The Body of the Prison

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines a number of historical, mythical and theological interpretations of women and the female body, as perceived by the ancient Greeks and by the religious writings of Christianity and Judaism, as a means of addressing the site, program, materiality and spatial organization of a maternity prison. The setting up of a parallel spatial, material, and metaphoric association between the productive body of the mother and the edifying body of the prison aims to make palpable in architectural form the transitional internal experience of women through their pregnancy and into motherhood. Themes of sin, punishment, confinement (containment), and redemption as related to women, drawn from the misogynistic connotations imposed by associations with mythical and allegorical figures, are used to form critical spatial, symbolic and literal design relationships between the female body and the body of the prison.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Ancient Greek poet Hesiod, in his works *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, vividly speaks of the creation of the first woman, Pandora, as an occurrence of evil brought to man. Disguised as a gift from the Gods of Olympus, the first woman was, in truth, a punishment, with the only side benefit of using her body for procreation.

Hesiod's writings on the woman's origins give a remarkable insight into the way women – their activities, customs and way of life – were perceived in ancient Greece. Isolated within the precincts of the houses, women's main function was the capability to bear children. Woman's fertility was often associated with mortality as an unintended ending to each cycle of new life. Biblical references and a variety of customs in numerous cultures maintained and maintain apodictic notions of female inferiority. The female body was often considered synonymous with sin because occurrences of menstrual blood and the pain during childbirth were habitually seen as a deserved penance. Some cultural practices frequently required females to be segregated from society, often in confinement as supplementary punishment.

Professor of Western European Middle Ages, Caroline Walker Bynum, in a collection of seven essays entitled *Fragmentation and Redemption*, reveals that during the Medieval period, ideas connecting women and their "femaleness" to the Christian symbolic figures of the Church, Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary were witnessed with extraordinary frequency. These significant links allowed women to redefine their status, previously based on the negative associations to Eve's sin, as motherly symbols of

humanity and nurture. In this context, motherhood becomes a way for transcending the impressions imposed on women by the historical notions of female inferiority.

Visually elaborating on the theme of women in Greek mythology and Christianity are Gustav Klimt's paintings entitled *Danae*, *Hope*, and *Three Ages of Woman*. These three works allude to the established oppositions of woman/child, mother/sexual object, and life/death, conveyed by the historical texts of ancient Greece and religious Christian writing. Furthermore these paintings disseminate these dualities in combining them into the depictions of the women. The compositional analysis of Klimt's work together with the analysis of the Pantheon and the Mamertine Prison as built structures symbolically associated with the female body, re-introduces the notion of punishment, containment and redemption of women within an architectural context.

Based on the historic texts of Ancient Greece and the medieval misogynistic beliefs of the female sin as emerging from the female body itself, and drawing from the opposition between the female body being contained and becoming a container once impregnated, this thesis aims to architecturally develop the idea of a maternity prison.

2.0 THE BODY

2.1 THE FEMALE BODY AND ITS CRIME

The notion of female inferiority, physiologically, ontologically and functionally, has shaped both the male and the female sense of self, and persistently this notion of inferiority exists to this day. The female body itself, its physical composition and functions, continue a direct relationship with an insistence of segregating and isolating women from society. Apart from being able to bear children, the other fundamental function by which the female body is different from the male is its inherent biological cycles of menstruation. Although fundamental in human procreation, the phenomenon of menstrual cycles remains an issue of taboo in many cultures and is rarely openly discussed even to this day. In his *Natural History* (c. 77 A.D.), the Roman writer, Pliny went to a great descriptive length to speak about the ill singularities related to eumenorrhea:

Contact with it [menstrual blood] turns new wine sour, crops touched by it become barren, grafts die, seed in gardens are dried up, the fruit of trees falls off, the edge of steel and the gleam of ivory are dulled, hives of bees die, even bronze and iron are at once seized by rust, and a horrible smell fills the air; to taste it drives dogs mad and infects their bites with an incurable poison.... Even that very tiny creature the ant is said to be sensitive to it and throws away grains of corn that taste of it and does not touch them again.¹

It is believed that such negative opinions were mainly enforced by men, who by understanding that this mysterious phenomenon is connected with the cycles of the moon feared such cosmic power in the apparent control of a member of their own species.

¹ Pliny, *Natural History*. trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), Vol. II, book 7, p.549.

American writer Bruno Bettelheim suggested that childbearing and menstruation were once a source of envy to men, who as result imposed taboos in an attempt to equalize the sexes.² In many primitive societies, the menstruating woman was excluded from the most ordinary life of her tribe for four or five days every month. Unable to plant, harvest, cook, associate with her husband, or wander freely around the village, the woman went instead to the menstrual hut, a cramped dwelling of leaves and bark, set at some distance from the village. There a menstruating woman might, depending upon her culture, be required to undergo purifying practices or stay confined in solitude until her release, imprisoned as punishment for being born a woman.

Among the cultures practicing such customs of female segregation were the Romans. In ancient Roman culture special structures were erected to house the Roman women, where they would spend a few days each month away from their husbands and children. There is speculation that the Pantheon was once meant to be one of the buildings with that purpose. Considering that the function of the building remains a mystery, some building elements make clear references to the female body (see plate 1). The common perception of the Pantheon as a temple to all the gods is only largely due to its name (from the Greek *pan*: all; and *theios*: of a god)³, but in many ways it eludes this definition. Due to unusual for temple elements such as its inscription, its geometry and size, the Pantheon is unlikely to have been a temple in the traditional sense of the term, and rather finds its formal and structural parallels in the typology of imperial baths.⁴ The main space and its form evoke references to the womb through its use of circular

²Janice Delaney, Mary Jane Lupton and Emily Toth. The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation (New York: Mentor Books, 1977), p. 6.

³ Mark Wilson Jones, Principles of Roman Architecture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p.179.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.179.

geometry and single point illumination, emphasizing interiority. Moreover, it seems significant that the building is set on the axis from the baths of Agrippa to the Mausoleum of Augustus, the latter suggesting death, asserting the symbolism of life and death and its relationship to women and the female body in the Classical belief.⁵ Some references are also found in the number and structural symbolism. The coffering of the cupola is divided into twenty-eight parts, the same number as that of the columns and pilasters belonging to the main order (fig. 1). Although it is generally believed that twenty-eight implies the celestial theme and that this was a rough approximation to the number of days in the lunar cycle, the number seems more exact when related to the female menstrual cycle. The oculus, the round opening in the center of the dome, illuminated the space from above. It cast a ray of light onto the interior surfaces as a vision of a rotating full moon, internalizing the human experience within, creating a separate world for the confined, condensing it into the enclosed space of the building (fig. 2). The absence of windows at a lower level was also very important as being denied visual contact with surrounding buildings puts the visitor (the female) in a realm removed from everyday reality,⁶ which was necessary for the women who were to spend the time confined in seclusion.

Though the Pantheon no longer functions as menstrual building, some religious customs today still emphasize isolation of menstruating women from their families. This is exemplified in Jewish culture. In Judaism *niddah* means “separation” and “seclusion” and refers to the woman who is menstruating and who has been separated for a specified

⁵ Note: the symbolism of life and death and its relationship to women and the female body in the Classical belief is discussed in more detail further in this chapter on p. 16.

