

**TRANSFORMING PSYCHE:  
A PHILOSOPHY FIGURED  
IN AN ANCIENT PATTERN**

**BY**

**BARBARA WEIR HUBER**

A Thesis  
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for the Degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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## Abstract

This study presents a reinterpretation and revisioning of the myth of Psyche. Using an interdisciplinary approach that combines current feminist and educational theories as well as concepts from the fields of literature, psychology and cultural anthropology, the myth is decoded as a metaphor not only to express female experience in a patriarchal context but also to provide a model of affirmation for all aspects of female life: biological, emotional, intellectual and spiritual.

Beginning with a review of education theory to explore the circumstances around learning in the present social context, the research continues by employing several different strategies. The first introduces the myth of Narcissus as a means of illustrating how gender influences the metaphors of sight and hearing which are integral to any understanding of Psyche's initial situation. The second is to scrutinize the oldest extant version of the myth, Lucius Apuleius's narrative of Eros and Psyche, in the light of existing interpretations and with a feminist rereading of the goddess Aphrodite. Next, the myth is surveyed as an ancient model of what Belenky et al. call "women's ways of knowing" to show that it also encodes a way of knowing that is as intellectually available to articulation as is our present Western tradition. The fourth approach reexamines the myth as it represents two narrative structures: the Eros

plot and the Psyche plot. From the analysis of the Psyche plot evolves an investigation into what Mary O'Brien calls female reproductive consciousness as a way of providing another paradigm to deemphasize our current accent on the subject/object dichotomy. Then, as a way of testing the hypotheses presented, some twentieth-century autobiographies by women are examined for the variety of ways in which they reprint this ancient pattern.

In place of a formal conclusion, the study ends with a retelling of the Psyche myth as a way of providing a modern and feminist signature to an ancient narrative pattern. This is followed by an Afterword which suggests a new term important for the philosophy encoded in the myth.

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My thanks to Dr. Joan Walters who accepted the overseeing of Education's place in this interdisciplinary proposal. Her willingness to allow me to move beyond her (and my) immediate considerations of the learning experience and Education, coincident with the admonition to remember those responsibilities, was itself instrumental in this return-with-a-difference.

I am grateful also to Dr. Keith Louise Fulton. Her passionate concern with the promise of feminist theory and its ability to bring thoughtful analysis to the roles assigned women in different societies and cultures brought the reminder of the particular importance of acknowledging difference within community even as I looked for what brings us together.

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This is dedicated to Henry with love and gratitude for his unselfish and ready assistance and for making my best dreams attainable.





### Foreword

The origins of this project lie within the study I completed for a master's thesis in Art Education.<sup>1</sup> That study involved an examination of the learning experience of practicing women artists in the Mentor Program of Manitoba Artists for Women's Art (now Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, Inc.). Inspiring at least as many questions as it answered, it also brought with it a belief that underlying women's life experiences lies a coherent, integrated, viable and richly rewarding pattern of being that is as fully accessible to intellectual articulation as any other. For me, however illusive or nebulous that pattern might be, it was somehow tied to the ancient image of the spiral. What follows here is my own journey to secure that pattern, those folk whom I encountered along the way and the ideas that contributed to this unwinding.

Even the best attempts at explanation are only more or less successful translations into another metaphor. (Indeed, language itself is only a metaphor.) The most we can do is to *dream the myth onwards* and give it a modern dress. And whatever explanation or interpretation does to it, we do to our own souls as well, with corresponding results for our own well-being.

C.G. Jung (1951)

We are, I am, you are  
by cowardice or courage  
the one who find our way  
back to this scene  
carrying a knife, a camera  
a book of myths  
in which  
our names do not appear.

Adrienne Rich (1973)

## Introduction

Ours is a culture that is frequently defined in shorthand as patriarchal, revolving around and servant to the (metaphorical) Fathers. Feminist analyses have critiqued patriarchal society by investigating the concomitant suppression and absence of a woman-centered view of reality.<sup>1</sup> Much of feminist criticism, in turn, is directed towards the foundations of the Western intellectual tradition itself. In Western, Euro-centric and scientifically-oriented thinking, human society and the natural world are seen as mutually exclusive units that are defined in terms of opposition and aggressiveness. Many feminists especially see society as impoverished by the intellectual construction of polarities, dichotomies and gender.<sup>2</sup>

Character traits have been linked directly to gender in ways that compound what has been excluded from the material of that intellectual tradition. The definition of male in terms of certain psychological traits leaves them with logic, reason, and aggressiveness. The masculine nature of commerce, law and justice, science and technology means prestige and tradition. Definitions of female being are criticized for their association with the feminine; those qualities are deemed undesirable in men. The conflation of the feminine with female biology has meant that women are regarded as emotional, passive and intuitive. Furthermore, femaleness is metaphorically associated with nature, the

flesh, procreation and physical pleasure.<sup>3</sup> From the conjunction of feminine qualities with reproductive responsibility in childbirth comes the view that women are by nature maternal, compassionate, empathetic, (over)loving and hence, morally weak.

Because our Western and Euro-centric tradition privileges men's ideas and perceptions, it is their ideas about women and their apprehensions of women that have, until recently, been given precedence within the public domain. As women, we learn about ourselves through what men have thought and written about us.<sup>4</sup> Thus, formal education is expressly problematic because it takes place within a system set up to reflect male experience. Because as women we live a differently gendered social and cultural experience, it may readily be argued that women face particular and specific problems within a male designed education system.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, in a system that is based on male experience, exclusivity and a hierarchy of values, women's place is doubly difficult.

In addition, the arrangement given these different values is teleological and translates readily into a power structure that is equally gender based. Those values associated with the female and feminine are seen as existing to service the higher values of the male and masculine. Reflected throughout Western culture, this adversarial system continues to define the self only in male terms and

human experience by male experience, and through its pervasiveness, this equation influences all aspects of social life and culture, men as well as women. Identity and selfhood, the self as human, as singular changeless Subject, is regarded as male, Man. The Other, of necessity and automatically, becomes object, female, Woman.

Because education was historically and traditionally the exclusive right of men, its structure and methodology were designed to fit and reflect male experience. In an examination of curriculum and its social context entitled *Transforming Knowledge*, Elizabeth Kamarck Minnick challenges the conceptual errors that underlie this dominant intellectual tradition. These errors she defines as a faulty universalization that conflates human into man, and a circular reasoning that justifies and defines what is appropriate for intellectual consideration. Based on these two errors, she sees two more. The first is an emphasis on the products of thought rather than its processes and consequences, and the second is that this partial knowledge excludes all that can be defined as other or different. As she observes about this knowledge: "It makes the part the whole, and that whole is partial to the interests of those thus defined at the defining, controlling center" (148). These faults are so deeply embedded within the meaning system that they have become nearly invisible.

Unquestionably, too much has been left out in the

construction of our male-defined universe. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the research into human development. Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* introduces an ethic of care and responsibility--regarded as female--to balance Lawrence Kohlberg's work about (male) ethical development, a development seen as based in a paradigm of competing rights. Discussing the work of William J. Perry and his examination of intellectual and ethical development, she comments on the absence of any recognition of the problems and failures that arise out of excessive detachment and unsatisfactory and inadequate attachment. Gilligan describes these as difficulties that arise out of an over-emphasis on separation and a specifically male anxiety about connection. As she sees it, both men and women move toward contextual complexity in their development, but they do so out of differing ethics.

About formal learning itself, the authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing* note that the women they interviewed regarded learning as gleaned through the lessons "in relationships with friends and teachers, life crises, and community involvements" (4). Further, the authors recognize that "little attention has been given to modes of learning, knowing, and valuing that may be specific to, or at least common in, women" (6). Whether this is because of the general cultural perception of the nature of the female mind/psyche as emotional, intuitive and irrational or the

more universal male dominance in a culture which privileges male experience and masculine values, the effects are the same--the absence of a female presence in the tradition of what is termed intellectual development and a devaluation of what is defined as the feminine:

The mental processes that are involved in considering the abstract and the impersonal have been labelled thinking and are attributed primarily to men, while those that deal with the personal and interpersonal fall under the rubric of "emotions" and are largely relegated to women. (7)

This description couples either/or dichotomous thinking and its corresponding teleological valuation to the detriment of women's intellectual life.

Just as the authors of *Ways* provide a pattern for the process of women's learning that evolves from silence and passivity to an integrated and self-constructed knowledge, Sara Ruddick's "Maternal Thinking" evolves intellectual theory out of maternal practice and Adrienne Rich's *Motherhood as Experience and Institution* distinguishes between the institution and the experience of motherhood. All have contributed significantly to a creation of viewpoint that compels the development and articulation of a more personal and body-centered assessment of female experience. Similarly, in *Representations of Motherhood*, literary analysts, psychologists, anthropologists, artists and activists continue the revaluation of motherhood to reclaim what has previously been unspoken.<sup>6</sup>

Whereas *Ways of Knowing* proposes a frame and the



perspective through which contemporary women acquire knowledge of the world, and others like Ruddick and Rich suggest more experientially-centered directions for this kind of approach, what remains missing is the sense of a transhistorical pattern, an awareness that women have always had access to important--indeed fundamental--ways of knowing life and life experience. One such ancient pattern can be found in the myth of Psyche and Eros.<sup>7</sup> Although the tale has been interpreted to support a patriarchal imperative, a careful reading of its various components suggests how these more current perspectives may indeed be modern versions of female experience and learning patterns that are at least as old as Apuleius's time (the second century C.E.), and if we consider the original folk sources of the tale, possibly far older.

In this myth, Psyche is a princess whose beauty brings her in conflict with the goddess Aphrodite. Psyche is also interpreted as representing the female soul wedded to Eros, the god of love. Because he visits her only in the dark of night, she is curious about his appearance and contrives to see him by lamplight. When she succeeds, he leaves her. The four central tasks in the myth portray Psyche's struggles for reconnection with her husband. Her success at those tasks brings a reconciliation with Eros and her ascendance to Olympus.

To read this ancient mythic representation of female

desire for affective (re)connection in conjunction with twentieth-century research on ways of knowing--cognitively based connection--is to discover new ways of considering the complexities and nuances that are inherent in any philosophy about female life experience in the emotional and intellectual realms. That Psyche is pregnant throughout her tasks adds an undeniably female biological basis to complete the experiential orientation of this myth.

Alongside the central place occupied by the myth of Psyche, two other myths contribute worthwhile perspectives on female being and knowing, ontology and epistemology. One is the Narcissus and Echo myth which not only focuses on the dangers accompanying self love but also foregrounds the roles of sight and hearing in relationship to the overall narrative of vision. The second myth is that of Persephone and Demeter, which addresses the connections between mother and daughter and between human and the natural or agricultural environment.

The seasonal change that underlies this mythic mother-daughter story illustrates the meaning of "transforming" that I am intending to imply through my use of the term in the title of my study. The transformation of Psyche implies an explicit desire to shift traditional interpretations both of the mythic Psyche as a female figure and of the psyche as a learning site. Moreover, my title proposes that transformation is an accurate descriptor of the process of

how we know. Thus, my concern is with change in all the relationships of Psyche: to the world, to learning, to work and to love.

Transformation has been defined as: "To alter or change in nature, properties, appearance/or form" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).<sup>7</sup> The *Webster's New World Dictionary* further clarifies the meaning of transformation by introducing its synonyms and their different nuances. Whereas transformation "implies a change either in external form or in inner nature, in function," metamorphoses "suggests a startling change produced as if by magic," transfigure "implies a change in outward appearance" only, and transmute "suggests a change in basic nature that seems almost miraculous." My use of transformation, then, emphasizes the continuous, incremental and integrated nature of knowledge rather than either a magical change or a superficial alteration of appearance.

My reason for subtitling this study a "philosophy" likewise derives from the dictionary definition of the word itself: "The love, study or pursuit of wisdom or of knowledge of things and their causes, whether theoretical or practical." The pursuit of wisdom in the case of my project is necessarily interdisciplinary. Although for the most part, the range involves literary criticism, education theory and women's studies, the multiple questions that arise in the process of my investigation also require far-

reaching excursions into other fields such as biology, psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology.

A transformed, revalued and reexamined female life experience, presupposes a willingness to entertain a number of premises: 1) that biological life, in the body and on the earth, is a central fact of human existence, and one which grounds us in metaphor; 2) that female behaviour in body, mind and spirit has its own and inherent philosophical truth and that its free expression will change how we define what it is to be human; 3) that the full range of human attributes (those characteristics labelled masculine or feminine) is available to all individuals regardless of gender; 4) that the characteristics labelled "feminine" are fundamental to human life but have been inadequately and negatively defined and valued; 5) that in all of these revaluations lies the potential for a redefinition of human society; 6) that this willingness to revisualize the full range of human experience is not simply a reversal of dominance and therefore does not place men in the subordinate, dominated position that women have so long suffered.

Although to say it seems superfluous and contradictory, female life and feminine values have their logic. Therefore, if the Western intellectual tradition is, indeed, only a construct which expresses a bias toward male life experience and masculine vision--one based on opposites, conflict and

dichotomies--then to walk away from male defined experience toward the Other, the female/feminine, is to move toward life viewed as interconnection and relationship. Taking such a step, we draw toward a concept of community in which side by side replaces face to face confrontation and polar opposites are joined by the recognition and emergence of the continuum between.

By way of structuring such a philosophical inquiry into female life experience, I will begin in chapter one with an exploration of the context and background from which the issues in this study have arisen. Expanding the scope and complexity of this investigation into adult and non-traditional learning experiences is essential as a way of reorienting the problems beyond the present educational system itself. Chapter two presents an analysis of the metaphors of vision and hearing. As a way of highlighting the gender specific implications of these metaphors, they are examined within the context of the story of Narcissus and Echo. Chapter three introduces Psyche and the goddess Aphrodite who also figures prominently in the tale. A reexamination of the tasks the goddess sets Psyche requires a reevaluation of what Aphrodite as goddess represents. Chapter four interprets the myth of Psyche and Eros as a story of transformation within this realm governed by Aphrodite.

Chapter five returns to epistemological matters by way

of a close scrutiny of the implications of Psyche's tasks in the context of what we presently know about women's learning. Here my analysis also includes a consideration of the more ancient mythic and shamanic associations of learning and emphasizes the ages-old patterns in the life experiences of women. Chapter six reexamines the tasks once more for what they reveal about gendered preferences for narrative form and how Psyche's journey is structured in terms of female life and spirituality. In chapter seven, female reproductive consciousness provides an avenue out of the subject-object dichotomy which so influences our present Western and Euro-centric outlook. This consciousness brings a way of justifying context as an important and integral factor in any model for problem solving.

If any hypothesis about female experience is to be seen as valid, then its main elements must be revealed as embedded in the real experiences of many women who live differing lives and life experiences. The most readily accessible source for such a validation can be found in women's own life writings, specifically in published autobiographies. Therefore, an entire section--chapter eight--is devoted to testing hypotheses and surveying some of the ways whereby twentieth-century women articulate the central themes and issues disclosed in the Psyche story and how variations of the theoretical patterns are embedded within the lifeprints of contemporary lives.

Finally, though I do hope to suggest that a coherent philosophy of female being does exist, the concepts integral to such a view will appear throughout the course of this analysis, instead of in a formal conclusion. What I offer in place of such an ending is a retelling of Psyche's story in chapter nine. This is followed by an Afterword in which I suggest a new-old term as a means of reclaiming a forgotten aspect of our own tradition--but one held secure and protected by an ancient and enduring Eastern goddess.

## Chapter One

### Contexts and Circumstances

The search for a means of articulating and illustrating a view of learning which is whole, organic and fully expressive of a total life experience ties together both educational and feminist theory. Whereas a concern with the oneness of things is in direct conflict with the separate pieces and the discrete discourses of the Western intellectual tradition, the domestic image of quilting suggests how an integration can be achieved. Because issues of gender permeate the different "traditional" disciplines, feminist research especially necessitates an interdisciplinary approach that sews pieces excerpted from different knowledge fields to make new connections and to emphasize the previously overlooked. Along with a sense of being artists, artisans and agents who make the patterns, the traditional practices of sewing and weaving bring an appropriate woman-centred image from outside these same (male) disciplines and a consciousness of a different methodology for redirecting the inquiry and rearticulating the issues.

Up to a point, the quilt serves as an apt metaphor for constructing an interdisciplinary woman-centered knowledge: a quilt is pieced together from unconnected bits and requires the imposition of an external design to acquire a wholeness not integral to the content. The inadequacy of the



metaphor, however, resides in the very cleverness of its construction.<sup>1</sup> A quilt remains an object. It does not put us into the learning experience or represent change in the quilter or transformation of the psyche; it represents a transformation of object. Likewise, although the image of the needle weaving through the three layers of cloth suggests the integration of past history and separate intellectual discourses, it does not represent the quilter's personal story. The quilt represents a separate learning; it is no more representative of the self than are the separate pieces from which it is constructed.

A quilt cannot represent self-referential female learning and life experience as much as it presents the age-old female necessity of constructing the practical (and beautiful) out of the already worn out, of transforming the threadbare and useless into the creative and useful. The weaving needle, too, implies a place centeredness, a stationary quality that does not carry us, but is carried. Clearly, whereas both sewing and weaving are portable skills, they do not move the self out from an intellectual understanding based in isolation, separation and solitary existence. Part of the process of exploration then will center on a search for new metaphors to illustrate a more connected learning.

The Dynamics of Metaphor

Because my investigation hinges on metaphors and on how they have been interpreted, an understanding of the dynamics of metaphor is essential. Metaphors have consequences; they expand our understanding even as they impose limits to the significance of comparisons. In their theoretical examination of the uses of metaphor in everyday life, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson remind us that metaphors are not merely the vehicles of "poetic imagination"; they are fundamental to the ways we think and act in our daily lives (3). Metaphors are central to perception because they make up much of our conceptual structure: "We understand experience metaphorically when we use a gestalt from one domain of experience to structure experience in another domain" (230).

This ability to transpose experience intellectually from one form to another gives metaphor importance as a way of deriving meaning from sense experience, perception, language and action. Again, according to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor is basic to our way of structuring "*imaginative rationality*" and permits us to understand "one kind of experience in terms of another." They go on to state: "New metaphors are capable of creating new understandings and, therefore, new realities" (235). Furthermore, the information conveyed through metaphoric depictions is selective because metaphor allows us to focus on one aspect

of a comparison while excluding others that may be equally pertinent to understanding. They note the value of paying particular attention to the "entailments," the necessary consequences, of metaphoric comparisons in order to disclose the features which direct and contain understanding. Extending a careful attention to the entailments of comparisons conveys information about experience that brings significant new meanings.

In addition, Lakoff and Johnson describe two polarized systems of metaphoric understanding, subjective and objective, and indicate their inadequacies. As they see it, "What the myths of objectivism and subjectivism both miss is the way we *understand* the world through our *interactions* with it" (194). Suggesting a third or experientialist myth, they synthesize objectivist interest in truthful, factual knowledge of the external world, fairness and impartiality with an internal and personally meaningful subjective concern for individual experience, feeling and intuitive insight; to these two components, they then add context: the "perspective of man [sic] as part of his environment, not separate from it.... From the experientialist perspective, truth depends on understanding, which emerges from functioning in the world" (229-30). Experientialist myth accepts that "meaning is always meaning *to* a person" (228).

Metaphors of Voice and Sight

*Women's Ways of Knowing* identifies the metaphor of voice as an especially powerful one for women and applicable to many aspects of women's experience--even as it is used to distinguish that experience from men's.

The tendency for women to ground their epistemological premises in metaphors suggesting speaking and listening is at odds with the visual metaphors (such as equating knowledge with illumination, knowing with seeing, and truth with light) that scientists and philosophers most often use to express their sense of mind.

The authors go on to emphasize that the metaphors of vision and voice may also be linked to different types of social behaviour:

Visual metaphors, such as "the mind's eye," suggest a camera passively recording a static reality and promote the illusion that disengagement and objectification are central to the construction of knowledge. Visual metaphors encourage standing at a distance ... removing ... subject and object from a sphere of possible intercourse. Unlike the eye, the ear operates by registering nearby subtle change. Unlike the eye, the ear requires closeness between subject and object. Unlike seeing, speaking and listening suggest dialogue and interaction.

They also note the way that our cultural preference for the visual leads to a paradoxical approval of its loss:

"philosophers and scientists who use visual metaphors to connote 'mind' value the impairment of that sense" (18).

*Ways* illuminates what has been obscured even from the mind's imaginings: how *intentional* blindness limits very obviously "what one can 'see' with the mind's eye" (19).

Behind the privileging of sight lies a distrust of all sensory perception, *including* vision, the preferred

metaphor. In this context, one of the most interesting facets of my own earlier study was the observation that even women with an *obvious* visual orientation--that is, who were practicing visual artists--were as inclined to use a metaphor of voice and hearing to describe their experience of self and mind as Belenky, et al. found in their study of women who were presumably not as specifically or vocationally oriented to sight. Indeed, that these artists relied on the hearing metaphor even as they described their love of visual creativity seems now to suggest the possibility of women's affirmation of all sense experience rather than of any impairment. Moreover, the way that these women responded indicated not only a concern with the creativity of a visually-available expression of self and joy in the visual objects themselves, but also a concern with maintaining affective connections to family and community (both the wider social and more specific art communities) and keeping strong the lines of communication, connection and relationship within and to those constituencies.

### Experiential Learning

The relationship between visual metaphors and the functioning of the mind has also influenced our understanding of the learning process. In her investigation of experiential, body-centered learning and the "two-sided

mind," Linda Verlee Williams reminds us that the focus has been on visual thinking, whereas learning might be better based on all the senses and, in fact, in an expanded definition of all the senses. After listing the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste, she continues by reminding us of "the proprioceptive senses--the kinaesthetic, vestibular, and visceral systems which monitor internal sensations" (144). This inventory of what has been left out by the construction of a visually-based metaphor of learning and education, suggests that we have an intellectual system that might readily be called impoverished and that it would be enriched by a more inclusive use of sense experience.

Not only with respect to sense experience, it has been argued, is the current attitude toward learning less than generous or expansive. Research psychologist Howard Gardiner developed a theory of multiple intelligences to suggest other possible definitions of human intelligence. Stressing that his is an "opening list," he adds musical, spacial, bodily kinaesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences to the already accepted linguistic and logical-mathematical aptitudes that are measured in standardized tests. Explaining how people evidence these separate gifts, Gardiner tells us that musicians, architects and dancers demonstrate the first three, that actors, teachers and therapists show interpersonal intelligence, and

that diarists--and, I might add, autobiographers--show a special intrapersonal ability. Furthermore, Gardiner suggests that all these faculties may be avenues to the creative: "intelligences singularly or in combination may be put to artistic uses" (20). Presenting his two assumptions, that "not all people have the same minds" and "life is short," he argues for an individual-centered school, one that would allow for these personal differences and accept a wider range of learning styles (22). Finally, Gardiner, tells us that "intelligence and creativity are not always used benignly. They are value neutral." He goes on to illustrate the essential factor of context: "One can compose for Hitler or paint for Stalin" (27).

Both Gardiner's and William's differing assessments of an impoverished learning experience underscore Lakoff and Johnson's description of an experientialist myth of understanding. Both grant an increased significance to aptitudes and contexts, accept that we are part of an environment, know it and interact with it. In a similar vein, in his exposition of and support for a sensory based and experiential learning process, Edward Cell describes how experience is necessary to, and must be acknowledged in, learning: "All learning is from experience. The experience may be our own or it may be that of others" (61). He continues by arguing that we respond emotionally to experience, that this emotion brings a mutuality of meaning

and strength to learning and that it grows from self-knowledge (91,110). This personalized knowledge, in turn, contributes to interpersonal relationship: "Personal knowledge of another is based on our knowledge of ourselves" (118).

In his search for a new understanding about learning, Cell correlates empathy with sight and employs a spacial metaphor to suggest the connection.

In empathy, then, we take up residence in two counties, seeing the other and his world from both his point of view and from our own simultaneously, although it is his view that is dominant, our own functioning only as the means by which we understand his. (119)

The simple impossibility of physically being in two places at once renders these metaphors problematic, but the introduction of dominance makes them doubly problematic for women. He continues by introducing the metaphor of touch: "Fundamental to personal knowledge is our need to be in touch with each other.... Touching is an act of recognition.... At its heart, being a person is being in touch ... 'respect' means 'to look at'" (125).

Although he recognizes the importance of love to empathy and knowing, his philosophy is conventionally gendered and he switches to the feminine pronoun to discuss the object in the knowledge exchange.

Genuine empathy, then, in which we enter into the viewpoint of the other and see her on her own terms requires love as does knowledge of ourselves. The *agape*, *eros* and *philia* dimensions of love each play a necessary role in full empathic knowing. Empathy, that is, includes caring for the well being of the other



(agape); finding her likeable, pleasurable, enjoyable (eros); and sharing the mutuality of friendship with her (philia). (128)

In spite of bringing in these other sense experiences, voice and hearing are not accounted for; only touch and sexuality are added to vision.

### Continuous Learning

William G. Perry's work discusses the positive valuation our cultural context gives to the ideas of progress and achievement; he links growth and creativity to separation and transcendence. The problems raised by such a definition of growth are in turn addressed by Robert Kegan in his study of the structure of development entitled *The Evolving Self*. Although, in "Things So Finely Human: Moral Sensibilities at Risk in Adolescence," Betty Bardige has argued that Kegan's approach implies a self-centeredness that may not exist, he does acknowledge and represent our cultural bias for understanding knowledge and meaning in the familiar metaphors of mind and vision. He also includes an affective dimension: "what the eye sees better the heart feels more deeply" and "[m]eaning depends on someone who recognizes you. Not meaning[, ] by definition, is utterly lonely" (16,19).

Introducing a metaphor of the spiral or helix to illustrate his concept of interindividuality and developmental growth, Kegan images growth as an evolutionary

and twofold process of differentiating self from, and integrating self with, others. Distinguishing between these two human yearnings for inclusivity (connection) and integrity (independence), he suggests that their relation in tension is what accounts for the creativity of life experience (107). Rather than seeing growth as separation and repudiation, he believes that it is "a matter of transition," a spiral which involves reconciliation and recovery (140). The spiral represents an evolution of meaning which sees the self moving between poles of integration and independence. He suggests that there will be a development "beyond psychological autonomy" that will have as a central feature "a new orientation to contradiction and paradox," one that "seems to shift to the relationship between the poles in a paradox rather than a choice between the poles" (228,229).

Other educators have looked for ways to make learning more meaningful and inclusive by studying adults who continue to learn throughout the lifespan. Cyril O. Houle not only suggests the variety of continuing learners by distinguishing three types--goal, activity and learning oriented--but also studies the "whys" and the "cataract of consequences" that make for continuous learning. To Houle the role of the teacher is not of ultimate significance, but the presence of a public library, and a strong relationship with parents--either positive or negative--are profoundly

influential factors (72-3,75,69). In this way, he sees continuous, lifelong learning as linked to strong emotional connections in the family and to an accessible and nourishing cultural environment.

That the teacher is not perceived by Houle as having a long-term influence is at first glance surprising in view of the importance of the emotional response to parent figures, but his findings do confirm the sense that something is missing in present educational practice. This failure of influence may simply be one of form: the traditional teacher--Houle's book was published in 1963--functions in a hierarchical arrangement, and such an organization works against connection. Thus, teachers in a hierarchical situation may make for the efficient transmission of that package of knowledge required by a functioning democratic society, but hierarchy itself may work against the development of what Houle terms the "inquiring mind."<sup>2</sup>

An "inquiring mind" implies a learning that grows from experience and is of a piece with the student's life and life journey; the development is transformative because of the interactive nature of self with environment and life with experience. This change in educational goals from the transmission of a set package of what is known to a transmission of the skills of inquiry is a central concern for Malcolm S. Knowles. His interest in learning as a lifelong process encompasses connection and continuity. His

accent on self-directed learning "assumes that learners are motivated by internal incentives, such as the need for esteem (especially self-esteem), the desire to achieve, the urge to grow, the satisfaction of accomplishment, the need to know something specific, and curiosity" (21).

Calling this adult and self-directed learning "andragogy," Knowles distinguishes it from traditional pedagogy, the transmission of already parcelled knowledge to children. Whereas the shift from child (*païdo*) to man (*andro*) has a "male" element, the change in name does, nonetheless, clearly signal a modification in the role of the teacher from an authority figure to facilitator and cooperative co-learner. Changing the environment in this way shifts the emphasis to the student and to designing a process for learning. The emphasis is on acquisition--getting for oneself--rather than on transmission--being given--and the switch compels learners and teachers into active sharing of available resources (71). The teacher becomes an associate, a mentor, rather than an organizer of a pre-established curriculum content.

### Mentoring

Learning and development theory place special emphasis on mentoring. In writing about male development, Daniel J. Levinson describes the characteristics of male mentorship, its importance for individual learning and success and a

little understood connection with the negative and potentially destructive emotions of envy and resentment. He lists the mentor's functions as those of teacher, sponsor, guide and exemplar but states that the most developmentally crucial role of the mentor is "to support and facilitate the realization of the dream" (98). Furthermore, he calls mentors "transitional figures," but notes that the mentoring relationships he studied often ended unhappily.

In a "good enough" mentoring relationship, the young man feels admiration, respect, appreciation, gratitude and love for the mentor. These outweigh but cannot entirely prevent the opposite feelings: resentment, inferiority, envy, intimidation.... Following the separation, the younger man may take the admired qualities of the mentor more fully into himself. (101)

For men, Levinson states, "the mentor relationship in its developed form is rare. It is sundered, with other things, as part of *Becoming One's Own Man*" (149).

Other metaphors for the multiple dimensions of the mentoring relationship have emphasized the spiritual nature of the role. Laurent A. Daloz expands the guiding and friendship aspects of the mentoring relationship to terms that evoke myth and the transformational life journey. In addition, he suggests a personal responsibility for choosing a mentor: "Whether as close as the classroom or as distant as history, mentors are creations of our imaginations, designed to fill a psychic space somewhere between lover and parent. Not surprisingly, they are suffused with magic and play a key part in our transformation" (17). Emphasizing

teaching as a transaction, as a relationship and development, as both change and direction, his description of learning as knowing more and thinking differently also evokes the spiral image.

Daloz uses the journeys of Dante and Odysseus as mythic prototypes for the journey and, consequently, he also emphasizes separation: "At some point, mentors always depart, generally before the journey is over. The trip belongs, after all to the traveller, not the guide - and the mentor has his own promises to keep" (33). Applying the theories of Gilligan, Kegan, Levinson and Perry to the mentoring relationship and learning, Daloz describes mentors as powerful liminal figures, "gatekeepers as well as guides," who are able to accept chaos as necessary for attaining enlightenment, who balance polarities and introduce new ways of seeing: "They stand at the boundary of the old and new worlds and, as such, hold the keys for successful passage. That they are in the position to make judgements and select or reject us gives them considerable power" (96).

Furthermore, Daloz stresses hearing and "sees" teaching as listening. His description of good teaching echoes the emphasis given by Belenky et al. and by Gilligan to the metaphor of voice. Downplaying the accumulation of "a shelfful of knowledge" or "a repertoire of skills," Daloz observes that: "In the end, good teaching lies in a

willingness to attend and care for what happens in our students, ourselves, and the space between us. Good teaching is a certain kind of stance ... of receptivity, of attunement, of listening" (244).

### Learning as Journey

The myth of the journey, and its equivalents of path and quest, occurs frequently as a metaphor of learning because it implies change--usually growth--and putting ourselves into the center of the learning experience. John A. B. McLeish, writing of age and creativity, uses the myth of Ulysses and the Ulyssean path to explore new possibilities in middle age. As he describes it, the Ulyssean path is a journey of detachment, confrontation and separation with a final return home to reconnection--a circle. Home--Penelope--is waiting patiently and with great difficulty outwits her suitors to stay the same--not to change. This view of the journey represents an experience gendered as male, a unitary and solitary venture that chafes at the confines of home and seeks adventure for its own sake.

Just as men's learning and the hero's journey are linked in an emphasis on adversarial conflict and detachment, so women's learning and journeys are linked by an awareness of growth as continuous, even if visually imperceptible and characterized by a greater inclination to

accommodation and cooperation. Carol P. Christ, however, expands the journey metaphor and ties it to both silence and spiritual quest. Her analysis of "nothingness" evokes the "silence" of the learning pattern set forth in *Women's Ways of Knowing*:

Women's spiritual quest begins in an experience of nothingness (self-hatred, self-negation, being victim) on to awakening (powers of being revealed) through mystical insight (in nature or with other women) to a new naming. (13)

Christ's "experience of nothingness" is explicitly tied to women's cultural otherness, but even if this experience is profoundly negative, Edward Cell's study of learning experience reminds us that "more often than not our most significant growth processes take place subconsciously precisely at those times when it seems to us on the surface that nothing is happening at all" (230-31). Like seeds planted in the earth, spring's first new growth is underground, undeniably present but not visually observable.

In addition, Christ suggests that women's narratives share a spiral pattern: "The moments of women's quest are part of a process in which experiences of nothingness, awakenings, insights, and namings form a spiral of ever-deepening but never final understanding" (14). The spiral, which Kegan has also offered as a metaphor to suggest a balance between autonomy and interrelationship could have especial value as a metaphor of the stages of knowing described in *Ways* and as an image integral to women's own



experience of life and spiritual values. Perhaps any circumstance which requires a new perspective, a new way of dealing with a changing world, causes women to move to silence. Perhaps, too, silence might indicate the beginning of another cycle, a germination of new ways of dealing with and making sense of the world.

### Myths

The differences that distinguish male and female journeys parallel the distinctions Bruno Bettelheim draws between the structures of myth and fairy tale. In fairy tales, the lack of polarization, of good and evil, is an assurance that even the meek may succeed, and that even the most unpleasant of feelings is acceptable; "the difference between myth and fairy tale is highlighted by the myth telling us directly.... The fairy tale never confronts us so directly, or tells us outright how to choose" (34). Myths and fairy tales are likened to shamanic journeys, as all "were derived from, or give symbolic expression to, initiation rites or other *rites de passage*--such as a metaphoric death of an old, inadequate self in order to be born on a higher plane of existence" (35).

Bettelheim's description of the relationship between children and the everyday objects around them suggests that, in their eyes, the "magical" simply represents an enhanced perception, an ability to discern and respond to an inherent

beingness within nature. "To the child," he comments, "there is no clear line separating objects from living things; and whatever has life has life very much like our own. If we do not understand what rocks and trees and animals have to tell us, the reason is that we are not sufficiently attuned to them" (46). Because this kind of interaction with the natural world is not acknowledged in our scientific culture, it remains visible only in the realm of myth and fairy tale. That only myths and fairy tales hold this non-scientific knowledge certainly lessens its cultural availability.

In spite of this, the simple fact that myths and fairy tales endure, have been handed down to us, indicates a level of social sanction. The act of recording signifies that the myths reflect the views of those who record them--those who have the power to record. In the Introduction to *Whence the Goddesses*, Miriam Robbins Dexter cautions us to "remember that myth is political" and that it may be perceived as giving "divine sanction to the social patterns of a culture" (x,xi). According to Dexter, what is sanctioned in the Western tradition is patriarchal because myth is a male construct expressing masculine values. This does not, however, mean that myth is necessarily myth in the conventional sense--though its doubled definition as "fictitious" indicates a desire to downplay its less acceptable meanings. As Sarah B. Pomeroy avers: "Myths are not lies, but rather men's attempt to impose a symbolic

order upon their universe" (1). Writing specifically about Apuleius and the imposition of his own viewpoint, his own symbolic order, Judith K. Krabbe states that "every writer is a transformer, shaping new reality out of his experiences, personal and literary" (42).

Leslie Fiedler makes another useful distinction. Using the term, "Archetype," instead of myth, he refers to it as an immemorial pattern which illustrates our response to death, love, the biological family and spiritual relationship. Because of this patterning, the Archetype carries what he describes as an unspoken awareness or consciousness of the universality of human experience. For Fiedler, the "Signature" is the sum of the individuating characteristics of a work of art, and as such, it carries overt information about the social collectivity. This is where cultural bias may be inscribed. "The difference in the communal element in the Signature and that in the Archetype," he states, "is that the former is *conscious*" (319). What he also contends is that an understanding of Archetype requires an interdisciplinary analysis, specifically anthropology and psychology, to reveal the underlying and transhistorical truths about human life that lie embedded there.

If myth endures, in its longevity, then, it reveals not only this personal (male) and cultural (patriarchal) reality or Signature but also the underlying and more universal

experience or Archetype. Even in explicitly patriarchal myths and fairy tales, women may respond to extant (though obscure) truths lying in and energizing their cores. That these doubled understandings are transhistorical in no way denies their contemporary relevance, and indeed, Pomeroy suggests that this doubled reality also existed in the practice of ancient patriarchal religions.

Pomeroy differentiates myth and cultic practice by the way each represents the goddesses in their relationship to women. Myths, she contends, show goddesses hostile to women, but cults, in the actual ceremonies and rituals of worship, pay attention to women's roles and answer women's needs. Since the myths, usually male-authored stories, are what have survived, the anti-woman, anti-feminine biases in the goddesses have also been handed to us through the centuries. That these biases are ancient and transhistorical in no way denies their contemporary relevance, but even within these prejudices, women have been able to reclaim and recycle female experience from male mythopoetic vision.

These distinctions between Signature and Archetype, cultic practice and myth underscore the work of revisioning myth that is a central project of feminism. Works as various as Barbara Walker's *Woman's Dictionary of Signs and Symbols* and her *Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* and M. Esther Harding's *Women's Mysteries* reclaim and revalue the roles of the goddesses, women and the feminine within myth.

More recently, *Women Who Run With the Wolves* by Clarissa Pinkola Estes and Christa Wolf's *Cassandra* incorporate an interdisciplinary research focus with retelling the stories to reclaim women's lived experience underlying the patriarchal signatures of these ancient traditional stories.

### Learning Roles

The cultural construction of social roles that both mask and constrict women's lived experience is a central concern of sociologists such as Lillian B. Rubin and Caryl Rivers et al. who have examined women's life patterns in modern society and discussed the ways that these role assumptions for women are changing. In spite of perceived advances, however, Rubin's examination of mid-life women reveals an underlying and pervasive culturally embedded fear of women--particularly of aging women. Though women have great emotional power privately in the family, they lack the power that gives agency in society. They are not expected to be achievers, to act. According to Rubin:

For him, adult means to do something in the world out there. For him there is no *being* without *doing*. For her, it works the other way. All her life, she's been expected to *be--be* good, *be* pretty, *be* patient, *be* kind, *be* loving. *To be--the* quintessence of woman. (57)

As a creature of *being*, woman is by implication "done to," and underlying these definitions are implications and expectations for female behaviour in relationship.

Rubin describes the way that the repression and fear of

women's sexuality and emotional power in relationships is subsumed into cultural values. The behaviours expected of women all stress the well-being and comfort of the others in the relationship; female selfhood and desire is consumed in care for others. The usual implication is that the others are husband and children. Relationship, however, also implies a mutuality of give and take. This is nowhere more significant than in sexual expression.

When it comes to sex, it is this very quality of giving that is necessary to turn the sex act into a relationship. Only when two people wish to give at least as much as they wish to take does sex become a nourishing and enriching experience. (Rubin 79)

The ascription of gender-based behaviours often results in relationship failures and the crushing of needs or feelings that are deemed inappropriate (in either gender).

This scheme, even if or especially if unspoken, renders intellectual life or public life that is not exclusively for the service of others' needs particularly difficult for women to undertake. Any non-traditional and self-expressive activity will be regarded as un/non-feminine or un/non-womanly, and in addition, any traditional female activity will be denigrated or ignored. The cultural anthropologist Emily Martin documents how these views continue to influence even present-day (north) American culture and specifically medical practice. Christine Battersby shows how ingrained and historically slippery attitudes to gender and to creative and intellectual abilities in men and women

continue to prejudice attitudes toward "genius" and the recognition of women's creative work.

There is an equal penalty for women in the idealization of the mother-child relationship. Thus, countering this idealization, Rivers et al. have argued that "hostile mothering" has real benefits: a "reasonable amount of conflict and tension is inevitable and appears to help children grow into 'separate people'." They go on to declare that a measure of maternal antagonism in an otherwise loving and supportive relationship may be especially beneficial to girls: "Encouraging independence--and being careful not to reward dependent behaviour--is the first key step in helping girls become self-reliant and free to develop their full potential" (137).

Rivers et al. emphasize the fact that girls are educated in incompetence and do not learn to recognize their own success: "Girls have to learn to take credit for their own accomplishments. Too many girls and women do something good and then write it off to luck" (137). The authors also link the failure to become one's own woman with "chronic, unexpressed anger" (202). This loss of voice and unexpressed anger has obvious detrimental effects for the woman herself, but learning to express the needs that result in anger, conflict and tension has real benefit for all of a woman's relationships. In this way, the struggle to express unhappiness with inhospitable circumstances can, in fact,

result in changes that improve interpersonal relationships.

### Women and Science

Nowhere is women's struggle to change roles and find a place in an inhospitable community--while at the same time working to change the contours of that community--more evident than in the field of science. The examinations of the lives and careers of women scientists is paralleled by an intense scrutiny of the very forms of the scientific process. Evelyn Fox Keller has provided both in her exploration of the work of scientist Barbara McClintock. Keller recounts and contemplates McClintock's career for the ways in which she does scientific observation *differently*.

McClintock's struggles to reconcile objective and scientific observation with empathic understanding serve to test concepts about "the limits of verbally explicit reasoning." Keller tells us that McClintock's stress on the importance of a "feeling for the organism" in phrases that "sound like those of mysticism" have made her suspect among her peers (xiii-xiv). Her work remained unrecognized throughout most of her career and McClintock lived her life at the boundaries of her natural community--the scientific community. The story of her work exemplifies how difficult it is for a woman to find recognition in a male-defined science or to find acceptance for an alternative way of knowing.



Describing McClintock's attempt to reconcile scientific observation and intuitive understanding, Keller portrays her work on corn genetics as taking on a life of its own and as being focused on the individual details and the unique characteristics of individual plants (86,101). Understanding and insight combined with "respect for the unfathomable workings of the mind" and "regard for the complex workings of the plant" all illustrate a concept of learning based on connection and relationship, on interrelationship between knower and known, subject and object (104-05). An image of attunement and sympathy pictures an observational approach that is profoundly different from the concept of the objective scientist who is outside of, and removed from, the area of inquiry.

Throughout history, artists and poets, lovers and mystics, have known and written about the "knowing" that comes from the loss of self - from the state of subjective fusion with the object of knowledge.... Scientists often pride themselves on their capacities to distance subject from object, but much of their richest lore comes from a joining of one to the other, from a turning of object into subject. (Keller, *Feeling* 118)

Correlating the description of "artistic" loss of self and fusion with another, which arises out of a desire to eliminate the sense of distance between subject and object, Keller reveals that the richest results come from a desire to lose the sense of self in the intellectual experience.

Keller observes that McClintock's ability to "see" is central to her methodology: "For all of us, our concepts of

the world build on what we see, as what we see builds on what we think. Where we know more, we see more" (148). This interrelationship between visual and the cognitive--reading "simultaneously by the eyes of the body and those of the mind"--exists within a relationship of "shared subjectivity"; it involves "a way of looking that is necessarily in part determined by some private perspective" and "a capacity for union with that which is to be known" (148,149, 150,201). Keller links mysticism and spiritual experience to this "commitment to the unity of experience, the oneness of nature, the fundamental mystery underlying the laws of nature.... Basically, everything is one. There is no way in which you draw a line between things" (201,204).

### Sex as Metaphor

In her series of essays exploring the relationship between gender and science, Keller moves from her study of the experience of one woman to explore the general sexualization of knowledge. She indicates that the way in which the gap between subject and object, knower and known is traditionally closed, is in the compelling and powerful metaphor of "sexual relation." Knowledge is described as "a form of consummation, just as sex is a form of knowledge. Both are propelled by desire." Emphasizing that even without metaphor "the experience of knowing is rooted in the

carnal," her study is arresting for the paradox this metaphor is used to reveal:

What classically distinguishes knowledge is its essential thrust away from the body: its ambition is to transcend the carnal. Mind is not simply immanent in matter; it is transcendent over it, all visions of knowledge must accordingly struggle with the dialectic between immanence and transcendence. (18)

What her use of the sexual metaphor also shows is the differing valuations applied to mind and body and to transcendence and immanence. The suspicion of embodied sense experience results in a paradigm of knowing which separates the mind from the *only* means through which we collect information.

Maintaining that objectivity has become the cult of objectivism to the detriment of true understanding and knowledge, Keller first traces the development of these ideas through history--from Plato to the present--and contends that modern science carries a "projection" and a "reflected self-image" which is specifically male and which undercuts any claims of objectivity. She then moves through a discussion of object-relations theory and the tensions among power, dominance, autonomy and love to explore the failures in a concept of science based on the "laws of nature"; in turn she suggests shifting "to an interest in the multiple and varied kinds of order actually experienced in nature" and "more global and interactive models of complex dynamic systems" (134).

According to Keller, the scientific belief in the

blindness of the "laws of nature" contrasts markedly with McClintock's extraordinary emphasis on, and definition of, seeing and response.

"Laws" of nature name nature as blind, obedient, and simple; simultaneously, they name their maker as authoritative, generative, resourceful, and complex. Historically, the maker is God; but as discoverer and maker converge, the scientist inherits the mantle of creativity along with that of authority. (134)

Keller, describing a view of nature "as orderly, and not law bound," argues that this "allows nature itself to be generative and resourceful--more complex and abundant than we can either describe or prescribe." Nature is regarded as "an active partner in a more reciprocal relation to an observer, equally active, but neither omniscient nor omnipotent" (134).

Keller especially recognizes what such a shift entails for the ways in which we conduct investigation:

Such a relation between mind and nature would require a different style of inquiry, no less rigorous but presupposing the modesty and open attentiveness that allow one to "listen to the material" rather than assuming that scientific data self-evidently speak for themselves. (134)

Suggesting an integrative, responsive and passionate learning which exists outside of or at the very least on the edges of present learning theory, Keller confronts the importance that is traditionally accorded the idea of transcendence, of the mind as having a power which (sexually) penetrates and subdues (rapes) nature. As it relates to learning, transcendence presupposes a subject

matter that is passive, outside and apart from the learner. Not surprisingly, this construction of a passive subject matter accords fully with patriarchal constructions of female roles and feminine behaviours.

