# FINDING THE GODDESS:

# THE MOTHER QUEST IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY SOUTHERN DRAMA

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Auburn University at Montgomery

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Liberal Arts

Montgomery, Alabama

1 December 1995

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated with love to my grandmother, Matred Barefoot. She has believed in me when I did not believe in myself, and her encouragement and support have made a tremendous difference in my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to the Master of Liberal Arts faculty at Auburn University at Montgomery for first-rate instruction and inspiration. Special thanks and appreciation to Dr. Susan Willis for her patient, knowledgeable, and expert advice, as well as for enduring my erratic work habits and numerous neuroses. I am also very appreciative of Dr. Robert Gaines for working as my second reader and for facilitating the independent study from which this thesis evolved.

And, thank you, Amy Blair, for being a wonderful friend and colleague.

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# INTRODUCTION
# "THE TRUTH BEHIND THE LIE"

*"' . . . patriarchal myths contain stolen mythic powers. . . . But it is necessary to break their codes in order to use them as viewers, that is we must see their lie in order to see their truth. We can correctly perceive patriarchal myths as reversals, as pale derivatives of more ancient, more translucent myths from gynocentric civilizations.'" (Orenstein quoting Daly 47)*

*"In all ages and in all places men have conceived of a Great Mother, A Great Woman, who watches over mankind from the sky or from the place of the gods . . . . In all these places . . . the Mother has certain clearly defined qualities . . . . It is indeed strange that legends which have taken their origin so far apart should yet be so similar. The only possible explanation is that the myths represent a psychological reality which has been perceived . . . not in the form of abstract thought, but as an image rising from the unconscious." (Harding 96)*

The literature of the modern American South embraces far more than merely "Southern" themes. Writers such as William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor explore the same universals as their non-Southern counterparts. The aspect that sets Southern literature apart is the unique viewpoint from which these universal themes are explored. While the South shares a history with the other regions of the country, it also claims its own separate mini-history, so that there are two levels at work within the Southern psyche. The novelists and poets of the South offer subtle and often poignant illustrations of this uniquely Southern point of view, and that region's dramatists portray it via memorable characters who are Southern through and through, but who also embrace the totality of humankind.

Close study of the characters in the early twentieth-century plays written by Southern dramatists Lillian Hellman and Carson McCullers indicates that each playwright is influenced by socially imposed gender roles. Hellman's female

characters merely exist as conventional women within a totally male-dominated world, revealing that the author herself probably never questioned standard definitions of femininity and masculinity. The characters lack depth and, with the exception of Regina Hubbard, merely exist as stock females. Regina is devoid of even conventional feminine characteristics as she crosses the gender line in an attempt to assert control, indicating that the playwright saw masculinity as the only route to power.

McCullers's characters make unsuccessful and sometimes disastrous attempts to cross gender lines while trying to come to terms with standard feminine behavior in their attempts to control their environments, but it seems that the playwright has a vague awareness of alternatives to male supremacy. Her characters seem to try to join the two gender realms, but their efforts fail because their chosen substitute behavior is unacceptable within the societies in which they exist. Also, even when they stay within the appropriate gender realms, there is a missing element so that the characters are incomplete.

Examination of Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* reveals a similar problem. Williams's female characters opt to stay within their "appropriate" realms, never crossing gender lines, but they are caricatures. As with their dramatic predecessors, these characters' attempts fail because there seems to be something lacking in the female portraits drawn by the playwrights; that missing element might be described as a true feminine archetype. Williams offers a glimpse of the archetype in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,* and then it becomes increasingly evident in later twentieth-

century Southern drama. Plays written by Robert Harling and Beth Henley include female characters who break free of stereotypes not by crossing gender lines or playing socially imposed gender roles, but rather by embarking on a hero's journey and true "mother quest."

An exploration of traditionally held views of "mother" and "mother quest" will help set the groundwork for a definition of a true mother quest. The hero's journey is a common theme in myth and literature, and the most familiar stories that incorporate this journey have evolved largely as products of male-dominated cultures. This patriarchal influence makes the *father* quest integral to many such journeys. In a discussion of the goddess cultures that preceded patriarchy, Bill Moyers, in *The Power of Myth*, poses the question, "But why no mother quest?" to which Joseph Campbell responds:

> Well, the mother's right there. You're born from your mother, and she's the one who nurses you and instructs you and brings you up to the age when you must find your father.
>
> Now, the finding of the father has to do with *finding your own character and destiny*. (166, emphasis added)

While current feminist critics might applaud Moyers' thoughtful question, and might even accept, with reservations, Campbell's answer, yet another question might be asked. Why does the hero have to be male? If "finding the father" has to do with the male hero seeking his own character and destiny, how does the female hero go about finding her character and destiny?

In *Life Stages of Woman's Heroic Journey,* Susan A. Lichtman addresses the issues inherent in this question. Her answer can be found in Moyers' own question; obviously, the female hero must undertake a mother quest. Viewed from a patriarchal standpoint, the term "mother quest" takes on a certain one-dimensional meaning, illustrated best by Campbell's response already cited: the hero is "born from [his] mother . . . she's the one who nurses [him] and instructs [him]" (166). In other words, the mother quest in terms of patriarchy involves the "mother" in her most literal sense--life-giver and nurturer.

Lichtman chooses a more intricate definition of "mother" when exploring the female hero's journey or what Moyers refers to as the mother quest. She views the mother in her original, all-powerful splendor: the Great Goddess or Great Mother. From this standpoint, the conventional definition of "mother" is only a partial definition; specifically, it constitutes less than one-third of the definition of the Great Goddess/Mother, and this standard patriarchal viewpoint of conventional motherhood sorely lacks depth when examined from an archetypal standpoint. Further, Lichtman contends that, along with the mother aspect, the other two aspects of the Great Goddess/Mother--the virgin and the crone--have also historically been re-molded or misshapen to fit patriarchal viewpoints or ideals, leaving woman with "only the labels that defined her biological functions" (16). Thus, the virgin is defined by her hymen and potential as child-bearer; the mother is defined by her uterus and breasts; and the crone is defined by her lack of fertility and diminished sexual attractiveness. In addition, patriarchy has imposed a duality onto each of the three aspects; it is best

summarized as the either/or, virgin/whore division that has plagued women for centuries. According to Lichtman, these patriarchal dualities subdivide the three aspects of the Great Mother thus: the virgin as either a good girl or bad girl (*femme fatale*); the mother as either devoted or devouring; and the crone as either a fairy godmother or a wicked witch. Marilyn French labels these divisions inlaw and outlaw feminine, inlaw being acceptable to patriarchy and outlaw being unacceptable (15). French's terms applied to Lichtman's subdivisions, including either/or virgin/whore, are:

| **INLAW FEMININE (VIRGIN)** | **OUTLAW FEMININE (WHORE)** |
|---|---|
| Virgin--Good Girl | Virgin--Bad Girl (femme fatale) |
| Mother--Devoted | Mother--Devouring |
| Crone--Fairy Godmother | Crone--Wicked Witch |

These patriarchally based definitions deem the female hero's mother quest pointless if the patriarchal ideals and stereotypes they suggest comprise her character or destiny; this type of mother quest could be renamed the *father's-idea-of-the mother quest.*

A true mother quest, or what Lichtman calls "the journey for self actualization," will "link these individual portraits of virgin, mother, crone into a full vision of woman" (19), with each of these aspects of the Goddess defined from a matriarchal point of view. The virgin here is not simply a maiden without sexual experience; rather she is "a young woman who is 'one-in-herself" (Lichtman 23). According to

Annis V. Pratt, virginity in the goddess cultures "was the virginity suggested by the word itself--'a woman (gyn) like a man (vir)' . . . . It [was] a virgin because it [was] unexploited, not in man's control" (110). From the same viewpoint, "the mother represents the warrior; she creates, defends or destroys, and emerges intact" (Lichtman 45). Also, Lichtman considers the mother to be the "central anchor" for the virgin and the crone (46), and she quotes Nancy Chodorow thus: "'Being a mother, then, is not only bearing a child--it is being a person who socializes, and nurtures'" (44). Lichtman considers a mother to be "a woman who gives birth . . . metaphorically as well as physically," maintaining that "motherhood means nourishing and investing in the present for a better survival in the future" (44). Finally, "The crone, transcending the virgin's self-awareness and the mother's adversities, moves into the realm of eternal values" and "emerges from the mother to again become one-in-herself" (Lichtman 66; 65). Meredith Powers labels this idea the "syncretistic archetype" (154); similarly, Lichtman views the three aspects of the Great Goddess/Mother as phases in a cycle, much like the moon phases to which each corresponds: "The virgin begins, the mother creates, the crone sustains; no one portrait is adequate; all must be linked together" (19). From this standpoint, the subdivisions imposed by patriarchy do not necessarily have to be black and white, either/or. The reality of femininity strikes a balance: the virgin is somewhere between the good girl and the *femme fatale*; the mother between devoted and devouring; and the crone between fairy godmother and wicked witch.

The most ancient, thus presumably the most true, feminine archetype encompasses all three aspects of the Great Goddess; exclusion of one or more of the

phases of the cycle constitutes a false archetype. The so-called feminine archetypes evident in most literature are actually man-made--the result of the divisions imposed on the Goddess by patriarchy. Powers calls these divisions a "splitting off" and contends that they "evolved because the unabated, protean nature of the goddess defies differentiation in patriarchal modality and is therefore threatening" (153); she also suggests that while the true nature of the goddess confused "patriarchal revisionists," it simultaneously gave them "endless possibilities for their propagandistic fragmentation of the original archetype" (79). This fragmentation was cloaked in a mythic disguise, so that ". . . the prodigious forces which converged to obscure authentic feminine archetypes in storytelling were eventually elevated by the irrefutable premise of male monotheism, and metamorphosed into the most ungiving authority of all, tradition" (138). Patriarchy used religious myths and stories to justify their power, and religious beliefs always establish tradition.

In *When God Was a Woman*, Merlin Stone (quoting Sheila Collins) asserts that "'Theology is ultimately political'" (66), and an examination of the most obvious reason for the patriarchal suppression of female autonomy throughout history makes clear the validity of this statement. Quite simply, until man became aware of the male role in procreation, paternity was unimportant. Only the identity of a child's *mother* had political significance from the standpoint of property inheritance. When the sperm factor became obvious and matrilineal lines gave way to property and kingship being passed through males, uncertain paternity became a political threat. The only way to control paternity is to control women; the only way to control women

is to suppress them, especially their sexuality. In the early days of what later became Judaism and then Christianity, the threat of female sexuality and uncertain paternity was nowhere else more evident than in the Great Mother/Goddess cults and religions that represented some of Yahweh's greatest competition. As Stone maintains, ". . . male kinship lines remained impossible as long as women were allowed to function as sexually independent people, continuing to bear children whose paternity was not known or considered to be of any importance" (190). Quoting from the book of Hosea, Stone points out the resolve of Yahweh (through the Hebrew "fathers") to kill off the Goddess:

> 'I will put an end to all her rejoicing, her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths and all her solemn festivals. I mean to make her pay for all the days when she offered burnt offerings to the balls and decked herself with rings and necklaces to court her lovers, forgetting me. It is Yahweh who is speaking . . . . Your daughters play the harlot and your brides commit adultery for the men go aside with the harlots and sacrifice with cult prostitutes' (185).

It is significant that the *prostitute* in Hosea was the Great Mother's *prophetess*. Indeed, according to Stone, ". . . the Hebrew word *zonah* is at times defined as 'prostitute' and at times as 'prophetess'" (211). While other patriarchal cultures also worked toward maintaining certainty about paternity by diluting the power and influence of the Goddess, none was as ruthless as Christianity's ancestral religions. In *The Power of Myth*, Joseph Campbell points out that

> . . . there was a very strong accent against the Goddess in the Hebrew which you do not find in the Indo-European mythologies. Here you have Zeus *marrying* the Goddess, and then the two play together. So it's an extreme case that we have in the Bible, and our own Western subjugation of the female is a function of biblical thinking. (171-172)

Campbell asserts further that ". . . the *Indo-Europeans* . . . did not completely devaluate the female principle" (173, emphasis added). Campbell is perhaps being somewhat lenient toward Zeus's chosen people; they were as guilty as any other patriarchal culture of bastardizing the Great Goddess, whether she re-emerged as Zeus's wife, mistress, or daughter, as Powers contends:

> . . . there is much to suggest that from her origins as a Cretan great-goddess, [Athena] was gradually stripped, first of the sources of her power, her sexuality and fertility, and then overlaid with the wearisome artificial burdens of patriarchy. It was only through the revamping of her entire nature, through enforced sterilization and androgenization, that she could come to share Zeus's spotlight as much as she did. (81)

An argument, weak though it is, can be made for the Greeks' begrudging acknowledgement of female power (on their terms, of course), but total devaluation of the feminine realm has a starring role in the book of Genesis and subsequently in Western civilization. Other traditional myths are numerous, but the negative effects of one specific patriarchal myth--the story of Adam and Eve--have been the most enduring in Western society.

While the story of Adam and Eve certainly is not the oldest patriarchal myth, it has had by far the most influence on Western civilization's attitudes toward women, keeping what Christian doctrine refers to as man's helpmate in her "proper" place for centuries. Traditionally, the woman (Eve), serpent, and Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, all three of which are so central to the myth, have been associated or identified with Satan; however, this association is one of the "stolen mythic powers" of this patriarchal legend. The truth behind the lie is far more ancient than Christianity or even Judaism. The three major culprits contributing to the Judaeo/Christian fall of man all have links to the Great Mother/Goddess. Eve's association with the Goddess obviously stems from her sex and her mythical role as the mother of mankind. Stone makes clear the association between the serpent and the Goddess: ". . . the allegorical identity of the dragon or serpent is that of the Goddess religion" (67). Paglia refers to "pagan images in which goddess and serpent are one" (43). Further, Stone presents an effective theory which associates the Goddess with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, suggesting that it may have been a sycamore fig and pointing out the connection between the Goddess Hathor, who was known as "the Lady of the Sycamore." (214-215)

The "lie" in the story of the creation and man's fall is the assertion that Satan and the inferior woman joined evil forces against the good represented by God and Adam/man. The truth behind the lie is that the authors of this story had a hidden agenda or ulterior motive: to destroy the Goddess in order to control female sexuality,

resulting in the subjugation of women and the association of the female sex with evil and darkness. Esther M. Harding asserts that

> The Moon Goddess was [the] giver of life and of all that promotes fertility, and at the same time she was the wielder of the destructive powers of nature. To the ancients her contradictory character was an essential factor, frankly recognized. . . . From the Christian point of view it is well-nigh impossible to conceive of a god who is at once kind and cruel, who creates and destroys. For God is conceived of as good: evil is always the work of the devil. But to the worshippers of the Moon Goddess there was no contradiction. Their supreme deity was like the moon . . . dual in her very nature. (111)

In other words, duality was a fact of life and a necessity in the Goddess cults; creation and destruction were two sides of the same coin. They had no concept of good/evil, either/or. Enter the Hebrews, the forerunners of Christianity, with their duality in the form of opposing forces whom we continue to recognize today as God and Satan. While the Goddess religions had always been tolerant of male deities and had even included them in their rituals, the Hebrews and their Christian descendants set out to suppress the Goddess religions:

> The female religion, especially after the earlier invasions, appears to have assimilated the male deities into the older worship and the Goddess survived as the popular religion of the people for thousands of years after initial invasions. By the time of Marduk and Ashur of the

> sixteenth century BC, Her position had been greatly lowered in Mesopotamia. But it was upon the last assaults by the Hebrews and eventually by the Christians of the first centuries after Christ that the religion was finally suppressed and nearly forgotten. (Stone 68)

It is reasonable to assert that a culture holding a white/black, good/evil, either/or view--as did the forerunners of Christianitiy--would strive to associate with evil anything it wished to destroy or suppress. Thus, two of the main items on the Hebrew's patriarchal wish list--to suppress female sexuality and destroy the Goddess--had to be accomplished by associating women, sexuality, and the Goddess with evil. This was done neatly and efficiently through the story of Adam and Eve.

Hebrew laws from on high which threatened everlasting damnation eventually served effectively to suppress female sexuality and keep most hymens intact until marriage, and where the laws did not destroy Goddess worship, bloodshed in the name of Yahweh greatly diminished it. However, truly effective subjugation and oppression must also assault the collective psyche. Again, the patriarchal, Hebrew good/evil, either/or viewpoint came into play, and was later reinforced by Christianity's split-off version of the Great Mother: the Virgin Mary. Jesus's mother is a dream of a patriarchal archetype: *physically* a virgin (one-in-herself is out of the question), and *physically* a mother as she serves as a vessel to bring forth the male son of a male deity. The crone aspect is also diminished, because the wisdom that accompanies it is counter to the unquestioning, subservient patriarchal idea of femininity. The patriarchal feminine is inherently simple; the very purpose of it has been, through the

centuries, to erode, replace and try to destroy the complexity of the true feminine archetype. The very one-sided nature of man-made archetypes excludes the cycles and balance that are crucial to the Great Goddess.

The importance of this cycle and balance becomes apparent upon chronological examination of twentieth-century Southern drama. While the Great Mother cycle can also be explored in other types of literature, the history of the American South provides a very clear parallel between Goddess cultures and patriarchy, and the heavy influence of Christianity in that region has resulted in an abundance of patriarchal feminine archetypes in the settings that comprise Southern drama.

In *The New South Creed*, Paul M. Gaston quotes a famous editorial in which Henry Grady related a story about the burial of a man from Georgia. Written in 1884, the column made the point that the man was buried in the middle of a marble quarry, but his headstone came from Vermont, his shoes came from Boston and his coat came from New York. In short, "'The South didn't furnish a thing on earth for that funeral but the corpse and the hole in the ground'" (Gaston quoting Grady 71). This amusing parable effectively illustrates the type of relationship Old South culture had with Mother Earth. It was a relationship not far removed from ancient goddess-cults: a give-and-take, birth/death/rebirth relationship that made use of, but never actually transcended, Mother Nature. The corpse in Grady's story was all the agrarian Old South needed to contribute at the funeral; it helped enrich the soil and thus ensure a bountiful crop. In the Old South, man's gift to nature resulted in nature's gift to man, continuing the life cycle.

The purpose of Grady's story was to point out what he considered to be the absurdity of much of the South's stubborn adherence to an archaic way of life and refusal to join the New South bandwagon leading the way toward progress. The path the New South followed was a re-routing of the Old South cycle that, in the eyes of the "progressive" New South businessmen, was merely a vicious circle that would only swallow itself. It was like that age-old symbol of the Goddess: the serpent with its tail in its mouth.