⁶ Wilson Jones, Principles of Roman Architecture, p.183.

period after her menstrual flow has ended.⁷ It is a symbolic process, which refers to the menstrual flow, the seven-day period of purification, and the ritual bath *mikveh*. On the one hand, as menstrual blood is natural for the woman it is considered to be an expression and symbol of the feminine essence and signifies the potential of conception, the construction of the Jewish household and the continuity of the Jewish people⁸. On the other, the religious laws are enforced since menstruation is regarded as a potential danger to a husband who may become ill if he comes in contact with this blood and thus *mikveh* is the means of preventing menstruation from “soiling” the husband and making him ill. In this case as well, this bodily process, which is strongly connected to one’s identity as a female, is held in a way, which creates connotations of men being the norm and women being the exception.

Niddah is considered to be one of the three “women’s commandments,” religious acts associated with women. Some works from the Yiddish *musar*, or ethical literature, openly discuss the subject of women’s bodies, the biblical story of Eve and the commandments, paying special attention to menstruation as symbolic of the relationship of later women to Eve’s sin and her punishment. They make both the three women’s *mizvot* (commandments) and the women’s post-Edenic physiology emblematic of punishment for Eve’s sin.⁹ In one of such works, *Sefer mitsvas ha-noshim* (c. 1577), rabbi Benjamin Aaron Solnik retells the tale of Eve’s sin in the Garden of Eden and develops the view that Eve’s sin understood as the causing of Adam’s death and that menstruation is seen as part of God’s punishment for her:

⁷ Howard Eilberg-Schwartz. People of the Body: Jews and Judaism From an Embodied Perspective (Albany, NY: State University Press, 1992), p.309.

⁸ *ibid.*, p.317.

⁹ *ibid.*, p.103.

.... Therefore the woman must also...suffer torment and misfortune. And therefore she must have her period every month, and must fast once or twice [a month], so that she will always remember her sin and remain in a constant state of repentance. Just as a murderer continuously does, who must all his days fast once or twice a month, so that he will think about repentance, and regret his sin, so must the woman do as well. Every month she immerses herself in the ritual bath, so that she will remember her sins, and be pious. Therefore, it is fitting for her to recite the prayers for a repentant sinner.... (Solnik 1602:4a)

According to this passage, women's very bodies give evidence against them of being murderers once a month. The implication also seems to be that because of Eve's sin, all women are "naturally" more sinful than men, and need, therefore, the monthly reminder of their sins that the observance of *niddah* provides.¹⁰ In his text, Solnik collapses all women into Eve by affirming: "Women, with their apple eating, brought death to the world, and with their piety...they can bring about the end of death...Thus has the Lord God spoken; may it come to pass speedily and in our days, ...amen" (Solnik 1602:39b).

The biblical story of Eve could be seen as the root of the misogynist image of the woman, a symbol of female sinfulness that is to be redeemed by enduring punishment. But the theme of punishment as it relates to women is also present in the Greek Mythology. For the Greeks, however, rather than being punished, the first woman, Pandora, *was* the punishment, a "soulless creature"¹¹ created to plague mankind, as she is described by Hesiod, an early Greek poet and rhapsode.

Hesiod tells the story of Pandora in two separate works: *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. In *Theogony*, the myth of Pandora begins long before her creation, with the punishment of Prometheus, as a result of a cruel game of tricks between him and Zeus. As he is used to having the upper hand, Zeus has Hephaestus, the artisan god, fabricate the first woman, a "beautiful evil": Pandora. In *Works and Days*, Hesiod reveals that

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.104.

¹¹ Paul Diel. *Symbolism in Greek Mythology: Human Desire and Its Transformations* (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 209.

Pandora was actually made as a gift to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus, a disguised evil who “devised anguishing miseries for men”¹² as she opened the box (although more precisely it was probably a vessel more resembling a jar) and let out all the ills known to mankind only leaving hope inside. Thus the woman was created “as an evil for men and conspirers in troublesome works”¹³. In *Theogony*, at the end of the passage, Hesiod explains that the gods have balanced the evils personified in woman with the good, which was her ability to bear children, providing a necessity for a man, for marriage and begetting children, if he was to avoid suffering in his old age and vanishing without a trace after his death. Hesiod points out that the name Pandora stands for “the Gift of All” as she is the bearer of gifts from all the gods on mount Olympus. There is speculation that the meaning of her name is twofold. Above all, as wife and mother, woman is herself also a giver of gifts, because she produces children from her belly and gives them nurture.¹⁴ Despite differences in detail and intent, the two versions of Pandora’s story, have been taken as complements of one another, two halves of a single extended narrative that mutually illuminate the double-sided question of the origin of woman and woman as origin.

The notion of Pandora’s box brings up themes of containment and containers, which are closely associated with the women of ancient Greece. Boxes, chests, jars and other forms of containers occupy a place that seemed important in a woman’s world. Often depicted on vase paintings surrounding women, these objects not only identified female activities but also the symbolic values connected with these activities. The box in

¹² Hesiod. *The Poems of Hesiod*. Trans. R. M. Frazer. “Works and Days.” (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), line 95.

¹³ Ibid., “Theogony,” line 600.

¹⁴ Ellen D. Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 50.

the case of Pandora is meant to symbolize the woman herself, as she is the container full of all things evil with her “lies and wheedling words and the treacherous ways of a thief¹⁵”. By opening the box she unleashes the miseries upon men, yet hope is still left within. Hope is seen as her god-given ability to give birth. With regards to childbearing, the woman becomes the container in the most literal sense. The theme of containment is persistently implied in the relationship of women and living space, as they are not only surrounded by containers, becoming containers but are also contained themselves.

In ancient Greece little girls grew up and spent most of their time in the women’s quarters of the house called the *gynaikon*. The *gynaikon* was the quintessential female space, and women were closely identified with the concept of enclosure that it represented. Hesiod’s view of Pandora as the “great plague” for mankind, shameless and deceitful resonates with how the Greeks saw women in general. It is known from the Hippocratic writing that the ancient Greeks considered the uterus the source of most of women’s physical and emotional ills¹⁶. The word “hysteria” literally comes from the Greek derivation of the word “womb”. Both menstruation and childbirth carried overtones of contamination; after childbirth, a house was considered to be polluted for three days or more¹⁷. Women were thought to be without the ability to control themselves or withstand outside influences due to their biological and physiological makeup such as emotions, since emotions were considered to be external forces. There was considerable apprehension in Greek thought that, should her true nature remain unconstrained or become unleashed, a woman would wreak colossal damage on society.¹⁸

¹⁵ Hesiod, “Works and Days,” line 78.

¹⁶ Reeder, *Pandora*, p.25.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.26.

As a result of this kind of mentality girls received little formal education and were married very young. As wives, they were insulated in the women's quarters of the houses and directed to conceal their bodies behind voluminous folds.¹⁹

The themes of childbearing, punishment and containment are closely related in the context of other female figures besides Pandora in Greek mythology as well (more often than not in that specific order). To discuss these themes in this particular context, it is useful to bring forth two other mythical tales with a female figure at the center of each: the story of Metis and the story of Danae.

