

Motherless Child Childless Mother

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Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the training requirements

C. G. Jung Institut, Zürich

Summer Semester 2014

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Dancing with a Symbol

I want to take a risk. Rather than play it safe, I want to get “up close and personal.” I want to get “in the mix” with a symbol that is pregnant with meaning for me. When I ask myself, “What symbol is the most relevant for you?” an African American spiritual comes to mind, “Motherless Child.” Silently, I sing the song to myself. I mull over the phrase, “Sometimes I feel like a motherless child.” Then I invert the words: “childless mother.” I flip them like a coin, “motherless child, childless mother; motherless child, childless mother.” This is a pair of opposites; two sides of *a symbolic* reality. “You can’t write a paper on something that personal!!!” I say arguing with myself. “That is too charged, too personal, too close to home!” “OK I won’t.” I say, agreeing with my inner naysayer, “I’ll play it safe.”

My naysayer and I make up our minds to write about a different symbol: the moon shadow. This new symbol is like an old file hanging in the back of my desk drawer. Moon shadow is like a forgotten essay. Since I was in graduate school it calls to me. “write me up.” At that time, I was completely immersed in the scholarship of Marija Gimbutas. She compellingly argues that the present understanding of symbols is solar-based, but that symbolic meaning evolved out of pre-Homeric cultures. These earlier cultures were informed by lunar- and chthonic-based symbolic systems. When I look at

Jung's model of the psyche through the lens of the Gimbutas' lexicon, I see the ego not only as being like the sun, but also as being like the moon. If the moon periodically casts a shadow (that is when the night is dark enough, when the moon's light is bright enough) is there an analogous phenomenon in the psyche?

This idea of a moon-shadow can be amplified by a Hindu ritual dedicated to the goddess, Latchme. Believed to be the Mother of the Universe, Latchme brings wealth, spiritual and material prosperity, light, wisdom, generosity, and courage. Once a year, on the brightest autumn night -- when the moon actually casts a shadow -- She is celebrated. In this ritual Latchme and her owl -- who is understood as representing penetrating sight and intelligence -- descend to earth. She is worshiped as the giver of vital life-sustaining energy. Are there moments in the psyche when the ego's "moon light" is so bright that it casts a shadow? Does it illuminate the archetypal landscape undergirding our personal consciousness? Like the Hindu ritual that celebrates Latchme, does the psychological significance of such moments bring a sense of well being to the soul? "Interesting questions." I say to myself. "And it's safe." My naysayer says. We agree.

Months go by. I don't read or write or even muse on the moon shadow. The whole time I feel as if I'm avoiding my too-charged-too-personal-too-close-to-home symbol. The longer I stay away from it the more it seems to haunt me. Everywhere I turn I see an expression of it.

Fixed in front of the computer, staring at the screen, I type into the search bar: "motherless child childless mother." I hit on a web site and read: "Spiritually each of us is a motherless child. Spiritually each of us was born into a religious culture where for the

last 3,000 years or so God as been pictured nearly exclusively as a Divine Father.”¹ On another web site I watch a litany of videos showing performers of all stripes singing “Sometimes I feel like a motherless child.”² I learn the origin of the song -- it dates back to a time in the US when slave children were taken from their mothers and sold.

Looking out the window beyond the computer, I see the farm where I live. This is our little piece of paradise, sandy loam, rich Arkansas delta, where slaves once labored to raise cotton. I wonder if there were slave children born here that were taken from their mothers and sold. Are their dead souls hanging around? Is their affect in *terror* – in the spirit of this place? My attention floats through the window back out to the farm and lands on our family milk cow, Columbine. Does her life story embody a motherless child childless mother reality? She was born and then immediately was taken from her mother. When she gave birth to her own calf, immediately it was taken from her. This was her reality, until she came to our farm. With a symbolizing attitude I ask myself, “Maude, do you have a corresponding inner reality?”

I decide I’m so far afield I might as well go rogue, do something else, and come back to my symbol paper later. Going in a completely different direction, I read *The Hidden Messages in Water*. In this 2004 book, Japanese author and entrepreneur Masaru Emoto introduces his revolutionary hypothesis: water molecules are affected by human consciousness, feelings and music. By photographing crystal formations of water, he was able to show how water is “imprinted” with information. After reading Emoto’s book, I

¹ Rev. Holt, Ricky. *The Divine Mother*. Editor’s Choice. Adishakti P. n.d. Web. 12 October. 2009.

² Soulflypie. *Odetta Sings “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child”*. Youtube. 30 Dec. 2008. Web. 12 Oct. 2009. KathrynE59. *Motherless Child.wmv*. Youtube. N.p. 9 May 2010. Web. 17 May 2010.

thought about Columbine as a motherless child and childless mother. I wondered if her experience of being separated from her mother – as well as the experience of all commercial dairy calves -- is making an imprint on the watery composition of milk? And if it is, is it also making an imprint on the people who drink milk, put cream in their coffee or eat cheese? Is *motherless child childless mother* hidden in our concrete reality and also in the depths of the collective unconscious?

I feel like I am too “up close and personal,” drowning “in the mix,” swirling round and round this dual symbol. *Massa confusa*, I finally mentioned my dilemma to a colleague -- an analyst-in-training and friend. I thought she would relate. She doesn't have any children; her mother's deceased; she lives alone. Thankfully, she doesn't *analyze* me. All she says is, “Aha.” Later she sends me a message. From the cool distance of an email she writes, “Your symbol really resonated with me. After we spoke, while making dinner, I started singing all by myself in the kitchen ... sometimes I feel like a motherless child!” *Her* warm response gave *me* the courage to surrender to my original impulse. I file my moon shadow symbol back in the drawer from whence it came. Time to write about *motherless child childless mother*: a symbol that is both pregnant with meaning for me, and resonate for a friend.

