Back to the Garden: Cultivating the Spirituality of the Female Body

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

BACK TO THE GARDEN:
CULTIVATING THE SPIRITUALITY
OF THE FEMALE BODY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF PASTORAL COUNSELING

BY

KATHLEEN CIESLAK

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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Meinrad Craighead for her artwork Garden as it appears in The Mother's Songs: Images of God the Mother. Copyright @ 1986 by Meinrad Craighead.

Frank Cordelle for his nude photographic portraits (from Century, a work in progress) as they appear in "N"-Nude & Natural, 13.2. All photographs in this thesis are copyright @ 1995 by Frank Cordelle.
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Overgrown Weeds to be Uprooted

You give birth, woman, in suffering and anguish. You are under your husband's spell, and he is your master. And do you not know that you are Eve? She still lives in this world, as God's judgment on your sex. Live, then for you must, as an accused. The devil is in you. You broke the seal of the Tree. You were the first to abandon God's law. You were the one who deceived man, whom the devil knew not how to vanquish. It was you who so easily overcame him who was made in the image of God. For your wages you have death, which brought death even to the Son of God. And yet you think of covering your tunics with ornaments.

Tertulian

The Grooming of Women

********************************************************************************

Conversation in a department store dressing room:

Woman #1: How does the dress fit?

Woman #2: It didn't fit right. You know the moment you get out of the shower and look in the mirror. Boy, doesn't that make you feel sick? That's the way I feel right now.

Woman #1: Yes, I know exactly what you mean.

Seeds of Truth to be Cultivated

Do not disdain your body. For the soul is just as safe in its body as in Heaven.

Mechtild of Magdeburg

********************************************************************************

I love this body
hair forever unruly
bare feet to dance run leap on soil and sand
vocal cords to shape sound to song and poem
hands to caress babies, daughters, sons
tongue taste the treasures
strength of a mother tiger
quickness of a squirrel
grace of a mantis
fingernails akin to claw and tortoise shell
pupils to dilate with the ebb and flow of light
ears to hear whispers, heron calls, the beat of a drum
uterus that sheds blood with the moon
belly of changes—round, soft, full
thighs and ass to move me smooth
breasts...the two cone mountains with valley wide between.

i love your rhythms
i love your smells
i love your passion blowing like a humid storm in summer
i love your bones that wear me
i love your laughter
i love your tears
i love your saliva
i love your spinn

you are the first and the last temple
you are the phoenix
you are earth.

Claudia L'Amoreaux
INTRODUCTION

Let me out! Let me out!" the little girl screeched over and over again.

The door on my right was closed, had been for a very long time. It was more than curiosity that had led me to open it; it was a feeling of exigency, a compelling sense of vital necessity. As the door swung open, I was frozen in horror by what I saw. The tiny room was a dungeon, the residence of a little girl, perhaps 10 or 11 years old. Her arms were held upright by chains hanging from the ceiling; her long dark hair matted and gnarled; her head hung listlessly on her pale chest; and her naked, emaciated body sat lifeless in her own excrement. I wasn't sure whether time had halted or an eternity had passed--it didn't matter because I couldn't move, stuck in the horror of my find and the rawness of my feelings. Eventually, the little girl summoned some energy--perhaps her rage at my inertia--and jumped up screaming over and over, "Let me out! Let me out! Let me out!" With all the energy her being could muster, her screaming turned to screeching; and like a wild animal that had been caged, her body furiously danced its urgent need for freedom. Though the screeching was wordless, it spoke clearly to the core of my being.

This powerful dream image gifted me at a time when I was struggling to get acquainted with my body, its rhythms, its needs, its messages, its unique beauty. For more than 30 years, I knew nothing of my body except that it betrayed me to disease and misery. It never worked properly and seemed a worthless piece of junk. I ignored my
body like it ignored me, focusing instead on something more lofty and worthy of my loving attention: my soul. For many years I traveled inward and upward, embarking on a journey of discovery, exploring the nooks and crannies of my inner being. The journey was wrought with terror and excitement; awful and awe-filled were the deep insights, broadened capabilities, and life-changing transformations. While this traversing of my soul was immensely difficult and took much fortitude, the benefits were enormous as I discovered a truer sense of self and a clearer sense of God.

I became an expert at soul work; it was deeply gratifying to be able to move with increasing ease into my depths. After several years, however, this tiny little voice in me urged, "There's more waiting to be discovered." I happily plunged deeper into my soul, believing that was where I would find "more." The little voice got bigger and more insistent, "This is not enough. There's more." I went back to my soul, searching for, for what? There was no neon sign pointing the way, no guide leading the tour.

I found the sign and the guide quite unexpectedly; rather, they found me. The sign came in the form of a broken foot that heralded a structural degenerative process and a permanent deformity. The guide appeared in a dream two days later: a female mentor, Lois, asked me to accompany her to Mount Horeb, the "mountain of God's revelation." It was in dealing with my foot and the havoc it wreaked in my life, that I began climbing the mountain to Horeb. When I reached the top several months later, God's revelation to me was, I am certain, that little girl in the dungeon. I realized that she was the same little girl who tripped me up four years earlier causing me to break the same foot. She wanted
my attention then, but it was imperative that she have it now before she rotted away.

I have freed that little girl from her chains and am slowly learning to care for, nourish, and love her. Lois is gone; this little girl has taken her place, teaching me what no journey to my soul, however deep, could. She is returning me to my body; accompanying me as I explore this long lost treasure. Together we are learning to respect our rhythms and cycles, admire our body's contours and feel, celebrate our body's functions and sexuality, and accept lovingly our body's imperfections and deformity. Most wonderfully, we are discovering that our body is sacred, a holy channel for relating to God, others, and, yes, self.

No, my soul work has not been forgotten. I am learning that my soul must be companioned by my body; that these parts of my being are inextricably intertwined; that alone, neither are whole. I am discovering that body and soul not only enrich and complement each other, they complete each other. My soul's voice is heard in and through my body; my body's beauty and uniqueness mirrors and reflects my soul. I am growing to experience my soul as well as my body as vehicles of spirituality, that is, the life force that connects me with the divine, others, nature, and self.

As my little girl and I marvel at the discovery of our body as sacred, I am aghast that I could ever have believed it betrayed me. I am beginning to understand that my body did not betray me; its illnesses were desperate attempts to call me to wholeness. It was I who betrayed my body; my religious denomination and its god betrayed it; family and friends betrayed it; society betrayed it; our culture betrayed it. Indeed, my body and
the bodies of all females have been betrayed for centuries. We have been taught that our bodies are evil, dirty, deficient; we have learned that if we don't mold our bodies to Barbie doll figures (or the prevailing cultural criteria) we are considered ugly; we have been forced by a male normative culture to abandon our lowly bodies in lieu of the loftier abstractions of our minds and souls. We have been chained to a small existence that leaves us fractional and broken, and disconnected from self as well as all of creation.

It is the premise of this thesis that a female's body is her major source of spirituality— that is, her essence, the life force through which she experiences relationship to, connection with all of creation. This premise challenges the traditional understanding of spirituality as the domain of the soul, and maintains that a female who has abdicated her body cannot be connected with her soul, she cannot, therefore, be whole, holy. The female who has abandoned her body, is a woman whose spirituality has been quashed and proscribed by culture. She is a broken being, for without connection to her body, her spirituality, her essence, a female cannot be whole unto herself, cannot be connected wholly to the divine and others.

It is becoming more and more evident that throughout all of recorded history, repression of the feminine within males and females has been projected onto females; that is, repression of the individual and collective feminine is manifested by, scapegoated in oppression of the female body. The format of this thesis calls the reader to acknowledge and honor the feminine which is epitomized ultimately and most profoundly in the female body. This body of work images the feminine via art, poetry,
and prose. This format, I believe, gives life, energy, passion, and fullness to the explorations and insights of each chapter. Chapter one discusses the uneasy, if not harmful duality of body and soul. Chapter two scrutinize the myths of Genesis which perpetuate and legitimate the denigration of the female body. In chapter three, the "f" word, fear, is named as the perpetrator of the immense hostility toward the feminine. Chapter four explores the phenomenon of the "daughters of the father." Contemporary beauty ideals that oppose if not obliterate genuine female bodiliness are discussed in chapter five. The final chapter discusses the feminine principle and its implications for pastoral counselors.

Wholeness is the goal of life's journey. This thesis is about reclaiming the female body, discovering its spirituality, and in doing so, attaining, or perhaps more appropriately, returning to an original, primordial female wholeness. Artist and prophet Meinrad Craighead proclaims, "...the tree of Life grows in the body of every woman" (1993, lecture/slide presentation). It is the task of my journey, this thesis, and, I am convinced, of all pastoral counselors to cut away the chains and release women from the dungeon's of their lifeless bodies; to begin to travel the path to wholeness; to return to the garden of the female body, rediscovering and eating freely the fruit of the tree of Life.
**Weeds and Seeds**

*Our Father, who art in heaven...*

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son... as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be. Amen.*

*My friend, I went to the market and bought the Dark One... I put him on a scale before I bought him. What I paid was my social body, my town body, my family body, and all my inherited jewels. The Dark One is my husband now.*

*Mirabai*

*Although the wind blows terribly here, the moonlight also leaks between the roof planks of this ruined house.*

*Izumi Shikibu*

*I am born connected. I am born remembering rivers flowing from my mother's body into my body. I pray at her Fountain of Life, saturated in her milk and blood, water and honey. She passes on to me the meaning of religion because she links me to our origin in God the Mother.*

*Meinrad Craighead*

*The naked woman's body is a portion of eternity too great for the eye of man.*

*William Blake*
GARDEN

From THE MOTHER'S SONGS:
Images of God the Mother.

Meinrad Craighead
CHAPTER 1
SPIRITUALITY: ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Spirituality has long been considered the realm of the soul. Throughout recorded history, spirituality has been associated with a transcendental relationship with God which includes, indeed demands transcending the realm of the material. While spirituality is widely defined as the life energy or principle that pervades a person's entire being (Colliton, 1979), the entire being seems to include only the soul trapped in the human body until it can reach ultimate transcendence or complete union with God. Thus, the spiritual is seen not only as apart from, but far superior to the physical; its purpose and goal to transcend the temporal.

The dichotomy between spiritual and temporal, body and soul, is the manifestation of a dualism that is deeply rooted in, if not the foundation of Western philosophical, theological, and scientific thought. Dividing the world into opposites appears to be innately human. However, as Singer (1976) explains, when faced with opposites, humans tend to view them as problematical if not irreconcilable. Far from existing as complementary or concordant, opposites are forced into an adversarial relationship and viewed as nearly unbridgeable polarities. Wedges are driven between spirit and nature, transcendent and immanent, permanent and impermanent, rational and
irrational, female and male, body and soul, with the spike of the wedge, as we shall see, rendering the "inferior" pole nearly lifeless.

Not only are dividing lines drawn, but hierarchical structures are created, for dualism implies hierarchy. As Hendler (1975) points out, there is an age-old tendency to establish one side of a duality as good, desirable, and superior, while the other side is relegated to an inferior, if not evil status requiring domination and control. Hendler asserts there is one duality that "appears to be the generator of all psychic dualities, that of male-female" (p. 1). According to the hierarchical legend of this dualism, female is associated with the negative, including the body, and male with the positive or superior and therefore dominant.

_In the Beginning_

As modern depth psychology seeks to revisit and uncover early childhood experiences to understand the source of the wounding and thus accomplish change, so is it necessary to revisit the birthplace of dualistic thinking. Western culture was born in ancient Greece around the sixth century B. C. It was at this time that Greek philosophers began to make an intellectual leap from the predominant primitive view of nature to a reasoned, analytic view of existence. Asking "why?," philosophers attempted to theorize about life and meaning by means of rational thought and logic (from the Greek _logike_, meaning "the art of reasoning"). Logic, the Greek philosophers contended, is the most reliable test of truth; and truth, according to Socrates, is implanted in the mind. The function and goal of the early philosophers was to recover the truth that had been buried
Socrates, the greatest and most influential teacher in ancient Greece, proclaimed the soul to be the "seat of the mind." He believed the soul to be immortal and hindered by the troubles and "foolishness" of the body (Greer, 1987, p. 62). For Socrates, the goal of life is to know the truth rather than indulge the needs and desires of the body. It is only in death that the soul is released from the prison of the body, enabling it to at last know truth in its purest form. Plato continued the work of Socrates, embedding even deeper the uneasy connection, if not growing disconnection, between mind/soul and matter/body. Plato insisted that the imperfect surface of matter conceals a perfect, absolute, and eternal order. He considered the physical world as superficial, an illusion of the senses. The real world, Plato insisted, is the world of the soul (mind).

The world of the soul, Plato contended, consists of "perfect Ideas authored by 'God'" (Greer, 1987, p. 63), which are permanent and unchanging throughout all time. These perfect Ideas are independent of individuals and can be known only through the soul. According to Plato, while matter or the body may offer clues about the Ideas, it is of no value itself. It is in the Ideas that absolute truths are to be discovered. For Plato and other philosophers of his time, matter and sensory impressions were to be shunned while the perfect, the eternal, the real was to be sought after, only to be found in the soul.

While Plato's student Aristotle accepted Plato's general notion of the existence of Ideas, he was more interested in the senses, in the physical. But even in the realm of the physical, a duality was created, for Aristotle equated the male with leadership and
superiority, and the female with matter and, especially, carnality. Indeed, in ancient Greece, women were regarded as inferior to men. They received little formal training or education, were denied citizenship, possessed limited property rights, were rarely seen outside their homes, and had no say in marital arrangements that were negotiated by male relatives. Within the marriage, women were viewed primarily as childbearers and housekeepers, with the sexual liberty of husbands taken for granted (Greer, 1987). Indeed, male children were favored, and, in light of the emphasis on mind and soul, male intellectual achievements were fostered to a degree never before known. Additionally, males were encouraged through training and athleticism to make their bodies strong and healthy, for the "sound mind" needed to be housed in a "sound body."

The female, according to Aristotle, is a misbegotten male; that is, nature always tries to produce a male, but when something goes wrong, it produces a defective and accidental creature, a female. Physically, females were considered lacking in muscular strength due to what Aristotle perceived to be softness, looseness, and porosity "making them particularly permeable to liquids and vapors" (Sissa, 1992, p. 80). Believing the male sperm to contain all the necessary materials for progeny, Aristotle and others understood the female's menstrual blood to be her only contribution to the reproductive process.

Plato's notion regarding females is similar: "A woman is merely a lesser man" (cited by Christian, 1990, p. 150). Plato associated females with the body and nature, insisting they were flawed, finite, and, therefore, not worthy of attention. Females, then, were associated with the flesh, with bodiliness. The negative view of matter and the body
was assimilated with the negative view of females. Females, therefore, were (and continue to be) considered not only physically lowly and weak, but spiritually inferior to males.

Thus, in ancient Greece, the birthplace of Western culture, femaleness was synonymous with embodiment, the lowest realm of being. As such, the female and her body was to be dominated and controlled or completely invalidated by the male aspiring to transcendence. The degradation of females, then, is linked to the identification of femaleness and bodily nature. Temporal nature becomes symbolized in the female body, while male transcendence is idealized, deified. The transcendent male is the prototype, and the embodied female, far from being analogous or complementary to the male, is his antagonistic antithesis. The male experience becomes the universal experience; the female becomes a "chimera without substance" (Ruether, 1974, p. 12).

This universal male norm has existed for millennia, relatively unchallenged, accepted as not only tradition, but truth. This "truth" according to Ruether (1983) is, in actuality, a "Big Lie." She exposes this lie, insisting

The Big Lie...makes women appear the offspring of males, and males the primary creators of babies. It makes matter the final devolution of the mind, and mind the original source of all being. It regards the body as an alien tomb of the soul, and the soul as growing stronger the more it weakens the body. It abstracts the human from the earth and God from the cosmos, and says that that which is abstracted is the original, and the first, and can exist alone and independent....The Big Lie tells us that we are strangers and sojourners on this planet, that our flesh, our blood, our instincts for survival are our enemies. Originally we lived as disincarnate orbs of light in the heavenly heights. We have fallen to earth and into this clay through accident or sin. We must spend our lives suppressing our hungers and thirsts and shunning our fellow beings so that we can dematerialize and fly away again to our stars. To become eternal and everlasting, we must flee the body, the woman, and the world. (p. 264)

Thus, God is perceived as pure spirit, uncorrupted by a physical body. Male is viewed as
"the image of the male transcendent ego or God" (Ruether, 1989, p. 152), while female is equated with lowly carnality and nature.

**The Older Sister**

The baby named Western Culture that was born in ancient Greece was a strapping son, the favored boychild, nourished and nurtured to the exclusion and detriment of his sibling, an older sister, Mother Earth. She was born long before history was recorded. In fact, the earliest humans believed she created the earth, gave birth to it from her own body. Archeological evidence indicates that the first humans, the Paleolithic peoples, knew Mother Earth intimately. The peoples of the Paleolithic era or Ice Age (circa 35,000-7,000 B. C.) were fully evolved humans. They were hunters and gatherers whose survival depended on knowing and working in cooperation with the earth and the cycles of nature. As such, their sense or intuition of the sacred was connected with the earth, Mother Earth, which for them was "the source of all life and ground of being " (Gadon, 1989, p. 23). While the myths or beliefs of the peoples of this era were not recorded on paper, they are visible and discernible via artwork found on the walls of caves; in numerous symbols from nature found in dwelling places, places of worship, and burial sites; and in statues or figurines representing their deity, all figures of females. The artwork conveys a clear message: the earth is the body of Mother, the creator, sustainer, and receiver of all life.

For the women and men of the Ice Age, the earth was seen as analogous to the natural processes of the female body and, especially, the "great womb out of which all life
emerged" (Gadon, 1989, p. 6). Humans as well as plants and animals were given life via earth's womb and, in death, were returned to that same womb. Red ochre, the color of the earth and the symbol of life giving blood, was used not only on cave walls and figurines to connote life, but also on the bodies of the dead to symbolize their return to the earth, the womb of the Great Mother. Both life and death were held in respect and awe; both equally important in the cycle of nature. Whether celebrating or invoking fecundity, or honoring the dead with funerary rites, the Paleolithic peoples found meaning and purpose by participating in and honoring the cycles of the body of Mother Earth.

The body of Mother Earth was imaged by the people of the Ice Age in small icons or statues representing the sacred female. The earliest and perhaps most widely known figurine is that of the goddess Willendorf, the Earth Mother. This popular icon is naked and very round; her breasts are large and pendulous; her pregnant abdomen protrudes; and her enormous hips and thighs match the ample roundness of her breasts and belly. Willendorf, which was usually painted with red ochre, was small enough to fit in one's hand. Other stone or bone carved female images or body parts such as breasts, abdomen, or vulva were worn as jewelry and adorned dwelling places. In general, the icons of this age emphasized the female body parts associated with reproduction, representing the source of all life (Eisler, 1987; Gadon, 1989; Giambutas, 1974).

Pantel (1992) notes that Paleolithic icons have traditionally been interpreted to be the objects of attempted magic by a superstitious peoples or cult objects used to promote fertility. Ruether (1983), Eisler (1987), and Gadon (1989) disagree, citing the work of
such well known and respected prehistorians as Giambutas, Malleert, Leroi-Gourhan, and Marrshack. Ruether considers these clay images of the human female to be a "primary way of experiencing mimetic cooperation with the awesome powers of life and renewal of life" (p. 48). As Gadon explains:

These figurines were not what is commonly understood as cult objects...Rather, they represent the fecundity of the earth itself in all its abundance, bounty, and creativity. Breasts, vulvae, and buttocks are powerful and universal symbols...potent packages that evoke both physical presence and human significance....[The Paleolithic] peoples whose survival depended upon the ability to adjust to seasonal changes would have noticed the natural changes in women's bodies and the rutting seasons of animals. The carved notches [in caves] also might have recorded the menstrual cycle and the lunar months of pregnancy. These marks were not only functional but probably also were part of the ritual process through which all were connected to the cosmic renewal of life. The world is born, not made; it is a birth process. The earliest rituals may have honored the menstrual cycle, the womb blood that nurtured the new life....The sacred female [icon]...indicated not only human reproduction but also the life force, an energy that emanated from the earth [italics added]. (p. 8)

Female figurines continued to occupy a central place throughout the transition from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic era (7000-3500 B. C.). In this agrarian age, that which had previously been a sense or intuition of the earth as the source of life became a more formal belief system that included the ritual practice of honoring the goddess.

Archeological evidence found at Neolithic sites in Old Europe, the Near East, and the Middle East indicates that worship of the goddess was central to all life (Murdock, 1990, Giambutas, 1977). Additionally, Neolithic art, female figurines, and other archeological finds serve to reinforce and "reconstruct the story, myth, and ritual that celebrated the power, sensuality, and sacredness of women's bodies" (Gadon, 1989, p. 23). Also, as Eisler (1987) instructs, goddess worship was not simply relegated to religion or the
spiritual for "religion was life, and life was religion" (p. 23).