### Subjectivity and Experience

A concern for the construction of female subjectivity and authenticity and for the articulation of an engendered female experience requires a philosophical definition of experience. As Teresa de Lauretis states: "Though very much in need of clarification and elaboration, the notion of experience ... bears directly on the major issues that have emerged from the women's movement--subjectivity, sexuality, the body, and feminist political practice" (159). According to her, experience results from a process of continuous transformation:

Through that process one places oneself or is placed in social reality, and so perceives and comprehends as subjective (referring to, even originating in, oneself) those relations--material, economic, and interpersonal--which are in fact social and in a larger perspective, historical. The process is continuous, its achievement unending or daily renewed. For each person, therefore, subjectivity is an ongoing construction, not a fixed point of departure or arrival from which one interacts with the world. (159)

After surveying the dualities inherent in various theories of subjectivity, and the difficulties for women within current discourses, de Lauretis moves to a discussion of semiotics and the split subject. From that vantage point, she defines experience as "a complex of habits resulting

from the semiotic interaction of 'outer world' and 'inner world', the continuous engagement of a self or subject in social reality" (182).

In the self-consciousness present in feminist theory, de Lauretis sees a way for women not to "become woman" and in turn articulates a future direction for feminist theory:

not in femininity as a privileged nearness to nature, the body, or the unconscious, an essence which inheres in women but to which males too now lay claim; not in a female tradition simply understood as private, marginal and yet intact, outside of history but fully there to be discovered or recovered; not, finally in the chinks and cracks of masculinity, the fissures of male identity or the repressed of phallic discourse; but rather in that political, theoretical, self-analyzing practice by which the relations of the subject in social reality can be rearticulated from the historical experience of women. (186)

While we need to note the clear and present dangers in the list of "nots," taking on what de Lauretis describes as "the subtle, shifting, duplicitous terms" (186) of contradiction can provide a way out of the labyrinth. An examination of the underlying truths of ancient patterns clearly does accord with the theoretical and self-analyzing practice that emphasizes process and experience in an attempt to understand embodied female life and feminine values.

## Chapter Two

### Narcissus and Echo

The myth of Narcissus is characterized by its haunting images of vision, beauty and passionate love. In complex and subtle ways, it intertwines the ramifications of the inequalities of power with gendered social roles, intellectual inquiry and spiritual values. Since in this myth, Echo also figures "loudly," an analysis of her situation prepares for the related concerns of voice and hearing that are crucial in an interpretation of Psyche's story. The examination of a myth in which the protagonist is male and both the spectator-owner and object-projection of his own reflection/obsession, dramatizes the problems at hand because all are so closely tied to women's social status and with what has been called the feminine in Western tradition.

These problems are male and masculine issues of identity, power and anxiety which, as they are played out and as they have been construed, are detrimental to women and to what is labelled the feminine. In addition, the Western intellectual tradition has made use of both the positive and negative aspects of this myth to mask a specifically male anxiety, and twentieth-century psychoanalysis from its Freudian beginnings has codified the myth in such a way as to reenforce male attitudes in modern culture.

Narcissus and Vision

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is the source for the story of Narcissus.<sup>1</sup> The narrative begins with violence in the ravishing of Liriope by Cephisus, the river-god; and it also begins in blindness, with the blind see-er, who is consulted by Liriope about whether her "most beautiful" Narcissus will have long life. Tiresias's response, "If he does not get to know himself," introduces the complicating factor of identity and self-knowledge. Because of his beauty, Narcissus is loved by many but "(there was in his delicate beauty so stiff a pride) / no men, no girls affected him." Echo, "still a body, not a voice," falls in love with Narcissus, but he rejects her: "Hands off, do not embrace me./ I would die before I would offer myself to you." As a result, she grows thin, wastes, shrivels until "only... her voice remained; her bones they say, took on the appearance of stone."

Narcissus also rebuffs young men, and one youth so "disdained raised his hands up towards the ether / and said, 'so may he too love, and so may he not gain / what he has loved'." The young man's prayer is granted by Nemesis. Narcissus sees himself in a pool, "a beautiful reflection" and "loved a hope without a body"; "He did not know what he was seeing, but he was on fire for what he saw." Authorially the poem warns: "What you are looking at is a shadow, a reflected image./ It has nothing of its own." Understanding



the image as his own reflection, as himself, Narcissus wishes "that I were able to withdraw from my body." He longs for escape from embodied life because he knows that only in transcending the physical will he be able to achieve his desire to join with his reflection. He, like Echo, pines and wastes, but his body metamorphoses magically--is totally changed--into a flower, the narcissus.

The myth sets forth a clear moral about the Western, Eurocentric intellectual tradition. Narcissus vividly enacts the kind of scientific observational stance that Keller critiques. Narcissus falls in love with the projection of himself, his own and male/masculine dichotomized version of culture (history, philosophy, religion, etc.).<sup>2</sup> Narcissus sees a projection of himself on the surface of a pool--his image on nature--a nature that he does not see, and in which he does not therefore include himself. Thus, the image he adores excludes context and is *partial*. His projected "reality" is selective, exclusive and prohibitive: he selects his own youthful male image, excludes nature and the world as context and prohibits any relationship that could interfere with self-love.

If Narcissus can be read as a representation of Man-as-male/masculine and sight, then Echo can equally represent Woman-as-female/feminine and hearing. Echo can express herself only through a partial repetition of what is said to her: in this case, the last part of Narcissus's speech.

Echo's plight is a punishment by Juno/Hera. Echo distracted the goddess from seeing her husband Jove/Zeus's marital infidelities with the nymphs. The female figures are presented as divided and set against one another over an issue of sight, and female authority is portrayed as problematic and vicious. Further, marriage is depicted as the province and protection of a spiteful goddess who punishes Echo by depriving her of the means for the direct expression of her own will.

As embodied female and as part of the named feminine, Echo is already unable to speak her own reality or her Self; she is forbidden to "touch" Narcissus. He cannot "hear" her. Significantly, the definition of touch allies it with hearing: touch is derived from "*toccare*, to strike," as in "To strike the strings, keys, etc. (of a musical instrument) so as to make it sound." The term has a specifically sexual meaning as well: "To have sexual contact with." These multiple meanings of "touch" suggest that Echo's presence in Narcissus's tale accounts for some "crucial absences"--even if her story is but a minor theme. Echo is as (sexually) unfulfilled as Narcissus, she pines to a stone-like bone. An early, if sad, by-product of Narcissus's self-obsession is that Echo's fate, like her being, is of no concern to Narcissus. As Amy Lawrence explains: "even when he is alone (watched by Echo) speech is the one thing that could break his absorption in the image, language the medium that could

explain the image's status as reflection" (1).

Not only is Narcissus lost in image reflection but Echo is lost in "acoustic reflection" (2). Lawrence describes Echo as a representation of "woman's voice"; she represents a woman's physical ability to make a sound, a woman's relationship to sound or verbal discourse and a female point of view. The separation of voice-as-echo from the embodied female comes about because Echo cannot "touch" or affect Narcissus, because female life and feminine values--as biologically, culturally and socially reproductive and generative--are disregarded, unheard.

Disembodied, disconnected sound, the Word is all that remains of Echo, and even that is not her own. She may respond only with part of what Narcissus says: "the one thing not forbidden / Is to make answers," but these answers are mere and partial repetitions of what she has last heard. She does not even have access to the history--to the words--that have come before what she repeats. As an image of the plight of woman's place in the Western intellectual tradition, Echo reverberates with painful truth. Like the surface image Narcissus sees in the pool, she speaks an incomplete and superficial reality, unable to create her own self-expressive language. Ignored by Narcissus, left as intellectually and creatively infertile as her love leaves her unfulfilled, Echo may only "bear witness." She is destroyed--almost accidentally--by ignorance.

The Nature of Reflection

In this saddest of tales, both Echo and Narcissus are lost in a dichotomized world of oppositions, but like a stone dropped in that pool, the story has rippled forward through time to present a provocative image, warning us of what is lost in this construction of disconnection and this failure in expression of identity. If my first and cursory explanation of the myth suits the long range goals of my project, a closer examination of its central imagery reveals the complexity inborn there. An investigation of this imagery and its metaphors leads to a review of some of the ways in which the tale has been interpreted. These views provide other issues and problems central to any philosophy of female being.

Poolside, Narcissus is rooted in the contemplation of his own beauty; he is locked into the visual and into visual imagery as the means of expressing self-identity. By exploiting the advantage of the outsider, by watching him watch himself (from Echo's distance), we see that more than sight is necessary for perception. Narcissus discounts, does not see, the pool that mirrors and reflects his image. Narcissus does not register the pool as context, as a very real element in the natural world. As a universal symbol, water represents generative nature, the life source, the mother, and gives "birth to 'spirit', supposedly a male principle" (Walker *Encyclopedia* 1066).

His mother is named Liriope: a water grass that grows around shallow pools, a "grass-leaved" herb described as having "a superior ovary" (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*). In the notes to his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, D.E. Hill states that it means "lily-like" and that the lily is botanically related to the Narcissus; Barbara G. Walker discloses that the lily represented Astarte, Hera/Juno, Venus/Aphrodite and the Virgin aspect of the triple goddess (*Encyclopedia* 542-43). By the myth's representation, however, the pool is specifically named as Narcissus's paternal source; Cephisus is a river god. In this way, the pool is a symbol representing his parents (especially his father) and implies his own personal past, his social, cultural and family history. In this instance, it is his conception in rape and its effects on perception that should not be overlooked. David C. McClelland uses this aspect of the Narcissus myth to illustrate the issues of power and violence in what he refers to as the Icarus complex.

Drawing on the writing of Octavio Paz, McClelland describes the alienation and isolation experienced by the sons born of the rape of Mexican women by Spanish conquerors. The violence inherent in rape results in a profound, painful and traumatic estrangement for the son: from identification with his father and from a mature and affective sexual identity. Both are doubly difficult because

of an understandable emotional identification with the mother's trauma. A third consequence of rape is illustrated by the cultural anthropologist Wenda R. Trevathan. In *Human Bonding*, she writes of how important the father's loving support is to the mother's optimum bonding with her infant. Because Narcissus is the result of rape, the primary--primal--bond of affective connection is disrupted.

Not only does Narcissus not recognize the pool as an element of nature in and of itself or of his own familial history but he also does not know that the pool surface functions as a mirror. A mirror is both "a polished surface which reflects images of objects" and a process: "to reflect in the manner of a mirror." The word "mirror" comes from the latin *mirari* meaning "to wonder at." On the one hand, Narcissus's beautiful image in the pool is a mirror reflection, a product of the mirroring process, the object of his sight and love, "a hope without a body." On the other hand, mirroring is a "wonderful" process, a by-product of the pool's character, a process also called reflection.

Reflection by its dictionary definition encompasses process and product, is both means and ends: "The action of a mirror or other polished surface in exhibiting or reproducing the image of an object; the fact or phenomenon" but also "An image or counterpart thus produced." At the same time, however, reflection is also defined as a process and product of thinking: "The action of turning (back) or

fixing the thoughts on some subject" and a "meditation, deep or serious consideration." Philosophically, it is the "mode, operation or faculty by which the mind has knowledge of itself and its operations, or by which it deals with the ideas received from sensation or perception." What is left out of Narcissus's perception is the pool as nature, parent, personal history and the process of reflection. His thought, a reproductive procedure, reflects the world through his own nature. That Narcissus sees only his own image guarantees a partial understanding of reality.

His is an over-developed and self-absorbed emphasis on the end product, the image. Narcissus cannot see through his image to the process of his own desiring or to the means, the pool behind it. This ensures that he is unable to embrace--to love--or to understand either his image-as-repetition or the process in context, the pool he does not see. His blindness to the pool (the mirror, the continuum, the middle, the reflective process, his own reflective thought) on which and by which his desire has been created, means that there can be no resolution, no consummation; this mental action is unproductive, ungenerative. And this blindness, the need for more sight, carries its own judgment. The last of the dictionary definitions given for reflection is of blame, censure and reproof: "An imputation; a fact or procedure casting an imputation or discredit on one."

Romantic Love

The passion for his own image becomes the unquenchable, internal fire that destroys Narcissus: "He did not know what he was seeing, but he was on fire at what he saw." In *Love's Fatal Glance*, Lance K. Donaldson-Evans discusses the role of eye imagery and traces the "aggressive eye topos" back to Ovid and the philosophy of Plato. Not only does the sight of the beloved itself generate love but the beloved's glance engenders and nurtures love: "Briefly, the efflux theory of vision represents the eye not as a mere receiver or reflector of light rays, but as possessing its own internal illumination in the form of fire" (12).

The mix of water, fire and voice metaphors with eyesight and passionate love is evident in the quotation from Plato that Donaldson-Evans uses to illustrate the effects of this gaze: a "'flood of passion' pours in upon the lover," is partly absorbed and "as a breath of wind or an echo" returns to its origin and "re-enters the eyes of the fair beloved." In the myth, then, Narcissus's "fiery" eye beam is reflected back to consume him in fire. Plato might well be writing of Narcissus when he observes: "So he loves, yet knows not what he loves... not realizing that his lover is as it were a mirror in which he beholds himself" (17). As Donaldson-Evans observes, other ideas associated with these metaphors include the belief that love is "a kind of illness which can be transmitted by the effluences from



the eyes" and that "the eyes shoot arrows... project fiery beams which burn the soul and kindle love's flame" (18,21). Thus the fire imagery and the "primary role given to the eyes in the experience of falling in love is well established in the pre-Christian era of Greek literature" (21).

### Repetition and Aesthetics

While Plato has supplied a theory for what happens to Narcissus, for the process of his own immolation, it is not one that Narcissus recognizes. His blindness to process and failure to include it into his reasoning results in his falling prey to an image of his own beauty. This creates in him a constant tension, a desire that is unattainable, unembraceable. The attainment of an unreal desire--an image--may be realized (made real) only in transcendence, by rising above and out of the physical body into the imagination. Narcissus's body is consumed by a desire which blinds him, a "hidden fire," and is changed magically into another form, a flower.

Playfully accurate and misleading, Tiresias's augury "If he does not get to know himself" has been fulfilled. Narcissus is immortal--a figure passed down the generations as mythic--precisely because he does not "know" himself. He is immortal as story and lives forever because he does not understand. As a morality tale of what not to love, he

endures. In the same vein, he immortalizes transcendence and the escape from the physical body and any sense perception beyond a limited "vision" of "beauty." As the (male) subject-spectator in a magic and delicious projection,<sup>3</sup> he loves himself as the (male) object-surveyed and suppresses any knowledge labelled the other: nature, affective relationship or the maternal.

By a magical species change into a flower, he becomes a vision of beauty and gains the illusion of endless life perpetuated in cultural memory. Present as subject and shadow self--thus representing both sides of the gaze--Narcissus presents a case of repeating sites, a repetition of sights, and, consequently, he represents a perpetual and sexualized tension. His desire is to embrace a projection of himself, to embrace a reproduction as an end which stands for the origin(al). Sanctioned as action, as a kind of methodology peculiar to this intellectual tradition, Narcissus is the image of masculinist desire: circular, closed, origin-as-end.

Whereas a process that is repetitive is viewed as having no little or no aesthetic value, repetition in the form of repeated image--an object--does. Thus, repetition has been employed to distinguish art from craft and thereby to establish a hierarchy of aesthetic values. In an essay which explores this double standard in aesthetic criticism, Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman quote Lucy Lippard.

Although Lippard is discussing the work of a particular woman artist, the distinctions she makes about repetition as process have a general validity.

Repetition ... refers not to form but to process, that is to the repetition of single unit materials which finally make up a unified, single form after being subjected to the process of repeatedly unravelling, then to the process of repeatedly binding or to the process of nailing into wood or to the process of repeatedly sticking bricks in cement or to the process of repeatedly gouging out tracks in plywood. (92)

Barry and Flitterman view the negative attitude toward repetition-as-process as a kind of repression. In this instance, what is repressed, overlooked and disregarded is the complexity and work involved in women's traditional handiwork. In the realm of women's art production, this negative view results in dismissal; women's art, especially the traditional art forms, is relegated to the lesser domain of craft. The traditional art forms of weaving, quilting and pottery necessarily rely on repetitive processes and the discrepancy in assigned aesthetic value epitomizes the devaluation of process.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to the idea of repetition as process, repetition as form reifies stillness. However tension-filled, Narcissus's world remains truly stationary, solipsistic and self-referential. There is no breath (no life) to disturb his own reflection as he sees it on the surface of the pool. The primary focus of his reflection is his head--doubly read as intellect and phallus. As image, his head represents a concern for things of the mind, an

intellectual knowledge on top of, surmounting, a male body, disconnected both from nature and from the female. This disconnection represents a purification of understanding by removing--disengaging--subject from context. Scientific understanding is represented as "pure" by just such a removal of context.

The Mother-Child Monad

In *New Essays on Narcissism*, Bela Grunberger illustrates the ways in which repeating states are turned into psychoanalytic theory. Describing his own approach as "bioanalytic," he traces "narcissistic phenomena back to hypothetical *prenatal coenesthesia*, to a factor which is primarily biological, to an unconscious and archaic lived experience," which he then "extends to the social, the intellectual, the cultural and the mystical" (1,2). Stressing prenatal nature and biology as sources of narcissism, he records the positive, even spiritual feelings that are part of "the matrix" of this state:

serenity, the feeling of happiness, the feeling of sovereignty (all of these may of course be distorted and can take either a positive or negative form), completeness, omnipotence, a sense of one's own worth, an exultant expansionism, feelings of absolute freedom, independence and autonomy, feelings of vulnerability, eternity and immortality. (2)

In the prenatal narcissistic state as he describes it, "[t]he fetus experiences no conflict and no desires; its host takes care of its metabolism, and it exists in a state

of perfect completeness" (16).

Although Grunberger sees this "unorganized" prenatal experience as "integrated into the ego" and "*interpreted*" (2), and although he stresses that it is unremembered in the usual sense, he argues that the prenatal experience has a masculine cast: "the phallus is emblematic of all the attributes of prenatal coenesthesia, and its image--a primal fantasy--is present within the psyche from, and probably before birth" (16). In his interpretation, then, this matrix of feelings before birth is irrevocably and psychically gendered male.

Following birth, the infant must cope psychologically with the memory of difficult physical birth as well as the loss of this wonderful prenatal psychic condition. Grunberger draws in the Oedipal complex and the theory of castration as explanation for this loss: "when a child is born it experiences a huge trauma, to which it responds with an aggressivity of cataclysmic intensity. That aggressivity is the object of immediate repression (primal repression)." Describing birth as "a castration of the narcissism represented by the phallic image," he goes on to state that it occurs "because of the loss of prenatal coenesthesia, and because birth represents the moment of transition from that loss to the other primal fantasy, which consists of attributing narcissism, and therefore the phallus, to the adult (the father)." This "stimulates the birth of a

specific urge to recover the phallus." Continuing with his argument, Grunberger agrees with Freud and posits that "this prototypical castration provokes an enormously aggressive response, and that this aggression might be the *primal source of a future and equally powerful sense of guilt*" (17-18). According to Grunberger, the difference between the pre- and postnatal infant is that in the prenatal state the infant has access to a greater and different energy reserve (2).

Continuing with a description of the post-birth monad, Grunberg observes that mother/caretaker and child in a "non-material womb" provided by the mother/caretaker, attempt to reproduce the well-being of the prenatal world and to "facilitate the transition from one existential system to another" (3). The mother-child monad is "a binary unit... in which the infant merges with the surface of the internal envelope," and which serves as a transitional subject between narcissistic projection and true object relations. In this post-birth, monadic relationship, "the one thing that the child asks of its mother is that she 'be with'... it in a certain way.... The pure narcissistic demand the monad is called upon to satisfy is not to be confused with the child's instinctual demands" (4). While the "instinctual demands" are necessarily the demands for bodily care that accompany infant life, the post-birth phase that Grunberger emphasizes is tied to gaze and "pure narcissistic"

reflection, and incorporates the father as the image of "narcissistic completeness and phallic energy (the penis)" (18,19).

Grunberger returns to the myth of Narcissus in order to explore further the ideal of purity as a psychological state outside of physical being and especially beyond sexual and physical love: "Narcissus is pure. We know that he rejects both hetero- and homosexual love and contents himself with worshipping the reflection of his face in the water." Grunberger notes that this forms "a double unit" and he continues with his hypothesis on the infant's internal psychological state: "the term monad gives an accurate description of a state surrounding something which, in its view, merges with it. That substance is its universe (cosmic narcissism), even though it does not *physically* merge with it" (92).

In a description of the disembodied nature of the post-birth monad, he tethers the absence of the maternal body to purity, vision and the experience of self-identity.

At the moment of birth, the mother does not exist as such, but her gaze (narcissistic confirmation) and her touch may act as a substitute for prenatal bliss and may therefore compensate for the basic existential trauma. From this point onwards the child's narcissistic existence will be supported by the monad, which has now been reformed (we know that a child which is being breastfed looks into its mother's eyes, not at her breast). (92)

Purity is thus attained in a progression away from embodied connection and embodied self: from a disappeared maternal

body, through the absence of touch/embrace to a sense of elevation away from an embodied understanding of reality (93).

This movement signals a sense of agency and mastery: "Dreams of flying or levitation are probably an expression of the same fantasy of disembodied purity and of a fantasy of omnipotence involving the phallic emblem... in the unconscious the phallus and penis are represented by the same emblem" (94). To Grunberger, the purity of narcissism is directly associated with aggressivity and male violence, and he extrapolates to speculate that it is associated with war: "At the moment a number of wars are in progress, and they have been caused by sanctity and purity" (97).

### The Death Wish

Narcissus and his reflected face are not only a vivid example of repetition, but as image and myth they have also been used in psychoanalytic theory as an explanation for masochism. In his discussion of Sigmund Freud's theories, Jeffery Berman discusses how repetition operates in masochism and how the desire to repeat unpleasant experiences functions as a kind of self-punishment. Berman combines Freud's theory of drives in human beings (the pleasure principle and the death drive) to explain the insecurity inherent in narcissism. First: "Freud reasons that depression is caused by the internalization of an



object originally loved but now hated because of its association with rejection or disappointment.... The cause of narcissistic injury then is the incorporation of a poisonous object.... Behind narcissists' self-love lies self-hate; beneath their grandiosity lies insecurity" (18). As a psychoanalytic term, narcissism is, paradoxically, a result of too little genuine self-love (26) and is linked to a failure of parenting such as maternal loss and cold or disapproving fathers (53). Using Berman's analysis, then, we can see that in Narcissus's story, rejection and disappointment lie with Cephisus, the rape of Liriope and a failure of affective connection with the father and perhaps with his mother; Narcissus was conceived in violence.

In an examination of the social construction of visual symbol in film theory, Noel Carroll comments that in the oedipal period, "the male child, putatively fearing castration by the father, leaves the quest for the mother and seeks to emulate the father in a process called introjection" (68). Carroll stresses that this introjection is not just a biological role that is assumed, but is, more importantly, a cultural position: "For Freudians, the introjection process of the oedipal stage is the means by which the culture reproduces itself" and "for Lacanians, the investiture of the child with its social roles, ideals, and values is also the point at which the child is said to enter language" (68).

In both theories, the introjection, the unconscious incorporation of characteristics, is by way of image, an imaginative and mental repetition of pattern. One enters language by copying the form of power, by being able to copy that form. Thus the Word belongs only to Narcissus, a son, and never, by definition, to Echo. While Echo does repeat, she is allowed only "to answer"; she will never access the power of self-expression in this paradigm. The patriarchal tradition repeats the male and masculine image alone; that image *is* Narcissus.

In his analysis of Freud's influence on Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, Richard Boothby ties Freud's writing on narcissism together with the development of the theory on the death wish. Highlighting the backward looking, negative and pain-filled nature of the Narcissus's experience, Boothby illuminates Freud's concern with the way in which unpleasant experiences are repeated and reenforces the destructive, death-oriented conclusion of his desire: "Alongside the homeostatic principle of pleasure there must exist a second basic principle, a destabilizing, disruptive force that tends not toward equilibrium and harmony but toward conflict and disintegration" (3).

Boothby comments on the strange and radical nature of this death-drive theory: "It amounts to saying that the true goal of living is dying and that the life course of all organisms must be regarded as only a circuitous route to

death" (3). He agrees with Freud and describes the problems inherent in repetition as necessarily involving "a tendency to reach into the more and more distant past," but suggests that it is "not repetition as such but only repetition of unpleasurable experiences" that led to the creation of a death-drive theory (80).

### Women and Narcissism

Returning now to Grunberger's analysis we can see how problematic for women is inclusion into any such knowledge system. Like Berman, Boothby and Carroll, Grunberger describes psychosexual development as taking place in a polarized mother-child bond with dualistic phases. For Grunberger, these are labelled the instinctual/Oedipal and the narcissistic. The monad consists of the infant and the envelope of the responsive mother's touch and gaze. She, the mother, is asexual, removed; she serves only as a landscape or envelope which predates object relations.

Grunberger extends his analysis to describe the Oedipal and narcissistic as corresponding to two visions of humanity: the patri-oedipal and the matri-narcissistic. He is roundly dismissive of "the latter view," the matri-narcissistic, arguing that those who adopt it "form phratries, narcissistically identify with each other in a play of mirror reflections, and cluster around archaic mother figures which protect them by warding off, fighting

and disavowing the father and his entire world" (177). Not surprisingly, he goes on to emphasize the importance of male descendants, seeing in matrilineality only a disguised patriarchy. Underscoring the legal concept of marriage as way of legitimating offspring, he describes the line of descent as "a continuous sequence of male individuals; the founder of the line is therefore the father" (178).

Grunberger's interpretation of incest is equally bound up with this concern for legitimacy and lineage, and as a result women's affective connections are dismissed as totally as the myth obliterates Liriope and to the same extent that Narcissus ignores Echo. To Grunberger, incest "represents a search for narcissistic fulfilment by returning directly to the mother's womb (incestuous coitus)." To avoid incest, then, and if "the line of descent is to be perpetuated, it must be constantly crossed or cut by the introduction of a mother from the outside (exogamy)." Exogamy constrains women into new family groups; daughters are compelled out of their kinship communities. For the son, staying in the family (with the mother) has its own difficulties and dangers: "the return to the mother brings an impasse because coitus with the mother means the death and obliteration of the father." Furthermore, Grunberger argues: "In so far as the prohibition of incest takes a socialized form which gives rise to rites and taboos, we can conclude it has more to do with the breaking of the line

than with the prohibition of an individual sin" (179-80). Thereby and conveniently, incest is regarded as solely a mother-son taboo; whatever the father does to his daughters does not in any way break the line of descent and so, presumably, is not taboo. To the same effect, such an interpretation of incest makes an on-going life-long affective connection between mother and son problematic.

Grunberger reiterates the view that psychosexual maturation demands the oedipal transition, the break from the mother. Such a view disregards all the ruptures of connection and responsibility experienced by the mother and ignores any ramifications this theory has for women's self and being. Furthermore, he disputes the value of what he has defined as the matri-narcissistic, the "other" representation. To his way of thinking, the matri-narcissistic is a trend that threatens patriarchy and will destroy the "life and existence (I am speaking of the life of the drives and of the senses)--of essential difference between objects, structures, ideas, and individual histories." What Grunberger does accept is the pain inherent in this (perceived) transition: "Even within psychoanalysis itself, man is striving to lay down the burden of his conflicts and his primal narcissistic wound" (181). Yet even while he stresses the importance of the oedipal transition (particularly for its setting up of "essential difference"), he focuses on the burden of such a view only for "man."

In discussing Freud's theories of development, Elizabeth Young Bruel explains how even this burden, this "narcissistic wound" is transferred and used to explain heterosexual attraction: "The boy's overvaluation of the penis is narcissistic: to give up his certainty that all people have penises--to experience 'castration threat'--is to experience the limits of self-love" (29). Used in Freudian theory to explain the transfer of the adolescent male's affection to "the girls they love," narcissism, which is recognized as an overvaluation of self, is, at the same time encoded as a cultural norm.

In an examination of vision and difference in her book of the same name, Griselda Pollack explains the defenses against this traumatic discovery occasioned in the male child. Disavowal and fetishism are linked to anxiety and are acknowledged, but only by displacement to another object. As she sees it, this ultimate "form of fetishism, which involves not just displacement but fetishistic conversion, also takes the form of reshaping the whole of the female form into a fetish, a substitute for what appears to be lacking on the maternal body, the phallus" (139). She lists these fetishes, these displaced lost parts, as they appear in the male vision of woman: women's fragmented bodies, schematized faces, blank looks (140).<sup>5</sup> These fetishes and fragmentations are a constant reminder of what is obviated, hidden but not forgotten (140).

There is a connection between the origin of the fetish and the role of beauty in women's lives. John Berger comments on the equation between the mirror and the cultural perception of women's vanity. He describes the role of the mirror in art and the importance of the pleasure which is involved in this gaze.

The mirror was often used as a symbol of the vanity of woman.... You painted a naked woman because you enjoyed looking at her, you put a mirror in her hand and you called the painting vanity, thus morally condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure. (51)

Female nakedness masked as narcissism is revealed as a way to disguise and transfer anxiety about the phallus and masculinity.

Sensitive to the particular burden this culturally entrenched male gaze represents for women, Teresa de Lauretis explores the way this matrix of ideas surrounding woman as a specular, visual image and fetish relates to the prohibition of incest, and she includes the theories of Levi-Strauss:

[T]he "historical" event instituting culture and found in all human societies, requires that woman be possessed and exchanged among men to ensure the social order.... One then understands that women are not simply objects exchanged by and among men but also messages which circulate among *individuals* and groups, ensuring social communications. (18-19)

In this way, woman becomes a sign system as well as a displaced narrative object (fetish); woman exists in the realm of symbols, a sign that means something more, however extrapolated from the real (23).

In his classic essay *On Narcissism*, Sigmund Freud inscribes self-centered narcissism as a neurosis specific to "normal" women:

Women, especially if they grow up with good looks, develop a certain self-contentment which compensates them for the social restrictions that are imposed upon them in their choice of love object. Strictly speaking, it is only themselves that such women can love with an intensity comparable to that of a man's love for them. (192)

This he directly ties to his theory of penis envy in women, to what he calls women's "narcissistic wound" and to what he sees as their inability to overcome this wound and obtain "object love." One way involves seeing the child which they bear as "a part of their own body confronts them like an extraneous object, to which, starting from their narcissism, they can then give complete object-love." Another way exists for those women "who do not have to wait for a child in order to take the step in development from (secondary) narcissism to object-love."

Before puberty they feel masculine and develop some way along masculine lines; after this trend has been cut short on their reaching female maturity, they still retain the capacity of longing for a masculine ideal - an ideal which is in fact a survival of the boyish nature that they themselves once possessed. (193-94)

In her discussion of this essay, Elizabeth Young-Bruel not only notes the way that Freud endorses the masculine as human ideal, but recognises how Freud sees loving as active and thereby, a masculine trait, while defining narcissistic desire or being loved as passive and therefore feminine.

Young-Bruel relates this attitude specifically to



Freud's own nineteenth-century cultural context: "Given this interplay of anatomical and social factors, boys and girls end up complementing each other in the manner of the Beauty and the self-sacrificing Beast characters so common in nineteenth-century novels" (30). The creation of gender stereotypes reenforces the roles that were so important then and that continue to linger into the twentieth century, roles which imply that the only relationship possible is heterosexual and wherein the girl/wife replaces the mother in the son's life. Young-Bruel goes on to record that even Freud knew that such stereotypes were limited and that sons can "not only love their mothers but identify with them" (31). That Narcissus as flower, is "grass-leaved" and shares with Liriope as grass, "small whitish or blue or violet flowers" suggests that possibility vividly.

### Echo and Voice

In this survey of the issues surrounding narcissism and the theoretical uses made of the myth, I have strayed rather far from the story itself. Let me now return and focus more closely on Echo. As noted, Echo is witness to Narcissus's dilemma, a witness who is without a voice for her own desire. She does not have a language with which to voice an authentic self and life-experience. Returning to Amy Lawrence's examination of the role played by women's speech in contemporary Hollywood cinema, we can now elaborate on

the crucial role of speech to meaning in Narcissus's myth:

The story of Echo and Narcissus is a cautionary tale warning against what is conceived of as the unnatural and dangerous separation of sound and image, woman and man, hearing and seeing.... Both Echo and Narcissus are ravished by perception, subjected to obstacles of expression or comprehension and ultimately to die from the missed connections. (2)

This multiple relationship of "woman's voice" to sound, discourse and authorial point of view prompts Kaja Silverman to suggest the term "acoustic mirror" as a way of indicating a combined image of sound and sight for the female voice.

Echo fades away to exist only as a repeating voice. The first reason Ovid's recounting gives for this decline is that after Narcissus rejects her Echo retreats to nature: "Spurned, she hid in the woods and, in her shame, covered her face / with foliage and lived henceforth in lonely caves." Echo--as a figure representing woman--is hidden by a shame that is not rightfully hers. As the outcome of the tale implies, however, the shame belongs to Narcissus because he loves his own image too much.

The second reason Ovid provides for Echo's loss of embodiment is that her love for Narcissus grows with his rejection; she values him too much: "and yet her love clung to her and grew with the pain of rejection." What is unsaid but implied is that she loves herself too little. Echo's failure to care for herself parallels Narcissus's over-loving self-regard. Her misplaced caring leads to waste--the wasting of her own life's blood: "her cares kept her awake

and made her body pitiably thin, her skin wasted and shrivelled up and all her body's / moisture went off into the air." Echo cannot speak--may not speak--for herself, and this leaves her a hard, stony "skeleton" of her former self, devoid of feeling: "only her voice and bones were left: her voice remained; her bones, they say, took on the appearance of stone." The outcome of the story for Echo is underscored by her loneliness out in the natural world where she remains unbodied and disconnected: "Since then she has hidden in the woods and is never seen on the mountains, she is heard by all: but it is only sound that lives in her." And, as I noted earlier, even the language is not her own.

In her discussion of feminist art criticism theory, Joanna Frueh describes a painting of such an Echo-like female figure in nature. Her description of Gustave Courbet's "The Source" presents an Echo voiceless but still fleshed: "A fleshy woman sits by a stream. One hand holds a branch, seems almost molded to it, as if she herself were part of the tree; and her contours, from the buttocks up are eaten by shadows, so that nature absorbs her flesh, is actually one with it." She goes on to point out that "Woman and nature literally mirror one another for the material of the female body is the material world" (157). The significance of Courbet's painting lies not only in the equation of woman with nature and fecundity but also in the lack of consciousness signified in the association. The

image presents an incomplete female being.

Arguing for a feminist art criticism that is "alive," Frueh calls for a rejection of the "phallic tongue" and for the exercise of an intelligence integral with female physical being. Her argument suggests that the "path to freedom" exists in a body ownership: "Once a woman owns her body she will speak a different language. When the organ in her mouth belongs to her, we will know that all tongues, all words are flesh" (160). Writing also about art criticism, Arlene Raven presents this embodied thinking as a way of transforming thinking "to a model of rhythms and relationships upon which a society can be built" (238).

As myth, Narcissus demonstrates and isolates two solitudes of gendered life in an intellectual and social patriarchal system. Since it is not possible to restore to Echo her own embodied experience, to an independent relationship to language and the authority of her own desire, then in order to break these ancient dichotomies--masculine/feminine, culture/nature, self/other, seer/site, speaker/spoken--into which male and female life experience have been placed, it is necessary to turn away from Narcissus to another myth.

### Chapter Three

#### Introducing Psyche, Attending Aphrodite

The myth of Psyche and Eros, in its conflicts over beauty and power, depicts the central concerns in the long history of Western attitudes to sight and the gendered power relations that co-exist with these attitudes. In the way the Psyche myth begins, there is a concern with vision and beauty, with perception and image, that is similar to that found with the Narcissus myth, but the questions change with the change of gender. In the Psyche myth, it becomes appropriate to ask: whose vision? whose beauty? whose perception? and whose image?

Like the Narcissus tale, the story of Psyche exists within a larger work entitled *Metamorphoses*, also known as *The Golden Ass*.<sup>1</sup> Written by Lucius Apuleius, a second-century Platonic philosopher from Madauros in North Africa, it recounts the Psyche and Eros story as one told by an old woman to a young bride who has been kidnapped by bandits; both women are subsequently killed, but because the tale was overheard by a man who has been magically changed into an ass, it continues to exist as part of the story of his adventures.

In the Introduction to his translation of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, J. Arthur Hanson indicates some of the conflicting viewpoints of critical opinion: "It can be, and has been, read as Platonic allegory, psychic autobiography,

Bildungsroman, and literary parody" (xi,xii).<sup>2</sup> Stressing the care and complexity of the work, Hanson also warns that irony is a central feature. In this regard, the fact that the haunting tale of Psyche and Eros exists within a series of Milesian or pornographic stories that are told by a man who has been changed into an ass (and later back again) and who then culminates his adventures in an initiation into the rites of the goddess, Isis, serves as a lengthy caution to any reader who might take the events in the tale at face value.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Significance of Beauty

The story of Psyche begins with the narrator telling us that Psyche is beloved in her father's kingdom because of her "so dazzling and glorious" beauty, because others believe her--see and judge her--as beautiful: "Many citizens, as well as multitudes of visitors... were dumbfounded in their wonderment at her unapproachable loveliness... and would... venerate her with pious prayers as if she were the very goddess [Aphrodite] herself" (237).<sup>4</sup> Psyche's beauty causes Aphrodite to be jealous and angry because she sees how Psyche's beauty has estranged her own devotees; while it is not overtly stated, Apuleius also implies that Eros fell in love at his first sight of Psyche's beauty (241,295). As for Psyche, "She hated in herself that beauty of hers which the world found so

pleasing" (245). In addition, she is prohibited from seeing Eros, her lover/husband who visits her, his bride, only at night (259). His beauty is not for her eyes.

Issues of whose sight and whose visions are very much part of contemporary explorations of gender and authority, gender and artistic expression, in the visual arts. In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger describes what is, in fact, a crucial part of Psyche's dilemma, a dilemma inherent in woman's situation within the Western patriarchal tradition:

To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space into the keeping of men.... But this has been at the cost of a woman's self being split in two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself.... And so she comes to consider the *surveyor* and the *surveyed* within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman. (46)

As Psyche might attest, even having beauty does not preclude the exaction of such a price and, in fact, can simply raise it.

Berger's description of the surveyor and surveyed as the two constituent elements within a woman recalls for us the spectre of how narcissism has been employed to denigrate women. What is lost in Berger's discussion of the two elements is the third: her lack of power. In an absence of power lies the real fear that any judgment about narcissism in women obscures. The closest analogy to woman's place as visual object is as that of quarry. The hunter requires vision; the hunted relies on camouflaged. In this way, a

concern for appearance represents security and self-preservation rather than vanity. Psyche is singled out from her community and then separated from all she has known and loved. In both instances she is isolated and alone and faces real danger and real violence.

Berger suggests several other elements that affect the power arrangements in this dichotomized beauty equation. There are three which concern Psyche. The first is that women conventionally are "seen and judged as sights" by men; they are beautiful or not, simply according to the penchant of a male viewer (47). What is beauty exists outside the control of the woman judged as having it. Because it is an arbitrary designation, "beauty" is not a source of power to those who "have" it. Power lies only in the bestowal; power belongs to those who have labelled Psyche beautiful.

Second, as a sight and site, beauty as woman is given the "prize" of being "owned" by the (male) judge and thence, sexually available to the judge (52). The label, "beauty" magnifies the woman's physical appearance--over which she has no control--to mask the real powerlessness. Psyche is named beautiful in a kingdom, the quintessential patriarchal society. As her father's daughter, Psyche is his to "sacrifice," to do with as he pleased; then, when Eros singles out her "beauty," he becomes her "owner."

Third, "Women are there to feed an appetite, not to have any of their own" (55); sexual desire is active for



men, and therefore, masculine, but, in a peculiar twist of thought, desire is perceived as passive in the feminine, and absent for women. Women do not desire. Psyche, whom conventional slang would designate as a "looker," may not look at Love.

Berger sums up the consequences of this kind of relationship and its implications for contemporary women, but such consequences apply equally to the mythic Psyche: "This unequal relationship is so deeply embedded in our culture that it still structures the consciousness of many women. They do to themselves what many men do to them. They survey, like men, their own femininity" (63). Thus, throughout time, vision, beauty and woman's sense of self and place in society are clearly and crucially linked. In *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf documents more fully the price that modern women pay because of this situation. She also highlights the major import of this image: "The beauty myth is always actually prescribing behaviour and not appearance" (15). The response to Psyche's beauty emphasizes this truth. Her beauty fails to bring her a husband; the only role available to her, the prescribed behaviour, is that of marriage, and perversely, this is made impossible by the very declaration of her beauty.

While Psyche's story introduces the issues surrounding beauty, hers is also a narrative that presents the silence of women and the relationship of silence to lack of power.

The first of the silenced women in the myth is the queen whose role in the narrative is, of course, mother (237). As mother, she listens and grieves (247). Psyche, too, is silent, and in her silence, powerless. Her beauty, the sacrifice and her ensuing marriage to Eros are not of her doing or choosing. She is both passive and alone, unable to connect to, or exert influence on, those around her:

"Psyche, for all her manifest beauty reaped no profit from her charms. Everyone gazed at her, but no one, neither king nor prince nor even commoner, desired to marry her and came to seek her hand" (245). She is entirely obedient to her father, the king, to the priest and, in the beginning of their relationship, she transfers this obedience to her husband, Eros.

While she does lament her situation and recognizes its source in her being called "a new [Aphrodite]" (249), she in no way avoids her fate or attempts to argue against it: "the maiden fell silent... abandoned... frightened, trembling and weeping at the very top of the cliff" (251). Likewise, she is "carried" to a paradise. There, she continues obedient, even "to the suggestions of the disembodied voice" and finally, "promised to behave as her husband wished" (257,259).

### Marriage as Betrayal

Psyche's story commences with betrayal and violence

encoded as marriage and sacrifice. Erich Neumann sees "the basic mythological situation," the "ancient, primordial motif," in terms of "marriage as the marriage of death." Arguing that "every marriage is a rape of Kore," he goes on to state: "The character of rape that the event assumes for womanhood expresses the projection--typical of the matriarchal phase--of the hostile element on the man." Whereas for the woman patriarchal marriage is separation of "the primordial relation of identity between daughter and mother" and "a mystery of death," for the man "marriage... is primarily an abduction, an acquisition--a rape" (61-63).

Neumann recounts the metaphor used to imply female youth and beauty and, in doing so, highlights the sexual implications of such a symbolism.

It is no accident that the central symbol of maidenhood is the flower, which delights man with its natural beauty, and it is extremely significant that for the consummation of marriage, the destruction of virginity, should be known as "deflowering." (63)

As he continues, his diction suggests that female loss of self is co-incident with femininity, sexual experience and real life: "For the feminine, the act of defloration represents a truly mysterious bond between end and beginning, between ceasing to be and entering upon real life" (63-64). What Neumann's language reflects is the complex of relationships in patriarchy that are used to justify female loss of agency, will and desire. Entry into marriage equates "beginning" and "real life" with "ceasing

to be."

Thus what Neumann refers to as the necessary prelude to real life may more accurately be envisioned as a betrayal of its daughters by a patriarchal society. In their silences, Psyche and her mother represent the sacrifices that patriarchal continuation of family requires from women. As sign and exchange between the patriarchal kingdom and its gods, Psyche's situation makes real what is hidden, makes real the lost daughters who are obscured in the patriarchal romance. She represents the specular image and fetish described by De Lauretis, the betrayal and sacrifice of the daughter within the patriarchal exchange of power and communication between men that is coded in the history of marriage.

This sacrifice/betrothal/betrayal is carried out by Psyche's father, the king, on the advice of the priest, the oracle of Apollo. Carried out because Psyche is worshipped for her unsurpassed beauty, because others see her as beautiful, this first betrayal carries with it the attendant losses of family, community, choice and self-esteem. This is the rape; this is the second birth, the twice-born, "born again" entrance into culture that is the lot of patriarchal daughters.

Significantly, the kind of betrayal Psyche experiences is perpetuated in current interpretations of the myth. Robert A. Johnson, for example, writes of a sense of pain

and abandonment that is the "Psyche nature":

there is a Psyche in every woman, and it is intensely lonely. Every woman is, in part, a king's daughter - too lovely, too perfect, too deep for the ordinary world.... It is terribly painful. Women are often excruciatingly aware of this situation without knowing its origin, which is the Psyche nature, and there is nothing that can be done about it. That part will remain untouched, unrelated, unmarried most of one's life. (10-11)

Complex equations of pain, inevitability, perfection and identity with a "nothing can be done about it" attitude makes Psyche's story reducible to woman's destiny rather than cultural or social construct. Psyche is made responsible for her own alienation; she is made inherently responsible for her own violation because it is her "nature."

Even more importantly, Johnson describes Psyche's nature as being solely relational, passive and dependent on the marriage (love) relationship. Introducing the "sacrificial element" of a wedding, he also brings in the goddess, Aphrodite, to suggest that all is not well in such a dependency: "Aphrodite does not like maidens to die at the hands of men. It is not her nature to be subject to a man" (13). This confirms a view of women's nature as passive even as he follows with a comment on the paradox inherent in this view of weddings and of the goddess.

It is Aphrodite who condemns Psyche to death but who is also the matchmaker who brings about weddings in the first place. Yet Aphrodite also weeps and rages at the wedding for the possible loss of the bride's freedom and individuality, for the loss of her virginity. The forward push of evolution toward

marriage is accompanied by a repressive tug of longing for the autonomy and freedom of things as they were before. (14)

For Psyche, the rape is of personhood, agency, control and voice; this is what is lost in patriarchal marriage and longed for after. In a culture which subsumes female autonomy and personhood, love--of a sort--is readily available; agency and voice are not.