The mythical goddess Metis, as described by Hesiod, was the first wife of Zeus. Through an oracle Zeus was told that Metis would give birth to two powerful children, one of which was to eventually overthrow him and take over his title of King of Gods. And when the time came for Metis to bear Zeus the first child, to prevent her from giving birth, he used his beguiling ways on her and swallowed her whole. Metis then, in her pregnant state, found herself contained inside Zeus's body.

The story of Danae is told by a Greek scholar Apollodorus (c. 1st century B.C.). According to him, Akrisios, King of Argos, to prevent his daughter's inevitable impregnation, has left Danae confined in a tower where no man would be able to access her, as an oracle informed him that his daughter was destined to bear a son who would kill him. When Zeus became aware of Danae, he visited her in the form of a shower of golden rain, which was able to penetrate the roof of her cell and impregnated her.

In both mythical cases, the women were punished ahead of time for acts of potential death caused by their future children, which were yet to happen. These stories, along with Pandora's, are vivid illustrations of the relationship of the female figure and

¹⁹ *ibid.*

her physical role to the imposed act of being confined as a result of it. This suppression of woman's fertility is a way of overlooking the value of her experience in childbirth, her suffering and travail.

After Danae gave birth to Perseus, her father locked up both of them in a chest, which was intended to be her tomb since it was meant to sink in the sea. The dual connotations of enclosures signifying both life and death are pervasive in Greek thought.²⁰ A woman's gift of life was always simultaneously viewed as a gift of mortality, because birth marked the beginning of a life cycle that would inevitably end in death. In Greek myth, it is the role of the mother to tell her child that he will die. Moreover, by Greek tradition, it was women who ushered the deceased out of the world through a funerary ritual marked by anguished cries analogous to those that accompanied childbirth.²¹

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 267.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 195.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

2.2 REDEMPTION

Surprisingly enough, the Greek mythology left such an impression on the human imagination that Christianity has adapted a number of legends to its own purposes. In the twelfth century, the allegorical interpretation of myths was already well established in the service of Christian moral teachings. With regards to Danae, for example, in the context of Christianity, she became a symbol of modesty, and the tower that protected her virtue represented Chastity²². Danae's immaculate conception even served as a parallel to the Virgin Mary in the *Moralized Ovid* (1328)²³, an anonymous medieval interpretation of Ovid's Classical mythological poem *Metamorphoses* (c. 1 A.D.) In fact, religious writings of the Middle Ages present an interesting perspective on how women and their bodies were perceived in Christianity. According to medieval priest and theologian Aquinas, childbearing was the sole reason for women's creation, as for any other task a man would have made a better helpmate.²⁴ The image of a woman being a man's helper, his subordinate, largely came from the tale of Adam's rib – the biblical creation of a woman – and permitted for Christianity to view women as the afterthought of God for she was not made in the divine image of Him. In the late medieval period, however, considerable changes occur in the religious opinions of women. Medieval history writer and professor Caroline Walker Bynum explains some of the notions associated with stories and symbols related to women and female roles, in the context of this

²² Madlyn Millner Kahr, "Danae: Virtuous, Voluptuous, Venal Woman." *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 60, No. 1. (Mar., 1978), p. 44.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p. 186.

investigation into the thematic of female punishment and redemption, in her text *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*. Three main aspects are revealed by religious writings of the Middle Ages. The first, being a noticeable change in the general attitude towards the role of the female, which appears in the late medieval period. The second is female piety and its manifestations in relationship to the body. And the third, being the emergence of particular religious symbolic associations of Christ as female and the notion of his motherhood in connection to women.

The misogynist beliefs are found to be very common and obvious in the Christian writing of the Middle Ages. The first woman in Christianity, Eve, was considered to be a symbol of sinfulness and sexuality on the part of the female, and that association has accompanied woman since her creation. However, the late Middle Ages was a period when a large number of medieval female writers came forth using female imagery and voicing characteristically female concerns. Though they spoke of themselves more as human than as females, their writings, countered by the male interpretations, allow to draw parallels between a dualistic perception of female roles with regards to Christianity. In the period from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, in contrast to the early Middle Ages, positive female figures and feminine metaphors took a significant place in spirituality alongside both positive male figures and misogynist images of women.²⁵ This medieval “women’s movement”²⁶ manifested in many different ways: devotion to the Virgin Mary and to women saints has considerably increased; there was a significant and sudden rise in the number of female saints; witnessed were occasions of heretical

²⁵ Walker Bynum, Caroline. *Fragmentation and Redemption: essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 152.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 61.

movements claiming female clergy or a female god. Furthermore, female erotic experience, childbirth and marriage became major metaphors for spiritual advance, for service of neighbor and for union with the divine.²⁷ What becomes noteworthy in this case is that in actuality, it was not so much women who were responsible for such sharp changes. Women did not feel the need to counter the stereotype of woman as “fleshly, weak, irrational and disorderly.”²⁸ In fact, religious women seemed to have given surprisingly little noticeable attention to their assumed incapacity. A careful and comparative reading of texts by male and female authors from the twelfth to the fifteenth century suggests that it is men who develop conceptions of gender, whereas women develop conceptions of humanity.²⁹ Bynum argues that women’s stories are less frequently told as stories of crisis and change (which is a predominant theme in male writings), and women writers seem less interested in stories of conversion than in stories of constant and courageous suffering. And suffering came to be one of the main expressions of female piety in the Middle Ages.

Though female influence in Christian piety was increasing, women remained outsiders and their piety would often express itself not in a form considered characteristically institutional, but rather largely outside the authority of the church. As the, typically of the period, synonymous Church and the clergy were deemed to be predominantly male, women chose to remain as “quasi-religious”³⁰ and express their devotion through prayer and handicraft or social service in the homes of fathers, husbands or friends. Another characteristic of female piety was what is referred to as

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 152.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 154.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 156.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 63.

“penitential asceticism”³¹, particularly in the practice of food deprivation, self-inflicted suffering and interpretation of illness as religious experience with the understanding that the result of such experiences is both beneficial to neighbor and a path to God.³²

Statistical studies of saints show that such phenomena are rarely if at all have been reported of male saints, but happen rather frequently among the women of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Some visionary women prayed for disease as a gift from God and many made physical and mental anguish an opportunity for their own salvation and that of others, as sickness and suffering were sometimes seen by medieval people as conditions “to be endured” rather than “cured”, which is especially true with regards to women.³³ There is reason to believe that conditions that would be seen as “illnesses” were given different meanings depending on whether they occurred in male or female bodies. Bynum refers to the hagiographer Pierre-Andre Sigal when claiming that his studies (showing that females made up the smallest percentage of the miraculous cures behind men, children and adolescents) suggest that the society found it more valuable to cure one sex than the other and that endurance of a condition of illness without supernatural amelioration was considered more appropriate to women. Nevertheless, the tendency of women to ‘somatize’ religious experiences and give them positive significance was their means of reaching God.

Even though the late Middle Ages were a time of proliferation of female presence in Christianity, it would be inaccurate to state that women in that period have gained much authority with regards to the Church. And though women themselves did not intend on seeking to define themselves as gender, they did however gain attention as

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 60.