The symbol's origin and evolution.

Nature offers many ways to look at *motherless child childless mother*. The archetypal foundation of the symbol finds a parallel expression in the instinctual lives of female animals. An event that happened on our farm is a case in point. A few days ago, while doing my daily drive round the pasture where the water buffalo graze, I see

Big Mama by herself off in the distance. We call her Big Mama cause she weighs about 1600 pounds. One of her enormous horns curls around so tight that the tip cuts into the back of her neck. Big Mama is ornery. As I approach her I see something dark, low to the ground that might be ... and it is ... a newborn calf ... still wet! “This thing can’t be more than a few hours old!” I say to myself. I pull in close. I don’t want to spook Big Mama, so I stay inside my car. The calf stands up and looks at me. On the jet-black hair around its lips are tiny white bubbles, the remains of first milk. Hanging down between its legs is a moist and translucent blood red umbilical cord. Suddenly Big Mama darts between us. She paws the ground with her front hoof, flicks her head, and then looks at me as if to say, “If you get of the car I’ll kill you.” I know what to do – I leave them alone. I drive back home. A few days later, on the lawn by our house, I find the remains of Big Mama’s calf. A severed head is lying on its side. No milk on its lips. Flies land on an open unblinking eye. It’s painfully clear -- despite Big Mama’s size and ferocious nature coyotes got this calf.

Since the dawn of time, analogous events have happened to women and their children. Before the 20th Century infant and maternal mortality rates were much higher than they are today. Dangers of all kinds changed mother-and-child into motherless child or childless mother. Examining the cult objects our distant ancestors made in response to the experience of the loss of a mother or a child casts the archetypal pattern of *motherless child childless mother* into bas-relief.

The pioneering work of Lithuanian-American archaeologist Marija Gimbutas is relevant in this investigation. Like French philologist Jean-François Champollion, who in 1822 deciphered the Rosetta Stone, Gimbutas assembled, classified, and descriptively

interpreted nearly 2000 artifacts (from early Neolithic sites in Europe), unlocking the meaning of the mythology of a previously undocumented era. She created a glossary of pictorial motifs and on that basis established the “main lines and themes of a religion.”³ The Great Goddess of this primordial religion can be perceived in contrast to the 3rd Century BC God of the Old Testament. In Genesis God tells Adam, “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust and to dust you shall return” (3:19). In the Neolithic religion, the earth from which all creatures rise is not dust -- it’s alive as the Goddess-Creator herself! The whole universe and every living thing within it is part of Her divinity. This religion’s iconography arose in reflection and veneration of the laws of Nature. And so did the original cult objects and ritual artifacts relating to *motherless child childless mother*.

By using an interdisciplinary approach, that included folk beliefs, linguistics, and mythology, Gimbutas established four distinct themes of this goddess-centered religion: Life Giving, Renewing and Eternal Earth, Death and Regeneration, Energy and Unfolding, (1989, 2006). Cult objects and other material related to *motherless child childless mother* are found in the Death and Regeneration theme. According to Gimbutas, this theme is associated with the winter season and its iconography reflects the belief “that out of every death new life grows” (p 185). In this theme images of death are combined with symbols of regeneration that accentuate the “interplay of the life- and death-giving functions in” the Goddess-Creator divinity (xxii). Gimbutas describes the Goddess’s purpose in Death and Regeneration as “*the promoter* of the beginning of the life cycle” (185) italics mine. Etymologically the word regeneration originates in the

³ Campbell p xiii Forward to Language of the Goddess

Latin word *regeneratus*, (created again) and means to be morally or spiritually reborn.⁴ These characteristics and ideas -- the interplay of a life- and death-giving religious function, the promotion of the beginning of a new life cycle and spiritual rebirth -- give the archetype undergirding *motherless child childless mother* its distinct contextual foundation.

To differentiate the symbols' specifics from its foundation, I have identified six particular references within Death and Regeneration, specifically related to *motherless child childless mother*. The first three examples are associated with birds, the cuckoo, the vulture and the owl, and they show the symbol's nascent characteristics.

In Neolithic times people looked at the cuckoo's behavior and saw it terms of their religion. To them the cuckoo was an epiphany of the Goddess. According to Gimbutas, the religious beliefs of antiquity are still "alive" in folk beliefs. A folk belief related to *motherless child childless mother* is found in the Lithuanian and Latvian folksongs that refer to the cuckoo as the incarnation of the dead mother. In nature, the bird's behavior is relevant to *motherless child childless mother* because cuckoos are brood parasites. They lay a single egg in the nest of some other bird, and decline to rear their own young. The young cuckoo is naturally greedy. It either ejects the other eggs in the nest or it monopolizes the food brought to the nest by the foster mother. While the young cuckoo grows fat and sleek, the foster mother can fall victim to the cuckoo's

⁴ As I researched this I learned the English word for death relates to the German word, tot -- 'dead.' Tot is also an English word -- it's British slang for 'bone.' It is derived from the word totter. Totters, of 19th century Britain, were men who walked through city streets collecting rags, bones, and other refuse to resell. They were the junkmen champions of recycling. In Britain people say "tot" for total, a word that originates in the Latin word *totum* -- 'the whole.' But *tot* also refers to a small child. In light of my symbol *motherless child childless mother*, I found it anecdotally interesting the word *tot* in English and German links the concept of death with bone, wholeness, and child.

voracious appetite. The calls of the cuckoo are not learned; they are innate. Seasonally the call of the European or Common Cuckoo extends from a minor third, to a major third to a fourth. The major third is the same interval as the beginning melody of “Motherless Child.”