### The Sacrifice of Psyche

If such a view of marriage is less a reality in the Western world of the twentieth-century, what does remain is a clearly measurable and profound loss of self-esteem in young women. Even though the trappings have changed--in marriage and apart from marriage--the devaluation of female life remains unchanged. This forfeiture of feeling "right," of being "Okay," is directly related to growing up in a male defined value system. In *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*, Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan emphasize this apprehension of "leftness" and the betrayal of female personhood:

Women's psychological development within patriarchal societies and male-voiced cultures is inherently traumatic.... For a girl to disconnect herself from women means to dissociate herself not only from her mother but also from herself--to move from being a girl to being a woman, which means "with men." (216)

The authors continue by linking this trauma to loss of voice (becoming Echo): "For girls at adolescence to say what they are feeling and thinking often means to risk, in the words

of many girls, losing their relationships and finding themselves powerless and all alone" (217).

In this way Psyche encodes the losses in self-esteem that come with female adolescence in masculinist cultures. What has been termed the marriage of sacrifice merely obscures--by positing the desirability of a sexual relationship--the essential betrayal of growing up female in a patriarchy. The conflation of female agency with a coerced sexuality in loss of virginity by force, by rape, is a twofold betrayal. Loss of personal agency or action (sexual desire) is rewritten into an objectified form of male power (marriage); female desiring like Echo's is consumed in male power structures. This is fittingly described by Annis Pratt as a model for "growing down" rather than "growing up," especially as it is so crucially linked to sexual maturity.

There remains one other sacrifice/betrayal of female experience that is fundamental to Psyche's (and Echo's) loss of voice. That is the betrayal inherent in the way Aphrodite's wrath is presented. As Apuleius recounts the tale, we are told that Aphrodite is neglected: "Her rites were postponed, her temples fell into disrepair, her cushions were trodden under foot, her ceremonies neglected, her statues ungarlanded, and her abandoned altars marred by cold ashes" (239). Psyche, victimized by an unwanted adoration, is blamed for this transfer of allegiance and is made the focus of Aphrodite's violent wrath: "But, whosoever

she is, she will certainly get no joy out of having usurped my honours: I will soon make her regret that illegitimate beauty of hers!" (241). As an object of beauty (fetish) Psyche is without power and denied action; nonetheless, she is condemned for usurping Aphrodite's honours.

Psyche's beauty, described as "illegitimate," disguises the "illegitimacy" of the adoration. The faithful in the kingdom transfer adoration from the (n)ever-virgin goddess to the virgin girl. In this transfer lies perhaps the greatest female loss of power innate in patriarchal societies: the absence of a fully female--even fully feminine--divine.<sup>5</sup> An analysis of what this transfer of adoration illustrates about the structures of power, values and relationship in the kingdom enables a reevaluation of the changes in Psyche. To do this first requires a transformation of our understanding of this goddess and her place in patriarchal myth.

### The Goddess

In the larger framework of the *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius combines a male quest motif with devotion to a female deity. As protagonist, Lucius autobiographically represents Apuleius's submission to and initiation into the Mysteries of Isis. Most interpretations of the frame tale see Lucius's adventures as a personal, interior, masculine and male search for union with the feminine as represented by Isis.



To Marie Louise Von Franz the *Metamorphoses* is "the story of Apuleius-Lucius' double path--conscious and unconscious-- towards the unity of his 'conversion'," wherein "the great mother-goddess Isis" personifies an "interior cosmos": "It concerns in particular the problem of the *incarnation of the feminine principle*, and of its 'reconnaissance' in a patriarchal culture" (4). Elizabeth Hazelton Haight similarly describes Lucius's path to unity as a quest "for some meaning in life" which is found in "a union with a mystic goddess who sublimates his emotion and absorbs his life into her service" (196). Ben Edwin Perry sees the story as a quest "for communion with the *anima mundi*, the mystic soul of the world" (240).

P.G. Walsh places the adventures of Psyche into a comparable framework, seeing it as an "adaptation of a traditional story pressed into service to illuminate in allegorical terms the nature of Lucius' spiritual odyssey" (191). And further: "A series of specialized inquiries has established Cupid and Psyche as a folk-tale wittily retold, as a sustained philosophical myth, as the re-enactment in fiction of Isiac initiation" (223). Walsh links the Psyche story directly to the mysteries by calling the myth an allegory--an extended metaphor--of the second or frame narrative. He then goes on to describe Psyche's story as

a vision of the progress of the human soul alienated from the true reality, yet searching unceasingly for it and being eventually admitted to it by initiation into the mysteries. It is in this sense that Apuleius can be

said to have shaped the tale into a Platonist-Isiac myth.

What Walsh touches on here discloses space sufficient for a revitalised interpretation of Aphrodite, Psyche and Psyche's ordeals.

Apuleius does not just describe the goddess Isis in terms of the feminine but makes her a "true reality," the reigning deity of an external world. Significantly, Walsh notes, "When Isis reveals and describes herself to Lucius, she pronounces herself identical with the Venus of Psyche's story" (222). Thus both the goddesses potentially depict one deity, an aggregate figure, and in his description of Isis, Apuleius expresses (perhaps unconsciously) an interpretation of Venus-Aphrodite which surpasses the patriarchally defined feminine love goddess. That this is often at odds with what he as author consciously has Aphrodite do and say invertedly accords with the interpretation of the inner tale as a satire on the Classical gods. He presents both the patriarchally defined "symbolic order" as the one-dimensional love goddess and undercuts it with the potential of the heart's core, the "Great Mother."

In Lucius's vision, Isis names herself "mother of the universe, mistress of all the elements... mightiest of all the deities, queen of the dead" and called by many names, Minerva [Athena], Venus [Aphrodite], Diana [Artemis/Selene], Proserpina [Persephone], Ceres [Demeter], Juno [Hera] and "my real name, which is Queen Isis" (2: 299,301). This

description of Lucius's initiation and vision of the Mysteries of Isis-Aphrodite lends support to an interpretation of Aphrodite as more than a mere goddess of beauty or representative of the inner feminine.

By making Aphrodite a name for Isis, Apuleius encourages the reading of Aphrodite as a mother figure and life goddess in Psyche's tale and paves the way for an interpretation of Aphrodite as a mentor of wholeness, of holiness and of transformation for Psyche. Indeed, within Psyche's tale, Aphrodite names herself "the primal mother of all that exists, the original source of all the elements, the bountiful mother of the whole world" (239, 241). As Psyche is forced beyond patriarchal culture and out into "the whole world," she moves out into the realm of "the all that exists" patterned in Aphrodite, the "primal mother." Annis Pratt reminds us that this is in fact a "green-world" and a "special world of nature."

#### The Goddess's Attributes

Current research into the ancient goddess provides a catalogue of the powers implied in the totality traced by Apuleius. Pomeroy states that Isis "readily encompassed inconsistencies and mutually contradicting qualities"; she was healer and creator, assigned language and invented alphabets and astronomy (218). These and other attributes added to those directly associated with Aphrodite magnify

her role beyond that of the classical "beauty queen" of Paris's judgment. Powers ascribed by ancient and possibly pre-patriarchal cultures give us the seeds for a rereading of the metaphors in Psyche's journey.

In her association with Isis, Aphrodite possesses omnipotence; as Pomeroy notes: "But in her omnipotence she was not threatening, for she was loving and merciful" (218). She is described by both Miriam Robbins Dexter and Erich Neumann as a golden goddess, a goddess of earth and waters, of animals, of birth, life and death, of regeneration and transformation, of birds and snakes. While Dexter describes her as encompassing the chthonic, David Kinsley suggests that more emphasis should be placed on her association with light, golden sunshine and warmth, with fertilizing dew and rain, flowers, seasonal growth and fruitfulness. He attributes the chthonic to her close connection to Persephone.

In her relationship with the natural world, Aphrodite is also and specifically a sexual goddess, the goddess of desire and longing, of passion and its physical expression. While she regularly attends to marriages and wedding celebrations, hers is not passion which confines itself to patriarchal wedlock or to heterosexuality, for in her earliest manifestation, she is able to give birth parthenogenetically: "The autonomy of Aphrodite, the fact that she was not bound by the rules of chastity which were

imposed upon other goddesses and mortal women, also bespeaks her power" (Dexter 115). As Kinsley too, notes, her sexuality is so powerful that she was never virgin (201). Born out of the sea (from the east as Astarte), she is closely allied with the seashell, a female genital symbol. Jane Ellen Harrison ties Aphrodite's spirituality to her triple nature and to the natural world, a tie so strong that it has endured beyond patriarchal appropriation.

Aphrodite the earth-born Kore is also sea-born, as became an island Queen, but more than any other goddess, she becomes Ourania, the Heavenly One.... She is the only goddess who in passing to the upper air yet kept life and reality. (314)

Already acknowledged an earth goddess and sea-born and in spite of becoming "Heavenly," a spiritual being defined by its polarized opposition to earth, Aphrodite nonetheless adds the "upper air"--earth's essential atmosphere--to earth and sea to be truly triple. Pomeroy explains her reduction to a dual nature as an outgrowth of Plato's discussions on the nature of love. Plato describes Aphrodite as representing both an intellectual love and a "vulgar" sexual love: "Vulgar love could be either heterosexual or homosexual, but intellectual love could only be found between two males." She continues by pointing out that "the dichotomy" in "the two sorts of love" later "came to be applied to heterosexual relationships as well" (7). To fit into the creation of this kind of dichotomous reasoning, Aphrodite must lose one of her essential triplicities in any

given context.

Kinsley links this spirituality--intellectual love--in Aphrodite to its semantic cognates, to creativity in speech and the intellectual realm. This connection of passion with communication, expression and intellectual reproduction suggests that the relationship of the worshipper and worshipped is other than hierarchic. In her overt sexuality, her strong connection to the earth, and in her triplicity, Aphrodite represents feeling and sensory perception in spiritual consciousness. In her "green world," the body as sense perception, intellect and emotion are all integral to spiritual awareness. All these facets are represented by the figure of Aphrodite.

While the philosophic tradition has rendered Aphrodite as a sexualized duality, in *Psyche's Sister's: ReImagining the Meaning of Sisterhood*, Christine Downing likens one's relationship to Aphrodite with that between siblings.

To know Her is to see us in our variegated individuality, to acknowledge how our interactions with one another reveal our gifts and our needs, our power and our frailty, our beauty and our ugliness, our compassion and our cruelty. To know Her is to know Her as Sister. (3)

In *The Goddesses*, Downing describes the impossibility of relating to Aphrodite as a distant goddess addressed only as a third person, a "she" because she is the relationship goddess: "You are to me not only a you but that in me that is you directed, which comes into being as it is shared with another, a you apart from whom I cannot imagine myself"

(186). In her sexuality, sensuality and multiplicity, Aphrodite represents an interaction of feeling, understanding and awareness. In feeling in the form of sense perception and emotion lies consciousness and wisdom.

Psyche as Hero

If Apuleius himself has encouraged an expanded reading of Aphrodite, so too does his presentation of Psyche encourage an interpretation beyond that of an anima figure. What the anima interpretation omits and glosses over is that the myth of Psyche introduces a female protagonist, a woman who is fully bound up in a culture and who represents a female apprehension of consciousness. As Lee R. Edwards accurately attests: "Psyche's heroism, like all heroism, involves both doing and knowing. The pattern of the tale parallels the growth of consciousness" (11). While Psyche has been construed as an anima figure in masculine consciousness, she even more truly enacts feminine experience, living first within a patriarchal world and then in a world overseen by Aphrodite. Moreover, Psyche grows up, gains sexual experience, conceives and gives birth as a female being. Even if these experiences have been interpreted metaphorically as creative and spiritual consciousness and as an anima representation, they are fundamentally experiences of female reproductive biology, a biology which she presumably shares with the "mother of the

universe."

This female body experience also changes the perception and comprehension of the feminine archetype. Erich Neumann sees the "archetypal feminine as a unity" and notes the way in which the patriarchal world divides this unity into "antithetical goddesses." He explains how Psyche's perception differs from this: "But Psyche's experience of the unity of the archetypal feminine is not the experience of opposites... it is the experience of totality" (129). Thus Neumann distinguishes Psyche's understanding of the goddess from a patriarchal or male mythopoetic interpretation: the difference between Lucius's desire for "unity with" and Psyche's recognition of the "unity of."

Psyche not only presents a different vision of the female goddess, but she in turn also sees differently in the goddesses realm, her green world. When Psyche is betrayed and sent out to the mountain top as a sacrifice, her journey moves her out from patriarchal society with its devaluation of female experience and into a new place, influenced by a different deity, with a different perception of female being. This understanding is one that recognizes completeness, undivided nature. In what happens to her combined with an expanded reading of Aphrodite and her triple aspects, compels a triple reading of Psyche's experience.



The Goddess's Powers

This larger interpretation coexists with a redefinition of power as it is exercised by the goddess. Dexter defines two sorts of goddess power:

power over, which is the power exercised by one who dominates, and power within, autonomy, connectedness to the life force, which is the power of those engaged in a sharing society. This power within belongs to those who connect themselves to the life force and who as nurturers, augment that life force. The paradox of energy is that the more one gives to life, the more one is filled with that energy. (143)

The second view of goddess power as a "power-within" is important to an understanding of the way that the triple energies of the goddess have been appropriated by patriarchal society: these energies are transferred to men by the awarding of sovereignty, by the granting of warrior energy and by the transferring of nurturance. In the goddess this energy is imaged in three forms. As virgin or kore, she represents stored energy; as (not-virgin) mother she releases that stored energy to men in sexual intercourse and progeny. In patriarchal cultures, the third or grandmother phase is broken into two dichotomous views: as the "wise old woman... venerated for her wealth of knowledge" or as "an object of fear or derision... the fearsome witch" (Dexter 160). The triple goddess is re-interpreted as four: the mother/daughter binary and the wise-woman/witch dichotomy.

The contradictions in the interpretations of the grandmother phase emphasize the danger to patriarchal societies of the old and/or not-virgin, not-married woman.

As Dexter indicates, "she became a threat to the patriarchal, patrilineal establishment, because she became autonomous." This autonomy was interpreted as specifically threatening to patrilineal inheritance and sexual mores: "Any woman who took control of her own sexuality... was both condemned and feared" (164). In this loss of the third phase of the triple goddess, in its breakdown into two dichotomous antithetical binaries, we have imaged the loss of the autonomous woman, the self-directed woman of wisdom and experience.

By restoring to Aphrodite this third phase, we might return to Psyche the potential of autonomous, articulated and self-directed experience. While all three of the phases Dexter describes have relevance in the myth of Psyche, in the attitudes toward the goddess as virgin, we are given clues as to the reasons for the worship of the virgin Psyche: "And so the virgin, the maiden who stored her powers and held them in abeyance for the men of her society, was a woman who was cherished and revered" (173).

Here then are the motivations obscured by, yet underlying the change of worship from Aphrodite to the maiden, Psyche. Aphrodite's power is circumscribed; the goddess as one-unto-herself and virgin, as matron in control of the dispensation of sexual--reproductive--energy and as old wise-woman of female and feminine wisdom, is replaced by the patriarchal daughter who has yet to attain wisdom, whose

"energy" is controlled for dispensation by the father and will be appropriated by the husband.

Aphrodite is deprived of the reverence of the community which has turned to the adoration of a virgin princess, a situation which Apuleius describes as "an extravagant transfer of heavenly honours to the cult of a mortal girl" worshipped for her "illegitimate beauty" (239). The issue of beauty is used to disguise the very real appropriation of power. The devotion given Psyche relegates Aphrodite to a "vicarious veneration" (241) and the result is not only the loss of outward authority and inner power of the triple goddess but also the trivialization of Psyche as a representation of human female experience.

This change in the object of worship illustrates the process by which the pre-patriarchal culture was transformed into a patriarchal society. Psyche's story illustrates how the arrogation of Aphrodite's power to a human maiden supports a male social order which is sanctioned by the male-ordained and defined pantheon of gods. Aphrodite's command to Eros that Psyche "be gripped with a violent flaming passion for the meanest man," one who lacks "rank, wealth, and even health" becomes the priest's insistence that she prepare for "a funereal wedding" to "a cruel and wild and snaky monster, That flies on wings above the ether and vexes all, And harries the world with fire and sword" (243,247).

This interpretation of Aphrodite's request is made by Apollo's Oracle, but Apuleius outlines no direct communication between Aphrodite and the Oracle or the priest. There is communication only between the priest and the king who feared "the gods' anger" and between the priest and the Oracle of Apollo (245,247,283). Only men and their male gods interpret Aphrodite's directive. Her will is that the social--patriarchal--hierarchy be upset by Psyche's falling in love with "the meanest man"; this, however, is translated into a lawful and "funereal marriage" to a "monster" on "wings" who "vexes" all. Aphrodite commands that Psyche as princess and daughter to a king should fall in love with the poorest of men and so upset the patriarchal power alliances. Psyche's falling into love and sexual experience then choosing to love with the knowledge of that experience, denies father and husband the choice--ordering--of their coalitions and hers.

### Cultural Failure

By their interference, king, priest, and Apollo's Oracle determine that passion (and love) are exiled and what is enshrined is coercive patriarchal marriage and an irresponsible male sexualized eroticism, Eros. The transfer of worship from Aphrodite to the maiden has deeper implications for that entire kingdom and the entire social structure. After telling Eros to make Psyche fall in love,

Aphrodite departs: "Then she sought the nearest beach... stepped out... over the topmost foam of the quivering waves and... sat down over the clear surface of the deep sea" (243). Recalling Aphrodite to her "duties," the seagull recounts that the goddess's "entire household is getting a bad reputation." Describing what has transpired in the kingdom with the absence of Aphrodite and her son, the seagull says:

there is no joy any more, no grace, no charm. Everything is unkempt and boorish and harsh. Weddings and social intercourse and the love of children are gone, leaving only a monstrous mess and an unpleasant disregard for anything as squalid as the bonds of marriage. (303)

This absence of Aphrodite is described in terms that indicate a wider cultural breakdown.

According to James Baird, cultural failure generally results from "the loss of a regnant and commanding authority in religious symbolism," a loss that brings disorder and cultural failure (16). Whereas Baird is speaking of a nineteenth-century Judeo-Christian religion, cultural climate and loss of faith, in *Psyche's* tale, cultural failure may be construed as the loss of the full powers of female sacredness and deity, of female life and of a commanding authority of the feminine. For women and for the feminine, cultural failure is recorded in the transfer from a matrifocal and matrilinear culture to patriarchal order. Thus, the breakdown of affective connection and family responsibility is effected.

Arising from a turning away from the worship of a goddess representing all phases of female being, and constituting a limited reinscription of those powers, the new values represent a patriarchal, male-defined, cultural takeover. These dualities of an unrestrained male erotic power (Eros) and the coercion of female eroticism in marriage law are directly associated with this change of worship.

The image of Aphrodite's retreat that Apuleius gives subtly underscores the import of this cultural failure. Aphrodite moves "Out toward the Ocean," shielded from the hostile sun's blaze," accompanied by the music of "a tuneful conch shell" while a Triton holds "a mirror before his mistress's eyes" (243,245). Because the kingdom does not provide Aphrodite with a true reflection of herself, she returns to the place of her birth with her mirror--to the mirror of the natural world.

## Chapter Four

### The Green World

In the green world that is Aphrodite's domain, we discover with Psyche what concerns are central in an environment no longer obviously bound in patriarchal social order. Psyche's first experiences in this natural world are sensual, and in her encounter with Eros, she achieves sexual and reproductive maturity. In this new context, her sisters visit her, and in the interactions of the sisters, we glimpse new reasons for the action they inspire in Psyche and for their final fate. Playing out these two kinds of relationships in the larger world of the goddess, Psyche begins to understand her own power, the possibilities of relationship, and most of all, she learns to accept the consequences of her own actions. Aphrodite sets Psyche four tasks, and when she completes them, Psyche knows wisdom.

#### Psyche's Paradise

After being abandoned on the mountain top, Psyche is "slowly lifted by a gentle breeze... carried down... and in the valley deep below laid... tenderly on the lap of the flowery turf." There, "her great mental stress was relieved and she fell peacefully asleep" (251,253). David Kinsley tells us that one of Aphrodite's epithets, from her association with the poppy, is "She Who Lulls the Senses and Brings Sweet Sleep" (209); thus, in the sleep of Psyche, we

have a recognition of Aphrodite's supremacy in this new environment. Aphrodite's domain is a paradise of the senses, and she controls all aspects of sensory response including release into regenerative sleep. In Aphrodite's world, moreover, all experience is through the body; there is no separation of mind from embodied life.

This sense of an isolation and solitude that encourages self-discovery and an awareness of an enlarging individual potential is fully present in Apuleius's description of Psyche's paradisaic interlude and the "royal palace" she finds there. Psyche awakens to a "resplendent and charming residence" of "citronwood and ivory," with "great art" and "pictures made of precious stones" (253). A bath, "a royal feast," "nectarous wine" and music are all part of Psyche's encounter with paradise (257). This "residence of some god" is built with "divine hands." Those who tread there are twice blessed "and even more." Psyche "crossed the threshold" and "found it amazing that there was not a single chain or lock or guard protecting this treasure house of all the world." Addressed as "Mistress," she is asked, "Why are you so astounded at all this great wealth? All this belongs to you" (253,255).<sup>1</sup> Significantly, too, her sisters are the only visitors from her old life to be carried to her green world. This is a palace of female being which Eros visits and it is here that she conceives their child.

Apuleius's description of the particular aloneness that



implies youthful self-discovery and sexual awakening has a modern counterpart. Jessica Benjamin reiterates a parallel theme of isolation in the psychological experience of today's adolescent women who are also "preoccupied with solitude" (129). Relating this directly to the story of Eros and Psyche, she observes:

It is only when freed from idealization and objectification that Psyche can experience true sexual awakening, first alone, and later in her desire to see and recognise her lover, Eros. The idea that sexual desire arises in a state of aloneness--open space--may seem a paradox. But... this state offers the opportunity to discover what is authentic in the self. (129)

Idealization and objectification are identified as crucial to keeping young women from authentic self-hood. Idealized and objectified because of her "beauty," Psyche is denied genuine desire until she is alone.

Penny W. Caccavo suggests that the awareness of sexual potential begins in the seclusion, the turning inward that accompanies menarche (140). Certainly, this turning inward might be associated with the self-exploration that may accompany puberty and menarche. Apuleius does tell us that Psyche's "bridal veil" is "flame-red" (247). Furthermore, Pomeroy states that in ancient Roman society--in Apuleius's time--marriage and puberty were often coincidental (207).

### The Green World Eros

In *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, Annis Pratt describes the "special world of nature" wherein women

writers create for their female heros "images of desire for an authentic selfhood." Often, Pratt continues, these images involve "the figure of Eros... the green world lover" because this natural world represents what is lost in patriarchy, what is lost by the "rape-trauma" archetype. Neumann's description of Psyche's interlude with Eros is characterized by the patriarchal implications of this rape-trauma; he terms it an "unworthy servitude," a "state of blind, though impassioned servitude," a "non-existence, a being in the dark, a rapture of sexual sensuality" (74). Psyche's experiences, however, cannot be circumscribed by these negative terms, and this, paradoxically, is equally apparent in Neumann's suggestion: "What for the masculine is aggression, victory, rape, and the satisfaction of desire... is for the feminine destiny, transformation, and the profoundest mystery of life" (63).

The relationship with "green world Eros" represents an awakening to new experience rather than the trauma of lost desire and coercion into bondage. Truly, Psyche has reached a paradisaal green world and equally truly, a central aspect of this green world is an authentic female being that includes sexuality. According to Pratt, "Eros is one of the primal forces leading the personality through growth towards maturity, as necessary to human development as intellectual growth and the opportunity for significant work" (74).

However significant his presence may be, he is but one

element of the green world and subservient to the mother (life). Aphrodite herself reminds Eros of her greater power: "I will adopt one of my young slaves and make over to him those wings of yours and torches, your bow and arrows, and the rest of my equipment, which I did not give you to use that way" (307). Likewise, as Erich Neumann and Robert Johnson inform us, Eros is the daemon of relationship and attachment to others, and in the patriarchal pantheon, a daemon is certainly a lesser god.

The designation as Aphrodite's son and the emphasis on his wings and serpentine form imply that Eros and the erotic have a potential beyond patriarchal society and the patriarchal gods. His attributes are associated with the goddess of regeneration (Dexter 140), and Psyche's description of him--after she sees him--emphasizes his integration of both masculine and feminine characteristics. His hair in "neatly shackled ringlets" suggests that his sexuality is bound--presumably by affection to Psyche. As hair is generally a symbol of male virility (Neumann; Johnson; Walker *Dictionary*), that the "rest of his body was hairless and resplendent" implies that he has female aspects as well. Furthermore, his "weapons" are bow, arrow and quiver. The arrow (eye beams) like the bow is a male attribute (Donaldson-Evans; Walker *Dictionary*), but the quiver as a container is a female symbol. As a figure of sexual energy Eros is both male and female, masculine and

feminine.

In spite of this, within the world and life experience to one side of "civilization," Eros symbolizes the energy in the specific emotional connection that is basic to reproductive life and one other way through which intellectual growth and consciousness are achieved. As a representation of this energy and connection he is male and female, masculine and feminine. Isolation is essential to new erotic connection. The "within" world of lovers is warm, intimate, sharing; the close and vivid physical relationship is removed and isolated from the patriarchal structures of power. Lovers are never more alive, power-full, and never more "dead to the world" or the concerns of power.

Because the early relationship between Eros and Psyche represents a honeymoon of pleasure and sexual experience, for Psyche, the nighttime experience with Eros is pleasurable and reassuring:

This happened thus for a long time, and, as nature provides, her new condition through constant habituation won her over to its pleasure, and the sound of a mysterious voice gave comfort to her loneliness. (259)

To Psyche, the "new condition" is an incremental step in her life journey and represents one that is central to human experience. Through sexual need and feeling, we are drawn beyond parental connection and dependence to form new connections.

The Patriarchal Taboo

Even here, however, centrally portrayed in the myth is the patriarchal taboo against female sexuality and female desire. In their sexual encounter, Eros forbids Psyche to see him; he comes to her only at nighttime: "Now her unknown husband had arrived, had mounted the bed, had made Psyche his wife, and had quickly departed before the rising of daylight" (257,259). When Eros forbids sight of himself, he is forbidding female desire and female agency in sexuality. Penny W. Caccavo discusses such prohibitions as a "forbidden room," a taboo imposed by husband or fiance which forbids a young woman access to "her femaleness, that which permits her to be her own woman, a young goddess" (147). Sidney M. Rosenblatt posits that comparable paradisaic isolations may also imply masturbation and self pleasuring, and thus Eros's interdiction might denote these additional proscriptions.

Annis Pratt raises the issues that clarify the dangers to patriarchal society inherent in Psyche's forbidden desire. She explains that the taboo against female sexuality arises because it is a threat to inheritance (42). This is a threat that extends to all the patrilineal family members. Not only is the woman ruined economically and the man not ensured rightful heirs, there is also a danger to the children themselves, and this is encoded within the tale. If Psyche disobeys, her child will not be immortal--will be disinherited--and so will forfeit a father's protection in a

system of governance where nothing but legitimate paternity counts. As Pratt again points out, such a tragedy results "from a flaw that would not be fatal in a male hero, namely, the desire for sexual fulfilment" (73).

In Psyche's case, because the taboo is *only* on seeing Eros, the implication seems to be that vision equals knowledge and that with sight comes Psyche's first cognition of Eros; if she does not see, she will not know (or desire) Eros for herself. That first "sight" of Eros, however, might more appropriately be read as a re-cognition of Love. As bride, she already has very real and other-sensory experience of her husband: in the sound of his "mysterious voice" and in the touch and movement "through constant habituation" of his body, Eros "was sensible both to her hands and ears" (259). To this other-sensory knowledge that she has of Eros, she merely *adds* sight.

What is clear in the totality of the description of this paradisaal interlude is the importance to Psyche of *all* sensory experience: hearing, taste, touch, smell, movement *and* sight. The addition of sight emphasizes the multi-sensory nature of Psyche's desire. By choosing to look, to see, what Psyche does is assert an independence of desire--through the knowledge and ownership of her own body and its erotic empowerment, but also in the light of her awareness that she is already "Mistress" of a "royal palace."

Psyche and her Sisters

Notwithstanding its pleasures, Psyche's interlude is interrupted with new information about her family. Eros tells her of her parents' "tireless mourning and grief" and her sisters' attempts to console them with "searching for some trace of you." Psyche is warned: "do not even look in their direction. Otherwise you will cause me the most bitter pain, and yourself utter destruction" (259). Eros's warning highlights the truth in exogamous marriage alliances. As women are passed between men, their ties to sisters and families of origin are severed. Psyche, however, prevails: "Then she pleaded with him and threatened to die until she wrenched from her husband his consent to her wishes: to see her sisters, to soothe their grief and to converse with them" (261).

Where her resistance to Eros and "his injunction to break off relations with her sisters" leads Neumann to see in Psyche a "puzzling persistence that appears to contradict her softness" (75), Psyche's need to see her sisters is based on an understanding of female emotional life. God or no god, daemon or not, Eros and the erotic are not sufficient to Psyche's entire happiness. The sisters, too, "hastily deserted their own homes" and for their own complex needs are compelled to reconnect in love and grief with their parents and with Psyche (259). Nancy Choderow's psychoanalytic theory validates their responses as based in

female experience and affective care. In *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*, she relates this response to the fact that children are universally raised by women and retain the love for their mothers and the need for female love and friendship.

Choderow expands her view by explaining the different ways in which boys and girls resolve what is referred to as the oedipal complex: "While for boys resolution requires repression of the attachment to the mother; for girls there is no absolute change of object nor exclusive attachment to the father." She goes on to say:

If there is an absolute component to the change of object it is at most a concentration on her father of genital or erotic, cathexis. Affective interest remains dual: the clinical corollary to Freud's claim is that love for the father and rivalry for the mother... is always tempered by love for the mother. (69-70)

The result is that women have complex affective needs which are not satisfied in an exclusive romantic attachment.

Certainly, Psyche's reunion with her sisters is joyful: "the sisters took their delight in mutual embraces and eager kisses." In spite of this joy, upon returning home the sisters "were consumed with the gall of burning envy" (267,269). Thus, in the way that Apuleius has drawn the complexities of the relationship between Psyche and her sisters, there are both positive and negative elements. In *Psyche's Sisters*, Christine Downing describes a sororial relationship as being instrumental to female consciousness specifically because siblings are both alike and different:



"Likeness and difference, intimacy and otherness--neither can be overcome. That paradox, that tension, lies at the heart of the relationship." She goes on to explain the special role of each same sex sibling in the other's life: "Same sex siblings seem to be for one another, paradoxically, both ideal self and... 'shadow'." They are engaged in a uniquely reciprocal mutual process of self-definition" (11).

### Eros and the Sisters

Eros has no such doubled, paradoxical vision. He again warns Psyche against the sisters because their plot "is to persuade you to examine my face." Calling her sisters "those deceitful bitches" and "those horrible harpies," he tells Psyche: "your womb, still a child's, bears another child for us, who will be a god if you guard our secret in silence, but mortal if you profane it" (273). By his injunction, secrecy is sacred, truth profane; new ties and responsibilities are substituted for kinship and sisterhood. Introducing power dynamics into their intimacy, he describes the barriers Psyche must erect between herself and her sisters, barriers necessary for his primacy--indeed, male supremacy.

By resolute self-restraint free your home, your husband, yourself, and our little one from the catastrophe of ruin which threatens. Those vile women - you cannot call them sisters after their murderous hatred and their trampling on the ties of blood do not look at them or listen to them when... they make the

rocks resound with their fatal songs. (275)

This reconstructs one aspect of the conflict between Psyche and her sisters as another outcome of a society in the midst of what Baird terms cultural failure. Psyche's ties of blood to her sisters are trampled; the loss of legitimate reverence for Aphrodite is illustrated in the antagonisms between sisters and recalls the seagull's plea for the goddess's return. To underline this loss, the sisters in Apuleius's tale are nameless; they are doubly deemphasized--in their affective importance to Psyche and in their individual natures.

The sisters represent the breakdown of the ties most essential in matrilineal, matrifocal cultures and the betrayal away from their original family connections. Blood kinship and affective connections between women preserved these older societies, and a transference of this ability is necessary for the maintenance of patrilineal families. There are also significant personal issues that the sisters individually represent as women who have been betrayed into patriarchal marriage and estranged from their original family connections.

To understand this second kinship betrayal, we need to consider how a male socio-political view is authorized by patriarchal society to interpret female experience in wedlock. As Dexter explains:

according to Classical Greek and Roman mythopoeists,  
mother-in-law is to be pitted against daughter-in-law,

and sister is in competition with sister. The warrior concept of "divide and conquer" pertains to the domestic sphere and to the battlefield. (140)

Such a view of female relations preserves a binary, dichotomous and antithetical philosophy and sanctions a view of power as domination. This view of the relationships between women influences both the male mythopoetic visions and their interpretations. Because men have focused on the aggression, confrontation and separation in their concepts of maturity, disputes in the family--among women--are understood only in terms of male power structures and male warfare. Such interpretations also foster patriarchal hierarchies because they ensure that relations between women do not threaten individual male power or the social structure.

#### Anger and Envy

Regardless of the subsequent punishments for Psyche and her sisters, what is obscured by Apuleius's focusing on the sisters' envy is just how profoundly important to all three women is the "nature" of the men they marry. To outward appearances at least, the two older sisters had made "fine marriages," but they feel differently; one husband was "older than my father... balder than a pumpkin... punier than any child, and keeps the whole house locked up with bolts and chains"; the husband of the other was "doubled over and bent with arthritis, and hardly ever pays homage to

my Venus" (209). In the sisters, what is named an envy of Psyche is a very real and justified anger against the coercion of their own marriages.

In the *Politics of Reality*, feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye makes several comments on the nature of anger which explain much of the sisters' circumstances. Observing with some irony that women's anger "is generally not well received," although it "is in fact sane and sound," she notes that men often misread it and ignore its causes. The sisters' response to the failures and unhappiness in their own marriages is misread as envy, and the cause of the anger--the very real failure and inadequacy in the husbands--is ignored. Patrilineal societies cannot afford to acknowledge failure in the marriage arrangement since to do so would destabilize male power structures. The anger is ignored or turned aside and renamed envy.

Frye goes on to say: "Anger seems to be a reaction to being thwarted, frustrated or harmed." The frustration that generates anger comes out of a sense of being offended and of seeing it "as due to someone's malice or inexcusable incompetence" (85). The sisters' anger renamed envy arises out of being thwarted in personal fulfillment specifically because of their husbands' physical infirmities, parsimony and sexual inadequacy. Frye's view that anger also has about it a sense of righteousness resounds in the sisters' plight. If women are allowed only marriage in a patriarchal social

structure, then rage is an appropriate response to any failure or injustice perceived. The sisters have been truly wronged because someone else--the king/father--chose their husbands poorly, either maliciously or incompetently or though sheer self-interest.

Psyche is visited twice more by her sisters, and on the third and last they tell her to take "a very sharp razor" and "a lamp, trimmed and filled with oil and burning with a clear light." Hiding these, she is to wait until her husband is asleep; "then, with as strong a stroke as you can, sever the knot that joins the poisonous serpent's neck and head" (287). Left alone, Psyche experiences a gamut of emotions: "She felt haste and procrastination, daring and fear, despair and anger; and worst of all, in the same body she loathed the beast but loved the husband" (289). In spite of her emotional turmoil and armed with the razor, she does carry out the plan, and by the light of her lamp, sees Eros asleep.

For married women in patriarchal societies, well-being is almost entirely bound up in the whims and fortunes of the husband. The importance for Psyche of knowing her husband is clearly gauged by her emotional state and is intensified by her pregnancy; while still adhering to the prohibition, she says to Eros that she "will know [his] looks at least in my unborn babe's" (277). Knowledge of her husband is undeniably part of her responsibility to her child. With her first

sight of him, however, Psyche is "terrified at this marvellous sight... overcome... faint and trembling." She tries to hide the razor "in her own heart," but it slips away. Psyche at first "[i]nsatiably, and with some curiosity... scrutinized and handled and marvelled at her husband's arms." After pricking her thumb on one of the arrows from Eros quiver, Psyche bleeds "tiny drops of rose-red blood" and "fell in love with Love." She rests "overcome by the sense of being safe" (291; emphasis mine).

In spite of this complexity of affection and intent, Apuleius provides for all three sisters a retribution that recalls Pratt's explanation of disinheritance. First, Psyche is cut off from her paradisaical life, and her child will be born mortal--disinherited from the father's power and support. Then, when the sisters are told by Psyche that Eros really loves her, each rushes back to Psyche's paradise by throwing herself from the mountain as they had done before, and in this way both the sisters fall "to the self-same deadly doom" (301,303).

#### The Sisters' Doom

The sisters' doom is doubly problematic for a woman-centered interpretation. Their deaths provide endings that are both appropriate and inappropriate. That the sisters should die is a fitting ending in terms of the isolation that exists and is compelled between women in exogamous

marriage systems. In the "normal" course of these systems, Psyche would lose social contact with her sisters; wives join their husbands' family groups. The deaths are also psychologically fitting, but for more complex reasons. The sisters have not confronted the true source of their envy-- that very real and justifiable anger.

In her examination of anger, Carol Tavris reminds us of its importance and especially of honestly confronting its true source: "Ultimately, the purpose of anger is to make a grievance known, and if the grievance is not confronted, it will not matter if the anger is kept in, let out or wrapped up in red ribbons and dropped in the Erie Canal" (160). Making the source of anger and grievance known is the way by which we keep it centered in our own lives, where, presumably, we may make some difference.

Transferring the anger to envy of another moves the emotional action out of our own lives and prevents any appropriate changes. Not expressing their anger prevents the sisters from taking action to change their own circumstances; the sisters die to their own lives at a profound psychological level. And lastly, naming the "grievance"--expressing anger--reveals the purpose of the voicing: to grieve. Hidden in the sister's welter of angry emotion is the real pain and sorrow at the betrayals they have endured.

The Sister Goddesses

The sisters' deaths, however, are inappropriate, and for equally complex reasons; the first is that they are in Aphrodite's realm, where there are real psychological forces that argue for the continued existence of Psyche's sisters. Reclaiming Aphrodite from male mythopoetic depictions of her brings with it the opportunity to change how we view the relationships among the women in the tale. Aphrodite is a mother goddess who can be interpreted as encompassing all of the creative and destructive variables of life, of the natural world, and of passionate relationship. Her rich and complex nature fully embraces discord and difference, knowing they are not necessarily warfare and need not be resolved in retribution. Difference and discord are as much a part of her understanding as is love and generation.

Apuleius's tale does provide another model of sisterhood; there is a second set of three sisters who endure: Aphrodite and the sister goddesses Hera and Demeter. According to Dexter, Downing (*Goddess*), Kinsley and Spretnak, the three goddesses are equal in their ancient powers and current (patriarchal) divisions of labor. All three are aspects of the Great Goddess, but Hera dominates as queen, Demeter as agriculture and the seasons, and Aphrodite as nature, life, procreation and sexuality.

In the tale, Apuleius describes the sisters, Hera and Demeter, as representing a full range of "natural" annoyance



and support. They meet Aphrodite soon after the seagull has told of the chaos in the world brought about by her "abdication" and Eros's dalliance with Psyche. With some irony at their appearance just at this moment, Aphrodite sees the meeting as "opportune," but nonetheless seeks their assistance to find Psyche (309). They attempt to soothe her, remind her of her own and her son's respective responsibilities and "for finding fault with your own talents and your own delights in the case of your handsome son." While the tale interprets this as flattering deference to Eros--even though he is not present and even though hers is the greater power--they give sound criticism and advice; they tell the truth, but since it is not what she wants to hear, Aphrodite "swept past them on the other side" (311).

Juxtaposing the two sets of sisters allows for some comparisons that resolve the unsatisfactory denouement to the relationship of Psyche and her sisters. What is acknowledged in the goddesses is their individual spheres of power; they are named and their names carry the association with their powers. Whether seen as a carry-over of earlier matrifocal lore or as existing in a patriarchal power structure, these goddesses have their individual spheres of influence and do not seek the powers of their sister. In their similarity of powers, there is also acknowledged a difference of sphere. What is missing in the mortal sisters is this sense of name, of individual difference and of

individual power.

In Aphrodite's world sisters may be wrong, irritating or too often right, but they are an essential part of the community of female life. Denying Psyche her sisters denies her what Downing has described as mirror and shadow self reflections. What is a far more profound loss is the friendship of similars. Linda A. Bell makes the important observation that in Western culture's traditional views differences and similarities have not been adequately appreciated. Because difference has been reduced only to gender and heterosexuality, "it has resulted in an enormous and uncritical assumption of the similarity of all women with each other" (226). Unlike the goddesses, the sisters are undifferentiated and nameless, and what they bring to Psyche is also unnamed. This unnamed mirroring therefore is unrecognized and lost to Psyche with their deaths. Acknowledging their similarities and differences, their griefs, anger and joy by keeping them alive would add a dimension missing from the final stages of Psyche's journey.

### The Wounds

In the tale, however, Eros is the one visibly, undeniably angry, burned--awakened--by "a drop of boiling oil" from the lamp Psyche holds (293). He quickly sees the danger he has escaped: the plan to cut off his head. Erich Neumann sees the planned act of cutting off Eros's head as

"an ancient symbol of castration sublimated to the spiritual sphere" and suggests further that "the opposition between a psyche that hates the beast and a psyche that loves the husband, is projected outward and leads to psyche's act" (72,77).

To suggest that castration is a spiritual sacrifice links castration to the definition of sacrifice as "ritual slaughter of an animal or person," and so implies the spilling of blood through violence, by sword or dagger. Even though Psyche's sisters supply her with a razor, she does not use it on Eros. He is only burned; he is not "sacrificed." By way of contrast, Psyche's abandonment on the mountain constitutes more of a sacrifice in the manner of ritual slaughter; she is consigned to an unnatural and violent death, even if a psychological rather than necessarily a physical one.

The dictionary gives the origins of sacrifice as the latin *sacre*, holy (whole) and *facere*, to make, and thus, another way of being made holy and whole is to be spent, used up, to live in service to life, to generation and to love. In this way Eros is a "dying god" and made sacred in Aphrodite's realm; he is enlisted in the service of life rather than given to death. He is merely wounded--burned--and requires time to heal. Thus the image is entirely consistent with the male role in physical reproduction. Eros is "spent" and "dies" in the service of life and rests to

recuperate, to "rise" renewed. Page Du Bois states that "the theme of male death or sleep after intercourse may refer to the male loss of semen and of force, which is sacrificed to the earth in order to ensure its continued productivity" (54).

Such a definition of sacrifice can also transform our interpretation of Psyche's pricking of her own thumb and bleeding. For her too, this blood may portray an aspect of entrance into female reproductive life and sexual experience. In M. Esther Harding's description of menstrual blood we come closer to an evocation of blood spent in the service of life. Likewise, Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove refer to menstruation as a "wise wound" that brings healing and self-knowledge. Bruno Bettelheim adds a description of such drops of blood in fairy tales as a symbol of sexual maturity (136) and as the "sexual bleeding" of menstruation or of the breaking of the hymen in first sexual intercourse (202). In all these interpretations, the "wise wounds" which women bleed without dying and the release of semen with which men die without dying is how Aphrodite makes life sacred and ever-renewing.

Eros does leave Psyche in anger, however, citing her ingratitude in a temper of sanctimonious indignation: "Illustrious archer that I am, I shot myself with my own weapon and made you my wife, for the pleasure it seems of having you think me a wild beast and cut off my head with a

sword, the head that holds these eyes that are your lovers" (295). When Marilyn Frye says that anger implies "a claim to domain" she could be referring directly to Eros, since he clearly claims--a patriarchally warranted--sole right to sight and to "ownership" of the beloved. Conflating Psyche's justifiable concern about his nature with her wish to see him denies the mutuality and respect that is necessary between equals. He will not grant Psyche this seeing and respect, and flies away. He intends to be revenged on the sisters, but punishes Psyche "merely by leaving." Still, Psyche responds not with anger, but in an action of despair and depression "threw herself over the edge of a nearby river."

#### Pan's Advice

The river deposits her unharmed on the bank. There, Psyche is addressed by Pan who is seated nearby with Echo. Pan's significance to the tale is seen by Neumann as that of a wise old man, loving and natural. Barbara Walker suggests a different description. She states that Pan represents "the sacred king who died in fertilizing the earth," that his attributes were "goat-hoofs, horns, and unremitting lust" and that he "coupled with all the Dionysian Maenads" (*Encyclopedia* 765). As a lusty though indiscriminating male fertility god, his wisdom would be of little use to a Psyche who is already pregnant and wishes for a more durable

reconnection with Eros.

As a fertility god, however, Pan's first comments direct an immediate attention to Psyche's appearance: "your weak and oft tottering footsteps, your extremely pale complexion, your constant sighing" (297). In a discussion of pregnancy, Robbie E. Davis-Floyd calls the birth process a transformational rite of passage and clarifies Pan's depiction of Psyche's behaviour:

What Victor Turner calls liminality, pregnant women experience as a sense of change, of growth, of detachment, fear, wonder, awe, curiosity, hope, specialness, simultaneous alienation from and closeness to themselves and their families, irritation, frustration, exhaustion, resentment, joy--and a trembling sense of unknown, unknowable potentiality. (24)

Davis-Floyd also notes that pregnant women sense that they share a "secret sisterhood" (35) and want to reclaim the sister-mother connections.

Within the tale as Apuleius relates it, Psyche does indeed seek out her sisters, but she does so because of Pan's advice: "Stop your mourning and put away your grief. Instead pray to [Eros], the greatest of the gods, and worship him and earn his favour with flattering deference, since he is a pleasure loving and soft hearted youth" (297). Notwithstanding Pan's suggestion that her behaviour is out of "flattering deference" to Eros, we may assume that she heeds Pan's advice and pleased Eros as she next confronts her sisters and tells them of Eros's love, thereby setting their destruction in motion.

But we must remember that it is Echo who is seated on Pan's lap. Neumann attributes Echo's presence as "the unattainable beloved," transforming herself "into music for him" and with whom he holds an eternal loving dialogue" (97-98). In keeping with my earlier interpretation of the Narcissus myth, I question the association of Echo with unattainability and argue that her presence is cautionary, suggesting that Pan's advice should be differently interpreted. Echo's presence implies a limited repetition or ironic parody of Pan's advice. That Pan is accompanied by Echo emphasizes Psyche's depression and passivity. As one who--like Echo--only "makes answers," Psyche remains outside the action and as voice, she repeats to her sisters the information that ensures their destruction. She speaks Eros's intent from the passivity of her own depression. Again the situation emphasizes grief, mourning and an absence of choice; Psyche is carried along by events even as she was carried by the river. Marilyn Frye's distinguishing the frustrations that cause anger from those that cause depression, gives a means for assessing what underlies Psyche's passivity. Her acceptance of Pan's advice suggests that Psyche is depressed, her anger is inward; she cannot save herself.