Through the gospel of the New South, that serpent would become an evil hindrance to the region's economic salvation. The progressive New South was the Father, and industrialization was its savior Son; together they formed a new economic religion that had nothing to do with the seasonal life cycle of old. Replacing the green crops of the Old South was the green dollar of the New South. Mark Twain, quoted by C. Vann Woodward, summed it up succinctly when he described the New South men he observed during the 1880s: "'Brisk men, energetic of movement and speech; the dollar their god, how to get it their religion'" (153). In early Southern drama, Old South/New South can be viewed as a microcosm of Goddess/Patriarchy, and chronological study of Southern drama parallels the chronology of the feminine realm's age-old battle forward (and backward) toward the Goddess.

Patriarchy triumphs in plays by Hellman and McCullers because of the rigid one-sided archetypes imposed by (and adhered to because of) patriarchal ideals. Although some of the female characters cross gender lines and even display Goddess characteristics, the either/or male viewpoint held by not only the male but also the

other female characters diminishes the influence of the true feminine realm. Even when they do not cross gender lines, the characters still operate within and strengthen the masculine realm because they represent male ideas and/or ideals of femininity. And, while the black characters in these plays, especially in McCullers' works, come very close to representing complete Goddess figures, their place in the social hierarchy prevents the true archetypes they represent from having any real influence on the ultimate outcome of the plots.

Exaggerations of gender roles lead to the same disastrous results in Williams' s *A Streetcar Named Desire* as they did in Hellman's and McCullers's earlier plays. Even though Blanche DuBois finally embarks on a shaky mother quest, patriarchy prevails because the rigid, one-dimensional viewpoints of the three aspects of the Goddess still dominate. However, Maggie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is a breakthrough character and, with help from male characters who display Goddess attributes, she comes much closer to the Great Mother archetype than do the main female characters in earlier Southern drama, and through her Williams blazes the trail toward contemporary plays by Harling and Henley which demonstrate the cyclical connection of the three aspects of the Goddess as represented by the female characters. The evolution of Southern drama during the twentieth century represents an evolution in the collective psyche; this psychic shift is progress via regression. The most ancient is now the most modern. Southern drama finally encompasses the true feminine archetypes which were suppressed for centuries and replaced by gender roles and/or "false" archetypes imposed by patriarchy. The Goddess returns.

# FALSE FEMININE ARCHETYPES IN *ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST*
## "CHASTE OR CHEAP: CHATTEL ALL THE SAME"

*". . . the descendants of the great goddess, the once-honored tribal mothers, became the chattel of their fathers, husbands, and sons." (Powers 94)*

The post-Civil War South comprises the setting for Lillian Hellman's *Another Part of the Forest*. Although Hellman wrote this play in 1946 after she had written *The Little Foxes* 1938, *Another Part of the Forest* is a prequel and thus its historical setting (1880) precedes that of *The Little Foxes* (1900); therefore, the prequel will be analyzed first. The dramatic portrait Hellman creates in *Forest* confirms Mark Twain's observation about the new Southern aristocrats. The remnants of the dead Old South are barely visible under the merciless wheels of the New South bulldozer represented by the Hubbard family. Hellman's play also presents another nearly imperceptible fragment, disguised by centuries of patriarchal reconstruction. Parallel to and macrocosm of the barely one-generation-old, money-hungry invader that is the New South is the age-old, power-hungry oppressor that is patriarchy. In the pretentiously "Greek" Hubbard household, the Goddess is a misshapen shadow much like the revised goddesses of Greek mythology that are, or have served as models for, standard false feminine archetypes.

In discussing Greek mythology and drama, Meredith Powers suggests that "In [Cassandra] Euripides has presented a remnant of the archetypal goddess as exegetical revision would have her, powerless and raving. She is without even the allowable power of the restructured feminine, the power to influence . . ." (119), and goes on to

point out that "If the goddess is crazy or chronically misunderstood, as was Cassandra, her power is dismissible" (130). Fast forward to Alabama, Hubbard household, circa 1880, and come face-to-face with a Southern Cassandra: the raving and dismissible Lavinia Hubbard. Her burden is her knowledge--she has suffered for years because of it. Being punished--in fact, being *blamed*--for possessing knowledge also aligns Lavinia with Western civilization's premiere false archetype: Eve.

Powers points out that "Eve's single action brings down anarchy and untoward destruction" (131), and Marcus might say the same of Lavinia. However, one man's destruction is another's creation. The knowledge that destroys Marcus gives Ben a renewed power; only Lavinia is oblivious to her own creative/destructive power, for man-made archetypes have placed stumbling blocks between women and their true natures. And the two men do not consider her power valid until they learn it is *written down*--in the Bible, no less. Lavinia's oral testimony is not enough, but the written word makes it true.

While Lavinia is merely a nuisance and ultimately helps her son usurp her husband's power, Laurette Sincee represents patriarchy's *worst* nightmare: female sexuality. Being beholden to no one, she is in reality one-in-herself. However, in this world, she is an outlaw feminine, social outcast--a common whore. Lavinia's confusion when she meets Laurette and Birdie is meant to be humorous, but it is also a very brief glimpse at a world without male-imposed stereotypes--to Lavinia these two are simply young women and their sexual histories are irrelevant. Laurette's honest outbursts at both Oscar and Marcus also make her even less acceptable to

patriarchy. She is a destructive, devouring bad girl and a threat to social order within the Hubbard circle as well as in the outside world. Her knowledge, as well as her audacity in refusing to remain quiet about it, cause her to be banished from the household. When she ultimately rejects Oscar, Laurette comes closer to representing the Goddess than any other character in the play, with the possible exception of Coralee. Like Laurette, Coralee represents what Simon de Beauvoir refers to as the "Other" (the Hubbard men and what they represent being the "One") (xvi), and Coralee is the only character in the play who shares Lavinia's knowledge. She is a silenced, powerless Goddess figure who lends quiet strength to Lavinia, but as a black woman, her role in the social structure makes her as dismissible as her "raving" friend. Similarly, Laurette's social position--a position imposed by patriarchy--makes her powerless in this world. The Goddess's priestess is patriarchy's prostitute.

Strangely enough, selling a chaste woman or using her as a token of exchange is not considered prostitution in patriarchal societies. The Greeks considered women to be spoils of war; the Levites/Hebrews regularly used their daughters and sisters as currency on the marketplace, in much the same way they used livestock. Ultimately, Birdie's desperate barter with Ben results in her turning over her body and her soul to the Hubbards through the arranged marriage with Oscar, which is suggested here and later confirmed in *The Little Foxes*.

Birdie's unquestioning acceptance of her marriage to Oscar--of being what amounts to a piece of property in a business deal--is typical behavior for a female product of patriarchy and is again the result of a false model of feminine behavior

being integrated into the collective psyche. Powers, referring to the Cupid and Psyche myth, states that

> As a model it has been used again and again to validate as 'archetypal' a pattern of behavior for the heroine in Western culture that is intricately interwoven with her acceptance as necessary even the most bizarre patriarchal marriage. [Psyche has] . . . blind faith in a system which is alien to her inherent ethics and her natural desire to know, a system which demands her surrender to the superiority of physical might . . . . (130)

In contrast to Laurette, Birdie's naivete and lack of knowledge cause her to be ensnared in the web of this decidedly patriarchal family. In effect, she is really as much a prostitute as Miss Sincee; the difference is that Birdie prostitutes a plantation and her entire being rather than mere sexual favors. This exchange is acceptable to patriarchy because the product of exchange is controllable and, rather than being a threat to the power structure, it adds to it. The arranged marriage guarantees it. Oscar "marries money" for Ben.

Regina must also ultimately marry money for Ben, but there is an added taint to this arrangement. She has committed the ultimate female sin in a patriarchal society: she has lost her virginity, which renders her nearly worthless on the marriage market: "You could have done alot better, but girls who have been despoiled in this part of the country--" (390-391). Ben points out that he must marry her off to Horace very hurriedly, before the groom finds out the awful truth. Thus, her virginity is

renewed, but not in terms of the Goddess because she does not renew it as a one-in-herself, powerful woman. Quite the contrary, in this world her sexuality has stripped her of any semblance of autonomy she may have had and is used as a weapon against her rather than being the empowerment it would be for a true feminine archetype. Ben renews Regina's virginity for her in order to meet his own goals.

Like Birdie, Regina is an "acceptable" prostitute. Rather than using a plantation as a token of exchange, she prostitutes the only thing she has left--her father's image of her. As long as she is his "darling" (313), the money keeps flowing to her. The sexual undertones in her exchanges with Marcus cannot be overlooked, but it is a *safe* (i.e., patriarchal) sexuality that will obviously never be consummated.

In the process of enrapturing her father, Regina replaces her own mother in her father's life. Powers observes that the goddess has been "Distorted to perpetuate cultural notions of gender" and "is fragmented into . . . separate characters who are locked in social conflict with one another" (77), and this distortion, fragmentation, and conflict are very evident in *Another Part of the Forest.* In Marcus's mind, Regina is the pure, virginal good girl devoted to meeting his every whim and need, while Lavinia is an old woman who knows too much. As Hellman's play clearly demonstrates, in a patriarchal psyche, collective or individual, these aspects of the Goddess *must* always be in opposition and will never co-exist. Their conflict insures their weakness, and their weakness insures the power of their oppressor.

# FALSE FEMININE ARCHETYPES IN *THE LITTLE FOXES*
# "IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM, JOIN 'EM"

*". . . in [women's] endeavor to escape from the dominance of the male, inherent in our patriarchal civilization, women themselves disregarded the effects of their own rhythm and tried to resemble men as closely as possible." (Harding 69)*

In Hellman's *The Little Foxes*, the battle lines between Old South and New South are clearly drawn, and from those obvious illustrations the ancient struggle between feminine and masculine emerges with two surprising twists. Ruthless patriarchy is depicted in the guise of a woman, Regina, and the defeated feminine is presented in the guise of a man. This representative of the feminine realm, Horace, is no more a match for the patriarchal Hubbards than are the female characters. He represents the feminine conforming to the masculine standard.

Horace is an artist who has masqueraded as a banker. The implication is that he was once an accomplished musician, and the piece of violin in his safe deposit box is a reminder that he is a broken man. The violin fragment represents the artistic, emotional side of his nature. What he truly is has been shattered and locked away inside his patriarchal facade. It is even invaded by Leo, who cannot begin to comprehend why Horace would hold onto a violin fragment or a baby shoe. Horace's true nature is a useless relic in the realm in which he has tried to operate.

Paul M. Gaston relates a warning by Edward A. Pollard in 1866 that Southerners conforming totally to New South imperialism were in danger of losing "' . . . their literature, their former habits of thought, their intellectual self-assertion, while they [were] too intent upon recovering the mere material prosperity, ravaged and impaired by the war'" (156). They were in danger of losing their introspection and

thus their unique identity as they sought for identity outside themselves. Again, a parallel can be drawn between Old South/New South and Goddess/Patriarchy. Horace is as much a representative of the silenced feminine as he is of the archaic Old South. He has lost his introspection, and during his months away from Regina and her family, he has managed to regain it. As he tells Regina, "My 'thinking' has made a difference" (189).

Horace's thinking has given him the strength to refuse to conform to the Hubbards' games. Even though he does revert to Hubbard-like techniques as he attempts to deprive Regina of what she wants, he does not do so for selfish reasons. Alexandra will benefit most from his plan; he is using masculine strategy to achieve a feminine goal. Unfortunately, feminine goals have no place in this world. Horace is ultimately destroyed because he has waited too long to assert his strength and stand up to what the Hubbards represent. He is as powerless as the women.

Powers asserts that "What prevails in the [patriarchal feminine is] a characterization of women enslaved not only by their tragic political position, but by their deafness to Cassandra, their complicity in the revised ideal" (122). The men in *Another Part of the Forest* were not the only ones who ignored Lavinia; Birdie did the same. Had she not been "deaf" (as well as blind) to Lavinia's plight, she would not *be* Lavinia twenty years later in *The Little Foxes*. In fact, Birdie is even more stripped down than Lavinia, who did, if unwittingly, have a bargaining tool in her knowledge. Birdie is dismissible and crazy just like Lavinia, but with no hope or plan of escape.

And Marcus's verbal abuse of his wife is taken a step further by Oscar, who adds physical abuse to his repertoire of control methods.

Each of Birdie's attempts to be herself is smothered. For example, Oscar calls her a fool when she wants to show her music album to Mr. Marshall, but makes an abrupt about-face when he sees that Mr. Marshall wants to hear her play the piano. She merely wants to share her gift of music; to Oscar, her gift is a nuisance that, at that moment, happens to be useful for his and his family's ultimate goal of going into business with Mr. Marshall. Birdie's psychic music--her song for and connection to the goddess--has also been silenced. Like the shattered piece of violin hidden away in Horace's box, she has been broken. Her soul is in pieces, just like the Goddess.

Birdie has been reduced to property status and totally stripped of her identity in order to insure that she remains in her proper place. To Ben, she is not Birdie but "Our brother's wife" (156). Leo speaks of his "mother's grandfather" rather than referring to the pre-war governor as his own great-grandfather, while a few lines earlier Oscar makes a reference to "our great-grandfather" (156-157). Birdie's feelings are unimportant. She is and has always been only a commodity to the Hubbard family, and her only ally is Alexandra.

Her motherly attitude toward Zan is the only hint of the true goddess left in Birdie, and along with Addie's maternal doting on Zan, represents the only fleeting glimpse of the Goddess in the entire play. Like Coralee before her, Addie's true feminine nature is no threat because of her social position. Birdie tells Zan, "But you are more to me--more to me than my own child" (173), reinforcing the fact that

"motherhood" does not necessarily involve giving physical birth. It is impossible for Birdie to relate to Leo, because he is completely his father's son, a mutant monster created by the Dr. Frankenstein that is the Hubbard family's greed and dishonesty. Birdie is painfully aware of the fact that while Leo presently mistreats horses, it could very well be Zan in the future. She tries, although her influence is very limited, to keep Zan's spirit from being broken. She does not want Zan to be deaf to her plight as she herself was to Lavinia's. Of course, her attempt at female solidarity is "rewarded" with physical abuse at the hands of Oscar. The abuse heaped on Birdie is in inverse proportion to her level of power. The more diluted the archetype, the more powerful the diluter, and, seemingly, the only hope is to join the oppressor--a tactic Regina chooses.

Esther Harding states that

> . . . in [women's] endeavor to escape from the dominance of the male, inherent in our patriarchal civilization, women themselves disregarded the effects of their own rhythm and tried to resemble men as closely as possible. Thus, they fell once more under the dominance of the male. This time it was not under the male without, that is under men, but under the rule of the male within. They lost touch with their own feminine instinct and began to function consciously, through the masculine qualities of the animus. (69)

Regina was long ago "bumped" from virgin status, and her total lack of motherly concern for Zan or anyone else precludes a devoted mother label. Regina does not

occupy the realm of even the *malevolent* split-offs of the goddess archetype because she lacks sexuality and totally lacks identity with the life/death/rebirth cycle. She is totally masculine in the most negative sense. The only time she comes close to even outlaw femininity is during her flirtatious act with Marshall, but it is just that--an act. She is using a sexual mask for a masculine purpose; Marshall is her ticket to Chicago and wealth. Her insinuation that Horace's "fancy women" (189) may have caused the deterioration of his health is also very masculine; through the ages, from Pandora to Eve, patriarchal cultures have placed the blame for man's woes squarely on the shoulders of women. Regina is doing the same.

She is totally out of touch with the "Other" (*i.e.*, the Goddess), as evidenced by her treatment of the black characters. Throughout the entire play, Regina only speaks to Cal twice and Addie once; each time she is giving orders. She tells Cal "The grits isn't hot enough. Take it back" (182); later she tells him, "Be still, Cal. Bring him in here" (213). Her direct communication with Addie consists of, ". . . Put the lights out and lock up . . . . Call me when Dr. Sloan gets here. I don't want to see anybody else. I don't want any condolence calls tonight. The whole town will be over" (224). This is a startling contrast to her mother, whose only true friend was Coralee and whose entire sense of self was wrapped up in the "colored" church and the "colored" children. The only remotely in-depth conversations Regina holds are power struggles with her brothers and Horace. She is incapable of communicating on an emotional level.

Regina's attitude toward death also illustrates her lack of identification with the Goddess. In this way, she is like her father, who announced in *Another Part of the*

*Forest* that he "may not die" (317). The goddess cultures understood that death was simply a part of the cycle that also brings sustenance and life, so they were very comfortable with it. According to Joseph Campbell, "What you get in the vegetation traditions is this notion of identity behind the surface display of duality . . . . [and] you have to balance between death and life--they are two aspects of the same thing . . . ." (107-108). Regina will not even discuss Horace's impending death: "I've never understood why people have to talk about this kind of thing" (188). She refuses to discuss Horace's death on an emotional level, but she has no qualms about taunting him about dying (199) or hurrying his death when she knows it will help her gain control over her brothers. It is at this point that she turns her back on her last chance for identity with the feminine realm; rather than being a nurturing healer, she withholds Horace's medicine. She has already lost all identity with the virgin and mother aspects of the goddess; she is now oblivious to the crone. She does not acknowledge death in the feminine, goddess-cult sense, but she uses it--she *destroys*--to achieve a masculine goal. However, it is questionable at the end of the play as to whether Regina's power is permanent. Hers is the kind of masculine power that turns on itself. Zan says to Regina,

> Addie said there were people who ate the earth and other people who stood around and watched them do it. And just now Uncle Ben said the same thing. Really, he said the same thing . . . . Well, tell him for me, Mama, I'm not going to stand around and watch you do it. Tell him I'll

> be fighting as hard as he'll be fighting some . . . some place where people don't just stand around and watch. (152-153)

Zan will be fighting for a different reason than Ben, however; she will be fighting to save the earth from being eaten by people like her mother. Ben will be fighting to eat it himself or to at least get the largest portion. While Zan is still far removed from the Goddess, she offers hope. She is Lavinia and/or Birdie with a backbone; she is Addie with social status. It is significant that Regina is described as uncomfortable when she tells Zan, "You've been around Birdie so much you're getting just like her" (223). Zan will use masculine strength and assertiveness to achieve a feminine goal and try to make a difference in the world, although the culture and era in which she lives will preclude her from ever being more than an inlaw feminine, *i.e.* incomplete, ideal. At best, she will be a combination of Regina and Birdie--certainly no Goddess, but the best her world can do.