The cuckoo’s relationship to *motherless child childless mother* is evident in its nesting behavior. The cuckoo’s associations indicate formative aspects of the symbol. They suggest *motherless child childless mother* is simultaneously a manifestation of a dead mother (or child) and an epiphany arising from the interplay of the life- and death-function of a larger religious whole. The cuckoo’s characteristics further suggest the symbol’s relationship to the promotion of the beginning of a new life cycle and spiritual rebirth is accompanied by a life seeking hunger and perhaps even musical sounds.

Also belonging to *motherless child childless mother* are images that link the concepts of vulture to death and mother. This connection is evident in the artwork on the shrine walls at Çatal Hüyük, an early proto-city settlement site that thrived around 7000 BC in southern Anatolia. The link between vulture and death is clear in a fresco on the east wall of a shrine in Level VIII, 8 -- large red vultures are depicted swooping down on headless lifeless bodies. The link between mother and vulture is clear in shrine V1 B 10. Modeled in relief on the wall are a pair of human breasts. Inside the breast, a complete vulture skull is hidden. Vulture beaks emerge through the nipples. Linguistically the mother-vulture link is echoed in the Egyptian vulture hieroglyph which means “mother” and the word “vulture” for Siberian Yakuts equals “mother.”

The vulture-death-mother relationship is also clear in a Neolithic burial custom: corpses had to be reduced to bare bone before they were brought to the tombs or placed

in the earth. The dead were placed where the Goddess in her grisly epiphany as a vulture could eat the flesh of the deceased. With a significant percentage of women and children dying in childbirth it is not hard to imagine the common occurrence of vultures eating the bodies of dead mothers and children down to the bone. The vulture's relationship to *motherless child childless mother* originates in this scenario and points to the symbol's grim but necessary place in the cyclical mystery of life.

The vulture's behavior and characteristics are also relevant to *motherless child childless mother*. As scavenger birds, vultures walk on the dead they are eating. The uric acid in their urine kills the accumulated toxic putrid bacteria on their legs and talons. They gorge themselves until their craw bulges and then sit in a torpid state to digest their food. Because their stomach acid is especially corrosive, vultures can digest putrefied bacteria in infected carcasses that would be lethal to other scavengers. The vulturistic aspect of the symbol suggests that in addition to the symbol's quality of ravenous hunger, there is a pull towards a dormant state and the ability to metaphorically "digest" what is putrid and life-threatening.

As the territory of the Large Black Vulture does not go farther north than southern Europe, the vulture's association with death is assumed in Neolithic iconography by the owl. The death-owl connection is seen in the Egyptian hieroglyph for death -- the owl. Unlike vultures who scavenge carcasses during the day, owls have a killer instinct and a keen night vision which allows them to find their prey in the dark. Owls are known as "raptors" a term derived from the Latin word *rapere* which means to seize or take by force. In spite of their gloomy character, folklore accredits owls with wisdom, prophetic powers and the ability to ward off evil.

The relationship of the owl to *motherless child childless mother* can be seen in a cult object discovered in a Neolithic burial site in NE France: a phalange (a long bone) was inlaid with black round shell pieces to create dark owl-like eyes on the white bone. This amulet was found next to the skeleton of a three or four year old child.⁵ Its placement in the gravesite suggests it was there to protect the soul of the deceased. This owl related cult object amplifies *motherless child childless mother* with elements of “knowing” and “soul protection” along with stealthy night-seeing and sudden killer characteristics. Another characteristic of the owl is its ability to fly quietly. The unique structure of owl wings reduces flight noise down to a level below the hearing range of most of their prey. This owl characteristic implies *motherless child childless mother* has a sound component to it that is not heard by the physical ear.

In addition to these avian examples from Death and Regeneration, I have identified three other examples related to *motherless child childless mother*: a Balkan folk figure known as Ragana, a Maltese Proverb, and a historic ritual site in Malta built in the shape an egg. These last three examples shed light on the symbol’s paradoxical nature. The Lithuanian witch Ragana has owl characteristics. Linguistically her name is related to the verb, *regeti* which means to see, to foresee and to know. Ragana’s killer instinct is active in the summer when plants are thriving. In this abundant season, Ragana stops plant growth; she ties the ears of rye into knots, she plucks pea blossoms and ... she kills newborn babies. According to Gimbutas, Ragana’s death-dealing aspect balances life’s energy so that the powers of life and fertility don’t last forever. Ragana is a reminder that

⁵ The practice of carving a bone and placing it in a gravesite is one of the earliest manifestations of ritual -- dating from the period between 100, 000 and 40, 000 BC! Gimbutas, 1989, p. 196.

Nature herself is mortal -- there is no life without death. Ragana's baby killing activities and her role as a balancer of life's energy reveal analogous aspects in *motherless child childless mother*. Too much religious emphasis on mother and child needs to be equilibrated by its opposite.