It is pertinent to note that Paleolithic peoples and Neolithic societies demonstrated an interactional model of egalitarianism and partnership rather than hierarchical, authoritarian, or dominator styles (Eisler, 1987). There were no apparent distinctions according to class or sex. Neolithic societies are thought to have been matrilineal; that is, inheritance and descent were traced through the mother's family. Women played key roles in all areas of life; and, while women served as priestesses and heads of clans, there is little evidence that males were subordinate or in any way oppressed. In fact, artwork from both eras shows female and male symbols complementing each other. As Giambutas (1982) explains, Neolithic culture

was not polarized into male and female... Both principles were manifest side by side. The male divinity in the shape of a young man or male appears to affirm and strengthen the forces of the creative and active female. Neither is subordinate to the other; by complementing one another, their power is doubled. (p. 17)

Furthermore, Neolithic art shows a notable and conspicuous absence of warfare, weapons, conquests, slavery, or military activity. While the Neolithic societies were by no means utopian, they were guided by a norm of power with rather than power over; that is, power was equated with respect, responsibility, and love, not fear, coercion, or subjugation. This goddess culture was woman-centered, relatively peaceful, highly creative, and prosperous. As such, Gadon (1989) concludes there to be a direct relationship between goddess worship, holding the female body as sacred, and a peaceful coexistence between females and males.
The Great Change

With the invasions by nomadic bands came the "great change" (Eisler, 1987, p. 43)--a change of such magnitude that there is nothing comparable throughout all of history. The invasions coupled with natural catastrophes resulted in massive destruction of Neolithic societies. Archeological evidence indicates clear signs of distress beginning around 5000 B.C. when wandering nomads from the arid north and barren south began invading the Neolithic peoples of Old Europe, the Near East, and the Middle East. While these invasions took place in a multitude of places and times over the period of several millennia, all the nomads had one thing in common: a hierarchic and authoritarian social structure which was male dominated. These nomadic invaders were a warring people, ruled by powerful priests and male sky gods. For these nomads, life in their desert homeland had little or nothing to give and survival depended largely on the order of the social group. Nomadic faith was typically placed in a single male deity who was regarded as the divine creator of his people. The laws by which nomadic peoples lived had nothing to do with nature or the earth, but with a necessary and imposed law from a mythological ruling father deity (Campbell, 1968). Giambutas (1977) vividly delineates the distinction between Neolithic and nomadic ideology in her comparison of the Old Europeans and the Kurgans (a northern branch of nomads):

The Old European and Kurgan cultures were the antithesis of one another. . . . The Old European belief system focused on the agricultural cycle of birth, death, and regeneration, embodied in the feminine principle, a Mother Creatrix. The Kurgan ideology...exalted virile, heroic warrior gods of the shining and thunderous sky. Weapons are nonexistent in Old European imagery; whereas the dagger and battle-axe are dominant symbols of the Kurgans, who...glorified the lethal power of the blade. (p. 281)
The "lethal power of the blade" accomplished the subjugation or slaughter of countless peoples of the Neolithic culture as well the destruction and looting of their property. Eisler (1987) notes that the beginnings of slavery are closely linked to these nomadic invasions. It was not uncommon for nomads to massacre men and children, but save the women for use as concubines, wives, or slaves. Thus, the very women whose bodies were once honored as the sacred source of life were now relegated to the status of a mere male possession. It is of this troubled and destructive period that Engels (cited by Eisler) remarks, "the world historical defeat of the female sex [occurred]" (p. 46). Indeed, as the "living war machine, the armed man on a horse" (Eisler, p. 51) infiltrated and conquered the Neolithic peoples, his ideologies and way of life were imposed on a formerly peaceful, prosperous, and female-centered culture.

Gadon (1989) recounts that the new order instigated far-reaching social changes in the relations of women and men with each other, the gods, and nature; and "everywhere the sky gods took over, life became less free, less creative, less joyful" (p. 110). Indeed the nomadic invasions and conquests and the resulting forced assimilation of dominator ideologies resulted in a period of impoverishment and regression that in effect stagnated cultural evolution for nearly two thousand years. The social structures that ultimately evolved were based on a system of male dominance. By the time the civilizations of Sumer and Babylonia and the early Greek city-states were formed, male dominance and the institution of patriarchy was well established. Lerner (1986) contends that patriarchy is a historic creation that began its formation around 3000 B.C., and was well established by
the time the Hebrew bible was written.

The nomads who invaded Greece brought with them a thunderbolt deity, the sky-god, Zeus. In the new societal order, Zeus was named the father and ruler of all gods and goddesses. The power of the goddesses of the past was co-opted, usurped, and obliterated. The dethroned goddesses were "slain, tamed, or made defenders of patriarchy" (Christ, 1987, p. 172) and proponents of war; they became mothers, daughters, and wives, to the warrior gods. The goddess became subordinated to the gods, no longer viewed as the sacred source of life but a plaything, or more often, a nuisance to her masculine counterpart. In other words, the prehistoric Great Mother was reinterpreted to serve patriarchal interests.

Harrison (cited by Christ, 1987) notes that "with the coming of patriarchal conditions, women goddesses are sequestered to a servile domesticity" (p. 173). While this understanding holds truth, it is far too pretty, for the process seems more akin to the violent and repeated rape of an animal held in captivity. Indeed, Eisler (1987) maintains that brutal warfare was the essential ingredient in replacing the ideology of the goddess with nomadic dominator ideals. To move from the sacred and exalted position that honored the female body to one of "servile domesticity" requires repeated and consistent force, fueled and maintained by what can only be regarded as absolute madness. What happened to the goddesses in Greek mythology has ever since happened to females. Those who were once vibrant, full of life, indeed the source of life, have been all but destroyed by a process—a madness—that has, for thousands of years, been considered "normal."
Reclaiming the Sacredness of the Female Body

Regarding the patriarchal norm, Lerner (1986) instructs, "The lifelong dependency of women on fathers and husbands became so firmly established in law and custom as to be considered natural and God-given" (p. 141). In light of the accepted norm, Campbell (1968) warns that the profession of views that are not one's own and the living of life according to those views--no matter what the resultant sense of social participation--"eventuates inevitability in self-loss and falsification" (p. 86). As "spiritual daughters of the patriarchy" (Murdock, 1990, p. 111), females have indeed falsified and lost themselves. For with the devaluation of the goddess and her eventual disappearance altogether, and the imposition of a male norm, females, as a whole, lost touch with their bodies, its mysterious powers, its deep wisdom. With the denigration of the goddess came the denial of the sanctity of the female body, and, therefore, the denial of the very essence, life force, spirituality of the female. Unable to relate to her body--her own essence or life force--a female's sense of connection or relatedness with the life force of others, nature, and the divine is immeasurably diminished. For females, then, spirituality, far from solely occupying the realm of the soul, is experienced by, centered in, and expressed through her body and her body's relationship to others, nature, the divine, and, most importantly, self.

De Castillejo (1973) contends that for females, "unrelatedness is the touchstone of abomination" (p. 82). In fact, Fox (1983) names unrelatedness or separation as sin. That is, "the sin behind all sin is dualism: separation from self, separation the divine, separation of me from you, separation of the sacred from nature" (p. 54). Relatedness or
connection according to May (1982) is a vital ingredient of spirituality. He sees spirituality as a vital energy that expresses itself in a process of connecting. De Castillejo would agree, adding that "for a woman, spirituality implies relationship at its very essence" (p. 87). In light of this, separation of the female from her body is indeed an abomination, for without relatedness to that which is her essence, her life force, a female's relatedness herself and to the essence of all creation is hampered, experienced only to the distance her tethered and chained being can reach.

For females, then, spirituality involves embodiment and self-in-relation. That is, the primary life force or essence of a female is experienced in and expressed through her body and its functions, and finds fulfillment in connectedness with others. Recognizing her body as sacred, does not preclude the spirituality or life force of a female's soul. For dividing female body against soul creates yet another dualism or separation that prevents wholeness and is, in fact, contrary to the need of her body to be connected. Indeed, de Castillejo (1973) understands the female's soul to be embedded in and permeate her very body. In this sense the soul, far from being a separate entity that strives towards transcendence, autonomy, and perfection, instead seeks to be in relationship. As Hillman (1986) explains, the soul needs to be in relationship for it resists description and can never be grasped "by itself apart from other things, perhaps because it is like a reflection in a flowing mirror, or like the moon which mediates only borrowed light" (p. 32). Hamilton (1992) understands that borrowed light to be the body: "[T]he reality of the life of my body gives conscious birth to the reality of the life of my soul" (p. 150).
Spirituality vivifies and connects female body and soul. Jones (1995) insists the body is "the natural country of the soul, more wild and open than a garden; a realization and ground of the soul" (p. 2). Without the body, the soul is lifeless. It is in this sense that the female's connection with her body must be restored, for as Murdock (1990) enjoins, unless the female body is reclaimed and honored, her soul, as well as the soul of our culture, cannot evolve.

As did the female-centered Paleolithic and Neolithic peoples, Ruether (1983) insists that that which promotes the full humanity, thus full expression of body and soul spirituality, of females is "of the Holy" (p. 19), and reflective of true relationship to all things. It is the reclaiming of the sacredness and thus spirituality of the her body that will enable the female to realize her fullest and truest relationship to self and all of creation.
SYLVIA, 2½
Blessed Art Thou O Lord our God, King of the Universe,
I have not made me a woman.
(daily prayer of Orthodox Jewish males)
Weeds and Seeds

*Blessed Art Thou O Lord our God,*
*King of the Universe,*
*who has not made me a woman.*
*(daily prayer of Orthodox Jewish males)*

*Archie Bunker and his co-worker Irene:*
*A: We all know that men are worth more than women.*
*I: Archie, have you been reading Playboy?*
*A: No, the bible!*

*Three women conversing:*
#1: *By saying the sex was evil, [they are saying that] women—the embodiment of sexuality—were, in fact responsible for the downfall of mankind in the Garden of Eden.*
#2: *Yes, and we’ve been second class citizens ever since.*
#3: *Why can’t we be vicars or priests or popes?*
#1: *Because we’ve been too deafened by the din of our bodies to hear God’s word.*
*(from the movie Sirens)*

*I do not believe that any man ever saw or talked with God, I do not believe that God inspired the Mosaic code, or told the historians what they say he did about woman, for all the religions on the face of the earth degrade her...Whatever the Bible may be made to do in Hebrew or Greek, in plain English it does not exalt and dignify woman.*
*Elizabeth Cady Stanton*

*At the very dawn of religion*
*God was a woman.*
*Do you remember?*
*Merlin Stone*

*Mother, you are the Womb of the Universe, the Great Round.*
*Let us experience that although we think we are separate, we are one.*
*Help us to reverence in every body*
*in every woman body*
*in every woman body womb*
*your image.*
*Frances Rothluebber*
O femina forma,
quam gloriosa es!
(found in a text from the Middle Ages)
CHAPTER 2

WHO TOLD YOU THAT YOU WERE NAKED?

The Bible teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world, that she precipitated the fall of the race, that she was arraigned before the judgment seat of Heaven, tried, condemned and sentenced. Marriage for her was to be a condition of bondage, maternity a period of suffering and anguish, and in silence and subjugation, she was to play the role of a dependent on man's bounty for all her material wants, and for all the information she might desire on the vital questions of the hour, she was commanded to ask her husband at home. Here is the Bible position of woman briefly summed up....My own opinion is that the [biblical] story was manipulated by some Jew, in an endeavor to give "heavenly authority" for requiring a woman to obey the man she married. (p. 7)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's scathing, irreverent, and admittedly unscholarly sentiments were considered extremely controversial if not heretical in the late 19th century. They were not too far off the mark, however, for since her writing of *The Woman's Bible* in 1895, much scholarly work and scientific study has confirmed and substantiated Stanton's passionate convictions. Whereas the birth of Western culture gave rise to the dualistic thinking that separated female from male and body from soul, the bible, beginning with the myths in Genesis, rationalized, justified, codified, and legitimized those dualisms. For more than 2000 years, Genesis has informed women and men alike that male ownership and control of "submissively obedient" (Stone, 1976, p. 281) women is to be regarded as the divine and natural state of humanity. As Sjoo and Mor (1991) contend, the dualisms enshrined in Genesis are at the base of all Western culture's social, political, and economic institutions. As the fiery prophetess Stanton
The canon and civil law; church and state; priests and legislators; all political parties and religious denominations have alike taught that woman was made after man, of man, and for man, an inferior being, subject to man. Creeds, codes, Scriptures and statutes, are all based on this idea. The fashions, forms, ceremonies and customs of society, church ordinances and discipline all grow out of this idea. (p. 7)

Stanton then warns all women:

These familiar [biblical] texts are quoted by clergymen in their pulpits, by statesmen in the halls of legislation, by lawyers in the courts, and are echoed by the press of all civilized nations, and accepted by woman herself as "The Word of God"....and so long as a woman accepts the position they assign her, her emancipation is impossible. (p. 8)

It is the purpose of this chapter to assist woman towards emancipation and, therefore, wholeness, by identifying and understanding the messages given about her body in the Old Testament that have been largely accepted as universal truth. Before doing so, however, two issues must be addressed. The first concerns the bible as a whole.

While this chapter necessarily employs a critical exegesis of the Old Testament, it is not meant to negate or appropriate the importance or sacredness of the text as a whole.

Returning to Stanton, we are advised:

There are some general principles in the holy books...that teach love, charity, liberty, justice, and equality for all the human family, there are many grand and beautiful passages, the golden rule has been echoed and re-echoed around the world. There are lofty examples of good and true men and women, all worthy our acceptance and imitation whose lustre cannot be dimmed by the false sentiments and vicious characters bound up in the same volume. The Bible cannot be accepted or rejected as a whole, its teachings are varied and its lessons differ widely from each other. (p. 12)

The second issue involves an understanding of some underlying dynamics concerning cultural learning and norms. Miles (1989) points out that "reality" is never grasped directly; rather it understood through representation of culturally construed
reality. This representation is related to and dependent on political, social, and economic institutions. Miles explains that the key factor in representation is power; specifically, who has the power in a given society and by what system of power certain cultural representations are validated and legitimized while others are quashed or negated. Heidegger (cited by Miles) indicates the power within Western culture belongs to the male, "for it is the male who speaks, who represents mankind. The woman is only represented; she is (as always) already spoken for" (p. 8). As Miles explains, the function of representation

is to stabilize assumptions and expectations relating to the objects or persons represented....Consistent, cumulative, and continuous representations of an object cause that object to 'disappear' in its complex and perhaps contradictory "reality," subsumed in the "tidy, well-ordered totality" of standardized representation....This fact influenced the social and sexual arrangements that shaped women's everyday lives, their self-understanding and self-images, and their development of some talents and skills at the expense of others. (p. 11)

It is in light of this understanding of representation that we can begin our exegetical exploration of the Old Testament, focusing primarily on the myths of creation and of Eve and Adam. Consistent with Mile's understanding of representation and as Ruether (1974) explains it, the Old Testament contains speech about women by males from a society dominated by males. The story of Eve and Adam conditions --represents-- the definition of woman, explicitly citing her "carnality," her body and its functions, as the basis for all sin and therefore, in need of subjugation (Ruether).

As Stone (1976) tells it, Genesis is "most certainly a tale with a point of view, and with a most biased proclamation" (p. 198). She contends that the adoration of the goddess appears to be one of the most influential factors in the development of Hebrew
attitudes addressed and expressed in the myths of Genesis. The Old Testament is clear
about the Hebrew antagonism toward the goddess religions. In fact, Stone notes, the myth
of Eve and Adam shows evidence of having been written in scholarly circles and may
have been intentionally produced and added to the creation myth as a specific assault on
the goddess religion. While the Eve and Adam story has similarities, as we shall see, to
other "pagan" myths of the time, the subjugation of women and the female body is
unprecedented in its harshness, becomes subjected to a single male deity, and is
legitimized against in the laws of the Hebrew peoples.

In the Beginning

The creation myth in Genesis, while similar in some ways, is significantly
different from other tales of creation at the time. All creation myths of the era were
attempts to explain what happened "in the beginning," as well as to understand birth,
strife, aging, and death; they were also statements about social order as it is or should be
(Bird, 1974). These myths, each thousands of years old, had many common themes, most
notably a female as the creator of all life. In Sumerian ideology, the goddess Nammu was
"the mother who gave birth to the heaven and earth" (Stone, 1976, p. 219). For the
Egyptians, Isis was the goddess "from whom all beginning arose" (Stone, p. 219). The
Babylonians praised the goddesses Mami and Aruru, who created female and male in the
same instant. Near Eastern creation myths told how the Great Mother formed the first
human beings from the dust of the earth and her own saliva, and then breathed life into
them. Even the nomadic influenced patriarchal religions of the time understood creation
to be the product of the sexual union of earth mothers and sky fathers or the result of the
spilling a male god's seed (semen). But in Genesis, it is a celibate male/father god who creates all of life out of nothing—Yahweh was the only male god in history who "never made love to a female or to the earth" (Sjoo & Mor, 1991, p. 270).

While the creation account of the Old Testament draws heavily from other myths of the times using similar themes, developments, and language, its message differs radically from other accounts with the emergence of a male creator god. Bird (1974) explains that the biblical account of creation differs from its prototypes because "the context of its employment is different" (p. 72). Bird expounds:

The Genesis accounts are no longer myth, but history—or a prologue to history. Creation has become the first of a series of events that extend on down to the writer's own day...Creation stands always and only at the beginning—remote, complete, unrepeatable, the first of God's works. The God who performed that work continues to labor and act, but in new ways. History is the drama of the interaction of God and the world that he created...The creation stories [in Genesis] tell of man's place in that created world of nature and of his-her essential character. (p. 72)

The book of Genesis not only reverses creation as understood since the earliest institutions as a sacred process of procreation, gestation, and birth, it also seeks to destroy these myths and their connection with any goddess. As Gadon (1989) reinterprets:

The male god took over all creation.  
He created heaven and earth out of nothing,  
not out of his own body.  
He created by proclamation, not gestation.  
He created once and for all time, not through a dynamic process,  
the ongoing cycle of birth, death, and regeneration.  
He created all living creatures.  
He created man first, in his own image,  
ordering him to fill the earth and subdue it.  
Man was to name all the living creatures,  
and to have his way with them.  
He created woman out of man's rib  
so that man would not be lonely. (p. 187)
Bolstered by a single male god who created man first, then woman, the stage is set for the lesson of Eve and Adam in the garden. It is pertinent to note that archeological evidence indicates the story of the garden of Eden is clearly based on ancient myths or "folk memories" (Eisler, 1987, p. 63). The garden is an allegorical description of the Neolithic culture which cultivated the soil, thus creating the first gardens. The garden of Eden is also derived from the legends of Mesopotamia during a time of peace and plenty when the goddess reigned and females and males lived in an idyllic garden. The serpent in goddess cultures was primarily regarded as a female consort of the goddess. It was linked to wisdom and prophetic counsel, and was also seen as a symbol of goddess's powers of fertility and regeneration (Gadon, 1989). The trees of the garden are often connected with the Greek goddess Hera. A serpent is coiled around Hera's golden apple tree which was given her by the Goddess Gaia (Earth). The trees of the garden are also found in Egyptian mythology which revered the Goddess Hathor as not only the Serpent Lady, but also the Lady of the Sycamore. The Sycamore tree was considered sacred and was known as the Living Body of Hathor on Earth. To eat of its fruit was to partake of the flesh and bodily fluids of Hathor (Stone, 1976). The fruit of Hathor's tree was also believed to be given by her to the dead as the food of eternity and immortality.

According to Stone (1976) the events of the tale of Eve and Adam "betray the political intentions of those who first invented the myth" (p. 218). Eisler (1987) adds that the garden of Eden and fall from Paradise myths are drawn in part from actual historical events, for the story reflects the "cataclysmic cultural change" (p. 64) brought about centuries earlier by the nomadic invasions (discussed in chapter one) and the subsequent
imposition of male dominance. Thus, the garden of the Goddess became the garden of Eden; the snake of the goddess became a symbol of corruption and evil, "the most cunning of all the animals that the Lord God had made (Genesis 3: 1, NAB); and the fruit of the sacred trees of the goddess was a fruit forbidden to Eve and Adam. The absence of the goddess in the myths of Genesis is the "single most important statement about the kind of social order that the men who over many centuries wrote and rewrote this religious document strove to uphold" (Eisler, p. 94). The absence of the goddess from Genesis myths also symbolically represented the lack of a divine power to revere and protect females. Furthermore, as we shall see in chapters four and six, the absence of the goddess represents a fundamental loss of the feminine principle within the individual as well as the culture.

The myths in Genesis, explains Stone (1976), are used to warrant and justify male dominance, informing that male ownership and control was the natural order of things as designed by the creator. Because this new creation myth was a complete reversal of other long held beliefs, and in order to quash the goddess and other pagan religions, the position and reign of Yahweh as the celibate, sole, and male deity needed to be reinforced. Also, because the Hebrews had been accustomed to worshipping the goddesses and gods of their Egyptian and Babylonian captors, the writers of the myth needed to de-emphasize the pagan religions by proclaiming a radically different god, one that had no similarities with other gods. Thus, that which was the means of creating life, that is procreation, gestation, and birth, became sinful and shameful, detracting from Yahweh. As Singer (1976) understands it, the Hebrew scribes found it absolutely
necessary to eliminate anything that undermined the father-god, the one-god who was the deity of Hebrews:

It is easy enough to understand why the Hebrews, having returned to the Land of Israel after many wanderings throughout the Egyptian and Syrian deserts and the wilderness of Sinai, should insist upon the supremacy their own tribal deity, the male god Yahweh. Battles between nations were imagined as a conflict between tribal gods, and each side called upon its deity to show superior power by allowing the people who served him or her to be victorious in the fight. Since earth-mother-fertility-goddesses were being worshipped in the agricultural societies into which the Hebrew nomads came, it became necessary that the patriarchal principle challenge the matriarchal authority. As long as Yahweh remained a tribal god of a particularistic people, there was not very much difference in the basic nature of the struggles that ensued in the land of Israel from those that occurred when the Dorian [nomads] brought Zeus to challenge the hegemony of the older goddesses. (p. 83)

Furthermore, as Miles (1989) explains, because relationships between females and males are "perennially one of the most volatile and intimate aspects of communal life" (p. 85), strong social conditioning in the management of these relationships is crucial for maintaining a workable society. In light of the Hebrew community's release from captivity in Egypt and its struggle to survive independently and without yet having a homeland, the gender social conditioning can be understood as crucial to the life of the community. While this reasoning aids in understanding the subjugation of women, it need not be condoned, nor does it explain the extreme degree and fervor (then and now) with which females and their bodies were denigrated.

The Flesh is Sinful, Sinful is She

The story of Eve and Adam plays a pivotal role in training the Hebrews to accept workable social arrangements. This tale paints a clear picture of the role of woman, her subjugation occasioned by and enforced through her body. Enter Eve. Eve is
"Everywoman" and as such, the scapegoat for all humanity, "indicted as the cause of evil and the corrupter of men and angels" (Ruether, 1974, p. 97). A 16th century treatise on the temperament of females (cited by Sjoo & Mor, 1991) sums up clearly and succinctly the dynamic in Eden and the role of Eve, the prototypical woman:

Woman is earthbound....Through her you grow roots in the dark, the hidden, in earth and magic....The flesh is sinful, sinful is she...Deepest inside man is spirit, and spirit wants to climb, climb into freer spheres....Because of this the spirit fights the body, the flesh, and is ashamed when he lets himself be led astray. (p. 279)

As Ambrose in the fourth century sees it, Eve and Adam enjoyed perfect happiness in the beautiful and tranquil garden provided them by God. Although they were naked, they were not aware of it because they were "clothed in the garment of virtue" (cited by Miles, 1989, p. 90). According to Ambrose, Eve was "the first to be deceived and was responsible for deceiving man... she ought not to have made her husband a partaker of the evil of which she was conscious...She sinned therefore with forethought" (cited by Lerner, 1993, p. 141). After partaking of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Eve was the first to recognize her nakedness and is condemned, therefore, to bear the responsibility and the guilt for the downfall of all humanity.