*Another Part of the Forest* and *The Little Foxes* offer a glimpse of a world totally devoid of reverence for even the patriarchal feminine. Only one male character, Horace in *The Little Foxes*, displays recognition of and appreciation for those attributes deemed to be feminine, and he is ultimately destroyed. Even the playwright seems to have fallen prey to the rigid, false feminine archetypes which for centuries made women one-dimensional in reality as well as in literature. Hellman considered Birdie to be a "silly . . . . lost drunk" (Stern 35). Only one female character, Regina Hubbard, displays any semblance of strength or autonomy, and she does so by reverting to the type of destructive, masculine behavior that has, over the

centuries, served to dilute the true feminine archetype. Regina is essentially totally removed from even the patriarchal feminine realm. When questioned about Regina's "badness," Hellman replied, "I never saw Regina that way" (Phillips 56). The male characters in the plays, other than Horace, share Regina's destructive nature, and the other female characters are completely powerless against this patriarchal force. A fleeting ghost of the Goddess is revealed in some of the black characters as well as in Laurette Sincee, but those characters' places in the social hierarchy make it impossible for their Goddess traits to have any autonomy in their own lives or any influence in the lives of the other characters.

Hellman also once stated that she had planned ultimately to make Zan become "a spinsterish social worker" (56). In a patriarchal world, a spinster is an outcast, and the tone of her statement indicates that Hellman held in disdain nurturing, feminine qualities. Her plays depict a world totally lacking in feminine influence and without even a brief glimpse of the possibility of a mother quest. The hint of the Goddess in these plays is quickly obliterated by social convention and the playwright's own lack of recognition of the true feminine archetype. Only Zan offers hope at the end, but it is apparent that she will never embark on a true mother quest. The cycle is lost in a cloud of masculine rule.

# FALSE FEMININE ARCHETYPES IN *THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING* "'THE STANDARD OF HU(MANKIND)'"

*"Defying the power of nature, the masculine principle is the standard of hu(mankind). . . ." (French 14)*

Carson McCullers does not seem to share Lillian Hellman's masculine view of the world, but social convention continues to diminish the Goddess in her plays. In *Understanding Carson McCullers*, Virginia Spencer Carr relates a passage from an essay written by McCullers herself:

> 'The *Member of the Wedding* is unconventional because it is not a *literal* kind of play. It is an inward play and the conflicts are inward conflicts. The antagonist is not personified, but is a human condition of life: the sense of moral isolation.' (98)

The "moral isolation" of which McCullers speaks can be viewed from a feminist perspective. After all, the human condition for Western civilization has been *defined* from a masculine perspective, so that any moral isolation is most likely experienced by what Ann Carlton calls the "muted group" (54); that is, the group which is not dominant--often the female side of humankind.

In *The Member of the Wedding*, the object of Frankie's affection is not a person but a *wedding*. Marriage--the type of marriage familiar to Frankie as well as most modern readers--is a masculine institution designed to control female sexuality and insure certain paternity. Thus, Frankie, in the midst of an identity crisis, becomes enamored of the only goal available to her which is acceptable to society. Carlton calls her crisis an "experience with language, cultural expectations, and understanding the bounds--the limits--society has set for the female role" (58). Throughout most of

the play, Frankie stands on the edge of standard feminine behavior. Like Regina in *Foxes*, she has reverted to masculine behavior in an attempt to circumvent the inevitable, but Regina *joins* her oppressor. While Regina's behavior is a mask; Frankie's is a quest as she tries to escape the unknown or the unclear. Or rather, she fears the unknown that she knows, so to speak. She is on a thwarted mother quest. She is aware of what is expected of her, but it does not feel quite right. The shadow out of the corner of the eye she discusses with Berenice might be considered to be the fleeting psychic awareness of sexuality and thus the Goddess--an awareness she never quite grasps. Rather, she mistakes the shadow of the Goddess for the shadow of that archetype's patriarchal substitute--the "we of me"--the "brother and his bride"--the rigid role patriarchy demands of her. As a result, for much of the play, Frankie teeters precariously on the edge of her expected role while keeping one foot planted in the only escape she can fathom--being a boy.

Frankie's haircut is the first indication of her discomfort with her burgeoning sexuality. Whereas a haircut often is a rite of passage, in this case it represents a *fear* of passage. According to Tony Crisp, hair symbolizes "thoughts; self image; attitudes" and cutting the hair symbolizes "less thinking" and "denial of sensual and physical drive" (73). Frankie seems to identify very strongly with her brother, and it is possible that her conscious reason for having shaved her head has been to mimic his G.I. haircut, with her subconscious very obviously denying the fact that she is becoming a woman; her Goddess consciousness--that fleeting shadow--tells her that her hair is her source of power. Mathew J. Bowyer points out the ancient belief that "the vital force

of an individual [lives] in that person's hair" and further states that "During the Inquisition . . . it was customary to shave the head of a witch so as to take away the supra-normal power" (69). Being a product of patriarchy, Frankie shaves her own head, destroying the crone/goddess power within.

She plays at identifying with the feminine through Janice, a very safe, acceptable role model, but even as she plans the future of her "we of me," she continues actually to identify with Jarvis. For example, she predicts that "Captain Jarvis Addams wins highest medals and is decorated by the President. Miss F. Jasmine Addams breaks all records. Mrs. Janice Addams elected Miss United Nations in beauty contest" (88). While she is not specific about the records she will break, the implication is that they are more likely to be military or other male-associated records; *Janice* wins the beauty contest. By identifying with the *idea* of the couple and the wedding, Frankie can continue to associate herself with Jarvis and what he represents while also indirectly identifying with Janice, who represents the uncomfortable, though inevitable, standard feminine role. Even the name Frankie chooses has an androgynous aspect; while Jasmine is very feminine, the use of the first initial is an almost exclusively masculine practice.

In addition to representing Frankie's sexuality, the fleeting shadow of the Goddess that is ultimately eclipsed by a more acceptable archetype also represents her intuition. Frankie's casting off or denial of this important gift of the Goddess is symbolized by the doll early in the play. According to Clarissa Pinkola Estes, "Dolls are one of the symbolic treasures of the instinctual nature. . . . The doll is the symbolic

. . . little life" and is "a small and glowing facsimile of the original Self" representing ". . . the inner spirit of . . . women; the voice of inner reason, inner knowing, and inner consciousness" (88-89). John Henry asks Frankie twice if she really meant to give away the doll; both times she either does not hear him or pretends not to hear. She is denying her inner voice. When Frankie states that she doesn't "want to be the president of all those little young left-over people" (23), she is watching John Henry play with the doll, which is a reasonable facsimile of a little young, left-over person. She does not want to be responsible for her inner voices--those psychic left-overs from the original Great Goddess. She wants to drown them out, give them away and in fact must do so in order to be able to accept the substitute "voices" or archetypes provided by patriarchy.

As in Hellman's plays, the only remotely Goddess-oriented characters in *A Member of the Wedding* cannot possibly be role models for Frankie or legitimate feminine archetypes because they represent another, even more taboo "otherness" within the Southern social structure. However, McCullers offers a far more keen awareness of positive Goddess attributes through her more thorough development of her black Goddesses. These Goddess figures are, of course, Sis Laura Thompson and Berenice Sadie Brown and, surprisingly, Honey Camden Brown. Each dies or disappears at crucial moments in Frankie's inevitable, if reluctant, trek toward acceptable femininity.

Sis Laura, "the old vegetable lady" with her gnarled stick (35), is indisputably a Goddess figure. She provides sustenance and can predict the future, and her only

appearance in the play precedes immediately Berenice's comment to Frankie that "Your mother died the day that you were born" (37). This birth/death cyclic connection is referenced throughout the play, and in this instance Frankie quickly dismisses any discussion of it by changing the subject to her own physical appearance, referring to "fashion models and movie stars" (37), the implication being that her height is acceptable because it makes her like those modern-day, man-made role models. A discussion of the true nature of femininity--giving life as a recompense for death--is pre-empted by Frankie's preoccupation with measuring up to societal standards. Later in the play, the news of Sis Laura's death is interrupted by Frankie's fashion show. With the Goddess's death comes a physical display, albeit in this case a parody, of that archetype's male-imposed replacement: the mask best illustrated by "appropriate" feminine dress and behavior. Ironically, Berenice's review of Frankie's fashion show brings to mind the earlier description of the freak at the fair. A comparison of the passages reveals striking similarities:

> That little old pin-head at the fair. A head no bigger than an orange. With the hair shaved off and a big pink bow at the top. . . . That little old squeezed-looking midget in them little trick evening clothes. (29)

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> You had all your hair shaved off like a convict and now you tie this ribbon around this head without any hair. Just looks peculiar . . . . Here you got on a grown woman's evening dress. (65).

Frankie's attempt at patriarchal feminine behavior and/or appearance simply seems freakish to Berenice, who is in touch with the true feminine, the Goddess. John Henry, at seven years old already a product of a male-dominated culture, pronounces it pretty upon first sight, and though Frankie's father does not call it pretty, he also does not deem it unusual and certainly does not call it peculiar or freakish. He simply thinks she is wearing show clothes. Unfortunately, in the world Frankie is about to enter, Berenice's opinion will not mean very much.

Berenice encompasses all aspects of the Goddess. She is an independent, one-in-herself woman who has regularly renewed her virginity as she married "three times with a veil" and "because [she] wanted to" (33); she is the consummate nurturing mother; and she is the wise, all-seeing, one-eyed Gorgon Medusa--not the horrid, dark patriarchal Medusa, but the older version that Powers describes as the "benign . . . mother-mentor-maid" (80). Unfortunately, Berenice's place in the social hierarchy which makes her Goddess nature acceptable also invalidates her as an appropriate role model for Frankie. In the era and setting of this play, it would be difficult to find a white, middle-class wife, mother, or grandmother who displays all aspects of the syncretistic archetype. A white Goddess figure might be located at a freak show, mental hospital, or nursing home, but never in a white man's kitchen and certainly not taking care of children. As she belongs to a muted group *within* a muted group, Berenice's true feminine power is diluted by the social hierarchy in which she lives and is not a threat to the dominant class.

And even Berenice has succumbed to patriarchy's myths that distort older myths, not surprisingly those stories associated with the Bible. In response to Frankie's question, "Well, do you think I will be pretty?" Berenice says "Maybe. If you file down them horns a inch or two" (30). Of course, the implication is that Frankie is devilish; the "horn" remark associates her with that Christian bad boy, Satan. Actually, a much older story associates horns with the cow and the crescent moon, both of which are symbols of the Great Goddess. The horned goddess eventually evolved into a horned god (Elworthy 181, 182, 185), who was, according to Gerina Dunwich, "a phallic deity of fertility and intellectual creativity" symbolizing "the powers of the waxing and waning crescent moons" (16). In other words, he was one of the many male gods that the Goddess cultures willingly assimilated into their religions and made into consorts of their female deities. Dunwich then points out that "the Roman Catholic Church . . . perverted Him into their symbol of evil and called Him the Devil" (17). The perversion has been so successful that McCullers's own Great Goddess, Berenice, is out of touch with the truth behind the lie, as are Frankie, John Henry, and most readers. In a matriarchal society, Berenice might have told Frankie she would be pretty if her horns were to *grow* an inch or two.

If Berenice is a Goddess figure, then Honey is her consort and, like her, he belongs to the muted group within the muted group so that his association with the true feminine archetype has no bearing or influence. Unlike Berenice, he rebels against the role society has imposed upon him. In this aspect he is similar to Frankie,

but Frankie ultimately accepts her role while Honey's rebellion and inability to accept what he knows is wrong leads him to self-destruction.

Honey's first name links him to Dionysus and thus the Great Mother, as that god is, according to Camille Paglia, associated with "water, milk, blood, sap, *honey*, and wine" and is "the all-embracing totality of mother-cult" (91, emphasis added, and 93). Powers points out that "the chthonic deity still smolders and is worshiped still in the Mysteries and the rites of Dionysus, . . . who brought with him an impassioned mysticism as alternative to the Apollonian religion of conquest and rational thought" (124-125). Honey and his ancient Greek predecessor are both party animals, engaging in revelry for its own sake, but there are far more serious undertones in this connection. Paglia states that "Dionysus liberates by destroying" (94), and the same can be said about Honey. He is a racial liberator decades ahead of his time, and his fight with the patriarchal system leads to his sacrifice; the climax of a Dionysian frenzy is the sacrifice of the god or his substitute and through him, "All are equalized and sacralized in the continuum of natural energy" (95). The equality Honey seeks through his sacrifice is not realized until later in the century, but he is close enough to the truth behind the lie to know what he is seeks. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of Frankie.

As the play closes, she seemingly has only one option. Her "we of me" is long-gone, and with it her masculine role model, Jarvis, as well as her androgynous alternative, F. Jasmine Addams. John Henry, representative of her child-like naivete, is dead. The all-knowing Great Mother, Sis Laura, is also dead, as is Frankie's

masculine link to the Goddess, Honey. So with both feet Frankie steps into her acceptable, inlaw feminine role, even cultivating a friendship with Barney the "Greek god" (116). Berenice, doll in hand, is moving on. She says that Frankie's "road is already strange to [her]" (114) and that she will "never get used to working for [Mrs. West]" (112). The Goddess does not understand, nor can she co-exist with, false archetypes, so she will disappear from their world, taking with her the doll--the intuition that is within every woman, barely audible as the Goddess struggles to be heard.

# FALSE FEMININE ARCHETYPES IN *THE BALLAD OF THE SAD CAFE* "'THE STANDARD OF HU(MANKIND)'"

*". . . a terrible, dim face . . . like the faces known in dreams" (McCullers/Albee, 70).*

In Carson McCullers's *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*, Miss Amelia is what Frankie Addams probably would have become had she not given in to social expectations. Edward Albee, rather than Carson McCullers, adapted *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* to the stage. Although Albee remained true to McCullers's own characterization of Miss Amelia, he deleted many of McCullers's descriptions and details which are relevant to this discussion; therefore, both the novella and the play are referenced.

In ". . .Tomboys," Louise Westling very aptly describes *Cafe* as "a nightmare vision of the tomboy grown up, without any concessions to social demands for sexual conformity" (345). The adult tomboy in the novella and stage adaptation is Miss Amelia. In ". . . Amazon Nightmare," Westling describes Amelia as a "grown-up tomboy whose physical proportions symbolize her exaggerated masculine self-image" (465). Amelia is Frankie's worst fear realized--a freak, but she is actually only a freak *in terms of the realm in which she lives.* Westling is probably correct in her assertion that Amelia has an "exaggerated masculine self-image," but she is really not as masculine as she has been portrayed. In fact, she is not nearly as masculine as Regina Hubbard. Claire Kahane acknowledges Amelia's androgynous, autonomous power:

> Initially Miss Amelia . . . feisty, muscular, and an exceptionally good nurse, prosperous and skilled in both the masculine and feminine crafts,

> maintains a powerful authority over her town because she is both sexually ambiguous and completely independent. (60)

Some of her so-called manly traits are simply unconventional feminine traits--Goddess traits. The fact that she and the other characters exist within a patriarchal society accounts for the misinterpretation of her autonomy and the dismissal of her as a freak. But another freak resides in *Ballad*--Cousin Lymon--and his freakishness is not merely a result of his misshapen body. If Miss Amelia represents what Frankie might have been, Cousin Lymon represents what she actually did become: the thwarted, grotesque, deformed and false patriarchal feminine.

Kahane further suggests that

> As if [Amelia] had been waiting for an external object with which to re-present herself, she places her authority in [Lymon]. But in doing so she becomes vulnerable, and loses her hermaphroditic independence. Effectively he becomes her phallus--an object signifying her power--though significantly, a grotesque phallus--and she becomes increasingly 'female'--even, as McCullers notes, wearing a dress on special occasions. (61)

This observation is only partially true. Lymon becomes Amelia's patriarchal power, but not her phallus. If anything, he becomes her womb, albeit a patriarchal womb--a *phallic* womb rather than a phallus. He is the *crippled* goddess, a split-off bastardization of the true feminine archetype. Also, Kahane's suggestion that Amelia becomes increasingly female implies that she was not already female, and other critics

contend that Amelia is totally masculine and out of touch with the feminine realm. In addition, many assertions, other characters' as well as critics', that Amelia is masculine are based solely upon her physical appearance. Joseph R. Millichap calls her "essentially unfeminine" (334). While her masculine *behavior* certainly cannot be denied, especially her greed and her business dealings, many of Amelia's pre-Lymon traits also align her with the Goddess, while her post-Lymon behavior places her in the realm of the patriarchal feminine. Like Frankie with her wedding fantasy, Amelia naively tries to reconcile her autonomy with acceptable feminine behavior. Thus, Lymon *is* an external representation of an aspect of Amelia which proves to be self-destructive. Margaret Walsh notes that

> The possible metaphorical unity of Amelia and her adopted cousin is revealed as they retire for the night. Amelia welcomes her new companion--whether hideously deformed relation or horribly distorted alter ego, and as they ascend to her rooms, the stairway light makes 'one great, twisted shadow of the two of them.' (47)

Without Lymon following her, Amelia's shadow would have been tall, proud and normal in appearance, albeit larger than a normal woman's shadow. With Lymon behind her, the shadow the two form makes Amelia appear to have a hunchback, and she *does* have one. The hunchback, Lymon, is her hunchback. He represents a crippling element.

Every description of Lymon aligns him with the inlaw feminine. He is referred to as "Stirring, shy and coy, almost like a young girl" and "like a great hostess"

(McCullers/Albee 11, 16). His endless chatter, gossip, and preoccupation with petty details evoke images of the standard patriarchal view of women as frivolous. Cousin Lymon is, quite literally, a *homemaker*. It is generally accepted that Lymon is the catalyst through which Amelia's store is transformed into a home for the entire town. Walsh points out that ". . . in its rebirth as a cafe, [Amelia's store] becomes the town's new home, and its roaring, glowing stove becomes a community hearth reminiscent of the ancient archetype, a womb-like sanctuary, a place of warmth and security" (45). Westling notes in Amelia and Lymon's relationship the "inversion of traditional roles of male and female," observing that "Cousin Lymon is the pampered mate who struts about in finery, is finicky about food and accommodations, and gads about town socializing and gossiping" (*Amazon*, 470). Later in the novella and play, Lymon's self-degradation and groveling in order to get Marvin Macy's attention bring to mind earlier references to the tender young girls Macy degrades. In addition, Robert M. Rechnitz points out the similarity between the narrator's description of Lymon and John Henry's description, in *The Member of the Wedding*, of the carnival pin head (459). The parallels between the descriptions of the pin head and Frankie in her standard feminine wedding attire already have been drawn here, thus aligning Frankie's attempt at patriarchal feminine behavior with Lymon's appearance.