³² *ibid.*, p. 73.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 188-189.

females in the expressions of their spirituality. The extreme measures undertaken in attaining God might raise an argument that women *had* to manifest their religious experiences because they did not have clerical office as an authorization for speaking.³⁴ This argument begins to describe the premise that the fanatical acts of devotion on the part of women in the Middle Ages are a reaction to imposed on them inferiority and characterizations of being 'weak' and 'unreasonable'. Indeed, male appropriation of the notion of woman as weak sometimes became a claim to superior lowliness.³⁵ The German mystic of the late medieval period, Suso has occasionally suggested that the tears and suffering of real women were whining, whereas men's austerities were imitation of Christ.³⁶ Women themselves, however, rarely spoke of female weakness as a bar to theological expression or religious practice. Yet their display of devotion often took forms of such tremendous suffering that it is arguable that their self-inflicted pain, as a means to reach the divine, was a way of simultaneously punishing themselves for being the inferior sex and an attempt at redeeming themselves in the eyes of God. Historians Donald Weinstein and Rudolf M. Bell point out that male saints tended to see sin as a response to an external stimulus, but by contrast, in the lives of female saints, sin "usually appears to arise from the depths of woman herself."³⁷ These kinds of studies show that female sin was considered to be bodily or sexual, emerging from woman's body itself. As such allegations were a typical socio-cultural phenomenon of that male-dominated period, it was only normal for women to feel the need to want to redeem themselves and they manifested that through the means they knew best: their bodies.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 195.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 166.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 167.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 177.

Women theologians of the later Middle Ages, such as Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen, saw the woman as the symbol of humanity, where humanity was understood as physicality.³⁸ To Hildegard of Bingen, Christ's humanity was to Christ's divinity as woman is to man, and *mulier* (woman) represented humankind, fallen in Eve, restored in *ecclesia* (Church) and Maria. In fact, the association of women with body and flesh largely comes from the association of woman with the body or the humanity of Christ. This is partly because, as Christ had no human father, his body came entirely from Mary and was therefore closely associated with the female flesh. A number of medieval texts at times depicted the body of Christ himself as female. This partly comes from the notion of the Church being an allegorical personification of the body of Christ. Thus, Church was depicted in medieval art as a woman – sometimes as Christ's bride, sometimes as a nursing mother.³⁹ Some texts talk about Jesus as a mother, referring to the notions of God's care and nurture for souls. Julian of Norwich comments on the topic of Jesus-as-mother by saying that holy Church is our mother because she cares and nurtures us and that the Virgin Mary is even more our mother because she bears Christ, But Christ is mother most of all:

So our Lady is our mother, in whom we are all enclosed and born of her in Christ, for she who is mother of our Savior is mother of all who are saved in our Savior; and our Savior is our true mother, in whom we are endlessly born and out of whom we shall never come.⁴⁰

Bynum explains that the image of motherhood of Christ expressed three aspects of Christian belief about Christ's role in the economy of salvation. First, Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, which generated redemption, was described as a mother giving birth;

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 177.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴⁰ Julian of Norwich. *Showings*. Trans. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), long text, ch. 57, p. 292.

second, Christ's love for the soul was seen as the unquestioning pity and tenderness of a mother for her child; third, Christ's feeding of the soul with himself (his body and blood) in the Eucharist was described as a mother nursing her baby.⁴¹ But Julian of Norwich has taken it upon herself to fully develop a theology of motherhood as creation and redemption. To her, the motherhood expressed in Christ was closely related to our physical humanity in the mother's love as well as discipline towards her child. She writes:

The mother can give her child to suck of her milk, but our precious Mother Jesus can feed us with himself, and does, most courteously and most tenderly, with the blessed sacrament, which is the precious food of true life.... The mother can lay her child tenderly to breast, but our tender Mother Jesus can lead us easily into his blessed breast through his sweet open side, and show us there a part of the godhead.... And always as the child grows in age and in stature, [the mother] acts differently, but she does not change her love. And when it is even older, she allows it to be chastised to destroy its faults, so as to make the child receive virtues and grace.⁴²

From the beginning of Christianity woman and her body has been seen as an image of lowliness, outcast and punished for her own being, often punishing herself, at once struggling to defy the notion of her own inferiority by giving herself to religion. In the late Middle Ages the Church, the Virgin Mary and Christ himself became interchangeable symbols of humanity and nurturing, with which women could identify and draw analogies between God's motherhood and their own. The exclusive relationship thus formed between women and the divine allowed for a release from the misogynist ideals as the suffering they endured brought upon their ultimate redemption.

⁴¹ Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p. 158.

⁴² Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, long text, ch. 60, p. 298-299.

2.2 WOMEN OF KLIMT

The themes of sin and punishment of woman, as viewed by the Greeks and in Christianity, develop the idea of woman as weak, wicked and deceitful. In childbirth, her purpose is redefined as she becomes a nurturing mother, yet at the same time, through creating life, she is a symbol of its inevitable passing. Three paintings made by the late 19th century Viennese painter Gustav Klimt can help develop the proposed interpretation further.

Though also known for his depictions of landscapes, Klimt's work was predominantly concerned with painting women and the female body. He also often turned to the female figures in mythology and allegorical themes for his subjects. Klimt's pictures of females suggest a view of woman located somewhere between 'mother of God', 'femme fatale' and sexual object.⁴³ The depiction of his *Danae* (1907-8, fig. 3), *Hope* (1903, fig. 4) and *Three Ages of Woman* (1905, fig. 5) resonates with the themes of containment and the Greeks' attitude towards women as symbols of both life and death, also bringing forth references regarding key female figures in Christianity such as Eve and the Virgin Mary. These paintings also visually set up a very specific to women timeline: the time of conception, pregnancy and becoming a mother.

Klimt's *Danae* (fig. 3) is his interpretation of the mythical Danae (see section 2.1, p. 15) in the act of receiving Zeus as the rain of gold. Here, Klimt portrays her as erotic and seductive, even in her sleep. He is clever in his representation of this woman being

⁴³ Susanna Partsch, *Klimt: Life and Work* (Germering, Germany: I.P. International Publishing, 1999), p. 254.

confined. Her body is constricted to movement, curled up in a fetal pose, enveloped by soft layers of fabric and other textures. The framing of Danae's figure and the composition of her surroundings produce a womb-like feeling, as if she is still an infant waiting to be born. The child-to-woman duality is carefully apparent in this work as we see Danae simultaneously sexually inviting and innocent. Witnessed here is the act of conception, the momentary event of Danae's transition into womanhood. Nevertheless, in her passivity most apparent in this work is her sexuality, revealed through her body language and the expression of pleasure on her face. Though at times compared to the Virgin Mary, Klimt's *Danae* is portrayed as a sexual object, invitingly presenting her body to the viewer, which in this case carries Christian references to the "seductive, available Eve"⁴⁴ as described by European art critic and professor Angelica Baumer.

In Klimt's painting entitled *Hope* (fig. 4), the image of the pregnant woman dominates the composition of the painting. Translated from German, the title of *Hope* slightly loses its ambiguity. *Hoffnung* is a word which recalls the phrase in *gutter Hoffnung*, meaning 'expecting'⁴⁵, which is a more direct reference to the pregnant female who is the focus of the work. The painting shows her completely unclothed. Behind the woman's figure is a curtain-like strip of blue with gold motif suggesting the hope that is associated with the birth of a child, and at the same time protecting the unborn from the figures of sickness and death that lurk in the background. Here Klimt touches on the relationship of life and death as the woman bears both in her belly, according to the Greeks (see section 2.1, p. 16). The woman's face, however, is turned away from the monsters as she confronts the viewer with a challenging gaze, fearlessly. Over the years,

⁴⁴ Angelica Baumer, *Gustav Klimt: Women*. Trans. Ewald Osers (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1987), p. 12.