Eve is associated with the flesh, specifically, nakedness. In general, nakedness is associated with vulnerability, powerlessness, shame, and passivity--all supposed feminine traits. Female nakedness, however, as witnessed in Eve represents "sin, sexual lust, and dangerous evil" (Miles, 1989, p. 81). In the myths of the time of the Hebrews, to know good and evil refers to sexuality or sexual maturity. For Eve to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil meant she became aware of her body and its
sensuality and sexuality. In the goddess religions this would have been joyfully
condoned, a wondrous and sacred realization. The Hebrews, however, were taught
differently:

[Eve] took some of the fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who
was with her; and he ate it. Then the eyes both of them were opened, and they
realized they were naked; so they sowed figleaves together and made loincloths for
themselves When they heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden,
the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the
garden. The Lord God then called to the man and asked him, "Where are you?" He
answered, "I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid
myself." Then the Lord God asked: "Who told you that you were naked" You have
eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!" The man replied, "
The woman whom you put here with me--she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I
ate it." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?"
(Genesis 3:6b-13, NAB)

Thus, by eating the fruit first, Eve--woman possessed bodily and sexual consciousness
before Adam--man. Eve then "tempted" Adam to partake of the forbidden fruit, or in
other words, to join her "sinfully in sexual pleasures" (Stone, 1976, p. 221). As
Augustine interprets the situation, "Casting their eyes on their bodies, they felt a
movement of concupiscence that they had not known" (cited by Miles, 1989, p. 95). The
flesh is sinful, sinful is she...

Punishment for Everywoman

Having eaten the fruit of the body of the goddess--the fruit of sexuality--and
subsequently tempting Adam to do so was considered a betrayal by Eve of Yahweh. The
body of woman was the antithesis of and impeded relationship with Yahweh. It was the
wiles of the body of woman which forced man out of his blissful, utopian life of the spirit
in Eden and thrust him into the physical reality of the world. For causing this fall from
paradise, Eve's punishment was swift and decisive:

To the woman God said, "I will intensify the pangs of your childbearing; in pain shall you bring forth children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall be your master. (Genesis 3:16, NAB)

The Levites, the priests and prophets of the Hebrew peoples, codified this command of Yahweh. As Bird (1974) explains, the main purpose of the law was to assure the "integrity, stability, and economic viability of the family as the basic unit of society" (p. 51). The interests of the family, however, were identified with those of the male head whose rights and duties were connected to their property. The Levite laws insisted that all women be publicly designated as the property of some man, typically her father or husband. As her husband's property, a wife's primary contribution to him was her sexuality, "both in respect to its pleasure and its fruit" (Bird, p. 51). Ostensibly, in order to control female sexuality, rights of ownership were designated in accordance with virginity or marital status. As Stone (1976) tells us, the Levite priests wrote with open and scornful contempt of any woman who was neither virgin nor married....It was surely apparent to the Levite teachers that if a religion existed along-side their own, a [goddess] religion in which women owned their own property, were endowed with legal identity and were free to relate sexually with various men, it would be difficult to for the Hebrew men to convince their women that they must accept the position of being the husband's property...Hebrew women had to be taught that [this behavior] would bring disaster, wrath and shame from the almighty--while it was simultaneously acceptable for their husbands to have sexual relationships with two, three, or fifty women. Thus, premarital virginity and marital fidelity were proclaimed by Levite law as divinely essential for all Hebrew women. (p. 181)

Prostitutes--those who were not virgins or wives--while labeled harlots and whores, were tolerated as a licit outlet for male sexual energies (Bird). For the man who had a sexual relationship with an unmarried girl, it was his duty to marry her. If he was unable or
unwilling to marry the "spoiled" girl, she was put to death. Similarly, a wife found guilty of adultery was put to death. Her crime: dishonor and disloyalty not only to her husband but to her father. A husband's punishment for adultery consisted of a penitential offering of goods, services, or riches to the local priest. In this light, it is pertinent to note that Hebrew males were the acknowledged "sons of God," while females were referred to as "daughters of men."

The Hebrew laws were severe not only regarding sexual transgressions but in their insistence on the exclusive and undefiled worship of Yahweh (Bird, 1974). These two features are obviously interrelated and both had significant ramifications for women. The central idea of the lawmakers posed throughout the books of Leviticus is the repeated injunction, "You shall be holy, because I the Lord, am holy." Impurity and uncleanliness were considered the antithesis of holiness. Menstruation and childbirth were chief among the factors that caused uncleanliness.

The blood of menstruation and childbirth had, in the earliest religions, been considered sacred and the source of all life. In this sense, female blood was the essence of the creative power of the Great Mother. During menstruation, ancient women withdrew from the activities of daily life to join other menstruating women, fasting, and praying, honoring the Mother's body and cycles as well as their own (Sjoo & Mor, 1991). That which had once been honored as sacred and powerful became, according to Hebrew mores and law, unclean if not filthy, as well as dangerous and evil. Menstruating Hebrew women were banished to huts so as not to contaminate the males; women in labor were secluded, considered to be polluted as well as deserving of their pain; and after childbirth,
mothers were required to undergo "purification" before they could return to their husbands and society. It is pertinent to note that after the birth of a daughter, the purification ritual required fourteen days, while for a son it took only seven.

While bleeding women were considered to be contaminated and cursed, relationship with Yahweh was sealed in blood—male blood, that is, via circumcision. As Singer (1976) explains, it was with Abraham that the covenant was made "to bind the people of Israel to the Father God through the sign of circumcision, the phallic identification of Yahweh's people" (p. 79). Yahweh's covenant was sealed with the "lifeblood" (Sjoo & Mor, 1991, p. 184) of Abraham, and the covenant was kept by each male through circumcision. While circumcision has been long thought to be performed for health purposes, Stone (1976) cites evidence that it may also have been done to emphasize "the 'maleness' of the male-worshipping Hebrews" (p. 150) differentiating it from the "femaleness" of the goddess. In any regard, the message is clear: the once sacred and life-giving female blood is taboo and only males can truly bond to Yahweh via the blood of their foreskin.

Redeeming Eve

As discussed earlier, while the myths in Genesis demonstrated an already established shift from the goddess cultures to patriarchy, they radically depart from all other myths of the time. As Campbell (1968) explains, the Genesis myths represent God as a vestal male "up there," "not the substance, but the maker of the universe, from which he is distinct" (p. 20). That which had once been regarded as evidence of the divine in nature, the female body, was now interpreted as evil, of the devil. The previously life-
affirming images of the garden, serpent, tree of life and knowledge, and the Great Mother or "world parents" (Baring and Cashford, 1991, p. 488) were, in Genesis, rendered agents of sin, death (mortality), and sorrow occasioned by Eve, Everywoman.

The Old Testament accounts of creation and of Eve and Adam are stories of separation of female from male, body from soul. Everywoman was made to be submissive to man because she was aware of her body; and that submission, in large part, dealt with controlling and denigrating Everywoman's body and its functions. The female body which had once been considered sacred was now deemed sinful, filthy, shameful, and cursed. That body which once was honored as the source of all life was now blamed as having introduced death to humankind. That which once connected females to the divine, community, earth, and self was considered a dangerous evil in need of being subdued. The once blessed and mysterious gift of Everywoman's body to the community was now rendered the property of man.

Eventually, Genesis became the creation story for all of Western culture (Gadon, 1989; Baring & Cashford, 1991). The stories of Genesis are consciously and unconsciously the basis for our social, political, economic, and religious interpretations and motivations. It's images are buried deep in our beings, relatively unchallenged, accepted as the female and male way of being. In light of the accepted norm, let us return to Miles (1989) and her understanding of representation. She challenges:

People who do not represent themselves live under conditions in which their subjective lives--their feelings, concerns, and struggles--are marginalized from public interest; they live in constant danger of [further] misrepresentation. If women have suffered the effects of a misogyny deeply embedded in the representational practices of the Christian West, can we envision the possibility of more equitable images of women?... [A]dequate representation of women must be self-
I have argued that female bodies in the Christian West, have not represented women's subjectivity or sexually, but have, rather, been seen as a blank page on which multiple social meanings could be projected... Women have not enjoyed the conditions necessary for formulating the self-representation that could have informed collective views of women. (p. 169)

There have been many who have challenged the message of Genesis, who have sought to promote self-representation. A majority of these challenges have gone unheeded, if not destroyed--some in the form of written works were never allowed to be published or more likely, were demolished; others were silenced with the literal loss of life. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was one who challenged female representation. As a mystic, Hildegard's visions fused female and male, body and soul, and the rational and mystical (Lerner, 1993). While she understood the relationship between Eve and Adam to be somewhat more benevolent than described above, Hildegard finds Eve to be "victimized outright" by the wiles of Satan and "more sinned against than sinning" (cited by Miles, 1989, p. 99). She emphasizes Eve's vulnerability and suffering, not her provocation of sin. Hildegard also envisions Eve as being formed not out of Adam's rib, but from a shell containing stars, "the precious pearls of humanity" (Lerner, p. 61).

In an attempt to resurrect some of these precious pearls, Gerda Lerner (1993) tells of others whose challenges concerning female representation have not only survived, but created quite a commotion in their time. In her work Mirror of the Sinful Soul (1531), Marguerite d'Angouleme asks, "But Lord, if your are my Father, may I not think that I am your mother? To engender you by whom I am created: this is a mystery I cannot comprehend" (p. 149). Jane Anger's pamphlet Protection for Women (1589) addresses the creation myth in Genesis insisting, "Our bodies are fruitful, whereby the world increaseth, and our care wonderful, by which man is preserved. From woman springs
man's salvation. A woman was the first that believed" (p. 151). In 1615, twenty year old Rachel Speght refuted interpretations of "the fall" by Augustine and the church fathers, proclaiming the sacredness of the female body and all its parts. Speght states the female was created to be a "collateral companion for man to glorify God, in using her body and all the parts, powers and faculties thereof as instruments for [God's] honour" (p.152). In 1611, poet Aemilia Lanyer wrote, "Our Mother Eve, who tasted of the Tree, giving to Adam what she held most dear, was simply good and had no power to see, the aftercoming harm....[For] God's holy word ought all his actions frame, for he was Lord and King of all the earth, before poor Eve had either life or breath" (p. 154).

Sarah Grimke (1792-1873) was the first American to write a major feminist work. In *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes* Grimke moved far beyond her predecessors critiquing the linguistic and literal interpretations of Genesis. She (cited by Lerner, 1993) asserted that these interpretations were used by males to exercise dominion over females:

I ask no favors for my sex. All I ask our brethren is, that they will take their feet off our necks and permit us to stand upright on that ground which God designed us to occupy....All [biblical] history attests that man has subjected woman to his will, used her as a means to promote his selfish gratification, to minister to his sensual pleasures, to be instrumental in promoting his comfort; but never has he desired to elevate her to that rank she was created to fill. He has done all he could to debase and enslave her...and now he looks triumphantly on the ruin he has wrought, and says, the being thus deeply injured is his inferior. (p. 162)

It is here we return to Elizabeth Cady Stanton; her admonitions and challenges are, like many others throughout history, attempts to bring awareness, self-representation, and emancipation to females. Listen to the bible according to Stanton:

Women have been taught by their religious guardians that the Bible, unlike all other books, was written under the special inspiration of the Great Ruling Intelligence of the Universe. ..They [women] cling to it with an unreasoning tenacity, like a savage
to his fetich...they blindly worship [the Bible] as the Word of God....It does not occur to them that men learned in the languages have revised the book many times, but made no change in woman's position. Though familiar with "the designs of God," trained in Biblical research and higher criticism, interpreters of signs and symbols and Egyptian hieroglyphics, learned astronomers and astrologers, yet they cannot twist out of the Old or New Testaments a message of justice, liberty or equality from God to...women! (p. 213)

Stanton goes on to discuss Eve and Adam:

The real difficulty in woman's case is that the whole foundation of the Christian religion rests on temptation and man's fall....They [learned men ] have never yet tried to mitigate the sentence pronounced on [woman] by changing one count in the indictment served on her in Paradise....Come, come, my conservative [female] friend, wipe the dew off your spectacles, and see that the world is moving. Whatever your views may be as to the importance of the proposed work, your political and social degradation are but an outgrowth of your status in the Bible....The first step in the elevation of women to her true position, as an equal factor in human progress, is the cultivation of the religious sentiment in regard to her dignity and equality, the recognition by the rising generation of an ideal Heavenly Mother, to whom their prayers should be addressed, as well as to a Father.... (p. 10, 19)

The Stanton exegesis continues:

The conduct of Eve from the beginning to the end is so superior to that of Adam. The command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of Knowledge was given to the man alone before woman was formed, Genesis ii, 17. Therefore the injunction was not brought to Eve with the impressive solemnity of a Divine Voice but whispered to her by her husband and equal. It was a seraphim...who talked with Eve...She quotes the command not to eat the fruit to which the serpent replies "Dying ye shall not die," v. 4, literal translation....Then the woman fearless of death if she can gain wisdom takes of the fruit; and all this time Adam standing beside her interposes no word of objection...he is silent in this crisis of their fate. Having had the command from God himself he interposes no word of warning or remonstrates, but takes the fruit from the hand of his wife without a protest...And then the Jehovah God appears to demand why his command has been disobeyed Adam endeavors to shield himself behind the gentle being he had declared to be so dear. "The woman thou gavest to be with me, she gave me and I did eat," he whines...[W]e are amazed that upon such a story men have built up a theory of their superiority!....[The first woman's name was] Life for she was the mother of all living' [v. 20, literal translation]....It is a pity that all versions of the Bible do not give this word instead of the Hebrew Eve. She was Life, the eternal mother, the first representative of the more valuable and important half of the human race. (p. 26)
Stanton, as well as countless others throughout history, would enthusiastically sanction the words of modern day woman Mary Hamilton (1992):

Eve loves, is love...She lives a morality of the body that honors the interconnectedness of all forms of life. Through her eyes and her unconditional love my self-image is transformed from self-loathing to self-acceptance and eventually to self-love...."I am Eve," she says to me in mediation, "I am beautiful, for my body is created by divine energy. The sacred snake coils around by body and penetrates my being with wisdom. I know how to say "Yes" to life. (p. 150)
Weeds and Seeds

Instead of being raised and educated by women who told them the truth about their bodies, the girls were taken by the priests from their villages and put in schools where they were taught to keep their breasts bound, to hide their arms and legs, to never look a brother openly in the eye but to look down at the ground as if ashamed of something. Instead of learning that once a month their bodies would become sacred, they were taught they would become filthy. Instead of going to the waiting house to meditate, pray, and celebrate the fullness of the moon and their own bodies, they were taught they were sick, and must bandage themselves and act as if they were sick. They were taught the waves and surgings of their bodies were sinful and must never be indulged or enjoyed.

By the time the girls were allowed home to their villages, their minds were so poisoned, their spirits so damaged, their souls so contaminated they were not eligible for candidacy in the Society of Women.

The boys were taken away, too, and taught that women were filthy, sinful creatures who would tempt a man away from his true path. They were taught women had no opinion that counted, no mind to be honoured, no purpose other that to serve men.

Ann Cameron
Daughters of Copper Woman

A little girl once wrote:
Dear God,
are boys really better than girls?
I know you are one,
but try to be fair.
(Source unknown)

I've decided to wear my ovaries on my sleeve
raise my poems on my milk
and count my days by the flow of my menses
Ntozake Shange

Vagina...
the colors of raspberries and blueberries
or scuppernongs and muscadines—and of that
strong, silvery, sweetness, with, as well
a sharp flavor of salt
and thru that vagina
children.
Alice Walker
My Mother's Garden
We should have imagined life as created in the birth pain of God the Mother, then we would understand that—we would know that—our life’s rhythm beats from Her great heart torn with agony of love and birth...Then we should understand why we Her children have inherited pain and we would feel that death meant a reunion with her, a passing back into her substance...the blood of Her blood again...Peace of her peace.

Eugene O'Neill
Strange Interlude
There is, however, another "F" word, the real "F" word. Why would men even dream, deliberate, and act with such necessity, for centuries, to oppress and denigrate females? Why have female demands
CHAPTER 3

THE "F" WORD

For decades, the "f" word was a nasty little four letter word that was, at best, considered vulgar. It was uttered as an exclamation mark to anger, causing listeners to recoil in disgust. In the mid 1960's the four letter "f" word was replaced by an even more obnoxious and repulsive word, "feminism." Douglas (1994) captures vividly the popular (patriarchal) understanding of feminists:

...we all know what feminists are....fanatics, "braless bubble-heads," Amazons, "the angries," a "band of wild lesbians"....They are shrill, overly aggressive, man-hating, ball-busting, selfish, hairy, extremist, deliberately unattractive women with absolutely no sense of humor who see sexism at every turn. They make men's testicles shrivel up to the size of peas, they detest the family and think all children should be deported or drowned. Feminists are relentless, unforgiving, and unwilling to bend or compromise; they are single-handedly responsible for the high divorce rate, the shortage of decent men, and the unfortunate proliferation of Birkenstocks in America. (p. 7)

Feminists wreaked havoc with the established social order not because they waged war, brandished weapons, or even spilled blood. Worse than that, feminists demanded the unthinkable: the right of the full expression of the humanity of females. Thirty years after these demands were voiced, the word feminism remains odious to many and has not lost its impact.

There is, however, another "f" word, the real "f" word. Why would males find it necessary, for centuries, to oppress and denigrate females? Why have female demands
for equal rights and full expression of their essence been met with such powerful resistance? How is it that our culture can so disregard, hate, manipulate, and abuse females? Fear. Fear is the real "f" word. Specifically, it is the fear of that which is "other"--the female body, the mysterious and powerful female body.

In her classic work *The Second Sex* (1952) Simone de Beauvoir describes the relationship between the male and the other:

In truth, to go for a walk with one's eyes open is enough to demonstrate that humanity is divided into two classes of individuals whose clothes, faces, bodies, gaits, interests, and occupations are manifestly different. Perhaps these differences are superficial, perhaps they are destined to disappear. What is certain is that right now they do most obviously exist....What is a woman?....Woman has ovaries, a uterus; these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature. It is often said that she thinks with her glands...[Man] regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it. "The female is a female by virtue of certain lack of qualities," said Aristotle....St. Thomas for his part pronounced woman to be an "imperfect man," an "incidental" being. This is symbolized in Genesis where Eve is depicted made from what Bossuet called "a supernumerary bone" of Adam....Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself, but as relative to him...She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute--she is the Other. (p. xiv, xv)

As de Beauvois depicts, the female body is the basis for "otherness;" and it is the female's body that makes her not only different from but inferior to males. This inferiority stems not from logic, empirical evidence, or even an authentic deficit. It stems from the perception of the female body as unknowable, mysterious, and, as we shall see, all-powerful in its ability to not only give life but withhold or even take it. The female body has long been considered mysterious, its functions dark and powerful. Male fear of the female body, that mysterious Other, has resulted in the need to subdue and control that "puzzlingly similar-but-different being" (Miles, 1989, p. 168).
As discussed in the previous chapters, the original myths of the goddess were appropriated by the patriarchal myths of male power and dominance. As de Beauvoir (1952) sees it, these revised myths served not only to establish a new social order, but, more basically, to subdue that which was unexplainable and fearsome, the "feminine mystery." De Beauvoir explains:

Of all these myths, none is more firmly anchored in masculine hearts than that of the feminine "mystery." It has numerous advantages. And first of all it permits an easy explanation of all that appears inexplicable; the man who "does not understand" a woman is happy to substitute an objective resistance for a subjective deficiency of mind; instead of admitting his ignorance, he perceives the presence of a "mystery" outside himself: an alibi, indeed....Surely woman is, in a sense, mysterious, "mysterious as is all the world," according to Maeterlinck....To say that a woman is mystery is to say, not that she is silent, but that her language is not understood; she is there, but hidden behind veils, she exists beyond these uncertain appearances. What is she? Angel, demon, one inspired, an actress. It may be supposed either that there are answers to these questions which are impossible to discover, or, rather, that no answer is adequate because a fundamental ambiguity marks the feminine being, and perhaps in her heart she is even for herself quite indefinable: a sphinx....A mystery for man, woman is considered to be mysterious in essence. (p. 256)

In Greek mythology, the sphinx had the head of a woman, the feet and tail of a lion, and the wings of a bird. This powerful creature devoured anyone who could not answer the riddle she asked. In the myth of the sphinx it was a man, Oedipus, who supposedly answered the riddle. Her mystery uncovered, the sphinx destroys herself and mankind is free of this monster. This myth informs that the sphinx-female body and its riddle-mystery are not only unexplainable but deadly. Fearful of being devoured by the awesome sphinx, man controls her by supposedly exposing her mystery. This is the dynamic de Beauvoir speaks of above. As Freud (cited by Lederer, 1968) understands it:
The basic shyness, awe, and dread toward woman is based on this: That woman is different from man, eternally incomprehensible and mysterious, strange and therefore seemingly hostile. Man fears to be weakened by woman, to be infected by her femininity. (p. 3)

It is pertinent that in explaining—that is, supposedly exposing and conquering—the unexplainable and unknowable, man's conquest, in effect, led to the annihilation of the seemingly dreadful and eternally incomprehensible sphinx, the female body. This myth and others like it serve to authorize abuse of the female body and to justify the dominance and privileges of man. As we shall see, this dynamic is not only detrimental to the female and her body but to man himself.

In *The Fear of Women* (1968) Lederer asserts the "truth" (mystery) of females is "most intricate, perplexing, and elusive;" it is a "concern that occupies men's minds" yet "evades precise definition" (p. vi). According to de Beauvoir (1952), each of the new patriarchal myths are specifically designed to precisely define—to uncover and expose—the mystery of the female "in toto." She explains:

[Each] of these [myths] lays claim to containing the sole Truth of woman....The taste for eternity at a bargain, for a pocket-sized absolute, which is shared by a majority of men, is satisfied by myths. (p. 254)

What is the mystery these myths attempt to comprehend, to control? What is it about the female body that is so awesome, so powerful, so unknowable that it generates fear to the degree of terror, the terror of being devoured? Precisely and unquestionably it is that which makes the female body "other," that is, menstruation, gestation, and lactation—each transformative processes of the female body and, as such, each connected with the birth, death, and rebirth/ transformation processes which mirror the powerful, unexplainable, and uncontrollable cycle of the universe, of all creation. The following
discussion explores the life-giving and death-encompassing power of the mysterious female processes of menstruation and bleeding; gestation, birth, and female genitals; and lactation and breast-feeding.

The Great Mystery

Menstruation, according to Lederer (1968) is a mysterious process which renders females "most puzzling and quite different from men" (p. 25). As he sees it, menstruation is the great mystery, "as obvious as it is inexplicable" (p. 25). "And not only that," Lederer continues, "they [females] then further, even more mysteriously, manage to stop that bleeding and make babies out of it" (p. 25). Indeed, the blood of the female has, since the era of the goddess, been understood as absolutely fundamental to the creation of life. Hall (1980) points out that the word "blessing" comes from the Old English bloedsen or bleeding. In this sense, bleeding in matriarchal times was indeed considered blessing for, as Hall states:

First the blood has to flow to make new life possible...No doubt one of the first things woman knew about herself was that when blood flow stopped it was feeding and creating a child within....[N]o life can be built up without blood. (p. 170)

Accordingly, Neumann (1963) explains that the mystery of the female revolves around her "blood-transformation mysteries" (p. 30). Neumann names three blood mysteries that enable the female to be "the organ and instrument of the transformation of both her own structure and that of the child within her and outside her" (p. 31). Menstruation is the first blood mystery; pregnancy, the second; and the third is the mystery of lactation or, based in primordial understanding, the transformation of blood into milk. For Neumann, the "highest and most essential mysteries" (p. 51) of the female body are connected with her
blood transformation mysteries.