Lymon's immediate identification with Marvin Macy also places him firmly in the stunted feminine realm. In the novella, McCullers describes the first meeting between the two:

> [Lymon] and the man stared at each other, and it was not the look of two strangers meeting for the first time and swiftly summing up each other. It was a peculiar stare they exchanged between them, like the look of two criminals who recognize each other. (43)

They *are* two criminals, and they are in league against the Goddess. Walsh refers to Lymon as Macy's "vehicle for revenge" (48), and he most certainly is. Macy represents the relentlessly masculine realm--the patriarchy that destroys the Goddess; as already noted, Lymon represents patriarchy's invention and consort, the inlaw feminine, without which no man has true power over the Goddess.

Parallels between Miss Amelia and Goddess figures have been pointed out, most notably, as Virginia Spencer Carr states, by Mary A. Gervin when she aligns Amelia with Artemis, the virgin huntress. However, most of these references refer merely to the obvious Amazon aspects of Amelia's appearance and behavior, and her virgin status is viewed in terms of patriarchal virginity. Amelia's very apparent one-in-herself virgin and crone characteristics are mostly ignored, while her discomfort with--indeed, her total ignorance of--the biological and physical functions of the mother realm is a basis on which she is dismissed as unfeminine.

Annis V. Pratt's definition of a virgin in the goddess cultures fits Amelia perfectly: ". . . 'a woman (gyn) like a man (vir)' . . .[She is] a virgin because [she is] unexploited, not in man's control" (110). From this viewpoint, Amelia's *physical* virginity can be acknowledged but is relatively unimportant. From a patriarchal viewpoint, her physical virginity is the *only* issue. The fact that she is man-like,

unexploited and uncontrollable already makes her a freak in that world, and the fact that she refuses to have sex with her husband reinforces that contention. It is interesting to note that Marvin actually tries to prostitute Amelia; he thinks that giving her material goods will convince her to give in to his sexual demands. Walsh notes that "In desperation, Macy strips himself of his possessions as he has already stripped himself of his pride and self-respect, and he offers them to his bride . . ." (45). However, he expects sex in return, so Macy does not really become feminine or weak as other critics have implied; rather, he displays a patriarchal view of the world by considering sex to be a tool for barter. Amelia's reaction is further proof that she is actually not so masculine, for if she were, she would understand the sexual bargaining process being used by Macy. Also, she would expect sexual favors from Lymon as she slowly gives him her treasured possessions and allows him to gain access to her money and business dealings. Rather than bargaining for affection like Macy, Amelia is actually trying to reconcile or join the inlaw feminine with her Goddess-like autonomy. They cannot co-exist indefinitely and, ultimately, the former destroys the latter.

Amelia's occupation as healer aligns her with the crone. Millichap refers to Amelia's "benevolent or white witchcraft" (333). It is significant that Amelia does not charge for her healing services. Panthea Reid Broughton states that

> Unless they are sick, [Amelia] deals with people only to make a profit . . . and she deals with sick people because they are malleable. With them she can achieve a symbiotic union which confirms her sense of

> power even more than litigations and profit-making do. Thus this fiercely materialistic woman need charge no fees for doctoring, for power is its own reward. (40-41)

While it is true that Amelia's healing power is far more potent than her profit-making ability, Broughton is remiss in weighing the two types of power with the same patriarchal scale. Amelia's business acumen is a masculine power and the legacy of her father, thus it is artificial. Her healing ability is a feminine power and the legacy of the crone aspect of the Goddess, thus it is natural. Charging for these services would be like charging for the change in seasons or weather.

Millichap further notes that Amelia does not use her healing power in a negative way until after Lymon and Marvin Macy join forces against her: "Miss Amelia's degeneration is symbolized by the poison she puts in Marvin's food; her witchcraft is now destructive, her magic black with hate" (337). Earlier in the novella and play, the townspeople even try to turn Miss Amelia into a wicked witch, spreading the vicious rumor that "she cut [Lymon's] body up, and she bury him in the swamp" (McCullers/Albee, 15), but in reality it is only when she opens herself up to the inlaw feminine that she becomes truly murderous. Just as patriarchy has misrepresented the crone as an evil, wicked witch, patriarchy and its invention, the inlaw feminine, represented by Macy and Lymon, cause Amelia to use her feminine power in a negative way.

Amelia's disinterest in sex and discomfort with the biological aspects of being a woman--her denial of the procreative process--make her an incomplete Goddess figure, but she is not totally out of touch with the mother realm or the life/death/rebirth cycle, although her flirtations with both are stunted and wavering at best. Walsh argues that "Amelia's special feelings for the sufferings of children cannot be called maternal. *Paternal* is a better term . . . " (46). Walsh's theory seems to be clouded by the standard, western idea of "maternal," an idea which tends to consider childless women to be lacking in motherly instinct. Amelia's insistence upon all-day nurturing of children (*e.g.*, the child with the boil in the novella) before treatment can only be called sensitive, feminine and maternal. It is her method of relaxing the child with liquor that reeks of paternity. In addition, her willingness to test her remedies on herself before prescribing them is very maternal. Her role as supplier of the basics of life, both before and after Lymon's arrival, also place her in a nurturing role. It is her habit of *charging* for these products that is masculine. Perhaps the fact that Amelia is a motherless child contributes to her masculine behavior, for she is probably merely continuing a family business tradition. Her mother died while giving birth to her, so Amelia may feel that if she were to continue in the family child-bearing tradition, making herself maternal in a *conventional* way, she might die.

The only things Amelia's body produces are two kidney stones, and she seems to treat them with the same reverence and awe that a mother would treat a child. The well-known adage that the only pain comparable to childbirth that a man can experience is passing a kidney stone comes to mind when considering Amelia's

reverence for the two little objects. They are among her most prized possessions and the closest she comes to acknowledgement of her biological functions. She keeps them safely hidden away until she allows the inlaw feminine into her life, after which she presents them to Lymon and promises to buy him a watch chain on which to display the treasures, just as conventional mothers display their little treasures--their children--as proof of their worth as women.

Amelia's skewed view of the procreative process parallels her understanding of the entire life cycle, and her prized acorn best illustrates this point. The acorn, another gift she presents to Lymon, has been treated by Amelia with the same careful tenderness as she gives the kidney stones. Amelia explains that the acorn is special to her because she found it on the day of her father's funeral. It is significant that she did not *plant* the acorn and begin a new life in honor of the life that had passed on, choosing instead simply to keep the seed in its dormant state. Like Lymon, the acorn is stunted; it is a tree that never reached its full potential. It is only the possibility of life. Amelia has enough understanding of the power of the acorn to keep it in remembrance of her father's death, but she does not know what to do with it. She has planted and reaped crops her entire life, but when the life cycle is tied to human emotion, she is out of touch. This also parallels the scene in which she reads the *Farmer's Almanac* on her wedding night--farming is the only type of procreation with which she is comfortable. It is significant that she *does* try to nurture Lymon. She nourishes him by giving him food and liquor, and she also rubs pot liquor on his body to strengthen him, but to no avail. Only those features which make him grotesque, his

head and his hump, seem to increase in size. Amelia comments to Lymon, "You have not grown stronger; you are still so pitiful" (McCullers/Albee, 21), and the continuing passage points out that his legs have not grown bigger or stronger. The inlaw feminine does not possess what it takes to walk forward in the Goddess realm and complete the cycle.

Amelia has everything she needs to root herself firmly in the virgin and crone realms of the Goddess cycle, but she gets off track in the procreative, mother realm. Amelia's red dress represents her desperate attempt to enter the mother phase. Unfortunately, only the *color* of the dress can be associated with the Great Mother. Everything else the dress represents reflects the father's idea of the mother.

Robert Graves refers to ". . . the Full Moon, the *red* goddess of love and battle . . ." (70, emphasis added), and the full moon phase is commonly associated with the mother aspect of the Triple Goddess. Clarissa Pinkola Estes contends that

> Red is the color of sacrifice, of rage, of murder, of being killed. Yet red is also the color of vibrant life, dynamic emotion, arousal, eros, and desire. It is a color that is considered strong medicine for psychic malaise, a color which rouses appetite. There is throughout the world a figure known as the *red mother*. . . . [and] she is the watcher of 'things coming through.' She is especially propitiated by those who are about to give birth, for whosoever leaves this world or comes into this world has to pass through her red river. Red is a promise that a rising up or a borning is soon to come. (102-103, emphasis added)

Thus, red is associated with the complete mother--her devoted as well as her devouring aspects. However, as Estes further asserts, red also represents "life and sacrifice. To live a vibrant life, we must make sacrifices of various sorts . . . . Problems arise when there is much sacrifice but no life forthcoming from it all. Then red is the color of blood-loss rather than blood-life" (222).

Amelia's red dress is a sacrificial shroud, because whenever she wears it she sacrifices her own convictions. She slowly sacrifices herself and her Goddess nature, speeding up the process when Marvin Macy reenters her life. Prior to Marvin Macy's arrival, she "[reserves the dress] for Sundays, funerals, and sessions of the court" (49). On these occasions, Amelia acknowledges social convention, realizing that she must attempt to embrace the inlaw feminine in order to function in two supremely patriarchal settings--church and a court of law. After Macy's reappearance in her life, she gives in completely to the inlaw feminine that has been working away at her in the person of Lymon, and the red dress becomes her normal attire.

Broughton calls Amelia's dress a "symbol of her accessibility" (41), and indeed it is, because in a patriarchal setting a dress is a symbol of femininity, *i.e.,* passivity. In fact, in that world, outward appearance *equals* femininity, and Amelia's appearance is another reason her true archetypal feminine qualities have been overlooked. Germaine Greer points out that "The 'normal' sex roles that [women] learn to play from . . . infancy are no more natural than the antics of a transvestite" (19). Greer also discusses what she terms the "female fetish," which is equivalent to inlaw feminine, maintaining that

> [The dominion of the female fetish] must not be thought to entail the rule of women, for she is not a woman . . . . Her essential quality is castratedness. She absolutely must be young, her body hairless, her flesh buoyant . . . . No musculature must distort the smoothness of the lines of her body, although she may be painfully slender or warmly cuddly. (52)

Greer's description of the patriarchal feminine is the antithesis of Amelia, and Amelia's red dress is her pathetic attempt to give the appearance of fitting into a sex role. She probably appears to be a man in drag when she wears it.

Marvin Macy is also in disguise. He receives (and takes) undeserved credit for certain powers that he simply does not possess: "Now it seemed to the town that he was more dangerous than he had ever been before, as [if] in the penitentiary in Atlanta he must have learned the method of laying charms" (McCullers 48). Just as patriarchal cultures began to give men credit for certain powers and magical abilities as they destroyed the Goddess and replaced her with male deities and non-threatening, castrated goddesses, so are Marvin Macy's powers exaggerated and misrepresented. Westling notes Macy's alignment with winter (*Amazon* 471), and Millichap observes that "The natural rhythms of the seasons are broken for the first time in six years when Marvin Macy arrives with the Fall like some Hades of Dixie bringing death, desolation, and waste" (337). Further, when it begins to snow, an unusual occurrence, "Marvin Macy [lays] claim to the snowfall" (McCullers, 54).

Millichap seems to be attributing to Marvin Macy the break in seasonal rhythms. However, his reference to Macy as a "Hades of Dixie" alludes to the Demeter myth in which the Goddess disappears while her daughter, Persephone, resides in Hades. While the Goddess and her daughter are gone, winter descends upon the Earth. However, winter *does not* appear at the command of the king of the underworld. Winter overcomes the Earth because the Goddess is nowhere to be found; she is in mourning. It is *her* power that causes the earth to die temporarily. Marvin Macy's arrival obliterates the last vestiges of the Goddess left in Amelia. If anyone can lay claim to the snowfall, it is Amelia as she becomes more and more helpless against Macy and Lymon, even going "underground" herself as she stays inside until the snow is gone.

Amelia makes one last grasp for the Goddess who has been just out of her reach for most of her life as she prepares for the climactic brawl with Marvin Macy. She eschews the red dress, choosing instead her old overalls, and she has regained her strength for the big confrontation. The sexual undertones in the fight scene are acknowledged by Arleen Portada:

> The inevitable bar-room brawl, for which Amelia has actually trained with boxing and eating raw meat, is a wild scramble on the floor, with 'panting' and 'thumpings' and a locked hipbone embrace whose ironic sexual connotations are graphically evident. (69)

Thus, a parallel can be drawn between the wrestling match between Amelia and Marvin and the rape scene in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Marvin could not control

Amelia's sexuality even when he married her, so he is symbolically attempting to control her during the fight. This time the Goddess is outnumbered. Just as Amelia is about to triumph, the inlaw feminine in the form of Lymon flies across the room like a Harpie with his clawed hands and assists his partner in patriarchy with the final destruction of Amelia. Kahane observes that "At the end, [Amelia] is left a woman, gender-locked in a decaying house. If the image of the hermaphrodite recalls a fantasy of an omnipotent primal mother, McCullers' story effectively castrates her" (61). More specifically, the deformed feminine castrates her. The crippled goddess defeats the Goddess; the phallic womb prevails.

Walsh states that "McCullers's balladeer . . . tells of the terrible transformation of the rich young heroine into a crone . . ." (44). As noted earlier, the brawl is a symbolic sexual act, so that afterward Amelia is no longer one-in-herself. The narrator relates that "she changed very queerly as a doctor . . . . Now all this wise doctoring was over" (McCullers, 64). Also, the physical description of her at the end of the novella is that of a patriarchal wicked witch: "Miss Amelia let her hair grow ragged, and it was turning gray. Her face lengthened, and the great muscles of her body shrank until she was thin as old maids are thin when they go crazy. . . . She was not pleasant to listen to; her tongue had sharpened terribly" (64). The virgin and crone characteristics possessed by Amelia at the beginning of the story have been replaced by their split-off, patriarchal versions. She even prostitutes herself, charging "A dollar for lookin' at the freak" (McCullers/Albee, 69)--the freak with "a face like the terrible dim faces known in dreams--sexless and white, with two gray crossed eyes which are

turned inward so sharply that they seem to be exchanging with each other one long and secret gaze of grief" (McCullers 1). Perhaps they are seeking the Goddess.

While Regina Hubbard is left essentially a man in an inlaw feminine disguise, Frankie Addams and Miss Amelia are introduced in *A Member of the Wedding* and *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* as potential Goddesses in masculine disguise. The two plays reveal a fleeting awareness of the cycle on the part of both the author and the plays' characters. However, as in Hellman's plays, patriarchy ultimately prevails, but in McCullers's plays it prevails not because of the feminine realm is being completely trampled upon by patriarchy, but by the inlaw feminine's compliance with the masculine realm.

Regina's masculine behavior is her effort to *join* her oppressor. Frankie's and Amelia's masculine appearances represent their efforts to rebel against patriarchal rules which mandate that "acceptable" women display a specific type of outward appearance and behavior. However, the cycle of the mother quest is still somewhat clouded. Patriarchy and its stunted feminine work together to diminish the aspects of the mother quest apparent in Frankie Addams in *Wedding* and Miss Amelia in *Cafe*. McCullers presents a world in which the female characters are vaguely aware of their Goddess heritage but are so misled by the need to conform to the father's idea of the mother that they become hopelessly off-track so that everything representing the Goddess--Sis Laura, Berenice, and Honey in *Wedding* and Miss Amelia's one-in-herself virginity and healing power in *Cafe*--has disappeared as the plays end.

# FALSE FEMININE ARCHETYPES IN *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE*
## "'A FORM OF SUPERIOR SANITY'"

*"Women's so-called 'delusions of grandeur' seem to point to a search for an authentic mythology and history of which they have been dispossessed." (Orenstein 69)*

*". . . madness is a necessary transitional step toward the wisdom that is beyond logic, here called the wisdom of the goddess." (Powers 167)*

As in Hellman's plays, the clash between Old South and New South values is only one level of conflict in *A Streetcar Named Desire*; the more ancient battle between the Goddess and patriarchy is also once again fought. While McCullers's plays end with Frankie giving in to the inlaw feminine and Miss Amelia being forced to give in to it--in fact being destroyed by it--*A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams *begins* with Blanche DuBois giving in to the feminine stereotypes mandated by patriarchy. W. Kenneth Holditch describes Blanche as "the delicate last remnant of an agrarian, aristocratic order that, before its decline and eventual demise, was somehow able to balance its belief in a metaphysical and religious system with the demands of the flesh" (147). The order to which Holditch refers is, of course, the Old South, but he could just as easily be referring to the pre-Christian Goddess cults.

The Great Mother has definitely gone underground in *Streetcar*. Blanche tells Mitch that her name means "white woods. Like an orchard in spring!" (54-55). Holditch points out that white woods may also mean "decayed forest" (155). These two opposing possibilities bring to mind the patriarchal either/or view of women; the forest either must be in full bloom or in a state of hopeless decay. But another possibility for the significance of Blanche's name has been overlooked. Could "white

woods" not also mean a forest covered with snow, temporarily dead but holding promise of and possibility for new life?

Blanche's explanation of her name parallels her presentation of herself as pure and virginal. Holditch's suggestion--the "decayed forest"--parallels Stanley's portrait of Blanche, the one Mitch comes to accept. The irony is that in her heart, Blanche also believes the latter or she would feel no need to reinvent herself. Her compulsive virginity renewal, symbolized by her use of her maiden name despite being a widow and also symbolized by her frequent baths, is not one-in-herself regeneration in the tradition of the Goddess. Rather, it is a pathetic, desperate attempt to fit the mold patriarchy demands of unmarried women. Blanche is a liar, but she must be in order to be what a man's world demands of her--a split-off version of the Goddess. She lies in order to become the patriarchal lie, so the following assessment of her by Lionel Kelly is unfair at best:

> Blanche's creativity is, of course, little more than illusory; for the duration of the play it is no more than the nurture of her appearance, her wardrobe of props, clothes, jewels, and makeup. However, we can read the guises as tropes of the multiform shapes assumed by the white goddess in the sexual chase . . . so that it is right to see Blanche's nymphomania as a thwarted mimesis of the white goddess's predatory sexuality . . . . (129)

This judgment is unfair not only to Blanche but also to the Great Mother. Kelly is imposing a man-made split-off onto the White Goddess, the true feminine archetype

whom Robert Graves claims to be the source of all poetry, the all-encompassing Muse. "Guises" and props such as clothes, jewels and makeup are tricks of the *inlaw* feminine trade; they have no place in the realm of the true Goddess. Kelly describes the dark side of Germaine Greer's "female fetish" (52), *not* Graves's White Goddess, when he refers to "predatory sexuality." The Goddess merely possesses *sexuality*. The predatory label is the result of patriarchy's fear of the *power* of that sexuality.