There is a Maltese proverb related to the symbol: "a woman's grave is open from the day she has conceived till the fortieth day after her deliverance." In this folk tradition it is believed the first forty days of the baby's life are extremely dangerous because wicked witches, known as Zagas, kill newborn babies. Or they exchange them for their own ugly "changelings." The Zagas must be appeased by sacrificing a hen and preparing a special chicken-meal for the mother. The placenta is analogous to the Zagas and the midwife must perform a ritual to obliterate all traces of it/her. As she buries the placenta, she says, "It is not thee I am burying O afterbirth, it is the Zagas."

This ritual aims to both arrest and reverse the death-dealing powers of the Zagas and ensure the newborn's smooth transition to infancy. Similarly, in Neolithic times after vultures ate the stillborn baby's flesh, its skeleton was buried under the house to protect the living from the forces of death. The Zagas proverb and ritual suggest a dual nature within *motherless child childless mother*: the symbol's killer dynamic arrests the abundance of life's fertility and it balances death's energy so that new life can thrive.

Prehistoric art attests to a belief system that associates the egg with ideas such as becoming, regeneration and recreation -- a belief which is modeled on an ancient idea in which the Goddess/world is annually recreated. The underground egg-shaped chambers at the Hypogeum of Hal Saflieni in Malta are a sacred site that reveals the egg's connection with *motherless child childless mother*. This underground temple and tomb is

not simply a necropolis for the dead; it is a place of sacred mysteries concerning dying and rebirth. Amongst other pilgrims who sought renewal, barren women wanting to be pregnant came and slept in these egg shaped chambers. Strengthened by the contact with divine chthonic powers and the priestess' acoustic divination -- whether they became pregnant or not -- the women were born anew. This ritual event including the pilgrimage to the site, crossing the threshold into the egg shaped chamber, the sacred ceremony, and sleeping near the dead reveals in *motherless child childless mother* the intense searching, yearning or profound attempt to find to renewal.

The construct below outlines the symbol's various associations.

**Motherless Child Childless Mother
Death and Regeneration Epiphany of the Great Goddess Archetype**

Context	Characteristic	Paradoxical Nature
Life- and death-giving religious function	Grim but necessary part of the life cycle	Knowing, soul protection mixed with killer instinct
The promoter of the beginning of a new life cycle	Life seeking hunger/ musical sound (third)	Sounds not heard by physical ear/ stop over abundance of fertility - balance death so life can thrive
Moral or Spiritual Rebirth	Pull towards dormant state/ ability to digest life threatening material	Searching, yearning, attempting to find renewal in place of death

**Motherless Child Childless Mother Archetype
Needed to balance Mother and Child Archetype**

As the goddess-centered matriarchy was replaced by a patriarchal culture there was a shift in the way in which people understood the divine mystery of the cosmos. The

image of the Goddess went through a profound and debasing transformation. Around 5300 BC the belief in a world as a living body of a Goddess-Mother Creator slowly but inevitably vanished as the mythologies of the Sumerians and Indo-European tribes (Celts, Slavs, Greeks and Scythians) emerged. What was once venerated and holy became meaningless and profane. As the burgeoning patriarchal cultures emerged they ushered in a pantheon of gods and goddesses that reflected the social ideals, laws, and political aims of the societies from which they arose. The archetypal pattern underlying *motherless child childless mother* slipped from human consciousness and its original context and associated meanings vanished.

However, themes from the primordial religion were “alive” in people’s collective unconscious and projected onto the male-dominated pantheistic narratives. Although the new motifs were influenced by the Great Goddess religion the context and meaning of Her nature changed. The mythology related to Sumerian goddess Ninlil is a prime example. In an early myth, she is portrayed as an “Above World” goddess. But she does not appear as an empowered self-generating Great Goddess Creatrix. Ninlil, consort to her husband Enlil, is raped and ravaged by her husband. Enlil is banished to the Underworld as punishment for his transgression. Ninlil joins him. After her death, she becomes Lady of the Wind. Etymologically Ninlil evolved into the Akkadian Lil-itu, nocturnal disease bearing wind demons.

Similarly, the motifs and personifications associated with *motherless child childless mother* underwent a profound and debasing transformation. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, Lilith comes to mind. Perhaps as a vestige of the Great Goddess in her epiphany as the night-seeing bird of prey, Lilith’s name means “screech owl.” As

Adam's first wife, Lilith refused to capitulate to his demands to be the dominant sexual partner. She cursed him and "flew" away saying, "I was created only to cause sickness to infants."⁶ In Greek mythology there is Lamia a Libyan queen who mated with Zeus. After Zeus abandoned Lamia, Hera stole her children. The grieving queen took revenge by stealing other women's children.

The original associations and context of *motherless child childless mother* is mixed with a narrative in the Old Testament -- the story of Rachel. For many years after her marriage to Jacob, Rachel remained childless. Without a child, her status as wife was ambiguous. Infertility meant the loss of an inheritance as well as social and financial ruin. Eventually Rachel gave birth to her son Joseph. When in labor with her second child Benjamin, Rachel died leaving two motherless children. Like the Great Goddess whose purpose through Death and Regeneration was to promote the beginning of a new life cycle, after her death, Rachel became the spiritual matriarch of the Jewish people -- her sons helped to father the 12 tribes of Israel. And like the barren women who traveled to the Hypogeum of Hal Saflieni, barren women today make a pilgrimage to Rachel's Tomb.

