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Jung, Black Madonnas, and the Priority of the Maternal

by

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**A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Religion**

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
March 31, 2000
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the Faculty of Graduate Studies
acceptance of the thesis**

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submitted by

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B.A., B.L.S., M.L.S. (Toronto)**

**in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
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March 31, 2000**

Abstract

Black madonnas came to be cult objects in Europe through natural evolution and cultural transmission of ancient dark goddesses. They have been interpreted as earth goddess, wisdom, Great Mother, and metaphor. Jungian scholarship interprets the black madonna as a manifestation of the archetype of the feminine especially of the dark pole of the feminine. The black madonna possesses the attributes of the primordial Great Mother and symbolizes *prima materia* which carries the projection of the highest value, God. Jung's concept of the Great Mother as the most apt metaphor for God and the relationship of mutual dependency between divinity and humanity is discussed. The black madonna is a spontaneous manifestation of the Great Mother archetype. As such she is herself the most complete image of that which precedes differentiation and out of which all things come, thereby illustrating the priority of the maternal in Jung's thought.

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Introduction

The objective of the thesis is to interpret the phenomenon of black madonnas from the perspective of the thought of Carl Jung. Black madonnas are portrayals identified as the Blessed Virgin Mary, sometimes with the child Jesus, in which both are black. The madonnas are noteworthy because they inspire devotion and cults, and because they are considered to be miracle-working. There are many black madonnas in Europe, where they are an anomaly, because they are black whereas the population is white. Why are the madonnas black? Where did they originate? What do they represent? Why are they so popular? These questions are investigated through a review of the literature which has been published on black madonnas. An interpretation of the significance of black madonnas within a Jungian framework is presented. This is done in four chapters.

The purpose of chapter one, entitled *Great Mother: The Priority of the Maternal in Jung's Psychology*, is to establish the Jungian framework within which black madonnas will be interpreted. Essential elements of the framework are Jung's view of the psyche, his understanding of the Great Mother, and the priority of the maternal in Jung's thought. These elements are introduced and explained. In chapter two, entitled *Modern Data on Black Madonnas*, information based on the most recent research available is presented in order to answer five questions. What are black madonnas? Where are they found? Why are they black? What is the nature of legend and cult surrounding them? How did black madonnas come to be cult objects in Europe? Chapter three, entitled

Significant Interpretations of Black Madonnas, presents perspectives from various disciplines such as theology, religion, anthropology, folklore, cultural history and psychology on the symbolic meaning of black madonnas. The material is grouped thematically in four major categories: earth goddess, wisdom, Great Mother, and metaphor. In chapter four, entitled *A Jungian Interpretation of the Black Madonna*, a view of the phenomenon from the perspective of Jung's thought is developed based upon material presented in the first three chapters. An interpretation of the black madonna as archetype is presented. The concept of the black madonna as primordial Great Mother is developed. The significance of blackness in the archetype is amplified. Finally, implications of the analysis, namely the priority of the maternal, are presented.

It will be seen that the black madonna serves to subvert patriarchal monotheism, to compensate conscious attitudes of Christianity, to signal the reemergence of the feminine, and to complete the symbolic portrayal of the Godhead by bringing to it both the feminine principle in its fullness and the principles of matter and darkness. Black madonnas will be seen as powerful symbols and metaphors which serve to complete the image of both the feminine and the divine. More than this, however, the black madonna is seen as a spontaneous manifestation of the Great Mother archetype. As such, the black madonna is the most complete image, containing all opposites, the Divine Matrix, out of which all things come. It is concluded that, within the framework of Carl Jung's thought, the black madonna may be considered an image of the Ultimate Reality which we call God.

Chapter One: Great Mother: The Priority of the Maternal in Jung's Psychology

The purpose of chapter one is to establish the Jungian framework within which the Black Madonna phenomenon will be interpreted. Essential elements of the framework are Jung's view of the psyche, his understanding of the Great Mother, and the priority of the maternal. These concepts are developed in the *Collected Works* of C.G. Jung but especially in volume five entitled, *Symbols of Transformation*. This is the work in which Jung began to diverge from Freud and in which the concept of the Great Mother points to the collective unconscious and moves beyond the father paradigm. The original edition was published in 1911 when Jung was thirty-six. In 1950, thirty-seven years later, Jung wrote that *Symbols of Transformation* "was the explosion of all those psychic contents which could find no room, no breathing-space, in the constricting atmosphere of Freudian psychology and its narrow outlook," namely that of "reductive causalism ... and the almost complete disregard of the teleological directedness which is so characteristic of everything psychic."¹

Jung described the human psyche as composed of consciousness and the unconscious. Consciousness is the conscious standpoint of the individual. It is personal and particular and has as its centre the ego. By consciousness Jung meant the "function

¹C.G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, 2d ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1967), C.W. 5, p. xxiii.

or activity which maintains the relation of psychic contents to the ego.”² The ego Jung understood as a “complex of ideas (ego complex) which constitutes the centre of (the) field of consciousness and appears to possess a high degree of continuity and identity.”³ If a psychic content is not in relation to the ego, it is unconscious. Consciousness is not identical to the psyche as a whole because some psychic contents are not connected to the ego and, as such, are unconscious. The unconscious, Jung said, is more common to all humanity than the contents of individual consciousnesses because the unconscious is the “condensation of the average run of historical experience.”⁴ It is the “perennial rhizome beneath the earth” and of great importance because “the root matter is the mother of all things.”⁵

The unconscious has both a personal and an impersonal, or collective, aspect. The personal unconscious is composed of lost memories, repressed contents, subliminal perceptions and so on,⁶ what Jung called shadow material, that is, “the negative side of the personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide, together with the insufficiently developed functions.”⁷ The personal unconscious is the subjective psyche. The impersonal or collective unconscious, in contrast, is not a personal acquisition but is inborn, ⁸composed of elements which have not yet been in the individual’s

²C.G. Jung, “Definitions,” in *Psychological Types*, (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1974), C.W. 6, par. 700, p. 421-422.

³Ibid, par. 706, p. 425.

⁴Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 75, p. 49.

⁵Ibid., p. xxiv.

⁶C.G. Jung, “The Personal and the Collective (or Transpersonal) Unconscious,” in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1966), C.W. 7, par. 103, p.66.

⁷Ibid., fn. 5, p. 66.

⁸C.G. Jung, “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious,” in *The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 9i, par. 88, p. 42.

consciousness, “primordial images or motifs,”⁹ “inherited possibilities of human imagination.”¹⁰ which Jung called archetypes. It is collective because it is universal “a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in everyone of us.”¹¹ The collective unconscious is the objective psyche.¹² One of Jung’s major contributions was to identify the objective psyche.¹³

The concept of archetype, which was central to Jung’s thought, evolved over the years; hence it is defined in various ways in the *Collected Works*, for example, “an inborn mode of psychic apprehension”,¹⁴ “symbolic formula” which superimpose themselves on all impressions,¹⁵ “a formative principle of instinctual power”,¹⁶ “a kind of readiness to produce over and over again the same or similar mythical ideas”,¹⁷ “organizing factors, ... inborn modes of functioning.”¹⁸ The archetypes are inherited, common to all, and are that which gives rise to images, patterns, and actions. Jung came to distinguish the archetype itself from the image or myth to which it gives rise.¹⁹ In other words the archetype gives form to images or themes and can only be perceived in the manifestations to which it gives rise.²⁰ It cannot be perceived in itself because it is a force

⁹ Jung, “The Personal and the Collective (or Transpersonal) Unconscious,” C.W. 7, par. 101, p. 65

¹⁰ Ibid., par. 102, p. 65.

¹¹ C.G. Jung, “Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious,” in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 9i, par. 3, p. 3-4.

¹² Jung, “The Personal and the Collective (or Transpersonal) Unconscious,” C.W. 7, fn. 4, p. 66.

¹³ Edward E. Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* (New York: Penguin, 1972), p.3.

¹⁴ C.G. Jung, “General Description of the Types,” in *Psychological Types* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1974), C.W. 6, par. 624, p. 376.

¹⁵ Ibid., par. 625, p.377..

¹⁶ C.G. Jung, “On the Nature of the Psyche,” in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 8, par. 416, p. 212.

¹⁷ Jung, “The Personal and the Collective (or Transpersonal) Unconscious,” C.W. 7, par. 109, p. 69.

¹⁸ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, fn. 39, p. 328.

¹⁹ C.G. Jung, “Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetypes,” in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 9i, par. 149, p. 75.

²⁰ C.G. Jung, “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious,” in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 9i, par. 90, p. 43.

or element which resides in the unconscious, hence in a state of potential, of prototype, of readiness, and in a state of non-differentiation.²¹ Archetypes are perceived only after “conscious elaboration” or differentiation as they come into consciousness at which point the distinctiveness of individual consciousness appears.²² Archetypal or primordial images and motifs, according to Jung are the “most ancient and the most universal thought forms of humanity.”²³

Jung came to use the term primordial image to mean archetype, as he noted in his essay on image in *Psychological Types*, where he defines primordial image “elsewhere also termed archetype”,²⁴ as “an inherited organization of psychic energy, an ingrained system, which not only gives expression to the energetic process but facilitates its operation ... (guaranteeing) an apprehension or psychic ... and meaningful grasp” of situations.²⁵ For Jung, archetypal reality, psychic reality, is the most significant reality, in a sense the most real one. He wrote: “Not only does the psyche exist, it is existence itself.”²⁶ In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, he wrote: “Fate will have it - and this has always been the case with me - that all the outer aspects of my life should be accidental. Only what is interior has proved to have substance and a determining value.”²⁷

²¹C.G. Jung, “The Eros Theory,” in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1966), C.W. 7, par. 329, p. 20.

²²Jung, “Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious,” C.W. 9i, par. 6, p. 5.

²³Jung, “The Personal and the Collective (or Transpersonal) Unconscious,” C.W. 7, par. 104, p.66.

²⁴Jung, “Definitions,” C.W. 6, par. 747, p. 443.

²⁵Ibid., par. 754, p. 447.

²⁶C.G. Jung, “Psychology and Religion,” in *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 11, par. 18, p. 12. Ibid., par. 17. Imaginary conditions, Jung said, may be just as real and dangerous as physical conditions. In fact, according to Jung, psychic disturbances are more dangerous than physical disturbances. “Not even the medieval epidemics of bubonic plague or smallpox killed as many people as certain differences of opinion in 1914 or certain political ideals in Russia.”, he wrote in 1937.

²⁷C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, rev. ed.(New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. ix.

The archetypes are numinous in their effect and possess a certain autonomy and specific energy which enables them to attract out of the conscious mind those contents which are best suited to themselves. They exert “a fascination” on the human mind,²⁸ sometimes with “a possessive or obsessive force”²⁹ influencing human perceptions, actions, and beliefs. The individual is gripped by the archetype as though by an instinct³⁰ as in the extreme case of an addiction, for example, where an archetype, generally expressing itself through a complex has taken over or possessed a person.³¹ The energy which the archetype draws to itself is called libido which in Jungian terms means a general, undifferentiated, psychic energy, an energy-value able to communicate itself to any field of activity.³² In other words the libido is a pool of energy which may be used in any number of ways which satisfy a desire or impulse. In the Jungian framework the libido is channeled by the emergence of symbols which are indefinite expressions with many meanings pointing to something not fully known which the individual finds attractive or to which the individual responds.³³ The arts for example channel libido as do rituals such as baptism³⁴ and the mass³⁵ both of which contribute and lead to the spiritualization of the libido. Jung said that religious systems are “institutions which take up the instinctual forces of man’s animal nature, organize them, and gradually make

²⁸Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 467, p.308-309.

²⁹Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 34.

³⁰Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 225, p.158.

³¹Daryl Sharp, *Jung Lexicon* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1991), p. 37. Complex is defined as an emotionally charged group of ideas or images.

³²Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 197, p. 137.

³³*Ibid.*, par. 180, p. 124.

³⁴*Ibid.*, par. 320, p.219.

³⁵C.G. Jung, “Transformation Symbolism in the Mass,” in *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 11, p. 201 ff.

them available for higher, cultural purposes.”³⁶ The archetype, then, draws energy to itself in order to formulate purposive images and symbols which in turn give back energy to the individual who in some way acts upon the images or uses the energy. Hence the creation and enactments of myth, legend, and rituals. Jung considered the archetypes to be like gods and goddesses in terms of their impact on the human psyche: “To call them by this name is to give them that central position in the scale of psychological values which has always been theirs whether consciously acknowledged or not; for their power grows in proportion to the degree that they remain unconscious.”³⁷

It is important to note that just as the movement of energy between the individual and the archetype is bi-directional, that is the archetype draws energy to itself and gives back energy ³⁸ thus affecting human thought and behaviour, so too human reaction to the archetype influences the form and expression of the archetype over time. This is why Jung said the archetype was the condensation of human experience through time and why in *Answer to Job*, he said that Yahweh became more conscious of himself through the interaction he had with Job. “Whoever knows God has an effect on him. The failure of the attempt to corrupt Job has changed Yahweh’s nature.”³⁹

³⁶Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 415, p. 271.

³⁷C.G. Jung, “The Syzygy: Anima and Animus,” in *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 9ii, par. 41, p. 21.

³⁸Contact with the archetype is energizing, i.e. has an energizing effect on the individual.

³⁹C.G. Jung, “Answer to Job,” in *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, 2d.ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 11, par. 617, p. 391.

The regulating centre of the unconscious is, in itself, an archetype called the Self. The Self is the most important archetype in the Jungian framework . It is the central archetype which subordinates all others to itself, and surrounds and contains them.⁴⁰ It is a structuring and ordering principle associated with “wholeness, totality, and the union of opposites.”⁴¹ Ultimately the Self is the regulating centre of the psyche as a whole, that is, of both the conscious and the unconscious. Thus the ego is the centre of the conscious psyche or the subjective identity. The Self is the centre of the total psyche (conscious and unconscious) or the objective identity. Jung called the Self a God-image,⁴² *imago Dei*⁴³ in the human psyche, a force made manifest in dreams and mandalas, giving evidence of a teleological push to wholeness and integration. Of humanity the process is known as individuation; of divinity it is known as incarnation.⁴⁴ In other words by integrating previously unconscious contents the human personality becomes more conscious and whole, larger, more individuated. The process is ongoing and never finished. Correspondingly the unconscious by manifesting itself, or incarnating itself, in the psyche and through the human psyche in the outer world, becomes more conscious , more differentiated and elaborated, to itself. This process is initiated and conducted by the Self which is “the central source of life energy, most simply described as God.”⁴⁵

The dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious takes place along the

⁴⁰Edinger, *Ego and Archetype*, p. 38-39.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴²C.G. Jung, “A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity,” in *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P. 1969), C.W. 11, par. 231, p. 156.

⁴³*Ibid.*, par. 282, p.190.

⁴⁴Jung, “Answer to Job,” C.W. 11, par. 755, p. 468.

⁴⁵Edinger, *Ego and Archetype*, p. 4.

ego Self axis in the process of which the ego must relativize itself to the Self, the Self being the correspondence, or connection, or point of contact, between the human and the divine. The process has been described by Edward Edinger⁴⁶ based in part upon the study of mythological and ethnographical material by Erich Neumann⁴⁷ and clinical observations by Michael Fordham.⁴⁸ In the pre-conscious, pre-natal, state, ego and Self are one, Neumann's original uroboric state. Gradually the ego begins to emerge from and separate out of the Self, but it is still largely identified with the Self. As the ego grows in strength, and separates or differentiates, the ego-Self axis begins to become conscious. Finally, a more fully developed stronger ego - separated out from the Self remains - in conscious connection with the Self along the ego-Self axis. In this way "psychological development is characterized by two processes occurring simultaneously, namely, progressive ego-Self separation and also increasing emergence of the ego-Self axis into consciousness."⁴⁹ When the ego-Self axis becomes conscious, a conscious dialectic relationship between ego and Self becomes possible.⁵⁰ Through this dialectic not only does the unconscious influence consciousness but consciousness influences the unconscious so that the archetypes of the unconscious are in turn modified by conscious reaction to them. The ego-Self axis, therefore is the channel of consciousness of the relationship between the individual and the divine. In religious terms, consciousness and

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Erich Neumann, *Origins and History of Consciousness* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1954).

⁴⁸Michael Fordham, *New Developments in Analytical Psychology* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1957).

⁴⁹Edinger, *Ego and Archetype*, p. 6.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 7.

the unconscious are mutually redemptive.⁵¹

For Jung, as stated earlier, the archetypal level is the ultimate reality. The collective unconscious, composed of archetypes, is a matrix of structural patterns, out of which all things come. The matrix is the mother.⁵² "The mother", Jung stated "...personifies ... the whole unconscious."⁵³ The metaphor for this is the Great Mother, a personification derived of the mother archetype.⁵⁴ The mother archetype appears in an almost infinite variety of forms: human figures such as mothers, grandmothers, any woman with whom a relationship exists, as well as a wide variety of goddess figures such as Mary, Cybele, Sophia, the Virgin, Demeter, Kore, and so on. In addition, the mother archetype appears in other mother symbols which represent containment and redemption such as "Church, university, city our country."⁵⁵

The symbols may have positive connotations emphasizing maternal love and nurturing as exemplified in the Blessed Virgin Mary and other images of the Good Mother, or negative connotations emphasizing dark, dead, devouring as exemplified by Kali and the Terrible Mother. Jung spoke of three essential aspects of the mother:

⁵¹John P. Dourley, "The Religious Significance of Jung's Psychology," *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, v. 5, no. 2 (1995), p. 87. "Jung ... understood the meaning of ... human history as a self-contained organic process in which humanity and divinity were engaged in mutual redemption." Jung located the process "in the psyche as the basis of history. ... Jung's psychology would thus depict an unconscious God necessitated to create human consciousness in order to become conscious in it. Humanity is thus charged with assisting God in becoming conscious at God's insistence."

⁵²Jung, "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," C.W. 9i, par. 187, p. 101.

⁵³Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 508, p. 330.

⁵⁴Jung, "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," C.W. 9i, par. 148, p. 75.

⁵⁵Ibid., par. 156, p. 81.

“cherishing and nourishing goodness, ... orgiastic emotionality, and ... Stygian depths.”⁵⁶

The attributes of the mother archetype have been described by Jung in *Symbols of Transformation* and further elaborated and illustrated with mythological material by Erich Neumann in *The Great Mother*. An understanding of Jung’s concept of the Great Mother can be attained by looking at a selection of the symbols presented in the *Symbols of Transformation*.

The Great Mother is known first as the Good Mother, the nurturing earth-mother who “contains and protects, nourishes and gives birth.”⁵⁷ This is Neumann’s positive elementary character, she who feeds humanity in the harvest. Jung says this stage of the Great Mother archetype corresponds psychologically to the presexual stage when the child is nourished by the mother. Symbolically the Mother feeds the ego through expanding consciousness. Later, Jung says sexuality leads to the most typical form of worship the *hieros gamos* or wedding symbolizing the union of opposites, consciousness and the unconscious, archetypal masculine and archetypal feminine. In the ancient cults of Great Earth Mother and various vegetation goddesses, through what may be called magical thinking, the agricultural actions of tilling and sowing were considered to be a fertilizing of the mother designed to bring forth the fruits of harvest.⁵⁸ Neumann’s positive transformative character⁵⁹ refers to the agricultural, nourishing, and sexuality

⁵⁶Ibid., par. 158, p. 82.

⁵⁷Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother* (New York: Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1955), p. 120.

⁵⁸Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 226, p.159.

⁵⁹ Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p. 286.

aspects of the archetype symbolized by the Lady of the Plants⁶⁰ who is portrayed by the various vegetation goddesses and goddesses holding a plant or fruit. The positive transformative character is likewise symbolized by the Lady of the Beasts⁶¹ shown in animal goddesses or in goddesses accompanied by animals indicating animal strengths and fecundity.

From earliest time the Mother has also been known as the devouring or Terrible Mother who destroys in death, and consumes the ego in addiction or possession. She came to symbolize death itself⁶² as exemplified by Hecate and Kali. The Terrible Mother is often represented by a dragon, snake, or huge fish⁶³ hence the slaying of Tiamat⁶⁴ and the destruction of Leviathan.⁶⁵ Chaos must be overcome in order to create the world; the monster of the unconscious must be overcome in order to achieve consciousness. A closely related myth is that of the night-sea journey which is a symbol for death and rebirth in the mother. During the journey the hero is shut up in the mother's womb (the sea, the whale), threatened by dangers, and reborn by slaying the whale or the dragon.⁶⁶ This symbolizes the struggle of the ego to overcome the pull back to the unconscious state in the embrace of the mother. These images and tales show what Neumann calls the negative elementary character of the Great Mother archetype⁶⁷ as well as the

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.240 ff.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 268 ff.

⁶² Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 504, p.328.

⁶³ Ibid., par. 374, p. 251.

⁶⁴ Ibid., par. 646, p. 415.

⁶⁵ Ibid., par. 383-386, p. 254-255.

⁶⁶ Ibid., par. 308, p. 210.

⁶⁷ Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p.147 ff.

transformative character of the Great Mother through the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth in the mother.