⁴⁵ Frank Whitford, *Klimt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), p. 167.

this picture has, for many people, become the “private icon of Madonna-like pregnancy.”⁴⁶ Her motherhood displayed “entirely naked, as living vessel in which the hope of mankind, safe in the warmth of mother’s blood, grows towards the time when it will be raised from mysterious darkness to the light of day.”⁴⁷

The theme of life and death returns in *Three Ages of a Woman* (fig. 5), though not in a grotesque face of a monster, as was the case in *Hope*, but in the aged and dignified figure of the old woman standing above the mother, gracefully surrendering herself to the cycle of life. If Klimt’s depiction of Danae is more comparable with Eve, as a “symbol of female sinfulness and sexuality”⁴⁸, then the way he paints the young mother in *Three Ages* echoes the calm and graceful Virgin Mary. Her face is delicate and her golden hair flows around like a halo as she holds her sleeping child (fig. 6). This detail of the painting is often referred to as “mother and child”, which only supports its symbolic relationship to the Christian figure of the Virgin Mary.

Between *Danae*, *Hope* and *Three Ages of a Woman*, there is a perceptible thread not only in terms of transition from conception to motherhood, but also in the way Klimt lets his woman mature and assert herself into each one her roles, without rigidly defining her as one specific character (child, seductress, mother, old woman, etc.), but allowing her to dwell within her oppositions. The themes of dualities of child/woman, child/sexual object and life/death, as alluded to in first two sections, are diffused in the depictions of the women in Klimt’s work. By blurring the boundaries of single interpretations, his women are no longer isolated, segregated, put away or confined. They are able to exist within the frame of his paintings while still maintaining humanity.

⁴⁶ Partsch, *Klimt*, p. 256.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p. 151.

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

3.0 CONCEPTION

3.1 TYPOLOGY OF CONFINEMENT

Gustav Klimt's paintings, beyond diffusing the binary oppositions associated with the misogynist traditions rooted in women's bodies (as suggested in Greek mythology and religious writings of Christianity and Judaism), offer a symbolic architectural potential for the themes of containment, confinement and redemption, derived from the compositional analysis of his work. The paintings spatially continue the notion of woman-container and woman-contained evolved from the story of Pandora and her "jar" (see section 2.1, p. 12-13). The spatial conditions created for women in Klimt's work begin to develop experiential architectural implications within the context the female body. Graphically, confinement is suggested through harsh dark colors and framing, such as the tightly framed Danae, or the female figure in *Hope*, surrounded by darkness. Texturally, the flowing feel of fabrics and backgrounds, which at times seem almost liquid -- as the blue band in *Hope* appears like a stream of water (fig. 3) -- allude to the softness and comfort of the settings created for these women. Parallel to the experiences of female spaces designed by Klimt, the analysis of the Pantheon in the first chapter (section 2.1, p. 9-10) introduces a more elaborate architectural analogy of the female body as both contained and its container through its geometry and form, as well as the lighting and structural symbolism.

Through establishing associations between women and containment, these spatial manifestations, along with the relationship between female fertility and punishment, discussed in the three mythical stories of Pandora, Danae and Metis, have contributed to define a building typology for this thesis: a maternity prison. Taking the idea of Pandora's box as a symbol for the woman herself, a representation of a sinful female with hope being her fertility, her redemption becomes a metonym for the prison and the women contained within it. The design approach informed by precedents such as the Pantheon, along with experiential spatial qualities found in the paintings of Klimt allow to re-introduce the notions and symbolism of the female body as a container contained through an architectural language specific to the event of childbirth. In this unconventional prison the prisoners are confined within three consecutive phases of the complex: the pre-birth, birth and after-birth. The three stages embody the metamorphic physical experience of pregnancy and giving birth and psychological experience of becoming a mother. These stages also set up as a series of progressing events, guiding the prison experience to become one of a ritual, where the prisoners' bodies are allowed to develop a devoted relationship with the body of the prison itself.

3.2 RITUAL

Pregnancy and birth are an exceptionally transitional female experience: one is no longer “just” a woman, but yet not a mother of this particular baby. In his article *Implications of Menstruation as Liminal State*, anthropologist Bruce W. Derr emphasizes that childbirth in the modern day has become a highly “ritualized” process with its isolation, separation from involvement in work and active social life, attendance by a ritual specialist and a concern for a swift return to normal.⁴⁹ Imprisoned women, however, experience the days of their pregnancy same as all other days of their sentencing: within constraints of the prison routine. For these mothers-to-be the internal transitional state of pregnancy is simultaneously paralleled by the transitional state of social identity upon entering the prison. “You start losing your identity... You lose a sense of what day it is, what date,”⁵⁰ describes a prisoner at the Ohio Reformatory for Women. In such a place the admissions process is considered to be one of the most traumatizing experiences for the female prisoners. An author and journalist Kathryn Watterson, in her book *Women in Prison*, gives a very intimate view of the experiences of newly admitted prisoners as she describes them in detail from a perspective of a child. Examining the prison reality from such a perspective brings forth the intimidation and the intrusiveness, which women suffer as they go through humiliating strip searches and examinations prior to obtaining their new numerical identity.

⁴⁹ Bruce W. Derr, “Implications of Menstruation as Liminal State.” *American Anthropologist* Vol. 84.No. 3 (Sep., 1982) p. 644.

⁵⁰ Kathryn Watterson, *Women in Prison: Inside the Concrete Womb* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), p. 73.

The design strategy to undertake the issue of transition when adjusting to both becoming contained and becoming a container, was to employ the notion of ritual, as a set of actions of symbolic value, forming the basis for the primary functions and regulations determining specific behavior, time and place of the prison architecture. In the context of the late Middle Ages, Caroline Bynum asserts that Christian rituals and symbols were especially important in women's spirituality. She describes the Eucharist as one of such rituals. Previously discussed was the belief that women in the late medieval period, in their devotion, felt a closer connection to Christ in his humanity. To medieval women Christ on the cross was "humanity", in eating and loving that "humanness" one became more fully oneself.⁵¹ The Eucharist, albeit a recapitulation of Christ's execution, was not therefore a symbol of death but of life, birth and nursing. Correspondingly, in its rituality, the Eucharist comforted women as they found it to be a symbol with which they could identify. The approach to design, using the notion of ritual as series of acts and symbols with which women can identify can ease the transitions into motherhood and into their cells.

An undeniable part of the ritual is its structure. It employs a certain number of fixed actions, each one of which transmits a single, more or less definite meaning.⁵² Thus, architecturally, the building is intended to become a kind of ritual frame, structural and symbolic, for assessing the human experiences within, which will guide the women in their pregnancy as they redefine their identity (as child-mother and inmate) through motherhood. Author and lecturer Brian Wicker explains the relationship between ritual and identity in the context of religious society:

⁵¹ Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p. 50.