It is not difficult to comprehend how the ancients found female bleeding and blood to be so powerful, numinous, essential to all life as well as the source of it. Female menstrual blood was sacred. It was, in essence, tangible evidence of the "psychic-physical bonding of humans through the blood of their mothers, and of the Mother" (Sjoo & Mor, 1987, p. 270). Menstrual blood was used in ritual and ceremony, invoking the goddess as well as honoring and mourning the dead, planting and plowing the fields, and harvesting crops. The abundance of red ochre found not only on the goddess figurines but in drawings in the dwelling places, ritual sites, and funerary chambers of the Paleolithic and Neolithic peoples attests to the significance and sacredness of female blood.

Adding to the mystery of female bleeding is the fact that in the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras all females in a given community bled at the same time (menstrual synchrony), and the timing of their bleeding corresponded with the cycles of the moon (Sjoo & Mor, 1989). In other words, females bled together at the same time of each moon cycle. It was believed, therefore, that the moon mother also bled as the females of the community bled. The menstruating females withdrew from the community for these several days each month to be together to ritualize, return their blood to the earth, and honor their bodies. In light of this, the ancient peoples came to understand such abundant female blood to be so powerful and sacred that a bleeding female should be reverenced and not touched. Thus, the bleeding process took on even more mystery, becoming associated with moon power and dark and magical properties.

Gradually, as the nomadic invasions occurred and the goddess cultures were
appropriated, males learned "a great jealousy and fear of natural woman" (Sjoo & Mor, 1989, p. 271). As Campbell (1972) explains:

The fear of menstrual blood and isolation of women during their periods, the rites of birth, and all the lore of magic associated with human fecundity make it evident that we are here in the field of one of the major centers of interest of the human imagination....The fear of woman and the mystery of her have been for the male no less impressive imprinting forces than the fears and mysteries of the world of nature itself. (p. 31, 59)

It is this fear that eventually reduced female bleeding from sacred to sacrilege. Patriarchal induced menstrual taboos rendered female bleeding as no longer blessing but curse. Bleeding females were pronounced filthy, contaminating and polluting society. Instead of willingly separating themselves from society to celebrate their bleeding, females were banished to huts in disgrace and punishment. No longer considered powerful and magical, female blood was declared evil. As de Beauvoir (1952) vividly depicts:

Since patriarchal times only evil powers have been attributed to the feminine flow. Pliny said that a menstruating woman ruins crops, destroys gardens, kills bees, and so on; and that if she touches wine, it becomes vinegar; milk is soured, and the like. An ancient English poet put the same notion into rhyme: Oh! Menstruating woman, thou'st a fiend, From whom all nature should be screened....Through menstrual blood is expressed the horror inspired in man by woman's fecundity. (p. 149)

Bleeding, de Beauvoir concludes, does not make the female impure, rather, it is evidence of her impurity.

Rich (1976) concurs, noting that patriarchal thinking has "turned inside out, rendering [female bleeding] sinister or disadvantageous" (p. 106). Furthermore, Rich adds, menstrual taboos have been internalized, making females themselves feel that bleeding is a "time of pollution, a visitation of an evil spirit, physically repulsive" (p. 106). De Beauvoir (1952) describes how this attitude may be manifest between
mother and daughter:

Her [young girl's] first menstruation reveals this meaning; and her feelings of shame appear. If they were already present, they are strengthened and exaggerated from this time on. All the evidence agrees in showing that whether the child has been forewarned or not, the event always seems to her repugnant and humiliating. Frequently her mother has neglected to inform her; it has been noted that mothers more readily explain to their daughters the mysteries of pregnancy, childbirth, and even sexual relations than the facts of menstruation. They themselves seem to abhor this feminine burden, with a horror that reflects the ancient mystical fear of males and that the mothers pass on to their offspring. (p. 310)

Di Prima (cited by Hall, 1980) speaks eloquently and with a deep longing of that which the female has lost and of the connection she seeks to self and others, past and present, in reclaiming menstrual reverence and awe:

O lost moon sisters...
I walk the long night seeking you...
you are my mirror image and my sister...
    I am you
    and I must become you
    I have been you
    and I must become you
    I am always you
I must become you. (p.179)

Life-vessel

While menstruation is considered the greatest mystery, gestation and childbirth, is the female's "most exclusive" mystery. As Lederer (1968) tells us:

"[T]he dim terror felt by men about women"....derives, appropriately, from woman's most exclusive and essential function...the transformation mystery [of pregnancy]: deep within the unknowable darkness of the womb, unconsciously purposeful, silent as the night, woman transforms food and blood into new life. (p. 115)

This mysterious process is best represented by the central symbol of the feminine, the vessel. Neumann (1963) explains that humankind's most elementary
experience of the feminine is found in the equation woman = body = vessel. "From the very beginning," he states, female body as vessel has been "the essence of the feminine" (p. 39):

For obvious reasons woman is experienced as the vessel par-excellence. Women as body-vessel is the natural expression of the human experience of woman bearing the child "within" her and of man entering "into" her in the sexual act. Because the identity of the female personality with the encompassing body-vessel in which the child is sheltered belongs to the foundation of feminine existence, woman is not only the vessel that like every body contains something within itself, but, holds for herself and the male, but is the "life-vessel as such," in which life forms, and which bears all living things and discharges them out of itself and into the world. (p. 42)

In the earliest eras, it was thought that the female was the spontaneous and autonomous creator of life; the role of the male during intercourse was to open the womb to encourage creation (Sjoo & Mor, 1989). Female fertility and life-giving powers were considered awesome and magical. With "patriarchal revaluation," Neumann (1963, p. 57) asserts the basic premise of the matriarchal/goddess world was denied or overthrown. With the advent of patriarchy, he contends, the mother was symbolically murdered by her son who then identified with the father, making himself the source of all life, including the feminine--"like Eve arising from Adam's rib" (p. 58). Not surprisingly, at the dawn of Western civilization, the Greek philosophers taught that the female's role in conception and gestation was simply that of incubator. She was thought to be womb-man (woman), for the male seed contained all the elements needed to create life. Womb-man was the vessel that held the "divinely active" male seed (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p. 521). In the same vein, Socrates suggested male articulation of thought was akin to childbirth. For the male, giving birth meant finding a proper way of expressing the Idea that moved within him (Sissa, 1992).
Were the mystery of the female-vessel simply concerned with its life giving powers, man would be filled with a fear induced by awe and envy. But there is something more than fear, horror, that surrounds this female mystery. For de Beauvois (1952) the horror is that birth automatically destines one to death. That is, we are not only made carnal with all its limitations, but in being carnal, we are finite. In this state man considers himself a "fallen god." De Beauvoir expounds:

[H]is curse is to be fallen from a bright and ordered heaven into the chaotic shadows of his mother's womb. The fire, this pure and active exhalation in which he likes to recognize himself, is imprisoned by woman in the mud of the earth. He would be inevitable, like a pure idea, like the One, the All, the absolute Spirit; and he finds himself shut up in a body of limited powers in a place and time he never chose, where he was not called for, useless, cumbersome, absurd. The contingency of all flesh is his own to suffer...She [woman] also dooms him to death. This quivering jelly which is elaborated in the womb (the womb, secret and sealed like the tomb) evokes too clearly the soft viscosity of carrion for him not to turn shuddering away. Wherever life is in the making--germination, fermentation--it arouses disgust because it is made only to be destroyed; the shiny embryo begins the cycle that is completed in the putrefaction of death. Because he is horrified by...death, man feels horror at having been engendered; he would fair deny his animal ties, through the fact of his birth murderous....To have been conceived and born an infant is the curse that hangs over his destiny, the impurity that contaminates his being. And, too, the announcement of his death. (p. 146)

Regarding the female connection with death, de Beauvoir clarifies:

The Earth Mother engulfs the bones of her children. They are women...who weave the destiny of mankind; but it is they also, who cut the threads...Death is a woman, and it is for the women to bewail the dead for it is their work....Thus the Woman-Mother has a face of shadows: she is the chaos whence all have come and whither all must one day return. (p. 141)

In the "gaping jaws" (Miles, 1989, p. 57) of the womb lay birth as well as death.

The womb is vis a vis tomb; the realm of birth is in dialectic relationship with death/rebirth. The blood of birth is indistinguishable from the blood of death. The female-vessel is at once the giver of life and death. It is in this sense that in the goddess
cultures, the dead were marked with a large sacred triangle (vulva) or sprinkled with red ochre, placed into fetal position, and sometimes squeezed into egg-shaped clay pots (Gadon, 1989). The female-vessel, as Lederer (1968) tells us, "cradles the infant and the corpse each to its particular new life" (p. 127). For the prehistoric peoples, death was honored and respected as a part of the transformative cycle of life. With the advent of patriarchy, death amounted to a "rape of life, a violence to be feared and controlled as much as possible" (Perera, 1981, p. 21), a decay into nothingness.

Death, then, becomes not reverenced and respected, but feared and rendered horribly ugly. As such, death is relegated to the realm of the archetypal Terrible Mother. As Neumann (1963) explains:

The mysteries of death as mysteries of the Terrible Mother are based on her devouring-ensnaring function, in which she draws life back into her womb. Here the womb becomes a devouring maw and the conceptual symbols of diminution, rending, hacking to pieces, and annihilation, of rot and decay, have here their place which is associated with graves, cemeteries, and negative death magic. Here belongs also the blood-drinking goddess of death...satisfied by the killing of men and animals...[S]he perpetually demands the blood of men [and] destroys all living things without distinction. (p. 149)

No one, not even man who attempts to control her, escapes Death--death the dark mystery created by the female-vessel. The life-giving womb is also the vessel of doom.

The horror wreaked by the female-vessel does not end there. In the eyes of man the dependence on the female-vessel for life constitutes a "fateful power" (Neumann, 1963, p. 67). It is this power that confuses and terrifies man for he struggles at once with wanting to sink back into the protection of the female-vessel and desiring to separate, individuate from it. Sinking back into "her dark and protective warmth" (Lederer, 1968, p. 251) would amount to a dissolution of self; yet separating from her entirely is
impossible for "woman is the eternal background." Lederer continues:

[Woman], that Great Mother was herself the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, long before her son made any such claim; and in her essential capacity of Nature, and of the unaware, unconscious [internal] processes and forces, she is still the ocean on which man's little vessel of self-awareness and individuality floats precariously....Mother, as the original Whole, is a threat to particular individuality or personality. So then is every woman... (p. 250)

Not only is the female-vessel endowed with fateful power, but it is also seen as possessing prodigious powers. Freud pronounces the opening of the female-vessel, her genitals as "uncanny," "strangely familiar and yet anxiously strange" (cited by Lederer, 1968, p. 3). As such, the female-vessel is seen as not only a dark, deep, dangerous, and alluring place, but as a vessel that cannot be adequately filled by man. Freud compares the "maternal genital" with Medusa's head: "a confusing horror, but a horror unquestionably" (1968, p. 3). Also, according to Freud, the powerful yet penis-less vulva terrifies not only because it is "castrated" but because it (supposedly) has the power to castrate. Horney (1924) suggests this fear is rooted in man's awareness of the inadequacy of his penis compared to the woman's vulva. Horney notes it is not uncommon for males to fear falling into the female genitals, being submerged and drowned. Indeed, myths surrounding the female vulva and its effects on males abound. There are stories of vaginas with teeth (vagina dentata), devouring vaginas, polluting vaginas, vaginas with snakes or other animals. Female genitals have been compared to rock-crushing machines, rotating knives, and meat grinders--enough to make any man afraid! Or is it man's fear of the female-vessel that creates these myths?

So basic, vital, and all encompassing is the female-vessel to life, and so strong is the fear of her that, as Neumann (cited by Rich, 1976) asserts, only the fact that man
cannot exist without woman has prevented her exterpitation.

The Feeding Breast

Based on their observations of the female body, primitive peoples understood the goddess to not only give birth to all plants and animals, but also to feed them, giving each the particular type of nourishment it needed. The feeding breast of the goddess was, in essence, the source of all food (Lederer, 1968). Accordingly, some of the most beautiful and touching of the Paleolithic and Neolithic goddess icons are those in which the goddess has an infant at her breast. Other such icons reveal the goddess proudly displaying or presenting her full breasts, lifting them upward and forward toward the viewer. On some icons the goddess had tens or hundreds of breasts. Similarly, ritual sites and walls of some dwelling places were covered with clusters of disembodied sacred breasts. Still other primitive icons show the goddess pointing to or holding her breast with one hand, while pointing to or touching her genitals with the other. Widemouthed and open vessels such as cups, bowls, and chalices represented the breast. Indeed, according to Greek tradition, the first bowl was patterned after the female breast, the nourishing breast of the goddess.

For the primitive peoples, the breast was another sacred female-vessel, one that mysteriously transformed blood into milk, the nourishing lifestream of the goddess (Sjoo & Mor, 1987). Milk from the human breast was synonymous with rain from the breast of the goddess; both nourishing liquids were understood to be the life milk of the world. Rain, the milk of heaven, was invoked in primitive times by offering the goddess plates fashioned in the shape of a breast (Hall, 1980). Honey was also thought to flow from the
breasts of the goddess. Milk and honey, which required no preparation for eating were seen as "pure gifts of nature" (Hall, p. 53). During initiation ceremonies, milk and honey were ingested, representing the foods of the newborn and symbolizing its reliance on the Mother; the initiated child recognized and was grateful for the milk-giving breast which enabled the child to be strong enough to now move towards independence.

"Dependence" is the word connected with the mysterious breast that causes fear in man; for what the female-vessel once contained, nourished, and sheltered in utero is, at birth, "dependent on it [female-vessel] and utterly at its mercy" (Neumann, 1963, p. 43). As Lederer (1968) sees it, the life-vessel does its "dark magic, bearing new life. And this new life, helpless, and yet unfit for living needs to be mothered still" (p. 122). Returning to Neumann's equation discussed earlier--woman = body = vessel--we find a fourth aspect, world or nature. Thus, if we consider Neumann's equation woman = body = vessel = world, it becomes obvious that woman embodies not only nature's life-giving and life-sustaining bounty but also "nature's indifference toward the living things that depend on her" (p. 51). Therein lies man's fear of dependence. As Neumann explains, the female vessel, "in so long as it is 'good,'" does not withhold "but is a giver of riches" (p. 52). However, the female-vessel, equated with nature, is entirely capable of withholding, unpredictability, and indifference towards those who are dependent on her.

It is a very real possibility that the mother's rain/milk could dry up or, worse, she could refuse to give it. In a patriarchal Greek myth, Zeus lays his son, Hercules (born of a mortal woman) at the breast of his sleeping wife, Hera. According to the story, if Hercules were allowed to drink his fill, he would have attained immortality. Instead, Hera
awakens and angrily tears the child from her breast. As she does so, her milk spurts into the sky creating the Milky Way.

Indeed breast milk was thought to be a spiritual food, one that assured transcendence, immortality. Whereas the lower part of the female body was connected with the earth, the upper part, including breasts, was thought to contain more spiritual qualities. Thus, while the functions of the breast were mysterious and magical, they were not as dark or earthy as menstruation and gestation, functions of the lower body. The breasts were external as opposed to internal, illuminated as opposed to dark, and, as with Hera's milk, capable of endowing immortality, not a finite carnality. Milk from the female breast, the myth tells, is powerful, so powerful that it created a galaxy; so powerful that man sought it--needed it--to attain immortality; so powerful that it could also be refused to man. Like Eve, Hera's body denied man transcendence and immortality, instead drawing him--no, forcing him--into the seeming darkness of immanence.

The metaphor of this myth demonstrates the power of the female breast and, therefore, its danger to man. Hercules had not been satisfied with being a beloved hero and the strongest man on earth. He wanted to be like the gods, to be immortal. As Lederer (1968) tells it, "woman threatens man by withholding his salvation: by tying him in humanity's bondage whenever she alone can liberate....by refusing, as mother, to save her son;...by thwarting the voracious oral needs,....[she appears] an ogress and evil witch" (p. 4). These voracious oral needs are understood by Freud (cited by Lederer, 1968) to be "aggressive oral and sadistic wishes" encountered unconsciously "as the fear of being
killed by the mother" (p. 4). He continues

This fear, in turn, would justify death-wishes against the mother should they become conscious. How often such fear of mother may be based on an unconscious maternal hostility which is sensed by the child, this we cannot tell. (p. 4)

Certainly, Hera as well as countless other women would be amused and knowingly acknowledge the reality of maternal hostility--what nursing mother has not been painfully engorged, or resented the infant pulling at her raw and reddened nipples, or grudgingly roused herself from a much needed sleep to feed a screaming child.

Unlike Freud's understanding of maternal hostility, Klein suggests the breast is the object onto which the nursing infant's death instinct is projected. She understands the breast to be the "focus of all trouble" (in Segal, 1980) explaining that the infant projects that part of itself which contains the death instinct outwards into the original external object--the breast. Thus, the breast, which is felt to contain a great part of the infant's death instinct, is felt to be bad and threatening...giving rise to a feeling of persecution. (p. 12)

Hera's refusal to nurse Hercules resulted, ultimately, in his death because he could not attain immortality. Hera's breast and, therefore, the breasts of all women were metaphorically proclaimed to be "bad and threatening." As with menstruation and gestation, the reverence for the sacred feeding breast gradually degenerated. Instead of being freely displayed and honored, breasts became an embarrassment to be covered. Breasts that were once openly suckled by infants, older children, and even adults were hidden, their feeding function accomplished in shameful solitude. Sacred breasts that once flowed with life sustaining milk and honey became sex objects for the greedy Herculean mouths of men. Furthermore, the spiritual nature of the breasts was
emphasized. The once openly erotic and sensual nature of the female became split off from the maternal feminine (Hall, 1980). Breastfeeding and maternity became "Madonna-like--pale, blue, creamy, and peaceful;" a mother's sensual experience became "cloaked under the image of pure and self-less maternity" (Hall, p. 55). Defined and regulated by the male understanding of the spiritual, breastfeeding and motherhood became purely nurturing, self-less, and self-sacrificing acts--leaving virtually no room for feminine "darkness" or female sensuality. With female sexuality and mystery tamed by motherhood, the female body posed no threat to man.

The sacred breast, external and once highly visible was replaced with another external and distinctly noticeable entity, the phallus. As Hall (1980) explains:

Our Western world is rather given over to the masculine. Instead of prizing the breasts of the mother...we have chosen, or our ancestors chose, to publicly prize the phallus of the father: the Roman fasces or bundle of rods into which an axe head was tied, a symbol of the magistrate's power (and the root of the word fascism) still decorates dimes in circulation. To the Hebrews it was the rod and staff that gave man comfort. The phallus or masculine creative spirit as rod and staff is represented in the shepherd's crook, king's scepter, the magician's wand, priest's crozier, all tools of the masculine commanding spirit, which is...concerned with law and order as opposed to nature,...reliable like the regular sunrise and sunset, instead of the capricious and changing [female body]. (p. 5)

In the same vein, worship of the goddess and her body was eventually replaced by "Mother Church"--a religious institution in which the priest was mother "nourishing souls from the milk of religion" (Lerner, 1993, p. 88). Mother church was (and is) dominated by father clergy.

Fear of the breast is manifest in phallocentrism. As such, the female is defined not by what she is, but by lack or absence of an obvious phallus. Even so, phallocentrism can mask but never obliterate the fact that man does not enter the world except by
woman; and on her breast he is dependent and utterly at her mercy. Yet, as de Beauvoir (1952) points out, while "woman condemns man to finitude, she also enables him to exceed his own limits" (p. 148). Perhaps one day the collective male will realize, with love and gratitude, this gift; and on that day, that transformation day, he will utter the likes of the prayer of one of Chaucer's characters (cited by de Beauvoir), an old man waiting to die:

With my staff, night and day
I strike on the ground, my mother's doorway,
And I say: Ah, Mother dear, let me in. (p. 148)

Female Body as the Essence of the Feminine

As we have seen, the female body is about transformation--mysteriously making something out of nothing. According to Hall (1980), the work of the female body is

...giving form to formless energy....Her elements are blood and milk--both liquids held within her are organic...She is both container and contained... She transforms matter and is herself transformed. She is the procession of forms and the forms of the process. (p. 169)

Implied is the reality that the female body is one within itself (the original meaning of virgin), that man does not enter the world except by woman, that on her he is utterly dependent--certainly enough power to make any man fearful. While the female body and its mysteries may convincingly and conclusively explain the origin of the "f" word, there is more. Listen as Lederer (1968) opens up the question:

The fear we encounter here, attested to by so many defensive tabus [sic], is undoubtedly real enough, and pertains to the other-ness of woman, the particular mystery by which she manages to bleed, and to transform blood into babies, and food into milk, and to be apparently so self-sufficient and unapproachable in all of it. And yet, these mysteries are still, so far, beneficial and the appropriate response to them would seem to be admiration rather than fear. To account for this we must investigate further. (p. 33)
Investigate we shall, and we need look no further than to Neumann and de Beauvoir who have already contributed immensely to our understanding of the "f" word. Each names clearly the factor we are seeking. In Neumann's (1963) eyes, the "anguish, horror, and fear of danger that the [female body] signifies cannot be derived from any actual and evident attributes of woman...[it] originates rather in inner experience" (p. 147). De Beauvoir (1952) clarifies stating, "In all civilizations and still in our day woman inspires man with horror: it is the horror of his own carnal contingence, which he projects upon her" (p. 148). In other words, it is an inner fear, the fear of the feminine, which gets projected onto the female body.

The feminine (or femininity) as well as the masculine are modes of being human that exist within and can be lived out by both females and males. As Sullivan (1992) explains, the feminine and masculine elements exist within the inner being forming a whole; the tendency to distinguish between these elements is a "given of the human condition:"

All people, everywhere and at all times, sort the world into these two categories. Although some of that sorting may be biologically determined, most of the content of our notions of "feminine" and "masculine" is culturally determined....Traits that reflect one or the other reflect a given culture's stereotypes rather than anything inherently true for women or men....[With the] feminine and masculine principles, we are talking about a complex inner image that is strongly rooted deep in the unconscious, distorting our perceptions of the material world....Real men and women...must operate from and contain both principles. (p. 16)

While distinguishing between female and male, feminine and masculine does not necessarily divide them, dualism does. Rather than acknowledging the whole as a continuum which includes differences, the feminine and masculine have been divided into opposites. Interestingly, as Sullivan notes, the realm of the feminine is wholeness
and relatedness while the masculine insists on separation and splitting the world into opposites. When in balance, the feminine and masculine work together and keep each other in check.