Blanche actually was a White Goddess figure in her youth, serving as Muse for her young husband. She was the inspiration for his poems, which she has cherished lovingly over the years. Stanley's failure to recognize the significance of these verses--"What the hell are they?" (42)--illustrates clearly how far removed from the Great Mother he actually is. His rummaging through the poems makes Blanche "faint with exhaustion" (42); the Muse loses her energy under the merciless probing of patriarchy. Just as the precious poems are buried underneath the stack of legal papers representing the "epic fornications" (43) of Blanche's male ancestors, the Goddess is buried underneath man-made laws and rules. Propped up in her place are the paper goddesses of patriarchy, represented in *Streetcar* by Stella and Eunice.

Holditch astutely points out that "[Stanley] will not tolerate the passionate and physical elements that are part of Blanche's past . . ., though he expects and enjoys the sensual in Stella" (164), but Holditch does not offer an explanation for this double standard. The probable reason that Stanley finds Stella's sensuality acceptable is because he is responsible for it; therefore, he can control it as he cannot control Blanche and what she represents to him. Stella is the epitome of the inlaw feminine:

married, pregnant, and subservient. She does not threaten Stanley's home. Rather, she maintains it. As Mark Royden Winchell notes,

> . . . Stanley's loving and obedient wife is always waiting for him, eager to gratify and be gratified . . . . the Kowalski household embodies a patriarchal vision of home as Heaven. There is not enough potential conflict here for either tragedy or farce. Not until Blanche enters the scene. (136)

Even as she tries desperately to fit an acceptable mold, Blanche represents the chthonic, outlaw feminine to Stanley. Almost immediately, he recognizes her as the enemy. Her sexual past is as illustrious as his own, so she becomes almost a rival. She is a threat to his little kingdom because she attempts to take his wife away, back to the "white columns" from which he removed her. Blanche wants to return Stella the "star" to her rightful place in the heavens. Stanley wants Stella to go no further than upstairs.

In "Eunice Hubbell . . .," Philip Kolin considers the stairs in *Streetcar* to be "associated with Eunice and feminine values throughout the play," (118) and he also maintains that her "'upstairs' apartment [is] almost a god-like, god-benevolent location" (115). The operative word is "god," a *male* deity. Kolin further refers to Eunice's "advancement of feminine values and virtues" (119), but he fails to recognize that these are *patriarchal* feminine values, not true feminine values. Eunice is from the "stand-by-your-man" school. If Stella remains in Stanley's world, Eunice is her only role model. She represents Stella's future, just as Lavinia represents Birdie's future in

Hellman's plays, the pin head at the fair represents Frankie's future in *Wedding*, and Lymon represents Amelia's future in *Cafe*. The only feminine values Eunice represents are inlaw feminine values. While it is true that she chastises Stanley after he hits Stella, she is merely spouting rhetoric. Of *course* she is outraged. Even Mitch is appalled, but Kolin does not praise *his* feminine values. Blanche has the only logical solution: she wants Stella to leave Stanley. Eunice's *actions* are more indicative of her true allegiance than is her scolding of Stanley. When her own husband becomes abusive, she simply hits back--a likely choice for Stella in the future--and goes upstairs to her "god-like" haven to make love to her oppressor. Rather than rising above patriarchy with dignity, Eunice joins Steve and Stanley and what they represent. The only differences between the Eunice/Steve relationship and the Stella/Stanley union are a few years and an extramarital affair on Steve's part, and the possibility that Stanley will engage in affairs is highly likely if his character is examined realistically. The fact that he rapes his wife's sister establishes his value system, and the fact that Eunice advises Stella to believe Stanley instead of Blanche establishes her value system as the same. Kolin's positive assessment of Eunice places the critic himself in the patriarchal realm. Eunice and Stella are Cousin Lymon to Stanley's Marvin Macy.

Like Macy with the innocent young girls he corrupts, Stanley is described in terms of his sexual appetites:

> Since earliest manhood the center of his life has been pleasure with women, the giving and taking of it, not with weak indulgence,

> dependently, but with the power and pride of a richly feathered male bird among hens. (29)

It is ironic that Stanley's sexuality is the main source of his power, but that he uses Blanche's sexuality to weaken and ultimately destroy her. It is also ironic that while Marvin Macy sets out to destroy Amelia because she refuses sex, Stanley is able to destroy Blanche because she *does not* refuse sex. Neither woman follows the patriarchal rules that require Amelia to relinquish her virginity as a married woman and Blanche to remain chaste as long as she is unmarried. Marvin Macy defeats Amelia with the aid of the stunted inlaw feminine personified by Cousin Lymon; Stanley defeats Blanche with the aid of the stunted inlaw feminine personified by Stella, Eunice, Blanche herself and also with help from Mitch.

Although seemingly more sensitive than Stanley and the other men in his crowd--Blanche deems him "superior to the others" (49)--Mitch ultimately proves to be no better. When he tells Blanche at the end of Scene Nine that she is "not clean enough to bring in the house with [his] mother" (121), he indicates that he is just as far removed from the Great Mother as Stanley. Mitch will never be any closer to the Goddess than her Christianized version, the Virgin Mary, a patriarchal invention and ideal with whom he obviously equates his own mother. Surprisingly, it is actually Blanche who shares space with the Virgin in the mythic realm.

In "Our Lady of the Quarter . . .," Kolin points out several obvious parallels between Blanche and the Virgin Mary, citing her rhinestone tiara as a variation of Mary's Queen of Heaven crown, Blanche's mirror, her sorrowful facial expressions

and, most notably, Blanche's birthday which is the same day as the Feast of the Mater Dolorosa (82). He maintains that "Williams merges script with Scripture, conflating Blanche with Christ's Mother" (83), and concludes that she is aligned with Mary because of her grieving, sorrowful characteristics. However, each of these characteristics is related to Mary as she is presented in Christian, *i.e.*, patriarchal, doctrine. When her *ancient* origins are examined, the connection between Mary and Blanche is even more profound, revealing the stifled Goddess in Williams's heroine. Joseph Campbell observes that "The antique model for the Madonna, actually, is Isis with Horus at her breast" (176). Camille Paglia asserts that "The medieval Madonna, a direct descendant of Isis, is *a Great Mother with her chthonian terror removed.* She has lost her roots in Nature, because it is pagan nature that Christianity rose to oppose" (43, emphasis added). The original Blessed Virgin is the Great Mother. Blanche has been uprooted from her chthonian Goddess temple, Belle Reve, because her actions threatened the status quo; like the Great Mother's prophetesses who dared defy Yahweh by "[playing] the harlot [and committing] adultery" (Stone 185), Blanche is banished from the only world she has ever known. She finds herself in a patriarchal kingdom with a "god-like" haven (heaven) within shouting (praying) distance just upstairs--complete with patriarchal feminine ideals to uphold and reinforce the rules of the kingdom. In order to fit in, she denies--in fact, loses sight of--her Goddess nature and attempts to sanitize herself into an ideal, just as the Great Mother was disguised as the Virgin Mary in order to fit into the Christian religion. The Goddess's son/lover

became simply God's son, and she merely a vessel through which he entered the world.

Paglia convincingly establishes the connection between the Great Mother's son/lover and Jesus:

> The Great Mother's main disciple is her son and lover, the dying god of near eastern mystery religion . . . . Maleness is merely a shadow whirled round in nature's eternal cycle . . . . Masculinity flows from the Great Mother as an aspect of herself and is recalled and cancelled by her at will. Her son is a servant of her cult . . . . The most brilliant perception of *The Golden Bough*, muted by prudence, is Frazer's analogy between Jesus and the dying gods. (53)

Paglia also contends that "the priest of the Great Mother changed sex in order to become her" (44), and that "a woman putting on men's clothes merely steals social power, but a man putting on women's clothes is searching for God" (90). It might be more appropriate to say that he is searching for the Goddess. It is significant that Blanche always refers to her dead poet husband as a "boy." In effect, he was her son/lover and poet-priest, she his Muse, and his homosexuality--symbolically changing sex--was a form of worship. Her twisted notion, fostered by patriarchy, that his sexual deviance and subsequent suicide must somehow be her fault, is the reason she spends her life afterward seeking affirmation through sexual promiscuity. After all, as she tells Mitch, "the lady must entertain the gentleman--or no dice!" (86).

The incident which finally causes Blanche to be banished from Laurel is her seduction of a teenage boy. This action is usually explained as her attempt to alleviate loneliness and to prove herself still youthful and attractive and, on one level, is probably true. However, she is also the fragmented Goddess attempting to pick up the pieces and form an alliance with another son/lover. Unfortunately, in a patriarchal world the son/lover must be simply a son and the Goddess must be a virgin. She feels the faint vibrations of the Goddess once again when, in Scene Five, the young man comes to the door in New Orleans. It is very significant that he is collecting for *The Evening Star*. After all, it was the evening star in the east that heralded the coming of Jesus. Blanche also calls him a Prince as she restrains the Goddess nature that fleetingly surfaces. Her potential son/lover is soon replaced by Mitch, a son with a virginal mother. Just as Blanche seeks a replacement son/lover, Mitch seeks a replacement for his dying mother. Unfortunately, Mitch is too far removed from the Goddess to fill Blanche's void, and in reality, Blanche is too far removed from patriarchy to meet Mitch's need. She almost succeeds with her inlaw feminine disguise; if Stanley would keep quiet, she would find the conventional security she seeks. If he simply wants her out of his house, this would seem the easiest, most logical way to accomplish that goal. But Stanley's wish is not that simple. He seeks to destroy Blanche because her proximity to her Goddess roots is too threatening. He is like the Levites/Hebrews who refused to co-exist alongside the Goddess cults and who were not satisfied until they were all destroyed.

Quoting Anca Vlasopolos, June Schleuter states that "Blanche styles herself 'a priestess of Aphrodite' who slipped outside to answer the calls of young soldiers; Stanley casts her as 'the male joke about insatiable fallen women'" (71). Again, the Goddess's prophetess (or priestess) is patriarchy's prostitute. In fact, numerous critics have referred to Blanche as a prostitute, although there is no indication in the text of the play that she ever accepts payment for sex. Rather, Williams seems to be depicting sex as the life force. One of the main themes in the play is the idea that desire is the opposite of death, which obviously makes desire analogous to life. In her quest for security, comfort, and kindness while still living in Laurel, Blanche was, albeit unwittingly, participating in the great cycle that represents the Great Mother. This is quite unlike Stanley, who uses desire/sex to control his immediate universe and establish his superiority.

In "Nietzsche Descending," Joseph N. Riddel attempts to align Stanley with Dionysus (25), maintaining that his intense sexuality and earthiness place him in opposition to the Apollonian, which he asserts is represented by Blanche. However, it seems that the reverse is actually more probable because underneath Blanche's inlaw feminine pretense lurks a Goddess with no hope of survival in the Apollonian world represented by Stanley. The Great Mother is aligned with the Dionysian. According to Paglia, Dionysus is "heir to the Great Mother of chthonian nature, [and] is, with Osiris, the greatest of the dying gods of mystery religion" and she notes further that "he remains the son of his mother, wearing her clothes and loitering with bands of women" (88-89), descriptions hardly appropriate for Stanley Kowalski. It is *Blanche*

who is symbolically torn apart, not Stanley. There is no consort/son/lover; the Goddess herself is sacrificed, and she prepares herself appropriately for the atrocity.

The evening of the rape, Blanche is first confronted by Mitch. She is wearing her "scarlet satin robe" (113). Like Amelia's red dress, the robe is a sacrificial shroud. It is obvious that Blanche is beginning her descent into madness as she hears noises that Mitch cannot hear (114-115). The voices are like the shadows Berenice sees in *Wedding*, fleeting glimpses of the Great Mother. Blanche's fleeting glimpses remind her of the sacrifice of her son/lover. Coinciding with her descent is Blanche's gradual acknowledgment of her Goddess nature. The first indication is her statement that "Everything here isn't Stan's. Some things on the premises are actually mine!" (114). She is desperately trying to assert some type of ownership or control over her environment and remind both herself and Mitch of her possibilities for autonomy. She then proclaims, "I want magic! Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people" (117). A magical, life-giving ability was precisely what gave the Great Mother *her* power throughout the ages. Blanche's satirical jab, lost on Mitch, as she renames the Flamingo Hotel the Tarantula Arms (118) indicates her astute realization that it is her sexuality that has been her downfall. She no more believes her sexual conquests to be victims than the men themselves did; even as she is being humiliated, she is making fun of the fear of the Mitches and Stanleys of the world who are responsible for the mislabeling of female sexuality as predatory and destructive.

Blanche's reaction to the Mexican flower vendor is also evidence of her voyage toward the Goddess. The old blind woman represents the crone stage of the mother

quest, associated with the death aspect of the life/death/rebirth Great Mother cycle. The fact that she speaks a foreign language is no accident, and it is very significant that Blanche not only understands her perfectly but hears and sees her before she actually arrives at the door, even though the flower vendor is described as "calling barely audibly" and being "only faintly visible" (119). Blanche's immediate recoil from the crone--"No, no! Not now! Not now!" (119)--might be interpreted as her denial of the Goddess rather than moving a step closer to her. However, the subsequent passages during which she relates to an uncomprehending Mitch the connection between death and desire show her coming face to face with the reality of the cycle. Her statement that she and her mother would sit together at Belle Reve with "death . . . as close as you are" but that they "didn't dare even admit [they] had ever heard of it" (120) is in sharp contrast to Blanche's immediate recognition of death at the door in the form of the Mexican flower vendor. Thus, rather than being a symbol of doom, the blind, old woman symbolizes Blanche's growing recognition of all the stops on the mother quest. The fact that Mitch only relates to the desire/life aspect of Blanche's new realization indicates his lack of recognition.

After Mitch's departure for his clean mother's house, Blanche changes her sacrificial shroud for a costume even more symbolic of her fate. Her soiled slippers represent her muddled steps toward the Great Mother cycle. They are analogous to Lymon's weak legs. Stanley refers to Blanche's clothes as a "worn-out Mardi Gras outfit" (127). Mardi Gras, or Carnival, is a feast and celebration with decidedly pagan roots. According to Ralph Wickiser, it is "a curious mixture of pagan mythology and

Christian dogma . . . . As a festive rite, [it] is, probably a carryover from the Bacchanalian, Lupercalian, and Saturnalian festivals of Rome during the pre-Christian era. The Bacchanalian and Saturnalian rites were festivals of *Bacchus* and Saturn" (73, emphasis added). Bacchus *is* Dionysus (Bulfinch 8), the Great Mother's consort. As she descends further into madness, Blanche makes a closer connection with her Goddess nature. Stanley's dismissal of the costume as cheap and worthless is further proof that he is very far removed from the Dionysian. Stanley's rape of Blanche is a drunken parody of the revelry associated with the Dionysian/Bacchanalian rites and revelry. Rather than being a celebration of the life cycle, it is a celebration of patriarchal power. Stanley's crime is not one of passion or desire, but rather one of violence. The only desire involved is his wish to destroy. Take *Desire* to *Cemeteries* and you will arrive at *Elysian Fields*. The life/death cycle *must* be acknowledged, and Stanley's actions indicate that his recognition of it is just as minute as Mitch's. Stanley is not a streetcar; he is a freight train crushing or drowning out everything in his path as he charges down the straight line of patriarchy, totally oblivious to the cycle.

Stella and Stanley's baby has been viewed as a replacement for Blanche, a type of rebirth symbol to counter her symbolic death. However, it is significant that the child is male and that he does not appear onstage until Blanche is out of sight. Rather than representing a phase in a continuing cycle, this child represents patriarchal lineage and he is aligned with Stanley, not Blanche. This is made very clear when Stanley reaches for Stella's breasts--the child's sustenance--at the end. Stanley's blood has not merely been mixed with the DuBois blood, as Blanche suggests earlier in the play.

Stanley has obliterated the last vestige of the world Stella, and now Blanche, left behind. While Stella came down off the columns, Blanche has chosen her only alternative in this world. Her madness is her escape, her way of returning to the Goddess's temple.

Citing the work of R. D. Laing, Powers points out that "psychosis in either women or men can be a sane, self-protective response to life in an oppressive social situation" (167). Orenstein concurs:

> Female madness, then, within the context of a patriarchal creation myth and literary history is, according to critic Barbara Hill Rigney, a political event. It is connected to a rebellion against or escape from male authority, and Rigney views it much as R. D. Laing would view all madness--as a form of superior sanity and a search for an authentic, integrated image of the self. (46)

The events leading up to Blanche's brutal rape all point toward a descent into madness, but there is also evidence of a vague recognition of the Goddess. The shadows that appear ominously on the walls prior to the attack parallel the noises and voices that only Blanche can hear and, again, are analogous to the shadow Berenice sees out of the corner of her eye. They are the Goddess lurking about, attempting to claim one of her own. Blanche DuBois actually does fashion her own true mother quest, as Powers calls "the wisdom beyond logic" associated with madness and "the wisdom of the goddess" (167). However, Blanche remains as powerless as she was when she was a caricature of the inlaw feminine because, again, "if the goddess is crazy or chronically

misunderstood . . . her power is dismissible" (Powers 130). As she is dismissed, the patriarchal card dealer announces another round of the man's game.

As *A Streetcar Named Desire* begins, false feminine archetypes are hopelessly ingrained in Blanche's psyche, so that she becomes a caricature of the inlaw feminine, presenting herself as pure and virginal in an effort to fit into a "man's world." The familiar alliance between patriarchy and the patriarchal feminine is at work as Eunice and Stella uphold and comply with Stanley Kowalski's oppressive behavior, and they help make possible the one-man rule of his little French Quarter kingdom as well as his eventual destruction of Blanche. Her fate at the end of the play is similar to Amelia's at the end of *Cafe* in that both are left broken women, but Blanche takes a step closer to the mother quest as she descends into madness. Amelia's crossed eyes are a harbinger of Blanche's fate. The "secret gaze of grief" (McCullers 1) that Amelia's eyes exchange with one another becomes Blanche's poignant, dignified descent into herself. While Amelia desperately seeks the Goddess outwardly but continues only to see herself without comprehending the obvious, Blanche looks inside and embarks on the only mother quest available to her: a solitary, inward quest into madness, where only she understands the language of the Goddess.

FEMININE ARCHETYPES IN *CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF*
"WALKING IN RHYTHM TOWARD THE GREAT MOTHER"

*"Perhaps when women and men bite that apple--or fig--at the same time, learn to consider each other's ideas and opinions with respect, and regard the world and its riches as a place that belongs to every living being on it, we can begin to say we have become a truly civilized species" (Stone 241).*

Even though she is ultimately dismissible like Lavinia Hubbard, Blanche DuBois stumbles almost unwittingly onto the Goddess cycle and embarks on a descent into madness--the only mother quest she is allowed in the Kowalski kingdom and what it represents. But it is nonetheless a fledgling mother quest. Insanity is her only alternative because she is alone on the quest. Like her dramatic sister ancestors in Hellman's and McCullers's works, Blanche stumbles across one patriarchal blockade after another until she is hit head-on by the freight train named Kowalski.