⁵² Roger Grainger, *The Language of the Rite* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), p.xi.

....A religious society has certain rituals of initiation by which it can cope with the identity crises of its new members. These rituals are of fundamental importance in preserving the stability of the society. But what matters is that they do so by transforming the whole problem of personal identity. To put it very simply: religious initiation is a means by which the social and psychological crisis is turned into positive, creative use.⁵³

Thus, though the prison is not a place for religious women only, by setting up each event as a necessary component in a bigger frame of a ritual, the process of entering the facility and living contained within it, from the *initiation* process onward, gains a symbolic value in the actions of being undressed, examined, washed and finally confined.

Once ritualized, the experience of entering the maternity prison begins to draw certain parallels with the Jewish ritual bath *mikveh* (see section 2.1, p. 11). In *Immersion Therapy*, writer and award-winning journalist, Lynn Harris describes her personal experiences immersing in mikveh. It's a bath used since ancient times by men and women for Jewish rituals of transition. She elaborates that prior to taking the bath she must thoroughly clean herself and be stripped of all clothes and jewelry. This is necessary as in an official mikveh she will need to pass an obligatory inspection before she is able to immerse. The ritual also explicitly regulates how one is to go under the water three times in a very specific way, which if not done properly will not count. She explains:

When you go under, all of you must be submerged, even stray hairs, and no part may touch the sides or bottom. Dunkage therefore requires a fetal position, which is no accident. You float in the water like a baby in the womb, and emerge born anew.⁵⁴

The three mikveh experiences of which Lynn Harris writes are three very different accounts of her appreciation and understanding of the ritual. Following the final mikveh, which takes place in an extremely official mikveh establishment after suffering a

⁵³ Brian Wicker, "Ritual and Culture." *The Roots of Ritual*. Ed. James D. Shaughnessy (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), p. 15.

⁵⁴ Harris, Lynn. "Immersion Therapy." *Nextbook: A New Read on Jewish Culture* (19 Jan. 2006). <<http://www.nextbook.org/cultural/feature.html?id=251>>

miscarriage, she imparts that it gave her a sense of comfort and re-assurance as she became aware of her purpose in being there. This one was to mark the end of her mourning period and the beginning of trying again. Though the formality of the event had evoked feelings of anxiety mostly due to fear of having to be supervised, and nervousness about performing the ritual properly, she insists that it was precisely this formality and the numerous rules which she was to follow that brought her a sense of security in knowing that her prayers would be answered because she did it the right way.

The essential acts of stripping down and being examined resonates with the traditional prison admission. One's willingness to perform these acts is in the established symbolic meaning and the understanding of its purpose.

3.3 THE BUILDING AS BODY

Much like in the ritual bath, the significance of water also becomes an important part of design. Water is an essential element in the way a building functions. In the present context of the prison as a symbol of the female body, the water becomes the blood within the body of the prison.

In Christian writings of the Middle Ages, blood was considered to be the basic bodily fluid and female blood was the fundamental support of human life. Medieval Christianity saw a close relationship between flesh and female by relating Christ's humanity, and correspondingly his body, to women. Medieval writers drew on ancient physiological theory, according to which it was believed that the mother's blood fed the child in the womb and then, transmuted into breast milk, fed the baby outside the womb as well.⁵⁵ Furthermore, in the Middle ages blood started appearing on walls and wafers. Blood miracles such as the miracle of the bleeding host, in which consecrated Eucharistic wafers turn into bleeding flesh, and the miracle of stigmata, in which the bodies of ordinary people suddenly receive and display the various wounds of Christ, proliferated. Such miracles took place primarily in the bodies of the experiences of women.⁵⁶ Thus blood became an increasingly powerful female symbol in late medieval devotion. Moreover, blood is considered to be a bodily fluid most associated with women and a symbol of female fertility with regards to menstruation (section 2.1, p. 8). Thereupon, the symbolic references to blood as most elemental bodily fluid, in the context of the building and its construction with relationship to the body, initiate the concept of water as

⁵⁵ Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p. 100.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 102.

being essential to the vitality of the prison. And as water becomes a constant presence throughout the building, the prisoners, contained within it, become more and more aware of being part of the body of the prison, surrounded by its organs and fluids, living and growing within its walls.

The notion of the female body becoming part of the architecture, its form and its structure, figuratively and literally, rather than just occupying it, is applied in the design of the prison wall. In an effort to redefine the prison wall as a definitive surrounding element in prison design, and to diffuse the boundaries between container and the contained, this project intends to incorporate it into the building, with the prisoners living and moving within it. This idea is evocative of the female immurement described in the ancient Romanian legend about Master Manole.

The legend has it that one day a very wealthy and religious Wallachian prince, the Black Prince, rode with nine masons and their master Manole to find a forgotten decayed wall on the site of which they were to build a church more beautiful than anyone may have seen before. The masons started to work, but whenever they reached to the top, the walls would collapse before they could ever finish it. In a dream Manole had heard a voice from above telling him that a woman must be sacrificed in order for the church to ever be completed. Thus the masons decided to build into the wall the first woman they would lay their eyes upon, and this woman was Manole's wife. Left with no choice, Manole watched his love immerse into the wall he built up brick by brick, as she cried. Some versions of the story reveal that the woman's breasts were left exposed as a symbolic reference of nurture for her two children. Others make no mention of that, but

affirm that a pond or a stream of water, created by the tears of her sorrow, marks the place of her immurement.

Similarly to Klimt's paintings, the legend of Master Manole diffuses the boundary between container and contained, this time, within the context of architecture. Manole's wife is contained within the wall of the church with her body – immured, becoming part of its structure, literally and figuratively – as the element essential to the construction, purpose and beauty of the building.

3.3 CASE STUDY: THE MAMERTINE PRISON

The evocation of conceptions of corporeality in prison design as it relates to the female body and the themes of birth, life, death and rebirth can be observed in, what is considered to be one of the earliest prisons recorded in prison history. The prisons of the ancient world and those of late antiquity have disappeared or fallen into ruin. Like the buildings that once housed them, the sources for the early history of prisons have also been lost, fragmented, or otherwise are difficult to interpret. Although both classical Greece and Rome are reported to have used stone quarries as prisons, and a number of large public prisons existed in Rome, the only place of confinement about which much is known is the Mamertine Prison, also called the Tullianum. This prison is located two levels below the Chapel of the Crucifix situated directly beneath the church of San Giuseppe dei Falegnami, by the Roman Forum at the base of the Capitoline. Its original entrance was made of huge stone blocks. It consists of two chambers, one above the other (fig. 7 and 8). The two levels, already in ancient times were called “carcer” and “tullianum.” Archeological and physical evidence suggests that the tullianum chamber evidently existed before the upper carcer.