Other symbols of the mother are containers or vessels such as chests, barrels, baskets, and furnace. Moses was placed in a basket and floated down the river to save his life. Humanity was saved in Noah's Ark. These are symbols of containment of positive elementary character. The furnace, or melting pot was considered by the alchemists to be the womb from which the child is born as a symbol of the fiery process which leads to the birth of the fourth.⁶⁸ This is a symbol of transformative containment. City, well, cave, the Church are also mother symbols which contain and embrace.⁶⁹ The city, for example, shelters its citizens as a mother harbours her children inside herself. Three mother goddesses, Rhea, Cybele, and Diana wear mural crowns. Unconquered cities are virgins; colonies are daughters and sons. In the Bible, heavenly Jerusalem is the Good Mother and earthly Babylon the Terrible Mother.⁷⁰ The ambivalence of the symbol can be seen. The mother contains in a sheltering fashion or in a suffocating fashion demonstrating dual aspects of one symbol in this case, that of containment.

Yet another maternal symbol is water: water, the sea, the ocean, the lake. Children are born out of the womb of umbilical fluid; the birth waters break at the onset of the birthing process. Water is easily understood as a mother symbol. Jung says that the

⁶⁸ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 245, p.167.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, par. 313, p. 213..

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, par. 303-305, p.208.

projection of the mother image onto water endows it with numinous or magical qualities characteristic of the mother. For example, baptismal water in the Church symbolizes birth or rebirth into the spirit demonstrating the transformative character of the symbol. A large expanse of water coincides with the nature of the unconscious and can be regarded as the mother or matrix of consciousness, that is, the unconscious gives birth to consciousness.⁷¹

At the opposite end of the spectrum are the menacing waters of the flood.

The tree is a mother symbol; the tree of life, which initially Jung speculates may have been a fruit-bearing genealogical tree, is a kind of tribal mother, Lady of the Plants. There are myths that humans came from trees⁷² and many female deities were worshipped in the form of trees which led to the cult of sacred groves and trees. By extension wood and things made of wood are mother symbols such as wood itself, ships, the ark, tree of life - all are symbols of the mother which may be both positive or negative. The tree of life is a symbol of life, growth, and development; however heroes also die on trees - wooden crosses - Odin and Christ for example. The wooden ark saved humanity but Viking dead were set afloat in a boat.⁷³ By tradition babies are rocked in wooden cradles but wooden coffins receive the dead and heroes have been enclosed in the maternal tree trunk, for example Osiris.⁷⁴ Wood as a symbol relates to both life and

⁷¹Ibid., par. 320, p. 219.

⁷²Ibid., par 367, p. 246. In Greek myth, ash trees are the mothers of the men of the Bronze Age. In Nordic myth, God created man by breathing life into a substance called tree or wood. In the world ash, Yggdrasil, a human pair hides at the end of the world. From them will spring a new race. At the moment of world destruction, the world ash becomes the pregnant guardian mother. Par. 368, p. 246. In Egyptian tradition, Ra rises up, born from a tree. Fn. 74, p. 246. In Athens there was a family called hewn from the poplar. Fn. 76, p. 246. In Persian myth, the white haoma is a celestial tree which gives eternal life, children to women, husbands to girls, and horses to men.

⁷³Ibid., par. 368, p. 246-247.

⁷⁴Ibid., par. 321, p. 219; par. 368, p. 247.

death in the mother.⁷⁵

In the Jungian frame of thought, animals too are symbols of the mother. For Jung the animal stood for the “non-human psyche”⁷⁶ or the unconscious which “as the matrix of consciousness, has a maternal significance.” “All animals” Jung says, “belong to the Great Mother.”⁷⁷ Animal symbolism for the mother includes dogs, jackals, and vultures which were often associated with death because they devour corpses⁷⁸, hence a reference to the Terrible Mother. At the other end of the spectrum the huntress Artemis, goddess of childbirth was often accompanied by a dog or dogs⁷⁹ in their capacity as guide dogs, guard dogs, and hunting tracking dogs. Dogs are guardians of the treasure of new life in birth and of the treasure in the underworld of Hecate who is not only death goddess but sometimes birth goddess.⁸⁰ Dog sacrifices were offered to Eileithyia goddess of childbirth⁸¹ and to Hecate who is occasionally goddess of both marriage and birth.⁸²

The horse too refers to the mother. It is an “extremely complex” symbol of great antiquity. Cirlot notes that the horse through time has been associated with burial rites in

⁷⁵ Ibid., par. 368, p. 246-247.

⁷⁶ J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 2d. ed. (New York: Dorset Press, 1971), p.13.

⁷⁷ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 503, p.327.

⁷⁸ Ibid., par. 354, p. 237.

⁷⁹ Ibid., par. 577, p. 370.

⁸⁰ Ibid., par. 577, p. 372. Par. 355, p. 238. Hecate is dog-headed like Anubis. Par. 577, p. 369-372. Hecate is a nightmare and is shown riding a horse. In the Hesiod she is patron goddess of riders, vampire, mother of witchcraft and witches, wild huntress, mother of the underworld. Also a birth goddess, the multiplier of cattle and goddess of marriage. A Great Mother goddess as Aphrodite, Gaia, and Artemis. Her symbols are the key, the whip, the dagger, and the torch.

⁸¹ Ibid., par. 355, p. 239; par. 377, p. 370. Eileithyia, the goddess of birth. Fn. 40, p. 287. Theocritus calls the pangs of birth the darts of Eileithyia. Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p. 228. Refers to Eileithyia or Athene as one of the Great Mothers, spinners of destiny.,

⁸² Ibid., par. 355, p. 239.

chthonian cults, with cyclic movement and cosmic forces, with intense desires and instincts as the general symbolism represented by steed and vehicle.⁸³ At its most basic level the horse, due to its speed and strength, symbolizes energy or libido. In the nightmare, however, the negative side of the horse symbol is seen.⁸⁴

Jung notes that the libido, directed towards the mother, symbolizes her as a horse.⁸⁵ Hecate is sometimes represented with a horse's head. Demeter changes into a mare to escape the attention of Kronos. Witches can change into horses.⁸⁶ The horse represents the animal nature of humanity and is sometimes considered to have attributes which belong to the unconscious such as clairvoyance, path-finding, and prophecy.⁸⁷ The horse is a priapic animal hence associated with fertilizing the earth. Mother Holle the goddess of childbirth comes on horseback. In contrast, the Valkyries are horsewomen who fetch the souls of the dead.⁸⁸ Hel the goddess of death rides on a horse.⁸⁹ Finally in the Middle Ages the bier was called St. Michael's Horse and the modern Persian word for coffin means wooden horse thus linking horse to the symbolism of wood.⁹⁰

⁸³ Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 152.

⁸⁴ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 577, p. 369. Hecate is a "real spook-goddess of night, a phantom, a nightmare," who sends a "horrible and fearful" night-time of apparitions. Par. 370, p. 249. Lamias are typical nightmares feminine in nature. The maternal world ash Yggdrasill is called *Schreckross* (terrible horse) in German. Nightmares are female spirits, mother-goddesses. Peasants drive them away by throwing the bone of a horse's head on the roof. There is an etymological connection as well. Nightmare and mare refer to a female horse. Par 371, p. 250. Indo-European root: *mer, mor*, means to die, also Latin *mors* means fate. Par 371, p. 250. French *mère* has a phonetic resemblance to nightmare. In Slavonic *mara* means witch. In Polish *mora* mean nightmare. Par. 373, p. 251. The mother is her child's horse, i.e. she carries the child on her back or riding on the hip. Odin hung upon the maternal world ash, his terrible horse.

⁸⁵ Ibid., par. 421, p. 275.

⁸⁶ Ibid., fn. 1, p. 275.

⁸⁷ Ibid., par. 421, p. 278.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., par. 428, p. 282.

⁹⁰ Ibid., par. 427, p. 281.

The examples of mother symbols preceding, show ambivalence; they demonstrate dual aspects - positive, negative, elementary, and transformative. This Neumann says is “an essential feature of the primordial archetype that it combines positive and negative attributes and groups of attributes. This union of opposites in the primordial archetype, its ambivalence, is characteristic of the original situation of the unconscious, which consciousness has not yet dissected into its antitheses.”⁹¹

Through attention to the images and symbols presented above it is possible to distil the archetype which underlies the symbol group.⁹² The beginning is symbolized by the uroboros, the tail-eating snake. The uroboros shining through the metaphor of the Great Mother, symbolizes the creative matrix, the unconscious which precedes all differentiation. The archetype of the uroboric Great Mother precedes differentiation into the Archetypal Feminine and the Archetypal Masculine.⁹³ In fact it precedes the archetype of the Great Earth Mother as well which is in itself a further differentiation of the uroboric Great Mother and the Archetypal Feminine as consciousness begins to evolve. Neumann explains that the dominance of the archetype of the Great Mother constellates the human psyche of the primordial situation in which consciousness only slowly develops and “gradually emancipates itself from the domination of unconscious directing processes.”⁹⁴

⁹¹ Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p.12.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

The reason for the ambivalence or dual aspects of a single power, which the symbols reveals, lies in the nature of the psyche and of psychic life itself. Creation and the transformation of consciousness involve a process of ongoing cycles of death and rebirth. New consciousness is born. The birth is followed either by the death of some unconsciousness or by the death of an old consciousness. The death is followed by rebirth of a new consciousness, that is, a new form of consciousness or a new insight, a new attitude, etc. The process is intrapsychic and is described through the myth of virgin birth, for example. The myth of virgin birth means that a content of the unconscious (the child, an archetype) has renewed itself or been reborn and become incarnate, that is, become perceptible to consciousness. This is brought about through the work of the Self, in other words not by human intervention. This is why the myth specifies the virgin birth as no human father was involved.⁹⁵ The ambivalence or dual aspects, then, is symbolic of death and rebirth.

Jung describes the above process, in relation to the mother, as birth of consciousness from the mother, death or return to the mother through reentry into the unconscious, and rebirth, or recovery and deliverance, from the mother in the form of new consciousness. The new consciousness is brought about by the Self in an everlasting cycle, or dance, of the union of the unconscious with consciousness in order to bring to life new consciousness. The process is also represented in mythology by hero myths such

⁹⁵ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 497, p. 323.

as the night-sea journey,⁹⁶ the life of Christ,⁹⁷ the epic of Gilgamesh,⁹⁸ and many others.

In the hero myths the slaying of the dragon or the mother, means that the autonomous ego must continually overcome the longing to return to Paradise, that is to the mother, to the unconscious time when all needs were filled and no demands were made upon us. This longing to return to the mother is the Jungian interpretation of incest: “the basis of the incestuous desire is not cohabitation, but, as every sun myth shows, the strange idea of becoming a child again, of returning to the parental shelter, and of entering into the mother in order to be reborn through her.”⁹⁹ The pull back to unconsciousness by the mother, the dragon of inertia, which devours, must be overcome through many metaphorical battles in order to win the treasure hard to attain¹⁰⁰ and the shining pearl¹⁰¹ - consciousness. Entry into the mother means establishing the relationship between the ego and the unconscious,¹⁰² that is the ego - Self axis, through which the dialectic between consciousness and the unconscious, or human and divine can take place.

Jung wrote that the ultimate source of energies is the Matrix, the “Matrix of the

⁹⁶ Ibid., par. 308-311, p. 210-211.

⁹⁷ Ibid., par. 288-289, p. 196-198; par. 294, p. 200-201.

⁹⁸ Ibid., par. 293, p. 200.

⁹⁹ Ibid., par. 332, p. 224.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., par. 520, p. 330.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., par. 459, p. 301.

Quaternity, ... *mater Dei*, ... the Matrix of all archetypes ... and the *conditio sine qua non* of the phenomenal world."¹⁰³ For Jung the most prior God-image is God as Creatrix, God the Great Mother; hence the priority of the maternal in the thought of Jung. As archetypal content expresses itself in metaphors,¹⁰⁴ the Great Mother is a metaphor and personification of the mother archetype. The mother, Jung said, represents the unconscious.¹⁰⁵ He refers to her as primal being,¹⁰⁶ mother of humanity, the psyche,¹⁰⁷ the source,¹⁰⁸ supreme goal and most frightful danger,¹⁰⁹ a mother who bears gods in her womb, the union of opposites, the All-Mother, the object and epitome of all unions,¹¹⁰ and finally the all encompassing world soul.¹¹¹ The libido channeled into religious structures, Jung said, regresses to the mother, that is, to the psyche which is the "inmost mystery of life ... (whose) structure is something given, the precondition that is found to be present in every case. And this is the mother, the matrix - the form into which all experience is poured."¹¹² Within the Jungian framework, therefore, the Great Mother is the archetypal level of the unconscious, the ultimate reality. She is a God-concept which is "not only an image but an elemental force."¹¹³

¹⁰³ C.G. Jung, "Psychology and Religion," in *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 11, par. 107, p. 63.

¹⁰⁴ C.G. Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," in *The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 9i, par. 267, p.157.

¹⁰⁵ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 660, p. 424.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, par. 660, p. 424.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, par. 259, p. 178.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, par. 352, p.236.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, par. 577, p. 370-371.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, par. 650, p. 417.

¹¹² C.G. Jung, "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," C.W. 9i, par. 187, p.101.

¹¹³ C.G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 89, p. 57.

Jung felt that awareness of the Great Mother which had been suppressed in patriarchal religions was reemerging in the contemporary era and that the declaration of the Assumption of Mary, as dogma, showed this. The Assumption, he thought, signified the recognition of the feminine principle with its implications of matter, wholeness, completeness and relatedness in the divine.¹¹⁴ In this way matter is spiritualized and the spiritual is materialized. Against this background of Jungian thought, the tradition of the black madonna will be discussed.

¹¹⁴ C.G. Jung, "A Psychological Approach to the Trinity," C.W. 11, par. 252, p.171.

Chapter Two: Modern Data on Black Madonnas

A large proportion of ancient miraculous madonnas of the world are black.¹¹⁵

They are noteworthy first, because they inspire devotion, even cults, and second, because they are an anomaly especially in Europe, as they are black whereas the population is white. In this chapter modern data on black madonnas will be presented. The material will be organized to answer the following questions:

1. What are black madonnas?
2. Where are they found?
3. Why are they black?
4. What is the nature of legend and cult surrounding black madonnas?
5. How did black madonnas come to be cult objects in Europe?

1. What are black madonnas?

Black madonnas, or black virgins as they are sometimes called, are portrayals of the Blessed Virgin Mary in which she is represented as black. Sometimes she is alone; more often she is portrayed with the child Jesus. Black madonnas generally take the form of statues, icons, and paintings although other artistic forms of portrayal exist. The iconography of Isis and Horus is considered to have influenced Christian madonna and child iconography including that of the black madonnas.¹¹⁶ Many madonnas are portrayed

¹¹⁵Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p.1.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 13. Stephan Benko, *The Virgin Goddess* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), p. 15. Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p. 129. Neumann says plate 38 Isis with Horus produces a "human and personal impression." It portrays, the "archetypal situation of the mother-child relationship." p. 130. Neumann says that pl. 44 Isis-Hathor Suckling Horus does not belong to the elementary character of the feminine but embodies the symbolic richness of ... the Archetypal Feminine. The king, the Great Individual ... remains the child of the great Mother Goddess, the mother of all the gods, who bore him and rebore him and through whom alone he is king. Thus the influence of Isis and Horus on Christian madonna and child iconography may be considered to be archetypal in nature. China Galland, *Longing for Darkness* (Markham, Ont.: Penguin, 1990), p. 147. "Now we come to the development of the motherhood of the deity, the Egyptian Isis.

with a child, some without, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe. Both types of madonna are included; the focus of the thesis is upon the madonna figure, not upon the figure of the child. It is known that the cult of the black virgin grew in popularity in twelfth-century Europe.¹¹⁷ However, there are many indications that the cult of the black madonnas is of much greater antiquity. In this century, as well, there has been growing interest in black madonnas. As a result more black madonna figures are being produced or reproduced. The focus of this thesis is upon black madonnas which have inspired an ancient devotion.

2. Where are black madonnas found?

Black madonnas are found throughout the world. Despite the fact that there has been an official tendency to “minimize the phenomenon”¹¹⁸ and despite the fact that their numbers have been reduced by theft, destruction, being painted over and being locked away from public view, it is known that black madonna sites are numerous in Europe.¹¹⁹ In addition to the European black madonnas, Begg noted that there are *also* approximately 450 images of black madonnas throughout the world which have been called black, brown, dark, or grey, not counting those of Africa and India.¹²⁰ Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum, a cultural historian,¹²¹ says that many black madonnas in Sicily were

Now we have the Mother Goddess depicted ... suckling her son Horus. Isis was worshipped from about 1800 B.C. and like Mary was a virgin who brought her son forth of herself.”

¹¹⁷ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 13.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 153. In his 1985 gazetteer of black madonnas, Ean Begg listed sites where a black madonna figure is venerated today. Included as well are entries for: sites where a black virgin is still venerated even where the original image has been replaced or is no longer black, where a black madonna was formerly venerated, where a black madonna cult was probable but not confirmed, where the image is a copy of an extant black virgin, where sites have been associated with black madonnas but information is lacking, and where the image is in a museum or in private ownership.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹²¹ Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas* (Boston: Northeastern U.P., 1993), p. 10.

painted over and remain uncouned and uncountable because the original black has been covered up.¹²² In addition the number of portrayals of the black madonna grows as contemporary interest grows. The actual number of black madonnas, however, is not important. What is important is that the phenomenon is widespread, that, apart from Mary, black images are rare in European Christian iconography, and that the black madonnas are considered to be especially miracle-working.¹²³

3. Why black?

The most common reason given for the blackness of the black madonnas is that the images have become black over time due to dirt, soot, and candle smoke. People became familiar, it is said, with the blackness and preferred that the virgin remain so. Begg points out that this does not explain why the rest of the figure did not turn black but only the face and hands nor why other church images did not also turn black. Another common argument is that the images reflect the artist's conception of a dark-skinned Palestinian Mary. Commerce between Europe and the Middle East is of great antiquity, however; hence it was known to the artistic community that Mary was not black. Finally it has been suggested that the original figures were carved in ebony or other black material, but such material was not available in Europe and almost all European black madonna statues are carved in indigenous wood such as oak, apple, cedar, and olive.¹²⁴

¹²² Ibid., p. 3, 119.

¹²³ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 7.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 6-8.

Two anthropologists, Leonard M. Moss and Stephen C. Cappannari, conducted research to ascertain why the madonnas are black. They analysed a sample of approximately 100 black madonnas in order to develop a classification of types. Three types were identified. The first type is the brown or black madonna whose colour and features match those of the indigenous population. According to these criteria madonnas of Asia, Africa, India, as well as Our Lady of Guadalupe from South America were excluded from the sample. The second type is the art object that has turned black for a variety of physical reasons such as deterioration of lead-based pigments, build-up of candle smoke, smoke damage due to fires, oxidation of silver used in the construction of the image, and other factors such as accumulated dirt and grime. These were also excluded. In view of the “open hostility” which the statues evince in church officials, artistic license was ruled out.¹²⁵ Based on this criteria the well-known madonna icon at Czestochowa in Poland was not included in the sample since “the figure is distinctly thirteenth to fourteenth - century Byzantine in form, and the skin pigmentation is characteristic of this stylized portraiture.”¹²⁶

The third type is a “residual category”, thirty-five percent of the original sample, “for which there is no ready explanation. These madonnas are black and are renowned as miracle workers.” They are not black as an attempt to anthropomorphize the virgin since the native population where they occur is caucasian; hence they do not conform to type

¹²⁵Ibid, p. 8.

¹²⁶ Leonard W. Moss and Stephan C. Cappannari, “Black Madonnas,” in *Mother Worship*, ed. By James J. Preston (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), p. 57.

one. There is no evidence for the various physical explanations of type two, or where there is such evidence of physical change, the madonna has been repainted black, indicating that the population wants her to remain black. For example, the Black Madonna of Einsiedeln was refurbished to a non-black state in 1799 but was repainted black by popular demand and official request.¹²⁷ Most of the madonnas in the third group appear to have been made black originally and are found in diverse locations in Europe.¹²⁸ In this thesis black madonnas will be investigated from the perspective of Jungian or analytical psychology for their potential symbolic import. For this reason and in agreement with the position of Ean Begg, no madonna site or image that has been associated with the cult of the black madonna will be excluded *a priori*.¹²⁹

4. Legend and cult.

Black madonnas have a long history of devotion in the Christian tradition. For example, the madonna of Montserrat has been an object of veneration since the ninth century,¹³⁰ that of Siponto since the fifth century,¹³¹ and that of l'Incoronto in Sicily since 1001.¹³² The circumstances of their arrival or discovery are sometimes associated with legendary events. For example, the Blessed Virgin of the Cult of Mauriac is said to have been found in 507 by the King's daughter who came upon the statue "haloed by light in a forest clearing ... guarded by a lioness and her cubs."¹³³ The statue at Montserrat is

¹²⁷ Fred Gustafson, *The Black Madonna* (Boston: Sigo, 1990), p. 43.

¹²⁸ Moss and Cappannari, "Black Madonnas," p. 56.