Stanley Kowalski has two counterparts in another of Tennessee Williams's plays, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof;* his kindred spirits are Gooper and Mae Pollitt. Although certainly more subtle, Gooper and Mae nevertheless occupy the same patriarchal realm as Stanley, Marvin Macy, and Regina Hubbard and her brothers. Like their dramatic predecessors, Gooper and Mae do not understand Earth-cult or Goddess values, and they abuse them to achieve their selfish goals. Unlike their earlier counterparts, however, they represent only minor setbacks as the mother quest begins to gain momentum.

Gooper and Mae use both life and death to achieve their ambitions. They withhold their knowledge of Big Daddy's impending death from both Big Daddy and his wife because they think it gives them power and time to plan a strategy for taking control of the family money and plantation. Big Daddy's death is a route to higher

status for them, just as Horace's death is for Regina. In addition, natural female power--the ability to give life--is simply another route to higher status for Gooper and Mae. She has one "no-neck monster" (more mutants, like Leo Hubbard) after another not because she wants to contribute to the ongoing cycle of life (which includes death), but rather because she is building up ammunition in the form of children to insure that she and Gooper receive an adequate share--and possibly control--of Big Daddy's estate. The children really are, as Maggie jokingly describes them, like "an animal act in a circus" (29). Like Cousin Lymon in *Cafe* and the pin head in *Wedding*, the no-neck monsters represent patriarchal, inlaw feminine values. They are part of a bigger act housed under the tent of their parents' ambitions. They may as well be displayed on a chain like Amelia's kidney stones. Big Daddy's comment to Mae when he catches her eavesdropping seems to have more cosmic meaning than meets the eye: "You stood on the wrong side of the moon, it threw your shadow!" (62). The moon is a feminine symbol, representing the Goddess, and by misusing her life-giving power, Mae *is*, in effect, standing on the wrong side of the moon. The shadow of her insincerity reveals her true, selfish nature and obliterates the Great Mother.

Big Daddy sees the shadow because, as he says later, he has "returned from the other side of the moon" (89). Having faced death, he is more in touch with the Goddess than is the endlessly fertile Mae. He removes himself from the realm that Mae and Gooper occupy when he refers to them as "not my kind" (82). The description of his plantation as "the richest land this side of the valley Nile"

throughout the play also places him *between* the feminine and masculine. He seems to have a foot planted firmly in each realm. According to Camille Paglia, the land of the Nile, Egypt, had an "overtly sexual" cosmogony with an hermaphroditic deity (41); quoting W. F. Jackson Knight, she notes further that ". . . 'Delphi means the female generative organ.' The *delta* has been found to symbolize the female pubes in societies as far as the Brazilian jungle" (46, emphasis added). However, she also notes that Egypt "made a mystique out of one-man rule" (57). Big Daddy's plantation was created by a homosexual couple (parallel to the hermaphroditic deity, as well as priests of the Great Goddess) and came under the control of Big Daddy first when he became overseer and then when he became sole proprietor (one-man rule). Big Daddy is in the paradoxical position of being an immensely successful man in patriarchal terms, but having acquired that wealth through the expansion of a plantation (connected to Old South and Earth-cult, thus the Goddess) rather than through industrial expansion. He began his rise as an overseer, a position which C. Vann Woodward aligns with corporate executive, but he lives the life of a gentleman farmer.

Big Daddy identifies completely with the feminine realm even as he occupies power status in the patriarchal realm. He identifies with the muted group while simultaneously joining the ranks of the dominant group. He tells Brick that as a child he worked "like a nigger in the fields" (58). He has an unusually understanding attitude toward homosexuality, and he accepts death as part of the cycle: "the human animal is a beast that dies" (66). He also refers to himself as a "planter" (81), an archaic term that implies Old South aristocracy, although he did not actually come

from that social structure. Thus, even though he is decidedly "New South," he freely embraces "Old South" values. Patriarchy embraces the Goddess.

Big Daddy did not even marry into the aristocracy; Big Mama's "'family' was maybe a little superior to Big Daddy's, but not much" (33). He is somewhat like Oscar in *Foxes* in that he belittles Big Mama, but his treatment of her seems to be more out of irritation at her personality than out of the kind of contempt Oscar holds for Birdie and what she represents; Big Mama would very likely not tolerate such poor treatment.

Like her husband, the Pollitt matriarch can also be identified with the Goddess as well as with patriarchy. She has an affectionate and motherly attitude toward Brick, and she seems to have no sense of a line separating her family from its individual members. Her disdain for locked doors, her prying into Maggie's and Brick's private life, and her interruptions of Brick and Big Daddy's conversation in Act Two all indicate that she views the family as one entity or unit, never thinking in terms of the individual. While these traits align her with the inlaw feminine, Big Mama also has a Goddess nature. There are indications that she is very sexual, so that she identifies with the true Goddess. It is interesting to contrast her attitude toward sex with that of Regina in *Foxes*. While Regina implies that Horace's impending death is the result of his having had sex with "fancy women," Big Mama implies to Maggie that Brick's emotional deterioration is the result of his *not* having enough sex: "Do you make Brick happy in bed?" (37). Also, Big Daddy testifies to Big Mama's sexual nature when he confides to Brick that "that old woman she never got enough of it . . ." (72).

Big Mama also does not seem to get enough jewelry. At her first appearance in the play, she is described as wearing "at least half a million in flashy gems" (33). In Act Two, "the luster of her great diamonds and many pearls, the brilliants set in the silver frames of her glasses . . ." are said to dominate the room (50). These descriptions evoke images of Blanche in all her finery, but it is a far cry from Miss DuBois's fake pearls and rhinestones, which reflect the false mask she wears. Big Mama, although certainly conventional, does not deny the Goddess within. Rather than being the guises and tricks of the inlaw feminine, Big Mama's larger-than-life attire and jewelry are simply a reflection of a larger-than-life, dominant personality. Rather than wearing them to attract men, she wears them because she likes them. She is a one-in-herself crone who is not afraid to take over the estate.

Further evidence of Big Daddy's identification with the Goddess is seen in the fact that he does not try to stop Big Mama from taking over the plantation until he thinks that he is *not* going to die. He accepts death and allows her to assert some degree of power. If he viewed death in the same way Gooper and Mae view it, he would have a different attitude toward memorials. While it is true that he reacts as he does to the preacher specifically because he has just been given false good news about his health, it would probably be out of character for Big Daddy to desire an elaborate memorial even if he knew the truth. The minister is described as having a "practised clergyman's smile, sincere as a bird-call blown on a hunter's whistle" and "the living embodiment of the pious, conventional lie" (86). He is the perfect representative of patriarchy and its values. The preacher is trying to turn the memorials into status

symbols, and he is clever in choosing Gooper as the object of his sales pitch. Just as he sees Big Daddy's impending death as an opportunity to gain power and money, Gooper would also probably view it as an opportunity to enhance his family's social status.

Unlike Gooper, Brick is uninterested in the status of anything, social or otherwise. In fact, he has no interest in life. He is like Horace in *Foxes* in that his spirit is dead, and his drinking will kill him physically. The difference is that Regina and her family destroy Horace because they *cannot* identify with the feminine that he represents; Brick is destroying *himself* because he feels he must turn his back on his feminine nature. His "crippled" state juxtaposes him with Cousin Lymon; whereas Lymon represents the stunted feminine, Brick is the crippled masculine. His crutch--both of his crutches--are outward indications of the destructive nature of a masculine world totally devoid of feminine influence. He is the Hubbard household personified, spiritually sterile and attempting to break the spirit of Maggie, an impressive life force. Brick also has a kindred spirit in Blanche, the only difference being that she hopes to save herself via lies and Brick holds lies responsible for his deterioration, failing to admit that they are his own lies and denial. Both Brick and Blanche began deteriorating after becoming disgusted by the homosexuality of those they loved--after denying the Goddess. Maggie really only attempted to force Skipper and Brick to acknowledge the *nature* of their relationship; it was their fear of it that actually destroyed Skipper and threatens to destroy Brick. It seems that Brick does not really despise Maggie; rather, he despises what she represents--the life force/feminine of

which he has an awareness and an understanding but is very afraid. As Maggie asserts, she is "alive . . . alive . . . alive, alive!" (45-46). Brick's response is to try to kill her *with his crutch*: "I tried to kill your Aunt Maggie, but I failed" (46). The crippled masculine fails in *Cat* because it has no comrades-in-arms.

Like Big Daddy and Big Mama, Maggie has both patriarchal and matriarchal traits. She is like Mae in that she wants to become pregnant to assure Big Daddy's and Big Mama's favor, but she also seems to be genuine in her craving for Brick's attention. Her sexual demands do not have a totally masculine purpose. Mae is a breeding machine; Maggie is an immensely passionate woman who also happens to be very calculating and ambitious. She is protective--almost motherly--toward Brick, calling him "Baby" and "boy," and she is critical of him only in private. Of all the characters in *Cat*, Maggie is most like Big Daddy. They are the only two who make the connection between Brick's drinking problem and his relationship with Skipper. They recognize Brick's denial of the feminine because they *are* the feminine.

Maggie's seemingly negative traits should not go unexplored. Her attitude toward Gooper's and Mae's children and her generally "catty" disposition might make her less than sympathetic if these aspects are viewed from a conventional, patriarchal standpoint. Her *very* satirical comment, "Don't want to burn up the home-place, at least not with Mae and Gooper and their five monsters in it!" (40), and her statement, "Yes, it's too bad because you can't wring their necks if they've got no necks to wring!" (16), evoke images of Medea, the woman brazen enough to murder her own children. This anti-heroine from the ancient Greek stage is a perfect example of the

split-off, patriarchal archetype, having been viewed throughout most of history as a monstrosity. However, Powers offers an alternative view of her: "With Medea Euripides speculates on the psychology of the woman who could not accept the redefinition of the feminine" (116). A woman who cannot accept this redefinition by default embraces the original definition, established here as the Great Mother. The modern Medea, Maggie, embraces the Goddess with relish.

Maggie most certainly possesses Goddess traits. Like Amelia, she is aligned with the Goddess Diana (Artemis). In *The White Goddess*, Robert Graves notes that in *Poetic Astronomy*, when the gods fled an invasion, they disguised themselves as animals and Diana became a *cat* (221, emphasis added). The reference to Brick's Diana trophy, after which Maggie claims to have a special archers' license and makes plans to go to Moon Lake, proclaiming "my--merciful arrow!" (45), makes her an unlikely comrade of Frankie and Miss Amelia before the latter two give in to patriarchy. Brick evokes images of Blanche and the Virgin Mary when he refers to "the martyrdom of Saint Maggie" (24), very ironic when considering that Blanche is a martyr because she engages in too much sex and Maggie is a martyr because she gets no sex. Instead of chastising Maggie, Brick encourages her to take a lover (31), a very *un*patriarchal suggestion and an indication that he is not too far removed from the feminine realm. Maggie *chooses* not to engage in an affair; even as a married woman, she is one-in-herself. Her nickname speaks volumes. According to David Fontana, "the cat is . . . lunar . . . and endowed with the hidden mysteries of the female" and he further asserts that for the ancient Egyptians, the cat "came to represent Bastet, the

moon goddess" (85)--the Great Mother. Graves notes that "cats' . . . colours vary, like the moon, between white, reddish, and black" (223). These colors correspond, respectively, to virgin, mother, and crone. Thus, while living in a patriarchal realm, Maggie shares traits with a Greek sorceress and demi-goddess who is unacceptable to patriarchy; an acceptable Greek goddess; a Christian goddess; as well as the true Goddess, and she still manages to prevail.

In both endings of *Cat*, Maggie is the victor. In each, Maggie's white lie seems to ensure an outcome in her and Brick's favor. Like Blanche, Maggie has told a lie so that she can fit the mold of a patriarchal lie. She knows that in the patriarchal world, being childless makes her "totally useless" (16), just as Blanche knew that being sexual outside marriage made her useless. Unlike Blanche, Maggie is not alone against patriarchy. In both versions, the man who hates mendacity is an accessory to Maggie's lie: in the original by saying nothing to refute it, and in the rewritten version by contributing to it when he antagonizes Mae, asking her, "Mae, Sister Woman, how d'you know that I don't sleep with Maggie?" (155). And, even though it is questionable at the end of the original Act Three as to whether Brick will actually sleep with Maggie, the implication is that she will win her battle with Mae and Gooper.

An unusual parallel can be drawn between the rewritten ending of *Cat* , the fight scene in *Cafe*, and the rape scene in *Streetcar*. Maggie "rapes" (or is about to as the play ends) Brick by taking advantage of his weakness, alcohol. Marvin Macy symbolically rapes Amelia and Stanley actually rapes Blanche, and each does so in

order to *destroy* his victim and what she represents to him. Macy and Stanley are asserting their masculinity; in both instances, the crippled masculine is the victor because it is aided by the crippled feminine. While the crippled masculine seeks to destroy--to *kill*--Maggie tells her lie and forces Brick to have sex in order to draw him back to the world of the *living*. While it is also true that she wants to become pregnant for financial reasons, that is not her sole purpose. When Brick announces that he is "not as alive as Maggie, but still alive . . ." (156), he is beginning to acknowledge the feminine again. He has found the Goddess.

While the inlaw feminine complies with patriarchy in earlier Southern drama, Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* presents the reverse: the Goddess finally has patriarchal alliances. The play's Goddess figure, Maggie, ultimately prevails in both endings. The inlaw feminine characters in Hellman's plays were presented as objects of ridicule, but in *Cat* the representatives of the purely patriarchal, Gooper and Mae, are laughable. In McCullers's plays, cross-gender traits cause Frankie to fear becoming a freak and Amelia to be considered a freak, while Big Daddy's cross-gender traits in *Cat* seem to lend him strength and compassion; they most certainly allow him to identify with Maggie, his feminine counterpart. In *Cafe* and *Streetcar*, the inlaw feminine joins forces with patriarchy to destroy both Amelia and Blanche because their steps toward the mother quest, however fleeting and unsure, threaten to destroy the status quo. Each woman succumbs to the destructive alliance while trying desperately to fit herself into a false feminine mold. In *Cat*, Brick is destroying himself as he attempts to *deny* the feminine side of his nature. While Amelia and

Blanche are destroyed because they defy patriarchy, Brick is in danger of destruction because he defies the Goddess, but it is not she who threatens him. The Goddess is far more forgiving than is her oppressor. She rescues Brick. She is like the ancient Goddess cults who were more than willing to incorporate male deities into their circle and celebration of the life cycle.

# TRUE FEMININE ARCHETYPES IN *STEEL MAGNOLIAS*
# "THE MOTHER'S IDEA(L) OF THE MOTHER"

Through Maggie in *Cat*, Tennessee Williams depicts a world in which patriarchy is sympathetic to the true feminine and vice versa, thus allowing the Goddess some autonomy and power and making the mother quest more accessible. The Great Mother is seen and heard with help from her patriarchal friends. In *Steel Magnolias*, Robert Harling offers a glimpse of a purely matriarchal world in which patriarchy is only a fleeting shadow. The all-female cast presents a dramatic interpretation of a complete mother quest. An analysis of the play reveals the cyclical connection of the three aspects of the Goddess as represented by the characters: Shelby and Annelle as the virgin; Truvy and M'Lynn as the mother; and Clairee and Ouiser as the crone. The circular relationship is very plain; by the end of the play, the two virgins enter the mother phase, the two mothers are taking steps toward the crone phase, and the two crones take on virginal, one-in-herself characteristics. The characters complete the mother quest, coming full circle while managing to operate within patriarchal structures. They outwardly represent the three aspects of the Goddess which the female hero must integrate into her psyche before she completes the quest.

The two representatives of the virgin phase in *Steel Magnolias*, Shelby and Annelle, are by no means conventional virgins. They parallel perfectly what Susan Lichtman calls "the state of becoming a mystical, magical creature with the power to create new human life from her own body" (25). They are full of possibilities, and a hymen is beside the point. Shelby can be viewed as the patriarchal idea of the good

girl, and Annelle can be viewed as the bad girl. Between the two, the true balance of the virgin realm--the realistic, matriarchal view--is revealed.

Shelby obviously is not a virgin in the physical sense. She takes the Pill and she speaks of herself and Jackson "skinny-dipping and [doing] things that frightened the fish" (25). However, she still lives at home and does not represent the threatening, sexually adventurous single woman. Despite the reality of her sexuality, she has the persona of the typical "nice" girl. She also maintains her independence as a career woman; she plans to continue working as a nurse after her marriage. She is "one-in-herself," a description which eventually also aptly suits Annelle.

Annelle's marriage definitely removes her from the realm of patriarchal virginity, and she emerges onto the scene from the wrong side of the tracks. Her circumstances at the beginning of the play would probably deem her an outcast in any but this totally matriarchal setting. Had she wandered into a barber shop full of men (or the Hubbard household or the Kowalski kingdom) and pronounced her living arrangements, she would have been viewed as a modern-day Laurette Sincee or Blanche DuBois and considered to be fair sexual game. Truvy and the other women see beyond her physical appearance and economic predicament--they know there is a "story" there, and it is a story they hear via their own prompting. Annelle takes her destiny into her own hands and never complains. She never sees herself as a victim. Throughout the play, Annelle follows a few steps behind Shelby in the quest. By acquiring the job at the beauty shop, Annelle enters the realm of self-reliance and all the possibilities it entails on the same day that Shelby becomes a bride and prepares to

enter the realm of motherhood. They are sisters under the skin, or in this case, sisters under pink dresses.

Shelby's identification with the color pink helps establish her place in the middle of two phases in the mother quest. White and red combined produce pink, and Robert Graves associates the color white with the new moon (virgin) and the color red with the full moon (mother) (70). When she freely offers her pink dresses to Annelle, Shelby establishes their occupation of the same realm and reinforces the idea that no solid line divides them. The virgin aspect of the Great Goddess/Mother embraces both Shelby and Annelle, making no distinctions. Annelle's development throughout the play offers a glimpse of Shelby's development prior to the play, which begins with the wedding. As she steps toward the next phase of the cycle, Shelby turns back to assist one behind her. A circle moves both ways.

Truvy and M'Lynn represent the next phase--the mother--and in keeping with the idea of the phases continuously merging into one another, Shelby enters that phase in the middle of the play and Annelle enters it at the end. Susan A. Lichtman considers a mother to be "a woman who gives birth . . . metaphorically as well as physically," and maintains that "motherhood means nourishing and investing in the present for a better survival in the future" (44). Both Truvy and M'Lynn have given birth in the physical sense, but they also give birth metaphorically.