According to Sullivan (1992), the feminine and masculine principles are core energies that are both static as well as dynamic. The core feminine principle is that of being immersed in the "living world, one link in an infinite chain" (p. 20). That is, the feminine seeks to be in relationship, embodied relationship, with the world. The static feminine is symbolized by the containing womb. Its central value is "Being" in an undifferentiated whole whose components are valued equally. Its focus, like that of Mother Nature, is on reproducing and continuing "the great chain of life" (p. 21). The static feminine is not conflicted about death, accepting it as an integral part of life. The dynamic feminine is about play and playfulness: "messing around, trying things out, moving randomly and without direction, being open to what might come up, letting events affect one, responding to the unexpected" (p. 18). The central value of the dynamic feminine is Eros, being in relationship.

The core masculine principle stresses separateness, valuing behavior that "acts on the not-me world, effecting it, leaving one's mark on it, dominating and transcending it" (Sullivan, 1992, p. 21). The static masculine resembles the benevolent king; its central value is impersonal objectivity and clear judgment (Logos) manifest in law and order. The penetrating phallus represents the dynamic masculine; its central value is "Doing," taking initiative and actively working towards a goal. The dynamic masculine is the realm of the hero, conquering and becoming a differentiated individual.
Neither principle is superior to the other; both are essential for wholeness, for a full experience of life. In general the feminine principle seeks to be in an embodied relationship with the world, while the masculine principle strives towards the world of the spirit. As Sullivan (1992) sees it, the major differentiation between the feminine and masculine principles is Being versus Doing:

Where a feminine viewpoint urges us to emotionally experience our grounding in our physical incarnation, to relax into our being, a masculine approach seeks the immortality of achievements that will live after one's physical death. The danger of the Masculine is depicted in Icarus's fate: In trying to fly too high into the world of the spirit, Icarus tries to leave utterly behind his embodiment in feminine matter, and the consequence is his disastrous fall into the arms of Mother Earth and Death. The danger of the Feminine is pictured in Sleeping Beauty's tale: as she becomes a woman, beginning to bleed at the age of 13, she falls into a deep sleep, into a state of Being that does not include room for any Doing, a state from which she can be rescued only by the Masculine--Prince Charming. (p. 21)

Doing requires and is carried out in the bright light that is consciousness. Being, on the other hand, happens in darkness--mysterious darkness-- in the unconscious. Being involves suffering, an awareness of one's smallness and finitude; it contains chaos and the shadowy states of illness and woundedness; it contains the rejected and feared elements of self. For Sullivan, these feared elements cannot be fully expressed because our culture "has woefully inadequate capacities to suffer the suffering that will deepen us and lead us to wholeness" (p. 87). Instead of experiencing woundedness or darkness, the very real stuff of life and, paradoxically, life-giving, Western culture (the individual and the collective) denies its dark side and, as we have seen, projects its seeming "anguish, horror, and fear of danger" (Neumann, 1963, p. 147) onto the dark and mysterious "other," the "not-me," the "essence of the feminine," the female body.
Human wholeness includes both mysterious feminine darkness and illuminating masculine light, for the one cannot know itself fully without the other. While the female body has taken the brunt of humanity's biases against the feminine, ultimately, as Sullivan (1992) insists, "human wholeness has been its most important victim" (p. 16). Our culture has forgotten its original wholeness, forgotten that feminine darkness is the place of life as well as death, the place where transformation, mysterious transformation, occurs. It is fear itself that needs to be overcome, not the female body.

Wholeness can never be a reality if it simply means "changing bosses," exchanging the feminine for the masculine. It is, rather, the fruit of mutual respect, complementarity, and integration. If humanity is to realize wholeness, then, it must reduce the radically one-sided masculine principle and begin to integrate the feminine principle, with all its mysterious and fearful darkness. To begin this integration, we must learn--or more appropriately, remember--respect and reverential awe for the essence of the feminine, the mysterious female body and its sacred connection to the Great Goddess who "bears and encompasses all things" (Neumann, 1963, p. 48). Perhaps Craighead's (1986) experience will one day be shared by all of humankind:

I am born remembering rivers flowing from my mother's body into my body. I pray at her Fountain of Life, saturated in her milk and blood, water and honey. She passes on to me the meaning of religion because she links me to our origin in God the Mother. (p. 29)
Weeds and Seeds

I do not understand. You lost Mother?

Is not possible!

Listen, her voice–wind. You have wind? Feel. Earth–her womb, giving, giving. Seasons, her cycle. Look, moon–her silver egg, fruit of her night sky. Stars, her eyes. Rain, her good milk. You have heavens? You have Mother.

You have woman, who by magic bleeds, by magic swells, opens to bear child? You have Mother.

You have little figurines with great belly, breasts?

Her holy blood on your floors stained with ocher?

Her image on walls of your caves? Of course!

You tell your children story, yes? In beginning she was there, Goddess of All Things, and she rose naked from chaos. But nothing was for her feet to rest upon, so she divided sea from sky. She danced lonely upon waves. Wind as she danced began work of creation. From herself she formed heavens, earth, all in them. You tell story to your children, yes?

You have high priestess, who speaks to Goddess for you and to you for goddess? And who makes earth fertile each year by choosing fortunate lover from among men and enjoying with him sacred marriage, then giving him as offering to Goddess that she may enjoy him too.

You have all this, yes?

Ah–you do not?

You have lost Mother! I worry now for you. Mother–is all!

Mmmm–you said word–"fa-ther." What is this?

Carol Lynn Pearson

"Bruen the Paleolithic" in Mother Wove the Morning
Athena was "born" of her father, Zeus. Although Athena was conceived as a result of the union of Zeus and Metis, she was unaware that she had a mother. Metis was an ocean deity known for her wisdom. When she was pregnant with Athena, Zeus, fearful of her power, tricked her into becoming a fly and then swallowed her. Encapsulated in her father's body, Athena grew to adulthood. Then Zeus, plagued by a headache, was assisted by the god Haphaestus who struck him in the head with an ax, creating an opening for Athena to emerge. As the myth tells, she sprang from the head of Zeus as a full grown woman wearing armor of gold, brandishing a spear in one hand, and emitting a mighty war cry. Athena was a beautiful warrior goddess and the protector, advisor, and patron of heroic men such as Hercules, Perseus, Odysseus, and Theseus. Athena shunned marriage, dedicated instead to chastity and celibacy. In general, she avoided the company of women, preferring men as her cohorts. With Zeus and Apollo the most revered of the Greeks gods, Athena was the most idolized and adored of the female deities.

Athena's role and purpose is spelled out clearly in The Oresteia, by the Greek playwright Aeschylus. The Oresteia is thought to be the first courtroom scene in Western literature. On trial is Orestes for the murder of a blood relative, his mother, Clytemnestra. Apollo defends Orestes saying that it is impossible for Orestes to have killed his mother
for children are not related to, not blood relatives of, their mother:

The mother is no parent of that which is called her child. She is only nurse of what she has conceived. The true parent is the father, who commits his seed to her, a stranger, to be held with God's help in safe keeping. In proof of this father there might be and no mother, see a living witness here, child of Olympian Zeus. (in Auden, 1984, p. 361)

To Apollo's declaration Athena replies:

Apollo is right...No mother gave birth to me, and in all things save marriage I, my father's child indeed, with all my heart commend the masculine. (Auden, p. 363)

When asked to decide Orestes' fate, the Athenian jury of twelve was evenly divided.

Athena was asked to cast the deciding vote: she favored Orestes' innocence. Thus, Orestes was acquitted on the grounds that he could not possibly have spilled kindred blood because, indeed, he was not related to his mother. The Furies (or Fates), who had accused Orestes of his crime and brought him to trial, are horrified by Athena's decision:

We to be treated so! We with the sage wisdom of years to dwell here, oh ever debased, oh defiled! Spirit of spleen and unyielding spite! Give ear, O Earth! Ah, the insufferable pangs sink deep. Hear my passion, hear, black Night! For the powers once ours sealed long, long ago, have by the younger Gods been snatched all away. (Auden, p. 367)

The story of Athena's birth and her behavior at the trial of Orestes symbolically marks the full transition from the goddess or matriarchal culture to the patriarchal Western culture (Eisler, 1987; Loomis, 1995). The myth of Athena elaborates on the myth of Eve and Adam; it defines the female, describing not her sinful nature for that has already been established, but her ideal image. Athena is the new patriarchal image of the ideal female--she is the father's daughter.

According to Loomis (1995), the swallowing of Metis by Zeus signifies the attempt by the patriarchy to contain the matriarchal culture by devouring it. While the
power of the matriarchy does not disappear entirely, it "lies within the patriarchy hidden in
the shadows" (Loomis, p. 74). According to Loomis, Athena's gestation, birth, and life
illustrate

how the matriarchy's unlimited powers were reshaped, confined, by the boundaries
and limit-setting imposed by the patriarchy. This myth depicts how the matriarchy
and the matriarchal energies were forced into reflecting upon themselves. Athena's
nature, her lineage is matriarchy; her nurture, her training, is the patriarchy. When at
birth Athena lays down the golden armor that symbolized patriarchal power and
might, she reveals her feminine and matriarchal allegiance. But it is a matriarchy in
transition, the matriarchy confronted by the patriarchy, that she represents. (p. 74)

At the trial of Orestes, however, Athena symbolically resumes her golden armor by
renouncing any matriarchal ties and proclaiming male supremacy. With this action, the
dismayed Furies, who represent the last vestiges of female power, were forced to
acquiesce to the "younger Gods" who snatched away their power and drove them
underground. In matriarchal cultures it was the Furies whom the Greeks understood to
spin the fates of humans, to determine the time for mortals to be born and to die (Eisler,
1987). Loomis (1995) adds:

Up until this point in history matriarchal law, enforced by the Furies, was absolute.
The only law was the law of the blood. No mitigating circumstances were allowed or
considered in...transgressions of the blood. Athena broke this pattern. (p. 71)

It is Athena's choice regarding Orestes' innocence that drives the Furies underground
rendering them, along with the likes of the once powerful Metis, lesser and marginal
figures "in a male-dominated pantheon of new gods" (Eisler, 1987, p. 80).

The Father's Daughter

As with the myth of Eve and Adam, The Oresteia was designed to influence and
alter society's view of reality (Eisler, 1987). While the myth of Eve and Adam ushered in
and laid the foundation for Western culture's patriarchal understanding of the female, *The Oresteia* was a user's guide of sorts. It instructed the peoples of the newly formed culture that new norms had replaced the old, patriarchal values prevailed, and the ideal female was as imaged in Athena. Despite its ancient origins, that user's guide remains applicable today. The Furies occasionally resurface crying "matricide," but, for the most part, are driven back underground; patriarchal values persist, strongly influencing and defining our culture; and Athena continues to live, if not thrive, in contemporary daughters of the father.

Daughters of the father are also referred to as daughters of the patriarchy, Athena women, women with animus egos, or animus women. Whatever the term used, daughters of the father are females who, like Athena, have rejected or never known the mother and identify with the values of the father. They are females who, infused with the spirit of the father, are disconnected from their feminine mystery and their bodies. As Woodman (1980) sees it, this split between mind and body is extremely destructive to the female:

...20th century women have been living for centuries in a male-oriented culture which has kept them unconscious of their own feminine principle. Now in their attempt to find their own place in a masculine world, they have unknowingly accepted male values--goal-oriented, compulsive drivenness, and concrete bread which fails to nourish their mystery...Only by discovering and loving the goddess lost within her own rejected body can woman hear her own authentic voice. (p. 9)

The unconscious femininity of the father's daughter, unable to be experienced or expressed in her body rebels and demands attention, manifesting itself, not surprisingly, in somatic form. As we shall see, physical illness and symptoms, eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia, and the inability to enjoy sexual orgasm or pleasure are all
indications of the unacknowledged feminine.

Father's daughters, like Athena, seek their father's approval and uphold or defend their values in supporting the patriarchal culture (Loomis, 1995). What does the modern Athena look like? While there is great individual variance, a basic pattern is consistently present in all father's daughters. Loomis outlines this pattern:

1. The daughter is secure in her father's love. From the time of her birth, her father makes it obvious that he considers her special, that she is his beloved daughter. Psychologically speaking, she has a positive father complex.

2. The daughter, perceiving with the eyes of a child, views her father as wonderful and powerful. Indeed, her father may be the Zeus-like, patriarchal lawgiver, holding wife and children subservient to him. However, it is also possible that in reality he is not powerful at all. He may be an alcoholic, he may be absent, but the home and family revolve around him.

3. The daughter holds the father's values and adheres to them unquestioningly, believing they are her own.

4. The daughter lives her life pleasing her father and being affirmed by him in what she does. She struggles to be what he wishes her to be.

5. The daughter is imbued with the spirit of her father and is at ease with men whether she is heterosexual or homosexual. She is spirited, energetic, and competent, and successful.

6. Holding her father's values and being at ease in her father's world, the daughter has a vague awareness or belief [based on clues from home and culture] that women (and the feminine) are not quite equal to men (and the masculine).

7. Holding masculine values above feminine values, the daughter elevates spirit [mind] and diminishes the body. Often this entails a denial of fatigue, stress, or physical pain. Anorexia and bulimia may also result if the daughter believes her father wants her to remain his little, prepubescent girl. The denial of her body can have...an impact on the daughter's enjoyment of her sexuality.

8. Her father usually treats her as an extension of himself, assuming she will want what he wants. In some instances, when the mother is absent through death or divorce, the daughter may become a surrogate wife to her father.
9. The father may be a strict disciplinarian and the daughter may be spanked or punished, but she is rarely sexually molested.

10. Her masculine energy--that which Jung calls a woman's animus--is well integrated and well developed in her outer world as evidenced by her achievements and relationships. However, her masculine energy, her animus, in the service of her inner, private self, is underdeveloped. (p. 10)

The father's daughter is or perceives herself in some idealistic way to be "Daddy's little girl," his "princess." As alluded to above, however, this seemingly comfortable if not coveted position of being adored by the father has its price: the daughter learns to become what her father admires at the expense of negating her own truth. The father's love is abundant as long as the daughter fulfills his expectations. Fulfilling his expectations, molding herself to her father's ideal, eventually becomes so automatic that the daughter may "forget as she grows into womanhood that she is paying for her father's love" (Loomis, 1995, p. 8) by denying her own essence. The father's daughter is secure in her father's love as long as she remains daughter rather than equal or peer--that is, as long as she remains prepubescent instead of becoming a fully integrated woman consciously accepting and embodying her feminine principle. As long as a female's feminine principle remains unconscious--whether swallowed and contained by Zeus-like males or sent underground by Athena-like females--she will remain separated from her essence and that which will make her whole.

"The True Parent is the Father"

While the specialness that a father recognizes in his little girl may be a very real trait or aspect of her personality, it is always something the father can identify with, "something unto which he can project his soul" (Loomis, 1995, p. 7). The father's
daughter receives and lives out her father's projection of his own idealized and unconscious feminine principle (Woodman, 1985). While outwardly the father may hold prestige and power, inwardly his feminine connection is distorted if not severed. As such, he is locked into a sentimental ideal of femaleness and is trapped in a mother complex. In Jungian language, a complex is defined as an emotionally charged group of ideas or images at the center of which is an archetypal image (collective universal pattern or motif). According to Jung, a complex "behaves like an animated foreign body in the sphere of consciousness" (cited by Woodman, 1980, p. 14). In other words, the complex seems to have a life of its own, or, as Woodman explains, the more unconscious the individual, the greater the autonomy the complex has. Furthermore, Jung tells us, "When an inner situation is not made conscious, it happens outside" (cited by Woodman, 1985, p. 145); that is, that which is unconscious is manifest in projection. In the case of the father's daughter, the father's unresolved, unconscious feelings about his own feminine principle as influenced by the mother complex are projected onto his daughter.

What is it that is unresolved? What is the father's unconscious struggle that is projected outward and lived by his daughter? As discussed in the previous chapter, and as Woodman (1985) elaborates, the father fears that which he at once desires, is utterly dependent on, and wishes to separate from:

...the man is in thrall to the mother complex, the sucking infant feeding on the all-powerful breast. The need is both ways: the breast has to be emptied and the child receives pleasure in taking. The dependency needs are fulfilled. This is Mother nature, an essentially symbiotic interaction. When the Mother withholds the breast, she becomes a manipulating witch whose demands the man cannot possibly meet. (p. 156)

The male caught in the mother complex is "mother-bound," a "mother's son," a
"puer" (Woodman, 1980, 1985). The puer is the "eternal youth," the male who lives
unconsciously as a little boy with a strong attachment to the mother. The attachment is full
of ambivalence for the puer is always wanting to please the mother while at the same time
fearing or hating her, needing her, yet wanting to detach from her. As Woodman explains,

His bonding to his own mother may have created a Prince Charming, but a prince
who is nevertheless dependent on women's approval. His chthonic shadow hates that
dependence and hates the women who make him feel vulnerable.... The puer's shadow
may murder not only [his own inner feminine] but the femininity of his little daughter
as well. (p. 36)

Fearing his own inner mother/feminine, the Zeus-puer creates (augmented by the
ambivalent collective unconscious of the culture) an image of the ideal Athena-woman and
projects it onto females. The puer man typically finds his mate in a puella woman, a
father's daughter, who shares his vision of the ideal female/feminine and becomes his wife-
mother. As the puella becomes wrapped up in household duties and child care, the puer,
"blessed with the comforting presence of the wife-mother" (Woodman, 1985, p. 35) is free
to project his unconscious idealized feminine onto his little daughter:

Together they build a Garden of Eden. The child is trapped in spiritual incest, even
more dangerous than actual incest because neither he nor she has any reason to
suspect that something is amiss. Called to be "Daddy's little princess," the daughter is
at once his spiritual mother, his beloved, his inspiratrice. With her he will have
thoughts and feelings that never come up with anyone else. She instinctively knows
how to act as buffer between him and a judgmental world; she instinctively knows
how to connect him to his own inner reality. Indeed, this is the only world she really
understands--this world where she acts as the connecting link between her father's
ego and the collective unconscious. Feeding on his version of Light, Beauty and
Truth, her young psyche can plumb to the depths of his anguish or soar to the heights
of his dream. (p. 35)

Although the dynamic is infinitely more complex than is presented here, in
general, the Zeus-puer is trapped in a mother complex, unaware of his ambivalent feelings
towards the feminine. He unconsciously fears the feminine, defensively creating an ideal which he projects onto an unsuspecting and captive audience, his female child. The daughter accepts this false image of the feminine as her own, using it to please Daddy, living out and reinforcing his own feminine ideal. This interplay becomes a life source for father and daughter, without which both would feel empty, lost. Trapped in this dynamic, the genuine feminine in each remains "hidden in the shadows," relegated to the underground of the unconscious. As long the unconscious feminine remains "dependent on the masculinity that is dependent on her" (Woodman, 1992, p. 12), the incestuous relationship persists; both father and daughter continue to live in a symbiotic relationship bound to an ideal that distorts or denies their genuine feminine principle and, thus, their unique individual fullness.

"No Mother Gave Birth to Me"

For the father's daughter, the umbilical cord is attached to the male. Like Athena, she has rejected, never been aware of, or long forgotten her connection with the mother. Indeed, the mother of a father's daughter is, predictably, herself a father's daughter. As indicated earlier, she is typically a puella aeterna, the "eternal girl" who has a strong unconscious attachment to the father. At first with her father and later with her husband or other males, the puella, disconnected from her own feminine, lives out her father-husband's false image of his feminine and identifies with an overdeveloped and idealized masculine principle which she projects onto her father-husband.

Unable to realize her own feminine principle, the mother becomes, like Metis, swallowed by the Zeus-puer, engulfed and overpowered by the masculine, ungrounded in
her own body. It is surely of this phenomenon that Rich (1974) speaks as she poignantly relates, "The woman I needed to call mother was silenced before I was born" (p. 228). As such, the puella mother has never known her own femininity, never taken up residence in her own body, never known her own mother. Like Metis whose entire being, body and soul, was devoured by the masculine, the puella mother and her daughter--both daughters of the father--do not know how to be feminine except in relation to the hypertrophied masculine.

In prepatriarchal times when the female was "sanctified, empowered unto herself, and knowing [respectful] of the mysteries of life" (Duerk, 1989, p. 6), mother passed down to daughter this sense of herself and her body, as well as her sense of the "Primal Feminine and her belonging within it." In doing so, mother gave to daughter "a respect for her own being, revering the Great Mother in herself and herself in the Great Mother" (Duerk, p. 6). With the loss of the Great Mother, came the gradual loss of the human mother's sense of self as a female with a mysterious and sacred body. Unable to find her essence mirrored in the Great Mother, the mother who is a daughter of the father has only emptiness to reflect her daughter. Out of touch with her own body and its rhythms, mother is unable to impart to daughter the sense of harmony with self and the universe which is fundamental to her sense of totality, wholeness.

Cut off from her own feminine principle and, thus, out of touch with her body, mother is unable to give daughter an instinctual love for her body. The personal mother, disconnected from her own essence once mirrored in the Great Mother, is unable to mirror or cherish her daughter's body and essence. The image mirrored, then, in the primal
relationship between mother and daughter is one of rejection; for the mother's rejection of
her own essence, her own body is felt by the daughter as a rejection of her essence, her
body. In turn, the daughter learns to reject not only her body, but that of her mother and
other females as well. Each rejects the feminine/female that has, it seems, rejected them.
For daughter and mother, this primal rejection amounts to not only abandonment but a
seeming annihilation of self. Rich (1976) refers to this sense of annihilation when she
insists that the loss of mother to daughter and daughter to mother is the essential female
tragedy.

This primal rejection results in profound despair and is manifest in a fundamental
fear of life. Woodman (1980) explains that the female who experiences primal rejection
develops a "petrifying fear" of the power of her own bodily instincts because she is "cut
off from her own inner Being, and therefore cut off from the reality of Life" (p. 96).
Woodman continues:

Such a child becomes an adult woman who simply does not comprehend the feminine
principle. For her "being receptive" means surrendering control, opening herself to
Fate, and plummeting through chaotic darkness into an abyss that has no bottom. No
loving arms will open to receive her as she falls. Therefore she dare not surrender to
Life—the consequences could be fatal. Even if the door of her cage stood open, she
could not dare to walk through. If she acted out of her own instincts and voiced her
own feelings, she would make herself vulnerable...Better to keep control by
remaining silent and acting out the roles of daughter, wife, and mother as she has
always half-heartedly understood them. (p. 96)

Fearing life and, especially, fearing the abject despair wrought by repeated
rejection of her essence, the daughter of the father learns to rank her father's principles far
and above maternal bonds. Indeed, as the result of primal rejection, the "original matrix"
becomes, instead, a "symbiotic patrix" (Woodman, 1985, p. 39); that is, the love the
daughter receives from her father becomes the very energy that gives her life and sustains it. She is dependent on the father to give her life, to help her be born.

