. Critics have long debated whether the male characters serve primarily as oppressive figures in a patriarchal society or whether they function as symbolic archetypes. Psychoanalytic critics, particularly those influenced by Carl Gustav Jung, argue that Anna's journey represents an **individuation process**—a quest to integrate fragmented aspects of the self. In Jungian terms, this process involves confronting the *animus*, the masculine archetype within the female psyche.

## Literature Review

Scholarly attention to *The Golden Notebook* has been diverse. Feminist critics such as Elaine Showalter and Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis have emphasized the novel's depiction of women silenced by patriarchal structures, noting how Anna's creative paralysis reflects broader systemic oppression. Jungian critics, however, have focused on archetypal patterns. For example, Susan Watkins highlights the novel's dream imagery as evidence of Anna's confrontation with unconscious archetypes. Similarly, Emma Jung's theories of the animus help explain why Anna repeatedly projects her inner masculine principle onto male partners.

Carl Jung defined the animus as a complex of masculine qualities within the female unconscious, manifesting in four stages: physical power, action, intellectual guidance, and spiritual wisdom. Left unconscious, the animus is destructive, silencing women through internalized authoritarian voices. Integrated, it becomes a source of creativity, logical thought, and broader perspective. This duality makes the animus central to Anna's transformation.

This paper examines how Anna's encounters with Michael, Paul, Tommy, and Saul Green embody different stages of animus projection. By analyzing these figures, the study demonstrates how Lessing dramatizes the destructive and creative aspects of the animus, showing that individuation—and by extension women's liberation—requires integration rather than rejection.

## Methods

This study employs **Jungian archetypal criticism** as its primary methodological approach. Jungian psychoanalysis emphasizes the symbolic function of literature, arguing that characters, dreams, and conflicts often externalize unconscious psychic processes. The animus, in particular, provides a useful framework because Anna's creative paralysis and recovery revolve around her relationships with male figures.

Three key principles guide the analysis:

1. **Projection** – Anna projects her unconscious animus onto men, who embody qualities she cannot yet accept in herself.
2. **Archetypal duality** – Each male figure represents both destructive and constructive potential, mirroring Jung's description of the ambivalent animus.
3. **Individuation process** – Anna's gradual acceptance of her animus is tracked through narrative structure (the transition from fragmented notebooks to the unified golden notebook) and through dream imagery.

Textual analysis focuses on key episodes: Anna's submission to Michael's ridicule, Tommy's suicide attempt, Saul's shared authorship of the golden notebook, and symbolic dreams. Secondary sources by Jung, Emma Jung, and feminist literary critics provide theoretical grounding.

## Results

### 1. Michael and Paul: Suppression of Creativity

Michael, Anna's lover, and Paul, Ella's partner in *The Shadow of the Third*, represent the destructive phase of the animus. Both mock the women's writing, forcing them into silence and dependence. Paul derisively calls Ella's novel "ideas about suicide," implying she lacks authority to address serious subjects. Michael dismisses Anna as a "writer" with contempt, reducing her creative identity to a trivial hobby.

Here, the animus manifests as **authoritarian judgment**. Instead of fostering independence, it becomes an internalized voice of ridicule. The women internalize these voices, losing self-confidence and suppressing their talents. Jung would argue that at this stage, the animus operates unconsciously, acting as a destructive power that blocks individuation.

## 2. Tommy: Numinous Destruction and Guidance

Tommy embodies the ambivalence of the animus. His violent outburst and suicide attempt symbolize Anna's desire to destroy her own creativity. Yet, paradoxically, Tommy also becomes a guide. He is the only person Anna allows to see her notebooks, and he encourages her to consolidate them, a crucial step toward integration.

Lessing describes Tommy as possessing a numinous power—others fall silent in his presence, drawn into his aura. Jung observed that archetypes carry a peculiar energy, capable of compelling attention. Tommy's blindness after his suicide attempt intensifies his symbolic role: deprived of sight, he develops a "sixth sense," becoming a prophetic figure who reflects Anna's unconscious needs.

This duality—destructive yet guiding—reveals the **transformational potential of the animus**. Tommy embodies the dangerous passage where creativity can be annihilated but also reborn.

## 3. Saul Green: Integration and Co-Creation

Saul Green represents the final and most complex stage of Anna's engagement with the animus. Unlike Michael or Paul, Saul recognizes Anna's creativity, but their relationship is fraught with projection. Anna experiences jealousy, alien emotions, and even the emergence of a "new creature" within herself—an unfamiliar personality reacting independently to Saul.

This fragmentation terrifies Anna but ultimately enables growth. Saul and Anna's shared authorship of the golden notebook symbolizes the reconciliation of masculine and feminine principles. Saul writes a protective charm, while Anna records her experiences. Together, they co-create, embodying Jung's description of individuation as the union of opposites.

Dream imagery reinforces this stage. Anna dreams of androgynous dwarfs celebrating destruction, a vision Jung would interpret as symbolic of successful integration. Another dream shows Saul as a "projectionist" organizing her unconscious, suggesting that Anna's animus now functions positively, helping her restructure her psyche.

## Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that Lessing uses male characters not simply as representations of patriarchy but as **archetypal embodiments of Anna's animus**. This reading highlights two major implications:

### 1. Feminist Implications

From a feminist perspective, *The Golden Notebook* reveals how women's creativity is shaped not only by external oppression but also by internalized psychological forces. Michael and Paul represent patriarchal voices, but their ridicule resonates because Anna unconsciously accepts their judgment. Lessing suggests that liberation requires confronting not only social structures but also the internalized animus that silences women.

### 2. Psychological Implications

Jungian theory clarifies Anna's psychological trajectory. The destructive animus initially paralyzes her, but through confrontation with Tommy's violence and Saul's projections, Anna learns to integrate its energy. This transformation allows her to rediscover creativity and broaden her perspective on life. Emma Jung argued that the integrated animus enables women to see beyond personal limitations; Anna's final dream of accepting life's cruelty and endurance reflects precisely this expanded vision.

### 3. Narrative and Form

The structure of the novel itself mirrors Anna's individuation. The fragmented notebooks represent a psyche split by repression and projection. The golden notebook, created with Saul, symbolizes unity. Lessing's formal innovation thus enacts the psychological process she depicts, making the novel both a narrative and a symbolic enactment of individuation.

## Conclusion

Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* dramatizes Anna Wulf's psychological transformation as an encounter with the animus. Through relationships with Michael, Paul, Tommy, and Saul Green, Anna confronts the destructive and creative dimensions of her unconscious masculine principle. Initially silenced by ridicule, threatened by destruction, and fragmented by projection, she ultimately achieves integration, symbolized by the golden notebook.

This Jungian reading demonstrates that individuation—psychological wholeness—requires not the rejection but the **integration of the animus**. Lessing's novel thus offers both a feminist critique of patriarchy and a psychoanalytic exploration of the unconscious, showing that women's liberation involves external resistance and internal reconciliation alike.

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