On a daily basis, Truvy takes her "wand and . . . fairy dust . . ." (104) and works her mother magic on countless customers; they emerge from her salon as new women--they are reborn. She represents the devoted aspect of the mother realm.

Truvy also becomes Annelle's surrogate mother, assisting her as she becomes one-in-herself while also preparing and training her so that she can play a part in the beauty birthing process over which Truvy presides.

Truvy's beauty salon is a decidedly feminine realm. It is completely feminine because the women do not enter the shop to perform a service to men; it is a place *for* women. Truvy's beauty salon is like a little community, a magical world with female inhabitants who speak only in passing of men who never appear. They only male "voice" in the entire play, the sound of Drum's gun, frightens Annelle. She is still gun-shy from her experience with the masculine realm. Her startled, fearful response to the gunfire reflects her wounded psyche. Truvy takes it all in stride. She does not seem to notice the noise until Annelle points it out, and then her casual attitude serves as a subtle lesson to Annelle that it cannot upset her world unless she allows it to do so. Truvy plants the seed of her wisdom that will eventually result in a new, strong Annelle.

While Truvy conducts her metaphorical mothering in the beauty shop, giving birth to new women each day, M'Lynn produces new, healthy psyches at the Mental Guidance Center. She maintains a protective, motherly interest in her patients, sheltering them from the prying questions of her curious friends. She epitomizes Lichtman's concept of the mother warrior: "she creates, defends or destroys, and emerges intact" (45), and she possesses both devoted and devouring mother aspects. Just as Shelby walks a few steps ahead of Annelle in the quest, M'Lynn strides a few steps ahead of Truvy. M'Lynn has become comfortable with her warrior status; Truvy

does not seem to be totally sure of her power. For example, while Truvy chooses simply to ignore the relentless assault of patriarchy represented by Drum's gunshots, M'Lynn boldly silences the assault by taking the gun.

M'Lynn cannot silence the sound of Shelby's footsteps walking away from her, however, and the relationship between the two serves to highlight M'Lynn's fierce, fighting nature. As Lichtman points out, "Few forces on earth can match the ferocity of a mother protecting her young" (54), and M'Lynn's quiet strength as she tries, in her own way, to protect Shelby has a soft ferocity. M'Lynn is truly a "steel magnolia." Ultimately, only one thing repels the protective shield M'Lynn holds for Shelby: Shelby's own mother quest. M'Lynn can carry candy in her purse at all times; she can plead with Shelby to quit her job; she can do the countless little things either stated or implied in the play to insure Shelby's well-being, but she cannot interfere with Shelby's trek into the mother realm.

Near the end of *Steel Magnolias*, M'Lynn states that giving birth to Shelby "was a breeze" (106), meaning that she did not suffer physically. M'Lynn's *difficult* labor with Shelby entails allowing her daughter to leave the womb of the virgin state and burst forth into the world of motherhood. Lichtman calls the transition to motherhood "the negation of the self for a higher achievement or understanding, the sacrifice necessary for creation and the fight for its survival" (55). This statement applies quite literally to Shelby, whose selfless nature subtly becomes apparent at the beginning of the play and quite alarmingly becomes apparent as she continues her quest. She insists on working, despite the detriment to her health, at a nurturing,

motherly occupation because she loves "being around all those babies" (19). Later, she insists on having her own baby, an act which eventually becomes self-sacrifice.

Shelby's death, which results indirectly from giving birth, literally represents what all women who give birth go through figuratively. Lichtman, quoting Penelope Washbourn, points out that "pregnancy and childbirth are as close to dying as any other human experience" (48), and further asserts that "the woman [giving birth] dies to herself as an individual and becomes two: a small society" (51). Shelby chooses to ignore her doctor's warnings and to become pregnant for several implied reasons, but the most obvious one seems to be her concern for her husband. She wants to give him the continuation in his bloodline. It is important to recognize that this is *her* choice. This baby does not represent the same type of patrilineal lineage that the Kowalski baby represents. Jackson tells Shelby before their wedding that they do not have to have children. Shelby's sacrifice to insure the continuation of Jackson's' familial line is a microcosm of woman's sacrifice to insure the continuation of the human race. On a grander scale, it is a microcosm of the Great Mother/Goddess's sacrifice as seen in the seasonal cycle to insure the continuation of the planet and/or universe.

M'Lynn's sacrifice represents the same thing as Shelby's. When discussing the impending kidney transplant, she states that "most mothers only get the chance to give their child life once. I get a chance to do it twice" (94). She literally gives up a part of herself to give Shelby a chance to live. Just as Shelby's birth experience proves to be more dangerous for her than for Jack Junior, the kidney transplant holds more danger for M'Lynn than for Shelby. It represents a replay of the birth process.

As Shelby prepares for the surgery, she solidifies her place in the mother realm. Her maiden locks are shorn in the name of convenience; she sacrifices her symbol of beauty so that she can more easily take care of her baby. Simultaneously, in her mother's eyes she becomes a baby herself; M'Lynn proclaims to Shelby, "the last time you had short hair was . . . kindergarten" (86). Truvy is absolutely correct when she refers to Shelby's haircut as a "'*rite du passage*'" (71); it is exactly the opposite of Frankie's and Amelia's haircuts in McCullers's works, which represent fear of passage. According to Julia and Derek Parker, hair is a "potent" symbol and "an indication of freedom and individualism, even of open sexuality . . . . and when shaved off, the lack of it indicates a positive frigidity, a devotion to the unworldly" (*Dreams* 109). Shelby sets forth on the female hero's journey into the underworld.

In her discussion of the female hero's journey, Lichtman uses the Inanna myth to illustrate many of her points. Quoting Sylvia Brinton Perera, she calls the myth "the source 'for renewal in a feminine sourceground and spirit'" (52). Very briefly, the female hero in the myth, Queen Inanna, must journey to the underworld to face her sister (in some versions her mother), Ereshkigal. As she descends, Inanna is gradually stripped of all clothing, jewelry, and other things related to her queenship, and she and Ereshkigal "must face each other at some point naked and unadorned" (53). Ereshkigal kills Inanna, but allows her to be brought back to life in exchange for compassion for her own labor pains. As Lichtman contends, "Inanna dies to Ereshkigal; Ereshkigal rebirths Inanna" (53).

As Shelby begins her descent, she sheds her adornment--her hair. She gives more clothing to Annelle. Just as Inanna casts off her adornments during her downward journey, so does Shelby. Inanna's sacrifices insure the renewal/rebirth at the end of her journey. Shelby's symbolize the same thing: Annelle will pass the clothing on to those in need; M'Lynn will have Shelby's hair in a box to remind her of her daughter's innocence, courage, strength, and vitality. Throughout the play, Shelby leaves little pieces of herself. Like a fairy godmother, she magically enhances lives. In her own way, she does the same thing as Truvy. While Truvy enhances women's physical appearance, Shelby enhances their spirits.

Two of the lives Shelby touches are those of Clairee and Ouiser. Lichtman states that "The virgin and the crone are always connected in the circuitous nature of woman's existence" (28). The crone reconnects at the point at which the virgin begins. Clarissa Pinkola Estes also points out the important connection and similarities between the virgin and the crone:

> Find the two-million-year-old woman. She is caretaker of the dead and dying of womanthings . . . . As the hag-maiden, she shows us what it means to be, not withered, but wizened. Babies are born wizened with instinct . . . . If a woman holds on to this gift of being old while she is young and young while she is old, she will always know what comes next. (34).

The "two-million-year-old woman" is self-knowledge--the character and destiny that are the point of the hero's quest. In *Streetcar*, Blanche faces this woman who comes

to the door in the form of the Mexican flower vendor, and after facing her begins to grasp the meaning of the cycle. The two-million-year-old woman is the Great Goddess/Mother.

Both Clairee and Ouiser evolve back (or forward) to the one-in-herself state that bonds the virgin and the crone, becoming young while they are old, and Shelby helps pave the way for them. Clairee has spent her entire life with an identity in terms of her husband. Truvy introduces her to Annelle (and the audience) as "the former first lady of Chinquapin, *Mrs.* Belcher" (6, emphasis added). At the beginning of the play, her life consists of functions related to her late husband's place in society and his business activities. She represents the fairy godmother aspect of the crone realm, complete with magic shoes. Estes relates a fairy tale in which a young girl's shoes "represent an enormous and literal step toward integration of her resourceful feminine nature in day-to-day life" (221). Clairee's "cha-cha" (13) shoes represent the same thing.

The dialogue in *Steel Magnolias* indicates that Clairee's shoes are youthful; Shelby notices them first, and Truvy desires them. Shelby, still in the virgin realm, identifies with the shoes; Truvy wants to *be in* them, and she playfully challenges M'Lynn: "Ah, ah, ah! They're mine!" (14). Parker relates that "in ancient times the shoe was a symbol of freedom" (187), and Clairee is about to step forward (or back) into the freedom of being one-in-herself. She is her own fairy godmother, with a little help from sister fairy Shelby.

Shelby encourages Clairee to buy a radio station, which she eventually does despite her initial reservations: "What would I do with a radio station? Business never interested me at all. Lloyd took care of all that stuff" (34). Buying the radio station enables Clairee to bridge her former life with her new independence; she becomes the color announcer for the ballgames so beloved by Lloyd. She progresses from venturing into the world of broadcasting to driving to Monroe to the theatre. At this point, Shelby offers more encouragement, urging Clairee to fly to New York despite her fears. By the end of the play, Clairee flies to Paris. She becomes a totally one-in-herself, wizened old crone.

Ouiser evokes connotations of the wicked witch aspects of the crone; the lifelong friendship between her and Clairee indicates the balance that the two represent. Their interaction with each other, even when they exchange insults, indicates a deep, enduring connection that would be impossible between the fairy godmother and wicked witch of patriarchal legend, the latter usually being destroyed by the former in those tales.

Ouiser the witch almost humorously parallels the evil caricature imposed on wise women through the ages by men who feared their power. At one point, Ouiser states that she has "more money than God" (61); in a patriarchal world, money means power, so in any but this setting she would be saying that her power surpasses that of God and thus would be viewed as truly evil or even Satanic. Her ongoing battle with Drum and his gun represents the ancient battle between the wizened crone of

matriarchal societies and the destructive nature of patriarchy, which misrepresents the crone as a wicked witch.

Ouiser is a witch complete with a familiar--her dog Rhett. Rossell Hope Robbins defines a familiar as a "low-ranking demon in the shape of a small domestic animal" (190). Robbins goes on to quote an ancient Scottish witch: "'Each one of us has a spirit to wait upon us, when we please to call upon him'" (190). Ouiser comically calls on Rhett at the end of Act I, Scene 1: "Kill, Rhett! Kill!" (44). Rhett seems to be Ouiser's surrogate child and he represents her power. His hair falls out under the stress of the gun just as female power has been eroded by patriarchy, leaving the Great Goddess/Mother unrecognizable.

Toward the end of the play, Ouiser's discomfort when Annelle prays for her could be misinterpreted as a lack of spirituality or soft side of this witch crone, encouraging the either/or, good witch/bad witch myth that is actually discredited in *Steel Magnolias*. Clairee's playful statement, "'Reach out' to Ouiser and you'll pull back a bloody stump" (78), evokes images of horrible creatures such as Scylla and Charybdis. Such monsters always represent the destructive, devouring feminine, and patriarchy has, through the ages, seriously presented them as accurate depictions. Actually, in her gruff way Ouiser serves as a guide or role model for Annelle even as Annelle is reaching out to Ouiser in the mutual quest. Her announcement that she plans to "have [her] colors done" (80) hints at the changing picture that will be painted of Ouiser by the end of the play. She progresses from making fun of Annelle's devout prayer to announcing "Yes, Annelle. I pray" (111). The woman who orders her dog

to kill Drum later becomes his nurturer, promising to "make sure Drum has enough food" (95).

As the play begins, Ouiser has actually reached the one-in-herself stage that Clairee moves toward, but she seems to have done so out of fear of being hurt or a reluctance to becoming close to other people rather than as the result of an inner quest. She withdraws, but does not seem to look within. By the end of the play, she reaches one-in-herself by way of the mother quest, and Shelby helps drag her onto the right path. Her budding romance with a past beau--a romance Shelby orchestrates--coincides with the softening of Ouiser's outward persona. She starts gardening, sharing the fruits of her labor with her friends. She says, "I am an old Southern woman. We're supposed to put on funny-looking hats and ugly old dresses and grow vegetables in the dirt. Don't ask me why. I don't make the rules" (77). The connection between woman (and Ouiser) and the Great Goddess/Mother vegetation cults permeates this statement, the essence of which is, "I am a . . . ***woman***. We're supposed to ***grow*** . . . . Don't ask me ***why***." Fresh flowers, more fruits of the earth, arrive at her home twice a week. Ouiser has come full circle. At the same time Shelby announces her own pregnancy, she also plants the seeds for Ouiser's rebirth when she reunites her with Owen.

Shelby's death coincides with the beginning of new life: the new spiritual lives of Clairee and Ouiser, M'Lynn's and Truvy's new lives with their husbands, and Annelle's new life as a wife and mother. Shelby's funeral takes place on November 1,

the day after Samhain, a holiday sacred to pagans or others who worship nature and the Goddess. According to Chas S. Clifton, Samhain is:

> the year's darkest time, midway between the autumn equinox and the winter solstice. It is a time when the spirit world is close to the world of the living, and the veil between the two is thin. For this reason, [pagans] celebrate the Samhain sabbat by inviting the spirits of the deceased to join [them]. At Samhain Witches hope to receive messages . . . from recently deceased loved ones . . . . The Goddess is honored in her aspect as The Crone . . . . (59-60)

*Steel Magnolias* begins in the month of April. On the last day of April, Beltaine is celebrated by pagans and witches. Both Samhain and Beltaine have origins in the Goddess cults. At Beltaine, the Goddess is honored "in her aspect as the White Goddess of fertility . . . . Beltaine is the celebration of the Divine Marriage" (62). The play begins with a celebration of spring and fertility--the virgin--and ends with a celebration of darkness and death--the crone. The fact that both are *celebrations* is very important. Annelle understands this as she comforts M'Lynn: "[Shelby] went on to a place where she could be a guardian angel. She will always be young. She will always be beautiful. And I personally feel much safer knowing she's up there on my side" (105). M'Lynn acknowledges that Shelby would also understand the important connection between life and death: "[Shelby] would look on it as just one of life's occurrences. We should . . . get on with it" (106). The play ends with Shelby's theme

music, ordered by Clairee, playing on the radio given to Truvy by Shelby: the crone's tribute to the virgin/mother, the virgin/mother's tribute to the mother/crone.

Joseph Campbell states that "you have to balance between death and life--they are two aspects of the same thing, which is being, becoming" (108). The story of Inanna's descent, death, and rebirth relates this idea in mythical form. *Steel Magnolias* relates this idea in dramatic form. This is a descent far removed from Blanche's only alternative. Her plunge into the underworld is an escape; the descent depicted in *Steel Magnolias* is a neverending adventure. It is the cycle of the Great Mother. The collective psyche represented by the characters comes full circle, completing the mother quest; but, as with all circles, there is no beginning or end. They are still becoming.

## TRUE FEMININE ARCHETYPES IN *CRIMES OF THE HEART* "THE MANY FACES AND FORMS OF THE GREAT MOTHER"

The bridge built via Maggie and Big Daddy in *Cat* leads to the ideal Great Mother cycle in *Steel Magnolias*. The cycle is put to practical test in Beth Henley's *Crimes of the Heart*. This play presents mother quests as varied as the women embarking on them. As in *Steel Magnolias*, the characters in *Crimes* also operate within patriarchal structures, but where the *Steel Magnolias* characters seem unencumbered by the one-dimensional definitions of femininity, the *Crimes* characters are unable to transcend them. While the characters in Harling's play represent the three aspects of an archetypal psyche, Lenny, Meg, and Babe in *Crimes* each struggles with her own quest, trying to reconcile the three aspects within her own individual psyche. As the play begins, each one has attained one or more phases of the cycle, but has done so in an unhealthy quest for patriarchal approval. The mother quest in *Crimes* does not come full-circle in as clean a manner as in *Steel Magnolias*, but the importance of seeking the Goddess and merging the three phases without patriarchal encumbrances is very apparent. Harling's play illustrates the ideal, and Henley's play applies the ideal to reality.

In *Crimes of the Heart*, each of the three sisters begins to "become" in her own way. This play involves three microcosms of the macro mother quest illustrated in *Steel Magnolias*. While the characters in Harling's play move freely around the circle in their magical feminine realm, the three sisters in *Crimes* stumble blindly, hit-or-miss onto and off the circle as they struggle to overcome the stifling patriarchy that defines their places in the family and society. They are what Blanche could have been had

she chosen to ignore the constraints of the inlaw feminine. Karen A. Laughlin points out that the action in *Crimes* takes place in "the 'woman's place' par excellence"--the kitchen (41). As noted above, *Steel Magnolias* takes place in a place *for* women. "Woman's place" implies a place designated for women by patriarchal standards; a place *for* women implies that women have a choice to enter a realm of their own creation. The setting of *Crimes* sets forth immediately one of the play's main themes: turning woman's place into a place *for* women--finding the Great Goddess/Mother, a cloudy, ambiguous figure in this play. Actually, as the action begins, the Great Goddess/Mother is dead. The image of the girls' own mother hanging in the cellar with her cat--the witch with her familiar, hanged by patriarchy--represents the dead Goddess.

Laughlin contends that "one of the most striking features of the crimes in Henley's play is [the sisters'] self-destructive nature" (36), and she convincingly ties this self-destructive behavior to the patriarchal oppression represented by Old Granddaddy and Zackery. This analysis will expand on Laughlin's observation by making a connection between the sisters' behavior and the fact that none of them has yet successfully embarked on the mother quest. Patriarchal oppression has made the Goddess unrecognizable to them.

As the play begins, aspects of the virgin and crone are evident in each of the three sisters, but from a patriarchal standpoint. Meg and Babe represent the virgin. The mother aspect remains dormant in them because in a patriarchal world, one must physically give birth in order to be considered a mother. In this setting, Lenny's lack

of fertility renders her somewhat worthless as a woman. She is not marriage material, so she cannot be in the virgin realm. She cannot have children, so the mother label is out of the question. Her "shrunken ovary" makes her a withered (instead of wizened) crone.

This self-image has been given to Lenny by that symbol of patriarchy, Old Granddaddy. Babe points out to Meg that it was Old Granddaddy who made Lenny feel self-conscious about her shrunken ovary. Laughlin contends that Lenny has "taken on the role of wife and mother in the family home" (41), but she has actually taken on the role of grandmother, or the male idea of the crone. As Babe says, "She's turning into Old Grandmama" (28). Lenny's "hair . . . falling out in the comb" (67) presents an accurate image of her dwindling vitality.