Beyond the western tradition, aspects of *motherless child childless mother* can be seen in the Japanese divinity Bodhisattva Mizuko Jizo. Although not her traditional role, in modern Japan Jizō has become the venerated guardian of unborn, aborted, miscarried, and stillborn babies. The Shinto-Buddhist ritual Myzuko Kuyō is dedicated to Jizō. It began in the Edo Period (between 1603 and 1868) when famine-stricken people resorted

⁶ Wikipedia. *Lilith*. Wikimedia n.d. Web. 12 May. 2010. The authors cite their source as *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, an anonymous medieval text attributed to Ben Sira and part of the fifth response to Nebuchanezzar.

to infanticide and abortion. Today couples travel to the Jozo-ji Temple in Tokyo to make offerings to Jizō so she can help relieve parental grief or guilt as well as to ask for the protection of the soul of their deceased child. A similar practice, known as Yingling Gongyong, is practiced in Taiwan. In this ritual women pray to appease the ghosts of their aborted fetuses.

Because we collectively inherit the ancient context and associations related to *motherless child childless mother* the archetypal pattern is imprinted *in illo tempore*⁷ on the bedrock layer (the psychoid level) of our psyches. The same pattern extends out into the culture. Examples of *motherless child childless mother* can be seen in literature and film: John Steinbeck's 1939 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Grapes of Wrath*; the 2013 motion picture *Philomena* starring Judi Dench and Steve Coogan.

Aspects of the symbol are manifested through Steinbeck's character, Rose of Sharon Joad Rivers. Throughout the novel she's pregnant. Although she has a loving mother, Ma Joad, metaphorically speaking Rose of Sharon, is a motherless child. Further she becomes a childless mother. A member of the Joad family, she travels west during the Dust Bowl along with other "Okies" in search of work, roots and a new life. The Joad family faces a series of misfortunes so that Rose of Sharon lacks the much needed nourishment and nutrition to support her pregnancy. When "her time" comes she doesn't even have any real shelter to deliver her baby. With Ma and Mrs. Wainwright by her side, Rose of Sharon gives birth to a stillborn child: "On a newspaper lay a blue shriveled little mummy. ... Never breathed, said Mrs. Wainwright softly. Never was alive."

The dead baby is laid down in an apple-crate coffin. Rather than bury it, Uncle John takes the stillborn to a roadside stream. Here, Rose of Sharon's first-born is released

⁷ I draw the term *in illo tempore* from Mircea Eliade who defines it as mythic time.

into the water. Recalling the biblical story of newborn Moses floating down the Nile in a basket, Steinbeck has Uncle John say, “Go down an’ tell ‘em. Go down in the street an’ rot an’ tell ‘em that way.” In this scene *motherless child childless mother* is featured in a religious context. Steinbeck refers to the ancient belief, out of every death new life grows, and foreshadows its presence in the next scene. The Joads seek shelter in a barn where they discover a young boy whose his father is starving to death. The boy says, “He needs soup or milk.” In final lines of his novel, Steinbeck eloquently portrays the moral or spiritual rebirth aspect of *motherless child childless mother*:

“Hush,” said Ma. She looked at Pa and Uncle John standing helplessly gazing at the sick man. She looked at Rose of Sharon huddled in the comfort. Ma’s eyes passed Rose of Sharon’s eyes, and then came back to them. And the two women looked deep into each other. The girl’s breath came short and gasping.

She said “Yes.”

Ma smiled. “I knowed you would. I knowed!” She looked down at her hands, tight-locked in her lap. Rose of Sharon whispered, “Will–will you all — go out?” The rain whisked lightly on the roof. Ma leaned forward and with her palm she brushed the tousled hair back from her daughter’s forehead, and she kissed her on the forehead. Ma got up quickly. “Come on, you fellas,” she called. “You come out in the toolshed.”

[...] For a minute Rose of Sharon sat still in the whispering barn. Then she hoisted her tired body up and drew the comfort about her. She moved slowly to the corner and stood looking down at the wasted face, into the wide, frightened eyes. Then slowly she lay down beside him. He shook his head slowly from side to side. Rose of Sharon loosened one side of the blanket and bared her breast. “You got to,” she said. She squirmed closer and pulled his head close. “There!” she said. “There.” Her hand moved behind his head and supported it. Her fingers moved gently in his hair. She looked up and across the barn, and her lips came together and smiled mysteriously.

While Steinbeck drew on real events to write his fiction, the motion picture *Philomena* is based on a true story. Philomena Lee, a motherless young girl in Ireland, gets pregnant as the result of a teenage tryst. Her father sends her to live in the Sean Ross

Abbey. While giving birth to her son Anthony, Philomena almost dies. For three and half years mother and son live in the Abbey. Philomena is allowed limited contact with her son. One day her little boy is unexpectedly given up for adoption.

Philomena keeps her lost child a secret for fifty years. Through a twist of fate she is introduced to Martin Sixsmith a journalist who decides to help her find Anthony in exchange for the publishing rights to her story. They begin their search back at the Abbey. A young nun tells them, "There are no records." Martin wanders outside into an overgrown weed filled cemetery. There he finds the graves of teenage girls and their stillborn children.

The search takes them to America where they find out Anthony died 8 years earlier. Philomena learns that Anthony flew to Ireland in search of his birth mother. Sister Hildegard, a nun who witnessed the birth and adoption, told Anthony that the Abbey has no records of his mother. They also learn that Anthony's ashes are buried in the Abbey's graveyard. When they return to Ireland, Martin accuses Sister Hildegard of being un-Christian. The elderly nun says Philomena had to lose her son as penance for her sin. Philomena asks only to visit Anthony's grave. Although enraged, Martin feels protective of Philomena and decides not to publish the story. Philomena tells him to publish it: "People should know what happened here."