The Tullianum is a circular chamber, approximately twenty feet in diameter and less than six feet high, partly excavated from the rock, and partly built of tufa blocks, each layer of masonry projecting a little over that immediately below so as to form a conical vault.⁵⁷ It was probably built originally as a cistern around the still flowing spring in its floor, whence its name, which is derived from the archaic Latin word *tullius*,

⁵⁷ Maurice M Hasset, “Mamertine Prison” The Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. XI (1 Oct., 1910). New Advent <<http://www.nweadvent.org/cathen/09579a.htm>>

which refers to a jet of water.⁵⁸ When the upper chamber was constructed, the top of the cone was probably cut off, and the present roof, consisting of a flat arch of tufa blocks, substituted. The upper chamber is an irregular quadrilateral, it measures approximately twenty-two feet and is sixteen feet high, and contains an inscription recording a restoration made in A.D. 21. The two chambers are at present connected by a stairway, but originally there was no means of communication between them except an opening in the floor of the upper chamber through which the prisoners were lowered. Eventually a passage between the cistern drain and the Cloaca Maxima, one of the world's earliest sewer systems, was constructed, reputedly for flushing out dead bodies. The time of the construction of both chambers is questionable, but it is clear from literary references that both levels already existed by the middle of the Republican period. It is probable that the floor of the Tullianum was at or slightly below ground level when it was built around the 4th century BC and that, after the ground level had risen somewhat, the carcer was built above the truncated Tullianum, also at or near its own contemporary ground level in the 2nd century B.C. The dungeon is roughly a dozen several steps below today's street level.

In the floor of the Tullianum is a well (fig. 9), which, according to the legend, miraculously came into existence. The Mamertine Prison is a Medieval name assigned to the site, while the ancient Romans simply called the site "carcer", which is a Latin term derived from Etruscan and originally meaning an enclosed space, but later almost always referred to this particular structure.⁵⁹ Some sources say that the Tullianum was not a

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

holding prison, as Roman law did not recognize imprisonment as punishment,⁶⁰ while some others speculate that confinement in the lower pit may have been used in lieu of the death penalty.

As one of the first known prisons, the Tullianum presents in itself an interesting case of spatial organization. The geometry and the elements within and around the prison's chambers suggest symbolic references of the female body and the womb. The incurved shape of the lower chamber has always stayed completely dark; the only means of exiting the chamber is the round opening above, all of which recalls subtle references to the Pantheon, the spatial characteristics of which, though at a much bigger scale, also allude to the womb. The chamber retains a physical connection to the drain system and historical connection to a stream or water, as well as the name of the prison referring to that stream, emphasizing the relationship forming between the prisoner and water, paralleling the one between the womb and the fluid surrounding the unborn child. The constraints imposed by such space could have been intended to intensify the prisoners' awareness of their own origin and mortality within the chamber, based on the Classical beliefs that the female body carried within itself symbols of both life and death.

⁶⁰ Norman Bruce Johnston, Forms of Constraint: A History of Prison Architecture (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 7.

Figure 7

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

4.0 DELIVERY

4.1 THE PRISON OF THE BODY

The ritualization of the maternity prison experience is intended to create an awareness of women's purpose of being there and an understanding of their own bodies, through establishing parallel relationships of woman and building as unborn child and mother, as they transition into motherhood. Mikveh, as a ritual of transition, employs within its commandments symbolic references to the notion of a child being reborn. In similar matter the prison itself and the immediate spaces of confinement become symbolic of the female body, allowing for the prisoner during her pregnancy to exist as a child to be born herself within the prison as her container. The relationship between the mother's body and that of the prison is important in creating a means for women to identify themselves with their place of confinement.

To develop these themes the maternity prison complex is comprised of three main typologies: tower, bridge and garden. The three typologies represent three phases corresponding to the three conditions experienced by women within the prison walls: pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood. In its entirety, the prison complex is sunken into the ground thus referencing the genetic connection between woman and earth, as affirmed by Hesiod. According to him, the first woman, Pandora, was made out of clay and water. These two primary elements are combined to form the body of the tower where women are first admitted to begin their stay. Derived from the story of Danae, a

brick tower is conceived as a confinement place where women are meant to spend the remaining months of their pregnancy, punished.

In the myths and stories of female containment discussed previously in the first section, a constant running theme is that of segregation and alienation from society, both physically and symbolically, as part of their punishment. Similarly, the project is located away from the city core of the Ottawa-Gatineau region, hidden at the bottom of the North-West boundary of the Gatineau park, yet within visual reach of the Ottawa river (fig. 10). Chemin de la Montagne is the main road that accesses the site, however the prison complex grounds are sunken deep into the earth, hence it remains isolated and sheltered from the passers-by. A long road leads down into the multi-story tower, which stands above ground, passing under a water reservoir, accessing the building from underneath. This path introduces the notion of water as one of the main elements of the prison, creating figurative references to being submerged under it as the first phase of the ritual. The new prisoners enter the edifice through a narrow passage carved into its main core: an immensely thick circular wall constructed out of brick. This wall, on the levels above ground, becomes an interior wall, thus the path leading to it underground further blurs the physical boundaries of the tower. Entering it through the crevice, from her very first steps into the building, each woman becomes a part of the tower itself, now contained, walking within its walls. The process of admission takes place in separate consecutive rooms along the periphery of the building, all of which connected by a passage within the wall (fig. 11). Each stage of the admission procedure is thus emphasized by the movement of the prisoners out of the enclosure into each separate

room, and then retreating back into the gap within the wall. This ritual-like procession advances along and within the wall until finally women are taken up to their cells.

Just as the woman was fashioned, according to Hesiod, out of clay and water, the body of the prison tower is constructed from brick, assembled in Flemish bond, with water playing a vital role in the function of the building. Properly, the design is intended to emphasize the passage of water through its systems. To make its movement and transformation felt throughout, as it transitions from the lower reservoir up, the method of an ancient water screw, as described by Vitruvius,⁶¹ is used for transporting large quantities of water up the tower (fig. 12). The four cylindrical water screws within the building are conceived of as its organs, with each one of the four spanning three separate levels, yet together still remaining one system. Though originally conceived with the purpose of water distribution, the mechanical floors are also designed with the function specifically pertaining to the women who inhabit the tower. In addition to storing the water to facilitate its movement through the building, water is used to fill swimming pools for the pregnant women on each of these levels. Moreover, a rotating system for the water screws has been designed in a way that the prisoners themselves operate them as part of their exercise (fig. 13). Thus, the women contained within the body of the prison become an essential part of its vital function, animating it, bringing it to life.

The concept of woman contained and woman-container, as previously discussed, is elaborated in the design through creating a metonymical spatial relationship between

⁶¹ Chris Rorres, professor in the Dept. of Math. and Comp. Sci., Drexel University, Philadelphia, in his article "The Turn of the Screw: Optimal Design of an Archimedes Screw," compares the optimal design of the water screw with the one described by Vitruvius and concludes that the output of Vitruvius's screw is fairly close to that of the optimal 8-bladed screw, yet the construction lines associated with its design are much simpler than those that would be needed to construct the optimal screw. Based on the findings of this comparison this project employs the geometry of the screw as described by Vitruvius in chapter VI, book X of the Ten Books on Architecture.

the container (prison tower) and the contained (its prisoner). The facility is designed to hold up to ninety-six women⁶², who would stay within its confines for no longer than sixteen months, the last eight of which the women will spend with their newborn. As each of the eight levels designated for holding cells corresponds to how far along in her pregnancy is each woman, she will not be spending more than one month in each cell. Once admitted, she is taken up to the floor, which is assigned to her according to the length of her pregnancy, and each passing month she is relocated one story below. The state of one's pregnancy takes away the female body's natural cycle of monthly timekeeping. Hence, each monthly relocation is a reminder of the approaching birth, acknowledging the continual change within her body and drawing attention to the growing baby inside. Similarly, the growth of the woman herself within the body of the tower is expressed through the design as each new cell is progressively slightly smaller in dimension (fig. 14).