Apuleius has already indicated that Psyche is quite capable of anger and of expressing it. When she was to be sacrificed and faced with the lamentations of her family she

displayed a justifiable irritation: "When countries and peoples were giving me divine honours, when with a single voice they were all calling me a new [Aphrodite], that is when you should have wept, that is when you should have mourned me as if I were already dead." She recognizes their sorrow as "dealt by wicked Envy," but even this does not detract from a real and rightfully placed anger at her situation nor does it help her to save herself (249). Therefore, since she does not display that ability to be angry when Eros flees, I think we may conclude that she does not see herself as wronged, at least not in her choice of husband.

Similarly, she does not seem to regard her loss of Eros as unjust or unfair or due to someone's malice and this certainly absolves her sisters. She reacts to this loss with a passivity that suggests depression. According to Frye: "By determining where, with whom, about what and in what circumstances one can get angry and get uptake, one can map others' concepts of who and what one is" (94). The sisters may take their anger out on Psyche and she may revenge Eros on them, but none of the sisters may themselves find justice; Psyche behaves as if she does not think she has the power to affect Eros, to effect a reconnection.

### Mothering

The deference to Pan's advice and the subsequent



retribution delivered to her sisters do not bring peace to Psyche; therefore in her search for reconnection with Eros, she seeks help from the goddesses Demeter and Hera. They, however, refuse to intervene, citing Aphrodite's goodness, the kinship ties of love and friendship they owe her, and especially they stress her rightfulness as Psyche's mistress. These goddesses in their guises of daughter-lost seasonal agriculture or as lawful queen and patriarchal "wife of" are not Psyche's enablers in this situation. They are, however, goddesses like Aphrodite who are not contained by patriarchal dictates. Demeter forced the return of her daughter from Hades, and Hera continually prevents or makes exceedingly difficult the philanderings of Zeus. In this very intransigence they are appropriate models for Psyche, but as mentor, she requires the goddess of life and regeneration, Aphrodite/Isis.

Unable to find anyone to save her or to restore Eros magically to her, Psyche "took counsel with her own thoughts" and reached a decision: "Hand yourself voluntarily to your mistress and soften her furious attacks by submission, late though it be." She speculates: "Besides who knows but what you will find what you are searching for, there in his mother's house" (321). And Eros does await in his mother's house. As great goddess, as life, Aphrodite represents all possibilities, even that of a reconnection that promises a greater equality. More immediately, however,

Psyche is pregnant and must prepare herself for motherhood and its responsibilities.

Psyche's desire for reconnection with Eros and her pregnant condition require a reexamination of mothering relationships as they specifically affect the behaviour of Eros, Aphrodite and Psyche. By showing how the intensity and exclusivity of the mother-child relationship affects men and women, Nancy Chodorow's research into the mothering relationship can be used to reframe the connection between Aphrodite and Eros, as well as that between Psyche and Eros. Chodorow sees exclusive mothering as having several results. First, women are more emotionally important to men than men are to women. Second, this lopsided importance is exacerbated by men's attempts to repress their own relational needs. Third, a man's first adult experience of loss precipitates depression and an incapacity for forming new relationships (75). All of these features are clearly present in Eros's experience.

Eros moves from a dependence upon his mother to a passionate dependence on Psyche. When he forbids Psyche to look upon him, he is denying reciprocity and instead substitutes control for the interchange implicit in relationship needs. Denying what losing Psyche means to him and as a result of losing/rejecting her, Eros retreats into depression, withdraws from the world, away from responsibility and back to Aphrodite. He finds himself

unable and unwilling to form another relationship or reconnect with the old. The strength of his attachment to Psyche, however, is undeniable; as James Hillman notes, there are no myths that tell of Eros's infidelity; he is faithful.

Psyche must find her own way to reconnection. Her seclusion in paradise is paralleled by her solitude as she submits to Aphrodite and takes up the tasks she is assigned. Aphrodite both sets the tasks and aids Psyche in the guise of her familiars: the chthonic ants, the reeds in the borders between pool and land, and the eagle. She is mother and mother-in-nature who directs Psyche to an understanding of the strength of female being and feminine values.

### The Tasks

Psyche's tasks are tasks of female achievement and feminine development. She must sort seeds, gather golden fleece, collect water in a flask and bring a jar of beauty back from Persephone in the underworld. All the tasks symbolize various aspects of the goddess, and most of the associations are already familiar. Seeds are associated both with Aphrodite as a life goddess and Demeter as an agricultural goddess. Both Erich Neumann and Robert Johnson conflate seed and semen to describe Psyche as learning to differentiate and sort the promiscuous masculine. Yet since seeds are whole and therefore more like a zygote/fetus, it

is biologically and genetically inaccurate to link seed with semen in this way. Semen accounts for only one-half of the "seed," whatever the metaphor (falsely) implies; the ova supplies the other half. Rachel Blau DuPlessis sees the seeds as Psyche's own fruitfulness, the child/ren within and the importance of conscious choice in that fecundity. Although Psyche's pregnancy makes the case for such an interpretation, to restrict the symbolism of the seeds to female fertility is also problematic, for seeds do not represent either semen or ova in the literal, grounded and biological sense.

Literally, the seeds are wheat, barley, chick peas, millet, lentils, poppy seed and beans. As Mary Anne Ferguson observes, they are most appropriately read as the manifestations of concrete reality. Indeed, because the list includes beans, peas and lentils and so provides complete proteins, its significance to food preparation is obvious. Psyche learns all that is required to sustain physical well-being. Charlene Spretnak links the poppy specifically to Aphrodite and "herbal magic," (69) but Aphrodite's capacity as a fertility goddess also places the other seeds in her realm and makes this task symbolic of the traditional female responsibilities for the provision of food and herbal medicine. Johnson also sees sorting as directly related to the tasks of housekeeping (49) and further suggests the psychological aspect involved in keeping orderly track of

"the influx of emotions, moods, and archetypes for the family" (52).

The jars of the third and fourth tasks represent the goddess as life container, and the water in the third task recalls Aphrodite's birth and indeed primeval archetypal birth. The significance of the golden fleece of the second task is less obvious although certainly Aphrodite is the golden goddess. Jane Ellen Harrison, furthermore, provides a more complete explanation. In pre-Classical Greece, the fleece was divine, associated with purification and revelation; unwashed, it was left as an offering at the opening of Demeter's cave (159). At Delphi, it was woven into a "net-work of wool-fillets" to cover the omphalos (61).

The tasks thus depict women's historic and traditional spheres of labour. Women were responsible for agriculture, weaving, medicine and child care. Sorting seeds implies an understanding of the uses of plants for food and medicines, gathering fleece suggests weaving, and collecting water is the link to Aphrodite herself, to the knowledge of birth, life and the life source.<sup>2</sup> Even in today's society, women remain almost exclusively responsible for food and clothing purchases, general health care, birth and nurturing in the family, and children's religious and cultural education. Thus the tasks have a practical and historic relevance, as well as mythic and psychological implications.

The Descent

What gives special particular resonance to these tasks is that Psyche is pregnant throughout her entire ordeal and her pregnancy makes the fourth task specifically and physically female. In this task, Psyche makes a descent journey, a journey inward represented through a journey to the heart of the earth and to the center of life's last mystery. At this center, Psyche comes face to face with death. Her last task requires Psyche to replenish "beauty" for Aphrodite, "who used up and exhausted all she had while caring for her sick son." Specifically, Aphrodite gives her the following command:

Take this jar and go straight down from the daylight to the underworld and Orcus' own dismal abode. Hand the jar to [Persephone] and say: [Aphrodite] requests that you send her a little of your beauty, just enough to last her one brief day.

Initially, Psyche, "headed towards a high tower, with the intention of jumping off it, since she thought this was the most direct and decorous route by which she could descend to the underworld" (341).

The tower is described by Johnson as "a construct, a convention, a set of rules, a tradition, a system" (65). According to Harding, however, the moon deity is symbolized by a conic or stone pillar (42). Combining the two we may see Psyche as being aided by the tower as a lunar manifestation of Aphrodite and representing her wisdom. As sea and moon goddess, she is linked to tides and so to the

menstrual cycle, the cycle of potency and generation, of cleansing and regeneration.

The tower warns her that this kind of death, "this most direct and decorous route," provides no return ticket; "in no way will you be able to return from there" (341). Instead, the tower commands her to go to "Dis's breathing-vent... a dead end road... a direct track to Orcus' palace" (343) and warns her "not [to] go forward into that shadowy region empty-handed" (343). In preparation for her descent, Psyche is given other warnings by the tower. In these warnings, Neumann distinguishes between the traditional or more universal motifs of "coin" and "sops" and Psyche's being forbidden to help the others (112). The former pertain to what is regarded as universal (male) payment, while the latter refers to what is regarded as "unlawful" or taboo for female journeys in the green world.

The tower tells Psyche which tasks are worthy of her attention:

you will meet a lame ass carrying wood, with a lame driver as well, who will ask you to hand him some twigs that have fallen off his load. But you must not utter a single word and must pass by him in silence. (343)

She is told, in effect, where silence is appropriate, where it is right to be Echo. She should not divert her energies to assisting those who do not need it or who misconstrue charity. "Some twigs" do not constitute a worthwhile request even from the lame. The tower then provides another injunction:

Likewise, while you are crossing... a dead old man, floating on the surface, will lift up his rotting hands and beg you pull him into the boat. But be not swayed by unlawful pity. (345)

Thus the two directives are linked in their application to the misuses of pity. For Neumann, the injunction against pity "confronts every feminine Psyche on its way to individuation: it must suspend the claim of what is close at hand for the sake of a distant abstract goal." To him the injunction stresses the importance of ego stability and the need to avoid distraction (113). For Johnson, the prohibition is required because "the fourth task requires all of a person's energy and resources" (68).

Carol Gilligan, however, provides the basis for another interpretation, one that focuses on women's moral and ethical development and stresses the importance for women of integrating the care of self into the desire to care for others. Recognizing and valuing the independent self within the community, and of being responsible for one's own needs and desires within the social context, is expressed by Gilligan in terms of the seeming paradoxes of separation and attachment: "we know ourselves as separate only in so far as we live in connection with others, and that we experience relationship only in so far as we differentiate other from self" (63). Rather than taking the form of conflict, as what Neumann sees as a "struggle against the feminine nature" (112), Psyche's evolution can be read as a movement toward the inclusion of self into an ethic of care for others, as a



giving of the same importance to her own journeying as she would grant to others.

Next, Psyche is warned not to interfere in the weaving of life and death that is the responsibility of the Fates.

After you have crossed the river and gone on a little farther, some old women weaving at a loom will ask you to lend a hand for a moment. But you must not touch this either. (345)

These Three Fates, "some old women weaving," represent life's continuum: its beginning, middle and end, birth, life and death (Dexter 120). Psyche learns the limits of her personal responsibility for others' lives. This is an essential lesson of the limits of responsibility for someone about to be a mother, and it recalls the silence and absence of her own mother from all but the beginning of the story.<sup>3</sup>

The tower tells Psyche about the proper behaviour in the underworld. Psyche is warned that Persephone

will receive you kindly and courteously and try to persuade you to sit down comfortably beside her and eat a sumptuous supper. But you must sit on the floor and ask for common bread and eat that. (345)

While Psyche is encouraged to know death and the shadow as a part of life--to "break bread" with Persephone--she must not dwell on death or make of death "a sumptuous supper." In a discussion co-authored with Jung, C. Kerényi ties the sowing of corn specifically to the underworld journey and to the decay which heralds "fruitful death" (166). "In most cultures" adds Neumann, "to eat a meal some place is to forge permanent ties with that place, or family, or

situation. Where one eats, one is somehow committed" (69). What is forbidden is to "gorge" on it, to give death excessive and hence unfruitful value in life. Thus, the atypical prohibitions concern pity, responsibility, and excessive indulgence in, or fear of, death.

The final warning is "not to open or look into the jar that you will be carrying, and in fact do not even think too inquisitively about the hidden treasure of divine beauty" (347). Psyche pays heed and successfully completes her journey, but on her return to "bright daylight," she decides to "take out a tiny drop of [beauty] for myself" (347,349). Peresphone's jar is supposed to contain "beauty," but it contains a "deathlike and truly Stygian sleep" which attacks Psyche "instantly, enveloping her entire body in a dense cloud of slumber.... She lay there motionless, no better than a sleeping corpse" (349).

Whereas Neumann describes this "beauty" as a personal feminine desire and associates "a woman's preoccupation with beauty or attractiveness, with physical desirability" (71), Marie-Louise Von Franz sees women's concern with beauty more appropriately as "part of their persona and their conscious personality" (106). That Psyche's journey is downward and passes through the vent of Dis, a yonic or genital symbol, highlights the essentially female nature of this quest. All these details are in accord with the acquisition of wisdom (beauty) in the realm of Aphrodite-as-Persephone,

particularly if we understand wisdom and knowledge of the world as acquired in the experience of the body and through the senses.

Writing of the Summerian descent myth of Inanna, Sylvia Brinton Perera connects this kind of female descent journey with Jungian theory.

Inanna's descent... may be viewed as the incarnation of cosmic uncontained powers into time-bound corrupting flesh, but it is also a descent for the purpose of retrieving lost values long repressed and of uniting above and below into a new pattern. (143)

Such an interpretation is consistent with establishing Psyche's female physicality and feminine values. A direct female experience of the positive or spiritual nature of embodied female life is what women have lost. Regaining this spirituality requires a transformation that takes place in the mind and which involves the integration of embodied life with spiritual values within an intellectual framework that allows for the full and integrated expression of all three.

Persephone, the goddess of the underworld, is, in dualistic, dichotomous thinking, the shadow self of Aphrodite. She represents the realm of unconscious experience. To bring "contents" up from the underworld as Psyche does is to bring them to consciousness, according to Annis Pratt who goes on to link this directly to Eros energy:

Eros springs from the inner realm of the unconscious experience. Indeed, fully experienced Eros demands the capacity for moving down into and returning from the deepest realms of the libido. (74)

If, as she states, one element of romance is the search for "one's heart's desire," then Psyche must look into the "jar of beauty," must see for herself, know her own desire and experience its power. This opening of the jar indicates that the last of the green world tasks is successfully completed.

### The Choice

Psyche's choosing to open the jar containing "beauty," is for Neumann a failure. "Psyche fails, she must fail, because she is a feminine psyche. But she does not know it is precisely this failure that brings her victory" (121). While I do agree that this symbol is profoundly important, I differ with Neumann in various ways. Foremost, I believe that Psyche succeeds--she is "meant" to open the jar in the sense of being provided with the opportunity. In moving between Aphrodite and Persephone, she weaves together the mortal--human, living continuity--and the goddesses. In her pregnant condition, she reflects the potential for individuation, for generation and for female community itself, even as she is the connecting tie.

Opening the jar to take "beauty" for herself, she chooses to be responsible for her own needs. While Psyche is pregnant with a child, that child in a very real sense is, paradoxically herself and another paradox lies in the way that she dies to be reborn. One of the secrets of the jar--the opening up of the underworld and the opening of the

virgin's body--is a liminal event associated with ritual precaution (DuBois 58). Unlike her disobedience of Eros, this choice was not instigated by the sisters nor dependent on the urgings of others. Psyche has undertaken the four tasks of purification, has rightfully chosen for herself, and is an agent willing to accept the consequences of an action that might reconnect her to Eros.

And lastly, Psyche's act does bring what she desires; Eros does take pity on her. As Gilligan explains, men must integrate a care for others into their system of competing rights. For them to pity is to accept the other as equally important to the self; for men, after separation comes reconnection. In their second chance, Psyche has emerged with knowledge of her separateness and strength; and Eros with an understanding of his connectedness and responsibility. Both together recognize the point at which they rely on outside circumstances, on luck. Whether these are ants, reeds, towers, Aphrodite, Pan or Zeus matters little to this aspect of psychological understanding. Coming to terms with life implies an acceptance of things that cannot be controlled and a willingness to trust others.

## Chapter Five

### Learning Transformation

At the end of the twentieth century, in Western, Eurocentric culture, we are most comfortable looking at learning as an enlargement of an intangible intellectual spirit. Especially have analyses of women's learning been marked by the desire to show women as intellectually capable, even as there is real effort to remake learning into an exercise more in keeping with women's values. In *Women's Ways of Knowing*, the authors describe different perspectives "from which women view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge, and authority" (3). Their research also marks the transformational encounters, the transitional events, which cause women to change their self-concepts and opinions of their own mental capacities.

Aphrodite exhibits, especially in the tasks she assigns and in her metaphoric associations, the potential for a different reading of the learning that takes place within Psyche. In this way, Aphrodite can be viewed as mentor. Laurent A. Daloz defines mentors as guides and explains their significance.

They lead us along the journey of our lives. We trust them because they have been there before. They embody our hopes, cast light on the way ahead, interpret arcane signs, warn us of lurking dangers, and point out unexpected delights along the way. There is a certain luminosity about them, and they often pose as magicians in tales of transformation.... (17)

By restoring to Aphrodite her ancient powers and

connections, we can see Psyche engaged in a learning experience fully connected to female gender and women's traditional transhistorical responsibilities.

### Silence

In the beginning, the behaviour of Psyche--like that of Echo--is locked into silence. Her beauty, the sacrifice and her ensuing marriage to Eros are not of her doing or choosing; she submits. She is both acquiescent and alone, unable to connect with, or exert influence on, those around her. Her behaviour portrays her as one of the silent: she exhibits an extreme denial of self, dependence on external authority, inability to learn or connect through language or from her own experience. Like the women described in *Ways*, she is locked into the immediate present and into specific and enacted behaviour. The self descriptions of such women appear to hinge wholly on "their own movements in and around the geographic space that surrounds them" (31) just as Psyche is concretely aware of her surroundings, "attracted by the allurements of this beautiful place" (255).

In *Ways*, this demeanour is characterized by the authors as passive and dependent, yet whereas passive is usually construed to mean the opposite of active (that is, without agency, without the will or desire to do or exert influence), here passivity is also perceived as a way of resisting when the outcomes of all alternatives for action

are deemed to be, or are perceived as unpleasant. This latter response could be more accurate as an explanation of Psyche's attitude. She expresses irritation with those around her, but she is not able to influence them; nor does she expect to. Like Psyche, the women described in *Ways* rely entirely on external authority, pure and absolute polarities and "blind obedience." They are entirely closed in upon themselves, and have no vantage point from which to imagine a complete self, or even to bring an external physical picture of self into view (26-32).

Belenky et al. suggest that movement out of silence is encouraged by "face to face" conversation and a "sign rich environment" (33). Certainly, Psyche experiences a sensual and sign rich environment in the paradise with Eros beyond her father's kingdom, and the face to face encounters are provided by Eros and by her sisters. While her paradisaical encounter with Eros is certainly physically close and mutually pleasurable and his conversations with her influential, she is forbidden to "see" him in the way that she is able to see her sisters. Her relationships with them provide for a mutuality of equals.

Silence is also tied to problems of communication. In Carol Gilligan's view, women's sense of moral values is directly related to hearing the other person's point of view, linking together attention and perception. The failure to respond to another and the failure to listen to another



indicate detachment; they are perceived by girls as not caring and are described in terms of the loss of voice--silence--and in terms of being equitable.

The amount of energy devoted to solving these problems [of communication], the intensity of the search for ways to make connection and achieve understanding, led girls to express immense frustration in situations where voice failed. When others did not listen and seemed not to care, they spoke of "coming up against a brick wall." The image of a wall had as its counterpart the search for the opening through which one could speak. (150)

Women's learning journeys do seem to suggest the importance of maintaining connection even through the silences of separation. Belenky et al. also state, however, that the "act of creation ushers in a whole new view of one's creative capacities" (35). Indeed, it is after Psyche becomes pregnant that she listens to--hears--the voices of her sisters, and this listening/hearing precipitates the confrontation with Eros (289).

Significant, too, for this discussion of learning is the fact that the conflict with Eros and the instigation of the sisters center not only on Psyche's relationship with her sisters, but also on Psyche's curiosity and that of her sisters. Psyche is, in effect, forbidden to be curious about the identity of her husband; she is allowed only a "blind" carnal knowledge. The sisters tell her to use a lamp to uncover his identity, to satisfy her own as well as their curiosity, and to use a razor to ensure her own safety if necessary. When Psyche does equip herself in this way after

Eros has fallen asleep, the lamp and razor respond in ways that confirm Psyche's safety with this husband: "At the sight of him even the light of the lamp quickened in joy and the razor repented of its sacrilegious sharpness" (291).

The lamp and the razor signify the specifically cognitive abilities of perception and judgment. The experiential and body-centered nature of Psyche's intellectual experience in comprehending Eros are made clear by the symbolism Barbara Walker attributes to these tools. She refers to the lamp as "an almost universal symbol of enlightenment," and she identifies "light in darkness" as meaning creation or birth and as symbolizing mystical enlightenment through sexual experience--through carnal/body knowledge. The razor she defines as "the cutting edge... the universal standard of sharpness... the keenness of female judgment" (*Dictionary* 143,151). This "razor" judgment (like Athena/Artemis's dagger) implies the mental actions of careful separation--dissecting, analyzing, scrutinizing, inspecting, observing--and close, "scientific" attention to detail.<sup>1</sup>

These skills reside with Psyche; her sisters suggest only how she might use them. Even though designated by the sisters as a useful weapon, the razor is not used on Eros. The lamp enables judgment, and safety renders the knife as weapon unnecessary. Whether his fear of beheading--castration--is real or not, she does not attack him.

Together these tools may be said to represent her intellectual potential for perception: her in-sight, reasoning and understanding; they represent an embodied learning that relies on sense experience and intellectual judgment.

*The Pricking of Psyche's Thumb*

Psyche fulfils her curiosity about the nature of her husband and his weapons and pricks her thumb on one of his arrows. Whereas others have suggested that this represents a "second defloration" (Neumann 64; Ulanov 221), I suggest that it represents the moment when Psyche actively chooses to love. Whereas the arrow's prick implies the male role in heterosexual intercourse as well as love's eye-beam, in this instance it represents an aspect of Psyche's own more cognitively based experience. What is marked by her action is the element of choice, the moment of choice which enters into love relationships.

After Psyche sees Eros for the first time, she tests the sharpness of her vision by touching her thumb to the arrow point. At this moment (point), when love becomes an intellectual choice as well as paradisaal erotic enjoyment, judgment is added to love. This is, likewise, the moment when the lover recognizes the profound and even irreconcilable differences between self and other that exist outside of gender difference.

The thumb is defined as an "apposable digit," one that can move next to or side by side with the fingers to grasp or hold on to objects. This ability is also metaphoric; it signals a specific capacity to hold on, and by extension, to hold hands and be together. That Psyche pricks "the tip of her thumb" reenforces her personal apprehension of care and responsibility. Symbolically, according to Walker's *Encyclopedia*, the thumb represents the soul, and as "the innermost Self, dwells forever in the heart of all things" (997). This definition also evokes Psyche's pregnant condition--even though the fetus is not forever in-dwelling. Such symbolic connotations confirm a self-directed, experiential and embodied knowing and emphasize the agency suggested by Apuleius's diction: "She drew one of the arrows from the quiver and tested the point against the tip of her thumb." The connotations also deemphasize the contradiction presented later, when Apuleius observes: "Thus without knowing it Psyche of her own accord fell in love with Love" (293).

Walker's designation of the symbolic meaning of the fingers, conversely helps to clarify what Psyche does not choose (*Dictionary* 310,315). Psyche does not prick the index finger of spells and pointing, which might indicate that she is a witch of either patriarchal or matrilineal defining. She does not prick the phallic middle finger of derision, which might imply that she was taking over from Eros, his

role or responsibilities and in effect, illustrating the wish to castrate him. Nor does she prick the ring finger of unions and love, which would emphasize the marriage and the union with Eros even above her own life's journey. Certainly she does not prick the "pinky" of ineffectuality and thus denigrate her own decision to look at love.

The pricking causes the eruption of tiny drops of blood, indicating life itself and especially female physicality and kinship bonding. Walker also relates blood to female wisdom, and here, the pricking of her thumb is especially appropriate (*Dictionary* 299-300). That she draws her own life's blood from the thumb reaffirms that Psyche has moved through sexual maturity, sexual experience and gratification towards personal choice. Her experience of love has grown from passion's embrace of body and emotion to include reason's choice, a wise preference governed by an adult knowledge of difference and responsibility. Love becomes agency and is self-chosen; no longer is it compelled by a patriarchal transfer of her body from father to husband. Psyche's choice of love is a willed, reasoned, sexual and emotional passion.

### The Taboo

The question of what else is being forbidden remains. Even patriarchy allows women to love, and a woman who chooses to love voluntarily is perceived as more amenable

than one coerced. Hence in the interdiction, there remains something beyond the obvious. Psyche must not look at or see Eros, male love; she may experience him/it only in darkness. When she does see him, Eros is sleeping, defenceless, vulnerable; he is not active, in control, erect. What Psyche is forbidden is to place Eros as object in a passive or feminine position.

This ancient taboo against the explicit depiction of the male (or male genitalia) as love object still persists into the present.<sup>2</sup> Rosemary Betterton has identified the power issues that coexist with the eroticization of sight: men have not been eroticized as objects for women's benefit and women have not been allowed the subjectivity of their own experience. This is part of the patriarchal taboo that Psyche's look has broken, the "mystery" of the phallus that exists to obscure the actual genitalia, the actual male being. Such a look is dangerous (to patriarchy) because women tend to see the individuality of their male models.

In her examination of the issues affecting women's art practice and criticism, Cassandra Langer describes the censorship applied to women who paint male nudes. Writing of Sylvia Sleigh's male nudes, Langer notes the change from the depiction of "beautiful blanks" when women are eroticized by male painters to women's depiction of an erotic appreciation of individualized "self-possessed and sexy male." The response is revealing:

The irate male audience is particularly sensitive to the change in position from vertical to horizontal, from superior to object. Ironically, this same moral male hierarchy sees the objectification of wombs, vaginas, and breasts by men as perfectly acceptable works of art.... It is indeed a paradox that these same art lovers are capable of censoring the work of women artists who have the unmitigated audacity to use male anatomy in a similar fashion. (120)

When we are made aware of the frailties, individual characteristics and weaknesses of the de-idealized male, men are no longer Man and universally powerful. The act of female looking at the male body challenges the authority in who has the right to look and reveals (the hitherto veiled and suppressed) human frailty of individual men. Either way men are no longer valorized, and thus they lose the right to an unquestioned authority, telling only their knowledge and vision as truth. This upending of author-ized (patriarchal) social structure is what Psyche's action portends. She loves an equal as an equal and now experiences her own desire for him: "Then more and more enflamed with desire for [Eros] she leaned over him, panting desperately for him" (293).

This satisfaction of curiosity has led to new desire. Describing this growth, James Hillman interprets the "awakening of the sleeping soul" as psychic development and sees the entire Psyche myth as offering a pattern of creativity, a "mystery text of transformation" (56). Hillman also tells us that present in the awakening of sleeping Eros through soul, in the "interplay of eros and psyche," is a ritual "between people and within each person" (59). This he

describes as a doubled form: within the psyche and "between the human and the divine" (60). I would suggest further that the metaphors require that psychological growth takes a triple form: the one relationship-between of human and divine and the other two taking the form of relationships-within of Eros and Psyche.

Hillman, however, continues by linking the creative spirit to genetic and masculine sexuality: "Eros has particular mythical connections with Phanes, the light-bringer; with Hermes, the male communicator; with Priapus, the phallic incarnation; with Pan, the male force of nature; with Dionysus, indestructible living energy" (65-66). By this reasoning, he goes on to say that access to creativity is more natural for men: "For a woman it requires an addition to her female identity; she has to bring it out of herself, give birth to it."

This "masculine Eros of the creative principle" is a transcendent "upward" motion away from the earth: "Therefore we find in eros literature the recurrent symbols of the fallen sparks, the ladder, the ascending fire, the wings, the Olympian goal of immortality" (83). What Hillman highlights is not only the strength of the taboo that Psyche has broken but also the way interpretations have encoded male sexuality to obscure the creativity in Psyche's experience; women's intellectual creativity has been conflated into physical pregnancy. Rejecting her, Eros



"straightaway flew up from the hugs and kisses" (293). Psyche clings for a time to his right leg, but "exhausted fell to the ground" (295). Within this metaphoric extension, earthbound Psyche cannot hold a place.

### The Grounded Journey

Psyche's transformation has its mystic qualities, but it is at the same time, human and earthbound. Throughout her experiences, the betrayals and tasks, she is depicted as walking in the same way that paradise has brought "constant habituation" and knowledge of her own and another's body. Hers is a journey in time, grounded--with the significant exception (in Apuleius's version) of her marriage and ascendance to immortality. She makes her way on foot. If hers is a soul's journey, it is also conducted on the soles of her feet and is solitary. In the connection of soul and sole, Nor Hall says that soul-feet are the way we enact "the interrelationship between human beings and green-life, rock-life, animal-life and planet-life" (166). Walker adds that "stones dedicated to Isis and [Aphrodite] were marked with footprints, meaning 'I have been here'" (*Dictionary* 309). Footsteps mark a moment-by-moment measurement of time, a linear and incremental timekeeping, a logical and even "scientific" time measurement. Footsteps suggest destination and the possibility of ending. Psyche learns to track time's passage in a path already marked by Aphrodite.

Learning as Listening

Psyche's rejection by Eros emphasizes the focus on learning acquired through listening and illustrates what *Ways* designates as received knowledge: "women in this position listen to others for directions as well as for information" (40). Their ideas and ideals are dualistic and simplistically absolute and separate: "Paradox is inconceivable" (41). Belenky et. al. also note that in such situations women do not see themselves as possessing authority or as being linked in any way with authority; authority is "they" (44). Like Psyche, they do not understand that advice, too, may be weighed and evaluated.

In fact, following rejection by one authority--Eros--Psyche listens to and seems to accept the advice of another--Pan. Psyche does not understand the irony of Pan's description of Eros as the "greatest of the gods" and a "soft hearted youth." Unlike her, we know Eros has not been especially soft-hearted in his rejection of Psyche and we see also that rage and retribution against the sisters--not forgiveness--follows his grief. Neither is Eros, precisely speaking, the greatest of the gods; he inspires fear of a different sort--the fear of one's own innermost desires unleashed. She next turns to the goddesses, Demeter and Hera who, however, firmly and politely refuse to assist her because Aphrodite "is making an intense investigation to track you down" (315).

Psyche's inability to interpret Pan's advice, like the real truth in his words, her deference to others--her father, her sisters, Eros, the goddesses--and in her failures of judgment, identify her as a received knower. By empowering others, the reasoning goes, she, herself, may gain what she wants because these others will take care of her (*Ways* 47). At the same time and like the women interviewed in *Ways*, Psyche "understands that she must begin to listen to her own voice if she is to become clear and confident and to move on in her life" (*Ways* 51). By her own decision and in her own best interest, Psyche turns to Aphrodite and accepts her as mistress and mentor.

### Subjective Knowing

In just such a manner, the third "way of knowing" indicates a shift from seeing the source of truth as residing in an external authority to seeing its source by way of an "inner voice and infallible gut" of intuition (*Ways* 54). Although there are still "right" answers, an inner source of certainty guides the growth of self confidence, and presupposes the growth of judgment. For women, this shift to subjective knowing arises out of an awareness of "failed male authority. Society teaches women to put their trust in men as defenders, suppliers of the economic necessities, interpreters of the public will, and liaisons with the larger community"; because there is an

absence of "stable male authority," the "sense of disappointment and outrage" is "pervasive" (*Ways* 57-58).

Keeping this in mind, it is possible to interpret Pan and Eros as representing failed male authority, representatives who remind us of the father and priest who similarly failed to protect her. Psyche's suicide attempts can be regarded as reactions to this loss of support from an all-powerful external authority and as a reaction to a pervasive psyche-shattering disappointment. Women who are subjective knowers are characterized by a distrust of "logic, analysis, abstraction, and even language" (*Ways* 71). At the same time, they "lack... grounding in a secure, integrated, and enduring self concept" (81). Thus Psyche's acquiescence in being "sacrificed" following her father's "betrayal," and the suicide attempts following Eros's defection and Pan's advice all accurately reflect such a lack of self-esteem.

This absence of a firm self-concept has, at the same time, a positive aspect: an openness to growth, a desire for change. Such women use "the imagery of birth, rebirth and childhood to describe the experience of a nascent self" (*Ways* 82). Psyche is pregnant and so portrays this "nascent self" powerfully. Watching and listening continue as important learning tools, but such women now begin to make comparisons, learning from others' experiences as well as their own (*Ways* 84).

In her first task, Psyche reproduces the movement from the perceptions and understandings of the received knower, towards the tasks of the subjective knower. Confronted with a "motley mass of seeds," she is instructed by Aphrodite to "put each grain properly in its pile" (329). The seeds can be read as facts, as received "grains" of knowledge and information; they do not need translation or interpretation; they need sorting, categorization. Literally, the seeds represent the range of agricultural and herbal lore necessary to the provision of food and naturopathic medicines. Figuratively, the act of sorting allows Psyche to know herself capable of recognizing differences in type, making comparisons, and organizing similarities and differences categorically; she discriminates and classifies.

In the sorting, Psyche's helpers are ants. According to Neumann, ants are "symbols of the instinct world... the "vegetative" nervous system" (95); to Johnson, they are servants of Eros (48); to Ferguson, they are "the cooperation of natural forces" (61); to Christine Downing, they are "siblings in their helpful aspect" (*Sisters* 50). Bringing all these views together, I would suggest that the ants may be understood to epitomize Psyche's own intuitive powers, to represent a continuation of the sisters' influence and to recall the power of the natural world and sexual pleasure. Psyche thus brings intuitive, sensory and affective awareness together with the cognitive aspects of

previous experience to confront this new task. As instincts, as servants, as natural and helpful siblings, the ants reenforce Psyche's ownership of all the abilities needed to guarantee successful completion of the task.

### Procedural Reasoning

The second task set by Aphrodite enlarges on the capabilities of the first by introducing a greater complexity. Psyche is told by Aphrodite to: "Procure a hank of... fleece of precious wool in any way [you] please, and bring it to me at once" (333). The fleece is from "Sheep whose fleeces shine with the pure hue of gold" (333). Upon hearing the task, Psyche again attempts suicide but is prevented by the "green reed" who advises,

Do not approach these fearsome wild sheep at this time of day, when they borrow heat from the burning sun and often break out in fierce madness.... But until the afternoon allays the sun's heat... you can hide.... And then... if you shake the foliage in the adjacent woods, you will find some of the woolly gold.... (333)

Attending to advice direct from Aphrodite's natural world, Psyche is successful: "Once she had been carefully instructed she never faltered or had reason to regret obeying" (335).

Procedural knowing, the fourth category according to *Ways*, arises out of the perception of conflict--as in the case of "the fearsome sheep"--and through meeting authorities that are benign and knowledgable--as in Psyche's "green and gentle reed." Also, Aphrodite by her

associations, if not her words or all of her actions, is benign and knowledgeable as well as confrontational and exacting; by setting the tasks, she has provided the opportunities and the helpers that allow Psyche to recognize her own power and knowledge and to expand her self-knowledge. This category and task emphasize the acquisition of more complex procedures, skills and techniques.

Psyche has exercised reason in interpreting the "kind and simple reed"; she does not need others to decipher this advice for her; she collects the fleece successfully because she pays attention to the language of the natural world itself. As a useful tool, the razor, too, might be linked to this task. It represents sheering rather than slaughter, leaving the sheep alive to provide for future needs.

As symbol, the fleece is variously called "male solar spirit" (Neumann 101), masculine power and courage (Johnson 54) and female "sexual power and the recognition of potency" (DuPlessis 86). There are, however, other interpretations which fit more easily into this examination of women's learning experience. Marija Gimbutas tells us that sheep were sacred to the Bird Goddess, as well as being a food source in Neolithic settlements, and that the Bird Goddess was associated with weaving (75,67). She also notes that the Bird Goddess was the precursor of Aphrodite, Hera, and Isis (318). Nor Hall makes a more direct link with the goddess, the sheep and knowledge: "Delphi means 'womb'. A small herd

of mountain goats discovered the womblike cleft in the earth that later became the Delphic temple site" (177).

In this light, then, Psyche is indeed Aphrodite's initiate, and we can interpret the collecting of fleece as implying carding, spinning and weaving, as epitomizing knowledge of these typical and traditional female crafts. As Hillman notes, creativity involves an ordering process; here carding and spinning and problem solving are related to planning a woven design, and these in turn enhance the development of consciousness. In just this way, again according to Hillman, Psyche reasons: "while eros burns, psyche figures out, does its duties, depressed" (94). There is much in traditional female responsibilities to "figure out." Weaving implies those important systems of order, pattern and procedure and of a suitable structure for projecting thought into the future.

Like the learning entailed in the provision of food medicines symbolized by the first task, the supply and maintenance of clothing and household furnishings continue through time as a designated and endless female obligation and duty. Moreover, this "ceaseless weaving acquires a magical quality" (Pomeroy 30) and links Psyche with the Three Fates, the spinners of life and death, "aspects of the archaic Triple Aphrodite" (Walker *Dictionary* 302) whom she will meet in the fourth task. As metaphors of reason and understanding, carding presents an initial ordering and



preparation of thought, and spinning replicates a drawing out or measuring of ideas to appropriate conclusions. These spun skeins, threads, and ideas are then, metaphorically, woven into concept, conjecture, and theory, finally to be tied off, cut free and released.

Through the collection of the skeins of "woolly fleece" and (by implication and logical projection) through the carding and spinning of threads and finally to the weaving of patterned cloth, this image of collecting strands of fleece holds within it a reading which suggests that Psyche has moved into procedural knowing and an appreciation of context.

Procedural knowledge comprehends the world as increasingly complicated, and integrates or synthesizes objectivity with subjective experience and circumstance; it emphasizes attending to, and waiting for, meaning that emerges from the object rather than from the self alone, just as a weaving arises from the loom, from the threads and from the creative self. Such an understanding consists of the ability to fore-see, to see ahead, to plan out and forward to add a futuristic element to what has transpired. Likewise, in procedural knowing the resolution of conflict does not involve violence and aggression, but hinges on the acquisition of techniques for conflict resolution/avoidance.

That Psyche must postpone until evening the gathering of the strands of golden fleece indicates the importance of

judging context and the significance of foresight, forbearance and the ability to wait. The extension of the fleece symbolism to include the logical implications of carding, spinning and weaving illustrates types of truth-seeking skills as well as planning processes. In this way, the metaphorical implications--"entailments"--of gathering the golden strands of fleece and of weaving imply the weaver's creativity, both in planning a pattern ahead and as attentiveness, while meaning or pattern are revealed materially and in context.

#### Connected Knowing

As Belenky et. al. describe it, procedural knowledge may be of two forms: separate and connected. Separate knowing is measured in knowledge itself, as in how to card and weave; connected knowing is measured in understanding. The separate procedural orientation is based on "impersonal procedures for establishing truth" and connected knowing on "truth emerg[ing] through care" (102). Separate knowing is portrayed as being most at ease in doubt and distance; connected knowing begins with belief and sharing or compassion. Even though they are described as learning through empathy and forbearance rather than formal instruction and manipulation, connected procedural knowers find collaboration helpful, perhaps because of the outward orientation of this perspective. This outward orientation,

however, operates within particular limits: "Women who rely on procedural knowledge... can criticize a system, but only in the system's terms" (127). The "weaving" takes place within the strictures prescribed by the structure of the "loom."

Psyche's second task also involves a particular and "connected" perception of time. This time sense is one that is integral to housekeeping and empathy (a seeing out into, a seeing within), forbearance and waiting. Katherine Allen Rabuzzi characterizes this kind of time as mythic, experiential and subjective, and "radically at odds with the more accepted time patterns of Western culture. Though we know better, we often act as though linear, quantifiable time (associated with masculine questing) were given in nature" (145). In traditional cultures and agricultural societies, mythic time is seasonal, but this time sense can be directly linked to housekeeping chores which "are so obviously circular that their completion can scarcely be experienced" (149). Psyche in her task represents this second seasonal time sense that is present in the natural and domestic worlds.

Furthermore, Mary O'Brien relates this different temporal or seasonal consciousness directly to a gendered reproductive consciousness and emphasizes the aspect of flow: "Female temporal consciousness is continuous" (32). Psyche, waiting to collect the fleece and then carrying out

the gathering, depicts a transhistorical image of traditional agriculture and housekeeping, the maintenance chores of family and community life, performed with the expectation of being redone, of ending and not-ending. Psyche's waiting encodes a second time sense as well as the kind of connected procedural knowledge necessary to the "routine" chores of maintaining a household and managing interpersonal conflicts.

This sense of time as continuity brings Psyche directly in touch with memory and links sense experience to consciousness. Memory is transformed into knowledge; remembered experience into understanding. The process is akin to Psyche's first task, the sorting of seeds, but enlarges its significance. In pre-literate cultures according to Walter J. Ong, this creation of consciousness arises from the connections between orality and literacy, feeling and intellect, memory and consciousness. Furthermore, creativity depends on an ability to dissolve boundaries or find a process that allows for the permeation of barriers set up between self and other.

According to Ong, writing incorporates a division and alienation that is resolved in "a higher unity" that "ties human beings together" (179). In contrast, an oral culture sees knowledge as an incorporation, a "unifying phenomenon, a striving for harmony" rather than "a fractioning" (72). This incorporation suggests allowing oneself to be taken

over and that is easily comprehended by those who live in female bodies. As women experience the processes of menstruation, pregnancy and birthing, these processes are beyond agency and yet ultimately creative. In any case, this way of perceiving is particularly close to that described as connected knowing.

Connectedness, individuation and knowledge are played out in female experience through the valuation given personal experience, multiplicity of voices and points of view, and empathetic understanding. Having belief rather than doubt is integral to connected knowing: "If one can discover the experiential logic behind... ideas, the ideas become less strange and the owners of the ideas cease to be strangers" (*Ways* 115).

Connected knowing does not debate, defend or argue; it is concerned with shared truth and shared ideas; it is non-judgmental because judgment breaks connection: "Within their own frameworks... women said they could make moral judgements, but they did not wish to impose them on others" (*Ways* 117). Ultimately, connected knowing requires patience, an ability to wait, an active receptivity and attention, a willingness to allow others to unfold at their own pace. Finally, it requires a letting go of control, a capacity for giving oneself up to experience just as Psyche had to present herself before the life goddess herself.

### Self-Constructed Knowledge

Psyche's third task, collecting water in a crystal jar, presents not only a concise symbolic representation of this same experiential view of relationship and time, but also a movement out into a more personal and self-constructed knowledge and understanding. For women, self-constructed knowledge promotes the integration of opposites and dualities into seeming paradoxes. *Ways* describes this as a healing of the split between emotion and intellect (179), a healing which takes place in a "connected" mode (186). Aphrodite sets the third task as a test of Psyche's "courageous spirit and singular intelligence" (335). Although "singular intelligence" might seem to suggest Psyche's own uniqueness, what the task involves is the recovery of connections lost through dualistic thinking-- what Mary O'Brien calls a "male-stream" thinking that she conjectures may be linked to the "gap" in male reproductive consciousness (34).

In this third task, Aphrodite gives Psyche a list of clear but complicated instructions:

"Do you see that steep mountain-peak standing above the towering cliff? Dark waves flow down from a black spring on that peak and are enclosed by the reservoir formed by the valley nearby, to water the swamps of Styx and feed the rasping current of Cocytus. Draw me some of the freezing liquid from there, from the innermost bubbling at the top of the spring, and bring it to me quickly in this phial." With that she handed her a small vessel hewn out of quartz.... (335)

Confronted with the enormity of the task and faced with the

dangerous snakes lining the streams and preventing her ascent to the peak, Psyche is "transformed to stone" (337), returned again to stasis and silence. She is then aided by "Jupiter's royal bird... the rapacious eagle," who takes the phial, "alleging [to the spring] that he was making his petition at [Aphrodite's] orders and acting as her agent" (339). This statement contains more truth than subterfuge; as bird, the eagle is under Aphrodite's purview. Her precursor, as Gimbutus tells us, was the Bird Goddess. The eagle, as minion to the Life Goddess, fills the pitcher and returns it to Psyche who then carries it to Aphrodite. The symbolism of these elements defines the "intellectual" nature of the task and the many other levels of female experience to which the task applies.

The water provides a profound image of connection and of connected knowing. Both Neumann and Johnson recognize this image as symbolizing the water of life; Neumann underscores its "vital energy" and "the uncontainable energy of the unconscious" (103), and Johnson, its "vastness" (61). In her *Encyclopedia*, Walker links "a watery womb of chaos or formlessness" with the Great Mother Goddess or Kali, and describes this womb/water image as "drawn from the lack of differentiation of self from other--or self and mother--experienced by the infant in the womb and subconsciously remembered throughout life as an archetypal image" (1066). She notes that this conflation of "water" and "mother"

continued up to the middle ages (and so would be well understood by Apuleius).

The links between water, motherhood and the Goddess are inherent in Aphrodite's sea birth, and both Gimbutus and Walker describe the Goddess's nature as being water-like. In addition, springs, birds and snakes are associated with Goddess shrines. Furthermore, Walker connects water metaphorically with love as "essential to the life forces of fertility and creativity, without which the psychic world as well as the material world would become an arid desert" (1066). Pomeroy also sees the similarities between the ritual cleansing of the corpse and the care of infants: "the cycle of life takes us from the care of women and returns us to the care of women" (44). Thus the water and the task are female and feminine, doubly Goddess inspired. In this way, the third task is a powerful image of the connections between mother and child, and of the connected knowing within communities.

