TO KEEP US IMAGINING: THE CHILD

> Of childhoods I have so many
> that I would get lost counting them.[1]
> Arnoux

As all of these essays have sought to communicate, the goddesses are so "original," that a new word is born with each:

> Though (the gods) are present all the time, the mythologems which unfold in narrative form what is contained in the figures of the gods are always set in a primordial time . . . Mythology tells of the origins or at least of what originally was.[2]

Mythology has to do with origins, arche', primary patterns, with worlds as they are coming into appearance and thus with epiphanies. Kerenyi suggests that the divine child in the god or goddess comes to the fore as part of the god's ephiphany, its showing itself in its primal essence.[3] Thus the goddesses as appearing, as coming into being, will be manifest in their child form.

This recalls me once again to that dark cave in which I felt myself so palpably in "Her" presence but unable to discern her shape. A few days after I had had that dream, I found myself still occupied with it, still disappointed that I had not been able to see the goddess who was so evidently there. So, using what Jung calls "active imagination," I re-entered the underground cavern, hoping this time to stay until she would come into view. I waited and waited in the darkness. Again I felt her presence all about me, but again could not see her. Then I happened to look down at the earthen floor immediately before me. There, peacefully slumbering, lay an infant whom I somehow knew to be a girl child. I can easily feel myself back in the cave, looking with astonished

delight and recognition at this baby girl. To catch the goddess appearing is to catch her in her child form.

It seems obvious in retrospect that in the womb-like cave, divinity would appear in the form of a child -- and obvious that at the end of all these reflections on the goddesses I would need to return to the child, as embodying an aspect of the goddesses which needs more explicit consideration than I have hitherto given it. To look at the goddesses as children -- and as giving birth to children who are in some sense themselves -- is subtly and yet essentially different from looking at them as mothers. We need to separate the mother-child mythologem, to see the child as a distinct archetype, related not only to mother but to nurse and grandmother, father and teacher, brother and sister -- but, first of all, as simply: the child, the newly appearing one. To look at the goddesses as they first appear, full of potentiality and yet already wholly themselves, is perhaps especially appropriate for us to whom the goddesses <u>are</u> new, just beginning to emerge into being.

I know it is singularly appropriate for me for whom the child has been the form in which the divine has most self-evidently and spontaneously appeared in my imaginal life. That the divine <u>is</u> I have known more assuredly through these epiphanies than through any other experience. Certainly the appearance of the child in that cave felt like a miracle. I say that I recognized her, as indeed I did, though I had not been sure I would ever see again This child who had first appeared in a dream years earlier. The dream presented me with a beautiful baby daughter who lived in a room in our house which I only rarely entered (though in waking life this was the room that was most entirely my own). Yet whenever I would go to her she would be awake and well and utterly delighted to see me. I remember picking her up and holding her and then laying her down

to change her diaper. She looked up at me with a smile on her face and a look in her eye which clearly communicated, "we both know it is really I who take care of you." I woke from that dream with a sense of joyous fulfillment I had never before known. I felt, she really is there and she does take care of me. I sensed her room to be the numinous secret chamber I had first entered in my childhood dreams; her crib now occupying the center . once occupied by a treasure chest or golden throne. When exactly the same dream re cured only a few months later, I began to wonder what it might mean. "I guess I'll know the third time," I told my husband. Sure enough, eventually there was a third time, but this time the dream was different. It began as before: although she was mostly left to take care of herself, whenever I came to my beautiful baby daughter she was vibrantly alive, blessedly content. But then one day as I came into her room and walked toward the crib, it seemed to be empty. Fearfully I approached more closely and still found no sign of the lovely child. Then in the farthest corner of the crib I saw a small shriveled bit of flesh, the size of a thumb or a flaccid penis. I have neglected her too long, I knew. As tenderly, as carefully, as gently as I have ever done anything, I picked up the lifeless little thing, hoping that perhaps it was not quite dead after all. I carried it to the sink and let some lukewarm water run over it. Hoping . . . And then I awoke. In the intervening years from time to time I had felt that somewhere this magic child was still alive but I had not seen her again until she lay before me in the underground cave.

But a few months earlier I had had a strange sense of in some way being that child, reborn. I was standing at the edge of the Pacific with seaweed swirling about my feet. As I moved in to the shore I suddenly felt myself to be Aphrodite

. . . . . emerging for the first time and yet full grown from the sea. I see now that, if the child shrivelled up in the crib and the child in the cave are indeed one, she too is Aphrodite, born of the unattached phallus after its immersion in the water. Kerenyi's sense that the emerging child goddess first appears as Aphrodite seems confirmed in my own experience:

> The mythologem of the emergence of the child god out of the original condition of things is, in Greece, connected with two divinities, Eros and Aphrodite . . . The image of the foam-born goddess puts the idea of genesis and timeless beginning as succinctly, as perfectly as only the language of mythology can . . . The phallus is the child, and the child - Aphrodite - an external stimulus to further procreation. . . From the high sea, stepping out of a mussel-shell, borne along by the wind and received by the gaily clad goddess of earth, Aphrodite Anadyomene arrives . . . Botticelli's picture helps us, as modern men, to conjure up the vision of Anadyomene. And she must be conjured up if we want to understand the goddesses of the Greeks. She is the closest to the origins.[4]

Certainly I knew from her first appearance that the dream child was a divine child. I do not know anymore whether I had already read Jung's essay, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype" or Bachelard's "Reveries Toward Childhood" but all that they write of "child" as signifying as yet unrealized potentialities of the self is congruent with my intuitive appreciation of the meaning of my dream child. I understand, too, why Jung affirms that images representing the archetype of the self and those embodying the archetype of the divine are functionally indistinguishable. She was in some sense "me" yet she was undeniably a numinous sacred being.