There are many ancient characteristics of *motherless child childless mother* apparent in the movie. The film's setting in the Abbey suggests the symbol's religious origin now fused with patriarchal Irish Catholic values. The yearning characteristic of the symbol is apparent in Anthony and Philomena's unfulfilled longing. The scene with

Martin in the graveyard shows the dual nature of *Motherless child childless mother* along with *mother and child*.

Deep in the psyche, buried underneath layers of patriarchal mythologies, social and religious doctrines, *motherless child childless mother* lives in its original form next to *mother and child*. Whereas the sacredness of the *mother and child* image has evolved to the present day in the form The Virgin and Child, images of *motherless child childless mother* are, like Philomena, for the most part degraded or at best profane. The original religious context of the symbol was as a grim and necessary part of the Great Goddess whole-universe construct. Along with other disregarded images, severing the *motherless child childless mother* image from the Goddess correlates to the archetypal fracturing of the feminine in the psyche. The psychological effects of this phenomenon have been expressed by English-born analyst Irene Claremont de Castillejo:

The deeply buried feminine in us whose concern is the unbroken connection of all growing things is in passionate revolt against the stultifying, life-destroying, anonymous machine of the civilization we have built. She is consumed by an inner rage which is buried in a layer of the unconscious often too deep for us to recognize (p.42).

Becoming conscious of the divine nature of the *motherless child childless mother* is the first step towards accessing the power of the symbol.

Motherless child childless mother: a symbol in the psyche

The psyche is a self-regulating system and symbols are part of this autonomous dynamic. Symbols are unconscious contents making their way towards consciousness "... to elucidate, by a more or less apt analogy, something that is still entirely unknown or still in the process of formation" (Jung, 1953/1977, p. 291). The unconscious produces a

symbol to regulate and bring the psyche into a state of wholeness. When aspects of consciousness become split off or divided from the unconscious, perhaps as a result of a trauma or wounding, it creates an inner conflict -- neurosis. In the attempt to heal the neurotic condition the psyche produces a symbol and therein lies its value: symbols are the antidote for neurosis.

In her examination of the feminine in fairy tales, Marie-Louis von Franz discusses “motherless child” and “childless mother” motifs. She draws a thread between these motifs, stages of life in women’s development, and the intra-psychoic ego-Self relationship. In the first half of life, von Franz suggests the *motherless child* motif refers to that time when young woman can no longer be identified with her mother. She has “the task of finding her own femininity in her own form,” and this “entails going through all the difficulties of finding it” (1972/1993, p.167). If during this time the woman’s feminine ego doesn’t meet the challenge neurotic symptoms will emerge. These symptoms may include: a chronic or acute sense of emptiness; feelings of abandonment or being loveless; an existential hunger confused with physical hunger; an ever-present longing for protection mingled with feelings of persecution; and a sense of lack regarding the foundation of her existence.

In the second half of life, von Franz states the *childless mother* motif indicates “that the connection with the creative earth of the psyche has been broken” and that “a gulf lies between the values and ideas of collective consciousness and the dark, fertile loam of the unconscious” (1970/1996, p.165). If a woman’s ego has developed by assuming the values of the collective to the point where it no longer connects with her own psyche’s base, she becomes psychologically sterile. Her task is to reconnect with her

creative origin. If she doesn't meet this challenge in the second half of life neurotic symptoms will emerge as: feelings of having lived a wasted life; a terror that one's personal originality and potential wholeness will never be lived; the feeling that one's ability for self care is eternally thwarted; a denial of the instinct to nurture and care for someone else; the endless search for meaning; and the anxiety and horror of an anticipated solitary death.

How does a symbol like *motherless child childless mother* heal such dire and far-reaching symptoms? In answer, I circle back now to my original impulse to sing "Motherless Child." As stated above, this religious folk song dates back to the era of American slavery. At that time, in the southern states, it was common practice to sell slave children away from their mothers. However, beyond this socio-political setting, the song's lyrics resonate with anyone who feels abandoned, empty, or loveless. Ironically, singing or listening to "Motherless Child" has a healing effect! The repetition of the word "sometimes" implies a glimmer of hope -- it implies that sometimes I do feel nurtured and found.

Motherless child childless mother symptoms are prominent themes in Blues music. Jungian analyst William Willeford examines the Blues through the lens of depth psychology. He maintains the Blues helps to connect the ego with the "fertile loam of the unconscious." In this way the Blues, which grew out of traditional African American spirituals, may amplify the healing dynamics of the symbol. Willeford claims the Blues are an "extraordinary development in the education of the heart" and he describes the Blues in terms of the mother-infant dyad (p. 244). He says "the mother's feeling relationship with her infant is the basis of further developments of feeling, which at the

deepest level are concerned with survival.” Because the Blues explore “such themes as what it is like to be on the ‘killing floor,’” Willeford maintains the Blues draw us back to this early infantile level of feeling and serve “the interrelated functions of “detaching us” from the pain of abandonment while simultaneously “keeping us in touch with it” (p.249). This dynamic of *detaching from* and *keeping in touch with* is what Willeford calls “ironic detachment.” It demands a “reorientation of the ego” (p. 249). It stimulates the ego to reach beyond the rational limits of consciousness in order to make contact with the deep archetypal layers of the unconscious. Through ironic detachment one gains access to something that has been painfully trapped by the limited intellectual framework of language. In this way the Blues enhances “the grounding of ego in self” (p. 257). It becomes “possible to grieve -- to know grief -- with a detachment that holds sorrow open to joy” (p. 258).