¹²⁹ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 3.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³¹ Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 108.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹³³ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 20.

reputed to have been carved by St. Luke while Mary was still alive, and brought to Spain by St. Peter. During Muslim invasions and the occupation of Spain, it was hidden in a cave. Later, it is said, a choir of angels directed a group of shepherds to the hiding place. Subsequent attempts by the bishop to move the statue into the town church failed; no one could budge the statue from her place in the mountain cave.¹³⁴ The madonna at Siponto is also attributed to St. Luke.¹³⁵

More often than not, however, the figures were discovered by ordinary farmers or shepherds. The following is an example of a black madonna legend:

A farmer had a cow which ate less than all the other cows but was fatter and healthier than those which ate more. Trying to discover why the cow was so healthy, the farmer followed it to see what it was eating and discovered the cow in a bush licking, with tenderness and respect, a black madonna statue. The farmer brought the statue to the village church, but each night the black madonna returned to her bush. Finally, a chapel was constructed at the site of the bush.¹³⁶

This tale is typical of the kind of legend which surrounds the black madonnas of Europe.

Usually black madonnas are associated with the countryside and with nature - caves, grottos, trees, forests, bushes, hills, mountains, rivers, springs, fountains, wells, and the sea. At Chartres, for example, there is a cult of a holy well associated with the

¹³⁴ Mary Elizabeth Perry, "The Black Madonna of Montserrat," in *Views of Women's Lives in Western Tradition*, Frances Richardson Keller, ed. (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), p.111.

¹³⁵ Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p.105.

¹³⁶ Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet avec la collaboration de Jean-Pierre Cassagnes, *Vièrges Noires*, 2e éd. (Rodez: Éditions du Rouvergue, 1990) p. 252.

Virgin Who Will Give Birth, Our Subterranean Lady.¹³⁷ The Black Madonna of Montserrat was hidden in a cave and is associated with jagged rocks and mountain representing Montserrat;¹³⁸ the Black Madonna of Miliac arrived by a ship in difficulty;¹³⁹ la Madonnina in Southern Italy guards those who pass through the straits of Messina;¹⁴⁰ and Sara le Kali at Saintes Maries des Mers is annually bathed in the sea.¹⁴¹ In addition black madonna names reflect the association with nature: *Notre Dame des Abeilles*, Our Lady of the Bees,¹⁴² Our Lady of the Thornbush at Avioth, Our Lady of the Hollies at Arfeuilles,¹⁴³ Our Lady of the Oak Tree, Our Lady of the Brambles and of Life,¹⁴⁴ Our Lady of the Dark Forest at Einsiedeln.¹⁴⁵ Some madonnas have appeared in oak trees,¹⁴⁶ others in willows, myrtles, and cedars.¹⁴⁷ Only in 1984 was the Black Madonna of Neuerberg in Germany removed from her tree.¹⁴⁸

Black madonnas are sometimes portrayed in association with plants and animals. The madonna at Montserrat for example, holds a pine cone, a symbol of fertility, regeneration, and of the tree of life.¹⁴⁹ Our Lady of Einsiedeln is portrayed with a bird,

¹³⁷ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 21. Caitlin Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom* (London: Mandala, 1991), p. 195. *Notre Dame Sous-Terre* (Our Lady Beneath the Earth).

¹³⁸ Perry, "The Black Madonna of Montserrat," p.111, 115.

¹³⁹ Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 44.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 56.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 68.

¹⁴² Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 79.

¹⁴³ Ibid, p. 9-10.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 21

¹⁴⁶ Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 72, 117.

¹⁴⁷ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 54.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 82.

¹⁴⁹ Perry, "The Black Madonna of Montserrat,"p.119. Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p.145.

probably a raven, which is perched in the hand of the child she carries.¹⁵⁰ The Black Madonna of Tindari carries a sheaf of wheat.¹⁵¹ Black madonnas have been celebrated with wheat, animals, fireworks, and trumpets.¹⁵² La Madonnina of Southern Italy is associated with spirals and serpents.¹⁵³ Traditionally some of these madonnas were pulled in a cart by bulls¹⁵⁴ others by oxen.¹⁵⁵ Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet says that a study of the legends shows that eight times out of ten, black madonnas were found by a bovine.¹⁵⁶

Black madonnas are known generally as miracle workers. Several authors attest to this.¹⁵⁷ Geoffrey Ashe speculates that the “primitive looking black madonnas acquired a special renown for wonderworking perhaps because of their sheer strangeness.”¹⁵⁸ Black madonna sites have become centres of pilgrimage¹⁵⁹ and the madonnas have been credited with the power to protect cities,¹⁶⁰ to overcome plague, hunger and thirst, to help the poor in search of justice,¹⁶¹ to have power over fertility,¹⁶² to grant eternal bliss to dead babies offered to them,¹⁶³ to restore life to unbaptized babies,¹⁶⁴ to cure any ailment - medical,

¹⁵⁰ Gustafson, *The Black Madonna*, p. 46.

¹⁵¹ Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 40.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁵⁵ Cassagnes-Brouquet, *Vièrges Noires*, p. 44. Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 63

¹⁵⁶ Cassagnes-Brouquet, p. 52.

¹⁵⁷ Geoffrey Ashe, *Miracles* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 91. Perry, “The Black Madonna of Montserrat,” p. 111. Moss and Campannari, “Black Madonnas,” p. 65.

¹⁵⁸ Ashe, *Miracles*, p. 91.

¹⁵⁹ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 44.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁶² Moss and Campannari, “Black Madonnas,” p. 65.

¹⁶³ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 87.

¹⁶⁴ Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 196. Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 10

physical or mental, and to solve all problems.¹⁶⁵ Moss and Campannari wrote that “all black madonnas are powerful images; they are miracle workers. ... The degree of adoration fervor far exceeds that attached to other representations of the Virgin. ... We are thus, equating the blackness of the images with their power. The attitude of the pilgrim approaches not reverence but worship (*latría*).”¹⁶⁶ Some scholars say that the black madonna is the only living symbol left in Christianity.¹⁶⁷ Maria Gimbutas states that the black madonnas may be “the most highly venerated of all Christian religious symbols.”¹⁶⁸

Black madonnas, then, have inspired cults from earliest times and are characterised by myth and legend. Their power is associated with their blackness. Their appeal, in a sense their authority, rests in popular culture, rather than with the official church. They are often situated in nature and are associated with plants and animals. They are considered to be miracle working.

5. How did black madonnas come to be cult objects in Europe?

According to divergent scholarly views, black madonna cults developed through prehistoric diffusion of an idea, indigenous development, cultural transmission, historic migration, or persistence of devotion to female divinities.

¹⁶⁵ Tullio Tentori, “An Italian Religious Feast: The *Fujenti* Rites of the Madonna dell’Arco, Naples,” in Preston, James J. Ed., *Mother Worship*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982, p. 97.

¹⁶⁶ Moss and Campannari, “Black Madonnas,” p. 65-67.

¹⁶⁷ Bimbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 12. Galland, *Longing for Darkness*, p. 51.

¹⁶⁸ Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 144.

Prehistoric Diffusion of an Idea

The archaeological record suggests that a Great Goddess was worshipped in Old Europe from earliest prehistory. Artefacts which support these findings date from ca. 33,000 B.C.E.¹⁶⁹ and demonstrate continuity of “a single line of development of a religious system from the Upper Palaeolithic through the Neolithic, Chalcolithic, and Copper Age.”¹⁷⁰ This represents a period from roughly 33,000 B.C.E. to 3000 B.C.E. although the culture persisted longer in Minoan Crete to around 1500 B.C.E.¹⁷¹ and had parallels in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and India.¹⁷² Ean Begg notes that trade connections between Mesopotamia and India in prehistoric times have been well established.¹⁷³

Symbols and images of the earliest European culture cluster around the parthenogenetic Goddess and her basic functions of life, death, rebirth, fertility, and motherhood. “She was the single source of all life who took her energy from the springs and wells, from the sun, moon, and moist earth”¹⁷⁴ and was portrayed as Maiden, Mother and Crone.¹⁷⁵ Symbols drawn from nature surround this goddess - fish, birds, serpents, butterflies, geometric patterns of waving form called meanders,¹⁷⁶ cosmic eggs, snake

¹⁶⁹ Marija Gimbutas, “The Monstrous Venus of Prehistory,” in *In All Her Names*, ed. by Joseph Campbell and Charles Musès (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), p. 25.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁷¹ Elinor W. Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), inside cover.

¹⁷² Joseph Campbell and Charles Musès, “Editorial Notes,” in *In All Her Names* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), p. 43-53. Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 1 - 15, 21. Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p. 1-114. Pamela Berger, *The Goddess Obscured* (Boston: Beacon, 1985), p. 5 ff.

¹⁷³ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 42.

¹⁷⁴ Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, p. xix.

¹⁷⁵ Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade*, p. 18. In the words of Rianne Eisler, Maiden, Creatrix, and Ancestress.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

spiral designs,¹⁷⁷ leopards, bulls, and other animals.¹⁷⁸ Black was the colour of the earth, of fertility, of the womb of the Great Mother; white was the colour of bones and of death.¹⁷⁹ “The Great Goddess encompassed all that was alive, both male and female, within her being. She was the self-fertilizing virgin mother.”¹⁸⁰ The male principle during the Palaeolithic had been symbolised by animals, especially the bull. When, during the Neolithic, male deities finally appeared they did so as sons and consorts to the Goddess.¹⁸¹

By 4000 B.C.E., Indo-European invasions had begun. This led to the introduction of Kurgan culture resulting in the Kurganization of Old Europe evidenced by a gradual shift to the predominance of male deities, and a warrior culture.¹⁸² Other changes occurred as well. The Indo-European notion of fatherhood and the institution of individual marriage was imported from the East¹⁸³ and revolutionized the social system of the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁸⁴ Black came to symbolize death and the underworld; white came to symbolize the light, the sun, and life. Yet later, in Christian iconography, black came to symbolize evil as well as death.¹⁸⁵ In India, even today, however, white persists as the colour of mourning.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁷⁸ Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p. 34. Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁹ Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, p. xx, 144.

¹⁸⁰ Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p. 50.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 30, 34.

¹⁸² Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade*, p. 44. Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p. 111.

¹⁸³ Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, amended and enl. ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p. 388.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 401.

¹⁸⁵ Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, p. xx, 144.

The clash between the culture of Old Europe and Indo-European culture led to a gradual hybridization of the two different symbolic systems. Archaeologist, Marija Gimbutas states that the period of 25,000 years during which the Great Goddess was the dominant deity, left an indelible imprint on the human mind. Old European sacred images were “too deeply implanted in the psyche”¹⁸⁶ to be totally uprooted. Traces of the Great Goddess culture of Old Europe can be seen in the folklore and fairy tales of Europe to this day, she says, in figures such as Baba Jaga for example.¹⁸⁷ Patricia Berger in her study which traces the prehistoric Great Goddess through her manifestations as vegetation goddess to grain goddess to the Christian madonna and various saints, substantiates this thesis through the visual arts, folklore, history, and literature.¹⁸⁸ These findings have been developed and interpreted by numerous other scholars.¹⁸⁹

Of the black madonna, Gimbutas writes: “The tie between the fertile soil and Earth Mother is ... seen in the continuous veneration of black madonnas to this day. ... The fact that black madonnas throughout the world are focal points for pilgrimages, are regarded as miracle workers, and are among the most highly venerated of all Christian religious symbols indicates that the blackness of these miraculous madonnas still evokes profound and meaningful images and associations for devotees.”¹⁹⁰ Black madonnas then

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 318

¹⁸⁷ Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, p. 318-319 and Gimbutas, “The Monstrous Venus of Prehistory,” p. 29.

¹⁸⁸ Berger, *The Goddess Obscured*.

¹⁸⁹ Gimbutas, “The Monstrous Venus of Prehistory,” p. 26-27, 53. Campbell and Musès, Editorial Notes,” p. 43-53. Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade*, p. 1-28. Berger, *The Goddess Obscured*, p. 1-24. Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p. 1-14. Betty de Shong Meador, *Uncursing the Dark* (Wilmette, Ill.: Chiron, 1992), p. 122.

¹⁹⁰ Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, p. 144.

find their roots deep within the prehistory of Europe.

Some scholars, however, suggest an ultimate source, or at least a parallel development, of the culture of the Great Goddess in Africa. Mary Daly,¹⁹¹ Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum,¹⁹² Monica Sjoo and Barbara Moor allude to this possibility. Sjoo and Moor write that black madonnas are “solid iconic remains of the ancient time when the religion of the Black Goddess ruled Africa and from thence much of the rest of the world.”¹⁹³ They suggest a migration route from black Africa in about 7000 B.C., through Egypt influencing the development of Isis, from Egypt migrating into Crete, and from Crete into Europe. Birnbaum suggests a route through Sicily and Southern Italy. Such influences are impossible to prove one way or another, nor do they negate archaeological findings which indicate a black earth mother, black for fertile earth, in an Old European culture which valued black as symbolic of vital, life-generating power. Traces of the Great Goddess culture will be seen to persist throughout the historical periods which follow.

Indigenous Development

Celts and Teutons are two early Indo-European peoples of whom some record remains. Their cults are so similar as to make them indistinguishable.¹⁹⁴ Both worshiped the goddess in her natural setting in sacred groves, caves, or near water. Rivers, wells,

¹⁹¹Mary Daly, *Pure Lust* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), p.117.

¹⁹²Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p.13, 30-32.

¹⁹³Monica Sjoo and Barbara Moor, *The Grand Cosmic Mother* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 32.

¹⁹⁴Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p.74.

lakes, and springs were honoured as themselves images of goddesses often in the form of the triple goddess.¹⁹⁵ Both Celt and Teuton sometimes placed figures of goddesses in trees, a practice thought to date back to the culture of Old Europe.¹⁹⁶ Great Goddess images and ideas, then, flowed into Celtic and Teutonic traditions and remain visible in their connections to the cult of the black madonna today. The original black virgins at Chartres and Longpont, for example, were probably Celtic fertility goddesses.¹⁹⁷ Some of the Celtic and Teutonic connections which appear to continue in contemporary black madonna cults today are presented below as examples of indigenous development.

Morrighan (The Cailleach, Ceridwen, Sheila an Gig, Black Annis)

Morrighan is an Irish black goddess, known as “the Morrighan” which means great queen. She was a death goddess associated with war and destruction, who assumed the form of a raven or crow and hovered near the battle field.¹⁹⁸ (Ravens occur in various legends associated with the death goddess. They are also part of the story of Our Lady of Einsiedeln. The bird perched on the finger of the child in the madonna child of Einsiedeln is probably a raven or perhaps a crow.) Morrighan appeared in later legend as Morgan Le Faye.¹⁹⁹ Begg calls her a black mermaid goddess of war and the underworld.²⁰⁰ As a Celtic triple goddess,²⁰¹ associated with the Western Isle of the Dead or Avalon,²⁰² she is the

¹⁹⁵Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁹⁹Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 143.

²⁰⁰Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 77.

²⁰¹The triple goddess reflects the triadic archetype. Leonardo Boff, *The Maternal Face of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 239. Boff summarizes the triadic archetype by saying that three is a symbol of development, of split, of one becoming two, of engendering, of division and conflict, of integration of division by becoming two. “The

mediator between the worlds who foretold the end of the world.²⁰³ Her spouse was Dagda the oldest of the Celtic gods, the father of all²⁰⁴ which makes her, through this union, the mother of all. Their feast day is Samhain, the Celtic New Year, which coincides in the Christian calendar with All Saints Day, All Souls Day, and with a number of other feast days associated with the black madonna²⁰⁵ who has also been called mediator or *mediatrix*.²⁰⁶

The Cailleach

Morrighan draws directly upon the character of the Cailleach, a Scottish Gaelic title of respect, meaning the Old One, that is Wise Old Woman. She is one of the oldest deities and has also been named the Grey Hag, Black Annis, and the Hag of Beare. As Black Annis of Leceister, or Cat Anna, she lived in a cave and devoured children whose skins she hung out to dry on an oak. (One of the specialities of the black madonna is to grant eternal bliss to dead babies by resuscitating them long enough to ensure that they are baptized.)²⁰⁷ As Hage of Beare she is the death goddess.²⁰⁸ She is also the Mountain Mother, who, like Ceridwen, guards a cauldron, and sometimes appears as the Dark

archetype of trinity, then, of threeness, is an element corresponding to a stage in which humanity makes a quantum leap in the direction of reflection and consciousness."

²⁰²Barbara Walker, *The Crone*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 77.

²⁰³Caitlin Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom* (London: Mandala, 1991), p. 207.

²⁰⁴Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p.76.

²⁰⁵Ibid., p. 77.

²⁰⁶Nancy Qualls-Corbett, *The Sacred Prostitute* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1988), p. 105. Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p.12.

²⁰⁷Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 87

²⁰⁸Caitlin Matthews, *The Elements of the Celtic Tradition* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 1989), p.21. Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 370.

Woman of Knowledge disguised as an ugly young woman possessor of great wisdom. She pursues the hero who is often her own son and forces him to develop in wisdom.²⁰⁹ Like Ceridwen, Black Goddess of the Underworld and Keeper of the Cauldron of Knowledge, the Cailleach is the Mistress of Life, Sheila an Gig,²¹⁰ the hag whose womb became a tomb for Gwion and womb for Taliesin.²¹¹ The Cauldron therefore, symbolises the cup of rebirth²¹² and black Morrighan, the Cailleach, Goddess of Rebirth. As both giver and taker of life the Cailleach outlives the end of the world.²¹³ The black madonna is also associated with death, regeneration, and rebirth.

The Cailleach usually manifests at wells.²¹⁴ In Scotland, it was noted that the river Lochaidh was sacred to the *Nigra Dea* and until recently rites were performed to her at the well of St. Declan, Armore, County Waterford where the image of a female figure was described as being like the pictures of Callee (Kali). Even today, in West Kerry, Ireland, it is said there shall always be some great Cailleach (pronounced Callee) among them.²¹⁵ Scottish, Irish, and Welsh legends said the Cailleach looks like Kali. She is a black-faced goddess who created the world and a death goddess flapping her raven wings at the window of a dying person. She is responsible, like Kali, for reeving the bodies of

²⁰⁹Matthews, *The Elements of the Celtic Tradition*, p. 21.

²¹⁰Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 212.

²¹¹Ibid., p. 212. Ceridwen brewed a cauldron of knowledge to give to her ugly son Afagddu and set her younger son Gwion to tend it. Some of the hot liquid splashed onto Gwion's thumb so he put his thumb in his mouth to clean it whereby he received all knowledge. He transformed into many shapes and finally became a grain of wheat which was devoured by his angry mother in the form of a black hen. Nine months later he was reborn of Ceridwen as Talieson, seer and poet.

²¹²Ibid., p. 213.

²¹³Matthews, *The Elements of the Celtic Tradition*, p. 21.

²¹⁴Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 211.

²¹⁵Ibid., p. 209.

the slain.²¹⁶ According to Scottish legend she has a large eye in the middle of her forehead and gave birth to monstrous giants with several heads.²¹⁷ This has parallels in Indian religious tradition. The death goddess tradition associates her with the black madonna who is known to succour the dying. The Cailleach, like Morrighan is also Black Annis. This is a good example of syncretism in the Celtic goddess tradition.

Brigit (Brigantia, Bride, Briannon, Britannia)

Brigit was also the triple goddess.²¹⁸ She was known as the fire keeper,²¹⁹ the goddess of wisdom, daughter of Dagda the oldest of the Celtic gods, father of all. In some legends she is simultaneously identified as the mother of Dagda, as the Dagda's mate, and as his three daughters.²²⁰ Like Morrighan the spouse of Dagda, Brigit incorporated many of the aspects of Danu (Anu, Danu, Dana, Don), who was mother of the gods.²²¹ Anu or Annis was Goddess of Earth and Moon who later became Aphrodite, Anatis of Egypt, and Nana of Babylon.²²² (As seen above, both the Morrighan and the Cailleach were also associated with Annu as Black Annis and Cat Anna of Leicester.) Brigit was goddess of agricultural fertility and mother of the Celts.²²³ As protector of the fertility of the land, she ensured the new milk of sheep at lambing time²²⁴ and as goddess of poetry, knowledge

²¹⁶Ibid., p. 206.

²¹⁷Walker, *The Crone*, p. 77.

²¹⁸Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 74.

²¹⁹Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 214.

²²⁰Donal O Cathasaigh, "The Cult of Bridgit," in Preston, James J. Ed. *Mother Worship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1982), p.81.

²²¹Matthews, *The Elements of the Celtic Tradition*, p.16, 100.

²²²Esther M. Harding, *The Way of All Women* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 98-99.

²²³Matthews, *The Elements of the Celtic Tradition*, p. 99.

²²⁴Ibid., p. 100.

and the arts of civilization,²²⁵ she was patron to poets, smiths, and healers.²²⁶ She assimilated into British tradition as Britannia.²²⁷ At Beltane, Brigit, as Danu, married Bres who was half African, a giant descended from Noah's son Ham whose people were the earlier inhabitants of Ireland. In Irish, *brig* means power.²²⁸

The festivals of Brigit were Imbolc and Beltane both of which are continued by Christianity. Imbolc is now celebrated as Candlemas,²²⁹ on February 1, the feast of St. Brigid, the Mary of Gael.²³⁰ Beltane is celebrated on May 1, feast day of Mary, Queen of the May. In legend St. Brigid was considered to be the foster mother of Christ.²³¹ The Black Madonna of Tarascon, one of whose titles is *La Belle Briançonne*, is considered to be a combination of Brigit and Ana or Anu.²³² Like the black madonna, St. Brigid has the ability to raise the dead and to heal the sick especially women suffering from barrenness and illnesses of childbirth.²³³

As Anu, mother of the gods, Brigit is also associated with St. Anne, mother of Mary, hence grandmother, i.e. great mother, of Christ. St. Anne's window at Chartres Cathedral was donated by St. Louis in the thirteenth century and has always been

²²⁵Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 86.