In *The Woman's Dictionary*, Walker sees water as a metaphor for spirit and the unconscious, for fertility, creativity, rebirth and baptism. Water is seen as life sustaining: "The Goddess was shown holding either her own breasts or a jar with two streams" (357). When we remember that the Psyche embarking on this transformational learning journey is pregnant, and if we link this water symbolism to Walker's analysis of mountain symbolism, the association is



particularly powerful:

The oldest deity in Greece was the Divine Mountain Mother... called... Deep-Breasted One. She controlled several mountain shrines including the Delphic oracle which was later usurped by Apollo.... The idea of universal breast milk flowing down from mountain peaks was common to both East and West. (346)

The vital nature of the task might include not only the ability to contain life in the womb but also to sustain life with breast milk subsequent to birth.

On a more general though equally practical level, this third task recalls traditional women's tasks of nursing the sick, of healing and medicine. The caregivers in the family and community were then, and continue now to be, primarily women. Gimbutus emphasizes just this curative sacredness of water, links it to the Bird Goddess and describes it as "Living Water which imparts strength, heals the sick, rejuvenates the old, restores sight, and reassembles dismembered bodies and brings them back to life" (43). As such, the image further reenforces the connections and empathetic responses characteristic of connected knowing.

In Psyche's task, water/milk from the spring is to be contained in a small vessel. In his interpretation, Johnson remarks on the quantity contained: "a little of a quality, experienced in high consciousness is sufficient for us.... [W]e may see the world in a grain of sand" (62). The crystal container, Johnson describes as "very fragile and very precious," like the ego (62). Johnson also interprets this task as an admonition to women "to approach the vastness of

life's responsibilities in a more orderly manner, to do one thing, take one crystal goblet at a time, concentrate on it, and do it well" (63). According to Neumann, Psyche's task is to function

as feminine vessel... to give form and rest to what is formless and flowing; as a vessel of individuation, as mandala-urn, she is ordered to mark off a configured unity from the flowing energy of life, to give form to life. (103)

Here, both interpretations suggest Psyche's ability to give form, to construct and take responsibility for her own understanding.

In addition, Neumann recognizes that "the essential feature of this spring is that it unites the highest and lowest" (103), and consequently the spring itself may be described as bringing together those polarities by a continuous movement. According to Neumann, the stream is "male generative" and "the paternal uroborus" and hence the vessel and water again conjoin the dualities of masculine and feminine, male and female as well as high and low. Indeed, with his interpretation of the eagle as a "masculine spirit aspect," Neumann sees this task as an integration of opposites:

The eagle holding the vessel profoundly symbolizes the already male-female spirituality of Psyche, who in one act "receives" like a woman, that is, gathers like a vessel and conceives, but at the same time apprehends and knows like a man. (105)

He goes on to link this to Psyche's earthbound nature:

"Because Psyche is born of the earth, she can only receive

and give form to a part of the infinite that is within her reach, but this precisely is what befits her and makes her human" (106). Neumann notes that this development, too, is double, but the doubled nature involves an accompanying increase: "This is the surprising thing about Psyche's development: it is a development toward consciousness that is accompanied throughout by consciousness" (106). Because this "duality" proceeds incrementally, however, it exceeds the idea of a "closed" binary union; it is the both/and, two/one. The "duality" becomes three.

There are other dualities represented as transformed by the task. The water is called "dark" and "black" (335). The container is of crystal. Walker links crystal with quartz and states that quartz was believed by the ancient Greeks to be "petrified ice" (*Dictionary* 508,519). Of Psyche's helper, the eagle, she says that it "is traditionally associated with lightning, fire, and the sun as well as the hero who, like Prometheus, brought down fire from heaven for the benefit of humanity" (401). Thus, "black" water in a "petrified ice" container is carried by (golden Aphrodite's) bird of light, sun and fire. In contrast to the Promethean situation, here the components are Psyche (human consciousness) and the waters of darkness (the unconscious) brought by the eagle at the behest of Aphrodite (the life goddess). The eagle carries the water down from the mountain top where it has surfaced from deep in the earth's core, the

source of the spring.

These polarities are reconciled and carried onwards through space and time. The continuum between perceived opposites, the movement between and through the polarities and then beyond, arises with an accompanying growth. From a "spring," the water "flows down" to the underworld river, Cocytus; from earth's center it flows up to the mountain top and down to the underworld again. Thus, lowest through highest becomes lowest again. The movement suggests the triplicities in the nature of the goddess: life/death/rebirth, generation/preservation/regeneration. The "freezing liquid" contained by ice, the crystal container, is carried by fire, the eagle, and is "doubly" triple in temperature and substance. Eagle and container signify an understanding based in an affinity for continuum, accretion and process.

Analogous to the symbolism of Psyche's third task, *Ways* comments that women at the level of constructed knowledge integrate the dualities of subjective and objective knowledge, intuition and analysis, structure and procedure. The experiences of this level involve intensive self-reflection and self-analysis. The separate knowers talk about finding patterns--as in the weaving of Psyche's second task--whereas connected knowers focus on the recovery of lost parts of the self--as in the flask of the third task.

The basic insight of this stage is an understanding

that "[a]ll knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known" (Ways 137). Accomplishing her third task, Psyche as a constructive knower is able to accept responsibility for her own knowledge--containing it; similarly, she becomes a passionate knower by joining--empathizing and connecting--with that which is to be known. With this containment of her own knowledge, with her "insight" or sight into all the connections of life, Psyche is prepared for her final task. As Robert Johnson observes: "A woman may not undertake the fourth task unless she has first gathered all the necessary strength from the first three" (65). Here, women abandon either/or dualistic thinking, accept ambiguity, contradiction and difference as inherent in life and human relationships, and recognize the full complexity of human life.

### Choosing Insight

In the fourth task, Psyche encounters the second injunction against seeing. She is warned by the tower "not to open or look into the jar that you will be carrying, and in fact do not even think too inquisitively about the hidden treasure of divine beauty" (347). As what Johnson has described as "a construct, a convention, a set of rules, a tradition, a system" (65), the tower, in short, represents what we may see as her assimilation of a self-constructed knowledge. This is a knowledge, moreover, that is associated

with Aphrodite, coming as it does from the moon-linked tower. Psyche pays heed and successfully completes her journey, but then she decides to "take out a tiny drop of [beauty] for myself. It might even enable me to please my beautiful lover."

She opened the jar, but there was nothing there, not a drop of beauty, just sleep--deathlike and truly Stygian sleep. Revealed when the cover was removed, it attacked her instantly, enveloping her entire body in a dense cloud of slumber. (349)

The descent moves Psyche between the dualities and polarities of Persephone/death and Aphrodite/life and between being awake in the underworld only to fall into deathlike sleep in the upper world. In processing these opposites and bringing them together within a living being, she creates an ontology that defies polarities and dichotomized reasoning. As pregnant mortal woman, asleep above and awake below, Psyche symbolizes contradiction and the paradoxical facts of life: increase, nurturance, birth and death exist beyond opposition. She gains an insight into the mysteries of life.

In her trance, Psyche experiences a third time sense--sees time as the timelessness that is a recognized part of creativity. Like the creative process, this sense of time exists outside of measurement and quantification. This time sense, described by Betty Edwards in *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, accompanies the "slightly altered state of consciousness of feeling transported, which most artists

experience while doing... any kind of art work" (4). Comparing the state to daydreaming, Edwards grants that it accompanies many other activities, such as jogging, needlework or listening to music. What she further emphasizes is that we can set up these shifts and move into them to gain "access at a conscious level to... inventive, intuitive, imaginative powers that have been largely untapped by our verbal, technological culture and educational system" (5). Realizing that this powerful problem-solving ability is unrecognized in much of Western educational practice, she notes this trance-like space is where we develop an "ability to perceive things freshly and in their totality, to see underlying patterns and possibilities for new combinations. Creative solutions to problems... will be accessible through new modes of thinking" (5-6).

At the same time, because of the way that Apuleius has structured the events following Psyche's deathlike sleep, her trance might seem to be a punishment for disobeying the injunction against seeing; her trance is something from which she must be wakened and rescued by Eros: "'See,' he said, 'you almost destroyed yourself again, poor girl, by your insatiable curiosity'" (349). Eros then seeks "to win support for his case" from Zeus, and Psyche's journey is taken over by Eros and by Zeus (351). She is returned to passivity, and on a very elemental level, this is

punishment. According to Annis Pratt, women's descent or rebirth journeys

create transformed, androgynous, and powerful human personalities out of socially devalued beings and are therefore more likely to involve denouements punishing the quester for succeeding in her perilous, revolutionary journey. (142)

Patriarchal societies can survive only by changing or suppressing the significance of transformations like Psyche's. To emphasize the importance of this suppression to a patriarchally ordered world, unlike the injunction against supping in the underworld, Psyche's wedding in "heaven's summit" is sumptuous. She drinks ambrosia and is given "a rich wedding banquet" where all the gods attend and serve. And here we see who is said to dance and where the tune: "[Aphrodite] danced gorgeously, stepping to the tune of the lovely music" (355).

### Shamanism

In the context of the learning journey, however, there is a more positive way to interpret the trance and understand the failure and passivity that follow it. By restoring the goddess as mentor, we can extend the locus of our understanding of the learning she elicits in Psyche. As goddess, Aphrodite's presence suggests that learning encompasses a spirituality within the natural world. Beyond what the twentieth-century Eurocentric tradition perceives as an education only of the intellect and beyond a view of



spirituality as something only existing separate from nature, Psyche represents a more ancient pattern. Returning to Daloz and his advice on mentoring, we are told:

It takes but the slightest deepening of focus to see that both education and religion are centrally about growth of the spirit, and it is no accident that in less specialized societies healers, teachers, and priests are often the same person. (104)

The suggestion is that teacher, healer and priest work a similar soul transformation simultaneously and that the journeys in life and in nature do not supersede each other; they coexist. As Mary Anne Ferguson observes, Psyche gains "competence and confidence both in the world and in herself" as she "symbolically encounters the full reality of the world--earth, water, sky, and finally underworld" (61).

Psyche's journey not only conjoins many learning journeys but also provides a window back through Apuleius into a more ancient heritage. In Apuleius's rendering, Psyche's ancient knowledge is subsumed and obscured by patriarchal culture and religion. By deciphering Psyche's journey as a shamanic initiation and quest we are supplied with a way of encoding the transformations of her tasks into both a personal empowerment and the possibility of a social empowerment that she may once have returned to her society, but which she cannot return to our own.

If Psyche is a shaman then her "trance" is in itself the sign of her power, and it is only those who are not familiar with the inner experience who would see the outer

manifestation as deathlike sleep. Michael Harner describes the shaman as "a man or woman who enters an altered state of consciousness--at will--to contact and utilize an ordinarily hidden reality in order to acquire knowledge, power and to help other persons" (25). In his classic study of shamanism, Mircea Eliade especially emphasizes the significance of this deathlike sleep. He calls shamanism "one of the archaic techniques of ecstasy--at once mysticism, magic and 'religion' in the broadest sense of the word" (xix). This ecstasy or trance is the time during which the shaman is able to ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld, to communicate with spirits or "nature spirits." The shaman, a "great specialist in the human soul," serves as a mediator who accesses kinds of information not readily available in everyday and uses it to bring healing (8).

In Psyche's sacrifice and betrayal are encoded the ways of becoming a shaman. Eliade states that together with what is termed "the call," shamans are "chosen" by heredity and the will of, or choice by the clan. Psyche is a princess and therefore could be said to "inherit" her role as shaman; she is worshipped by her society and so "chosen" by the clan; the oracle has confirmed this choice with a "call."<sup>3</sup> The characteristics of shamanic initiation include "ascent" and "descent" to talk with spirits above and below and the revelation of professional secrets. The marriage of death, paradise, the tasks and her ability to talk with the gods,

all mark Psyche's journey as shamanic and the opening of the flask as the gift of "professional" secrets.

The final ascent and marriage brings what in other initiation journeys is called a representation of the metaphysical truth: "those who know have wings" (Eliade 479). Having wings marks Psyche as an initiate of the ancient Bird Goddess. Further, supporting a view of these shamanistic attributes, Eliade records that the Indo-European variant for women who become "shamanesses" is a dream of marriage with an underworld spirit who visits her nightly and with whom she bears a child (422-23). Finally, in her discussion of the shaman as wounded healer, Joan Halifax reminds us that, if the path is "traversed with 'an obedience to awareness'" (30), the simple attainment of old age provides a life-span shamanic initiation.

Psyche's journey also reveals a pattern that Western culture has in common with other non-European power visions: the ancient vision quest of power. In his analysis of the inner experience of power, David C. McClelland lists the characteristics of such an empowerment quest: the messenger voice, the spiritual trip, the divine helpers, the surrender to spiritual authority, the dangers, the four gifts of power and the four evidences of a spiritually guided life.<sup>4</sup> Clearly present in the story of Psyche are the oracle, the journey, the helpers and the surrender to Aphrodite. Her four tasks are roughly equivalent to what McClelland

describes as the four gifts of the vision quest. The first gift, healing, comes with the first task and the herbal knowledge it bestows. The second gift, wisdom and foreknowledge, comes with the strands of golden fleece; the third gift, supernatural strength, is evidenced in obtaining the water, and the fourth gift, compassion, is integral to Persephone's realm and the descent journey.

By McClelland's definition, the vision quest ends with the return of the shaman to heal the community; it is a journey and knowledge that is undertaken both for oneself and for the benefit of other people. What is absent in Apuleius's version of Psyche's journey is the evidence that she utilizes these abilities; instead she seems to take them with her to Olympus and does not return with the knowledge to benefit her people. This, indeed, is the way that Von Franz interprets the outcome of the myth: Psyche's ascension to Olympus means that the knowledge she has gained is not made available to her society; the happy ending is "tragic" because it occurs in the "Beyond," the unconscious (106). What the situation suggests is that there is no place for the "wise woman" or her knowledge in patriarchal culture.

This kind of shamanic learning might play an important role in our society, however, and in discussing the way that technology can be reconciled with our roots in the earth itself, John A. Grim supplies a direction for utilizing Psyche's power:

Shamans are important religious personalities because of their unique ability to give symbolic meaning to the forces that animate the cosmology. Often identifying themselves with primordial earth processes, they establish for their tribes a particular religious consciousness which they continually reassert during difficult transitional times. (207)

Insofar as Psyche is a shamanic figure, she can be said to represent such a spiritual reconnection in difficult times; a woman and liminal to patriarchal society, she symbolizes a lost consciousness; she moves from being a silent icon at the center of her society to an outcast in the wilderness, and in this wilderness, she is a learner who achieves a resolution of opposites and an integrative wisdom.

## Chapter Six

### Eros, Psyche and N(arr)ativity

The previous analysis of the journey and tasks undertaken by Psyche illustrates how any attempt to articulate experience is inescapably metaphorical and how familiar comparisons and relationships structure human understanding. An analysis that bases metaphor in the processes and relationships of female life and female reproductive consciousness enables us to see that learning in Psyche's story can be shown to arise from a real physical and material basis. Since storytelling itself is an exercise of metaphor, narrative structure itself may likewise represent reproductive consciousness. We make sense of our lives by the way we structure the stories about ourselves and our experience, even before we use imagery to enhance this narrative frame. By identifying the ways in which the stories of Eros and Psyche differ in their narrative bones, we can then move from such a recognition of the gendered skeletons of consciousness to a transformed understanding of our universal experience of nativity.

#### Narrativity

In structuring his interpretation of the tale, Erich Neumann describes Apuleius's telling of the Eros and Psyche myth as a narrative that "falls into five parts--the introduction, the marriage of death, the act, the four

tasks, the happy end" (57). Such a five-part arrangement is familiar to every high school student as exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and conclusion (Abrams 141). Commenting on the pattern of rising, flying and falling in the myth of Icarus and relating it also to the myth of Narcissus, David C. McClelland refers to the whole configuration as the Icarus complex. He regards this complex as exclusively male and as originating from an intense relationship with the mother. In his evaluation, "ascensionism is an expression of the power drive" and "shows us a person engaged in an extreme form of asserting his independence of earthly ties, narcissistically insisting on his autonomy" (194-95).

In folk tales, McClelland observes the occurrence cross-culturally of some key elements in such a pattern: rising, falling, fire, emphasis on the visual--gaze, look, perceive, stare, watch--with less emphasis on other sensory experience--smell, hearing, touch, or on interpersonal relationships. Such a sequence of rising, flying, falling, he specifies as pleasure-pain and contrasts it with the female story sequence which he tags crisis-release or crisis-pleasure. For the female he suggests: "The sequence is pain-pleasure, the reverse of the male pleasure-pain" (101).

To McClelland, the myth that epitomizes this female psychology is of Demeter and Persephone, wherein he sees two

motifs: "women are the source of life and going without brings increase. Going down under (Persephone's submission) or going without (Demeter's loss of her daughter) is followed by a return which produces fertility and joy" (97). The psychological pattern he describes, that "the woman submits, is taken advantage of, and triumphs" (96), is the narrative pattern of the passive and feminine heroine (female) rescued by the active and masculine hero (male). As such, this pattern of female experience is the kind to be found in with male quest stories and the situation affirms the primacy granted the male and masculine view of experience.

Certainly Psyche's rescue by Eros and her subsequent elevation to Olympus would seem to place the story within such a masculine category; in Neumann's five-part breakdown of the Psyche story, moreover, we see that the introduction, marriage of death, the act, the four tasks, and the happy end, do indeed follow exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and conclusion. As such the tale would seem better to exemplify male experience than, as Neumann seems to assert, a means of depicting the feminine and thereby, female behaviour. This narrative pattern makes Eros and his experience, the masculine, the centre of the story even though much of the tale is about Psyche's ordeals and her experience of him. Indeed, Neumann's interpretation of the tasks does make Eros their center: "With each of her labors



she apprehends--without knowing it--a new category of *his* reality" (107; emphasis mine).

In her analysis of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, Marie-Louise von Franz seems to agree. She interprets the tale of Psyche as a story of masculine psychology, as a story of a particular man, Lucius, and his anima. Consequently, Psyche is perceived more as an element of male consciousness than as woman herself. Of the *Metamorphoses*, she comments: "It concerns in particular the problem of the *incarnation of the feminine principle*, and of its 'reconnaissance' in a patriarchal Christian universe" (4). Like McClelland, she connects a son's intense closeness to his mother with an equally intense desire for escape, for freedom:

So he escapes into the intellect where generally she cannot follow.... That I call the escape over the stratosphere: one leaves the earth ... where the old lady cannot reach, and one feels a man and free, but this naturally has a disadvantage...as soon as he wants to touch the earth... there the old lady stands.... (19)

As she sees it, such a search for freedom can be recognized in the Socratic detachment of emotion from reason and the Platonic and neo-Platonic detachment of the material, the real, from the ideal. In addition, man may transcend the human--escape the connection with his mother--by rising to the realm of the gods, above the earth, or descending to the sphere of animal life, beneath consciousness and the human realm. Thereby she associates both ascent and descent journeys, rising and falling, with male experience.

Narrativity and the Metaphor of Union

The goal of the ascent journey, Von Franz sees as the integration of the anima, but in the use of the *hieros gamos* to symbolize this goal she finds problems:

The bringing together of the divine, elating, transpersonal and freeing aspect of the *hieros gamos*, the sacred marriage motif, with the incompleteness and disappointing narrowness and dirt of human life, is still, one might say, one of the greatest unsolved problems. (88)

She recognizes the continuing difficulty for Western philosophy inherent in resolving the human life and the spiritual--the profane and the sacred--in a symbol of marriage, but my own concern is with the negative and dependent valuations this equation and the marriage motif stamp on nature, female life and thence on any analysis of the female (feminine) role in the narrative pattern. This valuation allows male and masculine beings to be both male "god" to woman and feminine "woman" to god--all the while maintaining the denigration of actual female life and the world of nature.

Focussing specifically on the relationship between marriage and narrative plots in prose fiction, Evelyn J. Hinz has used the concept of hierogamy to distinguish the kind of relationship found in romance from that which characterizes the novel. As she sees it, the novel employs a "wedlock" marriage plot and is concerned with the assimilation of the couple into the social sphere; in contrast, romance features a sacred marriage and the union

of the couple is linked to the union of the elements, earth and sky and serves to reconnect the individual to the cosmos. In effect, the sacred union leads to a rebirth and renewal of the cosmos. Referring to the myth of Psyche and Eros as the paradigm for romance, she observes that in modern romance only the tonalities have changed; the idea of sacred marriage remains the same:

all that has happened is that the locus of the divine has shifted from "up there" to "down here"... the gods now manifest themselves only in nature and... have become "dark"... these modern instances actually reflect a return to the most ancient and primordial features of hierogamy. (907)

What Hinz's analysis makes clear is the foregrounding of the idea of the union, and that, however the opposites are characterized, whatever the genre, some kind of marriage/sexual union is the means whereby opposites and difference are narratively bridged.

As I see it, what in turn characterizes both von Franz's observations of the thought structure inherent in Western philosophy and Hinz's commentary on prose plot developments is the recourse to polarities: rising/falling, ascent/descent, up/down, light/dark, transpersonal/human, elating/disappointing, divine/dirt. According to Mary O'Brien, such dualistic thought might be tied directly to an eroticized, male-defined sexuality and to what she refers to as male reproductive consciousness. She describes this consciousness as having at its core the recognition of the gap between the male role in conception and the resulting

birthed child. Because of this gap, men must mediate or understand their role intellectually by a creation of "intransigent dualism... a specifically masculine experience" (67).

O'Brien regards the creation of an intellectual tradition of male dominance and superiority as a means by which men may compensate for an absence from the totality of the reproductive cycle: "sexuality represents the male moment of inclusion in genetic continuity" (75).

Simultaneously, this intellectual mediation of the male gap in human reproduction has been wielded to secure for men an exclusivity of power.

The experiential moments of female consciousness, confirmed in actual labour, are thus denigrated and dehumanized, given a low value while they are quite frankly imitated in a 'higher' sphere, the creation of concepts in a male intercourse of spirit and thought. (132)

Men are able through this mediation to find power and superiority in absence by assuming the right to give birth to ideas.

A binary view of the world conjoined to a rational system grounded in an intellectually mediated paternity would logically resolve binaries or dualities within a metaphor of union, in an emphasis on marriage, intercourse and conception. According to O'Brien:

Men value the moment of sexuality for more than the immediacy of sexual gratification and the pleasures of copulation. It has symbolic value in social terms; it confirms an inclusion in genetic continuity and access to the double freedoms which the idea of paternity

translates historically into forms of male dominant society. (191)

In this sense then, the sacred marriage is an especially appropriate metaphor of male experience. Even if the object is the new birth, the *hieros gamos* is a masculine ending, as the focus is on the sacred marriage and act of conception and obscures the import of the female role in pregnancy, giving birth and child care: "We have no philosophy of birth" (O'Brien 198).

In contrast to men's reproductive consciousness, according to O'Brien, women's awareness of their reproductive role is experiential, continuous, visceral and mediated in the physical act of giving birth. Accordingly, while conception is likewise the locus of female genetic contribution, it is not even the initiating experience; menarche/menstruation is the initiating female reproductive experience, and pregnancy, birth and lactation are major and continuing female component in species reproduction. None of these are, very obviously, equivalent metaphors of union.

Leaving pregnancy aside for the time being, one might note that birth and breast feeding are indicative of growth, separation and partial dis-union, and hence birth is a metaphor of *transformation* and of partial--though certainly dramatic--change within a continuing relationship. Furthermore, marriage as union can readily be and is traditionally imaged as a circle, closed and complete, while birth may be likened to a circle opened. Here I call on

McClelland again, who notes just such a preference in males for the image of closed circle and in females for the circle "broken" (89). He also associates these images with a series of stylistic preferences: "Note how much easier it is to describe the male style: it shows a preference for the simple, the closed, the direct. In contrast, women are more interested in the complex, the open, the less defined" (88).

### The Eros Plot

By returning now to Apuleius's story of Eros and Psyche, we may review how all these stylistic elements appear to describe the gendered reproductive consciousness of either Eros or of Psyche and which consequently contribute to our understanding of their actions. Eros's story fits the Icarus complex: the intense relationship with the mother, narcissistic projection, the emphasis on vision, flight, fire, the fall/wound. Eros is shown as unusually close to his mother, Aphrodite, and the closeness between them is depicted as both negative and extreme suggesting a transference of attachment from Eros to Aphrodite. Aphrodite pleads with Eros "by the bonds of maternal love" (243). As a projection-reflection, this exchange exists in the province of Narcissus and is encoded as transference. That is, the "bonds" of love are transferred to Aphrodite; she is overpowering and she imprisons. The bonds are not mutual or interactive; they are unchanging in their restrictions.

Moreover, Apuleius emphasizes the intense and sexual nature of this love: "So saying she kissed her son long and intensely with parted lips" (243). Mother-child love and affection are seen only in terms of a sexualized and therefore problematic union of opposites. Erich Neumann, too, understands this as "an incestuous relationship" (91).

Apuleius reenforces the message of the unhealthy nature of this mother-son affection and emphasizes the visual aspect of Aphrodite's interference in her son's life by having Demeter and Hera both remonstrate with her: "Will you never stop spying inquisitively into your son's pastimes?" (311). Lance Davidson-Evans makes the link between vision and Cupid/Eros clear by saying that the eyes are directly associated with Cupid and are often the "means by which he casts his shafts" (21). This concern over issues of vision and sight is evident in the initiation of Eros's conflict with his mother. He does not choose Psyche openly--in the sight of Aphrodite. This emphasis on sight is reenforced when he forbids Psyche to look at him and when he cautions her about her sisters: "But he warned her time and again, often with threats, never to yield to her sisters' pernicious advice to investigate her husband's appearance" (261).

As to flying and fire, Eros is, of course, the winged and fiery god. Moreover, it is in flight that he leaves Psyche upon her dis-covering of him: "And as his words ended

he took wing and soared into the sky" (295). Likewise, he is wounded by fire, by Psyche's lamp: "O bold and reckless lamp, worthless servant of Love, to scorch the very god of all fire, when it must have been some lover who first invented you that even by night he might the longer enjoy the object of his desire" (293). Burned, "the very god of all fire" returns to his mother, Aphrodite.

The Eros plot line of the myth concludes in the "rescue" of Psyche and with their marriage, the *hieros gamos*: "Thus in proper form Psyche was given in marriage to [Eros]" (355). The separation of the marriage of death and the paradisaical conception from the sacred marriage--the *connunctio* or *hieros gamos*--elevates Psyche to the realm of the immortals and the wording--"in proper form"--likewise suggests that conception takes place after the wedding. This doubled emphasis on union as marriage and conception serves to reemphasize the association of heterosexual union with lawful (spiritual) sanction, reifying the importance of begetting at the expense of the green world conception and the female contribution--Psyche's tasks.

The progression from union to reunion to lawfully sanctioned union in combination with an emphasis on erotic pleasure effectively obfuscates the importance of Psyche's journey and the profound physical and social responsibility that she "bears" for human continuity. To clinch this pattern as specifically male, Eros's absence following the



conception of their child--during which time Psyche completes her tasks--and his return to her at a time that is nearly coincident with the birthed child, mimics exactly the pattern of male reproductive consciousness described by O'Brien.

To sum up, then, it is Eros's story which fits the "traditional" story pattern with its beginning in love at first sight, rising conflict over vision, climax in discovery and burning wound, falling action in recuperation and Psyche's rescue, closure in marriage and "happily ever after." In his description of the story as a quest for union, "for communion with the *anima mundi*, the mystic soul of the world" (240), Ben Edwin Perry's language emphasizes this male pattern in Apuleius's stylistic contributions. These are said to lie in the "wealth of concrete details which lengthen the description, or dialogue and make it more picturesque," and which, like the adding of new episodes, "prolong dramatic suspense by leading upward to a climax" (377). This description reiterates that progress for Eros may be recounted as a movement from pleasure and freedom to care and responsibility, and with the emphasis on sexual union to reunion, the action is imaged as complete, circular; its focus is on the male daemon/begetter.

### The Psyche Plot

A very different narrative model informs Psyche's

story; in the structure of her story there is a concurrence of ends and new beginnings, death with fertility, renewal and new desire. Moreover, whereas the signal of a male journey pattern and its (successful or unsuccessful) conclusion might be considered the climax and sexual union, in the female journey pattern, the silences may signal a female pattern, the renewal of growth and the beginnings of transformed connection. In contrast to the traditional male linear model which may be called an "either/or" confrontational mode or mindset, the female model--although equally sequential--may be referred to as a "both/and" cooperative outlook, an outlook that combines differences within an increased awareness.

In his description of Psyche's first sexual experience, Neumann comments on this conjunction of end and beginning in female sexual experience; her honeymoon and first sexual experience are both dual and threefold. For Psyche

the act of defloration represents a truly mysterious bond between end and beginning, between ceasing to be and entering upon real life. To experience maidenhood, womanhood, and nascent motherhood in one, and in this transformation to plumb the depths of her own experience. (64)

Because Psyche is pregnant, she is also a symbol of a biological transformation, and as such she makes her own rite of passage. This is likewise reminiscent of the comment Neumann makes of Psyche's own development as being toward consciousness and accompanied by increased consciousness.

Eros and the erotic are an undeniably significant

component of Psyche's story, potentially agreeable and pleasurable, but they are not the whole of her experience nor representative of the entirety of her reproductive consciousness. The *hieros gamos* is not the most appropriate ending to the story of her experience; nor is the closed circle, union to reunion, the metaphor most applicable to the development of her story. The circle opened, continuity, transformation and spiral movement, are.

Repetitions-with-change constitute Psyche's plot. The betrayals and the tasks all reveal this difference in kind. The first betrayals are public and encompass the roles of the "fathers" in the larger community; the second, private, include the sisters and her lover/husband; all represent "breaks" in what were enclosing circles of community. Each task, too, is of a different order and each completion indicates change, a process of growth and maturation.

#### The Descent Movement and The Eleusinian Mysteries

In order to understand the implications of the sequential connection between endings and transformation and to explain psychic renewal as it pertains specifically to female life, we need to give close attention to the multiple meanings of Psyche's fourth task, carrying a jar down to Persephone in the Underworld and returning with "beauty" for Aphrodite. The descent motif provides a direct connection with the Demeter/Persephone myth and recalls the unique

value that the Mysteries have for Apuleius; the conclusion of the *Metamorphoses* deals with the initiation of his protagonist, Lucius, into the Mysteries and the cult of Isis/Aphrodite.

Through an interpretation of the rites at Eleusis and relating what we know historically of the rites that took place there, McClelland links the myth of Demeter directly to the Mysteries and draws attention to the important element of secrecy. He concludes that the secrecy of these rites and the value placed on this secrecy results in the enhancement of the Mysteries. This secrecy he also relates to what he perceives as women's penchant for having and telling secrets.

Women particularly value letting people in on secrets. Women more often than men tell others about aspects of their private lives, particularly their feelings. The Eleusinian Mysteries suggest they do so because they are acting out a fundamental theme in traditional feminine psychology, which is to enhance the value of one's resources by restricting information about oneself and then letting others selectively in on the secrets. (98)<sup>1</sup>

In her clarification of such mystery rituals, however, Jane Ellen Harrison advances a different interpretation:

Mystery, secrecy, was not the main gist of "a mystery": the essence of it all primarily was purification in order that you might safely eat and handle certain *sacra*. There was no revelation, no secret to be kept, only a mysterious *taboo* to be prepared for and overcome. (154)

Harrison also notes that the *sacra* "were of trivial character" (157), and this in itself implies a less than total taboo against secrecy. Thus, to Harrison secrecy does

not play a dominant role in enhancement of the Mysteries and a taboo is meant to be broken--but only after proper preparation and purification.

Harrison's argument supports my conviction that Psyche does not "fail" when she opens the jar, but rather completes the task as ritual passage within the opportunity for learning that is provided by Aphrodite and Persephone. Equally important, whatever the reasons for Psyche's decision provided by Apuleius, is that this choice itself--the action of choosing--acknowledges acceptance of a profound truth about life and of her own responsibilities. There is also a difference in kind between the taboo of looking at Eros and looking at the "beauty" that is death. Looking at Eros upsets a patriarchal social system; opening the jar signals a personal spiritual transformation. But even if we insist on linking the descent journey to death, the specific connotations for female life lie in the possible and very real dangers of sexual experience for women: cultural ostracism, male violence, and the physical dangers of death in pregnancy or birth.

The Eleusinian Mysteries were rituals designed to bring mystical insight into the meaning of death--the role of death in life's experience.<sup>2</sup> In her discussion of ancient Greek representations of women, Page DuBois stresses that as rituals of harvest and planting, death and rebirth, these Mysteries occurred in the fall and preceded the sowing that

took place at that time. The rites involved the sacrifice of pigs. According to Walker, the pig was sacred to the goddess and was "taboo in the usual dual manner: both "unclean" and "holy" at the same time" (*Dictionary* 385). Specifically, the boar was a saviour or surrogate for men: "Mother Death guards the gates of the after-world. A man must pass these gates by distracting her attention with his sacrificial pig" (*Encyclopedia* 113). DuBois goes on to describe a later part of the sacrificial ritual: "They hauled up the remains of piglets, which had been thrown into ditches... in an earlier ceremony... the remains were placed on altars and mixed with the city's seed-corn and sprinkled in the fields to secure their fertility" (60).

That this rite originated with an agricultural people gives an earthy, practical dimension to any interpretation of the spiritually ritualized idea of rebirth--to what Mircea Eliade refers to as "eternal return." What was hauled up from the "depths" was "trivial" and universally available; it was rotten pig flesh, decayed animal matter, and its purpose was to fertilize; it is fertilizer. What is most likely present in the Mysteries is not the idea of individual resurrection--the stench and appearance of decay and corruption would make individual death only too vivid and real a concept--but the acknowledgement of an important responsibility for species continuity, both for plant and animal life and for their roles in the provision of food for

the human community.

The "beauty" essential to the life goddess, Aphrodite, which is provided by the goddess of death, Persephone, is the dead and decaying animal or vegetable matter, fertilizer. Life feeds from death; life grows out of death; life and death are an inseparable transformational process; death transforms life to renew energy in life. Thence transferred to the human community, the spiritual realization is that death is an important and fitting conclusion to life; death provides a meaningful and necessary closure to one's own life as well as those lives most dear to us.

Of the contents of the jar, Apuleius tells us, "there was nothing there, not a drop of beauty, just sleep-- deathlike and truly Stygian sleep" (349). This "Stygian sleep" is related to the river of death, Styx, and may simply indicate the reality of death's stench, of corruption and decay. Metaphorically speaking, death resides in the jar, and that the jar is a womb intimates the awful knowledge that shadows maternity. The blood mysteries are mysteries of corruption and decay as much as they are mysteries of preservation and life. Mortal women birth mortal beings; the howling, wrinkled, demanding infant who becomes dearer than life itself is subject, like its mother (and father), to transience. The good death, the best that any parent can hope for, is a death that precedes the

child's. Life's profoundest grief may lie in surviving one's child, but Aphrodite's jar carries no promises; Persephone's gift brings no reprieve.

The energy that Aphrodite, the life goddess, depletes in the care of Eros and which she must restore, comes from the realm of the Death Goddess, Persephone. As much as rain and sun, to be fertile the earth requires the energy that decay provides. Rather than the going without that McClelland sees as bringing increase, death itself fosters growth and increase. Psyche's fourth task involves a spiritual journey in which she meets and accepts a profound truth, that death is an essential part of the process of life, not its opposite. Her journey to the heart of life's mystery is not to meet her own death by failing her task, nor is it a journey to reconcile opposites, to unify polarities; her journey is a passage that encompasses a spiritual and philosophical integration of the idea of death into its rite-full place within an understanding of life processes.

This knowledge comes, as is fitting, before Psyche gives birth, during the time she prepares to meet her responsibility for the care of new life. As Christine Downing states: "The beauty to which Persephone but not Aphrodite has access is the beauty that comes with an intimate inner knowledge of death--the ultimate beauty of the psyche" (*Sisters* 51). This awe-full beauty is not a



paradox but the magnitude of coming to terms with, and making meaning from, consciousness of death. As Elizabeth Kubler-Ross contends: "Death is the key to the door of life" and "Death is the final stage of growth in this life" (164,166). The meaning we take from the grief of loss is spiritually and intellectually transformative, just as death itself is the final physical transformation of an individual life. Although death brings its individual closures and endings, the grief these prompt brings new meaning in life.

This continuation moves beyond the idea of death as finality, as ultimate end. By focusing on growth and change, on death-as-growth rather than end only, we also change our focus from an obsession with death and transcendence to an integration of death, development and growth into connection and community. Kubler-Ross extends the importance of this changed focus to include the whole human race: "Through commitment to personal growth individual human beings will also make their contribution to the growth and development--the evolution--of the whole species to become all that humankind can and is meant to be" (165).

### Nativity as Ending

Psyche's story seems to end in death, in the sense of the immortality she acquires through the *hieros gamos*, the marriage to Eros, but many have regarded this ending as unsatisfying, albeit for different reasons. Christine

Downing identifies another relationship of mortal and immortal: "the real aim of [Psyche's] journey all along has been not the reunion with Eros, not her own divinization, but the meeting with Persephone and the discovery that they are sisters, sister doubles, one immortal, one mortal" (*Sisters* 51). As she sees it, therefore, "[t]he given ending (with Psyche made an immortal resident of Olympus)" is unsatisfactory because it "returns Psyche to the unreal situation of the beginning where she is exalted above all mortal women" (50). Mary Anne Ferguson argues that the pattern for such an ending is "circular, rather than spiral" but sees it as true to life because women "are initiated through learning the rituals of human relationships at home, so that they may replicate the lives of their mothers" (59). This circularity accords with Annis Pratt's warning about the punishments resulting from women's descent or rebirth journeys.

Despite the way that the emphasis on the hierogamous seems to punish Psyche by returning her to passivity, however, the last words of the tale--stated almost as an afterthought--suggest an ending with a profoundly different import. Psyche's story ends in birth: "And when her time was come, a daughter was born to them, whom we call by the name of Pleasure" (355). Speaking generally of the symbolism of the child, Carl Jung tells us that the child represents "both beginning and end, initial and terminal creature" and

most often represents the "phallus, the symbol of the begetter" (*Introduction* 134). As a female child, however, Psyche's daughter does not represent the rebirth of the begetter but of the mother; the daughter cannot be phallus since she is both female and (in patriarchy) powerless. Psyche's child is a new being who, like Psyche, represents the power of a continuous reproductive consciousness, the process of life's continuing possibility.

Furthermore, birth is equally a metaphor of conclusion and beginning, a metaphor of transformation in female life. Menstrual cycles, conception and pregnancy may all be understood as a "before-the-beginning" as much as a "before-the-end" state of being. Pregnancy especially "carries" the "growing" awareness of life-before-birth, life-before-life, of increase. At the same time, birth carries within it the possibility of death for either mother or child. According to Katherine Rabbuzzi, this aspect of childbirth has its own spiritual and mythical element: "During this instant, in which the laboring woman and the Mother Goddess are fully one, the great mystery that a woman discovers is that birth is simultaneously death" (204).

### Virginity

Not only does childbirth carry the potential for a woman's physical death and/or the death of her infant, but even without these very real physical dangers, there is a

matching and equally real death of the unitary responsibility to the self, of psychological virginity. Just as during pregnancy, Psyche is an image of one who carries another within her, an image of physical two-in-herself-ness (we can even imagine her being given the age-old admonition to "eat for two"), with the birth of her child, she represents an additional and psychological two-in-one. Thus the loss of "virginity" that pregnancy and birth entail also brings an accumulation of competence in giving care and assuming responsibility, as well as an increase in experience and maturity.

There have been many definitions of "virginity" suggested by women scholars, all set forth with the desire for reclaiming an authenticity of female experience that is missing from the patriarchal meanings. M. Esther Harding introduces the term "one-in-herself" to suggest that ancient or more "primitive" societies viewed the virgin as a single woman belonging only to herself regardless of sexual behaviour or experience: "A girl belongs to herself while she is virgin--unwed--and may not be compelled either to maintain chastity or to yield to unwanted embrace" (103). Marilyn Frye acknowledges these older meanings, but goes on to stress the impossibility of transferring this meaning to patriarchal cultures:

The word "virgin" did not originally mean a woman whose vagina was untouched by any penis, but a free woman, one not betrothed, not married, not bound to, nor possessed by any man. It meant a woman sexually and

hence socially her own person. In any universe of patriarchy, there are no Virgins in this sense. (133)

Both Harding and Frye link their definitions to intercourse, acknowledging the power structures that confirm male hegemony.

The possibility remains that a more authentic, woman-centered definition of virginity can be based in female physiology. Since the word, virgin, comes from the Latin *vir* meaning "man," menarche would be the first signal that a woman is not *vir*-like. Not first sexual experience and "loss," but first menstruation and gain of an embodied power signals the transition beyond *vir*-like being and the patriarchal sacrifice allied with Psyche's "flame-red veil"; her veil is "man made," fiery, external to Psyche and placed over her. So too, the blood of first intercourse--if the hymen has not been broken in athletic or other physical activity--mimics the original dedication to female being and may, or may not, herald pleasure, however much it is an increase of experience. Such blood recalls Psyche's pricking of her own thumb on Eros's arrow.

Of "virgin birth," Barbara Walker states that it is a term evolving from the "virgin-born" designation given to children born of temple priestesses--those women, "holy virgins," dedicated to Aphrodite: "The Holy Virgins or temple-harlots were called 'soul-teachers' or 'soul-mothers'--the *alma mater*" (*Encyclopedia* 1048). The joining together of all these views and definitions suggests that a

different definition virginity might be applied to female being. With first menses, a woman could be said to *acquire* virginity as a consecration to life lived as a woman. Psyche is dedicated, has dedicated herself to Aphrodite; her daughter is thus "virgin-born"; her tasks encode learning and make her an *alma mater*. Virginity is a state of female being acquired at menarche; it is the consciousness that brings the embodied, incremental, and sacred learning of the *alma mater*.

In actual reproductive biology and for species survival, the well-being of Psyche's daughter is actually more important than Psyche's own, and in what seems a paradox, the importance of Psyche's own survival as caregiver has, conversely, increased. Because Psyche's story ends with the birth, the narrative reifies all these seeming paradoxes. Birth is both/and. Birth carries both the potential of real, physical death and the reality of the psychological "death" of the old, unitary way of being-in-the-world, along with the physical and psychological realities of birth in a new and helpless child, new beginning, new responsibility.

#### *Beyond and Outside Nativity*

There is a third goddess who figures in the background of Psyche's tale and who suggests the continuity that extends beyond and even outside of conception, pregnancy and

birthing in female life. Another aspect of female reproductive physiology needs to be considered in discussing transformation in women's lives and it is here via the Demeter and Persephone myth that we meet the goddess-as-crone, the goddess-after-menopause, who is called Hecate.

Literally, Hecate is not grandmother, as her age or her place in the trio of female figures might suggest. She represents female wisdom in its third phase. Perhaps it is because she is not specifically associated with generativity that accounts for the fact that her representation in human form is made unfamiliar; as Kerenyi notes, this third goddess is lost in, or obscured by the moon. The three goddess aspects become "maiden, mother, and moon," and are linked to the triple form as "the *three* realms of earth, heaven [sic], and sea" (Jung and Kerenyi 156).

In myth, Hecate is associated with Persephone and the underworld and--by extension or "entailment"--with a disinterested motherliness. She represents a nourishing, supportive companionship and maternal love not compelled by biological connection. The importance of this non-biological mothering quality is revealed by her role following the reunion of Demeter and Persephone:

After mother and daughter are reunited, Hecate once more appears in the hymn in order to receive the Kore and remain her companion for always: Hecate and Persephone are as inseparable as Persephone and Demeter. (Jung and Kerenyi 154)

Hecate and Persephone are also as inseparable as Hecate and

Demeter, a situation reflected in the tendency of scholars to see "*Demeter and Hecate in one person*" (Jung and Kerenyi 158). This, in effect and twice over, makes a doubled figure. Demeter and Persephone are almost always together, "thought of as a *double figure*.... Persephone is above all, her *mother's* Kore: without her, Demeter would not be a *Meter*" (Jung and Kerenyi 152).

According to Kerenyi, these two forms are, in reality, not two doubled figures, but "a triad of unmistakable individuals"; "the torch appears to be the attribute of each of them." Their communal epithet "*phosphoros*" (bringer of light) emphasizes the kind of transformational consciousness this triplicity carries: a consciousness symbolized in "One torch, two torches held by the same goddess, three torches in a row" (Jung and Kerenyi 154). Hecate as crone represents the mothering wisdom that comes of age and lived experience.<sup>3</sup> The loss of her form from our mythic consciousness represents the loss of our awareness of the "mother-of-all" consciousness that is frequently evidenced by many older women.<sup>4</sup>

Representing the female figure whose hormone levels have moved again to "pre-mother" levels, Hecate illustrates the return-with-difference so apparent in Psyche's story.<sup>5</sup> The pattern also deflates any attempt to apply greater or less value to any of the stages of female being. Each figure has its own significance; each figure its own role; each



figure represents its own accretion of knowledge. The triple goddesses, Persephone/Kore, Demeter and Hecate, the triple phases of female (hormonal) life imply another level of meaning in Psyche's journey: the descent may also pre-figure Psyche's movement into post-menopausal life.

Other attributes associated with the figure of Hecate equally signal an enhancement of meaning in the metaphors of Psyche's journey. Spretnak tells us that ritually prescribed food, called "Hecate's suppers," was offered to the goddess as a means of ritual purification. Echoing Psyche's supper in the underworld, this gives resonance to an interpretation of the ritual import of Psyche's fourth task and the contention that Psyche is meant to open the jar; she has undergone the ritual purification that enables her to accept the increase of wisdom.

Hecate's derivation from an ancient Egyptian midwife figure who assisted in the daily delivery of the sun is cited in Walker's *Dictionary*. In Hecate's moon connections, Walker also links her to Artemis, both as midwife figure and huntress (378-79). Of Artemis specifically, Walker observes that she was called "Cutter" and in her huntress-destroyer (Hecate) aspect, "Butcher" (58). This suggests that in the Psyche myth the knife, like the torch, evokes such a midwife figure. Walker connects the triple goddess figures, The Three Fates, with the weaving goddesses, with Aphrodite, Kali-Ma and the knife (302-03). Thus Hecate, appropriately

enough, conjoins food, ritual, the torch and the knife to female life processes. In this way, she is present in the background in Psyche's myth and, in her moon connections, she exerts a symbolic and metaphoric presence beyond that of the "old women weaving at a loom" that Psyche meets on her descent journey.