The father's daughter spends her life being born of her father's head (mind/soul) and of his projections. Having rejected her mother's body as well as her own, she identifies with her father, developing her mind and intellect. Her rejected body becomes a prison taking on the projection of her father's feared and idealized feminine principle.

Furthermore, fearing her own power and authority, the father's daughter projects it onto her father or husband and then falls in love with her own projection. In creating herself according to an image that is being projected onto her and in projecting her power, the father's daughter abandons her own Being (Woodman, 1985). Yet, the daughter readily projects her potency and accepts her father's values and projections for without kinship to her mother/Mother, she has no grounding with which to offset or refute them, no mirror to reflect her essence and power.

The devaluation of the female body as sacred has produced "ungrounded daughters of the patriarchy" (Perera, 1981, p. 20). The loss of the Mother/mother is wracked by primal fear which, in its core, is fear of the despair of "being unable to become one's true self, of never being truly known--never knowing who one truly is" (Duerk, 1989, p. 12):

Woman in the train of history, orphaned by the death of the Great Mother, has suffered loss of connection to her own beingness, lack of sense of legitimacy and belonging in the universe or in her own individual life. Orphaned, woman has been treated as orphan. She has received shame and humiliation, has felt unworthy of love and dignity. Full of self-loathing, she has put herself and other women last. Woman, so unmothered, has not had a chance...to feel within herself the possibility of being her own source of nurture, of wisdom. She has remained, often, the eternal girl, unable to feel or claim her full weight, substance, stature. (p. 12)
"Hear my passion, hear, dark Night"

Like Athena, the father's daughter identifies with the masculine, protecting and defending it, denying that she has a mother. Believing herself to be birthed and nourished by the father (personal and patriarchal), the father's daughter is driven farther and farther away from her inner feminine, fulfilling expectations that have little or nothing to do with who she truly is. While her inner feminine is relegated to the underground of the unconscious, the ego of the father's daughter chants: "No mother gave birth to me...and in all things...I, my father's child...with all my heart commend the masculine." Yet the Furies, despite their relegation to the underground, repeatedly protest the matricide, and give voice to the lost Mother. If their cry goes unheeded--as it often does because the daughter ignores or is not trained to hear it--the Furies demand much more loudly to be heard. As the Furies sound the rebellion of the shackled femininity of the father's daughter, their voice typically manifests itself in bodily illnesses or symptoms.

So unconscious is the femininity of the father's daughter, that her body, her rejected body, may have to break down before she begins to recognize her inner and outer tyrants (Woodman, 1992). To get the attention of the father's daughter and, paradoxically, to effect her healing, the unconscious feminine is proclaimed loudly and often forcefully through the body that has ignored or rejected her. As Woodman (1985) instructs, the "natural gradient" (p. 23) of one's being is toward wholeness; as such, the Self (one's core image of the divine) attempts to push neglected parts forward for recognition. That "push" in essence is the Self's way of presenting the individual with the possibility of rebirth. It is often manifest through phenomenon such as personal failures, physical symptoms,
inferiority feelings, loss of faith, loss of relationships, overwhelming problems, or numerous and seemingly coincidental accidents. For father's daughters, the push is for recognition and integration—rebirth—of the neglected and unconscious feminine, and it's tug is most often experienced in her body.

As the Furies can no doubt attest, initial warning signals sent to the body are often silenced by rationalization or ignored with pills or other anesthetics. Too long unheeded, the Furies cry even more loudly the needs of the unconscious feminine. As Woodman (1985) observes, daughters of the father...

...can listen to their cat more intelligently than they can listen to their own despised body...Their body...may have to let out an earth-shattering scream in order to be heard at all. Before symptoms manifest, quieter screams appear in dreams: a forsaken baby elephant, a starving kitten, a dog with a leg ripped out. Almost always the wounded animal is either gently or fiercely attempting to attract the attention of the dreamer, who may or may not respond....It is possible that the scream that comes from the forsaken body, the scream that manifests in a symptom, is the cry of the soul that can find no other way to be heard. If we have lived behind a mask all our lives, sooner or later—if we are lucky—that mask will have to be smashed. Then we will have to look in our own mirror at our own reality. (p. 25)

The mask of the father's daughter—the ego which proclaims, "I, my father's child"—is not easily smashed, for the daughter fears she will find rejection or, worse, emptiness in her own mirror. It is precisely this emptiness from which the father's daughter flees, seeking fulfillment through actual males or through "serving the collective ideals of the animus in prostitution to the fathers" (Perera, 1981, p. 39). Yet her only real hope is in facing the seeming emptiness, for her healing comes through this "abyss of the absent feminine" (Woodman, 1980, p. 96). It is in this abyss that the father's daughter will rediscover the Mother lost within the fearful darkness of her own rejected body. It is in the abyss, the dark womb, that she will learn to listen to and nurture her body and trust its
rhythms and cycles. It is in the abyss, the dark Night, that she will discover her body not
to be imprisoned by the masculine that has swallowed her, but the feminine vessel through
which she gives birth to herself. It is in the abyss that she will discover that the darkness
and death she fears is not annihilation but part of the feminine transformative cycle of
birth, death, and rebirth.

For the father's daughter, reclaiming her body, giving birth to herself requires
rediscovering the essence she has rejected. In other words, reclaiming her essence requires
living fully in her body, returning to and honoring her feminine vessel with its mysterious
and sacred transformative processes. As discussed in the previous chapter, it is the fear of
the mystery of the feminine principle--the darkness and death of the transformative
processes--that has been projected onto the female body. It is her own mystery, then, that
the father's daughter has learned to fear and hate. It is precisely this mystery, the fullness
of the transformative cycle that must be reclaimed, the feared abyss that must be entered
into.

Entering the abyss entails death. This death seems agonizing because it involves
a withdrawal from the seeming life-giving values of the father, and a descent into the dark
underground of the unconscious to retrieve the feminine values long repressed (Perera,
1981). The descent involves shedding the mask and the safety of the hypertrophic
masculine ideal, and submitting to the dark forces of the unconscious feminine. As the
mask is removed, there is a shedding of old illusions and false identities, an unveiling that
eventually leaves the father's daughter naked in body and soul. It is in this form, stripped
of her illusions, that the daughter can yield to the dark forces of the unconscious
feminine—that is, she re-enters the darkness of the Mother's womb where she is gestated and from which she is birthed.

Woodman (1980) insists that in avoiding the darkness of the abyss, of Death, father's daughters have lost contact with their own personal reality and "the possibility of the birth of their own divine child from their own sacred matter." Surrendering to Death, to the womb of the unconscious feminine, to the mystery and wisdom of her body, is crucial for the father's daughter whose Furies are sounding their cry. Though the daughter is often consciously unaware of it, "everything in her nature demands relatedness to Life" (Woodman, p. 109). While the surrender to the feminine process may appear to be rejection of Life, a leap into a black abyss, it is the sacrifice the daughter must make if she is to recover her connection with her body and its mysterious cycles, repair the split between body and soul, and bring to balance her feminine and masculine principles—in short, to live fully, to be whole.

The descent, the task of reclaiming her body, is far from easy. It is, according to Murdock (1990) part of a "heroine's journey" which has no "defined guideposts or recognizable tour guides" (p. 3):

There is no map, no navigational chart, no chronological age when the journey begins. It follows no straight lines. It is a journey that seldom receives validation from the outside world; in fact the out world often sabotages and interferes with it. (p. 3)

The descent stage of the heroine's journey is both terrifying and exciting. It may involve weeks, months, or years of seemingly endless "wandering, grief, and rage, of dethroning kings, of looking for the lost pieces of self and connecting with the dark feminine" (Murdock, p. 8). It is often a period a silence, of learning to listen to one's body, of being
instead of doing. To family and friends, it may appear that the daughter is depressed or withdrawn, while in actuality she is gestating, being nourished, growing. In a entry from her personal journal, Murdock describes this descent:

This is uncharted territory. It's dark, moist, bloody, and lonely. I see no allies, no comfort, no signs out. I feel scraped open and raw. I look for the dismembered parts of myself--something recognizable--but there are only fragments and I don't know how to put them together. This is unlike any struggle I've had before. It's not the conquest of the other, it's coming face to face with myself. I walk naked looking for the Mother. Looking to reclaim the parts of myself that have not seen the light of day. They must be here in the darkness. They wait for me to find them because they no longer trust. I have disowned them before. They are my treasures but I have to dig for them. This journey is not about some fairy godmother showing me the way out. I dig...for patience, for the courage to endure the dark, for the perseverance not to rise to the light prematurely, cutting short my meeting with the Mother. (p. 9)

For the father's daughter, the changes are often slow and subtle. Woodman (1985) emphasizes that females making this journey must live in the process, rather than be driven towards the goal (being versus doing). For the goal is wholeness and wholeness is a continual and cyclic process of life, death, and rebirth that encompasses a life time and beyond. Indeed, the process is Life itself. Despite the pain and darkness of the heroine's journey, the sense of self, of wholeness that begins to emerge make the trip well worth it. Despite the lack of support or understanding by family, community, or society, the heroine's growing sense of connection with her inner and outer feminine vessel empowers her to continue her journey. Despite the trials and lack of affirmation, the further she continues on her journey, the deeper the healing she experiences, the greater the impossibility of ever turning back. As Woodman (cited by Murdock, 1990), who herself has experienced the heroine's journey advises and encourages other heroines, "...if you travel far enough, one day you will recognize yourself coming down the road to meet
yourself. And you will say--YES" (p. 12).

Healing for the father's daughter comes in finding her own life in her own body, differentiating her own feminine, and integrating her own feminine and masculine principles. As Woodman (1980) warns, wholeness--healing--involves not choosing one principle over the other, but holding the tension between them. When the "masculine is unbound and the feminine unveiled " (Woodman, 1985, p. 172), together they can interact in the inner and external realms. As her feminine and masculine come into balance the battle cry of the father's daughter, "I, my father's daughter" is transformed to the heroine's conviction, "Your logic is sound, but my body is my truth" (Woodman, 1985, p. 132). For Woodman, this is the "new myth," honoring the body while also honoring the soul and the spirit that connects them.

It is the father's daughter turned heroine who introduces this new myth to society, for her healing extends to the cultural as well as the personal realm. As Woodman (1980, 1985) explains, the feminine principle in Western culture has been not only devalued but repeatedly and devastatingly raped for centuries so that it is now profoundly distorted. The rejection of her body by the father's daughter is the epitome of present-day cultural distortion of and alienation from the feminine. Yet, it is not only the father's daughter who has lost her mother; her whole family, community, and culture are Motherless children. As the father's daughter re-enters the dark womb of her feminine unconscious, as she claims, inhabits, cherishes, and sanctifies her body and its functions, she becomes the heroine who reclaims for self and culture the connection with the lost Mother. In doing so, she gives birth to the feminine in and for the culture that so
desperately needs to reconnect with its Mother. It is in this sense that the heroine lives the words of Joan Halifax (cited by L'Amoreaux, 1995, text pages unnumbered):

May my body be a prayer stick for the world.
Weeds and Seeds

For what has been valued in the West in women has been too often been defined only in relation to the masculine...[T]his collective model (and the behavior it leads to) is inadequate for life; we mutilate, de potentiate, silence, and enrage ourselves trying to compress our souls into it, just as surely as our grandmothers deformed their fully breathing bodies with corsets for the sake of an ideal.

Sylvia Brinton Perera
Descent to the Goddess

Our eyes are trained to search

to see our bodies

as problems that must be solved-

What if our bodies

were ours to master,

not the province of pills

or diet shakes, our own machines


to use however we wanted,

with variations here and there,

room for the slim and the curved

the angular and the heavy,

each one of us pushing the other

on, not holding anyone back.

Allison Joseph
Women become all eyes 
at spas...measure themselves 
and then each other....
I wish they would just 
get naked 
in that lighted, mirrored 
room in 
endless reflections 
of Rubens mounds 
of breasts and arms and hips 
and dance 
as goddesses 
with each other.
Anne Giles Rimbey....... I had forgotten how to see myself 
or another, without turning... 
Slipping slowly through heat-marbled waters... 
My body opens in warmth 
and I can't look away, seized 
by the beauty of bodies 
around me: sloping breasts and rounded 
carving, the lower gardens 
of moss and honeyed fruit....

I remember, I remember!
Kim Ly Bui-Burton

here is what i have...
poems
big thighs
lil tits
&

so much love.
Ntozake Shange
As the result of the first wave of feminism in the late 1800's and the second, begun in the late 1960's, females today have greatly increased political, economic, and social opportunity and stature. Despite lingering prejudices and subtle or even blatant discrimination, contemporary females have made enormous strides in achieving political and economic rights and power, and in attaining equality with males. More than any other time in history, it seems females are free to become all they are capable of being. What more could a female ask? Although she may not know what to ask for or how, she knows from a place deep within that something is missing, something is fundamentally wrong with this picture.

As a whole, the hard won accomplishments and substantial advances by and for females cannot be totally dismissed or minimized. For, according to Faludi (1991), the backlash which has been mobilized in a counterassault on these gains testifies to the strength of female power being realized. It is not coincidental or surprising, then, that at a time when females have won greater rights and privileges there is a resurgence and fortification of masculine standards. Faludi points out:
The truth is that the last decade has seen a powerful counter assault on women's rights, a backlash, an attempt to retract the...hard-won victories that the feminist movement did manage to win for women. This counterassault is...a version of the Big Lie [see chapter one]; it stands the truth boldly on its head and proclaims that the very steps that have elevated women's position have actually led to their downfall....[Backlash] is part of a relentless whittling down process--much of it amounting to outright propaganda--that has served to stir women's private anxieties and break their political wills....[Regarding the hard-won victories], the opposition doesn't simply go along with the reversal: it digs in its heels, brandishes its fists, builds walls and dams. And its resistance creates countercurrents and treacherous undertows....The force and furor of the backlash churn beneath the surface, largely invisible to the public eye. (p. xviii)

This backlash is difficult to refute or discredit because it is not a consciously formed or deliberately organized movement and as such, as Faludi implies, it is insidious. The lack of overt orchestration not only makes backlash harder to recognize, but makes it all the more powerful and effective. Backlash is most powerful, Faludi (1991) insists, when it "goes private, when it lodges within a woman's mind and turns her vision inward" (p. xxiii) until she begins to enforce the backlash on herself and others. Because of the insidious nature of backlash it "denies its own existence" while pointing an accusatory finger at those who name it or call its bluff. Insidious or not, it is significant that the backlash is triggered by the advancements in women's rights; and just as females seem closer than ever to achieving their full political, social, and economic power, they are deterred, if not struck down by backlash.

What is it that the backlash is fiercely protesting? What is it that is so powerful and fearful that an all out assault is being waged to prevent its full realization? What is it that, despite their great strides, gnaws at females, insisting that something--something deeply fundamental--is still missing? It is the awesome and powerful feminine, the collective and personal feminine principle that is attempting to make itself known. As
Sullivan (1992) sees it, the rejection of the feminine principle and the idealization of the masculine is occurring in ways that go beyond any historical precedent. It is without precedent precisely because the probability of the re-emergence of the feminine is without precedent. While the feminine principle remains largely underground, thanks to the women's movement it is no longer dormant but stirring in the womb, positioning itself for rebirth. The feminine principle which has been subdued and drugged by masculine fear for nearly 5000 years is threatening an emergence that strikes terror in the collective heart of the patriarchy.

Considering the very real potential for the full emergence of the feminine principle, the force of the backlash is enormous. The desperate focus of the backlash is, not surprisingly, aimed at the ultimate and powerful feminine vessel, the female body. Backlash strives, with an intensity never before known before, to alienate the female from her body, thus disconnecting her from the source of her power as well as that which gives her meaning and authenticity. Using the parlance of the feminist movement, the backlash mollifies modern females insisting that they can "have it all." Indeed, with the political, social, and economic gains she has enjoyed, the female, as the backlash paradoxically emphasizes, has more than ever before. The implication, however, is that the female should be content with what she has for, as the backlash would have her believe, she already has is all and need not strive for more. Yet without connection to her body, the female has nothing of herself, no connection to the feminine.

As Faludi explained earlier, the backlash is so insidious that it subtly yet decisively coerces females to internalize its rhetoric. It is a rhetoric that has created and
sustained female alienation from her body by dictating a beauty ideal that has little or nothing to do with her actual physicality. Specifically, this beauty ideal promotes thinness, if not emaciation—a standard that is the antithesis of the naturally rounded and curved fullness of the female body. As a result, the most widespread expression of alienation from her body is manifest as an obsession about her weight. In the same vein, Chernin (1991) observes that the "tyranny of slenderness" (p. 1) induced by the backlash is manifest in females as an inordinate fear of being fat. Chernin maintains that the backlash has, in many ways, attempted to transform the women's liberation movement into the "women's reduction movement" (p. 101), socially, psychically, and physically. Differentiating women's liberation from women's reduction, she explains:

In the feminist group it is largeness in a woman that is sought, the power and abundance of the feminine, the assertion of a woman's right to be taken seriously, to acquire weight, to widen her frame of reference, to be expansive, enlarge her views, acquire gravity, fill out, and gain a sense of self-esteem. It is always a question of widening, enlarging, developing and growing. But in the [women's reduction] groups the women are trying to reduce themselves; and the metaphoric consistency of this is significant: they are trying to make themselves smaller, to narrow themselves, to become lightweight, to lose gravity, to be-little themselves. Here, the emphasis is placed on shrinking and diminution, confinement and contraction, a loss of pounds, a losing of flesh, a falling of weight, a lessening...Thus, in the feminist groups the emphasis is significantly upon liberation—upon release of power, the unfettering of long suppressed ability, the feeling of one's potential, a woman shaking off restraints and delivering herself from limitations. But in the [reduction] groups the emphasis is upon restraint and prohibition, the keeping watch over appetites and urges, the confining of impulses, the control of the hungers of the self. (p. 100)

Indeed, the whole culture is involved in a backlash against the feminine via the female body, attempting to keep females from developing their bodies, their appetites, and their powers. Females are rewarded for their compliance or punished with isolation and denigration if they chose to defy the ideal. In seeking to survive in a patriarchal
culture, females, more than ever before, are finding their bodies to be prisons, cages of flesh that require strict control in order that the perfection of the mind and masculine values can be pursued. The female is a near total stranger in her own body.

The Cult of Thinness

In an age when traditional notions about females are being challenged and their roles are being redefined, a rigid and compelling standard of beauty has emerged--one that has locked females into a struggle with and hatred for their bodies. Enormous pressure is being placed on females to attain a remarkably rigid and antithetical female body ideal: thinness. "A woman can never be too rich or too thin" is the modern dictum with which most females would nod their heads in agreement; and while it may be impossible for all but a lucky few to be wealthy, it is certainly within the realm of possibility for any female to be thin. Hundreds of times a day females are reminded of this ideal: radio, television, billboards, magazines, movies, books, and more are dictating to females how they must look and telling them how to do it. Females are targeted for and inundated with advertising for diet centers and aids, pills and devices for "quick" weight loss, fitness programs and workout equipment, exercise videos, surgical augmentation or reduction, and fashions that hide "unsightly bulges" and give the illusion of a "sleek figure." So prevalent is the message proclaiming female thinness that it is all but impossible to avoid or ignore it. So insidious is the underlying motive for the message that it is virtually impossible to detect or see beyond the dictates of this unattainable standard (Cherin, 1981).

Just as Athena modeled the ideal female mentality, it was Twiggy whose body
demonstrated and ushered in the modern and stringent ideal for the female body. The ideal body, as all today's females know, is "lithe, lean, without a trace of cellulite, flab, or jiggly adipose tissue" (Seid, 1989, p. 215). This grueling standard has been adopted, nourished, promoted, and sustained for society by the modeling industry. In the television documentary, *The Famine Within* (Gilday, 1990), one modeling agent describes the ideal female body: "Her height is 5' 10"--6;" weight, 110-120 pounds; her dress size is 4, or 6 tops; and she is drop dead gorgeous." Another modeling agent adds that the perfect female body has "broad shoulders," "a long neck and long legs," and "a 34B bust, 24 inch waist, and 34-35 inch hips are standard. 36 starts getting up there." Both agents admit this ideal body type is extremely rare. In fact, only 4 out of every 40,000 females fit this description; and within the modeling and advertising industry, these few females are touched up to be made even more "perfect." What the average female sees, then, is these "unretouched" (note it is unretouched, not untouched) beauties who model the ideal and perfect body. These models mirror what females have come to believe is their own potential for a perfect body and unending happiness.

Twenty five years ago--as the women's liberation movement was in its infancy--the physical ideal may have been attainable, for the average model weighed only 8 percent less than the average female. Contemporary models, however, typically weight 23 percent less than the average female. Furthermore, the average weight of females has increased in those twenty five years, so that the gap between "real" females and the ideal is greater than ever before (Gilday, 1990). Not coincidentally, twenty five years ago, "women's magazines" had very few articles or ads about dieting, make-up, anti-aging, or
exercise and fitness; whereas today that is far from the reality.

With today's average female standing 5'3" and weighing 144 pounds, and with the intensification and sanctification of an unattainable body ideal, females have learned to despise their bodies, ignoring its needs and losing touch with its rhythms. Instead, they have become preoccupied with food and fat and physical perfection. The typical female has learned that thin is normal and everything else is an aberration. She is told hundreds of times a day what she should look like. Yet when measuring herself against this standard, she falls short—and falling short of the ideal, the female feels shame. In what becomes a vicious cycle, she attempts to avoid the shame by controlling her body, constantly triumphing over its demands. Chernin (1989) describes the effects of this shame-filled cycle:

Many of us have known it in ourselves and we realize that most women have known it at some time; and there are even further extremes, conditions of despair with the body, when the shame is so great that the body is quite simply and dramatically lost...[Our] bodies are disowned, alienated, foreign, perhaps stubbornly present but not truly a part of the real self....And it follows then that we must begin to experience our bodies as if they were constantly threatening to rage out of control. This is the inevitable result of our struggle to assert the preeminence of our will—this flesh we seek to conquer and subdue now confronts us as an alien from the other side of a division we have created in ourselves. (p. 53)

The division Chernin speaks of is the split between mind and body. For the shame-filled quest for thinness requires that the female exert incessant control over her body; and as the body is continually in need of food and expressive of its other needs, the quest for thinness becomes a matter of mind over body. Beauty becomes not a matter of money but self-discipline and control. Seeking thinness, the female will often drive herself to unbelievable feats, even starvation, to demonstrate her ability to exert mind
over body. In effect, control becomes even more important than thinness. Chernin (1981) observes that most females admire the ability in others to control bodily appetites and needs:

[W]e admire the success of their efforts to impose upon the natural body a shape and form which is the product of culture and reflects the power of the mind...[T]his motive toward the body's starvation may escape us when we reflect upon ourselves. But it is the same will to conquer and subdue the body, to adapt it to a cultural standard that is not appropriate for it, that drives our own obsession with the body. (p. 47)

In identifying with the mind and proving its mastery by controlling the body, females have found a comfortable connection with the masculine, a means of surviving in the male dominated world, an equality of sorts with males, and, especially, power. Thinness, the mind control needed to attain it, and, thus, the devaluation of and disconnection with her feminine, allows the female to move with relative ease in the patriarchal world. In this sense, she has found that thinness equals power. Thinness announces the renunciation of her femaleness, and proclaims instead power, that is, identification with masculine values.