²²⁶Matthews, *The Elements of the Celtic Tradition*, p.17. Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 213.

²²⁷Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 213.

²²⁸Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 86.

²²⁹Ibid., p. 55. Candlemas is the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

²³⁰Ibid., p. 85.

²³¹Matthews, *The Elements of the Celtic Tradition*, p.101.

²³²Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 85.

²³³Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 86.

black.²³⁴ Anna is a basic word which probably means queen or goddess mother. It confers divinity and is related to many other goddesses including those of the ancient Near East and those of the Greco-Roman traditions, as well as, ultimately, St. Anne.²³⁵ The connections to Brigit are considered to be traces of the “submerged princess of Breton legends, the ruler of hell, who has dared to resist authority ... Yet surely she is the reflection of the goddess of ancient, pre-patriarchal societies ... who haunts every corner of life, but reveals herself only very reluctantly, sometimes even as a Black Virgin.”²³⁶

Kundry and the Loathely Damsel

The black goddess can be seen in stories as well, for example, as Kundry, the Dark Woman of Knowledge in Northern mythology, whose figure is based upon the Cailleach. She admonished the Grail seekers and when she finally comes as a sign of the Grail’s achievement is hailed as a delivering goddess.²³⁷ As the black faced Loathely Damsel in the Welsh tale *Peredur son of Evrawg* she goes to Arthur’s Court and accuses Peredur or Perceval of failing in the true quest.²³⁸ Based on these examples, it would appear that the black goddess tradition is more firmly rooted in European tradition than had been recognized.

²³⁴Ibid., p. 87.

²³⁵Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 369-370.

²³⁶Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 87.

²³⁷Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 209.

²³⁸*The Mabinogion*, transl. With an introd. by Jeffrey Gantz (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 248. “These four men saw enter a black, curly-haired woman, riding a yellow mule. ... she had a rough, unlovable appearance: her face and hands were blacker than pitch, and yet it was her shape rather than her colour that was ugliest - high cheeks and a sagging face, a snub, wide-nostrilled nose, one eye speckled grey and protruding, the other jet black and sunken, long teeth yellow as a broom ... ” *The Mabinogion*, p. 248.

Rosmerta

Two goddesses, Rosmerta and Epona, seem to be transitional between the Celtic and Teutonic traditions. Rosmerta, fruitful mother earth, was the wife of Lug, originally a grain god, who was a carpenter, sorcerer, poet, horseman, and blacksmith. A raven was his familiar. Lug, in Latin *Lucus* or sacred grove, was the son of the Triple Goddess and is associated with two major black madonna cities in France, Lyons and Laon.²³⁹

Rosmerta is also the consort of Wotan.²⁴⁰ Rosmerta's name is rich with meaning: *ros* in Gaelic means wood; in German *hros* means horse; Latin yields rose and dew. *Mart* indicates Mars and war, associated with Wotan; or Martha, lady; the Sanskrit root *mrt* means dead; myrtle is sacred to Aphrodite and Venus, symbol of the feminine principle, happiness, victory, and initiation into divine mysteries.²⁴¹ All of these words, component parts of the name Rosmerta, have associations both with the Great Mother Goddess and with the Christian madonna. Rosmerta is considered to be the origin of the Black Virgin of Avioth.²⁴²

Epona

Like Rosmerta, Epona (Rhiannon, Macha) is associated with horses and later became patroness of the Roman cavalry. A number of black madonnas, especially Our Lady of the Hermits at Einsiedeln, are associated with horses. Einsiedeln is the site of a

²³⁹Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 78.

²⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁴¹*Ibid.*

²⁴²*Ibid.*

world-famous black madonna and a centre of horse breeding in Switzerland.²⁴³ Epona carries a key like Hecate who is holder of the key of the underworld. Many black madonnas have a staff reminiscent of Hecate's key or Isis' ankh.²⁴⁴ The black madonnas at Einsiedeln and Fribourg in Switzerland are an example of this.

Teutonic Deities

Within the Teutonic tradition, Wotan, in his chthonic role is Blaise, companion of the black madonna at Candlemas. His beloved Brunnhilde had a daughter Aslog whose name means raven and who is known as a sooty-faced kitchen maid (Cinderella) in Norwegian mythology.²⁴⁵ Freyja (Frigg, Holda, Held, Hilde, Goda, or Ostara)²⁴⁶ Wotan's lover, was a goddess of love affairs and of wisdom. She had a prophetic raven and she could fly through the nine worlds and bring back knowledge and power. In Christianity, Freyja came to be portrayed as queen of the night and of witches.²⁴⁷ Also associated with horses, she is the evil witch riding through the skies at night. As such she may be the original nightmare. Her feast day coincides with Candlemas and therefore with St. Brigid's Imbolc festival, which is the day of the black madonna. Finally as Hel or Hella she played the role of death goddess.²⁴⁸ She presides over the place of the dead. The Belgian black madonna city of Hal has been etymologically connected with Hel.²⁴⁹ As

²⁴³Ibid., p. 84.

²⁴⁴*The Herder Symbol Dictionary* (Wilmette, Ill.: Chiron, 1986), p. 8. The ankh is an Egyptian symbol of life often portrayed in the hands of kings and gods. In funeral pictures it may depict a key to open the realm of the dead. It was borrowed by Egyptian Christian Copts to symbolize the life-giving power of the cross.

²⁴⁵Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 90.

²⁴⁶Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 403.

²⁴⁷Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 91. Berger, *The Goddess Obscured*, p.110.

²⁴⁸Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 404.

²⁴⁹Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 92.

Ostara, the Saxon goddess after whom Easter was named, Freyja symbolized fertility. The hare which was her ritual animal still lays Easter eggs today.²⁵⁰ Like Freyja, black madonnas have both a death aspect and a fertility aspect and are supplicated today in both of these roles.

Syncretism among Celtic and Teutonic goddesses is clearly exhibited in the foregoing religious myths whose gods and goddesses are considered by contemporary Europeans to be indigenous. They create an important link between the prehistoric Great Goddess culture of Old Europe and the historical civilizations which followed. In so doing, they provide evidence of the European links among the prehistoric Great Goddess, Celtic and Teutonic deities, and black madonnas of today. Caitlin Matthews writes: "The potency of the Black Virgin cult has its roots in the native spirituality of Europe; it has rarely sprung out of orthodox Christianity."²⁵¹ The transition of black from its connotation of earth, fertility and life, as seen in Morrighan, Brigit, and Rosmerta, to its connotation of death and evil, beginning to be seen in Epona, Freyja, and Hella, is also demonstrated. (To be noted is that earth and death are not opposites; rather they are symbols of the cycles of transformation of death and rebirth.²⁵²) The transition took much longer to complete, however, and continued into the historical periods which followed.

²⁵⁰Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 404.

²⁵¹Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 197.

²⁵²Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, fn. 35, p. 415. Jung notes that the purpose of mystery religions and of initiation mysteries was to create symbols of dying and being born again. C.W. 5, par. 577, p. 369. Jung describes cave mysteries in honour of Hecate in which a descent of 365 steps into the crypt of Hecate refers to the course of the sun and "hence to the cavern of death and rebirth." C.W. 5, par.363, p. 244. Jung refers to rejuvenation magic in which the disappearance and hiding of an image in a cave, for example, points to death and rebirth.

Cultural Transmission

As noted above, the goddess tradition is characterized by syncretism: one goddess tends to merge into another.²⁵³ Thus the goddess traditions of the ancient Near East flowed into the Greco-Roman goddess traditions which, in their turn, were broadcast during the period of Hellenistic civilisation whence they flowed into, and influenced significantly, the Christian tradition. This development has been documented by numerous scholars. For purposes of this thesis, only a few of the most prominent goddesses from each tradition will be presented as examples of cultural transmission which have influenced the evolution of the black madonna as she is known today.

Inanna-Ishtar and Ereshkigal

Inanna is the original Sumerian Goddess of All. Esther Harding calls her a moon goddess known as Ishtar in Babylonia, Ashtarte in Canaan, Attar in Mesopotamia, Ashtar in Moab, Athtar in Southern Arabia, Astar in Abyssinia, Atargatis in Syria, Astarte in Greece, and ultimately Artemis, Magna Dea of the East,²⁵⁴ who later became Roman Diana. Inanna's throne was the world-tree which bestowed kingship upon the mortal of her choice. When Gilgamesh cut down the tree, and the sky-god Enlil dispossessed her, Inanna became a homeless wanderer, like Lilith, the Shekinah, in exile.²⁵⁵ She descended into the underworld where she met Ereshkigal, Queen of the Dead.²⁵⁶ It is in her descent

²⁵³Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 49.

²⁵⁴Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p.156. Galland, *Longing for Darkness*, p. 145.

²⁵⁵Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 41.

²⁵⁶Ibid., p. 42. The oldest known version of the tale is the Sumerian *Descent of Inanna* and two later Akkadian versions known as *Ishtar's Descent*. Sylvia Brinton Perera, *Descent to the Goddess* (Toronto: Inner City, 1981), p. 9. The tale or theme of descent and return of the goddess is known in many traditions but best known in the west through the Greek tale of Demeter and Persephone, Roman Ceres and Proserpina, Roman Psyche, and in various fairytales in which the

or creative dark moon phase that Inanna is a precursor to the black madonna. In this regard it is important to note that for the ancients “the power of life lay in the darkness of the moon,”²⁵⁷ that is, blackness carried a positive value.

Isis

In Egypt, Isis was the counterpart to Babylonian Ishtar²⁵⁸ and was linked to Artemis, Diana, and Cybele.²⁵⁹ She was the principal goddess of Egypt, sister and wife of Osiris, and mother of Horus. In one version of the myth she was born a dark-skinned child and called the Lady of Love.²⁶⁰ While in mourning after the death of Osiris, Isis was black robed and black complexioned.²⁶¹ Because she brought him back to life, she is goddess of life, death, and rebirth. The Cow was sacred to Isis, a moon goddess. Its horns represented the crescent moon which in Egypt appears on its back thus becoming a barque or boat.²⁶² Isis was identified with Hathor, the Cow Goddess,²⁶³ and is also associated with the three daughters of Allah, particularly with Al-Uzza, who was the black stone which is still venerated at Mecca today.²⁶⁴ The most typical form of Isis is that of virgin with child,²⁶⁵ frequently represented as black, which influenced the iconography of Christian madonna and child.²⁶⁶

heroine goes to Baba Yaga or to the witch in the gingerbread house as in Hansel and Gretel.

²⁵⁷Gustafson, *The Black Madonna*, p. 93. This is also noted by Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p. 157.

²⁵⁸Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p.156.

²⁵⁹Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p.15.

²⁶⁰Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p.172.

²⁶¹Gustafson, *The Black Madonna*, p. 91.

²⁶²*Bullfinch's Mythology* (New York: Gramercy, 1979), p. 917. Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p. 184.

²⁶³Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p.184.

²⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 218.

²⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 185.

²⁶⁶Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p.13.

Isis is considered to be the goddess of France, Our Lady of Light.²⁶⁷ Her city is Paris, City of Lights. One etymology for the name Paris is *Par-Isis*, that is, barque of Isis.²⁶⁸ She is the navigator of the barque which carries the dead. As supreme *initiatrice*, Isis carries the ankh. This associates Isis to Hecate who is sometimes portrayed with the key to the underworld and may explain some of the oddly shaped sceptres which black madonnas sometimes carry, as does the Black Madonna of Einsiedeln for example.²⁶⁹ Esther Harding says: "Isis ... like the Black Virgin of European shrines, who is so closely related to her, ... was a goddess of healing."²⁷⁰

Christians built over many temples of Isis and many black madonna sites are associated with her, for example, the Black Madonna at Le Puy, the Black Virgin of Boulogne-sur-Mer, and the Black Virgin in the Church of Our Lady of the Holy Blood in Boulogne.²⁷¹ In the cathedral of Metz, a statue of Isis, was venerated as a black madonna until the sixteenth century. The oldest madonna in the world, the brown virgin of the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome, is considered to be Isis.²⁷² Liberation theologian, Leonardo Boff, says the cult of the black madonna is the transposed cult of Isis.²⁷³ In mariology, he sees the emergence of the feminine archetype "with characteristics calculated to integrate masculine and feminine."²⁷⁴ This signals, he says, both the liberation of women and the

²⁶⁷Ibid., p. 14, 61.

²⁶⁸Ibid., p. 64.

²⁶⁹Ibid., p. 62.

²⁷⁰Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p. 187-188.

²⁷¹Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 68.

²⁷²Ibid., p. 67-68.

²⁷³Boff, *The Maternal Face of God*, p. 236.

²⁷⁴Ibid., p. 2.

subversion of patriarchy. "The equalization process (between men and women) continues apace, threatening the foundation of a dying patriarchal culture."²⁷⁵

Lilith

Lilith also has associations with the black madonna. Jung in *Symbols of Transformation* mentions the Jewish legend that Adam, before he knew Eve, had a demon-wife called Lilith with whom he strove for supremacy. But Lilith rose up into the air through the magic of God's name and hid herself in the sea. Adam forced her to come back with the help of angels. In Mithraic sacrifice the messengers of the gods, the angel, was the raven. At this, Lilith changed into a nightmare or lamia who haunted pregnant women and kidnapped new-born babies.²⁷⁶

Ean Begg says that Lilith has come to stand for feminine rebellion against masculine denial of woman's right to freedom and equality. In the earliest known portrait of her, a terra-cotta relief from c1950 B.C.E., she wears a turban which, he says, is reminiscent of the Black Virgin of Meymac. As the hand of Inanna, Lilith in Erech was to gather men from the streets and bring them to the temple of Inanna. Her original nest the huluppu tree, probably a willow, is a place much favoured by black madonnas.²⁷⁷ Lilith's tree had a dragon at its foot and a bird perched at the top. Gilgamesh killed the dragon and cut down the tree forcing Lilith to flee into the wilderness, signifying the

²⁷⁵Ibid., p. 1.

²⁷⁶Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 369, p. 248.

²⁷⁷Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 35.

displacement of women. According to Gilles Quispel, this is reminiscent of the Woman in the Wilderness in Revelation.²⁷⁸

A seventh century Syrian tablet shows Lilith as a winged sphinx, a killer of new-born infants. The eleventh century Cabbalistic document "*The Alphabet of Ben Sira*" says that for her failure to submit to Adam, she was sentenced to give birth to many children of which one hundred would perish each day. In despair she threw herself into the Red Sea. The angels pitied her and accorded her power over all new-born babies. Powers of life and death over infants are attributed to many black madonnas.²⁷⁹ The Cabbalistic literature also associates Lilith with Mary Magdalene, Mary the Egyptian, and other repentant harlots.²⁸⁰ This is reminiscent of the three Marys at Saintes Maries de la Mer.

Lilith is known in *Isaiah 34.14* as a screech-owl later translated as a night-hag and later Lamia. Ean Begg notes that she is the Queen of Sheba²⁸¹ in the Cabbala, the Zohar, and Arabic legends.²⁸² In one of her incarnations, she, as Moses' first desert wife Zipporah, became ancestress of priests and prophets including Hulda, the prophetess, which is also the name of the Teutonic goddess of the underworld and of witches.²⁸³ She seduced the prophet Elijah and had his child which may link her to the Shulamite woman

²⁷⁸Gilles Quispel, *The Secret Book of Revelation* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), p.125, 145. Galland, *Longing for Darkness*, p. 53.

²⁷⁹Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 37.

²⁸⁰Ibid.

²⁸¹Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 3d. enl. ed. (Detroit: Wayne State U.P., 1990), p.221, 252. Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 38.

²⁸²Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 38.

²⁸³Ibid.

who alone knows the hiding-place of the invisible spirit of Elijah on Mount Carmel.²⁸⁴

The Carmelite Order claims descent from Elijah. Carmelite churches are sometimes associated with black madonnas.²⁸⁵

Artemis

According to legend, Artemis of Ephesus started as a black meteoric stone discovered in a swamp by Amazons.²⁸⁶ Her image was brought to Marseilles in 600 B.C.E. by Phocaeans where she became of the Lady of the City. Marseilles was the trading centre of the Phocaeans who travelled widely. Black madonna sites are popular in Phocaean settlement areas and throughout the trade routes of the Phocaean people.²⁸⁷

The name Artemis is related to the word *artamos*, slaughterer, indicating a possible link to the black madonna who has affinities with the guild of butchers.²⁸⁸ As huntress and receiver of human sacrifice, Artemis also slew a Greek god with an arrow through the head thus becoming a head hunter like Black Kali - and possibly related to the Black Madonna of Einsiedeln who stands atop the skull of St. Meinrad.²⁸⁹

Artemis is often associated with Hecate. As Queen of the Dead she resembles most the black madonna, Notre Dame de Sous-Terre (Chartres) and Our Lady of Avioth

²⁸⁴Ibid.

²⁸⁵Ibid., p. 39.

²⁸⁶Ibid., p. 53.

²⁸⁷Ibid., p. 54. Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 197.

²⁸⁸Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 49.

²⁸⁹Ibid., p. 49, 50.

known as La Récevrresse because dead babies are offered to the black madonna there.²⁹⁰

Diana, the Roman version of Artemis - Hecate , became, in Christian times, goddess of witches and queen of the night, like Teutonic Freyja. Her favourite drink was made from the flower artemisia. The black madonna cathedral in Metz is built on a temple of Diana.²⁹¹

Demeter

Another major goddess, Demeter, was known under a dark aspect. Also known as Melania Demeter or Black Demeter,²⁹² her name derives from Ge - meter, that is, Earth Mother. In historical times in Arcadia, Demeter was still worshipped as an ancient earth goddess, Black Demeter.²⁹³ Arcadia was also associated with Maia, Maiesta, which is a description of the black madonna especially the Black Madonna of d'Auvergne.²⁹⁴ At Enna, in Sicily, a statue of Ceres with the infant Proserpina was used as a Christian madonna child portrayal and worshipped with offerings of grain sheaves, flowers, and soil, until the nineteenth century when it was removed from the church to a museum.²⁹⁵

Cybele

Stephen Benko writes that it was the goddess cult of Cybele which had the most decisive influence on Christianity and that mariology was substantially determined by the

²⁹⁰Ibid., p. 55.

²⁹¹Ibid., p. 56.

²⁹²Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 194.

²⁹³Benko, *The Virgin Goddess*, p. 210.

²⁹⁴Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 52.

²⁹⁵Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 194.

theology of Great Mother Cybele whose divine son was Attis.²⁹⁶ The prototype of Cybele, Phrygian mother of the gods, was probably the Great Mother Goddess discovered in the Neolithic matriarchal period remains of the civilization of Catal Huyuk. She was first worshipped as a black stone²⁹⁷ and was known as Magna Mater.²⁹⁸ In the third century Cybele became the supreme deity of Lyons where a black madonna cult flourishes today.

The name Cybele is etymologically linked to crypt hence to the queen of the dead²⁹⁹ thus linking Cybele to Hecate, Brigit, Morrighan, and the black madonna in their death goddess roles. The name is also linguistically related to the word Ka'aba, the cube-shaped holy of holies in Mecca which contains the feminine black stone of Islam.³⁰⁰ Cybele along with Artemis and Isis, was worshipped from the fourth century at Ra, in France which became Les Saintes Maries de la Mer where the three Marys are venerated.³⁰¹ There are many black madonna sites associated with Cybele: Aix en Provence, Madrid, Lyons which is the city of Cybele among others.³⁰² The Madonna Nera in Tindari, Sicily, is in a church constructed on the site of a former sanctuary of Cybele.³⁰³ Of the goddesses presented above, Ean Begg has said: "The most direct influence on the cult and image of the Black Virgin derives without doubt from three goddesses of the

²⁹⁶ Benko, *The Virgin Goddess*, p. 15.

²⁹⁷ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 56.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 68.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³⁰³ Benko, *The Virgin Goddess*, p. 213.

ancient Near East, Isis, Cybele, and Diana of the Ephesians ...”³⁰⁴

Historic Migration

European religious tradition presents itself in three stages. In the first stage there is only the goddess. In the second, Olympian stage, the father-god, thunder-god, sun-god dominates although he is companioned by goddesses and lesser gods. The third stage is purely patriarchal. There is only one god, the father god.³⁰⁵ During this third stage in Europe, the old gods and goddesses became Christian.³⁰⁶ To demonstrate this process, Pamela Berger has “explored one strand of mother goddess veneration - as protectress of sowing - in an essential Western European cultural context.”³⁰⁷ Her study of European non-canoncial texts, legends, folklore, art, music, and drama enabled her to trace the path of the goddess in her specialized function as grain goddess. In some instances the grain goddess “converted” to Christianity, as may be seen in a number of female saints, such as Saint Radgund,³⁰⁸ Saint Macrine,³⁰⁹ Saint Walpurga,³¹⁰ Saint Milburga,³¹¹ and Saint Brigid.³¹² Ultimately the grain goddess transformed into the Virgin Mary.³¹³ Berger states that “Christianity was successful in part because it allowed and even encouraged (such) syncretism.”³¹⁴

³⁰⁴Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 43.