Drawing inspiration from the formal concepts of the mother's womb, as addressed architecturally in the Pantheon and the Mamertine Prison and visually represented in Klimt's painting of Danae, the space within the cell is framed by the vaulted ceiling. From the vantage point inside the cell, the unusual window opening emphasizes the feeling of interiority. The window is composed of glass panes with tempered sides facing each other, forming a kind of container itself with water flowing in and out as the hours and days go by (fig. 15). The immediate presence of water within the cell is furthermore suggestive of the elements surrounding the fetus inside its mother's womb. Moreover, the movement of water acts as a timekeeping mechanism based on the ancient ideas of

⁶² The number of prison cells is estimated on the basis of statistical data relating to female prison population provided by Stats Canada in the year 2005.

water clocks, slowly filling up the window with each passing hour and receding after mid-day. The tempered glass is used to obscure the view and diffuse the light. Yet as the water fills the roughness of the glass surface allowing for more light to penetrate into the room, the view stays distorted, continuously affirming the boundary of exteriority. In instances, the bricks making up the inner lining of the cell are pulled in and out of its formerly stiff surface to make shelves, niches and different compartments within and out of the walls as to imply the potential of flexibility of this rigid enclosure.

The childbirth phase of the experience takes place in a maternity clinic. Once ready to give birth, the woman is taken out of the prison tower by a ramp leading into a narrow bridge-like structure, which in design is also suggestive of a thick security wall. Conceptually, the clinic is designed to bridge the two conditions of pregnancy and motherhood. Furthermore it manifests the transformation of the notion of the prison wall. In this structure, the prison wall no longer surrounds the grounds of the complex, but rather becomes part of it. No longer oppressing, this wall becomes inhabited (fig. 16a and 16b).

The impression of interiority and the constant theme of containment are emphasized in the movement through this passage as each woman proceeds within this immured corridor. The clinic provides two levels of inhabitable space by having metal beams span across and through the narrow form of the wall supporting the base of each level. Similar to the initial experience of being admitted into the tower, each woman, now ready to give birth, is brought through the pathway within the wall into a series of three consecutive spaces where the event of childbirth takes place: the labour room, the delivery room and the recovery room. The path of water out of the tower, through a

channel connected to one of its pools, follows that of the prisoner by a means of a stream flowing atop the bridge of the clinic. Its current inevitably drains down and out through two circular openings in the structure into a pond marking the place of birth (fig. 17). The gesture is also alluding to the new relationship being formed between the body and the water, now externalized, streaming out of the building, nurturing from the outside.

Overlooking this pond on the North side is the motherhood phase of the prison complex: the garden. The garden phase is conceived as two courtyard buildings connected to each by a bridge linearly continuing from the direction of the maternity clinic. The structure directly adjacent to the clinic is intended to house the mothers and their infants immediately following birth. The second structure, to which they are eventually transferred, is larger but similar in plan with regards to the overall spatial organization. Though the two remain separate buildings, conceptually they can be viewed as one idea throughout the discussion. Each cell looks out onto the courtyard and is designed to accommodate the mother with her child as they are meant to remain together throughout the rest of their stay. The notion of motherhood and mothering is expressed through the relationship between the body of building (mother) and the courtyard garden (child), which it surrounds. The rigid rectangular exterior with only few narrow openings creates a contrast between the entirely open and unsystematic glazed skin, which surrounds the courtyard. Implied here is the idea that once wishing to view out of the prison, the mother no longer cares for the outside, she has now only concern for her child, protecting and always watching. The arbitrary organization of the rooms is intended to reflect the erratic pace of a new life, a non-scripted rhythm of a newborn, which the new mother has to follow (fig. 18). The transition between the

regular and irregular happens within the wall separating the hallway from each room not only formally, but in materiality as well. Though the building is cast in concrete, the rough wood formwork on the interior of each room is left in and treated with a flame torch to achieve a dark surface creating a warm finish.

The garden itself is inhabited by different varieties of vegetation which are cared for throughout the year by the women. These plants and trees absorb organic pollutants, helping to filter the rainwater, which is refined through layers of soil and collected deep underground to be re-used within the building. The roofs surrounding the courtyard are sloped controlling the direction of rainwater to overflow into carefully placed stone basins (also used as seating) draining the water downward. The relationship of interdependency between the garden and the water that feeds it is evocative of the connection created between the female body and the movement of water within the prison tower.

As a reminder of the months of imprisonment inside the tower, a small chapel is erected within the garden of the larger structure. It is a cylindrical brick structure, in form reminiscent of the prison tower, a symbolic remembrance of the time spent confined within it, as a reference to the bodily sin of women, released through their motherhood.

The exit from the prison, once the prisoners are discharged, is a way of retracing the path already taken upon entering. Whether after suffering a miscarriage, an unsuccessful birth or after completing the given sentence, each woman must return to the beginning point of her passage, revisiting fragments of transitional spaces and memories, now about to become an outsider. The women take this returning path, mirroring the one they have already gone through. They are now able to look back and reflect on their sins, as the path unfolds itself, reflecting their journey. As they collect their belongings, they

are guided out of the tower, out of the depths of the prison and the underground, born back into the world.

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

Fig. 13

Fig. 14

Fig. 15

Fig. 16a

Fig. 16b

Fig. 17

Fig. 18

5.0 CONCLUSION

Given the themes of punishment and containment as they relate to the female body, the design of a maternity prison utilizes the concepts of ritual as a way of demonstrating the symbolic role of women as mothers, as well as the connection shared with human corporeality. In tectonics of the edifice, the establishment of a parallel spatial, material, and metaphoric relationship between the body of the mother and the body of the prison eases the transitional internal experience of women through their pregnancy and into motherhood. Drawing from the concepts of a pregnant body as both punishment and redemption, the female body has been the guiding metonym for the prison itself consequently allowing the inmates to identify with it and within it, both figuratively and literally.

The design creates an essential female space, embodying the transitional experience of childbirth architecturally, metaphorically and corporeally diffusing the dichotomous sets of oppositions that relate mother/child and life/death as set up by the ancient myths and religious writings.

By addressing the symbolic and physical correlations between the building and the female corporeality, the result is an architectural project focusing on the idea of confinement as a pseudo-biological process of existing within the prison, natural to the inner workings of the building's organism. Internalized within the tower in the pregnancy phase of the complex, then running along and spilling out of the birth phase, and later taking the form of rainwater in the final phase of motherhood, the nurture of

water, its path and the interdependent ties with the prison create a continuous maternal relationship between the prison and the women contained within.

While inspired by misogynistic references to the female body as container to be contained, the prison complex, serving as a symbol for the woman herself, evokes a kindred connection with the women living within its walls, nurturing and protective, since it becomes a prison devoid of judgment and blame, it takes on within it the fostering nature of the mother itself.

Plate 1

Plate 2

Plate 3

Plate 4

Plate 5

Plate 6

Plate 7

Plate 8

Plate 9

Plate 10

Plate 11

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