It is easy to see why, initially, thinness was synonymous with competence and intelligence; and, therefore, the quest of it was seen primarily in upwardly mobile females. While this was true for awhile, Seid (1989) reports that "thinness lust" has "infected" (p. 225) nearly all social, minority, and ethnic groups. Females of all ages, colors, professions, and regions are clearly hearing and heeding the message of thinness. Even feminists and other "enlightened" females are not immune to the tyranny of thinness. For all females, Chernin (1981) acknowledges the complexity and difficulty of the struggle, saying that while females as a whole
may be committed to the idea of growth and development,...[but] in certain, unexamined aspects of ourselves,...we express [consent to societal standards] in our body, we are still striving for conformity. The behavior we direct towards the social world may well express our radical orientation towards a woman's self-development. But the behaviors we direct towards our own body express our implicit loyalty to the conventional world. (p. 108)

"I'd Rather Be Dead"

As we have seen, it is not a coincidence that at a time when females are realizing greater equality and are on the brink of birthing their full power, only females with perfect bodies--thin bodies--are given attention and preference. In order to be thin--in order to survive--the female must deny her body using her mind to control and dominate it. In the quest for thinness, the female body has been profoundly manipulated, distorted, and disowned. In the desire to thin, weight becomes an obsession and, as such, the most important component for how females feel about themselves (Gilday, 1990). The morning weigh-in often determines the female's mood for the day; it rules her self-esteem and affects all areas of her life. As one young woman confides, "The scales are my evaluator" (Gilday).

In a recent survey (reported in Famine, 1990), when asked "What would make you happiest?" a majority of females chose "losing weight" over all other possibilities. Accordingly, and not surprisingly, one out of every two females is on a diet. The same survey found that while 75 percent of the females interviewed considered themselves overweight, 45 percent were actually underweight. When comparing their bodies to the ideal, it is not surprising that females have a distorted body image--one that tells them they are "fat" when in actuality they may be of average weight or lower. Whereas a
distorted body image was formerly associated with severe and pathological eating disorders, it is now considered normal among most females (Gilday). In fact, most females, influenced by the ideal, have no idea what their body actually looks like or how it functions.

Females are striving for thinness with "desperate intensity, as if it were their one true vocation, as if their lives depended on it" (Gilday, 1990). Indeed, more females fear getting fat than dying. Attesting to the intensity of the fear of being fat, Chernin (1989) poignantly demonstrates:

In this era, when nuclear war has become a serious danger, when violent crime is on the increase and unemployment a persistent social fact, five hundred people are asked by the pollsters what they fear most in the world and one hundred and ninety of them answer that their greatest fear is "getting fat." (p. 36)

One emaciated young woman echoes her cultural sisters' sentiments, candidly admitting, "Thin is in. I'd rather be dead than fat" (Gilday).

Thinness requires overriding the body's need for food, controlling one's appetite. As such, females have learned to nourish others freely, but never themselves. Socially, they are restricted to eating only small amounts of food: salad sans dressing and mineral water are the standard for lunch, and finishing all that is on her supper plate is gauche if not gluttonous. For females to feed their hunger "frankly and with pleasure violates what has become a deeply entrenched taboo" (Gilday, 1990). Indeed, eating has become, in many ways, equated with the sexuality that is associated with Eve--it is sinful and shameful, and, at all costs, must not be indulged but controlled. For the female, then, normal eating to satisfy her appetite is akin to overeating, and overeating correlates to powerlessness. It is in this vein that Seid (1989) asserts that "overeating = powerlessness"
(p. 230) has become one of the fundamental equations of our time.

In the cult of thinness, a curved body, a voluptuous body—a female body—is a failed body. It is fat that makes the female body round. So, it is fat that is the enemy. Fat is despised and feared; and if thinness equals power, fat signals powerlessness in the masculine world. Fat is clear evidence of lack of control. It is ugly; it is repulsive.

Primarily, though, at an unconscious level, fat is enormously threatening to a culture that fears the feminine, for it is, in large part, what makes the female body female. In general, females have 15-20 percent more body fat than males. The female body is naturally designed to store fat, a substance which is vital to the reproductive cycle. For a young girl's body to begin ovulation and menstruation, her body fat typically must be one quarter of her total weight; and in order to ensure continued and proper functioning of her menstrual cycle, the female must maintain a slightly higher amount of body fat than when she first menstruated (Rome, 1992). Fat, or adipose tissue, is typically stored in the female body in the breasts, hips, and thighs; with pregnancy and maturity, these fat stores increase. Without proper amounts of fat, the female becomes unable to menstruate, loses her natural curves and contour, loses that which is naturally female. As Chernin (1989) observes:

Because it is nature, the body of a woman grows fuller before the menstrual cycle, takes on water and rounds itself out as if passing through a pregnancy...we eat more food before a period, to sustain our bodies....Because it is nature, the body of a woman after childbirth grows fuller, the hips grow larger, and the breasts become heavier; with every child the thighs are less like the thighs of an adolescent; a softness comes to our flesh, we grow larger with the body's knowledge of life and of birth. And then later, in menopause, when we begin to round our lives, we grow more ample than we were before; we are deepened by life and broadened by experience. These things are according to nature. But we who have determined to conquer the nature in our bodies, experience these events with alarm. (p. 53)
Seid (1989) adds:

The whole "weight" of our culture has combined to convince us that what is normal for women is abnormal and excessive....It is normal that as women proceed with maturation, their metabolic and endocrine systems tend to conserve or add to fat stores. Each pregnancy reinforces this tendency. By the time she is in her forties or fifties, the normal woman has about 38 percent body fat and has gained about twenty to thirty pounds...[Rather than being regarded as] marks of maturity, trophies of a body that has fulfilled its destiny and been marked with a fascinating map of its odyssey...[each pound of fat] is regarded with shame. (p. 264)

The quest for thinness and morbid fear of the fat which is a natural and necessary part of femaleness is not only experienced by adult women. Young girls are increasingly being made to feel their bodies are unacceptable. A 1988 study (reported in Famine, 1990) indicates that upwards of 80 percent of all fourth grade girls have been on a diet. One ten year shares her concerns about being fat:

I am worried about getting fat because, well, I've never been fat and I don't want to be fat. I don't like the thought of being fat. I like the thought of being skinny. (Gilday, 1990)

Even more alarming than fourth graders' concern about fat is the mounting evidence that more and more parents are underfeeding their infant daughters in an attempt to control their weight (Gilday).

So driven are females in the quest for thinness, so engulfed are they by the fear of fat--the fear of being female--that more and more are dieting to the point of starvation. Anorexia, rare twenty five years ago, has increased in incidence dramatically. While anorexia affects males as well as females, 90 percent of all anorectics are female. This disease--dis-ease with one's body--is not only extremely unhealthy, but so severe that an astounding 15 percent of all anorectics die. Nevertheless, the anorectic female has become a cultural heroine, and her vision of thinness "may well be the vision of our
time" (Chernin, 1989, p. 68). Females who are not anorectic often secretly admire their sisters who are. A young woman tells of seeing a picture of an emaciated Karen Carpenter on the cover of a magazine shortly after she died from anorexia. The woman vividly remembers thinking, "She is so thin--she looks great. How can I get that way without dying" (Gilday, 1990).

As Chernin (1989) observes, "we gaze with envy as she [the anorectic] passes us in the theater, proudly swishing her narrow hips; it is the triumph of her will we are admiring" (p. 48). It is this triumph of the will, the victory of mind over her female body that the anorectic has learned to do so well. She has dieted away her breasts and curves; her fat cells are shrunken, if not annihilated; and she is typically amenorrheic--all characteristic of a pubescent body. In fact, the onset of anorexia typically occurs precisely when a young girl is about to become a woman. It is a time when the female's body fat increases by 25 percent, preparing her for menstruation, eventual childbirth, and the subsequent production of breast milk. While increased fat in pre-adolescent females is, as discussed earlier, part of the normal developmental process, the young girl interprets it as becoming "too fat." "You reach puberty and your body starts getting out of control," an emaciated teenager unabashedly announces (Gilday, 1990). Of this dynamic, Chernin (1989) implores:

[W]hen a girl is afraid to develop a woman's body, the conflict she feels means more than even a struggle between mind and body. Anorexia nervosa now suggests that our tempestuous warfare against our bodies involves no less than a woman's identity as a woman. (p. 65)

The anorectic, the modern heroine, denies her hunger the way today's females are supposed to, and yet "proclaims a hunger so great that no available food can satisfy
Transformation

With the all encompassing, ever-present, and highly internalized cult of thinness, the future would appear decidedly and extremely grim for females. The anorectic is, perhaps, the epitome of the punishment levied on Eve, her hideously emaciated body the culmination of more than 5000 years of deprivation of the feminine. She perceives herself to be powerful and full of life, successful in a man's world, the envy of all females. However, the anorectic and the sisterhood she represents, the feminine principle she denies in herself and on behalf of an entire culture, and even the culture itself hover alarmingly close to death. Chemin (1989) speaks of the somber and frightening reality:

For the anorectic [and her battle with the feminine] it is a battle unto death with death the only possible outcome. How else can the body [the feminine] be conquered? All the rest of life's purposes must be subordinated to this single, dreadful mania...Now only the total collapse of the body can testify to the superior power of the will. (p. 51)

The feminine, it seems, is about to be starved to death, totally conquered, by the masculine—mind over matter, soul over body, endless life without transformation or death. Yet the death of the feminine would bring not eternal life or paradise, but annihilation for the masculine cannot exist without her. In fact, it is not the feminine at all who is starving, but the masculine. The anorectic displays the body and features of a male, not a female, a masculine mentality and values, not the feminine. Indeed it is the feminine for which the anorectic and the culture she represents is starving. Lack of the nourishment of the feminine for nearly 5000 years has led to the starvation of the
anorectic and her sisters past and present, as well as the entire culture.

As is the essence of the feminine, life is mysteriously transformed into death, and death to life. The death, the annihilation, that now seems so alarmingly imminent can only be transformed by the birth of the feminine. Edwina Gately (1993) describes, beautifully, this birthing:

She rose from the shadows, ancient, magnificent, cloaked in soft brown wool that smelt of moist earth, her eyes shown deep wet reflecting the wisdom of ages past, present, and yet to come. She held a rounded stone which shone like crystal and a yellow black serpent hugged her sapped bosom. Ah, she rose from the shadows of ancient history into the consciousness of millions of souls seeking wholeness, harmony and hope, longing for the wisdom of the great sleeping mother. She rose from the shadows, ancient, magnificent, and the belly of the ocean stirred as humanity groaned in her birthing. (p. 82)

While the positioning for her birthing has, as noted earlier, been largely effected by the feminist movement, the process must continue lest the feminine be stillborn.

Whereas females have struggled for and attained a feel for the feminine via unprecedented political, economic, and social advances, this is only the nesting activity, the flurry of preparation that typically precedes giving birth. What is needed to propel the
feminine from the womb? How is she to be freed from this darkness of the unconscious? What is the vehicle for her redemption? The female body--the fully accepted, honored, and loved female body will give birth to the feminine. When the sacredness of the female body is reclaimed and realized, the unconscious feminine will become conscious. For the female, to become conscious of her body and its cycles, functions, and needs is to become conscious of her feminine principle. In that possibility, notes Woodman (1992) lies the potential for healing and wholeness for herself and her culture.

If it seems that the onus of human wholeness and the healing of the culture is on the female, it in a significant way, it is. As Estes (1992) sees it, while it may be more appropriate to put culture "on the therapeutic couch" (p. 204) than the wounded female, it is the female who must bear the responsibility for her own healing. In doing so, she not only claims wholeness for herself, but begins to effect it in her culture. Estes explains:

Where there is a wound on the bodies and psyches of women, there is a corresponding wound at the same site in the culture itself, and finally on Nature herself...Although a woman may not be able to stop the dissection of culture and lands overnight, she can stop doing so to her own body....A woman cannot make the culture more aware by saying "Change." But she can change her own attitude toward herself, thereby causing devaluing projection to glance off. She does this by taking back her body. By not forsaking the joy of her natural body, by not purchasing the popular illusion that happiness is only bestowed on those of a certain configuration or age, by not waiting or holding back to do anything, and by taking back her real life, and living it full bore, all stops out. This dynamic of self-acceptance and self-esteem are what begins to change attitudes in the culture. (p. 204)

Urging females to reclaim their bodies, Estes informs us, "There is no 'supposed to be' in bodies" (p. 212). She reminds us to affirm and honor all female body types and sizes:
The breast in all its shapes has the function of feeling and feeding. Does it feed? Does it feel? It is a good breast...The hips, they are wide for a reason, inside them is a satiny ivory cradle for new life. A woman's hips are outriggers for the body above and below; they are portals, they are a lush cushion, the handholds for love, a place for children to hide behind. The legs, they are meant to take us, sometimes to propel us; they are the pulleys that help us lift, they are the ring for encircling a lover. They can never be too this or that. They are what they are...The question is not of size, shape or years, or even having two of everything, for some do not. But does this body...feel, does it have right connections to pleasure, to heart, to soul...Does it have happiness, joy? Can it in its own way move, dance, jiggle, sway, thrust? Nothing else matters. (p. 212)

Reclaiming the body, giving birth to the feminine is a long, arduous, and often painful experience--birthing usually is. It is also, however, often a time of joyous expectancy, of preparing for new life. Whatever her gestation process has entailed, it is crucial that each female give birth to herself; it is a matter of life and death. Where to start? Start here and now, in the present moment:

We can reject body size as the chief determinant of a woman's competence and worth. We can struggle to defeat the power of the reigning beauty ideal over our lives. We can attempt to fashion a different system of female priorities. And sometimes, in the brief moments when we encounter each other undressed, we may get an intimation of what self-acceptance may be like, a glimpse of the true power and beauty that lie like secrets in our natural flesh (Gilday, 1990)
Weeds and Seeds

Every woman should be overwhelmed with shame at the very thought that she is a woman.

Saint Clement

Every woman who will make herself a male will enter into the kingdom of heaven.
(from the gospel of Thomas)

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child...
(Negro spiritual)

Mother
I write home
I am alone and
give me my body back.
Susan Griffin

I don't need much. All I need is--could I--
could I have a bit of earth
to put seeds in, to make things grow?
Frances H. Burnett
The Secret Garden

And in my sleep I lay in the lap of that Great Mother and she stroke my hair, and she say, "Shhhh, honey, it gonna be all right...someday it all gonna be all right. 'Cause you is my baby and I is your Mama forever!"
Carol Lynn Pearson
Mother Wove the Morning

See, you have to pull the weeds up
to give the flowers room to grow.
Frances H. Burnett
The Secret Garden
I believe in the resurrection of the Body 
and Life everlasting. 
So be it!
(from the Apostle's Creed, adapted)

I'm ceded, I've stopped being theirs;  
The name they dropped upon my face  
With water, in the country church,  
Is finished now...

Baptized before without the choice,  
But this time consciously, of grace  
Unto supremist name,  
Called to my full, the crescent dropped,  
Existence's whole arc filled up  
With one small diadem.

My second rank, too small the first,  
Crowned, crowing on my father’s breast,  
A half conscious queen;  
But this time, adequate, erect,  
With will to choose or to reject,  
And I choose—just a throne.  
Emily Dickinson  
Love's Baptism

Suddenly a young girl appears at the side of the throne, crawls familiarly into the lap of the Black Madonna and vanishes in her embrace. Within the same movement I am drawn forward, understanding that I am this child. Discovering the Mother, I find myself already in her.

Meinrad Craighead  
The Mother's Songs
ADELE, 85

"Mother of all the Living," the title most often used for the goddess. The story...
CHAPTER 6
BACK TO THE GARDEN

The female body has become a fallow garden. Over a period of more than five centuries the garden has remained largely uncultivated. Furthermore, disuse and repeated abuse have rendered it nearly worthless. Overgrown weeds rob the soil of nutrients and constantly threaten to choke off any new sprouts that may struggle to grow. Indeed, unless and until the weeds are pulled and the garden is tilled, its extinction is not only inevitable, but immanent. What to do? How to avoid this disaster? Where to begin? It is time to return to the story of Eve, for, as we shall see, this is her garden, and as such, the garden of Everywoman.

John A. Phillips (1984) informs us that the myth of Eve is "neither unintelligible nor irrelevant...Eve is very much alive, and every member of Western society is affected by her story" (p. xiii). Eve's story is the myth of the first woman, the prototypical woman, and, as such, her story has shaped the Western ideology of females. Eve is Everywoman; her nature and destiny belong to every female in the Western world. To comprehend the story of Eve is to "discover much about the identity that has been imposed upon women in Western civilization" (Phillips, p. xiii). However, considering Eve to be the prototypical woman renders an incomplete understanding of her story. She is also the "Mother of all the Living," the title most often used for the goddess. The story of Eve
effectively begins with her death as the goddess, the Mother of all the Living, and proceeds with her rebirth as the first representative woman, Everywoman. The story of Eve, essentially, is one of the displacement, the loss of the goddess. Eve is the deposed creatrix, the Great Mother. Ashe (1976) observes:

Whatever the Life-Goddess Eve was originally like, she appears in Genesis as a Hebrew Pandora, the villainess in a story about the origin of human misfortune....She has dwindled to being merely the first woman, a troublemaker, created from a rib of the senior and dominant first man. (p. 17)

Phillips (1984) adds:

Genesis holds as incontrovertible and irreducible the dictum of Hebraic religion that God is one: "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is One" (Deut. 6:4); "I am God, and beside me there is no other" (Isa. 45:5)....[H]ere it is taken for granted that the Goddess is dead....The history of Eve begins with the appearance of Yahweh in the place of the Mother of All the Living. This shift of power marks a fundamental change in the relationship between humanity and God, the world and God, the world and humanity, and men and women. (p. 6, 15)

Eve's story, the story of the loss or death of the goddess is, in its most essential and fundamental import, a story of the rejection of the feminine principle (Ashe, 1976; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Phillips, 1984; Polster, 1992; Chernin, 1987; Demetrakopoulos, 1983). The rejection of the feminine was accomplished via splitting the aspects of the mysterious transformative cycle that were once contained and unified within the body of the goddess. That is, whereas life and death were once not only related but an inseparable, unified whole within the body of the goddess, the Genesis story effectively split and polarized these two phases of existence. In effect, the "father god takes over the role of creation while the human woman becomes responsible for destruction" (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p. 494). That is, the father god and the male made in his image appropriated the "higher" and supposedly more pure and desirable
aspects of the goddess, while the female was equated with her more murky functions of
darkness, death, and decay.

While the act of eating the apple was supposedly the grievous crime that sealed
the fate of the goddess turned Everywoman, there were signs of disunity in Eden
beforehand which heralded Eve's nemesis. In goddess mythology, the image of a garden
with four rivers and a tree in the center is an image of totality. The tree of Life was one of
the primary images of the goddess, in whose "immanent presence all pairs of opposites
are reconciled" (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p. 496). In the garden of Eden, there is no
unifying manifestation of the goddess for there are two trees; that is, the one tree is split
in two. The one tree which offered knowledge and life, wisdom and immortality is split
apart. Campbell (1976) notes that

The principle of mythic dissociation, by which God and his world, immortality and
mortality, are set apart in the Bible is expressed in a dissociation of the Tree of
Knowledge from the Tree of Immortal Life. (p. 106)

Baring & Cashford add:

Here, knowledge of good and evil is split apart from eternal life, so that a perception
of duality is rendered absolutely antithetical to a perception of life's unity....In
Genesis, the activities of divinely caused birth and mortally caused death set
immortal and mortal, eternity and time, against each other, where before they could
be perceived together in relationship. Now the father god gives birth through the
Word, and the mortal mother of the human race gives death because of disobedience
to the word of Yahweh. How else could it be understood except as a human betrayal
of the divine, as an "original sin, the sin that was there in the beginning of the race,
that is, inherent in the nature of humanity? (p. 498)

With the advent of Yahweh, male monotheism became the instrument of a
"psychocultural revolution" (Ruether, 1983, p. 73) that effected a split in the surrounding
goddess centered reality. The split created a dualism of transcendent mind or soul over
immanent and inferior physical nature. Not surprisingly, gender was the primary symbol for the dualism of soul and matter, transcendence and immanence, life and death (see chapter one). As such, Eve-Everywoman, whose body imaged the dethroned goddess, and whose body, therefore, imaged the feminine, is given a negative identity by and in relation to the male god; she is required to be submissive to the human male; and she is relegated with matter and the fecund goddess to the lower and seamy realm of nature.

In Genesis, humanity is left without the goddess, without an image of wholeness--without the feminine principle. In its place and, as the Genesis myth implies, inherent in the nature of humanity, is duality--a hierarchical duality that divides and polarizes the body of the goddess, separating life from death, humanity from the divine, the divine and humanity from nature, mind from matter, soul from body, male from female, masculine from feminine. Whereas the goddess and her mysterious body were once understood to be an "organic, alive and sacred whole" (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p. xi), she is now split in half, less than whole, capable only of sin, destruction, and death. In Eve, the goddess is given a "fatally new and limited meaning" (p. xiii). Eve the Mother of all the Living is the depotentiated and demythologized Great Mother; she is the symbol of the loss of the feminine whole--she is Everywoman.