³⁰⁵Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 387-389.

³⁰⁶Ibid., p. 143. Robert Graves notes the passage of Venus to St. Venera, of Artemis to St. Artemidos, of Mercury to St. Mercouriso, and of Dionysus to St. Dionysius.

³⁰⁷Berger, *The Goddess Obscured*, p. 145.

³⁰⁸Ibid., p. 55

³⁰⁹Ibid., p. 60.

³¹⁰Ibid., p. 61.

³¹¹Ibid., p. 64.

³¹²Ibid., p. 70.

³¹³Ibid., p. 89.

³¹⁴Ibid., p. 3.

The crusades contributed to the evolution of the cult of Mary, and more particularly to the cult of the black virgin, in significant ways. Ean Begg says that the age *par excellence* of Our Lady was inaugurated by the crusades.³¹⁵ Poor pilgrims returning to Europe through Spain are said to have “ecstatically adopted the Marian cult”, hence the tradition of Merry England.³¹⁶ The influence from the east brought about by the crusaders has been noted by numerous scholars including art historians. Mary Elizabeth Perry states that merchants and crusaders brought back to Spain and France eastern depictions of Mary as the Mother of God. The Black Madonna of Montserrat is thought to date from this period.³¹⁷

The first crusade began in 1096 the same year as construction of the basilica of St. Mary Magdalene who has many associations with the black madonna.³¹⁸ The second crusade was preached in 1146 by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, renowned for his devotion to the Black Virgin,³¹⁹ from one of the four major starting points of the crusades, Vézelay, which was a centre for the cult of the Magdalen and subsequently a black virgin site.³²⁰ Begg suggests that the Church in an effort to offset the heretical influence of both Cathars and Templars³²¹ may have “gently” promoted “the mystery of the Black Virgin, throned in

³¹⁵Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 21.

³¹⁶Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 396.

³¹⁷Perry, “The Black Madonna of Montserrat,” p.112.

³¹⁸ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 97-102.

³¹⁹*Ibid.*, p.103.

³²⁰*Ibid.*, p.26.

³²¹The *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Oxford: U.P., 1999) defines the Templars as a powerful religious and military order. Cathars are defined as a heretical medieval Christian sect which sought to achieve great spiritual purity. They are associated with Manichaeism (a dualistic religious system with Christian, Gnostic, and pagan elements

the crypts and chancels of new churches rich in enigmatic carvings that expressed the inner pilgrimage,³²² that is, the relationship with God internalized as distinct from the external journey to foreign lands. The inner pilgrimage within Church confines would domesticate, or bring within Church limits, the quest for the divine. A considerable proportion of black madonnas are reputed to have been brought back from the crusades by the Knights Templars.³²³

The legend of the Holy Grail, with its female characters reminiscent of ancient goddesses, especially the black goddess, its maternal symbols (the chalice, the vessel, the container, the castle), and its ancient pagan associations such as the sacred marriage of the king to the land (goddess), developed during this period. It is thought to be related to a Templar search for the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple of Jerusalem.³²⁴ There are two chief candidates considered to be possible sites of the Castle of the Grail. One is Montségur, where in 1244 the Cathars, “heretical champions of the religion of Amor” took their last stand. The other is Montserrat the site of the black madonna, called La Moreneta.³²⁵ Attempts have been made to prove that the Grail was a relic or cult object of

founded in Persia in the 3rd century by Manes and based on a supposed primeval conflict between light and darkness), Gnosticism (a heretical movement of the 2nd-century Christian Church, teaching that esoteric knowledge (gnosis) of the supreme divine being enabled the redemption of the human spirit.), and Nestorianism (the Christian doctrine that there were two separate persons in Christ, one human and one divine, maintained by some ancient Churches of the Middle East.) Ean Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 107, says Cathars and Templars are associated with each other, with the Holy Grail, and with the cult of the black virgins. During the Inquisition “both Cathars and Templars, were accused ... of denying the validity of the sacraments, of renouncing the Cross, and of sodomy. ... Both had special extra-ecclesial rites which they kept secret, and avoided the priests and practices of conventional Christianity. ... The two centuries during which Cathars and Templars flourished and declined almost exactly coincide. Most Black Virgins date from this period (1100-1300), as does the cult of the Holy Grail.”

³²²Ibid., p.106.

³²³Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p.107.

³²⁴Emma Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz, *The Grail Legend*, 2d. ed. (Boston: Sigo, 1979), p. 20. Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 106.

³²⁵Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p.23-24.

the Albigenses, a sect of Catharists, exterminated in the thirteenth century on grounds of heresy, and that the legend contains contents of a Catharistic nature, thus heretical, concealed in poetic and romantic language for protection. The fellowship of the Grail knights, referred to by one author as *Templeise*, may be connected to the Albigensian sect or to the Templars.³²⁶ Legends of the Holy Grail, “a symbol, ... at one with the magic cauldrons of Ceridwen and ... Medea’s vessel of transformation” have stirred the imagination of the west for centuries.³²⁷ Jungian scholarship considers the Grail itself to be “a symbol of the feminine and, as that which receives, contains, and supports,” as a symbol of the “maternal in particular.” It is “the primal image of the mother, the wondrous vessel, ... an archetypal conception.”³²⁸ The Grail, then, is a symbol of the Great Goddess in her primordial maternal aspect, manifesting both the priority of the Goddess and the priority of the maternal as the uroboric Great Mother. Ean Begg writes, “A passionate longing is at the heart of the matter - something is lost that by the twelfth century desperately needs to be found.”³²⁹

Persistence of Devotion to Female Deities

Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum, a feminist cultural historian,³³⁰ “explores the hypothesis that veneration of the indigenous goddess of Old Europe merged with African,

³²⁶Jung and von Franz, *The Grail Legend*, p. 15-16. Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 107, notes that the Templars refused to take part in the Albigensian Crusade. They occasionally offered Cathars refuge and locally may have defended the Cathar cause. Many Cathars became Templars over time.

³²⁷Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 24.

³²⁸Jung and von Franz, *The Grail Legend*, p. 113.

³²⁹*Ibid.*, p.24.

³³⁰Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p.10.

Middle Eastern, and Asian dark goddesses and persisted in the Christian era in vernacular beliefs and rituals associated with black madonnas.³³¹ Monica Sjoo and Barbara Moor also make this case, arguing for a link to African goddess traditions.³³² Birnbaum considers that in Italy there has been a real **persistence** of devotion to the female divinity as distinct from evolution of ancient goddess worship into devotion to Mary. She cites the work of Carlo Ginzberg who "in careful and extensively documented studies, substantiates the persistence of the belief in a prehistoric woman divinity who was known in Italy by many names, notably *la Signora*, the feminine word for the lord."³³³ Birnbaum amplifies and supports the idea of persistence by describing popular rituals practiced to this day, especially in Sicily, which indicate continuing belief in, and practice of, ancient goddess rituals. For example sheaves of wheat are laid at the feet of madonna and child in the style of worship of Ceres and Proserpina and on Easter Sunday the reunion of mother and child is celebrated rather than the resurrection per se. This is in the tradition of the reunion of Ceres and Proserpina, as distinct from the Christian tradition of the resurrected Christ.³³⁴ Hence, in addition to tracing a descendance of black madonnas from ancient goddesses including the Gnostic mother goddess,³³⁵ Birnbaum suggests that popular belief remained with the goddess tradition while official belief became Christian.

Birnbaum's stance is supported by the study of fujenti rites of the Madonna

³³¹Ibid., p.4.

³³²Monica Sjoo and Barbara Moor, *The Great Cosmic Mother*, p. 32.

³³³Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p.26

³³⁴Ibid., p.146.

³³⁵Ibid., p.30

dell'Arco near Naples by Tullio Tentori. Tentori describes fujenti rituals as characterized by hysteria which he associates with the pre-Christian pagan rites of the cult of the goddess Cybele. He says that the "fujenti are themselves but a further instance of the specific form of antithesis between the state religion and the religion of the people that characterizes the unbroken religious history of Italy."³³⁶ Thus, a study of black madonnas in Italy has led scholars to conclude that there has been a persistence of ancient goddess tradition in Italy and that this persistence has been imaged specifically in the black madonnas. Ean Begg states, "It is ... no longer shocking to suggest that the images represent a continuation of pagan goddess-worship and that some may have once been idols consecrated to Isis or other deities."³³⁷

In chapter two, modern data, based on the most recent research available about black madonnas, has been presented in order to answer a number of questions. What is the black madonna? A black madonna is a portrayal of a female figure which is identified as the Blessed Virgin Mary, and which has inspired cults. Sometimes the madonna has a child sometimes she is alone. Where are black madonnas found? Black madonnas are found all over the world but this thesis focuses primarily on black madonnas in Europe although Our Lady of Guadalupe will be noted in chapter three. Why are the madonnas black? Some madonnas are black due to physical processes such as oxidation; others were created black by intent because black had meaning for the creators and for the

³³⁶Tentori, "An Italian Religious Feast: The Fujenti Rites of the Madonna dell'Arco, Naples," p. 116.

³³⁷Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 130.

worshippers. What is the nature of legend and cult surrounding black madonnas? Black madonnas are considered to be miracle-working and are firmly rooted in popular culture where they inspire veneration and worship. How did black madonnas come to be cult objects in Europe? Scholarship indicates a number of possibilities none of which are either mutually exclusive or entirely proveable. Black madonnas came to be cult objects in Europe through the natural evolution of original dark goddesses, through cultural transmission, through historical migration, and through persistence of ancient goddess traditions. In chapter three, the significance of the black madonna, as interpreted by scholars from various disciplines, will be presented.

Chapter Three: Significant Interpretations of Black Madonnas

A variety of views about the significance of black madonnas has emerged from various disciplines such as theology and religion, anthropology and folklore, cultural history. As with the goddess tradition itself, views on black madonnas are characterised by syncretism: they tend to blend into one another. In this chapter the literature on black madonnas will be reviewed under four main themes: earth goddess, wisdom, Great Mother, and metaphor.

Earth Goddess

Black madonnas are most commonly considered to be successors to the earth goddess. This interpretation crosses all disciplines. The earth goddess was at once vegetation goddess, fertility goddess, moon goddess, triple goddess and goddess of the underworld or death goddess. To her were attributed the powers of fertility, growth, birth, death, and cyclic return.

The earth goddess is first of all a vegetation goddess. During the Palaeolithic and Neolithic, a tie between fertile soil and the goddess, was perceived so that the Earth Mother, source of life, was considered to be a vegetation goddess.³³⁸ Of her Erich Neumann wrote: The “Great Earth Mother who brings forth all life from herself is

³³⁸Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, p.xix,144.

eminently the mother of all vegetation."³³⁹ The evolution of the vegetation goddess as grain goddess, has been studied by Pamela Berger in her book *The Goddess Obscured* already cited. The vegetation goddess tradition symbolizes the birth, death, and cyclic return of the agricultural cycle. As successor to the vegetation goddess, the black madonna inherits her powers over birth, death, and cyclic return.

The earth goddess is also a fertility goddess. At its richest and most fertile, the earth is black. Hence the black madonna and her prototype the black goddess is black by association with rich earth and its ability to be fertile and to grow things.³⁴⁰ She represents "the fecundity of the earth itself in all its abundance, bounty, and creativity."³⁴¹ The black madonna, associated with "telluric fecundity" and, by extension with that which generates and brings forth, becomes "*genetrix*".³⁴² The black madonna of Siparento, for example, is called the *Mater Dei Genetrix*, the generative Mother of God.³⁴³ Mary Daly considers black madonnas to be very powerful symbols because of the association to the fertility of the black earth.³⁴⁴ Like Artemis and Diana before her, the black madonna plays the role of fertility goddess and midwife, supplicated by couples wanting children, and by women about to give birth. As fertility goddess, the black madonna is *genetrix*, fertile and creative.

³³⁹Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p.48.

³⁴⁰Birbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 24. Galland, *Longing for Darkness*, p.153.

³⁴¹Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p. 8.

³⁴²Benko, *The Virgin Goddess*, p.211.

³⁴³Birbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p.108.

³⁴⁴Mary Daly, *Pure Lust*, p.117, 119.

The earth goddess is also a moon goddess. Jung wrote: "The Earth Mother is always chthonic and is occasionally related to the moon, either through blood-sacrifice ... or through a child-sacrifice, or else because she is adorned with a sickle moon. In pictorial or plastic representations the Mother is dark deepening to black, or red (these being her principal colours), and with a primitive or animal expression of face" ³⁴⁵ Thus the black madonna at Einsiedeln is black skinned and wears a deep red dress. In addition early woodcuts of the black madonna at Einsiedeln show an open window with the stars and a crescent moon shining through. ³⁴⁶ Geoffrey Ashe refers to strange primitive looking black madonnas. ³⁴⁷ Esther Harding says that every earth goddess is also a moon goddess ³⁴⁸ because early humanity recognized a link between cycles of the moon, cycles of the female, and fertility. ³⁴⁹ The moon was represented by a goddess and her son who dies and is born again ³⁵⁰ representing a concept of perpetual generation as the mother gives birth to the son and is in turn fertilised by him. ³⁵¹ The conflation of Earth Mother and Moon Goddess was universal; there is evidence for it throughout the world both old and new. ³⁵²

From the moon cycles developed the image of the triple goddess. ³⁵³ Ishtar, Isis,

³⁴⁵ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W.5, par. 312, p.186.

³⁴⁶ Gustafson, *The Black Madonna*, p.94.

³⁴⁷ Ashe, *Miracles*, p.91.

³⁴⁸ Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p. 34.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 94.

³⁵¹ Ibid., p. 95.

³⁵² Ibid..

³⁵³ Ibid., p. 53. Esther Harding notes that the triple goddess in her dark phase is associated with the underworld and with chthonic powers.

Aphrodite, Artemis, Hecate, and Diana were all moon goddesses. Aphrodite, Hecate, and Diana were celebrated in mid-August just as the Blessed Virgin Mary's Assumption is celebrated on August 15.³⁵⁴ The ancient festival of candles, now Candlemas, was originally celebrated in honour of a moon goddess on February 2.³⁵⁵ These dates and these goddesses are closely associated with black madonnas as we have seen in chapter two. For the ancients the dark moon represented power and transformation.³⁵⁶ Even biblical Noah was originally Nuah, a Babylonian moon goddess. The ark, a female symbol of containment, is cognate with the Hindu word *argha*, which means crescent, and with arc, meaning circle; therefore, the ark was a moon boat. Based upon the data presented in chapter two in which black madonnas are associated with the goddesses named above, scholars associate the black madonna with the moon, the moon goddess, and the triple goddess. Thus associated, the black madonna symbolizes the moon qualities of power and transformation as well as birth, growth, death, and cyclic return.

Finally, the earth goddess is death goddess, mistress of the underworld. Black symbolizes regeneration.³⁵⁷ Black earth mother and black madonna are associated with death, and with Hecate, as was Artemis-Diana who was both chthonic mother and goddess of death. She could send out invisible arrows which brought death. Later Artemis was connected with the moon and was goddess of the underworld, like Hecate, "for in late

³⁵⁴Ibid., p. 109.

³⁵⁵Ibid., p. 130.

³⁵⁶Ibid., p.151, 113. For the Greeks the power of the moon was represented by Hecate, the Dark Moon.

³⁵⁷Birbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p.3.

antiquity the various types of gods and goddesses were syncretised and merged."³⁵⁸ Of these the greatest was Isis who was the supreme *initiatrice*.³⁵⁹ Things are planted in the earth and grow. By analogy, the dead are buried in the earth where they live again in the underworld. From this perspective, black madonnas, like Isis, have been interpreted as *initiatrice*, that is, she who initiates, transforms, regenerates, and brings about resurrection.³⁶⁰ Of Isis, and by association of the black madonna, it is written: "She does the negative thing in order to depotentiate consciousness, then the positive thing to bring forth the transformation. ... She is the feminine principle which brings forth the transformation."³⁶¹ The black virgin, then, initiates transformation. Black virgins are often associated with schools of initiation.³⁶²

Symbol of the earth which is mother of us all, the black madonna becomes earth mother³⁶³ who nurtures,³⁶⁴ protects,³⁶⁵ and receives us in death. Black for earth, black for the dark moon, and black because driven underground by later religious tradition, the black madonna symbolizes the traditions of the ancient earth goddess as earth mother, vegetation goddess, fertility goddess, moon goddess, triple goddess, and goddess of the underworld. The black madonna, therefore, possesses goddess powers of fertility, transformation, death, and cyclic return. Consequently she becomes the black madonna

³⁵⁸ Von Franz, *Psychological Interpretation of the Golden Ass of Apuleius*, (New York: Spring, 1970), p. III-4.

³⁵⁹ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 62.

³⁶⁰ Pierre Gordon, *Essais* (Neuilly s/Seine: Arma Artis, 1983), p. 4.

³⁶¹ Von Franz, *Psychological Interpretation of the Golden Ass of Apuleius*, p. XI - 3.

³⁶² Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 133, 137.

³⁶³ Benko, *The Virgin Goddess*, p. 213.

³⁶⁴ Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 12.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

who generates and regenerates life (*genetrix*), who initiates transformation (*initiatrice*), and who is the creating Mother of God.

Wisdom

The second broadest category is that of the black madonna as a wisdom figure. In particular, those writing to situate the black madonna within Christian mariological tradition trace her presence as Holy Spirit, Sophia, Shekinah, and Old Testament Wisdom, back to the black wisdom goddess. The wisdom tradition encompasses sacred sexuality.

Black as the colour of wisdom is of ancient tradition. Robert Graves notes that even Ishtar at the height of her power acknowledged her sister the Black Goddess of Wisdom. The *Orphic Fragments*, he says, tell how Night mothered the universe. Night was a triad of Blackness, Order, and Justice. Throughout the Orient, Night was a positive power and black a prime colour.³⁶⁶ The Great Goddess Nuith manifested as a cloud of blackness or invisibility, a creative mist³⁶⁷ which may have been black because it was mixed with earth.³⁶⁸ Isis, whose name means ancient, was also called Maat which means knowledge or wisdom. Thus Black Isis is ancient wisdom. Esther Harding says some of the black virgin shrines in Europe have grown around such statues of the Black Isis.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁶Graves, *The White Goddess*, p.162.

³⁶⁷Peter Redgrove, *The Black Goddess and the Unseen Real* (New York: Grove, 1987), p. 121.

³⁶⁸Marie-Louise von Franz, *Aurora Consurgens* (New York: Pantheon, 1966), p. 218.

³⁶⁹Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p.184-185.

Wisdom is portrayed as black because black is primal,³⁷⁰ and creative,³⁷¹ the matter or *prima materia* out of which all things come.³⁷² The Black Goddess, Caitlin Matthews says, is the Goddess of Wisdom at the heart of the creative process.³⁷³ Black is the initial creative chaos, Tiamat, the Black Dragon of the original universe in the most ancient traditions. Hence ancient goddesses were sometimes portrayed as black symbolizing creation, transformation, concretization, and embodiment. Wisdom represents instinctual knowledge as distinct from theoretical knowledge, reason, and logos.³⁷⁴

Wisdom is black in the alchemical tradition, as well, because it represents a secret hidden in matter which can only be freed by extraction.³⁷⁵ The black earth itself is Wisdom,³⁷⁶ because it is the hidden feminine aspect of God imprisoned in matter.³⁷⁷ When Wisdom descends into matter she also experiences herself as in the dark. "Wisdom ... has become sunk in matter and finds herself in distress and darkness. A parallel or coincidental event has taken place: the alchemist and wisdom have become mutually entangled. He has sunk down into the darkness of the unconscious; but for Wisdom ... the approach to human reality also denoted a darkening, and thus divine Wisdom loses her way in the depths of materiality."³⁷⁸

³⁷⁰Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p.11.

³⁷¹*Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁷⁴Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p.184.

³⁷⁵von Franz, *Aurora Consurgens*, p.194.

³⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p.300.

³⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 242.

³⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 223-224.

For the Gnostics, also, Wisdom is considered to have fallen into matter.³⁷⁹ Caitlin Matthews notes that according to the Gnostics, there is no body distinct from the soul; the body is that portion of the soul discerned by the senses. In prepatriarchal times before wisdom was symbolized as transcendent, she was the Black Mistress of Life, understood primarily through the body. During patriarchy, developing goddess mythology began to speak of her descent into materiality in a way which expressed concern about the separation of body and spirit.³⁸⁰ In recognition of the need to join spirit with matter, the unconscious with consciousness, the tradition of sacred sexuality arose.

In antiquity the *hieros gamos* was enacted in the temples as a religious act. Goddess temples had sacred prostitutes dedicated to the goddess. As well, in some ancient Near Eastern traditions a young woman before her marriage went to the temple to join with a stranger - any man who would choose her, before she was married to her betrothed.³⁸¹ In this way the generative and creative energy of the goddess was renewed and maintained by bringing the fertilizing power of the goddess, through her female representative, into effective contact with human beings.³⁸² The act of union was carried out in imitation of the divine. In this role, the sacred prostitute, became *mediatrix* between the human and the divine.³⁸³ In later times the act became ritualized and symbolic. For example, in Greece a maiden would cut her hair, as a symbol of her

³⁷⁹Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 94.

³⁸⁰Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 35, 37.

³⁸¹Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p.134-135, 144. Qualls-Corbett, *The Sacred Prostitute*, p. 36.