### The Meaning in the Middle

In this model of female development, it is no longer necessary to see the middle only as a "detour" of struggles or imposed delay or simply as a means of creating (sexual) tension. The "middle" of the narrative becomes a place where transformations occur, a continuing transformation which makes meaning from life even as it enhances the meaningfulness of the life process. If Psyche's story begins "before-the-beginning" and ends with "no-ending," in birth, what is contained in the "middle" necessarily takes a different form; her story line relaxes from its original bindings, may lose "tension," is allowed to multiply in meaning and becomes complex by continuing to offer new meanings.

Her story emphasizes an incremental gathering-in as well as expansive action whose purpose is increase and transformation. Rather than progress to unitary, solitary ending, the "aim" of such a life story relaxes into the living of it; joy is celebrated by its very daily-ness. Each

"episode" is as important as the next, no less important than the one preceding and all three are joined. If there is a "goal" in this kind of narrative then the goal incorporates what Peter Brooks refers to as "arabesques" (and I describe as spirals). In such a view, a life well-lived tells, in an accumulation of sensory detail and description, about gains in experience and knowledge as they transform an individual human psyche. Relationships in their complexity become a source of richness, those encountered along the journey become interesting for the varieties of experience and attitudes they bring. At the same time, the spiral pattern lends itself to a description of embrace, a pattern of accretion, taking in, cooperation and accommodation; the emphasis is on care, continuity and maintaining connections and reveals the interrelatedness of learning, of the journey and the narrative.

In the landscape of this narrative structure, the paths contain intense and sensory descriptions of voyages out from and back to, of heights negotiated, and plains and valleys traversed. Each moment described leads always back to the psyche and to re-vision and growth. The process is continuous, both self- and other-referential. Within the spiral, the circle and line appear together, combined with the continuum as another both/and. Both circumference and plane change but sequential continuity is maintained. The journey is both (deeper or higher and broader or narrower)

/and (ongoing).

The dictionary confirms the multiplicity of meanings of the spiral and introduces yet another--an element of fixity at the center within the movement. Defined variously as a "locus in a plane of a point moving around a fixed center," as a "three dimensional locus of a point moving parallel to and about a central axis at a constant or continuously varying distance" and as a "coiling in a constantly changing plane," the spiral links transformative change and centered being.

To reiterate: Psyche's story begins before the meeting with Eros; it begins in context and relationship, within a family, and continues through disconnection (betrayal and violence) to new connections encoded as marriage and conception. The first betrayal with the attendant losses of family, community, choice and self-esteem is followed by the honeymoon with Eros, then more betrayal, by her sisters, by Eros, followed by the connection to Aphrodite, the life goddess. The initial pattern, of connection and betrayal repeated, evolves to integrate a wider life experience through the four tasks. Each task brings growth and new understanding in a repeating pattern that involves accumulation and assimilation, a move "away-from" followed by movement "back-towards" a different experience, a different level, a different plane. In each experience and task, what presages Psyche's growth is silence.

## Chapter Seven

### Voluptas Beyond the Ending

Erich Neumann presents Psyche and Eros as metaphoric figures in psychic integration. Their union and reunion include sexual and spiritual components and results in the conjunction of human and divine, female and male. He notes the strength and lasting power of this religious mystery:

For two millenniums the mystery phenomenon of love has occupied the center of psychic development and of culture, art and religion.... It has brought both good and evil, but in any event it has been an essential ferment of the psychic and spiritual life of the West down to the present day.

Clearly, Neumann's analysis of the potency of this image is accurate; as a culture the West has conceptualized both the spiritual mystery and its metaphoric expression by way of an image of heterosexual love.

Moreover, this Western tradition has used a reproductive metaphor in a way that subsumes female experience in sexual pleasure and into the relinquishing of self and devalues authentic and powerful female being. The male/masculine figure is regarded as the agent-saviour, and the female figure and the feminine are subsumed and consumed in a (sexual) union of the dualities. Neumann goes on to say:

This love of Psyche for her divine lover is a central motif in the love mysticism of all times, and Psyche's failure, her final self abandonment, and the god who approaches as a saviour at this very moment correspond exactly to the highest phase of mystical ecstasy, in which the soul commends itself to the godhead. (139-40)

It is this attitude towards spirituality that has in part prompted my own revisioning. By emphasizing Psyche's earthbound and specifically female nature and reinterpreting the metaphors of her journey, I have argued that Psyche's is neither a failed journey, nor does it involve a self abandoned. Furthermore, a female reproductive consciousness includes pregnancy and birth as well as sexual union and conception. She represents the possibility for a different metaphor of spirituality in this different life journey.

#### Birth as Maternal Transition

Psyche's relationship to her own sensuality, to Eros and the erotic is a transformation not an abandonment; in her pregnancy and in giving birth, she continues to grow and develop. Throughout her journey, she sustains and supports a pregnancy; in giving birth to a daughter, she recreates the mother-daughter bond and the ties of sisterhood that she missed in her green world paradise. What seems less apt, however, is the conclusion which leaves both Psyche and her daughter in the realm of the father gods, back within the patriarchal fold; this immortality is one that guarantees her assimilation into a patriarchal pantheon, not one that brings new knowledge and changes the community.

In Psyche's story, Apuleius has therefore recorded one aspect of the shift from matrifocal to patriarchal society. That a worship of a young and mortal virgin, the controlled

female and dependent feminine, replaces the engagement in what Neumann calls the "primordial feminine mysteries... of birth and rebirth" (148) signals a paradigm shift of incalculable significance for human society. That Psyche should be rescued by Eros, that Zeus should step in and fix everything, reflects the power dynamics of patriarchal society. That Psyche has been interpreted in male mythopoetic vision as carrying out feminine tasks that are completed only with the help of the masculine and as not completing heroic labors signifying her own agency further emphasizes the cultural transition. This shift is from community with and understanding of the life energies that include and value female being towards a male empowerment, a power-over and exploitation of both the natural world and female life.

Apuleius tells us that Psyche's daughter is named Voluptas, a name that various editors and commentators (Hansen, Adlington, Hillman, Johnson and Neumann) translate as "Pleasure."<sup>1</sup> This definition of Pleasure as voluptuousness emphasizes a sexually luxurious sensuality more appropriate to her conception; in turn, the continuity of sense experience in Psyche's journey, her labors and the birth are subsumed and ignored. The birth of a daughter (and not a son) highlights this continuity as present in women's individual lives and across the generations of women. In spite of her appropriation into a patriarchal pantheon and

the absence of her mother and sisters, the birth of a daughter implies a transgenerational reproductive consciousness. Indeed, the absence of the Queen echos the absence of Hecate in the tripartite goddess mythology and, therefore, is fully expressive of an intellectual tradition that prefers dualities and a dichotomized understanding of human experience.

This perspective might also account for the absence of an on-going, post-birthing experience of motherhood within Psyche's story. The physical labour involved in giving birth is a transitional labour; Psyche's labours of child-rearing have yet to begin; the tasks are training and not culmination. This absence is similar to that implied in the "beyond the ending" that Rachel Blau DuPlessis explores in her analysis of twentieth-century narratives by women writers. Like Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, who conclude that female quest patterns are *heroic*, and Lee Edwards who interprets Psyche as a *hero*, DuPlessis names as hero the female protagonist whose activity, growth and insight are central to the story. Conversely, a heroine is one who needs attention or rescue. Whereas the usual narrative ending subsumes and consumes female being into a rescue like Psyche's, the "magical," unlabored birth of a child and the absence of any continuation of story equally inhibits female agency and reinstates her as heroine.

Motherhood has never been regarded as heroic or grounds



for philosophic meditation because it is regarded as biologically impelled and therefore "natural" (O'Brien; Okin). Likewise, Adrienne Rich's analysis of the ways in which motherhood has been negatively interpreted and "institutionalized" to the detriment of the actual experience of mothering, makes it clear that even Aphrodite as goddess cannot escape this view of the bonds of motherhood.

Along with this negative opinion comes a corresponding (and paradoxical) absence of the mother from psychological theory, an absence as vivid as that of Psyche's own mother. As Jessica Benjamin observes: "No psychological theory has adequately articulated the mother's independent existence" (23). The work of motherhood has been interpreted in ways that are inimical to its definition as a cultural activity.

Benjamin's and Rich's observations about motherhood echo O'Brien's that we have no philosophy of birth, and all three serve to underscore how this aspect of female life has been left out of what we understand as human experience. Any articulation of a philosophy of female being must include birth. As a way of articulating such a philosophy and considering the entailments of this experientially grounded metaphor, including Psyche's pregnancy and the birth of Voluptas along with her "conception" as union, physically grounds a view of the revisioned sense of self, of self in community and within the spiritual mysteries of life.

By seeing birth as a metaphor for the self in relationship, it might seem that I am substituting an image of an unequal dyad in the mother-child relationship for an image of union encoded as a duality of opposites in marriage/intercourse. To address the concern that the birth metaphor simply substitutes a profoundly unequal dyadic relationship for an ideal of equality--and obscured inequality--of opposites inherent in union and consummation requires a careful examination of the facts of the birthing experience. Even though my philosophy is concerned with a woman-centered revisioning and my concern is centered in the ways in which women are disadvantaged, I reemphasize that Eros, like Psyche, has a mother and was (presumably) birthed.

The experience that all human beings--male or female--share--whatever their other differences--is that profound and original transition from uterine life--however it may be differently labelled "natural," technological, breech, caesarian. What female life may add is the experience of giving birth. That experience certainly does not take away from being born, nor does it negate life that does not include physical birth giving; it merely brings one more experience to the many others possible in life. And, as one aspect of Psyche's journey, pregnancy and birth are as intellectual, as growthful, as hazardous and as spiritually fulfilling as any other.

Birth as Species Survival

Although I have already noted that the birth experience is dangerous for both mother and infant, Wenda R. Trevathan helps us contextualize this danger through her discussion of the evolutionary significance, the survival benefits, of human birth and mother-infant bonding: "Darwin argued survival, but today we know that reproduction is what evolution is all about. But indeed, reproduction cannot occur unless survival has preceded it." She goes on to describe the anthropological heritage of the mother-child dyad in clear scientific terms which are especially useful as a way of removing any overly sentimental images we might hold:

every parturient woman... is... a sexually reproducing mammal with the characteristic features of viviparity and mammary glands... an endocrine repertoire from ancestors as remote as reptiles, a placenta from earliest viviparous mammals, and a birth canal from her earliest hominid ancestors. The newborn infant enters the world with its own set of hormones, a large brain inherited from remote hominid ancestors, and a state of helplessness unusual in the primate order. (ix)

Trevathan discusses reproductive survival within this context and underscores the increased potential for failure (death) because of the intricate, complicated nature of the adaptations that have made homo sapiens so successful a species.

Some of these adaptations include: two genetically contributing parents and (usually) the necessity of sexual intercourse, a placenta for the transfers of nutrients and

waste, a birth canal of a shape and size limited by bipedalism or upright walking, which, in turn, results in the birth of dependent and immature offspring requiring constant, intensive caretaking. Furthermore, encephalization, or the skull enlargement which is the outcome of the larger brain--a tremendous asset in survival terms--also adds to the danger inherent in birthing. Thus Trevathan emphasizes that these compromises and modifications for survival benefit have also resulted in heavy and unequal burdens for the human female and these modifications, too, have, like metaphors, their "entailments."

#### The Entailments of Birth

Trevathan states that the first entailment of this complex of behaviours making up the human reproductive capacity is that "the human female cannot carry to term a fetus phenotypically greatly different from herself, and she must be more selective in choosing her mate" than other primates (34). In other words, for ease (read success) of birth, the reproductive partner should be of similar physical size--by implication, of the same community group, endogamous.<sup>2</sup> In the myth of Psyche, Eros--as daemon or beast--is an exogamous relationship partner. By reason of Psyche's choice and in the success of the birth of Voluptas, however, he is a suitably equal or endogamous partner.

Theirs is in this way a union grounded in biological reproductive reality as well as mythic significance.

In affective terms, as Trevathan notes, the father's presence at birth contributes to a more "positive" immediate attitude of the mother to the child, a response important for the survival and flourishing of the live, but immature, offspring (114). Eros, as we have noted, does return before the birth although it should be pointed out that his on-going presence would also be important. Thus the dyad is immediately "opened" to include an essential third--both in terms of genetic input and postpartum psychological and emotional support--becoming a triad in which the presence of the third contributes optimally in a positive and affirmative way, to the "original" two. By seeing this pair in terms of mother/father or mother/child makes clear the "essential" triplicity in reproductive terms.<sup>3</sup>

A second entailment of human birth which Trevathan argues "is that birth is routinely performed with assistance in our species" (108). Her emphasis that this is routine in the lengthy history of human birth is both surprising and significant for our understanding of women's experience of birthing: "Assistance at childbirth has probably been a normal part of parturition in human beings for more than a million years." Clearly, she does not mean the kind of technological intervention for which North American medical practice has been criticized (Davis-Floyd; Kitzinger; Greer

Sex). While women can and have given birth alone, she goes on to state, that "having that assistance and support would have made the difference between life and death for many mothers and infants..." (110). Whereas now, in present day Western societies, such birth attendants are more likely to be professionally trained (male) doctors and midwives, most often historically they have been older female relatives who have already given birth (111).

Historically, therefore, success in birthing has depended on the bonds between women and such bonding behaviours would be self-selective with assisted birth. That is, women who formed close bonds with other women experienced in birthing would have access to the knowledge, physical aid and emotional support that would ensure successful birth and in that way would pass on the genetic disposition for affective connection. In this way, the triad "opens" further to include reliance upon a community--historically of women--a significant reliance given the unarguably complex and difficult nature of human birth processes.

#### *Symbols in the Birth Community*

Another detail that might be considered peripheral but which is noteworthy for my interpretation of Psyche's story is that "there is a statistical bias toward nocturnal birth."<sup>4</sup> Trevathan explains this by suggesting "that this

non-random distribution reflects a time in our past when it was advantageous to deliver at a time when fellow band members were available to assist and provide protection" (95-96). Again, such behaviour accentuates the historic and anthropological importance of the community, to the birthing female and downplays what has been perceived as a closed mother-child relationship or even the mother-child-father nuclear family. Moreover, these last two facts indicate real and experiential--even essential and historically female--reasons for the presence of Psyche's sisters and for the lamp and the razor/knife they bring her. The lamp and the knife or razor would both be necessary tools for midwifery, and thus they would be quite within the purview of the female and domestic realm. In this light, too, the birth of Voluptas argues for the survival of the sisters through to the end of the tale.

#### *The Physiological Role of the Placenta*

The knife, of course, is necessary to sever the umbilical cord and the umbilical cord recalls the issue of mother-child "unity" and Apuleius's emphasis on the "bonds" of mother love. Trevathan describes the placenta as an adaptive strategy allowing for greater diversity in the gene pool. It permits, within the maternal "environment," the development of a fetus which is not identical with the mother, which, in fact, shares less than half her genetic

make-up (13).

In this day of implants and transplants, we are very aware of what happens to foreign tissue in the human body unless strong intervention occurs. The placenta-as-barrier offers this powerful intervention and protection from the destruction or expulsion that would otherwise occur; the placenta permits co-existence of two different entities, one inside the other and allows an intrinsically distinct and separate creature to exist within a sustaining, preserving and nourishing maternal body. The already-released ova is fertilized--thus consists of transformed cell(s)--and exists within, both part of and separate from, the maternal body: and/both.

As a product of union, the zygote is a self-contained, though obviously not independent, assembly of cells that is different from each of the contributing parents; it is immediately more than and different from a union of each parent. In this sense, the zygote-fetus does not come directly from either contributing parent, but is a combination of genetic input "out from" the genetic heritage of each. In a rudimentary way, contributing ova-sperm/zygote are already separate from each parent.

Further, the placenta connecting fetal cells to the mother may be described as a transformer and is an outgrowth of fetal tissue, not an outgrowth of the maternal body. Placental operation is a function of fetal development and



attachment to the uterine wall and accordingly, it is a corresponding operation of fetal development. The three layers of tissue or membrane that separate the uterus and fetus are likewise all fetal in origin (7). This does not imply that the maternal "environment" is passive, however; it receives, sustains, nourishes and in due course, labors to release.

#### The Psychological Self at Birth

At the same time that fetal existence may be described as physiologically separate from the maternal body, fetal separateness (self-ness) may also be psychologically comprehended. Daniel L. Stern, working as a psychoanalyst and developmentalist, suggests that at birth there is at least an "emergent self" present. Acknowledging that there is no consensus on what constitutes the sense of self or the corresponding sense of other, he, nonetheless, states that we are all aware that such a thing as "selfness" exists and changes throughout life. Centering his theory on this innate sense of self, he states that "some senses of the self do exist long prior to self-awareness and language" and include the sense "of agency, of physical cohesion, of continuity in time, of having intensions in mind and other such experiences" (6).

Beginning with the presumption that "some preverbal senses of the self start to form at birth (if not before)"

while others need differing levels of maturity, he suggests that the task of understanding this sense of self is one which must be concerned with "the developmental continuities and changes" that occur throughout life (6,7). Offering his theory of identity formation as a "metaphor for clinical practice," he clarifies the significance of the changes that result when the child is seen as a distinct being: "Once parents see a different infant, that infant starts to become transformed by their new 'sight' and ultimately becomes a new adult" (276).

#### Agency in the Newly Born

A perception of individuals who are already "selves" at birth makes relationships with them immediately interactive, on-going and increasingly complex. Stern's vision of a reformed social interaction arising from a changed perception of infant selfhood is similar to the kind of social change envisioned by Kubler-Ross and serves to emphasize how a change of perspective exerts influence on many social behaviours. Equally important for my perspective is that a changed perception of the infant as a separate being compels a parallel change in our perceptions of the mother, the mother-child bond and mother work.

In this context, then, at-one-ness, the sharing of the maternal body by fetus and mother, does not imply union and the loss of the infant self or the submerging of the

infant's self in the "greater" environment; neither does it suggest passivity or loss of self in the mother. At the same time that the pregnant woman's bones, blood and tissue cradle and sustain fetal development, the foetus may be said to initiate a connection that maintains separateness even as it sustains life. This interaction provides a metaphor for an agency of receptiveness and nurturing, and for an interactive community of (at least) two that encourages and enables separate co-responsive growth.

That the fetus exhibits agency also erases the proscriptions of gender from concepts of the origins of human agency. From our earliest cellular beginnings, we are all beings of intention--even will--and we desire both connection to, and separation from, our environment. Such an agency may be described as encompassing an "inherent" sense of self that demands--for survival--both connection and separation within relationship, within an interactive biosphere. Fetal agency in prenatal biological development moderates our perceptions of the symbiotic existence, dependency and absence of control ascribed to the newborn. Other behaviours of the newly-born infant suggest that, as Stern argues, the infant is neither passive nor without a sense of self. Trevathan, too, notes that interactive communication occurs immediately after birth and that these "bonding" actions are multi-sensory and include vision, olfaction and touch (150).

All of this together encourages us to recognize that in the unity of mother and child usually ascribed to pregnancy there is also a very distinct triplicity because of the separation of fetus and mother that is implemented by the placenta. Thus, the placenta is barrier, connection and conduit--allowing the passage of nutrients and waste between the maternal environment and the fetus through the umbilical cord. The cord itself is biologically and physiologically, triple, for it "carries the fetal blood from the fetus to the placenta via the two umbilical arteries, and the returning blood via the single umbilical vein." Its blood vessels are coiled in a spiral fashion and finally both cord and placenta ensure that the "maternal and fetal circulations are entirely independent" (Bourne 90,85).

#### The Post-Birth Gap

Physiologically, the placenta and umbilical cord bridge a "gap" between different beings, allowing them to co-exist by providing a barrier, a connection and a process for sustenance. This important and physical "thirdness" of intrauterine life is recognized in many cultures. Commenting on the disposal of the placenta and afterbirth, Trevathan observes: "if there is a childbirth practice that comes close to universal incidence, it may be with the proper disposal of the placenta and umbilical cord" (106). Several cultures ascribe "personness" to it, and some consider it a

friend or younger sibling; it "has its own metabolism, its own life span, and it can live in the absence of a fetus" (107). In our own patriarchal and male-defined culture, we can see a form of this thinking not only in the way that "personness" is ascribed to the phallus, but also in the way that such an ascription constitutes an expropriation or metonymic transfer of this original view of the placenta.

In turn, if we accept the placenta and umbilical cord as outgrowth of the fetus and fetal development, and if we likewise accept that the sense of self very early encompasses body boundaries, then we can understand how the cutting of the umbilical cord may in fact be experienced by the newborn as amputation. If this amputation is metonymically transferred to the male sense of body cohesion, then it is also not surprising that Western culture has placed so much stock in Freud's castration theory. Indeed, this concern may be further exacerbated by the practice of circumcision, which constitutes a repetition of that original cut. In the context of the placental role as connection, it is even less surprising that the metonymic transfer of castration is from its "rightful" anxiety (the loss of the testes, the source of genetic potency) to the erect penis, the phallus, the means of male sexual connection.

For female experience, such an amputation-like occurrence might account for what is perceived as an

equivalent feeling of absence or sense of loss that is intensified by patriarchal betrayal and the general cultural message of being "born wrong." That this loss may be exorcised in the care of and affective connection to others and in the historic responsibility for infant care has effectively served the grand imperative of species survival.

### The Placenta as Metaphoric Ground

If we return the metaphor of loss to its true source in placental amputation, if we reinscribe this metaphor as the means and process of connection and separation, we arrive at a wealth of new and transformative meanings about the ways we connect to others and to our environment. What the placental metaphor brings into focus is the means of analyzing how a human concept or an intellectual or social system, is a self-generated construction that connects us to each other, provides a barrier that nurtures the self even as it encourages growth in the other, and in its very failures sustains growth. The placenta as metaphor includes the knowledge that the construct itself is a conduit--grows out of the self, connects infant and mother and carries blood and waste between them--and as an object is necessarily subject to analysis. In this we are all children; we endeavor to forge our own placental barrier-connections with the world--however hospitable or hostile it may be.

Metaphorically, the placenta is the site of context; that which is absent in dualistic thinking--the gap or third in dichotomy--thus becomes available as a metaphor in any enquiry, and any enquiry may be said to be faulty if it does not examine this essential third element. By this metaphoric reasoning, a debate which has only two sides and finishes with a winner and a loser provides no way of seeing truth. The conduit, the form has conditioned the results, but it has also obscured the process. The absence itself conditions the nature of the (failed) understanding.

The placenta metaphor enables a revised image of the mind as well. The placenta is the third which operates as a mediator between self and experience, between self and other. The mind, too, can be shown to have a triple nature and a mediative function. In *The Right Brain and The Unconscious*, Dr. R. Joseph uses the binary brain model, but his interpretation can equally suggest a three part brain. In describing the responsibilities of the dual mind, for example, he also portrays the Limbic system as "so ancient and, in some respects, primitive that some have referred to it as the *reptilian brain*" (110). When he contrasts this "old brain" to the "new brain," the right and left hemispheres, he illustrates again the traditional tendency to "dualize," but at the same time he observes that the "old limbic brain has not been replaced, for it remains buried within the depths of the cerebral hemispheres, where it

continues to exert its influence much as it has for the last million years" (110).

In the same way that the crone-mother-daughter triad of female relationship is dualized, the Limbic brain like Hecate, has been lost, and if mentioned at all, forced underground. (Not for nothing is "trivialize" pejorative.) Joseph tells us that the "limbic level of the mind could be referred to as the *primary unconscious*, as its appearance precedes all other aspects of mental functioning" (118-19). In his reevaluation of the role of the right brain and the unconscious, Joseph also recognizes "the constraints of language" and argues for a greater reliance on context, the "way things are said, the body language and facial expressions" (375,376). Such a view of the brain as a mediator of experience and of language as a metaphor in that process of mediation, enables us to change the way we understand and analyze human interactions with the world and each other.

Understanding language and intellectual, social and cultural constructions as metaphoric placental systems, can also lead to changes in our way of thinking. We can see that, for the twentieth century, technology is placental--connecting, dividing and transforming. Democracy and politics are placental in that they are the means through which we impose our collective will, are imposed upon by that will, and are conditioned by the form it takes. These



are metaphoric ways of connection, difference and transformation. What this third of placental connection/barrier offers is a way of including context in analysis and contextual understanding in meaning.

### *The Discourse of Relationship*

Focus on the social nature of the relationship between infant and mother and the ability of the infant to make an impact on his/her environment changes the way we regard the relationship. If female maternal power is perceived as total, it may readily be characterized as despotic and threatening, suffocating and ultimately life-denying. It is just this view of maternal power that sees Eros as locked into a relationship over which he has no control.

To return infant behaviour to its own and real agency restores to maternal behaviour the complexity that interactive social functioning and infant care demand. To acknowledge the diverse affective and intellectual behaviours that parenting requires is to restore to maternal and parental work its multiple responsibilities and challenges. The real labor of mothering requires an ability to perceive similarity and difference and to move out of the self into an understanding of what is appropriate for the well-being of a different-though-similar and dependent other. The surprise, then, is not that women might "fail" but that so many have succeeded so well.

What becomes even more evident with this metaphor is the understanding that even at an affective and relationship level, (an age-appropriate) distance and separation are as fundamental to well-being as is connection. If we understand that dis-connection--the separations--are as necessary to growth as is the on-going emotional nurturing, then mothers, indeed both parents, must "fail" as well as succeed. It is only when there is space between individuals that there appears room for growth. Development, the impetus to growth, the growth itself and the transformation may occur only in the space and difference of such a partial, though no less real, failure. Psyche grows within the tasks as much through Aphrodite's setting of them as by the provision of helpers. A definition of "symbiotic" relationship that acknowledges fundamental differences and separations (or failures) is the symbiosis of a transformative, good-enough (definitively *not-perfect*) mothering (parenting).

Because of their prominence in male life and masculine values, mastery and agency are easy to understand as important ingredients to the well-lived life, but the feminine relationship values have equally played their part despite their devaluation. Recognizing that relationship is an important life goal, and that interconnection is a fundamental psychological aim, has had, until recently, no real place in any psychoanalytic theory, Ruthellen Josselson presents a scheme for the "development that takes place

within, through, and for relatedness" (2). She underscores the need for developing a theory of "self-in-relation" that could "postulate individuation toward greater belonging and sharing, and see development as moving not toward separation but toward increasingly complex relatedness" (16).

Locating this development in "the space between us," she explains psychological growth as an enlarged perception of the individual security that results from a recognition of barrier and boundary, coupled with an increased comprehension of interconnection.

Relatedness and separation are recursive processes.... The clearer we are about who we ourselves are, the more we are able to risk ourselves with another. The more certain we are about our own boundaries, the freer we become to experience a range of affect and interconnection with others. (19)

Josselson describes "the discourse of relatedness" as consisting of eight ways, each of which constitutes "actually or metaphorically, a way of reaching through space (or being reached) and being in contact with each other" (6). These eight are holding, attachment, passionate experience, eye-to-eye validation, idealization and identification, mutuality and resonance, embeddedness and tending or care. Josselson also acknowledges the importance of context: "Relationships always occur in existing systems, enhancing, counterpointing, or clashing with what is already there" (27).

Part of Josselson's concern is with the absence of a language to describe relationship--the discourse of "we"--

and she stresses the need for metaphor: "Our limited language of relatedness requires that we rely on metaphor to grasp its various phenomena." Seeing the "physical and the psychological as metaphorically interchangeable" (5-6), she uses some metaphors already familiar: clarification as "candle" (20), holding as "invisible threads" (29), security as a "container" (30), death as "abyss" and "fall" (33). Stating also that "[r]elatedness and individuality are not dichotomous" (15), she continues with the observation that the growth of the one is accompanied by growth in the other. Recognizing this, Josselson uses paradox to suggest this mutuality and to explain each of the eight dimensions of relationship that she defines.<sup>5</sup>

As my analysis suggests, I see a more concise rendering in a threefold process combining difference with accretion (the Both/And). Similarly, I see a metaphoric physical birth-base for conditioning our psychological understanding of relationship and connection in the placental connection. In the placental connection, the self-cord/placenta-mother and the mother-placenta/cord-child triplicities, lie the physiological bases for a more accurate analysis of the psychological and philosophical complexities that characterize subjectivity, relationship, agency (selfhood) and community.<sup>6</sup> The umbilicus is a passage, a "cord," a "belt," which "ties" two together, can "knot," and "buckle," is finally "cut." In the loss of the physical connection of

the pre-birth state lies the metaphoric space (gap, fissure, slit) to be "transcended" - bridged, reached over, through, across.

The umbilical cord originates the metaphors of ties, paths, bonds, belts that link us together. In the placenta and cord lie the ways of grounding our understanding in metaphoric expression. The feelings of/in attachment prevent incorporation (symbiosis) as well as give energy and sustain life; beings do not merge; they relate. Context is the very real third in the seeming duality of cord and placental connection. The third, seen and named as space, is actually the means and context of connection; it is as fundamental to relationship as the two (or more) who are connected. As context, as barrier/threshold and path, the fluid-filled birth sac, the placenta and umbilical cord exist to protect difference and self-ness as much as they further connection and survival.

With conception and the fertilization of the egg, comes the drive for biological, physical attachment to the mother/womb as a survival imperative. With birth comes the need for affective connection as a way of ensuring physical nurturance and continued survival; with maturity comes the desire to find one's place, to connect in community. Thus the four more basic of Josselson's eight dimensions-- holding, attachment, eye-to-eye contact and embeddedness-- are followed by an increasing complexity of connection in

mutuality, idealization and identity, passionate experience and tending.

Liminality and the Gap

The navel to cord to placental/threshold is the child path to connection; here is the self-in-agency which is impelled to connection out from the self to threshold, the place of border, barrier and attachment to community. The placental/threshold to cord to developing fetus is, in turn, a mother-path; here we have a receptive agency, a responsibility and energy willing to move out through self's borders and in(on)to a path that ends in new creation. The mother-as-subject, passes the threshold first, before the path, leaving the old way of being-in-the-world to make new being. In this renewing lies eternal return-with-a-difference. The same Being ever different; the Same being ever different.

The sign or mark of this process is, conceivably (and whimsically) the navel, signifying both connection and separation and, as well, identifying the process of growth and change. As semiotic scar, it marks community at the same time as it signs uniqueness, and is as individual as a fingerprint. Coherency of separation, loss, connection, agency and context exist and are distinguished in this center. Aspects of Victor Turner's inquiry into ritual activity lends credence to the idea that we may have a very

real consciousness of placental nature and function. In *The Ritual Process*, he describes and likens liminality to "being in the womb" and as a "betwixt and between position" (95). In "Variations on a Theme of Liminality," Turner acknowledges that the source of the term is Arnold Van Gennep's examination of rites of passage. What Van Gennep found was that these rites "have basically a tripartite processual structure... marked by three phases: separation; margin (or *limen*); and re-aggregation" (36). Turner represents the *limen* as gap, as an absence between dualities and a separation between subject and other.

This middle is called an "interesting problem" by Turner and variously described as "a threshold, a corridor... a tunnel... a pilgrim's road" (37). The pilgrims or "liminaries" are also middle.

They evade ordinary cognitive classification, too, for they are neither-this-nor-that, here-nor-there, one-thing-not-the-other. Out of their mundane context, they are in a sense "dead" to the world and liminality has many symbols of death.... (370)

He goes on to say that gestation, parturition, lactation and weaning are all present with the symbols of death. "But the most characteristic midliminal symbolism is that of paradox, or being *both* this *and* that... both living *and* dead, at once ghosts and babes, both cultural and natural, human *and* animal" (37).

Restoring to the gap its original connector, makes it possible to envision the gap as superseding the absent chord

and connection/separation. What is represented is that which constitutes process. The gap exists in the absence of the third, the placental connector. Turner reenforces this by noting the effect of liminality on social conditions and community connections: "certain kinds of liminality may be conducive to the emergence of *communitas*" (47). This *communitas* is also characterized as requiring "flow" and a "merging of action and awareness" (51). The symbols of such a connection to community are described as "transitional processional, liminal, and transformative" (52).

Psyche's journey has been marked by an awareness of the both(two)/and(one) understanding that indicates a co-existence of (perceived or preconceived) opposites with process as the continuity and the path between. Female experience contains this kind of multiplicity and the possibility of consciousness through its three-fold dynamic: the maiden-kore experiences of the child's journey (as Persephone), the mother's responsibilities (as Aphrodite/Demeter) and old wise-woman's reflection on life (as Hecate). Female life, female reproductive consciousness and a philosophy of birth give processes of reflection and difference, agency and accretion familiar in Psyche's story. This is the basis for a new metaphor of being and a new way of reinterpreting old metaphors, for the transforming psyche.



Ancient Metaphors of Centeredness

One of these old metaphors is the navel. In his analysis of the significance of archaic man's "symbolism of the Center" and concern with the "center of the world," Mircea Eliade notes the biological terms used in ancient texts about the "Holy One" who creates "the world like an embryo" that "proceeds from the navel onwards" spreading "out in different directions" (16). The center is described as the earth's navel, where creation began. An omphalos, it is "pre-eminently the zone of the sacred, the zone of absolute reality" and "all other symbols of absolute reality (trees of life and immortality, Fountain of Youth, etc.) are also situated at a center" (17-18). In *The Language of the Goddess*, archeologist Marija Gimbutus describes the presence throughout Europe of ancient symbolic representations that combine the omphalos as navel with goddess representations. For example, she documents an ancient frog goddess with a navel represented by concentric circles; she links the depiction with regeneration (252).

Eliade reiterates that the path to this omphalos or center is a "difficult road," a "pilgrimage," a "danger-ridden" voyage, "because it is, in fact, a rite of passage from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity, from death to life, from man to the divinity" (18). By joining this interpretation of center to the path which leads to it, we see that the

"center" is a complex representation with different layers of meaning. First, it is the place from which the path begins, the earth-center birthplace; then it becomes the center as a source of creative energy for the transmission of inspiration, a threshold-center and path; then it is the center as divinity, the Other-center; and finally, it is the self, the center-within and originator agent of the journey.

The navel as center symbolizes not only how the varied subjects/individuals are represented as circles of being but also mark the scar where they were connected by moments (movements) of the arduous journey. These concentric circles of being conflate distance and deny the journey, even as they emphasize the absent link.<sup>7</sup> The journey as the metaphoric line that brings the circles together would necessarily be spiral. The restoration of a physical base to the metaphor causes a different emphasis in the interpretation of journey and center. According to Eliade, we become ontologically real by the repetition or imitation of an archetype; when we use the archetype of birth, which emphasizes connection as well as conception and includes separation, ontology is re-rooted in the original placental connection. Whereas Eliade calls the center "the navel of the earth" (13), "where man was formed" (16), it is thus more appropriate to see the center as the womb.

To Eliade, a "meaningful act... any repetition of an archetypal gesture, suspends duration, abolishes profane

time, and participates in mythical time" (36). As such and following Eliade's interpretation, the repetition of meaningful return (as initiation) focuses on violent disruption and disconnection and is explicitly gendered male. Male initiation begins with an act of rupture, a separation from the mother and is carried out within an age group.<sup>8</sup> In this way, male initiation is an entrance into male society that enforces a total separation from the mother and from female society; sexuality becomes an important part of the "eternal return" because it is the only way of returning to a family community. The separation of sons from domestic life is thus an exaggeration of one aspect of the separation-connection in placental pre-birth life. By the exaggeration of difference from the mother, male life prevents any understanding of the profound ways in which we are all interconnected and yet may retain and maintain our individuality. The anxiety over relationship with another is a culturally created fear, one which is evident in Apuleius's description of the kiss given Eros by his mother, Aphrodite.

Of the specifically female initiation, Eliade says that it begins with first menstruation and is thus physical and individual. A young woman is removed from her family and instructed by an older woman in "the secrets of sexuality and fertility" (42). In addition, he sees menstruation, pregnancy and birth as sacred and so rightfully argues that

they constitute initiatory ordeals equal to that of young men. In his discussion of the Hellenic mysteries at Eleusis, Eliade also makes several observations that fit with Psyche's tasks. The initiate becomes "he [sic] who sees" (111) and in the association of initiation with spirituality, Eliade identifies the "maieutic procedure (from the root *maia*, 'midwife')" which ties initiation and spirituality directly to childbirth (114).<sup>9</sup> Psyche, through her desire "to see" Eros and in conceiving, in her pregnancy and later in giving birth, images a primordial understanding that vivifies individual change and transformation even as it repeats an ancient gesture. She participates in an action that renews life even as it brings a profound and personal psychic renewal.

#### *Female Being and the Sacred*

I have described Psyche's journey of self-reflection and self-analysis, of growth in knowledge and understanding, as being shamanic. Now, we might note that the shamanic experience, as Eliade describes it, also acknowledges centers and connection: "The shaman knows the mystery of the break-through in plane" (259). The breakthrough place is described as central, as a sacred space, as the navel or "umbilicus" of the earth. These planes are not transcended but instead are "linked together by a central axis" (259) and represent an intelligence or understanding of

metaphysical truth: "Those who know have wings" (479).<sup>10</sup>

"For the Shaman in ecstasy," observes Eliade, "the bridge or the tree, the vine, the cord, and so on--which *in illo tempore*, connected earth with heaven--once again, for the space of an instant, becomes present reality" (486). In spite of describing the center as existing in space, Eliade accounts for a very umbilical connection.

This depiction of connection presents an image of the sacred, the spiritual, the numinous, that is different from Rudolf Otto's definition. For Otto, the numinous is a creature consciousness, "the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness" and characterized by "overpowering, absolute, might" (10). The feelings associated with this numinous are described variously as tidal, bursting, spasmodic, convulsive, demonic, horrible. The mysterious is also described as daunting, fascinating and "wholly other" (26). The threat and profound fear are of loss of self, of absorption and drowning. The language employed by Otto, with its implication of rise and fall corresponds to the expressions used to describe the structure of male narratives, the patterns perceived in Eros's experience, the male erotic or reproductive experience and the Icarus complex.

My examination of Psyche's experience, however, suggests that her journey could allow for a different language of relationship to the spiritual--one that includes

nature. This language would recognize difference as integral to connection and nurturing. The expression of the spiritual, in a way more in keeping with women's embodied experience, would include a recognition of the centrality of process to human life and a tendency to see the continuities as well as the contraries. An emphasis on embodied life within the biosphere, a return to understanding our sense of community with all things, a vision of at-one-ness and integration in the whole pattern, brings with it a heightened awareness of how we contribute to as well as take from the whole. Recalling the child-to-mother bond and their placental connector, the image of the sacred as an embodied mother goddess of the natural world includes the ways in which we are dependent and individual even as we are agents and responsible for our own connections.

## Chapter Eight

### Lifeprints

Earlier, I described Psyche's journey as a soul's journey on the soles of her feet in the footprints of the goddess Aphrodite; it is not a single life prescription, but rather a pattern of consciousness. In *Lifeprints: New Patterns of Life and Work for Today's Women*, Grace Baruch, Rosalind Barnett and Caryl Rivers also remind us how dangerous it is to limit our lives to one role; "no one pattern fits all women, no one lifeprint guarantees well-being and no one path leads inevitably to misery" (viii). As in the case of Psyche, however, what is common to all "walks of life" is the importance of both work and relationship to well-being. As *Lifeprints* puts it, in order to have a feeling of well-being (joy), women require both a sense of mastery (agency) and pleasure (satisfaction): "Doing and achieving are at least as important to the lives of women as are relationships and feelings" (15).

By highlighting the tasks to refocus on Psyche's achievements, and by placing all her relationships and tasks within the context of female life and feminine relationship values, we see both how Psyche's relationships enrich her life and how the tasks bring change and growth. *Lifeprints* places this awareness in the context of love relationships: they "can only enrich and deepen a life--they cannot transform who a person is" (20).

In the same way, placing women's autobiographies in the context of the Psyche myth can serve to "enrich and deepen" our appreciation of the female dynamics of modern works. Establishing that similar structures, themes and motifs co-exist in the myth and the autobiography will confirm a continuity of consciousness through the lineaments of relationships and descriptions of life experiences even as it respects what Keith Louise Fulton has called an "authentic voice" which does not "set aside parts or even most of ourselves" (426). Contemporary autobiographers all differently print, and re-print, aspects of this ancient pattern, and in doing so confirm the way that Psyche's tale differs from that of the Eros plot--the configuration underlying male autobiographies.

#### The Contours of Autobiography

In his theory of (men's) autobiography, *Metaphors of Self*, James Olney reminds us of, and rightfully emphasizes the importance of metaphor to our ways of knowing and as a way of producing order. He also emphasizes that this impulse to order is "closely related to soul and essential being, is not of the order of facts but of the order of process: an activity exercised continuously out from a center." Like Eliade, however, he goes on to interpret process as a movement "back from manifestation to source." So described, source and manifestation become--like Narcissus and his



mirror self--forever imposed and imposing on the world. To Olney, this obliges an analysis which sees "the mind of man, a great shape-maker impelled forever to find order in himself and give it back to the universe" (17).

Olney himself is aware of the dilemma this solipsistic attitude toward subjectivity presents:

If all selves are unique and, in their uniqueness, only subjectively experienced (ie., we may only experience other selves, but then only as objects, not as proper selves), and if all selves are constantly evolving, transforming, and becoming different from themselves, then how is it at all possible to comprehend or define the self or to give anyone else any sense of it?

He continues with his answer:

It may be that the nearest one can come to definition is to look not straight to the self, which is invisible anyway, but sidewise to an experience of the self... that can reflect or evoke it and that may appeal to another individual's experience of the self. (29)

This sidewise experience is by metaphor: "The self expresses itself by the metaphors it creates and projects" (34). That Olney regards the self as "unique" and focusses on a self-other isolation points to the problematic issues that concern theorists of women's life writings. Seeing the self as isolated and solitary, leads him to perceive autobiography as singular or, with the author, as a mirror double, a stand-in substitute that is static or a series of images and image-reflections.

Women's biographies, in contrast, are specifically concerned with challenging what Sidonie Smith calls the "metaphysical or universal subject."<sup>1</sup> In particular they

take part in the "[r]adical challenges to the notion of a unified and unitary core of selfhood [that] wrenched the ideology of the universal subject out of its ontological, teleological, and topographical boundaries" (55). She identifies Marx, Freud, Derrida and Lacan as among those who contributed to the deconstruction of this concept of self: "Site of fractures, splittings, maskings, dislocations, vulnerabilities, absences, and subjections of all kinds, the architecture of selfhood seems to have collapsed into a pile of twentieth-century rubble" (57); the "self" has become "one" and "not-one": the mirror has broken; "the very grounds of representation soften, break apart, and disperse" (57).<sup>2</sup>

As Smith sees it, however, the deconstruction of the unified self does not seem to have affected the male perception of female being nor the confrontational aspects of identity boundaries that ensure women's marginality. Women are still seen as having an "embodied subjectivity"; "woman remains the object of, and in, contestatory male discourses." She warns that this changed perception of male subjectivity, accompanied by an unchanged view of women's being,

threatens another kind of subjection that would erase real women outside the "text," silence the heterogenous specifics of their experiences, including the experiences of oppression, in service to the impersonal and homogenizing technologies of rampant textuality. (59)

Any ability to cause change, to transform, and any

capability to see multiplicity and difference is immediately curtailed by this post-modern view of subjective experience.

In Smith's analysis, because of its "tremendous elasticity," autobiography becomes the area where this concept of selfhood may be challenged. She uses some twentieth-century women's autobiographies like Gertrude Stein's to describe the "generic engagement" that allows "the entry into language and self-narrative of culturally marginalized peoples through which they recapitulate the contours of subjectivity" (61). "Moreover, they fashion and refashion, then fine tune various identities through which they make meaning out of their experiences" (62). By conjoining her insights with my revisioning of the birth process, autobiography can be seen as a (placental/journey) process-place for the transformative connections from older to younger selves, from self to (a specific) other, self to society, self to reader. Placing autobiography in a triple connection brings a way to transform the mirror and the gap, brings a metaphor that allows for difference in connection, and acknowledges context and time as important in any analysis of individual life. Clearly, seeing the self as originating in a triple connection, continuously sustained by that connection, transforms autobiography into a process of transformation and growth.

This concern with evolution accounts for what Estelle Jelinek describes as the "irregularity" of women's

narratives: "The narratives of their lives are often not chronological and progressive but disconnected, fragmentary, or organized into self-sustained units rather than connecting chapters" (17). She relates this feature to "the multidimensionality of women's socially conditioned roles" and also sees it as the cause of the relegation of women's autobiographies to "non-artistic" categories.

In her analysis of Lillian Hellman's style, she also suggests why such a circumferential style is important: "Had she forced an orderly and linear narrative on the events and persons that affected the development of her personality and values, she would have destroyed the achievement of the cumulative, three-dimensional portrait of herself" (18). While women's autobiographies might be called anecdotal and self-contained, one could also argue that the deliberate remembering, building-up and sequencing of narrative carries the possibility of seeing each event as evoking change, as "pregnant" and "bearing" on the next in cumulative meaningful life-experience.

#### Features of a Psychean Text

A comprehensive explanation of the Psyche features in women's autobiographies is obviously beyond the scope of this study. What is possible, however, is to provide a skeleton framework to suggest the general tendencies of a Psychean text. The configurations of Psyche's story are

present in women's autobiographies:

1) if the story begins "before-the-beginning" of the individual's birth, in origins and ancestry and seem concerned with context, with the author's life in the family, the larger community, in the matrix of life or within a personal philosophy; if the ending is "no-ending" but spirals onward, intending an opening out to another stage, another reading, a new reality; if the narration shares experience as well as "secrets" and catalogues achievement.

2) if there is a real consciousness of threshold, of a place that is an early transition; if this "placental" place is both barrier and way out; if it is metaphorically described as, for instance, window-, door- or passage-through; if this transition is articulated in its completeness, as a process "out-from/through/in-to," a three-fold movement; if this movement is accompanied by a sense of "Call."

3) if beginnings indicate both a move out as well as the awareness of loss, of connections "cut" or "severed" on social or personal levels, or on a combination of both levels; if grief is necessarily "passed through" to new connections or re-connections--with life itself, perhaps; if there is an awareness of a betrayal as inherent in patriarchy and the particular price women have paid in cultural suppression, repression or abuse; if there is a

realization of "split" and if cultural failure is a cause for grief, growth and action.