Motherless child childless mother: writing as a means to access its healing value

Symbols have the ability to help consciousness detach from the pain of symptoms while keeping in touch with them. As symbols emerge from the unconscious they are co-mingled with the psyche’s transcendent function. It is the transcendent that heals the inner conflict. Exploring the intimate relationship between the creative process, symbol formation and the psyche’s transcendent function has been for me, a lifelong passion. As part of my investigation of *motherless child childless mother*, I have written three personal essays related to this dual symbol and am including them in this paper. They are “From Woodstock to Walmart,” “You Can’t Let It Define You” and “Thirty-Six Hours in

Zurich.” Like singing “Motherless Child,” personal essay writing is a way I access the symbol’s healing dynamic. The first essay describes a time in my life when aspects of the symbol burst into my consciousness. The second essay recalls a moment when I realized I was forming my identity around being childless. The final essay describes the ways in which I worked with the motif of childlessness through active imagination and how my psyche responded to the motif with a dream.

From Woodstock to Walmart

Yearning for adventure my girlfriend and I stand by the side of the highway, “hitchin’ a ride ... hitchin’ a ride.” We’re both wearing hip hugger bellbottom jeans. I have on a pink paisley shirt. Whatever shirt she is wearing escapes my memory. It is 1970 and we are all about the triple-LP, Music From the Original Soundtrack and More: Woodstock album. A van stops. I am simultaneously terrified and thrilled. “Who’s in there?” I think to myself. In the front seat, there are two guys smoking pot. In the back of the van there are not seats just a mattress. While I stand mute, my friend asks, “Can you give us a ride to the mall?” Pretending not to be nervous or anxious I climb into the back. The door shuts. Suddenly the idea of hitchhiking doesn’t seem so good. “What if something happens?” I am on a mattress and anything really could happen. I hear a familiar song coming from the radio. It’s from the Woodstock album. Ritchie Haven sings, “Sometimes I feel like a motherless child, Sometimes I feel like a motherless child.” Silently, I sit on the mattress and let the music resonate in that empty place inside of me. Although I’m twelve years old, I’ve known this emptiness for centuries.

Thirty-eight years later I pull into the parking lot, spot a space far away from the front door, ease in and park. We both get out of the Honda. My legally blind, eighty-three year old mother and I begin walking towards Walmart. Feeling the pain of planter's fascia, she walks slowly, gingerly and slightly behind me. Wanting to protect her from something unseen beneath her feet, I grasp her hand. Snugly, I hold my mother's hand in mine. Keeping a keen eye on the traffic, I check out the Dodge that pulls into our lane, and parks in a spot close to the front doors. A woman steps out of the car. She is instantly followed by three children who jump out of back seat, thump onto the parking lot, then hop and skip their way across the asphalt. With unbounded energy they buzz around mother. After a few steps, the mother takes the hand of the oldest girl, then says to the other two "hold hands." They take each other's hands then mother takes the hand of the middle child. In my imagination they have done this many times. I watch mother negotiate the walk between her car and the doors to Walmart with three children. They quickly pass my mother and me. We exchange a glance. In that moment, we have an unspoken communication. We smile at each other with a knowing look as if to say – "we are the same." Suddenly the difference between us pierces my being. She is a mother with children. I am mothering my mother. I am a childless mother.

You Can't Let It Define You

My cousin Shufie has taken it upon herself to be the "matriarch of the family." It's Thanksgiving Day. We are gathered together at her house for our yearly reunion. Three generations of us: my parents, sister, aunts, uncles, cousins, their spouses and all their

growing children, my husband and me. I'm standing in the buffet line holding an empty plate. Shufie cuts the line. "You don't mind if I butt in do you Maude? She says, serving spoon in hand, "My girls helped me with a new recipe; sweet potatoes baked in brown sugar and Bourbon." Cami, my cousin John's wife, stands next to me. I flash back to that telephone conversation we had right after she gave birth to her third child, Grace Stryker. "Maude, this time I felt so powerful. The hospital had a shower right in the birthing room. At one point I was standing naked in the shower looking at the water stream onto my enormous belly. A nurse came in to check my blood pressure. I just stayed in the shower and stuck my arm out of the curtain and let her do her thing while I did mine. ... Maude you can do it. Don't give up."

Today, a gapping distance replaces the closeness of our phone conversation. In my mind I judge Cami – she looks utterly worn out, older and maybe thirty pounds heavier than when she married John. Yet I feel a strangely in awe of her – she looks more real than before, womanly and fully adult. She breaks the silent ice between us with a question, "How's it going at the fertility clinic?" I hold back my tears, I want her to comfort me – I want someone to comfort me – to "mother" me, to feel close to me as I share my secret barren reality. But I don't. I shrug my shoulders, cover the pain with a smile, I spoon some sweet potatoes onto my plate and say, "It just didn't work. I'll never have children," "Hey," she says while piling sweet potatoes on her plate "you can't let it define you. Think of all the things you can do now."