³⁸²Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p.137.

³⁸³Qualls-Corbett, *The Sacred Prostitute*, p.104,152-156.

femininity and as a sacrifice to the goddess, in place of the earlier sacrifice of *hieros gamos* prior to marriage.³⁸⁴

Stephan Benko writes that sacred *hieros gamos* was meant for fertility and enjoyment and was carried out by divine command blessed by the goddess of love. It was part of sympathetic magic: the practice of *hieros gamos* would enhance both human and agricultural fertility. It was also a sacramental suspension of sexual differentiation, a return to the primordial state of union before differentiation between the sexes had taken place and pointed forward to the final restoration of the perfect state of union.³⁸⁵ The practice of sacred sexuality came as close to divinity as humanly possible³⁸⁶ because it gave an experience of wholeness. Humans sought the divine experience of life; divinity sought the human experience of death.³⁸⁷

Ean Begg speculates that the idea of whore wisdom, or wisdom as whore, probably developed because wisdom was freely available to anyone just like the whore in the bible who calls out from the roof tops to all. Wisdom was accessible but despised - perhaps because she made free of herself. He suspects the word whore probably means lover originally. Sophia is called *Prunikos* which means lewd; one of Aphrodite's titles is *porné* or whore.³⁸⁸ Magdalene means reformed prostitute. The meaning of the word

³⁸⁴Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p. 136.

³⁸⁵Benko, *The Virgin Goddess*, p. 39.

³⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 69.

³⁸⁷Mathews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 35, 37.

³⁸⁸Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 96.

declined, he speculates, due to the spiritualizing tendencies of subsequent religious traditions, especially Christianity, which came to disregard the world of matter.

Ultimately the significance of the embodiment of knowledge, that is, wisdom as sacred harlot, is the reconnection of humanity to its own eros or instinct for joy and vitality in experience.³⁸⁹ Finally, sexuality was associated with dionysian ecstasy and a chaotic state,³⁹⁰ an aspect which will be discussed in the next section on the Great Mother.

In the Old Testament, there are numerous references to wisdom. She is personified in *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Wisdom of Solomon* where she is called Wisdom of the south, or south wind. Thus, the Black Shulamite, the biblical Queen of the South and the Queen of Sheba carry the tradition of wisdom as black.³⁹¹ Raphael Patai says the Queen of Sheba was Lilith. As beautiful maiden and harlot who fled into the desert, Lilith, he says, is the opposite of the Matronit who was identical with the Shekina and both with the Queen of Israel.³⁹² Wisdom became split into Nature, World Soul, and the Shekina, or immanence of God, at the heart of the creative process (concretizing spirit) in opposition to Lilith who represents wisdom as dynamic sexuality (matter). The *hieros gamos* became the bridge between the dynamic sexuality of Lilith and the energy generated by the symbolic union of opposites of the Queen of Wisdom.³⁹³ In the New Testament, according to Gilles Quispel, the Woman Who Fled into the Wilderness and was

³⁸⁹Harding, *The Way of All Women*, p. 184. Qualls-Corbett, *The Sacred Prostitute*, p. 13-14.

³⁹⁰Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 55.

³⁹¹von Franz, *Aurora Consurgens*, p. 155, 158. Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 96.

³⁹²Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 3rd enl. ed. (Detroit: Wayne State U.P.), p. 222-223.

³⁹³Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 45.

confronted by the Dragon in the *Book of Revelation* is also black wisdom³⁹⁴ as is the dragon itself which symbolizes lower world, matter, and reality.³⁹⁵ In later alchemical tradition, wisdom, as Maria Prophetissa and Maria the Jewess, became the author of alchemical works and symbol of the Holy Spirit.³⁹⁶ She expressed one of the “central axioms of alchemy,” namely that, “One becomes two, two becomes three, and out of the third comes the one as the fourth.”³⁹⁷

The tradition of black wisdom as sacred harlot is continued in black madonnas today. Robert Graves notes that “Provençal and Sicilian Black Virgins are so named because they derive from ... (the) ancient tradition of Wisdom as Blackness.”³⁹⁸ It is suggested by Caitlin Matthews that in the Sibylline tradition, people came to consult the “submerged, instinctual, forgotten Goddess of Wisdom.”³⁹⁹ In Italy the relationship of black madonnas to black sibylls has been documented by Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum who notes that in “Sienna an image of the black Phrygian sibyl holds a book open to a page which reads ‘I alone am God. There is no other God.’”⁴⁰⁰ Birnbaum places the black madonnas within the prophetic tradition. Gilles Quispel considers that the Woman who Fled into the Wilderness and was confronted by the Dragon in *Revelation* is Wisdom who is now symbolically represented by the black madonna.⁴⁰¹ Lilith, too, fled into the desert

³⁹⁴Gilles Quispel, *The Secret Book of Revelation* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), p. 125, 145. Galland, *Longing for Darkness*, p. 53. Galland cites a conference given by Quispel.

³⁹⁵von Franz, *Aurora Consurgens*, p. 221.

³⁹⁶Ibid., p. 155, 158.

³⁹⁷C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 2d. ed. (London: Routledge, 1968), C.W. 12, par. 26, p. 23.

³⁹⁸Robert Graves, *Mammon and the Black Goddess* (London: Cassell, 1965), p. 162.

³⁹⁹Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 205.

⁴⁰⁰Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p.160.

⁴⁰¹Galland, *Longing for Darkness*, p. 53. Galland cites from a conference given by Gilles Quispel.

and has been associated with the black madonna. Finally the black madonna has a number of Magdalene connections.⁴⁰²

In conclusion, black madonnas continue the tradition of wisdom as black and wisdom as whore. In so doing they carry the tradition of instinctual knowledge, or of reconnection to the “instinctive energies of the goddess of love.”⁴⁰³ Thus the black madonna symbolically represents embodied knowledge, a sense of vitality and joy in the world, and of matter as sacred.⁴⁰⁴ As whore wisdom, the black madonna plays the role of *mediatrix*, that is of a “transforming psychic force.”⁴⁰⁵ The black madonna symbolizes the “moving, transforming, mystical power of love which unites the human element with the divine.”⁴⁰⁶

Great Mother

A third category interprets the black madonna broadly as mother: mother goddess, Great Mother, and cosmic mother. Writers in this group focus on the evolution of the black madonna from pagan goddesses. They include within their purview the mystical and ecstatic tradition associated with dionysian rituals and practices.

⁴⁰²Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 99, 103, 26, 31, 37, 39. Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 144-145. One of the three Marys at Saintes Maries de la Mer is considered to be Mary Magdalene. Also in the Merovingian connections as black madonna sites, Magdalene is considered to have been the spouse of Christ who produced the heir to the Merovingian dynasty.

⁴⁰³Qualls-Corbett, *The Sacred Prostitute*, p. 87

⁴⁰⁴*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁰⁵*Ibid.*, p. 115

⁴⁰⁶*Ibid.*, p. 158.

A prominent new world black madonna who exemplifies the Great Mother tradition is the Virgin of Guadalupe. She appeared to a poor Indian, Juan Diego, in 1531 on a site sacred to that of the Aztec earth, fertility, and moon goddess Tonantsi and instructed him to have a church built on that spot.⁴⁰⁷ The vision is said to have taken place on December 12, 1531 at the hour of the winter solstice,⁴⁰⁸ according to one writer, who demonstrates links of Our Lady of Guadalupe to astrological constellations and to the Woman in the *Book of Revelation*. Guadalupe's image (her cloak bore the imprint of the heavens) is reminiscent of the image of the Woman in Revelation who is considered to be the Cosmic Mother.⁴⁰⁹

Our Lady of Guadalupe's Indian name is Coatlalopeuh or Coatlicue which means Serpent Skirt. Serpent Skirt was a central deity, mother of celestial deities. *Coatl* means serpent. *Lopeuh* means one who has domain over serpents. *Xopeuh* means crushed. The name is therefore a version of the earlier goddess name and also reminiscent of the Blessed Virgin Mary of whom it is said that she will crush the serpent under her heel. In addition, not only did Our Lady of Guadalupe appear on a sacred goddess site, but the Indian name of Juan Diego, to whom she appeared, was Cuautlaohuac - a name related to that of the goddess.⁴¹⁰ Finally, Guadalupe's Indian name is homophonous to Spanish

⁴⁰⁷Ena Campbell, "The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Female Self-Image" in *Mother Worship*, ed. by James J. Preston (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1982), p. 5.

⁴⁰⁸Michelle Guerin, "Cosmic Mother of the Aztecs: Our Lady of Guadalupe," in *Anima*, 15 (1989), fn. 19, p. 122. In 1531 the Julian Calendar was still in use and the winter solstice took place on December 12 at 4:40 p.m. in Greenwich, England which was 10:40 a.m. in Mexico.

⁴⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁴¹⁰Gloria Anzaldua, "Entering into the Serpent," in *Weaving the Visions*, ed. by Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1989), p. 77-78.

Guadalupe. Since the Spanish identified Guadalupe with the dark virgin, also called Guadalupe, who was patroness of west central Spain, she was readily accepted by the Spanish⁴¹¹ and easily bridged the two cultures - Indian and Spanish. She is therefore *mediatrix*.⁴¹² In 1660 the Roman Catholic Church named Our Lady of Guadalupe mother of God and patron saint of Mexicans. She is a national symbol for the Mexican people and has been subsequently named by the Church as Our Lady of the Americas.⁴¹³ Our Lady of Guadalupe has also been recognized by anthropologists and political scientists as a potent unifying force for the people with a significant socio-economic impact. In the past she provided a symbolic means of forging a new culture and policy out of Spanish and Indian elements. In the present she brings together, through pilgrimages, disparate groups who would otherwise not know each other thus serving to continue the process of society formation. In addition, research has shown that, under conditions of economic change where ethnic groups which have been distinct historically begin to merge into a cultural continuum, her rituals permit individuals to use symbols and symbolic behaviour both to illustrate their position in the cultural continuum and to validate changes in their positions.⁴¹⁴

It has been recognized, as stated in chapter two, that where madonna iconography is derived largely from Isis, madonna theology is derived more “substantially” from that

⁴¹¹Ena Campbell, “The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Female Self-Image,” p. 7.

⁴¹²Anzaldua, “Entering into the Serpent,” p. 79.

⁴¹³Ena Campbell, “The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Female Self-Image,” p. 5

⁴¹⁴Mary O'Connor, “The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Economics of Symbolic Behaviour,” in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 28 (1989), p. 105. 117.

of Great Mother Cybele, than from any other fertility goddess.⁴¹⁵ Cybele's son-lover, Attis, driven mad by his mother's love for him, castrated himself and died. He was mourned by Cybele and was restored to life.⁴¹⁶ Her religion was one of salvation and included an eating and drinking ceremony with sacramental effect similar to that of the Christian eucharist. Cybele's followers practiced dionysian rituals of music, dance, and frenzy leading to ecstasy and prophecy.⁴¹⁷ Benko says that the whore city of Babylon in *Revelation* was patterned on the image of Cybele and that "Babylon the great, mother of whores" really should read, by displacing the comma, "Babylon, the Great Mother of whores" with the meaning that Christians should leave the orgiastic rites of Cybele, the demonic and sinful Babylon.⁴¹⁸

Gnostic Kollyridians and Montanists, in particular, identified Mary with the Great Mother.⁴¹⁹ All major elements of the cult of Cybele reappear in Montanism, a Christian movement highly emotional in nature, built on faith not reason, and characterised by intense apocalypticism, ecstasy, and an emphasis on the role of women.⁴²⁰ It included dionysian aspects such as enthusiasm, mystical union, sacred sexuality, ecstasy, as well as

⁴¹⁵Benko, *The Virgin Goddess*, p.15.

⁴¹⁶Ibid., p. 71. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 299, p. 204. Jung notes that Attis as son and lover raises the incest problem which leads to ritual castration in the Attis-Cybele cult. Ibid., par. 659, p. 423. Attis was the son-lover of Cybele, mother of the gods. Driven mad by her insane love for him, he castrated himself under a pine tree. In one version Attis actually was changed into a pine tree. Arthur Cotterell, *A Dictionary of World Mythology*, new ed. rev. and expanded (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 20-21. Cotterell notes that in Phrygia, the spring festival was held in honour of the self-mutilated and resurrected god Attis, the son of the mother goddess Cybele. In Rome, the mystery cult was introduced in 205 B.C. Just as the god died and was restored to life, so the initiate, in union with him, entered a state of blessedness which was thought to endure beyond the grave. Union was achieved through either self-mutilation or a sacred marriage.

⁴¹⁷Ibid., p. 74-77.

⁴¹⁸Ibid., p. 106.

⁴¹⁹Ibid., p. 3.

⁴²⁰Ibid., p.151.

sexual abstention.⁴²¹ The Kollyridians were a local branch of the Montanists in Thrace. Benko says they elevated the Blessed Virgin Mary to goddess, worshipped her, and integrated pagan practices surrounding the mother goddess into their religious rituals.⁴²² For example, bread was sacrificed to Mary.⁴²³ Bread as sacrifice has a long tradition; according to Jung, it has a fourfold meaning. It is an agricultural product. It is a product requiring special processing from grain. It is an expression of psychic achievement and human vitality. Finally, it is a manifestation of mana or of the vegetation daemon. It is therefore, a symbol for a complicated physical and psychic situation.⁴²⁴ Demeter, Artemis, and other divinities accepted cakes as cultic sacrificial offerings from women,⁴²⁵ and for the Romans the most solemn form of marriage was the sharing of bread between husband and wife.⁴²⁶ The ancients were also familiar with the concept of divine bread having restorative powers⁴²⁷ and with the idea of mystical transubstantiation.⁴²⁸ This illustrates the nature and background of the pagan practices and cybelian elements which were integrated into Kollyridian religious rituals surrounding the Blessed Virgin Mary especially in her manifestation as black madonna.

Numerous black madonna sites with connections to Cybele have been noted. The Madonna Nera in Tindari, Sicily, was built on a Cybele site. Lyons, the city of Cybele, is

⁴²¹Ibid., p.158.

⁴²²Ibid., p.173, 191.

⁴²³Ibid., p.172.

⁴²⁴C.G. Jung, "Transformation Symbolism in the Mass," in *Psychology and Religion*, 2d. Ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 11, par. 385-386, p. 254.

⁴²⁵Benko, *The Virgin Goddess*, p. 175.

⁴²⁶Ibid., p. 177.

⁴²⁷Ibid., p. 181.

⁴²⁸Ibid., p. 182.

a black virgin city whose black virgin is assumed to be a replica of an ancient image, perhaps the image of Cybele, which had survived from the huge temple of Cybele which was replaced by a Christian church. Monte Vergine in Italy has a Madonna Bruna at the site of a sanctuary of Cybele.⁴²⁹ St. Peter's in the Vatican is built on the site of a sanctuary of Cybele and Attis which was called Phrygian.⁴³⁰ The fujenti rites of the Madonna dell'Arco in Naples are highly reminiscent, if not directly descended from, cybelian rites.⁴³¹

The fujenti are "zealous devotees" of the Madonna of the Arch who make a pilgrimage to the sanctuary on the first Monday after Easter. They come running or skipping from their home villages dressed in white with a blue sash around the waist and across the back. Once inside the sanctuary they cry aloud, mingling prayers, supplications, and groans. They seem to be in a trance. Some proceed on their knees, some run, some hurl themselves abruptly to the floor. Some faint and others are seized by convulsive fits. Before the black madonna, the fujenti present candles, votive offerings, flowers and other gifts such as images on which are painted scenes of their supplication. When they leave the church, they gather to regain their strength by eating and drinking, and resting, then join in the village festival. The Madonna dell'Arco is considered to be a highly effective intercessor for the people and is associated with a powerful union movement in Italy.⁴³² The fujenti rites, then, seem to be associated with the dionysian rites of Cybele, an

⁴²⁹Ibid., p. 214.

⁴³⁰Ibid., p. 164.

⁴³¹Ibid., p. 159.

⁴³²Tentori, "An Italian Religious Feast: The Fujenti Rites of the Madonna dell'Arco, Naples," p. 99.

ecstatic tradition repressed in Christianity which resists loss of conscious control. The ecstatic tradition, however, returns symbolically in the black madonna as seen by the fujenti worship of the Madonna dell' Arco.

Within the dionysian cult, the practicant was filled with the spirit, or with dionysian madness considered to bring about the deepest religious experience accessible to humans and a return to unity with God because the person was filled with, and absorbed into, the divine. The state resulted in a temporary suspension of order in human relations, and brought about a sacramental demonstration of chaos, considered to be the condition of commingling elements and the absence of divisions and separations, as in mysticism.⁴³³ Caitlin Matthews writes that with the veneration of the black madonna goes the apophatic spirituality developed by Dionysius the Areopagite - that is, a way of unknowing but not of unwisdom⁴³⁴ or knowledge of the deity brought about through ignorance and darkness.⁴³⁵ Matthews associates this aspect of the black madonna tradition to Kali, Lillith and the Sibylline tradition referred to earlier.⁴³⁶ The word sibyll and the name Sibilla are Latin derivatives of the name Cybele.⁴³⁷

The Great Mother then is perceived to have survived in the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially in the figure of the dark madonna which carries the repressed

⁴³³Benko, *The Virgin Goddess*, p. 69.

⁴³⁴Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 205.

⁴³⁵Ibid., p.345.

⁴³⁶Ibid., p.205.

⁴³⁷Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 160.

pagan traditions of mysticism and ecstasy associated with dionysian cybelian rituals and practices. Robert Graves writes that the Roman Catholic tradition has been slowly but inexorably reverting to the ancient Mother Son Goddess religion since the first century.⁴³⁸

Metaphor

A fourth major category is that of the black madonna as metaphor, a metaphor which moves to action. This interpretation is associated with the conception of God-Feminine,⁴³⁹ female deity, the feminine dimension of God, the feminine aspect of the divine,⁴⁴⁰ and the Divine Feminine.⁴⁴¹ The concept of the black madonna as metaphor builds upon the work done by feminist theologians such as Nelle Morton and Mary Daly.

Nelle Morton defines metaphor as a process or action which has two parts. First it is iconoclastic: it shatters familiar images and concepts. Second it is revelatory: it reveals or shows images of a new reality. Metaphor, Morton says, begins with the concrete and demands total presence to it. Morton looks upon the goddess as a metaphoric image.⁴⁴² In this sense of metaphor the black madonna shatters the familiar image of the white virgin and the male god and reveals or shows the new reality (or return to the ancient reality) of female divinity. Mary Daly says that “metaphors evoke action, movement.” By clashing

⁴³⁸Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 61. “... the popular appeal of modern Catholicism, is, despite the patriarchal Trinity and the all-male priesthood, based rather on the Aegean Mother-and-Son religious tradition, to which it has slowly reverted, than on its Aramaean or Indo-European ‘warrior-god’ elements.”

⁴³⁹Genia Pauli Haddon, *Body Metaphors: Releasing God-Feminine in Us All* (New York: Crossroad, 1988).

⁴⁴⁰Joan Chamberlain Engelsman, *The Feminine Dimension of the Divine* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), p. 149, 152.

⁴⁴¹Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 15.

⁴⁴²Nelle Morton, “The Goddess as a Metaphoric Image,” in *The Journey is Home* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), p. 152.

with conventional logic, metaphors connect memory with the future as they transform our perception of reality.⁴⁴³ In metaphor according to Daly, “deep Being is disclosed.” Metaphors become “Metaphors of Metabeing.”⁴⁴⁴ When Daly says “Metaphors of the Black Madonnas ... transcend ... depictions of the Arch-Image,”⁴⁴⁵ she defines the black madonna as a metaphor or image of God. The idea of the black madonna as metaphor implies divinity.

Basing her work upon the feminist theological concepts of metaphor presented above, Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum also considers that black madonnas are a metaphor for action. She writes that Our Lady of Guadalupe inspired the Mexican revolution of 1820 as well as the twentieth century struggle of grape workers of Delano.⁴⁴⁶ She considers the black madonnas of Italy to be a metaphor for Italian vernacular religious and political beliefs, for the beliefs of the subaltern peoples of the earth, and as a metaphor for popular hope for liberation.⁴⁴⁷ She refers to the “implicit liberation theology of black madonnas.”⁴⁴⁸ This position is substantiated by a presentation of the practices and rituals associated with black madonnas in Italy documenting the role they play as symbols of various counter-cultural, social justice, and political activist movements. For example, Birnbaum notes the links of the black madonna to base communities in Apulia,⁴⁴⁹ to student movements in Bologna, Rome, Naples, and Palermo (In Palermo the students

⁴⁴³Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 11.

⁴⁴⁴Daly, *Pure Lust* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), p. 120.

⁴⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁴⁴⁶Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 12.

⁴⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 139.

called themselves *la pantera nera* or black panther which Birnbaum says is reminiscent of Isis and Cybele.),⁴⁵⁰ to political movements at Bologna,⁴⁵¹ to the rebellion of socialist fasci siciliani in 1893-94 which was considered the first proletarian act in Italy,⁴⁵² to unions⁴⁵³ and to women's feminist and political movements.⁴⁵⁴ Birnbaum also cites various works of art such as the folk opera *Il viaggio della Madonna Nera* (*The Journey of the Black Madonna*) which is dedicated to Mother Earth and based on the cult of the Black Virgin in southern Italy.⁴⁵⁵ "Vernacular beliefs in justice and equality with difference, embodied in black madonnas, are visible in the contemporary nonviolent cultural, and political transformation of Italy,"⁴⁵⁶ she states.