For Ruether (1983) the loss of the feminine has effectively removed humanity from the "original harmony" of the "primordial matrix," and resulted in a "false system of alienated dualisms" (p. 71) that distort and oppress all relationships. Baring & Cashford (1991) understand the loss of the feminine principle to be the loss of a "valid expression of the sanctity and unity of life" (p. xii). For Sjoo & Mor (1991), it is the loss between the
human and the divine of "direct, continuous physical-emotional-spiritual relationship;" that is, connection between the "experienced self and the All is broken" (p. 417). As Sullivan (1992) understands it, human wholeness has been sacrificed with the loss of the feminine principle. Nowhere, however, is the loss more clearly visible and obviously acute than for Everywoman; for her the loss of the feminine is a matter of exigency and, as this thesis has demonstrated, now threatens her with annihilation. For Everywoman, the loss of the feminine has resulted in disconnection from her body, that is, her essence, her spirit, her life force as mirrored in the body of the Great Mother.

Implications for Pastoral Counseling

What has the story of Eve to do with pastoral counseling? How do the implications of her story pertain to the therapeutic setting? What impact does the disconnection from the goddess, the feminine, the female body have on pastoral counseling? The answer can only be, "Absolutely everything!" For pastoral counseling is about wholeness—that is, its process concerns the integration of all aspects of one's being, the bridging of splits, the healing of brokenness. The pastoral counselor is invested in wholeness and as such she takes on the role of a prophet, shaking, if not pulling, the roots of the weeds of the status quo, those alienating dualities that are the foundation of Western culture. She invites individuals and society to journey back to the garden—not the garden of Eden but the garden of the goddess—in order that wholeness may be realized as the feminine is cultivated, reclaimed, and brought to balanced integration with the masculine. This final chapter will discuss the tools the pastoral counselor may use to cultivate the feminine principle as it pertains to the therapeutic setting as a whole, the
female developmental process in particular, and, as has been the focus of this thesis, the spirituality of the female body.

The Therapeutic Setting

The psychological theories that undergird the knowledge, values, style and practice of the majority of pastoral counselors, and indeed most of the therapeutic profession, is based on a male and masculine norm. This exclusion of the feminine, Sullivan (1992) asserts, has so skewed therapists' understanding of their work "that profoundly healing aspects of the clinical encounter have been overlooked" (p. 30). She contends:

[Having] been skewed in a masculine direction...our understanding of what we do and what is helpful in what we do has been distorted by a worldview that values rationality, logic, and a stereotyped version of the hard sciences, at the expense of art, emotional meanings, and intuition. In many, many ways this masculine perspective provides an inhospitable attitude for psychotherapy, but rather than shifting our values and our conceptions, we have tried to cram our profession into this mold. (p. 30)

"This mold" is medical model which teaches therapists to diagnose the patient, devise a treatment plan, and then implement that plan in order to cure the client of illness. Stiver (1991) explains that this traditional model of therapy is based on two assumptions. The first is that treatment of the client requires the therapist to be objective, nonemotional, and relatively impersonal in order to be most helpful to the client. The second assumption is that growth and change can only occur if the therapist does not gratify the client's needs for connection. Thus, this masculine, medical model is predicated on objectivity, nonemotionality, separation, and authoritarian expertise. Accordingly, the ideal therapist is seen as detached, impersonal, objective, and scientific.
As Sullivan describes it, the ideal therapist views the client from "a distance in the bright light of the sun" and knows "all there is to be known about the [client's] illness and the healthy human condition into which he must be formed" (p. 79).

An increasing uneasiness with the traditional medical/masculine model, a more enlightened understanding of female development, and a growing awareness of the need to reclaim the feminine principle and integrate it with the masculine have induced a growing number of therapists to examine the presuppositions that guide the therapeutic world. Therapists such as Sullivan, Miller, Surrey, Stiver, Gilligan, Chodorow, and many others are questioning the effectiveness, even the ethicality, of the traditional model of therapy. The belief that all growth occurs in connection is stirring these therapists to incorporate the feminine principle in their work with clients. The core feminine experience as described by Sullivan (1992) is one of being "immersed in the living world, one link in an infinite being linked with all of life" (p. 20). Accordingly, the feminine in the therapeutic setting is based on connection, relationship.

What does therapy based on the feminine principle or relational model look like? It considers woundedness versus pathology, healing versus cure, growth versus modification or adjustment, caring and empathy versus authoritarian expertise, journeying with versus professional detachment, and wholeness versus perfection. It is a receptive approach and mutual process that involves being with instead of doing. Regarding mutuality, Jordan (1991) explains that in therapy employing the feminine principle, the client's subjective experience is at the center of the process, while the therapist offers herself to be used for the healing. In this context, "there is an important
feeling of mutuality, with mutual respect, emotional availability, and openness to change on both sides" (Jordan, p. 95). In this environment both client and therapist grow. As Jordan explains:

[Good] therapy is characterized by a process of mutual change and impact. Both therapist and patient are touched emotionally by each other, grow in the relationship, gain something from one another, risk something of themselves in the process—in short, both are affected, changed, part of an open system of feeling and learning. There is significant mutuality. (p. 288)

Regarding being receptive, the therapist is neither a tabula rasa nor passive. Rather, she is actively receptive. For Sullivan (1992), this means receiving the client nonjudgementally, with empathy—that is, welcoming the client's whole being into the therapeutic process. The receptive approach believes that everything the client needs is inside her or his own being waiting to be mobilized and actualized. Thus, instead of trying to act on the client, the therapist attempts to receive from the client what her or his psyche is trying to produce or make known.

Finally, the feminine approach to therapy is focused on being rather doing (see chapter 3). Kaplan (1991) explains that being with is a place of not-knowing, of experiencing, of existing in the dark. It is predicated on the premise that psychic health is not based on eradicating illness and woundedness, but on experiencing and containing these states. As Sullivan (1992) instructs, being with is an attitude that accept[s] the patient as he is now, not trying to hurry him along to a higher stage of development or to a healthier version of existence...He will have a more intact state only if we accept him in his present state, in all the dreadful pain. As long as we reject his chaos, seeking to "improve" the state of his psyche, his psyche is left with its desperate, frantic need to be seen and accepted now, as we can cherish him in this current imperfect state he will settle into it, experiencing his own reality, and believing in his own being. From this place, his psyche can begin to develop and grow. The client's health, wholeness, depends on recognizing, repossessing, and
experiencing his inner state, however imperfect or painful. The therapist's unswerving commitment to being with is essential to the healing process. As the client embraces his woundedness, it is no longer seen as an impediment to growth but as that while enables wholeness. (p. 101)

Furthermore, in embracing her or his woundedness, the client no longer projects it outward but claims it as her or his own.

Castrated Male or a Different Voice?

Not only does male and masculine normative theory exclude the feminine principle, but it views the male developmental process as normative and the female as a deviation from this norm. Although the inferiority of females had already been established for centuries, depth psychology as fathered by Freud was certainly based on this dynamic. As Hyde (1985) sees it, Freud's phallocentric theory articulates "age-old myths and images about women in scientific language" (p. 50). According to Freud, a female is a castrated male. The feelings about castration are manifest in "penis envy," or as Freud explains, "Girls notice the penis of a brother or playmate, strikingly visible and of large proportions, at once recognize it as the superior counterpart of their own small and inconspicuous organ, and from that time forward fall victim to envy for the penis" (cited by Hyde, p. 44). In the same vein--and in keeping with Western tradition--Freud blames little girls for the castration anxiety experienced by little boys, asserting that a boy's observations of a girl's anatomy provides undeniable proof of the reality of castration. Furthermore, a girl's unsuccessful resolution of the Oedipal complex (due to penis envy) creates an immature superego and "lifelong feelings of inferiority, a predisposition to jealousy, and intense maternal desire" (cited by Hyde, p. 45). Freud's phallocentric theory provided the basis for the male normative psychological theories that
Karen Horney was one of the first in the field of psychology to question the absolutism of the male norm. She challenged Freud's notion of penis envy with her own theory of womb awe or womb envy. Horney asserts that penis envy is not a critical factor in female development. Furthermore, she insists, "womb envy...represents an overcompensation for [male] feelings of anatomical inferiority" (1924, p. 58). Indeed, Bettleheim (1962) has since found that womb envy is a very real influence and penis envy has been greatly exaggerated. Jean Baker Miller (1991) contends that, for girls, "there is no major crisis of 'cutting off' anything" (p. 18), and that it is highly unlikely that the Oedipal stage exists in a girl's developmental process. Interestingly, Chodorow (1978) agrees with Freud that girls do indeed have penis envy; but far from being based in the recognition of the supposed superiority of the penis, it stems from the realization that the penis symbolizes the power males have in our culture.

Although Horney was one of the first to publicly and professionally question and dispute male normative psychology, it is only recently that others have begun in earnest to discover, develop, and deploy a more enlightened understanding of the female developmental process. While there is no one theory of female development, the consistent thread that all the theories about females contain is the seemingly innate and, indeed, vital developmental need of the female to be in relationship, to be connected. Far from Freud's emphasis on instinctual drives and separation as the basis for growth, Surrey (1991) insists that for females "there is no need to disconnect or to sacrifice relationships for self-development" (p. 53). Self-in-relation--that is, the deepening
capacity for relationships and relational competence--is the goal of female development (Surrey). Miller (1976) concurs; she speaks for most female developmental theorists explaining that a female's "sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to maintain affiliation and relationship" (p. 81).

The concurrent works of Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan have provided a significant contribution to our understanding of the female developmental process--contributions that seriously challenge male normative theory. Chodorow and Gilligan have deconstructed the theories of Freud, Kohlberg, Piaget, and Erikson, reconstructing a more appropriate and realistic developmental process for females. Both theorists have found that females and males are indeed different and distinct; neither gender is superior or inferior, rather, each relates to the world differently and possesses distinct values based on differing developmental processes. As Chodorow (1978) explains:

[G]irls emerge from this period [early development] with a basis for "empathy" built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not...Girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own (or thinking that one is so experiencing another's needs or feelings). Furthermore, girls do not define themselves in terms of the denial of preoedipal relational modes to the same extent as do boys. Therefore, regression to these modes tends not to feel as much a basic threat to their ego. From very early, then, because they are parented by a person of the same gender...girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuos with and related to the external object-world, and as differently oriented to their inner object-world as well. (p. 167)

Chodorow adds that, while male identity is achieved through separation from the mother, female identity is defined through a continuos relationship with and attachment to the mother. Thus it is that males typically have difficulty with relationships and intimacy, while females tend to have problems with individuation and separation.

While Chodorow reexamines and redefines Freud's theory in light of female
developmental experience, Gilligan takes issue with the theories of Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg. She focuses on Kohlberg’s work and, based on her research findings, reformulates his theory of moral development from a female point of view. Gilligan (1982) has found that females reason and solve moral dilemmas differently than males. Females focus on caring while males stress justice; females focus on attachments between people, males on agreements and contracts; females emphasize communication and relatedness, while males, viewing people as differentiated and standing alone, underscore the rights of the individual.

For Gilligan, the fact that females tend to think differently than males is not a sign of immaturity of deficit, but is simply based on different concerns and values. In her words:

...for the very traits that traditionally have defined the "goodness" of women, their care for and sensitivity to the needs of others, are those that mark them as deficient in moral development....The consequence of maturity is derived from the study of men's lives and reflects the importance of individuation in their development....When one begins with the study of women...the moral problem arises from conflicting responsibilities rather than from competing rights and requires for its resolution a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract....This different construction of the moral problem by women may be seen as the critical reason for the failure to develop within the constraints of Kohlberg's system....The morality of rights differ from the morality of responsibility in its emphasis on separation rather than connection, in its consideration of the individual rather than the relationship as primary....The moral dilemma changes from how to exercise one's rights without interfering with the rights of others to how "to lead a moral life which includes obligation to myself and my family and people in general." (p. 18)

In light of her findings, Gilligan (1982) asserts that when females are held to a male norm, they are unable to trust their own experience or recognize it as valid, meaningful, or life-giving, thus losing their voice. Specifically, this loss of voice
manifests itself in "personal doubts that invade women's sense of themselves, compromising their ability to act on their perceptions" (Gilligan, p. 23) as well as their ability to be empowered through the creation of and reliance on mutually satisfying relationships. Nelle Morton (1985) agrees saying that because Western culture has "confused the full human experience with male experience," females have been "deprived of living out of images consistent with our own selfhood"
(p. 124). Toward reclaiming the female voice and female selfhood, Morton insists:

> If we could claim unashamedly and proudly what belongs to us, that which is ourselves, and if we love these aspects in ourselves and others, we would be free from the patriarchal chains that bind us into a distortion of womanhood--making us ashamed of our created selves...All women's experiences are valid data and must be respected. (p. 122, 126)

While female developmental theories necessarily highlight distinctions between female and male, they do not and cannot absolutize what it is to be female or male. They can, however, inform the growing awareness that females cannot simply copy male individuation as a way to fuller personhood. Female developmental theories reinforce for females and their therapists, as well as the culture the realization that "all women's experiences are valid" and the acknowledgment of that which "unashamedly and proudly" belongs to the female.

**Back to the Garden**

The female body has "from the very beginning" been the mirror of the Great Mother, "the essence of the feminine" (Neumann, 1963, p. 63). It was once considered to be sacred, the source of all life, the life force of the cosmos. It was whole and unbroken, all encompassing, uniting opposites in an eternal cyclic transformative process. With the
psychocultural changes that resulted in the death of the goddess—as manifest in the story of Eve—we witness the loss of an original female wholeness. As Chernin (1987) sees it, the writers of Genesis took Eve from her mother's house and set her down in a patriarchal realm. In doing so, Eve and Everywoman thereafter was not only separated from the Mother, the Tree of Life, but was also split into "Original Goddess and Patriarchal Wife" (p. 169). Eve was simply behaving as homesick child, a daughter disconnected from her Mother, when she ate the apple that fateful day in Eden. She was hungry for her Mother's flesh, desiring to possess once again wholeness in her Mother's body. Instead, Everywoman learned that quenching this hunger is forbidden; it is a temptation that must be resisted. She must be content to spend her life serving and pleasing others in the patriarchal realm that bears no resemblance whatsoever to her original garden home.

The writers of Genesis and the fathers of Western culture would have us believe that it was Eve's "sin" that precipitated the fall of humanity from unity and harmony with god into estrangement and sin; it was Eve's sin that resulted in the necessary opposition of body and mind, female and male; it was Eve's sin that required Everywoman to be subjugated and her body to be brutally maligned for centuries, to the point of near annihilation. As this thesis has demonstrated, it is not Everywoman's actions that have created dualities and human misery, but humanity's fearful response to the powerful mysteries of the feminine transformative process as witnessed in the female body.

Having experienced a split between her body and her full female power in Eden, Eve became the "carnal woman separated from her original identity" (Chernin, 1987, p. 181). Her sin was not, as Genesis would have us believe, the cause of the downfall of
"man," but the desperate attempt to live, to reconnect with the fullness of her essence in her body, her Mother. Once it was clear that Eve-Everywoman was orphaned, however, her sin was and continues to be the acceptance of and acquiescence to the false identity projected onto her. Everywoman's sin of compliance enables the alienating dualties that have wounded her to persist if not thrive, the false distinction between physical and spiritual, body and soul to continue to threaten her genuine sense of self, her wholeness, her life.

Patriarchy has been the keeper not only of the female body, but of her soul as well. It is imperative, therefore, that the female reclaim her genuine or "essential soul" (de Castillejo, 1973, p. 169) as well as her body if wholeness is to be realized. However, reconnecting with and giving genuine voice to her soul must begin with living in and honoring her body. For the soul cannot evolve if the body is not genuinely experienced (Murdock, 1990). That is, in order to be known, the soul must be embodied for it is the spirituality, the life force of the female's body that informs her soul. Demetrakopoulos (1983) refers to the process of reconnection, of body informing soul, as "transcending downward" (p. 31). That is, the soul discovers and renews itself not in the abstract realm of the mind, but by "touching, diving into, and being surrounded by the ground of being, matter-nature-mother" (Demetrakopoulos, p. 31). Indeed, as an insistent dream image of Hamilton (1992) demands, "Do not look up for guidance. Your [spirituality] has nothing to do with heaven and the concept of a God living there...Spirituality is not in the space above the earth, spirituality is the Earth--is your flesh" (p. 163). Regarding this process and the body/soul relationship, Estes (1992) challenges:
Some say the soul informs the body. But what if we were to imagine for a moment that the body informs the soul...[T]he body is a God in its own right, a teacher, a mentor, a certified guide...Is it wise to spend a lifetime chastising this teacher who has so much to give and teach? Are we strong enough to refute the party line and listen deep, listen true to our body as a powerful and holy being?...The idea in our culture of body solely as sculpture is wrong...The purpose of the body is to protect, contain, support, and fire the spirit and soul within it...It is to lift us and propel us, to fill us with feeling to prove that we exist, that we are here, to give us grounding, heft, weight. It is wrong to think of it as a place we leave in order to soar to the spirit. The body is the launcher of those experiences...In its nose capsule, the soul looks out the window into the mysterious starry night and is dazzled. (p. 206)

In other words, soul without matter is lifeless. The reality of the life force, the spirituality of the female body gives conscious birth to the reality of the life of her soul.

Woodman (1980) tells us that the genuine spiritual experience of the female "must penetrate with passion into her body and her yielding to that power brings forth [a] new creation" (p. 119). Indeed, the female body is the vehicle of creation and of her creative life force, the energy that not only activates her being but connects her to all of creation. How does the female--Everywoman--begin to reclaim her body, to reconnect with her life force, to birth a new creation? How does she begin to become whole? She begins at the beginning, not the patriarchal beginning as described in the garden of Eden, but that primordial day at the dawn of creation when "God was a woman. Do you remember?" (Stone, 1976, p. 1).

Remembering begins with the elimination of, or the desire to eliminate the sin of compliance, lessening if not clearing the body/soul of its patriarchal holds. Then, in the true spirit of the feminine, Everywoman must learn--remember--how to simply be. For it is in being, not doing, that Everywoman learns to wait, listen to, and trust the feminine spirit in her body; it is in being that she will learn to be open, receptive, and
alert to the rhythms, cycles, and wisdom of her body; it is in being that she will once
again know the sacred mystery of her body, "remembering" it not with fear but awe-filled
reverence. In remembering the mystery that is her body and honoring its seeming
paradoxes, Everywoman knows once again--as it was in the beginning--that birth is the
death of life as we have known it and death is the birth of a life we have yet to live. It is
in remembering her mystery and living it fully that Everywoman learns to live
profundely and wholly--holy--in her body. It is in living fully her mystery that
Everywoman is reconnected with her Mother. A traditional Wiccan prayer (adapted by
Sjoo & Mor, 1991) wisely urges, gently challenges, and knowingly helps us to
"remember" the Mystery of all mysteries:

Know the Mystery,
that if that which thou seest
thou findest not within thee,
thou shalt never find it without thee...
For behold

*I Have Been With Thee From The Beginning*

And I await thee now.
Blessed be. (p. 432)

The Mystery, the Mother, the essence and life force of the female body is
"remembered" most fully in the garden of the goddess. Gardens have long offered us a
concrete connection with the mystery of life and death. Estes (1992) explains:

In the garden one can see the time coming for both fruition and for dying back. In
the garden one is moving with rather than against the inhalations and the exhalations
of wild Nature...[In the garden] we acknowledge that the Life/Death-Life cycle is a
natural one. Both...life-giving and death-dealing natures are waiting to be
befriended, forever loved. (p. 100).

At the center of the garden is the Mother Tree, the Tree of Life, the symbol of
the goddess in whose immanent presence all pairs of opposites are reconciled. It is an immense hunger for Life, for her Mother, for the feminine, that launches Everywoman on her journey to the garden to partake fully of the fruit of the tree. For Everywoman the goal is to eat freely of the Tree of Life, for when she does, she remembers, she knows the "mother-ground of first experience, before the father stole the garden, usurped the mother's power, established himself in her place" (Chemin, 1987, p. 181). In her journey to the garden, her garden, Everywoman becomes the New Eve, creating the New Myth as she grows fully into her body. Listen as Chemin prophetically, expectantly, and delightfully describes Everywoman-New Eve's journey to her Body:

The New Eve began to look at me with excitement. She was flexing her muscles, kicking out her legs, running a few steps, leaping into the air. I saw her eying the walls that still closed her in the father-world..."Listen," I said..."before you leap out of the Father's garden, why not hesitate one moment longer, see what it might be like to go after that apple in full knowledge of what it means to you?"

We walked together, the new Eve and I, making our way to the Mother Tree. I looked closely at her: guide, exemplar, foremother, counselor, ancestress. Made from our clay, she would soon give birth, would inscribe the female sex with courage, visionary zeal, the capacity for taking risk, and irresistible hunger for knowledge. She was on the way to her epic act of disobedience.

It was a warm, still day of the kind you find often in Eden. Clear skies of a soft blue hung by the Mother with loving care. I noticed a flowering shrub. Milk oozed from it. A lullaby blew its breath on us. The moon hung in the west, cradled by a sun that had not yet risen. Darkness and light held the garden in equal measure. Owls cooed, doves hooted, a chariot of winged angels sailed by overhead. Fires burned along the path that led to the Mother Tree, where a stork stood in the pool from which Eve had once awakened under a shade of flowers, in her mother's lap.

The snake came out to join us. She had been watching our progress from the woods but now she came with an open mouth and one hand outstretched, pointing to the Tree of Life. I thought she was a beautiful creature, but Eve drew back, clutching my arm in dread.

"Do it, do it," I urged, from a child's sense of delight in what should not be done.
The garden was still. Black sheep grazed quietly; from the distance I heard the rattle of leaves. Light was flooding down from a sky withdrawing behind veils of blue light. The stones were speaking.

Eve stood a long time in front of the tree. It had happened so many time, in so many stories, and each time there had been the same terror and hesitation. Maybe the Rulers and the Authorities and blind Samael and the Father God were telling the truth? Maybe death awaited her? The snake stood watching. She had pointed the way to the tree. All voices were silent. It was up to Eve.

Then finally, moving in the bold grace of a woman who has grown back into her body, with a gesture that had freed itself from all dread of hunger, Eve reached out and touched the fruit. The tree split itself in two. A woman stepped from it, holding her breasts with both hands. And now, as she came toward us, the snake went to nest in her hair. In the grove next to the pool the lion lay down with the lamb, The angel Eleleth parked her chariot at the crossroads and the tree grew whole. It put forth the apples and figs and peaches and pomegranates, while doves and oysters and cherubs and pigs came to nestle in its branches, to cast down upon us her freely given, never forbidden, freshly primordial fruit. (p. 182)
APPENDIX

LETTERS OF PERMISSION FOR COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL
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VITA

Kathleen Cieslak lives and works in Rockford, Illinois. A pastoral therapist, she currently maintains a part-time private practice. She counsels individual adults, couples, and teenagers, utilizing a wholistic approach that considers the interaction of mind, body, and spirit. While she works with a wide spectrum of psychological and spiritual issues, a specific area of interest and expertise is her work with clients who are dealing with body image and functioning.

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THESIS APPROVAL SHEET

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling.

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