Lenny's comical attempt to sing "Happy Birthday" to herself also presents an image of her psyche. The crumbling cookie and falling candle are like her crumbling self-image and lack of direction. She has difficulty celebrating her birthday just as she has difficulty being reborn so that she can be one-in-herself. However, her stubborn diligence as she keeps trying to construct the makeshift birthday cake hints at her fledgling, shaky rebirth at the end of the play. Poignant as it is, Lenny's solitary birthday celebration is far more positive than Blanche DuBois's birthday party.

Blanche's kindred spirit, Meg, represents the bad girl aspect of the virgin, man's worst nightmare: the destructive whore who is also irresistible. Her psychic state also results from Old Granddaddy's dominance. Even though she has veered clear of the circle of the Goddess quest, Meg continues in another vicious circle. She

claims that the reason she behaves as she does is because she wants to retaliate for Old Grandaddy's actions. She possesses a wonderful gift, her beautiful singing voice, but she has lost it because she started using it for the wrong reasons. Laughlin points out that "although [Meg] may have thought that she left for California of her own volition, both she and the audience come to see the pursuit of her career as an effort to please Old Granddaddy, to satisfy or . . . imitate his desire for her success" (40). Because of Old Granddaddy's wishes, her voice becomes not a gift to be enjoyed for its own sake, but rather a means toward a masculine end--fame and wealth. She rebels *against* patriarchy by submitting to a role *imposed by* patriarchy; she becomes whorish as a reaction against oppression and continues to be oppressed because she is whorish. Meg's sexual escapades are totally removed from the sexual initiation involved in the mother quest, which Lichtman says helps a woman emerge "as one who is 'belonging to no man,' 'one-in-herself'; 'she may give herself to many lovers, but, like the moon, she can never be possessed'" (34). Meg has given herself to men in order to *escape* her self-image; a woman on the mother quest does so in order to find herself. She is like Blanche in her unwitting participation in the cycle.

Meg's association with the hurricane further establishes her as being in the outlaw feminine category. From a patriarchal standpoint, woman's association with the life/death/rebirth cycle is misrepresented as another dual, either/or proposition. She either creates or destroys. Meg falls into the latter category. Only Babe sees the absurdity of this idea: "Oh, shoot! It wasn't Meg's fault that hurricane wiped Biloxi away. I never understood why people were blaming all that on Meg--just because that

roof fell in and crunched Doc's leg. It wasn't her fault" (57). Ironically, Meg leaves Doc during the hurricane in order to pursue her career in California in an effort to please Old Granddaddy. Ultimately, Old Granddaddy could be blamed just as much as Meg, but that would never happen. In this world, woman bears the blame for man's troubles.

Babe becomes the first to break away from the stagnation of the roles imposed upon her and her sister. She shoots "the richest and most powerful man in all of Hazlehurst, slap in the gut" (18) instead of shooting herself. Like her sisters, her psyche and her life have been molded by patriarchy. Laughlin points out that "Babe has been pushed out of the family home and into the role of wife and social climber" and that she "had virtually no say in the selection of her own husband" (40). She represents the good girl virgin who never became one-in-herself; however, as the play progresses and her story unfolds, Babe reveals her move toward individuation. Her sexual affair with Willie Jay makes her a bad girl; in effect, good girl/bad girl are merged within one psyche, revealing the unrealistic nature of the patriarchal either/or labels. This merger represents a first step toward the mother quest because she rejects the dual, black or white aspect of the masculine idea of the virgin. She engages in the affair simply because she enjoys the sex. In this she is a step ahead of Meg. Babe's relationship with Willie Jay compares to the fairy tales Lichtman cites to illustrate the importance of sexual initiation in the mother quest: "What . . . the fairy tale Beauty, receives in her adventures is her 'own personal autonomy and empowerment, [a sense of] possession of herself; and in coming to love herself, the fear of the 'Other'

dissolves, [and] the Beast becomes a friend" (34). Willie Jay represents Babe's emerging self-esteem and sense of empowerment, and when Zackery banishes him, she fights back by attempting to destroy Zackery. In keeping with the patriarchal mode of operation, Babe's *physical* relationship with Willie Jay ultimately becomes Zackery's weapon against her; the real issue is Babe's burgeoning independence, but Zackery remolds it into a tangent, physical issue.

From the affair with Willie Jay, Babe's quest continues. She becomes the mother warrior who fiercely protects her inner child. The mother warrior in *Steel Magnolias*, M'Lynn, boldly takes the symbol of patriarchal power, the gun, away from Drum. Babe goes a step further; she turns the symbol on the oppressor. She contemplates suicide, but hearing the cries of her inner child, she shoots Zackery instead. Laughlin states that Babe's reason for shooting Zackery (". . . I didn't like his looks!"-23) indicates that she

> has claimed the power to reject her husband on the basis of his physical appearance (a criterion usually associated with the male's concern for the feminine image) and, contrary to widely-held notions of female talkativeness, Babe's apparent boredom with Zackery's chatter echoes the discovery of recent research that it is the men in our society who do most of the talking. (44)

Thus, in addition to turning Zackery's gun (the ultimate symbol of male power) on him, Babe has also turned the tables by using two other, more subtle masculine weapons in her war against Zackery and what he represents.

Babe's actions are a source of embarrassment for Chick, whom Laughlin calls "a stereotypical female" (45), citing her nosiness and prudishness; these characteristics make her a stereotype of the inlaw feminine. A version of Cousin Lymon, she also represents the masculine ideal--the father's idea of the mother. Chick represents what Old Granddaddy wanted Babe to become: a wife and social climber. She lacks any concern for Babe's (or Zackery's) well-being, focusing instead on the impact the incident will have on her social status, so that she is also aligned with Gooper and Mae. She expresses embarrassment about the MaGraths' mother's suicide for the same reason. Just as patriarchal cultures shamelessly killed off the Goddess and buried the corpse under piles of oppression, making women ashamed of their Goddess heritage, Chick wants to deny the existence of the dead witch and her familiar hanging in the cellar.

In her quest, Babe discovers the truth about the witch in the cellar. Attempting suicide, she first tries to mimic her mother's method by hanging herself; when that does not work, she places her head into the oven. This gesture symbolizes a journey into the underworld; she is placing her head into the cave of the mother quest, and the Great Mother/Goddess rewards her with insight. At the same time Babe is attempting to plunge into the underworld, Lenny experiences a rebirth as she calls Charlie. At this point, Meg also has already displayed a fledgling awakening to her inner self after her night with Doc. In fact, Meg perpetuates both Babe and Lenny's rebirths; she pulls Babe's head out of the oven and she urges Lenny to call Charlie. She is their metaphorical mother.

All three sisters experience an euphoric sense of freedom over Old Granddaddy's coma. Discussing their hysterics, Laughlin says that "here Henley does not merely chip away at male superiority but actually provides an image of the removal of the patriarch, the play's supreme embodiment of male power" (45). When Lenny learns that Old Granddaddy has had the stroke that sends him into a coma, Babe replies, "Oh. Allright. My shoes are on" (75). The shoes mean freedom; Babe is free to move on, just like Clairee in her "cha-cha" shoes. Babe's legs are not weak (unlike Lymon), and her shoes are not soiled (unlike Blanche).

As the sisters gain their strength, Lenny banishes another patriarchal symbol. She chases Chick from the kitchen with a broom as she defends Meg and Babe against Chick's verbal assault. In *The Power of Magic*, Derek and Julia Parker point out that the broom is a "great traditional symbol of witchcraft . . . [and] is used [to sweep] unwanted thoughts and associations from the minds of members of the coven" (164). Chick most definitely represents thoughts and associations that should be far removed from the minds of women on the mother quest. Unlike Stella, who only wants to use a broom to sweep away evidence of Stanley's destruction (*Streetcar* 65-66), Lenny uses the broom to banish the source of that destruction. Association with witchcraft also associates the broom with the crone, but this time Lenny the crone has become one-in-herself; in fact, her call to Charlie made her a virgin again.

*Crimes of the Heart* ends with a birthday celebration complete with beautiful cake, a fitting replacement for Lenny's pathetic cookie of the day before. Babe's uncertain fate does not cloud the merriment or the new-found hope in the sisters'

hearts. Each one gets a red rose, and red is definitely not the color of sacrifice here. It is associated with the mother aspect of the Goddess, because they have given birth to themselves. They are finally on the mother quest. In her discussion of the Inanna myth, Lichtman speaks of "'feminine attributes' which reflect Inanna's personal growth . . . . They consist of 'allure . . . the art of women . . . and the art of music'" (29). Just as *Steel Magnolias* closes with Shelby's theme music playing on the radio, a cyclical gift as explained above, *Crimes of the Heart* ends with the saxophone music associated with Babe. Perhaps the Goddess demands a musical tribute all along the way, as the female hero continues to become.

# CONCLUSION

*"Today the symbol of the Goddess no longer represents the figure of a divinity to be worshipped in a new religion. Rather, it symbolizes 8,000 years of pre-patriarchal history which women must repossess before they can come to a true knowledge of their tradition and a definition of their identity." (Orenstein 69)*

Patriarchal religions and societies have managed, over the centuries, to instill into the collective psyche the image of a male creator. This image has been accompanied by laws, rules, and myths necessary for the enforcement of the idea that male dominance is mandated by a higher power. However, the idea of a male creator is relatively new when the history of Goddess-centered societies is examined. For thousands of years prior to patriarchal obliteration of these cults and tribes, civilizations held in reverence a Great Mother/Goddess who represented both the creative and destructive aspects of nature, each of which was held in equally high esteem. The Goddess's sexuality and intricate association with the life/death/rebirth cycle were celebrated by men and women alike, and through her celebratory sexuality they continued the cycle of life necessary for posterity.

Gradually, because the Great Mother's life-giving power and sexuality posed a threat to patrilineal inheritance, those aspects that were once celebrated became cause for shame. The creative/destructive aspects of the Goddess were no longer simultaneously revered. Rather, the Goddess became fragmented; the pieces that were acceptable to the new patriarchal rule were deemed "good" and the pieces the patriarchs found unacceptable were deemed "evil." The previous Goddess cultures had had no concept of these either/or divisions. Via new or bastardized creation myths and stories, this divisiveness eventually resulted in women being blamed for the

perceived evils plaguing most patriarchal societies. Eventually, the true feminine archetype represented by the Great Mother/Goddess was buried in the collective psyche by several false patriarchal archetypes, each being a variation of pieces or fragments of the once-powerful Goddess. The universal influence of these misshapen archetypes is substantiated throughout patriarchal history in countless literary works which recount tales of father quests, but which convey only a few visible signs of the mother and certainly no mother quests.

Until recently, patriarchal obliteration of the Goddess has served to render the mother quest unnecessary. Authors who are products of patriarchy write novels, poems, and plays which naturally set forth the father's idea of the mother and split-off, goddess fragments: the pure virgin, the *femme fatale*, the devoted mother, the devouring mother, the fairy godmother, and the wicked witch, all of which usually work in opposition to one another in some way and some of which cannot co-exist, making it necessary for one to destroy another. For centuries, these fragments were the *only* feminine archetypes. It was not until the Great Mother/Goddess was unearthed from beneath layers of patriarchy that it became apparent that these so-called archetypes were merely misshapen derivatives of a once-powerful true archetype.

Archetypes are, by definition, present in most literary genres and works. Subsequently, split-off, false feminine archetypes are abundant in the Western canon as these were deemed "the" feminine archetypes for thousands of years. While examination of most areas of literature would reveal this misogynistic pattern as well

as indicate the recent trend toward a more realistic feminine archetype and mother quest, a small portion of the canon, the twentieth-century drama of the American South, offers a microcosmic glimpse of the age-old struggle the Goddess has had with patriarchy.

The history of the American South lends itself easily to a definite, neatly drawn parallel with the patriarchal takeover and eventual obliteration of Goddess cultures. The pre-Civil War South had much in common with the vegetation, *i.e.* Goddess, cultures. It was a society dependent upon the cycles of the seasons and very much in touch with the life/death/rebirth cycle that actually defines the Great Mother. The "ruling class" was comprised of the plantation owners whose source of power and very livelihood was tied to Mother Earth, and Earth-cult values were instilled in their children by Goddess-like, black Earth mothers: the Great Mammies.

The most powerful post-Civil War Southerners, however, were those who did not acknowledge any aspect of the old way of life, so that ruthlessness and rape of the once-revered land were the new sources of economic and social strength. They were like the early patriachal cultures who refused to consider any alternative but total obliteration of the old way of life represented by the Goddess. Of course, many of the old ways should have been obliterated because they were unjust, the most obvious injustice being slavery. But even as the advocates of New South values freed the African slaves, they forced all sects of society--the freed slaves as well as their former masters--into a different type of slavery. This oppression was the mandate to conform to the new way or perish, to live by their rules or be punished. In addition, the freed

slaves were often treated far worse by those who freed them than by their former employers. This ruthless attitude is very apparent in the early twentieth-century Southern drama of Lillian Hellman. The Old South also lost its romantic aspect as well as its art and music--its collective introspection--at the hands of the money-hungry *nouveau riche*.

Just as Hellman's plays can be viewed as being representative of the first portion of a chronological study of Southern drama in this century and an accurate depiction of the greedy, oppressive New South ruling class, they can also be analyzed from a feminist standpoint as representative of the early stages of the feminine (and collective) psyche after the burial of the Goddess by patriarchy. As patriarchal laws, myths and traditions categorized women as "Other" and set forth rules and laws to insure feminine subservience, they assured absolute male power. Hellman's plays represent an early stage of patriarchal rule in which even the patriarchal feminine is not respected. Only the masculine realm is acknowledged and revered. The Goddess is so far removed that even fragments of her are barely apparent. The only female with any power in these plays is Regina, who is spiritually a man in an outward feminine guise.

Goddess fragments become more visible and developed in Carson McCullers's plays. Frankie in *A Member of the Wedding* and Miss Amelia in *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* are vaguely aware of their Goddess heritage; the fragments are closer to the surface. If Hellman's plays represent the collective psyche in its stage of development immediately following patriarchal takeover, then McCullers's plays offer a view of the

same psyche in a temporary state of introspection and simultaneous confusion. At this stage, the psyche is having Goddess flashbacks, but social constraints and centuries of patriarchal rule have clouded her in a swirl of standard feminine behavior. By this time, patriarchy has a fairly well-developed consort in the split-off, false feminine archetypes that represent the inlaw feminine realm, as well as ammunition in the form of the outlaw feminine split-offs to use to thwart potential mother quests.

The temporary introspection and Goddess flashbacks which characterize McCullers's plays have once again gone underground as Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* begins. This play represents the stage in the collective psyche in which the false feminine archetypes have become intricately ingrained and are accepted as true feminine archetypes. It is only when Blanche DuBois begins her descent into madness that the flashbacks return. The Goddess resurfaces, but in a way which allows patriarchy to continue to prevail. At this point, the Goddess is seeking alternatives around patriarchy. She is unseen and unheard in Hellman's plays. She is fleetingly visible, barely audible, and killed off by her own fragments in McCullers's plays. She is replaced by the fragments during most of *Streetcar*, but under male oppression as ruthless as any the Hubbards could have inflicted, she becomes very visible and very audible, but only to Blanche. As *Streetcar* ends, Blanche has faced the Great Mother and embarks on a solitary mother quest, but as always, "the name of [the] game is five-card stud."

While Regina Hubbard would have been playing poker with Stanley and his buddies, Frankie Addams would have been serving them sandwiches and drinks, and

Amelia would have been the butt of their jokes, Blanche's dignified exit forces at least some of them to think about the role they play in her destruction. Of course, there is only a slight hint of this at the end of *Streetcar*, and patriarchy as represented by Stanley still dominates, but the slight shift in psyche seen in *Streetcar* becomes a dramatic turn in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. In *Cat*, the *Goddess* has a consort, the *masculine* realm is crippled, and the representatives of the type of patriarchy prevailing in Hellman's plays are diminished to laughingstocks. Big Daddy's character is an indication of the type of consciousness and/or society which might have developed had patriarchy been willing to co-exist with the Goddess cultures as opposed to destroying them. Maggie's character is representative of the Goddess cultures who were more than willing to incorporate patriarchal myths and rites into their ceremonies. She and Big Daddy complement one another perfectly and, because of this merger, the Goddess is actually very visible as the play concludes. *Cat* represents the point in the collective psyche in which patriarchy begins to acknowledge the validity of the true feminine archetype, helping clear the path toward the cycle and making possible the mother quest.

Robert Harling's *Steel Magnolias* provides a very clear illustration of a true mother quest. The purely matriarchal setting is a mythic ideal, and the play represents the phase in which the Goddess fragments and patriarchal debris are cleared away and the collective psyche becomes aware of the most ancient and most true feminine archetype and, subsequently, the importance of the mother quest. Beth Henley's *Crimes of the Heart* represents the point of development at which the ideal has been

revealed, giving the psyche the tools and ammunition needed to embark on the mother quest, so that each individual within the collective strives toward the Great Mother in her own unique way.

Examined chronologically, twentieth-century Southern drama represents a microcosm of the macro quest which has led women full circle back to the true feminine archetype, the Great Mother/Goddess. Hellman's plays represent the ruthless patriarchal takeover of the Goddess; McCullers's plays depict the passive resignation of women to the false archetypes created to replace the true one, and *Cafe* goes a step further by presenting the deformed, false feminine in the form of Cousin Lymon; Williams's *Streetcar* represents the stage at which the patriarchal feminine joins forces with and strengthens male oppression of the true mother quest, but also indicates the stubborn strength of the Goddess as Blanche fashions her own solitary inner quest. In *Cat*, Williams offers a breakthrough character who, with assistance from the formerly oppressive patriarchy, fights for feminine values while operating within a still decidedly masculine realm. Patriarchy is completely unseen and only vaguely heard in *Steel Magnolias* as Harling's characters present an ideal mother quest. Finally, real mother quests within individual psyches are depicted in Henley's *Crimes*. The cycle continues.

The appearance of the mother quest and true feminine archetype in literature as well as popular culture indicates that each is being rediscovered by the collective psyche, and that universal consciousness is probably now somewhere near the point represented by *Steel Magnolias*. Through accurate depictions of the the true feminine

realm, the Great Mother ideal is being set forth and will become ingrained into the social fabric, overcoming the synthetic, worn false archetypes that have prevented men as well as women from developing completely as individuals. Acknowledgement of the Goddess is not a destination or a goal, but a first step. This step is the beginning of a cyclic odyssey, neverending, as we are still becoming.

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