The analyses of a number of other Italian scholars are presented as well to support Birnbaum's position.⁴⁵⁷ Tullio Tentori in his study of the fujenti rites, mentioned earlier in this chapter, notes the association of the Madonna dell' Arco for centuries with unions in Southern Italy.⁴⁵⁸ China Galland in her book on black madonnas writes that the Czestochowa madonna is credited by Poles for their victory against the Bolshevik Army in 1920.⁴⁵⁹ Birnbaum, herself, who writes primarily about the black madonnas of Italy, points out that Our Lady of Chastochowa in Poland is a national Polish symbol who was

⁴⁵⁰Ibid., p. 9, 172-173.

⁴⁵¹Ibid., p. 9, 25, 190.

⁴⁵²Ibid., p. 71-72

⁴⁵³Ibid., p. 150.

⁴⁵⁴Ibid., p. 54, 190-191.

⁴⁵⁵Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁵⁶Ibid., p.171.

⁴⁵⁷Ibid., p. 16, 20, 25, 29.

⁴⁵⁸Tentori, "An Italian Religious Feast: The Fujenti Rites of the Madonna dell' Arco, Naples," p. 99.

⁴⁵⁹Galland, *Longing for Darkness*, p.191.

the symbolic leader of the Solidarity labour movement in the 1980's and that Our Lady of Guadalupe is the 'most potent religious, political, and cultural image of the Chicano/Mexican.'⁴⁶⁰

Elizabeth Johnson in her book *She Who Is* writes of "salutary darkness,"⁴⁶¹ "dark radiance of love,"⁴⁶² and of the "great and terrible mother on the prowl for her own" which is, she says, "a suitable metaphor for a feminist retrieval of the wrath of God".⁴⁶³ The goddess, she says, "is not the expression of the feminine dimension of the divine, but the expression of the fullness of divine power and care shown in a female."⁴⁶⁴ Defined as a metaphor, which moves to action, the black madonna becomes an image of the divine, "the metaphorical appearance of the living spirit in matter."⁴⁶⁵ This is the feminist theological and socio-historical perspective on the black madonna.

In summary, published scholarship traces black madonnas back to ancient black goddess roots. Black madonnas as earth moon goddess symbolize fertility, growth, birth, death, and cyclic return. As wisdom, the black madonna symbolizes the immanence of the divine, the Holy Spirit, Sophia, the Shekinah, and, through the ancient idea of sacred sexuality symbolizes a vitality and zest for life. The black madonna as Great Mother represents the mystical and ecstatic traditions, called dionysian and cybelian, which

⁴⁶⁰Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas*, p. 12.

⁴⁶¹Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), p. 241

⁴⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁴⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁴⁶⁵Matthews, *Sophia Goddess of Wisdom*, p. 30.

survived in the repressed religious traditions of Montanists, Cathars, Templars, and Kollyridians. Finally, the black madonna is considered to be a metaphor which moves to action, with the implication of metaphor as signifying divinity. Black madonnas are considered to be manifestations of aspects of the divine notably of matter, of the feminine, and of the dark aspects of the divine. This interpretation is presented in another framework by Jungian analysts as will be seen in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: A Jungian Interpretation of the Black Madonna

The task of the fourth chapter is to interpret the phenomenon of the black madonna from the perspective of Jung's thought. An interpretation of the black madonna as archetype will be presented. The concept of the black madonna as primordial Great Mother will be developed. The significance of blackness in the archetype will be amplified. Finally, implications of the analysis, namely the priority of the maternal, will be presented.

Black Madonna As Archetype

As seen in chapter two, study of black madonnas has shown that, from time immemorial, there has been a female divinity - a great mother or great goddess figure - powerful and fertile who was often portrayed as black. Over time she differentiated into a variety of goddesses each manifesting an aspect, or some aspects, of the Great Goddess. Later, male consorts appeared and gods became dominant until finally, one god dominated. Patriarchal monotheisms moved to suppress memory of the goddess. Evidence of her presence, however, either remained, or crept back into religious tradition.⁴⁶⁶

The rise of the Blessed Virgin Mary demonstrates this trend. In the early years of

⁴⁶⁶Chapter two, section five of this thesis, entitled, *How did black madonnas come to be cult objects in Europe?* delineates this development. Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (Princeton: University Press, 1954), fn. 15, p. 340, 343. Neumann shows how mythological and religious evolution from matriarchy to patriarchy as seen in the differentiation of the Great Goddess into goddesses and gods, and eventually into one God, was necessary to the development of consciousness. It parallels symbolically human psychological progression from unconscious existence to the development of ego-consciousness. The task of the future, he says, is "the responsible *rapprochement* of human consciousness with the powers of the collective psyche."

Christianity, Mary was in a position of relative anonymity, a background figure. However, in 431, she was declared *Theotokos*, or God bearer. In 1431 the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was accepted by the Council of Basel and declared dogma in 1854.⁴⁶⁷ In 1950, the dogma of the Assumption of Mary was promulgated. Some religious traditions have never totally suppressed the goddess; thus Kali, Tara, and the Changing Woman⁴⁶⁸ survive. The presence of black madonnas, linked to earlier goddesses has been explained in various ways. Even if these theories were proven, however, there would still remain the question of why the goddess comes to life again and again in greatly changed circumstances throughout human history. Hebrew scholar, Raphael Patai, suggests it is because the goddess answers a psychological need.⁴⁶⁹ The Jungian explanation for this is the archetype.

Ean Begg writes that the black madonna is a “still-living archetypal image.”⁴⁷⁰ “No appeal to reason by means of such evidence as can be produced,” he writes, “carries much weight in comparison with the appeal to the imagination that the images themselves make.”⁴⁷¹ This is because the archetype exerts a fascination on the mind.⁴⁷² It draws

⁴⁶⁷ *Le Petit Robert 2: Dictionnaire universel des noms propres*, 6e ed. (Paris: Le Robert, 1982), p. 1150.

⁴⁶⁸ Ean Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin* (London: Arkana, 1985), p. 42. Kali is the goddess of time. Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother* (New York: Princeton, 1955), p. 152, 258, 332. Kali is also world mother. Tara is the great good goddess, mistress of the boats and also represents the highest form of spiritual transformation through womanhood. Virginia Beane Rutter, *Woman Changing Woman* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), p. 38-39. Changing Woman is creator of the Navajo. She is responsible for the vegetative cycle and the human cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. China Galland, *Longing for Darkness* (Markham, Ont.: Penguin, 1990), p. 144. Peter Lindigger, philologist, says that “Tara and the Black Madonna are not connected historically or geographically but they have the same archetypal roots.”

⁴⁶⁹ Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (Detroit: Wayne State, 1990), p. 152-153.

⁴⁷⁰ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 134.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 130.

⁴⁷² Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 467, p. 308-9.

energy to itself and, in turn, gives back energy. Black madonnas manifest the archetype in their creation by the artist who gave objective form to an archetypal image and in the fascination which they exert as cult object shown by the ongoing attractiveness of the image to people over time. The black madonna figure, concrete, female, virgin, mother, and black, gives expression to the archetype of the feminine.

As archetype of the feminine, the black madonna manifests the principle of connectedness and passion for life referred to by Jung as eros.⁴⁷³ She stands for the need to relate to the power of the feminine and to the spirit of relationship which remains largely in the unconscious.⁴⁷⁴ Ean Begg says the black madonna claims absolute equality with men thereby becoming a symbol of new relationship between the sexes⁴⁷⁵ and of a new attitude toward the feminine,⁴⁷⁶ thus the link to Lilith who claimed equality with Adam.

As an image, the black madonna represents the dark aspect or pole of the feminine archetype, an aspect not normally acknowledged in western culture. Fred Gustafson writes that it "is the dark side of the archetype that alerts us to its autonomy."⁴⁷⁷ Black madonnas adopt a "subversive posture vis-a-vis the rules of male-dominated theology"⁴⁷⁸ and are associated with marginal popular beliefs such as the belief that

⁴⁷³ Daryl Sharp, *Jung Lexicon* (Toronto: Inner City, 1991), p. 51.

⁴⁷⁴ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 134.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid, p.126.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid, p.130.

⁴⁷⁷ Gustafson, *The Black Madonna*, p. xi.

⁴⁷⁸ Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 130.

black madonnas resuscitate babies long enough for them to be baptised.⁴⁷⁹ They are also associated with more elaborate marginal traditions such as the Merovingian which includes the descent of Mérovée from the child of Jesus and Mary Magdalene⁴⁸⁰ destined to restore the Merovingian dynasty “possibly at the head of a united Europe.”⁴⁸¹ The black madonna is a symbol of the hidden, repressed, underground streams of Christianity such as Cathars, Templars, alchemists, and Gnostics which are characterized by greater recognition of the feminine and bear associations to the black madonna.⁴⁸²

As a Christian phenomenon, the black madonna compensates the one-sided conscious attitudes of the age as well as centuries of repression of the feminine. Christianity opposes patriarchal mastery of nature to the black madonna’s healing power of nature, chastity to sexuality, virgin to whore.⁴⁸³ The black madonna stands for the shadow side of the church and represents archetypal opposition to the Goddess Reason. She is a symbol for the “elemental and uncontrollable source of life, possessing a spirit and wisdom of its own not subject to organisation or the laws of rationality.”⁴⁸⁴ In these ways the black madonna reveals the autonomy of the dark side of the archetype.

Shadow of the church, the black madonna also stands for the shadow of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Marion Woodman writes that the Blessed Virgin Mary in her

⁴⁷⁹Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰Ibid.

⁴⁸¹Ibid, p. 130, 145.

⁴⁸²Ibid, p. 143, 145.

⁴⁸³Ibid, p. 131.

⁴⁸⁴Ibid, p. 27.

human bewilderment is symbolized by the black madonna.⁴⁸⁵ As Queen of Heaven, Mary represents the maternal aspect of the feminine, static and protective; whereas the black madonna is the dynamic, transforming aspect of the feminine related to the passion, sexuality, and fertility of the love goddesses.⁴⁸⁶ “The black madonna, associated with both earth and fertility, is an image of the divine feminine reflecting the ancient connection between women’s nature and the goddess of love. Through her, the Great Goddess still lives in Christianity.”⁴⁸⁷

Goddess spirituality went underground. As the dark pole of the archetype, black madonnas embody the goddess spirituality which was never totally suppressed. Ean Begg says that the black madonna continues the cult of Egyptian Isis. The words Egypt and alchemy both derive from the word *Khem* meaning black earth. *Chemia* in Greek means transmutation.⁴⁸⁸ Thus, the black madonna, like black Isis and Black Wisdom, represents transformation. At the individual level, this means the dark latency of our own essential nature, that which we were always meant to be.⁴⁸⁹ At the collective level, this means the “spirit of evolutionary consciousness that lies hidden in matter,”⁴⁹⁰ or the power within to bring forth the eternal embodied in the human.⁴⁹¹ The black madonna is the symbol or carrier of the development in the psyche whereby the psyche begins to grow in such a way

⁴⁸⁵Marion Woodman, *The Pregnant Virgin* (Toronto: Inner City, 1985), p. 100.

⁴⁸⁶Nancy Qualls-Corbett, *The Sacred Prostitute* (Toronto: Inner City, 1988), p. 152.

⁴⁸⁷Ibid, p. 153.

⁴⁸⁸Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p.144.

⁴⁸⁹Ibid, p. 144.

⁴⁹⁰Ibid, p. 131.

⁴⁹¹Marion Woodman, “Foreword,” in Tataya Mato, *The Black Madonna Within* (Chicago: Open Court, 1994), p. xiii..

that spirit is together with everyday life, with the body, and with the earth.⁴⁹² Woodman writes that the black madonna is the redemption of matter, the intersection of sexuality and spirituality, and the loving biological tie to the body.⁴⁹³

Our Lady of the Hermits,⁴⁹⁴ the Black Virgin of Einsiedeln, is the symbol of the legend of St. Meinrad which illustrates the transformational aspect of the black madonna.

St. Meinrad, a Benedictine monk, in around 835, withdrew deep into the Finsterwald forest near Zurich in order to pray, fast, and have greater solitude. He took with him a statue of the Blessed Virgin.⁴⁹⁵ On the way, he saved two young ravens in a nest being threatened by hawks. Meinrad chased away the hawks and nurtured the ravens who afterwards stayed with him. In the forest, Meinrad built a cell and a small chapel which he dedicated to Mary, the Mother of God. Meinrad lived in the hermitage, now the site of the monastery at Einsiedeln, for twenty-five years. One day while praying, Meinrad was surrounded by a "host of demons ... *tenebrarum ministris* ... servants of darkness" so that he could not see the light of day. He prostrated himself on the ground in prayer. After a long time he saw a light; an angel came and commanded the demons to go away. He was never confronted by demons again. In January, 861, Meinrad was murdered by thieves who were later apprehended and convicted because Meinrad's ravens alerted authorities and identified the murderers.⁴⁹⁶

Significant elements in this tale are the forest, the encounter with the forces of darkness, the ravens, and the presence from the outset of devotion to the Blessed Virgin

⁴⁹²Galland, *Longing For Darkness*, p. 142. The author quotes from an interview with Jungian analyst, Dora Kalff.

⁴⁹³Woodman, *The Pregnant Virgin*, p. 122.

⁴⁹⁴Gustafson, *The Black Madonna*, p. 23.

⁴⁹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 2-3.

Mary. In German, *finster* means obscure, dark, gloomy, sombre; *Wald* means forest. Thus *Finsterwald* means dark forest. In Jungian terms, the forest symbolizes a place of initiation and transformation. It is a place of life as well as death and decay. It is a maternal symbol of dual nature, that which gives life and that which takes it away.⁴⁹⁷ The forest represents *prima materia*, the beginning substance. It symbolizes, that which is of nature and of the earth, the feminine in a primitive undifferentiated state.⁴⁹⁸

Darkness too is of dual nature. Gustafson notes that it is the darkness of the black madonna which resists idealization.⁴⁹⁹ The dark element puts us back in relation to the earth⁵⁰⁰ from which we emerge and into which we return. In this way the darkness is both creative and transformational. It represents unconscious contents⁵⁰¹ and irrational (beyond our understanding) processes of life,⁵⁰² hence the symbolic significance of Meinrad's encounter with the forces of darkness. The encounter with the forces of darkness, that is the unconscious, led to consciousness, symbolized by the coming of the light and the angel who banished the demons. Thus the darkness of the black madonna symbolizes both the encounter with evil and the healing energy which leads to transformation. (Meinrad became a saint.) The blackness represents the dark matrix out of which comes creativity and renewal.⁵⁰³ The ravens, too, associated with death, death goddesses, and the black

⁴⁹⁷Ibid., p. 6. Emma Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz, *The Grail Legend*, p. 39. C.G.Jung, "The Spirit Mercurius," in *Alchemical Studies* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1967), C.W. 13, par. 241, p. 194.

⁴⁹⁸Gustafson, *The Black Madonna*, p. 9.

⁴⁹⁹Ibid., p. xi.

⁵⁰⁰Ibid., p. xiii.

⁵⁰¹Ibid., p. 17.

⁵⁰²Ibid., p. 31.

⁵⁰³Ibid., p. 112.

madonna, alert us to the transforming aspect of darkness.

Gustafson writes that the implications of the black madonna tradition as exemplified by the Black Virgin of Einsiedeln are to give religious expression to the feminine aspect of God and to extend the concept of the Self, or God, to include the dark aspect, both the dark side of the Father through judgments and the dark side of the Mother through irrationality and meaninglessness.⁵⁰⁴ The church, Gustafson says, by accepting the Black Madonna of Einsiedeln as the Blessed Virgin, granted her the ecclesiastical recognition necessary for her to become the means by which the feminine and the dark aspect could be integrated into church and culture.⁵⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the qualities symbolized by the black madonna remain largely unrealized in contemporary society. Marion Woodman writes that the black madonna, symbol of the suppressed and suffering feminine, is the archetypal image at the centre of our culture.⁵⁰⁶

In summary, the Jungian interpretation of the black madonna phenomenon is that the black madonna gives expression to the archetype of the feminine, in particular the dark pole of the feminine. She opens the way for integration into church and culture of the feminine as an aspect of God and of matter and darkness as aspects of God. However the potential remains largely unrealized.

⁵⁰⁴Ibid., p. 37.

⁵⁰⁵Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁰⁶Woodman, *The Pregnant Virgin*, p. 122.

The Great Mother

From a Jungian perspective there are two major stages in the occurrence of the metaphor of the Great Mother. One occurrence is that of the fertile and life giving mother exemplified by early Earth Mother and fertility goddess figures. This figure already represents a differentiated or partial aspect of the archetypal feminine. It is the uroboric Great Mother which is the primary occurrence of the metaphor. She is the primordial, archetypal Great Mother image, the maternal uroboros which contains all images and opposites in undifferentiated form. An essential feature of the primordial image is, therefore, that it combines positive and negative attributes which create the ambivalence characteristic of the original situation of the unconscious.⁵⁰⁷ (The ambivalence is due to the death and rebirth cycle which are required for differentiation to occur. The process is intrapsychic and was explained in chapter one.) The primordial image refers to “an inward image at work in the human psyche.”⁵⁰⁸ Only after millennia of sifting through images emerging from the unconscious, was humanity able to formulate images more concretely and allow them to take form as animal and human figures.

Jung wrote that “an archetypal content expresses itself, first and foremost, in metaphors.”⁵⁰⁹ The metaphor of the prehistoric Great Mother, found in archaeological sites, stands between the uroboric Great Mother of the original state of unconscious humanity and the differentiated goddess figures which followed.⁵¹⁰ Erich Neumann

⁵⁰⁷Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p. 12.

⁵⁰⁸Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁰⁹Jung, “The Psychology of the Child Archetype,” in CW 9i, par. 267, p. 157.

⁵¹⁰Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p. 19 and Schema on page opposite.

characterized the uroboric Great Mother as elementary and transformative, positive and negative, symbolized by images such as Lady of the Plants and Lady of the Beasts. The attributes identified by Neumann as characteristic of the uroboric Great Mother may be seen in the black madonna.

First and foremost, the black madonna, as noted in chapter two, is identified as the Blessed Virgin Mary, known in Christianity as the Mother of God, who succeeds Great Mother goddesses such as Cybele, Isis, and Diana. As the Blessed Virgin Mary, the black madonna corresponds to the positive elementary aspect of the maternal uroboros which is embracing, nourishing, protecting, stable, and static.⁵¹¹ As earth goddess, Nature, and World Soul,⁵¹² as Brigit who ensures the milk at lambing time, as Ostara, Rosmerta, and St. Anne, as Hathor and Diana of Ephesus, as well as in her association with ark and chalice, the black madonna gives expression to the positive elementary aspect of the uroboric Great Mother. The static, elemental form of the Great Mother as black madonna is perhaps best imaged by Our Lady of Montserrat, seated solemn, stately, and in herself thronelike. When associated with death goddess, crypt, and serpent, however, the black madonna gives expression to the negative elementary character of the uroboric Great Mother, entombing and suffocating.⁵¹³

Attributes of positive transformative character may be seen in black madonna

⁵¹¹Ibid, pl. 26, 29. Qualls-Corbett, *The Sacred Prostitute*, p. 152.

⁵¹² The goddesses and images referred to in the section on the black madonna as Great Mother are referenced, and their links to black madonnas explored, in chapters two and three.

⁵¹³Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, CW 5, par. 504, p. 328; par. 578, p. 373. Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p. 147 ff.

associations with moon goddesses, the triple goddess, with Brigit and Ceridwen, both keepers of the fire of Wisdom, with Wisdom in sacred sexuality, with Lilith as dynamic, transforming sexuality, and with cybelian and dionysian ecstatic rites. Known as mediatrix and initiatrix, the black madonna is a death goddess who helps the dying at the hour of death and who saves dead babies from limbo. As vegetation goddess she symbolizes cyclic return. These are traits of the positive transforming character of the uroboric Great Mother.⁵¹⁴ Attributes of negative transformative character may be seen in black madonna associations with Kali (Sara Le Kali, Callee of the Gaelic tradition) with Morrighan, Black Annis, Grey Hag, Morgan le Faye, Hag of Beare, and Hecate, with Freja as nightmare - the evil witch riding through the skies - and with the loathely damsel in the Grail myth. The black madonna has affinities with the guild of butchers which links her to Artemis whose name is related etymologically to *artamos* slaughterer.⁵¹⁵ The black madonna is called the Virgin Who Will Give Birth, Our Subterranean Lady at Chartres.⁵¹⁶ She stood atop the skull of St. Meinrad at Einsiedeln.⁵¹⁷ Her forerunner as Our Lady of Guadalupe was Coatlicue who accepted human sacrifice.⁵¹⁸ In all of these aspects, the black madonna reveals the traits of the negative transformative character of the uroboric Terrible Mother.

⁵¹⁴Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p. 286.

⁵¹⁵Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 49.

⁵¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵¹⁷Gustafson, *The Black Madonna*, p. 61.

⁵¹⁸Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p. 153.