Thirty-Six Hours in Zurich

It happened after a lecture -- Active Imagination and the Process of Initiation in the Underworld. At 10:00 the presenter, Vicente Luis de Moura, began his power point demonstration on Jung's Vision Seminars. My colleagues and I saw fantastic images created by Jung's analysand Christiana Morgan, and heard his interpretation of them. We also learned about her life. Morgan was a wealthy woman married to a disabled WWI vet and the mother of a young son. We learned that she was Jung's "star" analysand. Jung used her visions as the basis upon which to organize and display his method. We then learned how the rhythm between them started to get out of sync. Jung wanted her to develop a deeper connection with her feminine side and have another child. She didn't want to. Back in America, she collaborated with her lover Henry Murray at Harvard University. Together they created the Thematic Apperception Test. When Murray's wife died, he told Christiana that he was leaving her and going to marry much younger woman. Subsequently, Christiana committed suicide. "We have a few more minutes," de Moura says, "I'd like you to experience active imagination. Close your eyes and count backwards from ten. Descend imaginary stairs to a door. Open it and with a curious attitude let the inner scene unfold." ... After a few minutes, counting forward from one to ten he says, "Wiggle your fingers and toes. Come back into the room." The atmosphere was so thick you could cut it with the knife. "We have a few minutes left for questions," says de Moura. After a few polite ones, several students danced around the question, "If Jung's technique of active imagination is so curative and if his "star" analysand gave herself so fully to it, then why was her life and death such a tragedy?" Without raising her hand a woman student to my left stands up. Emotions buoyed her words. In my best memory she said "Perhaps we have to understand

Christiana Morgan as a brilliant woman whose life was deeply affected by the men who viewed her through the prejudices and blindness of their culture and time.”

It's four o'clock. The lecture is over.

Five hours later, alone in my bed, I'm still stirred up. But I've made up my mind I'm going to do it -- active imagination. I want answers, or guidance or something from my unconscious around the issue of having a baby ... adopting a baby ... or understanding why I don't had a baby. I'll take any guidance I can get so long as it shows me the road to a baby. I count backwards. "Ten." In my mind I step down on an old stone step. "Nine." I take another step. ... In front of me I see a medieval wooden door. Ivy leaves grow sparsely around its stone arched frame ... "One! I put my hand on the iron handle. I pull hard. Light streams in from the other side. I walk into the scene. The world is green and alive. On a table in front of me is a treasure chest. I am thrilled. I approach the chest and strain to lift the heavy lid. It's filled full of gold! "Oh! Thank you God." I exhale. A skeleton appears. "This is not what I wanted at all. I've got to get out of here. Wiggle, Maude, wiggle your fingers and toes." I say to myself. "One, two ... " I open my eyes. Back in my room, my room in Zurich.

The next morning I check my e-mail. There is something in my inbox from the clinic in India: the "womb for rent" surrogacy, in vitro fertilization deep discount clinic in Mumbai that is spawning a womb renting industry in India. How synchronistic! They were supposed to get back to me weeks ago.

About an hour and a half later I meet a friend of a friend. She is there to greet me as I step off the tram at Bellevue. We walk around the medieval part of Zurich. Strolling along the Limmat River, she says, "There is a special place I want to take you, the

cloisters in the Grossmünster.” Next thing I know I’m standing in a monastery surrounded by the columns with Romanesque capitals. “Look” she said, “on every pillar is a gargoyle ... each one is different. This is really one of the special places in Zurich... You see” she says pointing toward, “there is the ‘baby eater’.”

“The wha ...?” I say to myself. My focus shifts up to the corner. There is a gargoyle with a wide-open mouth in the process of devouring a baby. A little baby buttock and two legs are dangle down. I flashed back to that time I saw my dog Norton eat a baby rabbit. Half of the rabbit’s body was deep down his throat the tail and two legs were dangling from clutches of his jaw. “No. Norton. No!!!” I yell running to pull the little bunny back to life. But I was too late!

Back in the cloister I realize I am late. “I’ve got to catch a 1:31 train.”

Upon arriving at the Institute I run into my new “Jung friend.” She looks at my face and says, “Are you all right? Do you want to sit down and talk?” On a park bench, in the shady corner of the garden, I tell her “what’s up.” And then “it” happened. I tell her my secret, the secret I have around motherhood that gnaws at me in the night. She tears up and gives me an eternal hug. She told me some secrets too. She had been in a miserable marriage, finally left her husband, now she’s on the receiving end of her daughter’s rage. “So you see,” she says as her face lights up, “there’s guilt either way.” Just in time, we both started to giggle.

“We better get in there” I say. “Are you taking 2 o’clock lecture? I think it’s, Narcissism ... and Family Dynamics.”

That night in my room I was still stirring with the baby issue. I go online and look on the web site of that womb-for-rent fertility clinic. On a video stream I see the joy of a

male couple whose baby was created at the clinic. The proud parents sit on a couch, one is holding the newborn and a voice-over explains the process. I click on Fees and Expenses. The cost: \$35,000, “a bargain compared with the cost of the same procedure in the West: \$75,000 -100,000.”

A few minutes later, alone in my bed, I make up my mind, “I’m going do it.” Active imagination. I begin the descent. “Ten, Nine ...” Again I see the arched doorway. Again I open the door. This time the world inside is grey and barren. Wind blows. On the ground, I see several bones. They are the bones of yesterday’s skeleton. There is nothing more for me to see. I count from one to ten again. I open my eyes. That night I have a dream. I am at The School of Life with Lakshme. In reality, The School of Life is an ashram on East West Highway in Washington D.C. Lakshme, formally Lynnette, is a principle spiritual authority at the center. They purchase biodynamic rice from my farm and resell it through their business. Early in her life, Lynnette gave up the custody of her son. Now Lakshme teaches natural childbirth within the spiritual and physical context of yoga. In the dream we are standing together in the parking lot in front of the center’s Spiritual Food for the New Millennium building. Lakshme looks at me and says “Maude you don’t need to go to India, there are children right here in the US.”

At 4:00 in the morning -- I wake up!

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