4) if the narratives are experiential, sequential and concerned with process, with crises that are moments of passage and psychological growth, of recognition and transformation contextualized as intense moments in a life journey; if "digressions" as they appear in women's writing, turn out to be spirals out and back to re-collect experience that "adds to" narrative; if such "digressions" might have a "circumferential" aspect and involve the moving out to "encircle" the experience/information in order to "ferry" it back to the narrative; if there is an awareness of three different sensations of time: linear, seasonal and creative time or timeless-ness.

5) if the awareness of the "gaps" of life, of the coincidence of expectation and discrepant outcome is made explicit by the use of humor, a sense of irony and paradox; if these devices and this sense of humor may be seen to arise from a recognition of the incongruities of awareness between values held in a life-lived-as-a-woman (or as part of a marginalized group) within a social, intellectual and cultural community defined by men and male concerns, the dominant cultural group; if this outlook corresponds with an optimism that looks towards new being in life in spite of hardships, grief and loss; if this is congruent with a philosophy of death as necessary ending, as threshold rather

than as ultimate end, "tragic fall" or transcendent union.

6) if human relationships of all kinds, including but not exclusively focusing on the male-female courtship dance, are viewed as enriching, and predominate in the narrative; if the mother/mother figure or mentor has a preeminent place; if the sister-sister bond, the community of women, is regarded as supportive, fulfilling and vital; if relationship/s with child/ren figure as relationships of change and interaction, important in mutual growth rather than as clone-like extensions of the self; if there is a consciousness of the richness of the third phase of life, the life of female being beyond the reproductive phase, in a wider, socially expansive "mothering."

7) if relationships are seen as being processes of connection which recognize differences and see separation as the way of growth; if relationships are seen as having a triplicity, emphasizing the growth and change in relationship between two (or more) individuals in context and through time.

8) if the accumulation of sensory detail indicates an awareness of the richness of life as it is lived physically; if all of the senses are evoked: taste, touch, smell, hearing, vision and movement; if this acute awareness of the physicality of life brings with it a heightened awareness of the natural world; if this natural world is felt to have a being, an energy, that appeals emotionally to the spirit.

9) if the spiritual aspects of the life journey are expressed outside cultural contexts; if spirituality is registered in an affinity for the earth, the earth as home or place of at-one-ness; if this bond and communion-with brings a heightened sense of self and agency and is self-energizing rather than symbiotic or self-obliterating; if spirituality is expressed in ways that suggest the re-defined and tri-partite prebirth connection.

Reprints of Psyche's Story

From even a quick glance over the titles of women's autobiographies, some of these Psychean motifs clearly emerge.<sup>3</sup> Mary Daly's *Outercourse* is described as backgrounded in patriarchal suppression and a voyage into the "Clusters of Moments," "the Realm of Wild Reality" and the "Homeland of Women's Selves and of all Others" (1). In her "Introduction," Daly herself notes the importance of these moments as she comments on the first word in the title of Virginia Woolf's *Moments of Being*; she describes them as moments of seeing beyond--into context and into wholeness (Daly 3-4). Emily Carr's *Growing Pains: An Autobiography* integrates growth and pain, the positive and negative aspects of life inherent in growing up. Similarly, Gabrielle Roy's *Enchantment and Sorrow* seems to propose that life consists of both, that they are inseparable, just as does Fredelle Bruser Maynard's *Raisins and Almonds*. Movement on a



path within the landscape materialises in the title of Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road* and L.M. Montgomery's *The Alpine Path*. These titles also suggest physical discomfort and struggle, but the struggle is tempered by the community which is intimated in "path" and "road."

Path and road also indicate a recognition of connection to those who have gone before as well as those who will come after, and of being part of this larger procession. Margaret Laurence's *Dance on the Earth*, read either as a descriptive or imperative phrase, celebrates an embodied movement of life in the world of nature, in the world of here and now, and is all the more remarkable a title in view of the fact that her memoir was completed during her final illness. Maya Angelou symbolizes her struggle to find personal freedom within the cage of racial intolerance in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. That she "sings" evokes a joyful attitude in keeping with life-as-celebration in spite of limitation and restriction.

Maria Campbell's title, *Half-breed*, suggests both the social betrayal of racism and bigotry and the creation of a new community in her search for personal dignity. The bitter irony of the epithet is turned into a banner of survival and new being. Equally critical and harsh are the titles: *Don't: A Woman's Word* by Elly Danica and *Daddy's Girl* by Charlotte Vale Allen. Both give the lie to the patriarchal myth with all the painful intensity of the betrayed. The sense of

process beyond displacement and attachment to a home newly found is suggested in Laura Goodman Salverson's *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter*. One of the most amusing of the titles is *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* by Gertrude Stein, since title and author seem to contradict one another. What is not at all contradictory, however, is what such a paradox implies about the strength and importance of the relationship of each to the other in both lives.

Gertrude Stein: Circumferential Sequencing

In his analysis of Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, James E. Breslin makes several observations about style of this unorthodox work.

[It] blends the domestic particularity, whimsical humour, and ironic precision of Toklas with some of the leading features of Stein's writing - e.g. stylized repetition, digression, a language that continuously points up its own artifice. The reader is not sure who he is listening to; nor is he meant to be. (152)

The building up of particulars and the stylized repetitions foreground the accumulation of knowledge. As readers we have returned to not-quite-the-same-point in the narrative and with new knowledge. These signals begin immediately in Stein's narrative: "There are a great many things to tell" (6), "I must tell a little about" (7), "Before I tell" (8), "But to return to" (9), "As I say" (10). Such "digressive passages, however, do not seem to be mere forays out from the text or observations that serve no purpose and which can be ignored without loss; rather, the movement is out and

back and thus these passages are best described as circumferential. Stein's method is to spiral out from the narrative in order to gather in more memories and then to come back with them in tow, to enhance and add to the narrative.

Wendy Steiner suggests a similar way of interpreting Stein's narrative structure.

Stein believed that the old-style story with beginning, middle, and end was inappropriate to the twentieth century, because of the high pitched intensity of modern media-filled life. Instead of projecting one forward in time to a final resolution, a modern narrative should force one into the fullness and depth of each moment, and should proceed as a succession of such moments. Each should be a copy of the last, with only minimal differences. (176)

Steiner notes that such repetition with a difference is not the same as design which involves exact repetition (177).

Breslin also describes the book as having "an elusive center and discontinuous design" (152) and observes that this circularity suggests a lack of progressive linear movement.

Breslin continues by comparing Stein's style as a writer with Picasso's as a painter.

Like Picasso's portrait, *The Autobiography* gives the inside by way of the outside; it plays down psychology and sticks to the surface, recording externals ... in a way that clearly manifests deliberate and idiosyncratic acts of selection and stylization.... *The Autobiography*, in short, gives us Gertrude Stein being. (154)

The inside/outside paradox, the accumulation of the details of context and the inter-relationship of Alice and Gertrude suggest a consciousness of relationship based on connections.

In Stein's "disembodied strategy" of writing through Alice, Sidonie Smith sees "a subversive return of the repressed body." This paradoxical achievement is the result of appropriating "bourgeois heterosexuality" to "lesbian pleasure" (78-79), of writing through the body of her lover, making the text "an act of erotic union" (80). Stein does this by employing the forms of marriage: "Through the camouflage of normative gender arrangements of heterosexuality she encodes the 'abnormative' alignment of desire." By inscribing the heterosexual-union-as-marriage beside lesbian relationship Stein has disrupted "paternal narrative" (81-82).

I would argue further that this reflects reproductive consciousness and exists beyond the notion of union related to the concept of sexuality. By speaking through Alice, by using the median, "placental" shadow, the sister-self, she has evoked both the self and other, like and unlike complexities of the sister-sister relationship. By announcing this device at the end of the autobiography, Stein invites us back to a transformed reading of the autobiography. In his discussion of the conclusion of the text, Breslin emphasizes a vision of ending as no-ending, of new awareness, birth and spiral.

The autobiography ends by folding back on itself; and a reader is invited to re-read the book in the light of the revelation that Stein is the author.... Yet the book's conclusion also reveals Stein to be on a quest that is not completed; the book's ending is also open. The end of the book closes off and frames a life at the

same time that it breaks out of its frame, its artificial closure, to affirm the on-going process of the author's life. (161)

Thus, the impression is one of an ending that spirals out into another reading.

Mary Daly: Context, Spiral and Threshold

Mary Daly's *Outercourse* focuses our attention on the spiral as the informing structure of autobiography and in the process provides insight into her reasons for choosing it. She describes the spiral as an "accumulated Gynergy of Moments," and a "Qualitative Leap" to a "New Galaxy," and gives evidence of the desire to contextualize the life story, to give a base to the spiral (5). Daly recreates language to emphasize process and movement. Mentioning the importance of verb tense to an understanding of spirals, she presents actions as occurring in time: "were" and "are" and "will continue to be" (6). She writes of making verbs from nouns (be-ing, re-call, dis-covery) to focus on process and movement.<sup>4</sup> Although her training in dichotomous argument is clearly evident, she--like Echo outside--is conscious of a "patriarchally inflicted *aphasia*" and chooses to leap into the "Background" as a way of bringing in context, as a way of jumping over what is perceived as missing and into something new: "Qualitative Leaping is... not merely 'beyond' but toward and into something else, which I have named *Spinning*" (8).<sup>5</sup>

Emphasizing sequence as part of the spiral, she accentuates the interconnections of the moments of her autobiographical voyage by calling them "organic" (10). Daly stresses that both autobiography and philosophy are "interwoven" and "fit together" into a quest (12). The metaphors she uses--of light, the sea, volcanoes, the galaxies, planets, sun, moon and stars and of pollution--place this before-the-beginning squarely in a consciousness of earth, even as she writes of "space" travel.

Daly also writes of breaking taboos, repeating Calls, intuitions of nothingness, patriarchal betrayals, "The Dream of Green," the expulsion from paradise and of opening the "Third Eye/I" of intuitive understanding. Her voyage in a "craft" on a "subliminal sea" holds "contrapuntal movements," the coexisting and contradictory directions in her quest. Indeed, she also articulates a threshold moment, an Exodus from organized religion (138-39). This articulation of "Be-Falling" is reminiscent of Psyche's "Stygian sleep," the mark of the Shaman's return and her responsibility for bringing new awareness to the community.

This exodus is close followed by the breaking of another taboo--movement into lesbian sexuality: "From that moment nothing was ever the same again.... the transformation was permanent" (144). Even in her joy at finding her own way to sexual expression, however, lies the tolerance of difference that is basic to (maternal)

response-ability, to an understanding of the physical, psychological and affective lives of others' lifeprints: "In my view, then and Now, there are many dimensions of woman identification" (145). For Daly, difference, deviation and connection are "*Spinning*" and creation is "Dis-covering the lost thread of connectedness" (195). As a way of knowing, undertaken "with other Spinning Voyagers," she "Dis-covered more about our connectedness with each other and with the cosmos" (196).

Even her relationship with her mother is recounted as a connection of conflict, difference and deepened understanding.

My mother and I had been very close during my childhood, but adolescence and early adulthood had brought years of grief and struggle between us. Our time of living together in Brighton... and then our great reunion... had involved a transcendence of that conflict. This reunion recaptured the early ecstatic dimensions of our communication... while moving on to deeper understanding between us. We had not merely come "full circle." Rather our progress was spiral-shaped. My mother was not simply my mother, but also my sister and friend. (91)

Although she uses the term "transcendence" to describe the reunion with her mother, the description itself provides a clear articulation of the transformative nature of the experience. Her response to her mother's death is revealing:

I remember the way I said the word "No" when I saw that my mother had died. It was No to the unspeakable loss that I had dreaded since childhood. It was the ancient awful No that countless other daughters had gasped at such a Moment throughout thousands of years. Now it was my turn to say it.

Recognizing both timeless-ness and seasonal time's

continuity, the eternal returns of a life experience that exists in an intensity that is out of time, in no way obviates the individual and personal loss. This anguish of loss--the existential "No"--has not, likewise, obscured the irony in her use of "Luckily" to describe the too late arrival of the ambulance whereby her mother "was spared the horror of returning to the hospital and suffering prolonged 'treatment'" (93).

Virginia Woolf: Loss and Grief

Virginia Woolf marks her own mother's untimely death

as:

the greatest disaster that could happen; it was as though on some brilliant day of spring the racing clouds of a sudden stood still, grew dark, and massed themselves; the wind flagged, and all creatures on earth moaned or wandered seeking aimlessly. (40)

The images she uses to convey the sense of loss for her sisters and herself speak of an awareness of sensory experience which is immediately followed by her sense of irony in being unable to remember her mother through words. The mother remains a real presence nonetheless: "there she is... familiar... closer than any of the living are, lighting our random lives as with a burning torch" (40). The positive "light" Woolf associates with her mother and the torch continue in her association of the metaphor with "womanly virtues" and likewise recall the triple goddesses of Demeter-Persephone-Hecate (47-48).

In describing the relationship between her eldest



sister Stella and their mother, Woolf indicates the dangers of the loss of difference that is possible in mother-daughter relationships--the threat of "constant preoccupation."

It was beautiful, it was almost excessive; for it had something of the morbid nature of an affection between two people too closely allied for the proper amount of reflection to take place between them; what her mother felt passed almost instantly through Stella's mind; there was no need for the brain to ponder and criticize what the soul knew. (43)

What seems to be missing is a sense that both separation and difference are integral to relationship. For Woolf these differences-in-connection must be supplied by the process of reasoning, a reflective ability that recognizes differences as other than adversarial conceptions of self.

At her mother's death, Stella took up their mother's responsibilities in the family: "no one ever again was to serve her for prop" and she "never again, perhaps" cared "for anyone as she had cared for her mother. That, whatever gain is to be set beside it, was the permanent loss" (44). Loss and gain are inextricably linked in this view of a transformative moment, but interconnection is irretrievably dichotomized for Stella. She may regard herself as dependent or as strong and selfless; there is no recognition that we are always both.

In "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf acknowledges the "number of different ways in which memoirs can be written," but chooses to begin with "the first memory." She writes of

not consciously choosing a way, feeling certain "that it will find itself" (64). Mother consciousness, female reproductive consciousness, might explain this as, metaphorically, a sense that the newly conceived will either find the appropriate connecting path "or if not it will not matter" (64), echoing the (age-old and cliched) mother comfort words: "There, there, it's okay, it's alright."

Woolf further records the difficulty of locating in the memoir, the self, "the person to whom things happened" (65). Like Psyche, she is compelled to act in a culture which allows her only to be acted upon; she is perceived as passive and there is no language to express a female agency that is responsive to environment. Feeling is described as linked to an awareness of any change in physical circumstance, as a heightened sensory perception and as "lying in a grape and seeing through a film of semi-transparent yellow" (65). Shapes and sounds are as elastic and gummy as air; all are both tangible and at the same time illusory, ecstatic. Another memory is described as rapturous and tangible, pressed and humming around her (66). Intertwining sight, touch and sound, memory seems "more real than the present moment." Also tangible is the past, "an avenue lying behind, a long ribbon of scenes, emotions" ending in "the garden and nursery" (67).

Woolf even describes listening as a tactile connection to the past, using the metaphor of fitting "a plug into a

wall." Wall and cord are tactile and concrete ways of presenting the reality of emotion and remembering it. If "strong emotion" leaves "its trace," the problem is "how we can get ourselves attached to it" (67). One such strong emotion ties her "looking-glass shame" and sense of betrayal to the social constructs of femininity and beauty. The memory of Gerald Duckworth's violation of her "private parts" and her resentment and dislike is tied to an age-old taboo of body and links her to "thousands of ancestresses in the past" (69). She suggests that what is not remembered is as important to memoir as what is; a memoir is not just a chronology of events but must account for the changing self within the process; a memoir must account for the equally important moments between. In what she calls a digression, she notes the same problem for the writer of fiction: "how to describe... non-being" (70). What visual artists learn to see and explore as "negative space" is as essential as matter delineated; both "matter" in the process of the whole. They are the interconnective bits: "These separate moments of being were however embedded in many more moments of non-being" (70).

Angelica Garnett: Secrets and New Beginnings

Woolf's "Reminiscences" was intended as a life of her sister, Vanessa. As Vanessa's daughter, Angelica Garnett's memoir of her childhood brings another generation's

perspective on family relationships and secrets. She writes through an understanding of the influence that her unusual origins exerted on her life. Of Woolf's feelings about Vanessa, she writes: "love, admiration and understanding played their part but were inextricably mixed with jealousy and envy" (22). In a passage reminiscent of Psyche's sisters, Garnett describes the rift that developed between the sisters.

Virginia took it into her head to flirt with Clive.... It was not however, Clive's attention that Virginia wanted to attract, but Vanessa's: her behaviour constituted an appeal for help addressed to Vanessa over Clive's body. (26-27)

Garnett records her own ambivalence towards Vanessa: "Her image and personality had always obsessed me: on the one hand I felt compelled to imitate her, while on the other I resented her dominance" (2).

In this complex relationship lurks the kindly deceit; Garnett's biological father is not acknowledged openly; the person she calls her father, believes to be her father, is not: "Owing to my likeness to Duncan, even my grandmother Ethel must have had her suspicions. I was the only person successfully kept in the dark" (38). One wonders just how successfully when she also states: "With [friends of my parents] I always felt secure, but also ill at ease, sensing that there was some profound inadequacy in me to which, in their kindness, they did not allude" (1).

Of Vanessa's death, Garnett writes about her feelings

of ambivalence:

the thought that she might die was unbelievable, terrible and at the same time inadmissibly exhilarating. Like the disappearance of some familiar monument, her absence would reveal a new perspective in which I might be able to find freedom. (171)

She cannot realize this potential for a new beginning, however, without one of her daughters who faced a turning point of her own: "Her crisis had a deep emotional impact and brought me to life--it also taught me much; but I have learnt many precious lessons from all my children" (175). The intensity and complexity of this intergenerational chronicle is summed up in an observation about aging: "And yet it seems to me that one's maturity should be a better time than one's childhood, however wonderful that may have been. Mine has only just begun" (176).

Margaret Laurence: Sensory Richness and Metaphor

Margaret Laurence's *Dance* combines the view of closure as an invitation to go on and back with an emphasis on the dance of life itself. Persisting even in the face of death's seeming finality, her memoir ends with:

I know now, as I did not know when I wrote the first draft of these memoirs, that my own dance of life has not much longer to last. It will continue in my children, and perhaps for a while in my books. It has been varied, sometimes anguished, always interesting. I rejoice in having been given it. May the dance go on. (222)

And the book itself continues with "Afterwords" which are "after" only in the sense of following in page sequence; the

entries are of poems, letters and speeches written earlier in her life, before the memoir. *Dance* is also an exploration of movement as metaphoric connection: "I know there are many ways of dancing other than the literal ones. These other ways, of friendships, of work, of stubborn hoping in a terrifying world" (17).

By using this metaphor of physical movement through life as a means of connecting with memory, she describes her own three mother-mentors and how they influenced her life; in doing so she affirms, too, the special and close bond between women and in the community of women, even in the isolated nuclear family of the twentieth century. In the silences, we recognize the grief that shadows joyful relationship and signals the need for learning and transformation in women's lives. She writes of learning at five: "My mother is dead. I might not have known precisely what 'never' meant. But I think I understood I would never see her again. After that, I have no conscious memories for about a year" (25). She links two aspects of her personality to this mother and to this moment: "The part of me that remains young and clowning ... I probably owe to her. How much of the other side ... may have begun to grow in my spirit at my mother's death, I can never know" (26). The substance of joy and grief bound together in memory's process and in memory's absence accumulates into the person she has become, the one she now is.

Gloria Steinem: Self-Worth and Consciousness

Feminist and activist, Gloria Steinem articulates the importance of self-worth to any truly revolutionary project. In the examination of her own life and in the recognition of her own losses and experiences of injustice, she writes of creating a new being and in this way a new society of transformed beings. Part of this new consciousness is what she describes as a "Universal I." This universality is expressed through re-connections: with nature, with animals, with the body and in a differently articulated spirituality. She gives a metaphoric vision of the self that expands to encompass a self that is a "universe in microcosm": "We are so many selves.... What draws together these ever-shifting selves of infinite reactions and returning is this: There is one true inner voice" (323). The challenge remains to hear this authentic voice through the displacements of cultural betrayal.

Steinem writes about coming to terms with aging and with the stages of life. Because of her active career and the choice not to have children, because she "didn't have their growth as a measure of time," she "had been behaving as if the long plateau of activist middle life went on forever" (243). Describing her passage through denial and defiance as stages of dealing with age, she writes of finally recognizing that "I needed a model not of being old, but of aging," and "that my denial and defiance were related

to giving up a way of being, not ceasing to be" (244,245). One aspect of aging that continues to disappoint her recalls Psyche's original burden: "It hasn't liberated me from that epithet of 'the pretty one'.... If that sounds odd, think about working as hard as you can, then discovering that whatever you accomplish is attributed to your looks" (247).

Zora Neale Hurston: Time and Timelessness

In her autobiography, Zora Neale Hurston describes a personal philosophy that summarizes her beliefs in phrases that reverberate with compelling and sensual images, before-beginnings and after-endings and of her own sense of power, of personal integrity. "I do not pretend to read god's mind," she states; "Somebody else may have my rapturous glance at the archangels." What Hurston values is daily life, connection and evolution woven together by a sense of creative timelessness.

The springing of the yellow line of morning out of the misty deep of dawn, is glory enough for me. I know that nothing is destructible; things merely change forms. When the consciousness we know as life ceases, I know that I shall still be part and parcel of the world. I was a part before the sun rolled into shape and burst forth in the glory of change. I was, when the earth was hurled out from its fiery rim. I shall return with the earth to Father Sun, and still exist in substance when the sun has lost its fire, and disintegrated in infinity to perhaps become a part of the whirling rubble in space.

This sense of the spiritual is not one based on fear; she goes on to remind us:

Why fear? The stuff of my being is matter, ever



changing, ever moving, but never lost; so what need of denominations and creeds to deny myself the comfort of all my fellow men? The wide belt of the universe has no need of finger rings. I am one with the infinite and need no other assurance. (202-03)

Hurston's expression of connection as a return "with the sun" and her disclaimer that she needs no "finger rings" both in different ways express a consciousness of being part of the seasonal continuity that encompasses change. Her description of being at "one" with the infinite and yet uniquely individual expresses a personal understanding of life that accords with Psyche's journey.

Maya Angelou: Betrayal and Racism

Betrayal as a specific kind of loss is a central ingredient in Africo-American women's autobiographical writing, and it has been recognized as a signal of the loss of self-worth. As Regina Blackburn writes:

Most African-American female autobiographies confess to one incident in their early years that awakened them to their color; this recognition scene evoked an awareness of their blackness and of its significance, and it had a lasting influence on their lives. (134)

What is signified in such a "recognition scene" is the internalization of self-hatred because of an entrenched social hierarchy of privilege, an entrenched context. Blackburn contrasts the autobiographies of Hurston and Angelou in their responses to this betrayal, expressed in feelings about the South. According to Blackburn, "At an early age, Angelou recognized her hatred of self and allowed

it to grow in the southern climate," whereas Hurston found comfort there: "Unlike so many who wrote about the South, she always considered the region home. She never desired to escape from it, and she was spiritually revived upon returning to it" (144,138).

Angelou's betrayal experience initiates her autobiography, and the echoes of Psyche's sacrifice are clear.

Wouldn't they be surprised when one day I woke out of my black ugly dream.... Because I was really white and because a cruel fairy stepmother, who was understandably jealous of my beauty, had turned me into a too-big Negro girl, with nappy black hair, broad feet and a space between her teeth that would hold a number two pencil. (2)

The description of this incident with its bitterness of shame and humiliation lit with ironic humor, prefaces the narrative and thus implies its importance to the whole of the remembered life. This view encompasses "not only what the white world has done...but also the black world" (Blackburn 134), and this double betrayal is reenforced in the account of her rape by her step-father. The style of the subsequent chapters is circumferential; each adds to, and is read through, this incident.

Although Hurston's moment of betrayal is equally complex, it does not involve racism specifically. Instead she records her inability to influence, her failure to make others act in the way she intends. She writes of being unable to keep a promise to her dying mother--a failure

brought about by her father's physical restraint, and through an inability to make others understand what her mother wanted.

I was to agonize over that moment for years to come. In the midst of play, in the wakeful moments after midnight, on the way home from parties, and even in the classroom during lectures. Now I know that I could not have had my way against the world. The world we lived in required those acts. Anything else would have been sacrilege, and no nine year old voice was going to thwart them. My father was with the mores. (64)

Both Hurston and Angelou experienced betrayal in poignant, personal and public ways and record the way that it affected them for long years after. Angelou's account of childhood sexual abuse and racial betrayal indicates the multiple levels of punishment present in a patriarchal society which treats difference in terms of a value judgment. The double jeopardy of being black and female in a racist and sexist society brings a sexual betrayal as well.

*Elly Danica and Charlotte Vale Ellen: Betrayal and Incest*

The sexual betrayal that occurs in the midst of the family can be as profoundly debilitating as racial intolerance. Elly Danica's *Don't: A Woman's Word* chronicles the painful intensity of the journey to recovery that such a sexual trauma necessitates and she specifically uses the six gates of Inanna's descent pattern that is similar to Psyche's fourth task. What she also reveals is the healing potential in the creative process of writing: "I thought I had no future until I wrote this book" (97). The

recuperation is inherent in the process of revealing secrets, the secrets that have been entrenched in patriarchal power structures: "And I begin to see as well, how incredibly vital and urgent is the telling of what has been done to us; how we can come to use the truth about our pain to change the world for ourselves and each other" (99).

Similarly, Charlotte Vale Allen's *Daddy's Girl*, in both title and narrative, exposes the illusion and the dark depravity that can exist within the unquestioned patriarchal myth. Both Danica and Allen have mothers who are complicit in the betrayal. Danica recalls her mother as a woman who abandoned and condemned her:

Years of searching bring me to the woman who could not help me that night in the basement. The woman who walked away because that was the only choice she had.... I can forgive that. I have more trouble forgiving her this: she said he told her I liked it and she believed him. Again. She believes still I was born liking rape. I was born female. I was born a prostitute. (69)

The sense of being born wrong and of alienation from other women is pervasive in life in a patriarchal context, but still does not prevent one from finding mother-mentor and sister relationships. Danica finds such an older woman friend and acknowledges her mentorship: "She teaches me about survival, living alone, and poverty with dignity. She is fifty years older than I am. She understands" (90).

Allen depicts the complex sense of responsibility that remains with daughters. When her mother refuses to wave goodbye, to send her daughter off "with gladness," Allen

sees that "it hadn't occurred to me that I was abandoning my mother to Daddy. She'd be all alone with no one to stand between her and his murderous rage" (256,257). Allen says that her own daughter, Jossie, is crucial to her well-being and keeps her "firmly anchored to life" (176). She directly confronts the issue of sexuality that seems to be ever present in our patriarchally inspired concepts of self-other relationships, including same sex friendship. When editors raised the possibility that her friendship with Helen might conceal a lesbian attraction, she writes:

I reacted with some surprise and dismay, because what I was writing about wasn't a sexual relationship but one based on love.... I loved her. I wanted to be her. To my mind this was a great compliment: the wish to emulate what is good, wise and mature in an adult.... We were friends. It was the first time in my life that someone gave me equal status, placed me on a secure, recognizable footing. I've had few gifts in my lifetime of like quality. (177)

The distinction she makes between love and sexuality registers the complex and loving relationships that exist between women. So often obscured and denied in a culture that pretends that women find all their emotional needs met in heterosexual relationship, these relationships continue to be meaningful despite being culturally silenced.

Maxine Hong Kingston and Fredelle Bruser Maynard: Humor and Consciousness

Although Apuleius's rendering of the Psyche myth contains little humour, one can see the potential if Pan's

advice is considered ironic and therefore a basis for the misunderstanding or the different understandings required for humour. There is evidence in Kingston's and Maynard's autobiographical writings that this consciousness is often accompanied with a--more or less--bitter irony. Kingston comments on the discrepancies of growing up within a Chinese-American family and its traditions. Combining a remembrance of an aunt who committed suicide because of an "illicit" sexual encounter and pregnancy with the traditional practice of plucking the hairline, she says: "I hope that the man my aunt loved appreciated a smooth brow, that he wasn't a tits-and-ass man" (9). This same irony is directed to her own attempts to fit into American culture: "Walking erect (knees straight, toes pointed forward, not pigeon-toed which is Chinese-feminine and speaking in an inaudible voice I have tried to turn myself American-feminine" (11).

Maynard displays a similar humorous outlook on her remembered life when she tells about growing up Jewish "chosen and abandoned" within a small prairie town in Canada: "Bounded in a nutshell, I created myself king of infinite space" (29,14). Writing of her decision to marry a gentile and her father's reaction gives another dimension to the issues of marriage and culture that figured in my discussion of Psyche's myth: "I think he was not surprised when I told him I had fallen in love with a gentile.

Devastated, but not surprised" (166). And of her choice of husband, she says that "he was obviously unsuitable so I married him" (189).

Laura Goodman Salverson: Displacement and Reconnection

Salverson begins her autobiography with a memory of a night journey which vividly encapsulates her profound sense of displacement and contributes to her desire for a secure future: "That visit stamps the beginning of memory--the first of a chain of unrelated events, insignificant in themselves, and yet each one having its ineradicable, subtle effect upon my future reaction to life" (13). The constant search for an economically secure home, the upheavals and privations and strained family relationships, are all set forth in the opening, the "first horizon." In her initial description of fleeing through "an infinity of darkness" on the Dakota prairie, what comes into focus is the connection with the earth and "the green world."

Far ahead, in the midst of an ocean of darkness, two small jets of light stood out like candle flames braving the night. Why it should be so, I cannot say, but those wavering jets of light marked a division of time for the little girl at her father's feet. From that moment her little thoughts and starry impressions were distinctly individual, and she herself no longer just the little girl who existed as the small, obedient extension of her mother. (12)

Such perceptions of opposites within one another--of light within darkness, and "in the midst" as "standing out"--indicate continuity and process rather than the ascent and

descent of hierarchies.

Salverson also expresses an awareness of place and of the natural world as home. Of her return to Winnipeg, she writes:

There was no one to meet me so I was free to experience what I always experience on coming back to the golden west: a quite irrational thrill, as though something in the air itself is a missing part of me, and that now I am complete. A queer sense of coming home that has nothing to do with houses or people, or any tangible thing acceptable to reason. (356)

From her early immigration to Canada through her years in the United States, nothing has prepared her for the unreasonable feeling of being at home that is associated with "the golden west."

Emily Carr, Gabrielle Roy and Maria Campbell: Spirit in Nature

Likewise, Emily Carr recalls an affinity for the forest. She writes of the place that she found with help of her pony, Johnny.

Suddenly he would nose into the greenery finding a trail no one else could see, pressing forward so hard that the bushes parted, caressing him and me as we passed, and closing behind us shutting us from every "towny" thing.... When we came to some mossy little clearing where soft shade-growing grass grew Johnny stopped with a satisfied sigh. I let down his bridle and we nibbled, he on the grass, I at the deep sacred beauty of Canada's still woods. Certainly I [owe a "thank you"] to old Johnny for finding the deep lovely places that were the very foundation on which my work as a painter was to be built. (14)

The combination here--of embodied movement registered into/from, forward/behind, of sensual imagery and things



taken within, of outward landscape as a source of inner wealth--suggests a spirituality of transformation and energy rather than transcendence and power. Not depicted as a fall, the "deep" is presented as something into which one goes, a connection to something within, not a way down.

Gabrielle Roy expresses similar feelings of psychic energy restored when she describes walking into prairie vistas. Significantly, she begins by expressing a sense of homelessness--"There's no longer anything to make me feel at home in Manitoba"--but then goes on:

except the little section roads that stretch away beneath the endless sky....There are some who understand, who'll take me to the edge of the open prairie and release me.... So, I set off...walking towards the red glow low down in the sky where the prairie ends, because for the magic to work I need not only the illusion of infinite space but also the gentle time of day just before nightfall. Then, for a few moments, my heart may soar once again. (105)

What a profound "except" this is! She walks "off...towards" where the prairie seems to end at a "gentle" time between night and day; her heart soars not in preparation for a fall but in a repeated moment of magic.

Maria Campbell's Cheechum practiced this kind of religion and passed it on to her granddaughter--which may account in large measure for Maria's ability to recover from the abuses inherent in a racist society:

She taught me to see beauty in all things around me; that inside everything a spirit lived, that it was vital too, regardless of whether it was only a leaf or a blade of grass, and by recognizing its life and beauty I was accepting God.

This green world God is different from the supernatural deity defined by patriarchal religion. Seeing Judeo-Christian concepts as human constructions, Cheechum reinterprets death as a natural process:

She said that... heaven and hell were man-made and here on earth, that there was no death, only that the body becomes old from life on earth and the soul must be reborn, because it is young.... She said God lives in you and looks like you,... the Devil lives in you and all things....Her explanation made much more sense than Christianity had ever taught me. (82)

To Cheechum, moreover, both "God" and the "Devil" are aspects of the individual, and Campbell notes that this seems a more truthful interpretation than to see them as external forces.

Lucy Maud Montgomery: Love and the Task

Though Lucy Maud Montgomery spent much of her life in Ontario, her writing of the *Anne* books links her indelibly to Prince Edward Island. Her account of the "story of my career" emphasizes the pleasure of the task. Whereas many interpretations of Psyche's myth have seen the tasks the means for reconnecting with Eros, Montgomery shows how the love of the task itself brings transformation: "To write has always been my central purpose around which every effort and ambition of my life has grouped itself" (52). Describing the pleasure of seeing her work in print, she compares this joy to "some of the wonderful awe and delight that comes to a mother when she looks for the first time on the face of her

first born" (59).

Combining a sense of humor and wry observations about human nature with a discussion of the inspiration for, and creation of literary characters she says: "for my own part, I have never, during all the years I have studied human nature, met one human being who could, as a whole, be put into a book without injuring it." She goes on to describe the way the author's creation must exist behind the written character: "But the ideal, [her] ideal must be behind and beyond it all. The writer must create his characters, or they will not be life-like" (72,73). Of her writing career, she sums up with: "The 'Alpine Path' has been climbed, after many years of toil and endeavour. It was not an easy ascent, but even in the struggle at its hardest there was a delight and a zest known only to those who aspire to the heights" (95). Her sense of achievement is pictured as the successful completion of a physical laboring over real, difficult and mountainous terrain.

### Patterning Life

In this necessarily brief survey of women's autobiographical writings, I have attempted to indicate the range and variety in the voices that articulate Psyche's pattern. Even as their lives differ in time and place, they share an affinity with the consciousness of relationship and growth that characterizes this myth. To suggest as

Montgomery does, that there is a pattern behind the individual lives in no way delimits the range or possibility of choice or outcome. What Psyche's pattern does is to supply the philosophy and the attitude that informs the range of potential in individual women's lives; it grounds us in a history, in physical and spiritual being and in the natural world as home.

## Chapter Nine

### Retelling Psyche

Who could have predicted? Things on the surface seem well enough. Certainly, I never expected life to cast this dark screen before me. First blank, a wall, but now shaded by a flood of memories splashed up out of the past. Baffled, too tired to find my way through, I have energy enough only to watch and listen.

The memory that returns most frequently is of being twelve in the summer that belonged to Mrs. Livingstone--the last summer she spent at the lake. She was, after all, seventy five and not quite as hardy as she once was. I was there as usual with my parents. My brother, I ignored--and he, me--although I guess we did reach some kind of truce that autumn. We got along much better after that.

The rest of the family returned to the city frequently, but I didn't want to go with them. I moped that summer--alot, I think--so, for the most part, my parents let me be, and only insisted that I spend the nights with Mrs. Livingstone. I'm not sure who was keeping an eye on whom, but the arrangement suited us both.

Days were always mine: walking down the back gravel road on half a summer's worth of toughened soles or swaying in the hammock strung between the birches and watching the sun dapple through the leaves. Mostly, I remember the wind. In the wind at the edge of the lake, I spent the hours

dreaming.

One weekend appears most clearly. Warm and windy enough to keep the mosquitoes away, the weather drew me out to the sandy beach. Because the cottages faced east and the lake spread wide to the horizon, only clouds could stop the moon and sun from rising clear and bright, each in their turn.

That was the weekend that coincided with one of Mrs. Livingstone's "enthusiasms." At least that was what Mr. Livingstone always used to call them--before his death--implying he had watched her through many in their years together.

"Nose to the wind again," he'd say with that slow nod. "Off on another scent. No stopping her now. Head for cover."

That year, Mrs. Livingstone's enthusiasm picked up the myth of Psyche. After reading a tale based on the legend, she sought out the myth behind the story. She spent the winter and spring rummaging through piles of books that she had carted out to litter every available space in the cottage. On that summer weekend, she told the myth to me. At least, she told me how she wanted it to be--the way she said it lived for her.

Her storytelling suited me. That was, after all, my silent summer. At her cottage and on the point of land that was her beach, we sat on old and lumpy cushioned-covered benches. I made a fire and she chatted. I really hadn't intended to listen--I'd become quite good at pretending to

hear and yet drift away--but, in spite of myself, almost unknowingly, I was swept in.

She told me that the tale was first written down by Lucius Apuleius, but almost everyone assumed he used a number of much older stories. "It was written in Latin," she said, "but there are several translations. It's famous as an allegory of Love and the Soul. Although perhaps I'll call it a fairy tale instead," she mused, "kind of a Beauty and the Beast tale."

As Mr. Livingstone would have put it--Mrs. Livingstone cut straight to the chase. Her story began with... "long ago and not too far away, there lived a King, a Queen and their three daughters. The eldest was Liliias and blond like her father, the King; the second, Berylla, raven-haired like her mother, and Psyche, the youngest, had hair of a color somewhere-in-between, a kind of middle brown with black and gold all woven in together.

"These three were happy girls with food and love and adventure enough to keep them busy and content. Like all the sisters I have known, they played well together and fought well together. They were different enough to make you wonder if they belonged to the same parents and sometimes so alike, you'd think that they were one." Here, Mrs. Livingstone looked at me and I slid down a little on my bench; I didn't want to be reminded of siblings--especially if they sometimes got along or were alike.

"Lilias was intense and energetic, loved books and learning and spent much time with the king as he consulted scribes and astronomers or ruled at court. Berylla was quieter and gentle; her passion was outdoors, for plants and animals, for every growing thing. She collected frogs, and birds with broken wings, and dogs, and children followed everywhere she went. She loved the fields and woods and went there often with the aged herbalists. Through them, she learned the restorations hidden in the plants and how to make up healing salves.

"The youngest sister, Psyche, stayed longest with her mother, the Queen, but as she grew older, trailed after both her sisters--if and when they let her. The rest of the time she read a little--she was a princess and so she had a tutor--or sometimes gathered flowers, or just generally went about bestowing a sunny curiosity wherever her glance happened to fall.

"Of course, all three daughters were beautiful and all in the kingdom called them so. Who could wonder at that? These were princesses dressed in love and given the finest of everything.

"But when Lilias reached the age at which, customarily, young women were married, the King, again as was the custom, arranged a marriage. He thought this was a perfect opportunity to ensure the support of his most powerful advisor by handing Lilias to this courtier's eldest son. He



directed the Queen to make Liliias ready and to prepare the marriage feast.

"Well, Liliias was not impressed," said Mrs. Livingstone. "She did not want to marry anyone--even someone young and rich whose father was that powerful. She protested. To no avail. She wept. That did nothing. The King, her father, did not listen. The Queen tried to persuade her and suggested that she might find some useful work, and at least she would be near, and they might visit often. Liliias was not moved. Like the King, she would not listen; unlike the King, she was not heard.

"One night, just before dawn on a day shortly before this so-carefully planned wedding, Liliias awakened Psyche and Berylla. They hardly recognized her; only her voice reassured them. Dressed as a boy and in a warm dark travelling cloak, Liliias warned them to keep silent and told them she must leave. 'I will not marry so I cannot stay here.'

"'Where will you go?' whispered Berylla. 'West,' replied Liliias. 'I have heard there is an island where women have gathered to live and work as they please. And I can study the stars.' Quietly the sisters hugged and bid one another farewell. To light her way through the dark, Liliias took a torch from its sconce and after one small wave and one backward glance, she left.

"The two remaining sisters kept silent, watching as the

King and Queen discovered their sister's absence. The King raged and sent soldiers to find his errant daughter. They returned without her.

"Each day the Queen grew more grim and worried; the King more black and angry. Finally, the King recalled the searchers, retired to the throne room and shut himself in. The Queen grieved for a time then turned to plan a library so that, when this lost daughter returned, she would find a place that suited her. Liliias did not return.

"Some time passed and everyone said how the two princesses were the most beautiful in the kingdom. All who saw them, praised them. Then Berylla became old enough to marry. This time the King chose an alliance with the neighboring kingdom and its widowed ruler.

"Berylla wept and said she did not want to marry this old King; she loved someone else. She pleaded with the King; he did not listen. She pleaded with the Queen, but the Queen said Berylla must be dutiful; an end to war, a lasting peace might come from this alliance.

"The Queen arranged the wedding feast, sewed the bridal finery and packed a stock of ointments and some ancient healing recipes, a pharmacopoeia for Berylla to take to this other kingdom. Berylla took her favorite knife, the one she used for cutting herbs. When it was time for her to leave, she hugged her sister Psyche; she turned back only once to wave.

"With Berylla's departure, the Queen grew more silent and the King grey; they missed this daughter too. But after a time, the Queen put aside her grieving and set to work establishing a hospice. This seemed to bring some solace, and eventually they received news that Berylla had arrived in that other kingdom.

"Psyche was lonely for a time and wandered about the castle, but soon the resilience of youth and her own sunny nature returned and she resumed her interest in all around her. She was curious about everyone, helped her mother with the library and hospice both, kept her father company at his tasks and played with the children who missed Berylla.

"Without her sisters beside her, Psyche seemed all the more beautiful. Even strangers stopped to comment. Word of her astonishing attraction spread far beyond the kingdom and grew with every telling. People called her 'more beautiful than Aphrodite' and 'a new Aphrodite'. They turned to watch her everywhere she went, told stories of her dress and hair and every move and seemed to worship her. More and more, the goddess's shrines seemed old-fashioned. They were abandoned; her rites ignored; her wisdom disregarded. More and more, Psyche was the center of attention and rarely left alone.

"Psyche was a sensible soul, however, and had a sense of humor besides. One day, passing one of these neglected shrines, her gaze touched upon a bit of old, worn, highly polished obsidian. She took to carrying this small, flat

triangular stone about with her, even attaching it with leather to her belt. When all the noise about her beauty got too tedious, she would find a quiet corner, take up this polished mirror and gazing, find herself--catch sight of that self that others slid and lost behind their awe and worship.

"'Indeed yes,' continued Mrs. Livingstone, 'she was beautiful. Her bones were good, her smile a delight and her teeth were straight. And she had that funny crooked eyebrow like her grandmother's, the hair that curled too wildly like her father's and the deep dark eyes her sisters, too, inherited. All in all, she had grown into a sturdy, sunny soul.

"Now golden Aphrodite noted the neglect of all her shrines within that tiny kingdom. And how the people ceased the care of flocks and over-worked their fields. She was after all the life goddess and so was somewhat annoyed by this loss of careful reverence for life."

Mrs. L. explained, "Bird-goddess and sea-born, Aphrodite is the mother-protector of life in the sea, of the earth and air and even more. She is the ruler of the universe and therefore knows the danger in the loss of reverence for her wisdom and what her replacement signifies.

"She set out to see this Psyche. Her son, the so-delightful Eros, went along with her as he often did. Travelling over the kingdom, they saw temples slighted and

rites forsaken. Everywhere they saw a kingdom slipped from harmony, taking no care of community and no responsibility for each other. Finally, they came upon Psyche surrounded and clutched at by a great crowd. Pulling at her, calling for her attention, the multitudes seemed set to destroy the terrified girl. Aphrodite motioned Eros near her.

"'Here,' she commanded her son, 'use your arrows to cause this maid to fall in love. Let her be mesmerized by a passionate love for the most ordinary of men, one who is without rank or wealth or even health. Make him so full of grief and woe that there is no other like him. Nothing else so easily can teach these people how silly is the error of their worship and provide for her as swift a respite.'

"Eros moved to do as his mother requested. He too, was saddened by the foolishness of that tiny kingdom and even felt some pity as he contemplated Psyche's plight within it. Stretching back his hand to retrieve an arrow from his quiver, he fixed it to his bow and while he did this, unthinking scratched a line across his palm upon the point of his own arrow.

"Finished with her surveillance, Aphrodite turned away, out and into the open seas where, there among her attendants, she sought refreshment in the salty spa. Eros stayed watching, his hand held tight against his chest.

"Knowing nothing of this or of what the future held for her, Psyche sank further into misery. No longer had she any

peace or quiet. Hounded day and night, watched everywhere she went, she lost her sunny nature, driven thin and weary. She wept for the return of her older sisters to share this burden, and then, she blamed herself for wishing this on them. She despised the self that others found so pleasing--a portion that was not her or only part of her--and wished for the days with her sisters when she was just another daughter among beautiful daughters.

"By now Psyche's appearance anywhere in the kingdom caused so much disruption and instability that the King resolved upon another marriage. Even this would not be an easy matter. With Psyche's fame and reputation, not just any bridegroom would do; the king must make a great show of care in choosing some great prince. But all his overtures to other kingdoms brought him no response. No Prince would want so popular and troublesome a bride to rival his regard.

"Finally, the King in desperation was driven to consult the high priest of Apollo's oracle, asking him to make a pronouncement to resolve this perplexing dilemma. The priest conducted a long and solemn ceremony and finally gave this prophecy:

"As if for wedding or for requiem,  
Apparel Psyche beautifully  
Set her out upon the kingdom's farthest mountain.  
Your son-in-law is not of mortal stock,  
But fiery-wild and heartless; a snake-like monster  
Who flies and vexes all your kingdom  
With arrows bright and sharp.

"Then the King enlisted the priest to return with him

to tell the Queen. Grief-stricken once again, she wept even as she carried out their strategy. The kingdom, uncomprehending, joined her in that sadness. But since their very adoration obliged the fate of Psyche; their grief and lamentations benefited nothing.