Most symbols and goddesses associated with the black madonna are dual in nature. Like Artemis, Cybele, Hecate, Hathor, and Isis, black madonnas express duality in their manifestations. One specific example of the dual aspects is that black madonnas, like Freyja, have both a death aspect and a fertility aspect and are supplicated today in both of these roles. The expression of duality in symbols, revealing dual aspects in nature, is characteristic of the primordial Great Mother.

Neumann describes the primordial Great Mother as the Lady of the Plants⁵¹⁹ and Lady of the Beasts.⁵²⁰ He says that “the bond between woman and plant can be followed through all the stages of human symbolism.”⁵²¹ As Lady of the Plants, the uroboric Great Mother is associated with various plant symbols such as the sheaf of wheat, the rose, the iris, the lotus, and the lily symbol of the highest psychic and spiritual development.⁵²² Hence the significance of the association of black madonnas, with nature, vegetation, forest, and trees and the significance of their names - Our Lady of the Dark Forest, Our Lady of the Brambles, and so on - as noted in chapters two and three. Like the primordial Great Mother, the black madonna is Lady of Plants.

As Lady of the Beasts,⁵²³ the Great Mother is associated with bees “looked upon as a symbol of the feminine potency of nature,”⁵²⁴ birds (bird-headed), snakes (snake-

⁵¹⁹Ibid., p. 240.

⁵²⁰Ibid, p. 268.

⁵²¹Ibid., p. 262.

⁵²²Ibid.

⁵²³Ibid, p. 268.

⁵²⁴Ibid., p. 265.

headed),⁵²⁵ cows (Hathor), the wolf, symbol of *prima materia*,⁵²⁶ lions on whom she rides, pigs and bulls sacrificed to the goddess, as well as deer and horses, as noted in chapter one. Neumann writes that while the plant is a symbol of vegetative life, that is a life without consciousness, consisting essentially of reaction, the animal is the symbol of the next higher stage, that of drive, activity, and movement, representing sensory consciousness.⁵²⁷ Hence the significance of the association of black madonnas with bovines, birds, ravens and serpents, and with other animals through their forerunner goddesses. The black madonna at Banyuls is called *Notre Dame des Abeilles*, Our Lady of the Bees.⁵²⁸ Like the primordial Great Mother, the black madonna is Lady of the Beasts.

Finally, the primordial Great Mother, because of the unconsciousness of the original state of humanity, is characterized by darkness. Neumann says: "Night sky, earth, underworld, and primordial ocean are correlated with this feminine principle, which originally appears as dark and darkly embracing. The uroboric goddess of the beginning is the Great Goddess of the Night, although she is seldom worshipped directly as such."⁵²⁹ In all myths, he says the source of life is in darkness, the symbol of the unconscious.⁵³⁰ The blackness of the black madonna, then, symbolizes the blackness which contains all, the blackness of the original unconscious state whose metaphor is that

⁵²⁵Ibid, p. 272.

⁵²⁶C.G.Jung, "The Prima Materia," in *Psychology and Alchemy*, 2d. ed. (London: Routledge, 1968), C.W. 12, fn. 50, p. 388.

⁵²⁷Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p. 277.

⁵²⁸Begg, *The Black Virgin*, p. 79.

⁵²⁹Ibid., p. 212.

⁵³⁰Ibid.

of the primordial, or uroboric, Great Mother.

In summary, the black madonna, like the primordial Great Mother may be described as elementary and transformative, positive and negative in character. She is Lady of the Plants and Lady of the Beasts both dual in nature. Like the uroboric Great Mother she is characterized by darkness. The black madonna, therefore, shares the attributes of the primordial Great Mother.

Blackness

The blackness of the black madonna has been interpreted both positively and negatively: positively as that which contains all and negatively as that which lies in shadow. The blackness has been interpreted to symbolize wisdom, embodiment, earth, matter, fertility, death, transformation, latency, and the unconscious. To this, the Jungian interpretation has added the concept of *prima materia*. (The forest of St. Meinrad was considered to represent *prima materia* defined as the beginning substance symbolizing nature, the earth, and the feminine in a primitive undifferentiated state.) The Jungian term *prima materia* is drawn from Jung's work on alchemy.

Jung called alchemy the black art.⁵³¹ The alchemist wrote that he was striving to transform gross material into gold.⁵³² Jung, however, said that the alchemists were

⁵³¹C.G.Jung, "Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy," in *Psychology and Alchemy*, 2d. ed. (London: Routledge, 1968), C.W. 12, par. 85, p. 67.

⁵³²C.G.Jung, "Religious Ideas In Alchemy," in *Psychology and Alchemy*, 2d. ed. (London: Routledge, 1968), C.W. 12, par. 343, p. 243.

projecting collective archetypes, notably the “image of the spirit imprisoned in the darkness of the world,”⁵³³ onto natural matter. This happened because everything unknown and empty is filled with psychological projection.⁵³⁴ Hence the alchemist described a process of hypothetical physical transformation which symbolised the process of psychic transformation.⁵³⁵ Alchemy, Jung wrote, was “rather like an undercurrent to the Christianity that ruled on the surface.”⁵³⁶

The stages of the alchemical process of transformation are *nigredo*, the blackening (or disintegration, putrefaction), *albedo*, the whitening (or purification), and *rubedo*, the reddening (or coming into consciousness).⁵³⁷ The black madonna can be associated with each stage. Her purification (the whitening or *albedo*) is celebrated at Candlemas or the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The reddening (*rubedo*) is seen in the growing awareness of the black madonna in this century which indicates that she has arrived at the stage of *rubedo* or the coming into consciousness. This is indicated as well by the relatively numerous reports of apparitions of Mary in the last two centuries.⁵³⁸ The *rubedo* is also symbolized in the sculpted red robes of the Black Virgin of Einsiedeln. (Red is the colour of the Great Mother.)

⁵³³C.G.Jung, “Epilogue,” in *Psychology and Alchemy*, 2d. ed. (London: Routledge, 1968), C.W. 12, par. 557, p. 476.

⁵³⁴Jung, “Religious Ideas In Alchemy,” C.W. 12, par. 332, p. 228.

⁵³⁵Jung, “Religious Ideas In Alchemy,” C.W. 12, par. 346, p. 245.

⁵³⁶C.G.Jung, “Introduction to the Religious and Psychological Problems of Alchemy,” in *Psychology and Alchemy*, 2d. ed. (London: Routledge, 1968), C.W. 12, par. 26, p. 23.

⁵³⁷Jung, “Religious Ideas In Alchemy,” C.W. 12, par. 334, p. 230.

⁵³⁸Ashe, *Miracles*, p.99. Ashe notes the frequency of apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the last 150 years. Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 133. Begg writes note that the madonna appears in her white form because as she arises into consciousness she no longer needs to be black.

It is especially with the *nigredo* that the black madonna is associated, however, because she is black. *Nigredo* is “the initial state, either present from the beginning as a quality of the *prima materia*, the chaos or *massa confusa*, or else produced by the separation ... of the elements.”⁵³⁹ *Nigredo* as *prima materia*, represents the primal matter out of which all things are created. Symbols for this are dragons and serpents (derivative of the chaos monster at the beginning of time), earth mother figures, fertility goddesses, and Great Mother goddesses such as Cybele and Isis, *dea mater* and *dea nigra*. As previously noted, the black madonna is linked to these figures historically, symbolically, and archetypally. *Nigredo* as *putrefactio* represents disintegration - the work in the dark - required before the new thing comes into being. Symbols for this are death goddesses, sacred sexuality, cybelian and dionysian frenzy and ecstasy, also associated with black madonnas. The black madonna, therefore, represents *nigredo* as disintegration and *nigredo* as potential.

Alchemist Paracelsus said that *prima materia* is “the mother of the elements and of all created things,”⁵⁴⁰ thus indicating the autonomous psychic content of his projection onto matter.⁵⁴¹ Jung said that the autonomy and everlastingness of the *prima materia* in the writing of Paracelsus suggest a principle equal to the Deity, corresponding to *dea mater*. Therefore, he concluded that the alchemists came to project the highest value - God - into matter.⁵⁴² From a Jungian perspective, therefore, the black madonna, as *prima*

⁵³⁹Jung, “Religious Ideas in Alchemy,” C.W. 12, par. 334, p. 230.

⁵⁴⁰Ibid., par. 430, p. 321.

⁵⁴¹Ibid., par. 425, p. 317.

⁵⁴²Ibid., par. 431, p. 322-323.

materia carries the projection of the highest value which is God.

Priority of the Maternal

In chapter one an outline of Jung's thought was presented. It was established that Jung considered ultimate reality to be the archetypal level of the unconscious and the psyche to be the ultimate source of energies. The psyche, he said, is the "inmost mystery of life ... (whose) structure is something given, the precondition that is found to be present in every case ... the form into which all experience is poured."⁵⁴³ For Jung the most apt metaphor for this was the Great Mother as the primal being who represents the unconscious. Jung called her *mater dei*, the Matrix of all archetypes. She was, he said, "not only an image but an elemental force."⁵⁴⁴ For Jung, God is that which brings forth or gives birth. Therefore, the Great Mother is the most prior God-image. Hence the priority of the maternal in the thought of Jung.

Because the Great Mother, as metaphor for the unconscious, contains all opposites in undifferentiated form, she is, therefore, the source of all differentiation and she precedes all differentiation. This includes masculine - feminine, mother - father, differentiated feminine (e.g. goddesses), differentiated masculine (e.g. gods), and theological differentiations such as the Trinity. The Great Mother precedes the Trinity which gives her "the function of mother even of the Trinity."⁵⁴⁵ This is one implication of

⁵⁴³Jung, "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," C.W. 9i, par. 187, p. 101.

⁵⁴⁴Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, C.W. 5, par. 89, p. 57.

⁵⁴⁵John P. Dourley, "Religious Implications of Jung's Psychology," *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 40 (1995), p. 192.

the priority of the maternal.

In addition, as the Great Mother contains all within herself, she includes that which has been excluded. Jung wrote that the Trinity excludes creation in the sense of earth, body,⁵⁴⁶ and matter,⁵⁴⁷ evil whose toughest root is unconsciousness,⁵⁴⁸ and the feminine.⁵⁴⁹ He wrote that the "Trinity ... is of exclusively masculine character. The unconscious, however, transforms it into a quaternity ... (by bringing to it) the earth or the body ... symbolized ... by the Virgin (thus adding) the feminine element to (the) ... Trinity. ... The principle of evil ... appears in the poisonous quality of the *prima materia* and in other allusions. ... The unconscious is often personified by ... a feminine figure. Apparently the symbol of the quaternity issues from her. She would be the matrix of the quaternity, ... or *Mater Dei*."⁵⁵⁰ This is another implication of the priority of the maternal.

Finally as the psyche in Jung's thought is the ultimate reality, the Great Mother, as a symbol for the ultimate reality, is a God image or image of the Self. "The Self cannot be distinguished from the archetypal God-image."⁵⁵¹ The Self acts within the individual along the ego / Self axis, as was explained in chapter one, to bring about individuation of

⁵⁴⁶C.G. Jung, "Psychology and Religion," in *Psychology and Religion*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 11, par. 107, p. 62.

⁵⁴⁷C.G. Jung, "Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity," in *Psychology and Religion*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 11, par. 290, p. 195.

⁵⁴⁸*Ibid.*, par. 291, p. 197.

⁵⁴⁹Jung, "Psychology and Religion," C.W. 11, par. 107, p. 62.

⁵⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵⁵¹Jung, "Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity," C.W. 11, par. 238, p. 160.

the individual and incarnation of God.⁵⁵²

Jung understood God, from a psychological perspective, to be a function of the unconscious.⁵⁵³ This implies, he said, a reciprocal and essential relation between the individual and God, whereby the individual is a function of God and God is a psychological function of the individual. "From the empirical standpoint of analytical psychology, the God-image is the symbolic expression of a particular psychic state, or function, which is characterized by its absolute ascendancy over the will of the subjects"⁵⁵⁴ God, then, as a function of the unconscious, moves the individual to action in ways which transcend conscious understanding, by inspiration, for example.⁵⁵⁵ The soul, Jung defined as both a relation to the unconscious and a personification of unconscious contents.⁵⁵⁶ God, he defined, as an unconscious content which is a personification when thought of as personal and an image or expression of something when thought of as dynamic.⁵⁵⁷ When the dynamic principle of God, the libido, ceases to be projected outwards onto objects, it is drawn back into the soul as an "autonomous psychic complex" partially conscious because it is associated to the ego in a limited degree.⁵⁵⁸ The soul, Jung said, acts as intermediary, that is, as a function of relation

⁵⁵²C.G. Jung, "Answer to Job," in *Psychology and Religion*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), C.W. 11, par. 739-741, p. 455-457; par. 755, p. 468. "Introduction to the Religious and Psychological Problems of Alchemy," in *Psychology and Alchemy*, 2d. ed., (London: Routledge, 1968), C.W. 12, par. 26, p. 24.

⁵⁵³C.G. Jung, "The Type Problem in Poetry: The Relativity of the God-Concept in Meister Eckhart," in *Psychological Types* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1971), C.W. 6, par. 413, p. 243.

⁵⁵⁴*Ibid.*, par. 412, p. 243.

⁵⁵⁵C.G. Jung, "The Type Problem in Poetry: The Relativity of the God-Concept in Meister Eckhart," in *Psychological Types* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1971), C.W. 6, par. 412-413, p. 243.

⁵⁵⁶*Ibid.*, par. 420, p. 247.

⁵⁵⁷*Ibid.*, par. 421, p. 247-248.

⁵⁵⁸*Ibid.*, par. 421, p. 248.

between the individual and the depths of the unconscious. The determining force, God, operating from these depths is reflected by the soul, which creates symbols and images and is itself only an image. The soul is both receiver and transmitter. "As an organ of perception" it "apprehends the contents of the unconscious, and, as the creative function, gives birth to its dynamis in the form of a symbol."⁵⁵⁹

The images to which the soul gives birth may be elaborated reductively and synthetically to achieve a conscious realization which leads to a renewal of life in the individual which may be symbolized as God's birth.⁵⁶⁰ Jung wrote when "God is in the soul, i.e., when the soul becomes a vessel for the unconscious and makes itself an image or symbol of it, this is a truly happy state."⁵⁶¹ The unconscious, then, is the reality of the divine and consciousness becomes continuous with the divine. Jung felt "that his psychology is equipped through immediate dialogue with the deeper unconscious, to lead the individual into a direct confrontation with whatever aspect of the divine self-contradiction seeks resolution within that specific life."⁵⁶² Finally, the Great Mother, as a symbol or image of the Self, which is a God-image, becomes the agent for divine action leading to individuation and incarnation along the ego / Self axis. This is an additional

⁵⁵⁹Ibid., par. 426, p. 251.

⁵⁶⁰Ibid., par. 427, p. 252. The reductive method traces everything back to instinct and reality, "indeed to an over-valuation of reality and hence to the necessity of sacrifice. The synthetic method elaborates the symbolic fantasies resulting from the introversion of libido through sacrifice. This produces a new attitude to the world which offers a new potential." The transition to a new attitude is called the transcendent function. Ibid., par. 427, p. 252-253. "In the regenerated attitude the libido that was formerly sunk in the unconscious emerges in the form of some positive achievement. It is equivalent to a renewal of life symbolized by God's birth."

⁵⁶¹Ibid., par. 425, p. 251; par. 426, p. 251. Jung quoting Eckhart wrote that "God is dependent on the soul, and at the same time, that the soul is the birthplace of God."

⁵⁶²Dourley, "Religious Implications of Jung's Psychology," p. 198.

implication of the priority of the maternal in Jung's thought.

As noted above, the black madonna, characterized by the attributes of the Great Mother, is linked historically, symbolically, and archetypally, to various goddess traditions. She compensates conscious attitudes of Christianity and subverts patriarchal monotheism. She signals the reemergence of the archetype of the feminine, especially its dark pole and she offers a fuller image of the feminine than that offered by the Blessed Virgin Mary. Finally the black madonna serves to complete the symbolic portrayal of the Godhead by bringing to it both the feminine principle in its fullness and the principles of matter and darkness. Black madonnas, therefore, are powerful symbols and metaphors which serve to complete the image of both the feminine and the divine.

The black madonna is more than this however. She not only subverts, compensates, and completes, she contains all. She corresponds to Jung's concept of the Great Mother as God-image and image of the Self. Concrete, female, virgin, mother, and black, the black madonna, brings to consciousness not only that which has been excluded and therefore remained in darkness, but all that is in consciousness as well as all that remains in the unconscious. She is a symbol of the Self which accounts for the fascination which she continues to exert on humanity. It is the numinous attraction of the Self. This is why the black madonna remains a still living archetypal symbol as noted by Ean Begg and a still living Christian symbol as noted by Gilles Quispel and Maria Gimbutas. Within the context of the theoretical framework of Jung the black madonna, as a

spontaneous manifestation of the Great Mother is, herself, the most complete image, containing all opposites, the Divine Matrix which precedes differentiation and out of which all things come. Within the framework of Carl Jung's thought, therefore, the black madonna may be considered an image of the Ultimate Reality which we call God.

Conclusion

From the perspective of Jungian psychology, the black madonna may be seen as a spontaneous manifestation of the Great Mother archetype. As such, she is an image of the Ultimate Reality, which is called God. This interpretation has been developed in four chapters. In chapter one, entitled *Great Mother: The Priority of the Maternal in Jung's Psychology*, the Jungian framework within which the black madonna phenomenon was to be interpreted was presented. Jung's view of the psyche, his understanding of the Great Mother, and the priority of the maternal in Jung's thought were introduced and explained.

In chapter two, entitled *Modern Data on Black Madonnas*, information, based on the most recent research available about black madonnas, was presented in order to answer a number of questions. What is the black madonna? A black madonna is a portrayal of a female figure which is identified as the Blessed Virgin Mary, and which has inspired cults. Sometimes the madonna has a child, sometimes she is alone. Where are black madonnas found? Black madonnas are found all over the world but this thesis focuses primarily on black madonnas in Europe. Why are the madonnas black? Some madonnas are black due to physical processes such as oxidation; others were created black by intent because black had meaning for the creators and for the worshippers. What is the nature of legend and cult surrounding black madonnas? Black madonnas are considered to be miracle-working and are firmly rooted in popular culture where they

inspire veneration and worship. How did black madonnas come to be cult objects in Europe? Scholarship indicates a number of possibilities none of which are either mutually exclusive or entirely provable. Black madonnas came to be cult objects in Europe through the natural evolution of original dark goddesses, through cultural transmission, through historical migration, and through persistence of ancient goddess traditions.

In chapter three, entitled *Significant Interpretations of Black Madonnas*, perspectives on the symbolic significance of the phenomenon were presented from the vantage point of various disciplines such as theology, religion, anthropology, folklore, cultural history, and psychology. Published scholarship traces the black madonnas back to ancient black goddess roots. The black madonna, as earth moon goddess symbolizes fertility, growth, birth, death, and cyclic return. As wisdom, the black madonna symbolizes the immanence of God, the Holy Spirit, Sophia, the Shekinah. Through the ancient idea of sacred sexuality, the black madonna, as ancient love goddess and wisdom, symbolizes a vitality and zest for life. As Great Mother, the black madonna represents the mystical and ecstatic traditions, called dionysian and cybelian, which survived in the repressed religious traditions of Montanists, Cathars, Templars, and others. Finally, the black madonna is considered to be a metaphor which moves to action, with the implication of metaphor as significant of divinity. Black madonnas are considered to be manifestations of aspects of the divine notably of the feminine and dark aspects of the divine.

In chapter four, entitled *A Jungian Interpretation of the Black Madonna*, a view of the phenomenon of the black madonna from the perspective of Jung's thought was developed based upon material presented in the first three chapters. It was seen that the black madonna, characterized by the attributes of the primordial Great Mother, is linked historically, symbolically, and archetypally to various goddess traditions. She compensates conscious attitudes of Christianity and subverts patriarchal monotheism. She signals the reemergence of the archetype of the feminine, especially its dark pole, and she offers a fuller image of the feminine than that offered by the Blessed Virgin Mary. Finally the black madonna serves to complete the symbolic portrayal of the Godhead by bringing to it both the feminine principle in its fullness and the principles of matter and darkness. Black madonnas, therefore, are powerful symbols and metaphors which serve to complete the image of both the feminine and the divine.

The black madonna is more than this, however. She not only subverts, compensates, and completes, she contains all. She corresponds to Jung's concept of the Great Mother as God-image and image of the Self. Concrete, female, virgin, mother, and black, the black madonna, brings to consciousness not only that which has been excluded and therefore remained in darkness, but all that is in consciousness as well as all that remains in the unconscious. She is a symbol of the Self which accounts for the continuing fascination which she exerts on humanity as both cult object and worker of miracles. The numinous attraction of the Self expresses itself through the black madonna. This is why

the black madonna remains a still living archetypal symbol as noted by Ean Begg and a still living Christian symbol as noted by Gilles Quispel and Maria Gimbutas.

Within the context of the theoretical framework of Jung, the black madonna, as a spontaneous manifestation of the Great Mother, is, herself, the most complete image, containing all opposites. She is the Divine Matrix which precedes differentiation and out of which all things come. Within the framework of Carl Jung's thought, therefore, the black madonna may be considered an image of the Ultimate Divine Reality which we call God.

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