"Sewn up in finery for the day, hidden by a veil of red, dry-eyed Psyche briefly spoke her feelings. 'Why are you torturing yourselves with this weeping and wailing?' she asked. 'It will do me no good just as it availed my sisters nothing. Lead me wherever you will. The time that might have saved me has long passed. No one can save me now.' Then she withdrew to silence and looking straight ahead, took her place in the procession that made its way to the summit of the mountain. There she was abandoned."

I discovered I wasn't much warmer than Psyche right then. It was now close to midnight and northern summer nights may be long and light, but still they pack a chill especially by the lake. Mrs. Livingstone shivered too, so we went into the cabin for some hot chocolate.

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We settled on the beach again the second night. I was to set the wood ready and then light it when the evening grew dark enough. Mrs. L. continued.

"Psyche's parents returned to the palace where the

king, in his council chambers and staring blindly into the cold hearth, was gripped by an attack to his heart's core so crippling that he slumped dead upon his throne. The Queen, turned away to the tower, shut and bolted the door, locked herself in and every other person out. The kingdom hearing this, fell further into disarray, quarrelling and fighting amongst one another.

"Psyche did not stop long on that cold mountain; carefully and gently, she was carried down into a beautiful green valley. There, she settled upon a bed of fragrant and velvety flower petals. Immediately calmed, she fell asleep to awaken sometime later, rested and serene. With her natural inquisitiveness somewhat restored, and holding the shining obsidian, she began the exploration of her new place. Surrounded by a crystal stream, a waterfall, singing birds, a multitude of animals, great tall trees and tiny flowers and shrubs of every kind, she saw that all these were a rich and beautiful setting for a palace of exquisite grace and intricate beauty--a manor that fit perfectly within so wonderful a site.

"This dwelling place, she thought, must be residence to some sacred being, constructed as it is with such marvellous skill. Beautifully grained and fragrant woods, precious and glittering metals, flower drenched carpets, saffron pillows and mosaics of precious jewels, all gave their splendour to this uncommon dwelling. As she ventured further into this



remarkable place, Psyche could not help exclaiming-- marvelling at such wealth and promise. Even more astonishing, she saw that there were neither locks nor guards, there was nothing to protect this 'treasurehouse of all the world'.

"A soft voice at her elbow questioned why she was so astonished. 'All this wealth belongs to you', breathed the airy voice. 'Rest, bathe, dine, find ease; all this is yours', it said again and softly faded. 'All this is yours. All this is yours'.

"That night it was Eros who came to Psyche, but he departed swiftly again before the morning. Such sun-filled days and silky nights continued for so long a time that Psyche grew used to her new home and this new lover, too. She took pleasure in the comfort of his voice, the contentment of their quiet conversations, and the excitement of his nearness. Although she could not see him, her ears knew his rich and honeyed voice and her hands, the strength and grace of his body.

"The story of Psyche's misfortune, the king's sudden death and the Queen's seclusion had spread throughout the land and let loose a flood of weeping, rage and violence. Eventually the news even reached the far away sisters. Lillias, wrenched from her studies by the plight of her childhood home, left her sanctuary and journeyed to Berylla in the south. Together, they decided to collect Psyche's

remains for proper burial. Perhaps in the timeless rituals of grief, they all might find some solace. Worried and weary, they wept in one another's arms.

"One dark evening, Eros brought Psyche news of what transpired back in her old kingdom. Psyche's lover warned that her sisters soon would come nearby, searching for her remains. 'Do not answer their cries or look in their direction', he cautioned his new wife. 'Otherwise you will cause me anguish and yourself great trouble'.

"Hearing a warning phrased just this way, Psyche, of course, agreed. But left alone the following day, Psyche thought on what she heard and in this daytime loneliness, she longed to visit with her sisters and comfort them with the knowledge of her well-being. That evening, Eros found her listless and tired, weeping quietly.

"He scolded her, saying how it looked as if he could no longer trust her, and that she would be sorry if she persisted, but then, when her weeping only increased, he concluded that, of course, she could do as she pleased. 'Only', he added, 'don't come to me when you get into trouble and are sorry. I've done my best and you can't say I didn't warn you'.

"Psyche continued pleading to see her sisters. Eros grudgingly agreed, warning her not to listen to her sisters' advice or dare to look at him or investigate his appearance. Then he made a great show of relenting, gave the west wind

to her command and set aside gifts of gold and jewellery for Psyche to bestow upon her sisters. Psyche thanked him and reassured him of her passionate devotion.

"When the sisters found the place of Psyche's sacrifice, they wept over remembered betrayals and loudly lamented that even Psyche could not escape this fate. Hearing the noise they made, Psyche sent the west wind to carry them into her valley. Now the tears flowed from astonishment and joy.

"Quite the watery threesome," muttered Mrs. Livingstone. "But it is after all a fairy tale, and we should grant a little excess." She paused. "Oh well," she shrugged, "alot then."

"'Come,' said Psyche, 'let me show you my new home. Refresh yourselves, bathe and banquet here with me.' Laughing, the sisters started to tell their lives and what had happened to each since parting. Exuding that remembered nervous energy, Liliias told amusing stories that played down the hardships of her long and trying journey, the many paths she followed before she reached the island and her work. She spoke of peace and the contentment she found in study and in her community and how much work there was to do.

"Spreading square and capable hands before her, Berylla quietly spoke of learning to heal the ill and comfort the dying. She smiled as she recounted stories of her own children, adopted where she found them in the streets, and

chuckled over the silly things they did. She grew sombre as she told of wars and famine, and all the needless pain and hardship her skill in healing brought her to witness, and often failed to cure. It was the children, she said, that gave her daily strength; they gave so much with such a little kindness.

"Then, the elder sisters turned to Psyche and asked about this new husband and her new life. Was she happy? Did he treat her well? What new life's work had her many gifts brought with them?

"Taken unaware by their questioning, Psyche grew confused and mumbled out a story of her husband's youth and kindness, how she was happy, and how he spent much time in hunting. Quickly, she changed the subject, gave them the gold and jewels and sent them back upon the wind. How odd, the sisters thought together, and when they were set down again, reviewed the visit to find some reason for her sudden change. Finding none, they resolved to seek another visit before revealing her whereabouts to their old unhappy kingdom.

"That night, Psyche told Eros of the visit with her sisters. Again he warned her that her sisters would lead her on to look at him. 'They will try to get you to look at me, but if you see me', he warned, 'I will never come to you this way again. And you know you should be careful. You said we will be parents. Now is an especially risky time. If you

guard my secret in silence, this child will be a god. If not, then just a mortal'.

"Psyche beamed and nodded pleasure at the reference to the coming infant, but in spite of this anticipated joy, confessed an anxiety deeper than she could hide. She longed for the comfort of someone to answer her questions, and so just before he turned away to sleep, Eros told her she would be fine--just so long as she listened to him. Psyche persisted. She asked again if her sisters might come to visit just this once more. They always brought her strength, and Berylla surely would have something to say to help her. Eros promised that they could.

"When the sisters met again, Psyche poured out fragrant coffee and served sweet cakes (but left hers cooling in the cup and couldn't touch the food). The sisters, as they had planned, led the conversation to Psyche's absent husband. 'What does he do and where does he carry out his work?' asked Liliias. 'Who is his family and where do they come from?' inquired Berylla. Psyche ignored the questions and instead told about the coming baby, and in their excitement, the sisters promptly forgot the absent father.

"That is, the sisters forgot until, returning, they found themselves once more upon the mountain and no more sure of who he was than they had been before. Since Berylla had promised to return with some herbal teas, plain bread and soothing remedies for Psyche's present discomforts, they

saw one more opportunity to question Psyche.

"That night even as he promised the west wind would once more do her bidding, Eros warned his Psyche of the danger that any sight of him might bring. And Psyche in the reassurance of his embrace, didn't even bother to agree so heavy were her sleepy eyes.

"The next day, the sisters did return and discussed Psyche's well-being and the child to be. Berylla brought out her teas and ointments and Liliias encouraged Psyche to eat 'just a little more'. Then both began to question Psyche about her absent husband asking when they should meet and was he gentle. 'Do you think that he will be a kindly father'? they asked.

"Distraught and unhappy, Psyche confessed she did not have answers for any of these questions. 'I have never seen my husband', she wailed, 'I am forbidden. Though what I do know of him is kind and generous, he threatens me with an unspeakable loss should I ever disobey'.

"'We can see the evidence of his generosity', replied Liliias. 'But there is a world of difference between a good husband and a good father', added Berylla. 'Do you think he might also learn to be a gentle father'?

"'How would I know? How can I judge'? said Psyche.

"When you see him', said Liliias, 'that will help you know. Why don't you put a lighted lamp under an inverted basket near your bed? And when this husband is asleep, take

it out and look at him. Then you may see if his nature and his disposition will bear his new responsibility'.

"'Take a knife, too, and conceal it by the bed', added the ever practical Berylla. She had seen a little too much of the world and men to trust too eagerly. 'It will give you some protection if he wakes and is the kind of monster who would harm both you and this unborn child. Hurry, it grows late and we must leave. Remember', she added fiercely, 'even if we must leave you, if you do need help, do not hesitate to come home to us'.

"Lilias nodded her agreement and the sisters hugged Psyche once again, and then, looking back only once to wave, they left.

"Psyche was understandably upset. By turns anxious, despairing and fearful, she nonetheless hid the candle and knife in a safe place by her bed. At one and the same time, wishing never to see this husband again and in the next minute anxiously awaiting his return, she worried over what the night would reveal.

"Later, when Eros fell asleep beside her, Psyche slowly eased herself from her warm bed and carefully lifted the cover from the lamp. Picking up the knife in one hand and the lamp in the other, she turned to look upon this unknown husband. There carelessly sprawled before her lay her love. Golden brown and rose, velvet and sinew, Eros lay deep asleep.

"O my, he was beautiful!" sighed Mrs. L. "Overcome with relief and a sense of being safe, Psyche put down her knife even as she continued gazing. Then, by the end of the bed, she noticed his bow, the quiver and the arrows. Gently Psyche touched these arms, and plucked an arrow from the quiver itself. Thoughtfully, she tested its sharpness with her thumb while turning to look yet again on Eros. She pricked herself.

"Startled, she looked at her thumb and saw bright drops of blood appear. At once she bent to tell her love. So much in a hurry, she shook a drop of burning oil out from her lamp upon his right shoulder.

"Burned, Eros leaped up, reached for his weapons even as he saw Psyche reach for him and flew up without a word. As he arose, Psyche flung herself upon him, clinging tightly to his right leg. She hung there as he flew until she grew too weary; she dropped upon the earth below.

"Thus freed, Eros immediately lit upon a nearby cypress tree and spoke: 'How thoughtlessly and unaware have I fulfilled my mother's wish; I am punished with my own arrow, and now that you disobey me, I leave you here. Loneliness your lot and fortune both'. Eros took wing again and left Psyche.

"Psyche lay shivering with cold. Desolate, she watched her love fly away until he disappeared. With one long piercing wail, she threw herself over the bank of the nearby



river. This river, Lethe and forgetfulness, would have nothing to do with this lovers' quarrel, and rolled her out upon the bank. A brief hiccup later, up splashed her mirror.

"Now, beside this stream rested the wilderness god, Pan, and on his lap sat Echo. 'Now, let me guess', he mused as he spied Psyche. 'A suicidal leap, a pale complexion, those constant sighs, a ruinous digestion and woeful ever-tired eyes--why, this must be an overdose of love'. 'An overdose of love' sighed Echo.

"'Since I am an old man with countless, varied and sundry affairs of love', winked Pan, 'fear not my advice'. 'Not my advice', repeated Echo. Frowning at his lap's companion, Pan persevered along his lengthy counsel. 'Pray to Eros. Ask his forgiveness; flatter him; defer to him. He is a kindly, pleasure-loving and soft-hearted youth. Be sure to coax and plead and wait on him. Especially', he firmly warned, 'do not seek blessing and consolation elsewhere!' Then echoed Echo, 'Seek blessing and consolation elsewhere!'

"Psyche gazed silently on Pan and his companion, but they had already forgotten her and turned away. She picked up her mirror, and forcing one foot to follow after the other, she started out upon the rough and unfamiliar trail before her.

"Not stopping until she reached Berylla's palace, Psyche sought shelter in her sister's arms and poured out her whole sorry tale. In grief, Berylla tore her hair,

lamenting the outcome of her well-meant advice. 'Rest here, she said to Psyche. 'I will travel back to the mountain and heal this rift with Eros. Surely when he knows of my contrivances, he will see the knife was only for protection and not to do him harm. Relenting, he will then perceive just how important his presence is to you and to his unborn child'.

"Leaving her work, her family and Psyche resting, Berylla sped back up the mountain. Calling to Eros, she threw herself upon a passing breeze--only to fall crashing on the rocks below. Bashed and battered, weaving in and out of consciousness from the shock and loss of blood, Berylla crawled to a nearby road where she was discovered, recognized and carted back into her palace.

"Psyche's grief grew twofold as she looked upon her sister. I need a knowledge greater than my own to meet this crisis, she thought. Perhaps from Liliias I may gather what I need. Coming to her eldest sister's garden observatory, Psyche retold her tale adding what had happened to Berylla. Liliias jumped up immediately and said, 'I will convince him that the lamp was my idea and that if anyone should be punished, it must be me.'

"With that she left her studies and handed Psyche over to her friends for care. She herself went off to the mountain, planning so strong and rational a speech that it could move even the god of love. Throwing herself headlong

into the wind, Liliias tumbled over and over down the mountain side until she too, was picked up and carted back to the healing hands in Berylla's palace.

"Hearing of this second failed attempt, Psyche saw no other choice but setting out alone upon her path.

"Eros, meanwhile, had sought out refuge in the darkness of the forest and retreated spent and sighing from the painful feeling in his wounded shoulder.

"A seagull watching all that had transpired was now annoyed past all patience; she dipped and darted out across the rolling ocean's wide expanse until she came to where the goddess bathed. Settling down upon the waves, she proceeded to tell Aphrodite about Eros and Psyche, and what, since her visit last, had transpired within her far-flung realms.

"'The world has gone to wrack and ruin. Your shrines and sanctuaries continue empty and unused or fouled and stinking with pollution. One king is dead, the others old and sick beyond death and blind to what their greedy creed has wrought. The Queens languish ailing in their towers. Everything is crude and rude and violent. There is no happiness, no lasting solace, no care for family bonds and certainly no love for little children or any wild thing'.

"Hearing all this, Aphrodite grew dark and furious. 'And my own son contributes to this woe and flees his obligations and the lover that he chose himself', she shrieked and howled down the wind. Dark and baleful, wearing

a sea-raven's guise, she rose above the sea and unerringly flew toward her son's sequestered sickroom. Perching on a branch above his head, she spit and raged her fury, sparing no thought for the burning fever he already felt.

"'What fine behaviour! How appropriate to me and fitting to your ancient heritage'! Sarcasm spewed from her beak and ripped down like claws upon his naked chest. 'Your careless behaviour does me no honour and you no credit. The least of my feathered servants takes better care of his obligations than you have done. My grandchildren must be better served. Your conduct dishonours the quiver that I gave you and turns all your other instruments against their rightful pleasures'. And then relenting with some understanding for his inexperience of any loving but the kindling of a hot desire, Aphrodite spoke more gently, 'Recover your good health here as is needful, but then you will redeem yourself and your desire. Be quick as you can to return beside your love'.

"She touched his brow and traced his cheek and added these last words: 'No one, my dear--especially not you or I--escapes the burden of their gifts'. With that, she smiled and flicked his chin and left him there alone.

"Finished with her son's part in all that had gone on, but shaking yet in anger at other and more profound betrayals, Aphrodite flew out over her lands to seek some solace in their diversity. But the gull had truly spoken;

everywhere she looked, the lands lay even more wasted, bleak and troubled than they were before. Stunned by the desolation she discovered, Aphrodite shimmered still a moment.

"Her sister goddesses, Demeter and Artemis, found her in this glittering silence. Knowing full well the power of what would come, they sought to share their own concerns with her. 'How opportune', said Aphrodite into the quiet all about her, 'I suppose you wish me to desist'.

"'No! No! We don't presume to tell you what to do or give advice', the goddesses replied. 'But please, I ask, leave seeds enough to start afresh', said Demeter. 'And let the blameless birds and animals, the faultless ones in nature still survive', added wild Artemis. Then ravaging Aphrodite wheeled once against the sky and turned out again towards the sea. Behind her, the awful stillness broke into a thousand hurricanes, and earthquakes stormed across the land."

Mrs. Livingstone struggled up from the bench and prepared to make her way up the beach. This was no place to leave a story, but she wasn't persuaded. I kicked sand over the smoldering ashes and followed after, up the rise into the cottage.

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I remember the exhilaration of "dark and stormy" nights and all those summer thunderstorms when waves hammered in against the shore and lightning crackled the darkness. Such memories fit the tale and my own present pain, but that night in Mrs. L.'s cabin, I was safe. She pushed aside some books and settled in her favorite chair and to my pleasure, relented and continued with our story.

"In the strange stillness, Psyche, for a time, found walking easier. Coming upon an old abandoned and misused temple near a mountain well, she paused a moment to drink and rest and then began to tidy up the disarray. The broken jars of grain and unused implements spoke of Demeter's benedictions as did the torch-ends left within the walls and so Psyche determined to appeal for help.

"Demeter appeared. 'Your prayers are moving and I wish I might assist, but Aphrodite is my eldest sister and we are bound by ancient ties of duty and respect. I cannot interfere in what is her domain. And yet, you have my blessing'.

"Psyche, disappointed, walked on and passing into the next valley, came upon a woodland shrine. Here were many offerings and evidence of recent sacrifice. Animal skins, antlers and a still-warm blood-stained altar marked the shrine as dedicated to Artemis. Nearby the door the sacrificial knife lay clean and shining. Perhaps this is the goddess to assist me, thought Psyche, and so she meditated

once again.

"Artemis appeared. 'I wish I might reward your gentle prayers, but my offices are to offer an assistance more specific than you require. Great Aphrodite is my elder and I cannot trespass in her greater realm. I cannot interfere nor will I help. And yet, you have my blessing'.

"Out again upon the path, Psyche stopped a moment to sort her thoughts and rested her back against a rock. 'Eros is lost to me. My sisters cannot help. No other goddesses will save me. I can only face up to the worst that fate delivers and hand myself to what will be. I will submit to Aphrodite. A direct encounter can't be worse than what has thus far happened'.

"So saying, Psyche turned towards the east just as all about her broke the raging gales of Aphrodite's earth-bound promise. Buffeted by the tempest, wounded in this hail of trouble and sadness, Psyche leaned the fullness of her weight into this tumult and pushed her slow way into Aphrodite's presence.

"So suddenly did Psyche find herself again in stillness that she collapsed headlong upon the ground. Aphrodite loomed before her. With wide unblinking stare, the goddess stalked silently around the fallen Psyche. This way and that, the golden eyes missed nothing of Psyche's whole condition. Ruffling double her already awesome presence, the goddess spread a great wing to indicate a mound of seeds

piled to her left. Jumbled together were apple and pomegranate, barley, wheat and millet, poppyseeds, chickpeas, lentils and beans.

"'There is your first task'. said Aphrodite, 'If you would be mine and earn your own life's work and love, sort out that motley mass of seeds and properly put each grain into its own and separate pile. Finish before moon rise'.

"Psyche lay silent and dumbfounded by the enormity of the task. An ant came by and pitying her stricken figure, convened her sister-workers to sort the seeds into their separate piles. Grain by grain and one by one, they carried, sorted and distributed. The one pile disappearing, reappeared again into its nine constituent parts. Finished, the ants disappeared below the ground.

"When Aphrodite reappeared, she casually and carelessly surveyed the careful industry and orderly accomplishment, and throwing Psyche a crust of bread, herself retired to the night, leaving Psyche curled up upon the rocky coast--warm despite the coolness of the night.

"The next morning, Aphrodite pointed to the pastures far inland and said, 'See by that river; there graze the sheep whose fleece shine bright gold. Only their wool is fine enough for my shrine. Procure it, comb and weave it into a filet fit for my sanctuary entrance'.

"Psyche set out toward the stream. Once there she knelt to drink before embarking on this complex task. Beside her,



stirred into music by a breeze, a green reed softly sang.

'Dear Psyche, you cannot move so quickly anymore, so do not go directly to those wild and powerful sheep for they are fierce and will not let you near. Wait until they have grazed and tired, seek evening rest back in the forest. Then gather all the strands caught in the branches of the bushes round about the meadow'.

"Psyche waited through the day until the well-fed sheep moved out beyond the thickets to rest in the cool depths of the trees lining the stream. She went to find what woolly gold was clinging to the branches. Among the shrubbery all at once she came upon the strands already neatly carded, spun and woven into a net so delicate and strong it seemed no human could imagine its design. Behind this net, an ancient spider, squat and fat, cut free the filet from its place and disappeared.

"Gently Psyche caught the drifting fleece and carried it back to Aphrodite's shrine. And if her eyes had not been carefully cast down, she might have then detected the beginnings of a smile far back within those fierce and golden eyes.

"Certainly Aphrodite's voice betrayed no tender feeling. 'You sat about today and so this evening you must do another task. A steep mountain peak lies high above a towering cliff,' spoke Aphrodite into the gathering dusk. 'Dark water flows down from a heated spring that bubbles up

from deep inside that peak. The neighboring valley catches in a reservoir liquid enough for all the swamps of Styx and the swift currants of Cocytus together. In this crystal vessel, catch some of that rich rivulet and bring it back to me'.

"Taking the vial, Psyche willingly set off towards the mountain, but when she reached the plateau near the ridge, she saw the danger in the task and stood transfixed in silence.

"A cave high up slipped forth in brackish streams that then slid downward and into a valley where they were guarded left and right and roundabout by fearsome snakes who kept unblinking watchfulness. 'Beware the darting tongues! Look out! You will die!' the slithering and red-brown reptiles hissed.

"Silently and swift beside her there appeared an owl. 'Give me the vial,' she hooted in the gathering dark. Constantly swivelling her head round and back its full circle, she carried the crystal container up the mountain valley, flying through the snakes. At the topmost spring, she announced that this was for the goddess Aphrodite, and unhindered, she filled the crystal that, returning down the selfsame valley, she handed brimming full to Psyche.

"Psyche once again returned to Aphrodite with this token, but even completing that third task could not appease the goddess. 'There is another task for you to do. Take this

casket down to Persephone, hand it to her and say 'Aphrodite requests a little of your beauty since she has exhausted what she has repairing all the damage to her realm'.

"Psyche shivered in fear. As if a veil had lifted from her eyes, she understood. She was being driven to the underworld of death. Psyche trudged towards the great and ancient standing stone so she might lie beneath it and fasting find herself guided straight to death.

"Once settled against the giant megalith, Psyche was startled to hear the towering stone speak hoarsely in her ear. 'Cease this useless fasting. That is not how to approach death's gate. Get up, take two corn-cakes well soaked in mead, go upwards to the Vent of Dis, and begin your journey there by walking downward through its opening. And don't forget to take two copper coins within your mouth.'

"'When you have travelled a long way down the path,' continued the towering stone, 'you will meet a limping driver with a lame ass carting wood. He will ask you to hand him twigs that have fallen from his load. Do not lend your assistance, but pass them by in silence.

"'Then you will come to the river of the dead where you must pay Charon the passage money. Let him take one coin out of your mouth by his own hand. While you are being ferried across, a dead old man floating on the surface will lift his rotting hands and beg you to pull him into the boat. Turn

away; do not pity him.

"'A little beyond the river, you will come upon three old women weaving at a loom. They will ask you to weave a bit, but do not help them. If you put down one cake, you will never find your way back again.

"'There is a huge three-headed dog, the fierce and monstrous keeper of the gates. Split one cake in three to buy safe passage beyond those jaws. Once past, you will meet Persephone and her companion, Hecate. Only then may you beg your favour.

"'Persephone will bid you welcome and ask you to sit beside her to eat a sumptuous banquet, but you must sit upon the bare floor and request only a little of Hecate's bread and water. When you have supped, return with the filled casket, remembering to buy off the dog and sailor once again.

"Psyche hurried to complete this task and returning above ground with the casket, sank down with exhaustion and relief. Aching limb by limb, worn beyond endurance from so much grief, she gazed upon the gift she carried. Remembering what Aphrodite said of restoration held within, Psyche thought this: 'I have endured an awful journey and even willingly and with a good heart have undergone my tasks. My legs ache, my back is killing me, and soon I'll have a child. Here before me is the energy I'll need to meet the cares to come. If it restores a goddess, will not a drop be

just enough for me'?

"Raising the casket lid, Psyche was overwhelmed. With blank dark eyes she gazed down in the casket; a stench of death's decay enveloped her entirely.

"Within his forest far away, Eros woke and looked about for Psyche. At once remembering, he stretched his wings and flew to find her. And finding her again was certainly no problem; his nose directly led him to where she knelt there at the Vent of Dis.

"Quickly he folded up the stench into the casket and waved his wings to clear the air. He settled down in front of Psyche until she looked at him again. He hadn't long to wait. With silly smiling ear to ear and weeping tears that washed remaining hurts away, they each forgave and loved and reunited."

That's such a lovely ending, I thought then, but Mrs. Livingstone wasn't finished yet. "What he had to forgive, I can't imagine, but Psyche always was a generous soul and certainly she loved him dearly.

"'Come,' said Eros, 'we both have tasks left incomplete. You must... ' and here he stopped as Psyche once again sat as if spellbound. A moment passed and then she looked at him.

"'Not quite now,' said Psyche wryly as she shook her head. 'Call my mother; bring my sisters to me. I need them. I want them with me'.

"Eros said, 'There, there,' a little nervously and in a hurry. 'Yes. Everything will be alright. But of course... your mother. And your sisters.... Well... if you must'. And he was in such haste that he sent three winds abroad: the north wind to the Queen, the west wind to Liliias and the south wind to Berylla.

"With Eros braced supportively at her back, Psyche's one more labor birthed a daughter she named Joy. Liliias held high the lamp; Berylla knotted and cut the cord, and the Queen carefully lifted the child and carried her to the ocean shore nearby. There, while the sisters tended Psyche, she gave this newest grandchild into Aphrodite's arms.

"Borne gently out to sea by Aphrodite, Joy was bathed and dried and gently wrapped in down. Trailing laughter, like seaweed and morning sunlight, the goddess then returned the twice-blessed task of Joy to Psyche's arms and Eros wrapped them both in wings as light and warm and strong as love itself can sometimes be."

\*\*\*\*\*

I remember sitting quietly awhile with Mrs. Livingstone. Not exactly tired, but more at ease and resting, just watching our reflections in the cottage's night window.

When I was young, I knew that Joy was mortal, a

fleeting thing that came and went, and just assumed that Psyche became a goddess or at least a daemon like her husband, Eros. Or maybe an immortal. Now I know that none of that means anything. They're there, and if they come and go it's at our whim or in our need and not their own.

That's why I hear the story and the voice of Mrs. Livingstone. The message that I need is there in both, and I have heard enough to make an answer out of heartache. I do remember Psyche. I have seen her; so have you.

Often, we know her first with Aphrodite: bright in golden sunlight at the ocean's edge, in the fear and elation of a raging gale or flood or tranquil by a moonlit mountain lake, or in the damp and earthy forest, and certainly in the well-beloved level-to-the-skyline fields of home.

Sometimes she appears together with her sisters: woven up in squabbles and older and more bitter life-betrayals, or in the nurse's care or anywhere that people gather to talk about work or families or even politics and what's gone wrong. And always friendship's kitchen carries the latest traces of their presence.

With Eros sometimes, too: in warm embrace of eye and arm and thigh, in loves-lost or found again, in all the rages and betrayals a body's heat can generate; or coldness. In first love and last love and all the loves that rest between.

With Joy and all new promise: in new buds and spring

flowers, in children's laughter, in every species' infant playfulness, in bliss of work well done and in the day's achievements task by task.

But mostly Psyche appears to us alone, in those dark moments between moon-set and sun-rise. She's there, waiting, smiling and patient on the other side of the rain.



### Afterword

Much of feminist practice is concerned with naming that which has been silenced, suppressed and left out of patriarchal learning and the Western, Eurocentric intellectual tradition. Therefore, to keep faith with this spirit, I would like to introduce a term to describe a Psychean outlook.<sup>1</sup> While the term "paradox" does contain and unite such opposites as the traditional perceptions of life and death, the various connotations or entailments of the term make it unsuitable for describing Psyche's experience.

In his *Glossary of Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams notes that a paradox "seems on its face to be self-contradictory or absurd, yet turns out to make good sense" (126). He goes on to state that "it was a central device in seventeenth century *metaphysical* poetry." Paradoxes which conjoin two contrary terms are oxymorons and often are found "in Elizabethan love poetry" and "in devotional prose and religious poetry as a way of expressing the Christian mysteries, which transcend human sense and logic" (127). By reason of these two usages, paradox implicitly links sexual intercourse and transcendence/spirituality. In the light of the religious nature of paradox within Western, intellectual and dichotomized thought and the equally profound though differently sacred nature of Psyche's fourth task and reproductive experience, the term "paradox" is by definition, counter productive.

Compelled to look outside this European philosophic tradition to find a descriptive word for the psycho-spiritual attitude which sees life and death as integral, relational parts of a transformational journey, I choose "kalian" as a way of distinguishing such an outlook from that encompassed by "paradox." I have, very obviously, taken this term from the name of the goddess, Kali-Ma.<sup>2</sup> As Ajit Mookerjee describes her, Kali is the Indian goddess who is called Virgin-creator, sustaining Mother and Absorber-of-all and who "sprang forth" from the head of the Great Goddess, Durga. As a triple goddess parthenogenetically goddess-born, she is a profoundly female and feminine image for the approach to life that Psyche's journey and Apuleius's tale have revealed. Thus, any approach to life that is structured in terms of the continuity of life processes, increase and transformation, of the on-going values in sustaining and preserving life, and of absorbing or accepting a life experience that includes death's destruction might, suitably, be referred to as "kalian."

## Notes

### Foreword

1. I am grateful to the late Dr. Rene Carpentier for his encouragement and support of my research and the initial stages of writing that thesis, and to Professor Ken Osborne who prompted a feminist inquiry into the intellectual underpinnings of curriculum development and my first analysis of that tradition.

### Introduction

1. Some areas of research directed to address women's absence from specific areas of social and intellectual life include: philosophy and political thought, as in Susan Moller Okin's *Women in Western Political Thought*, Sheila Rowbotham's *Women's Consciousness, Man's World* and Mary O'Brien's *The Politics of Reproduction*; religion and art, as in Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father*, Merlin Stone's *When God Was a Woman*, Elaine Pagel's *The Gnostic Gospels*, Estella Lauter's *Women as Mythmakers*, and Lucy Lippard's *Overlay*; literature, as in Sandra M. Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* and Tillie Olson's *Silences*. Other texts such as Susan Brownmiller's *Against our Will* deal with the physical violence used against women that accompanies such erasures. Ann Jones's *Next Time She'll Be Dead* exposes the ways in which our cultural attitudes continue to allow and reenforce

men's violence and physical abuse against women in the home.

2. See for example, Margot Culley's and Catherine Portuges's *Gendered Subjects*, Arlene Fausto-Sterling's *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories About Women and Men*, and Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn's (eds.) *Feminism in Canada*.

3. See Sherry B. Ortner's "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" and Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*.

4. Perhaps the clearest example of the way in which men's ideas and attitudes, men's power and learning have controlled how women perceive themselves and their lives is in the role male physicians have played in the traditionally female responsibilities of childbirth and child rearing. Women's experience of the male control of childbirth is variously documented by Marilyn French, Germaine Greer in *Sex and Destiny* and Emily Martin in *The Woman in the Body*. The movement towards reclaiming a measure of control over the birthing experience is illustrated by the natural childbirth movement beginning in the sixties and by the LaLeche League. The incorporation of women's own descriptions of lived experience is encouraged in publications such as Sheila Kitzinger's *Giving Birth, How It Really Feels*.

5. For an account of the ramifications this has for all women, see Dale Spender's *Women of Ideas*. In the texts examining the issues in women's learning, scholars such as Judith Thompson, Sibyl Shack, Annis Dagg and P.J. Thompson articulate women's experience in education as variously as Shack's reference to women teachers as a "two-thirds minority" and Spender's description of women in education as "invisible." A similar displacement from an authentic voice for female experience is discussed by M.M. Jenkins and Cheris Kramarae, and Robin Lakoff.

6. Paulo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* introduces a concept for education in the third world that distinguishes a teaching/learning metaphor of banking from one of midwifery. This implies that even this more woman-centered metaphor could manifest a more egalitarian, family and human-centered approach.

7. The title of the myth is usually presented in the reverse order, as, for example, it is in Erich Neumann's reference to "Amor and Psyche." Because of Psyche's central importance in the myth, I order the names to reflect this importance.

8. Unless otherwise indicated, all definitions are taken from *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

### **Chapter One: Contexts and Circumstances**

1. Historian and experienced quilter, Dr. Barbara E. Kelcey reminds me that there are several different ways of constructing quilts. The pieced quilt image that I use is associated with the practice on the North American frontier (and that of my own grandmothers) and therefore most suitable as an analogy for an interdisciplinary analysis of educational practice.

2. For confirmation of the importance of attention to the way power structures influence educational practice and change, thereby controlling change in the learning experience, see Joan S. Walters's *Three Case Studies*.

### **Chapter Two: Narcissus and Echo**

1. I use D.E. Hill's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses I-IV*, within which the myth of Narcissus appears on pp. 107-115. I do not provide parenthetical page numbers because the passage in question is so brief. A recent translation, Hill's edition supplies valuable linguistic and historical information. Whereas Hill translates from the Latin and therefore uses the Latin names for gods and goddesses, I include the Greek names to suggest their more ancient associations.

2. In *Sowing the Body*, Page DuBois refers to "the male

narcissism of traditional scholarship" (7) and warns: "Our paradoxical enterprise is to be both within and outside the sex gender system, to see the ways in which it enables our being, but to call to the foreground its bias, its historicity" (9). My own enterprise is to bring to light what I see as the other and very real system that is represented by the "outside" and Echo's place.

3. Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* describes the patriarchal need for creating woman as mirror, whereby she is seen as "possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (53).

4. Feminist art practice and criticism presents both a reclamation and redefinition of those practices named craft. See Germaine Greer's *The Obstacle Race*, Estella Lauter's *Women as Mythmakers: Poetry and Visual Art by Twentieth Century Women*, Lucy Lippard's *Overlay*, and Rosalda Parker's and Griselda Pollack's *Old Mistresses: Women Art and Ideology*.

5. This is a splintering and fragmentation that Naomi Wolf, too, emphasizes as detrimental to women's psychological health and development. In *The Beauty Myth*, she describes how this male vision of women is culturally mirrored to

women.

### **Chapter Three: Introducing Psyche: Attending Aphrodite**

1. Translations of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* are offered by William Addlington, H.E. Butler, Robert Graves, and J. Arthur Hanson. Robert Graves provides a second later and separate edition of the Psyche myth with an introduction by Marian Woodman. The story of Cupid and Psyche also appears within William Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*. In *Till We Have Faces*, C.S. Lewis retells the myth from the point of view of the eldest sister.

2. I use Hanson's translation throughout this study because it is, I believe, the most recent. The fact that it is not to my knowledge associated with any previous interpretations is also a factor in my decision. In most instances, my parenthetical references will only include page numbers. Hanson's translation exists in two volumes whose pages are not sequentially numbered, but because I am primarily concerned with volume one, only the rare instances where I need to reference the second will I include the volume number, as in (2:299).

3. For an investigation into these sources and their motifs, see Jan-Ojvind Swahn's *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche* and Ben Edwin Perry's *The Ancient Romances: A Literary-Historical*



*Account of Their Origins*. For an analysis of the sources of motif and literary techniques involved in the conversion story as metamorphosis see Judith K. Krabbe's *The Metamorphoses of Apuleius*. In *The Novel Before the Novel: Essays and Discussions About the Beginnings of Prose Fiction in the West*, Arthur Heisman suggests an Egyptian influence in the way the episodes are linked by a storyteller "who is in some sort of predicament" (152). Elizabeth Hazelton Haight in *Apuleius and his Influence* gives a history of the ideas of love and soul and includes information on their earliest representations.

4. Apuleius, of course, uses the Latin names for the goddesses and gods. I prefer and have inserted the older Greek variants, for I rely on the reclamations and reinterpretations of these more ancient representations. Obviously I mean to suggest the fullest possible interpretation of Aphrodite's capacities and her relationship with Eros.

5. See Naomi Goldenberg's *The Changing of the Gods* and Elaine Pagel's *The Gnostic Gospels* for discussions of the ways in which the female divine has been appropriated in patriarchal culture.

#### Chapter Four: The Green World

1. The problems in the designation "Mistress" are explored in Rozika Parker's and Griselda Pollack's *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*. Alluding to the honorific title "old masters," they point out how patriarchal attitudes have undermined the female ownership of what might be roughly equivalent titles of respect. By acknowledging Psyche's ownership of the title, I intend that the authority it represents is equivalent to what we automatically grant "master."

2. Explaining early methods of birth control, Sarah B. Pomeroy supplies information that suggests a knowledge of reproductive responsibility that joins together Psyche's first two tasks: "Mixed with ineffective techniques [of birth control] were effective methods including the use of occlusive agents which blocked the os of the uterus. Oils, honey, and soft wool were employed" (167).

3. The mother's absence from literature is discussed by Di Brandt's *Wild Mother Dancing*. In her discussion of Canadian women writers, she examines aspects of the mother's silencing as each writer attempts to deal with it and the ways in which each reclaims the mother as subject of her own story.

**Chapter Five: Learning Transformation**

1. This attitude recalls the kind of feminist scientific practice Evelyn Fox Keller describes in the work of Barbara McClintock. Of similar interest is the paper on Native observational attitudes and practice given by scientist Pamela Colorado.

2. In Kent and Morreau's *Women's Images of Men*, Sarah Kent describes how the male body is objectified in homoerotic art. Male bodies are rendered as passive for the visual consumption of a male audience, but not for women's appreciation; the male viewer continues powerful. See "The Erotic Male Nude" (75-82).

3. This pattern of heredity, "call" and wisdom/foreknowledge as women's shamanic pattern also exists in the story of Cassandra; her knowledge also was lost; her society refused to hear her warnings. See Christa Wolf's *Cassandra: A Novel and Four Essays*.

4. Though McClelland does distinguish between a male and female attitude towards power and sex-role differentiation, his emphasis on power as a power-over is like the attitudes that I have questioned in my discussion of power in chapter three. To indicate the attitude appropriate to Psyche's story, I will call this kind of quest an empowerment vision.

The pattern, however, remains the same.

### **Chapter Six: Eros, Psyche and N(arr)ativity**

1. I cannot resist remarking how McClelland's (indeed male) perception of female behaviour is negatively coded and called feminine psychology and, further, that the priesthood of the Mysteries was by this time male and presumably not "feminine."

2. The "Travels" television series program, entitled *Madagascar: Isle of the Ancestors*, provides a comparison by way of a similar ritual of spiritual significance. Travel writer Helena Drysdale describes the journey of a family group to disinter the bodies of dead ancestors in order to replace their shrouds. While she describes her own anxiety at what she believed would be a macabre ritual, she is surprised that it is so joyous an occasion, that the bodies had decomposed to a rich loamy earth and that the ritual celebrated the continuity of life rather than the individual deaths. What is equally interesting is her observation that the removed and 'earth stained' shrouds were prized as blankets on which to conceive new life and so linked death to conception and birth, to regeneration. Ancestors and the yet unborn are linked together in a profoundly metaphoric way. (PPTV, ch. 3, 5/4/93, 7 pm.)

3. Examples exist of how other cultures include this wisdom into a female life pattern. For example, in *Grandmothers of the Light: A Medicine Woman's Sourcebook*, Paula Gunn Allen describes the seven steps to becoming a medicine woman. The last two stages, of teacher and wise woman are the post-menopausal years when the woman becomes "a transmitter of spiritual and social wisdom" (14).

5. An example of how this Hecate aspect is translated into a larger social responsibility and is clearly evidenced in the political activism of "The Raging Grannies" and of the anti-nuclear demonstrations of the women at Greenham Common.

6. Awareness of the significance and importance of post-menopausal female life experience is variously documented (and valued) by Gail Sheehy in *Menopause: The Silent Passage*, Germaine Greer in *The Change* and Janine O'Leary Cobb in *Understanding Menopause*.

### **Chapter Seven: Voluptas Beyond the Ending**

1. In keeping with my decision to use the more ancient Greek names, I substitute *Voluptas* for the Latin *Voluptatem*. Rachel Blau DuPlessis translates *Voluptatem* into English as Joy (90).

2. Trevathan's emphasis on mate selection gives an

additional way of interpreting the implications for women and family relationships of the exchange of women in the avoidance of incest. Exogamous marriage might result in exceptionally difficult childbirth and higher mortality rates for both infant and woman.

3. It will have become obvious that I am avoiding "trinity" and using "triplicity" instead. As the means of registering transformational movement, individuality and family relationship, "triplicity" circumvents the connotative meanings in the word "trinity." In patriarchal religions, its usefulness has been tainted by the absence of the female principle and by the implication of unitary oneness.

4. Nor Hall reduces this to one hour: "The hour of the wolf is the time between night and dawn. It is the hour when most people die, when sleep is deepest, when nightmares are most palpable, when ghosts and demons hold sway. The hour of the wolf is also the hour when most children are born" (117).

5. The direct references to these paradoxes are as follows: holding and attachment (53), passion (77-8, 80), eye-to-eye (106, 108), idealization and identification (128), mutuality (156), embeddedness (178), tending (203).

6. This placentally based metaphor also recalls Kegan's *The*

*Evolving Self* and provides a way of bringing together the theories of the separate and symbiotic self. For an analysis of the self described as "twice" born into a later psychological separateness see Margaret Mahler's *On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of Individuation*.

7. Brian McHale in his analysis of postmodernist fiction describes narrative circularity as one "possible structure of textual non-ending" (110). The spiral is a means of ascending to a higher level and "metalepsis" is the way to leap the gap which the spiral passes through (119). This leaping of the gap, however, bypasses the continuity that the spiral implies and substitutes instead a series of presumably concentric circles or centers such as Eliade discusses.

8. For examples and discussions of myths of boy's initiation ceremonies and the hero journey, see Robert Bly's *Iron John* and Joseph Campbell's *Myths to Live By*.

9. O'Brien notes that the stages of male initiation are remarkably like couvade. As husbands in some societies take to their beds in the appearance of giving birth like their wives do, so, likewise, do men appropriate the forms of menstruation, pregnancy and birth as a means of signifying magic and power (149-156).

10. Kurt Weitzmann states that, in ancient sculptural representations of Cupid and Psyche, both are winged creatures. Such a representation serves to mark each as devotees of the winged bird goddess and not necessarily as transcendent beings. Most birds fly, but they remain creatures of earth's atmosphere not "heaven."

### **Chapter Eight: Lifeprints**

1. The issues surrounding the definition of the self and individuality are recurrent in the analyses of women's autobiographies. Obviously my own view is necessarily limited in its ability to address these larger questions directly. For the moment, and in the light of the way I have revisioned birth, I am arguing the real and centered presence of a self in text and a self concept that is not "split" but transformative, able to act with a "responsibility." For an examination of the "discontinuities" of women's narratives see *The Female Autograph: Theory and Practice of Autobiography From the Tenth to the Twentieth Century* edited by Domna C. Stanton.

2. For a discussion of the ways in which this mirror representation and the dichotomized image of self both affects and fails to explain women's autobiographical practice see *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings* edited by Shari Benstock.



See especially the article by Kathleen Woodward for the discussion of mourning and loss in the context of Simone de Beauvoir's autobiography. As an example of search for a comfortable metaphor for articulating identity in a context that includes geography, Helen M. Buss suggests a metaphor of mapping. See her *Mapping Ourselves: Canadian Women's Autobiography in English*.

3. For comparison, an examination of the titles of twentieth-century men's autobiographies reveals motifs more in keeping with those characteristics I have discussed with respect to the Icarus complex and which appear in Eros's story. Roald Dahl's *Going Solo* emphasizes separation and recalls first flight as a qualifying pilot. Arthur Miller's *Timebends: A Life* plays with the ideas of time and life changes but in a way that implies force, confrontation, resistance and the laws of Physics. While *Treasure in Clay: The Autobiography of Fulton J. Sheen* combines paradoxical notions of value, in the work he describes himself as the clay and the treasure as gift, given from outside, "desire flourishing in clay" (29); it is his being called by God to be a priest that is the treasure, not his existence as an embodied being. The title of James A. Michener's memoir, *The World is My Home*, suggests a place in the world of man, in culture and society, and ease therein. Conrad Black's title, *A Life in Progress*, clearly states the sense of life as

means and ends rather than process or continuity. Finally, George Burns's saucy *Living It Up: Or They Still Love Me in Altoona* combines the world and the flesh in an attitude that Eros surely would approve and enjoy.

5. *Outercourse* is an intense and complex expression of a formidable intellect trained in two of the most patriarchal of disciplines: Christian theology and philosophy. In spite of her exodus from that religion, Daly would be the first to acknowledge her debt to that tradition for enabling her to critique it on its own terms (74-76). What this tradition brings with it is the focus on "gaps" and the necessity for the "leap" which recalls the dichotomy inherent in Narcissus's gaze and sexual union. While I see the Psychean pattern in her writing, I am fully aware and cannot stress enough that she sees something different. The most obvious is in the three-ness of my interpretation of Psyche's journey and Daly's preference for four and the quaternity in her spiral galaxies. As I see it, however, her Fourth Galaxy is the new being, another beginning in continuing process and she herself notices that four may be seen as three-plus-one (373). Rather than the stasis of quaternity, it becomes process.

6. The significance of this translation of noun to verb and movement and energy is frequently used in the feminist analyses. That so many have picked up on this indicates its

relevance to a theory of female experience.

#### **Afterword**

1. I use Psychean as an adjective to characterize the kind of life journey she undertook as well as its female nature. I apply it in the same manner that Ulyssean is used to describe a particular kind of male quest.

2. Here I am sensitive to the implications of expropriating a goddess from outside my own tradition. I justify my procedure only by stating that my motive is to maintain and continue what I understand to be the goddess's three original meanings: creating, sustaining, destroying. Perhaps my use of the term will help ensure that Kali-Ma avoids the fate of her sister triple goddess in the Western tradition.

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