The rediscovery of a child still alive in us, the recovery of the child's imaginal view of the world, may be regarded as the beginning of all depth psychology. When Freud realized, "I am Oedipus," he recognized his identity with the mythical child's exaggerated feeling of passionate love for his mother and parricidal jealousy of his father. The feeling tone and the contents

of those childhood emotions were still present in the adult man. Indeed, the childhood so important to depth psychology is never that of the actual child but that of the adult, composed as much of fantasy, imagination, as of literal fact. Freud learned that, when he found that the childhood seductions reported by his hysterical patients had never "really" happened. Bachelard says that our remembrances of childhood take place "at the frontier between history and legend."

> These images which arise from the depths of our childhood are not really memories. In order to evaluate all their vitality, a philospher would have to be able to develop all the dialectics that are summed up too quickly in the two words "imagination" and "memory". . . The soul and the mind do not have the same memory . . . In order to force the past, when forgetfulness is hemming us in, poets engage us in reimagining the lost childhood. They teach us "the audacities of the memory." One poet tells us the past must be invented: Invent. There is no lost feast
> At the bottom of memory.[5]

Yet, as Bachelard sees, the relation between imagination and memory is dialectical. Our images of childhood are not unrelated to our memories of our own early years or to our experiences of our biological children. I know that the soul-child is related to my own actual childhood. I experience her as pulling me consciously to take on the child's perspective again, to feel my identity with the child in the crib, with her happiness and her abandonment, and not only with that of the responsible and neglectful mother. She forces me to remember that when I was a child I was literally abandoned (by a father, not a mother) -- a child's truth which the adult in me (who was present very early) has always denied since it was Hitler's "fault" not my father's.

. The dream-child also reminds me that the child who was myself was already back then in touch

with the divine child, the imaginal child (as many children are). From the age of two at least until I went to school, the most important "other" in my life was a purely imaginary child (not a doll) whom I tended and nursed.

I have come to see the child's own relation to the archetype of the child as singularly important. Bachelard suggests:

> To understand our attachment to the world, it is ncessary to add a childhood, our childhood, to each archetype. We cannot love water, fire, the tree without putting a love into them, a friendship which goes back to our childhood. We love them with childhood.[6]

I have found this is true for me: I still know the goddesses most intimately, most immediately, as I knew them as a child: Persephone, as the very young maiden my mother spoke of, a figure much younger than that represented at the beginning of the Homeric Hymn, more like myself at some preschool birthday with a wreath of spring flowers in my hair; Athene, as the intelligent and athletic girl, proudly encouraged in all her activities by her devoted father; Hera, as my own youthfully blooming mother. Yes, I love those goddesses with my childhood -- and <u>that</u> early love enables me to love them with my adult womanhood as well, and to love even those aspects which the child did not know and would have turned away from.

Yet we need to add not only our own childhoods to each of these goddesses in order to understand them fully, we must also add their own. For her child-form is not a stage that a goddess outgrows but a perennial aspect.

Each goddess has a childhood that is uniquely her own and which shows her in the full perfection of her powers and outward form,[7] and each of these childhoods can be brought into relation to our own. For, as Bachelard so beautifully reminds us:

> When, all alone and dreaming on rather at length, we go far from the present to relive the times of the first life, several childhood faces come to meet us. We were several in the trial life (la vie essayée), in our primitive life . . . Our whole childhood remains to be reimagined . . . A potential childhood is within us, when we go looking for it in our reveries, we relive it even more in its possibilities than in its reality. . . What a lot of beings we have begun! What a lot of lost springs which have, nevertheless, flowed! Reverie toward our past then, reverie looking for childhood seems to being back to life lives which have never taken place, lives which have been imagined.[8]

Reveries looking for childhood return us not only to imaginings about our own past but also to our memories of our children's births and early years. I know it was important to me to be asked by a student with whom I had shared the dream sequence about the child in the crib, "Why couldn't that be about your actual children?" I realized then that, of course, one of the reasons the child has been such a primary image in my dreams is that being pregnant, giving birth, nursing, weaning, caring for young children has been so important in my everyday waking life. Naturally this aspect of my daily existence would provide the material cause of my dreams, would serve as "residue." My concerns about my children, my delight in them, my sense of fulfillment within the role of mother, my guilt about my inadequacies -- all would, of course, be reflected in my dreams and used to express other anxieties and hopes. When I was carrying my first child I experienced the fetus growing within as my body's dream. The most perfect moment of my life was that in which I first held that eldest son in my arms. It was he who made me a mother:

> Little heart, little heart
> You have sung in me like the spiral
> You, who gave birth to this mother older-bud,
> comprehend, for how much longer? my mysteries.[9]

I know that looking honestly at the divine child must mean confronting the archetypal dimensions of my relation to my actual sons and daughters just as coming

to terms with Hera involved in part a revaluation of my relation to mother and husband, a disentangling of the personal and archetypal and a recognition of how that isn't fully possible. Athene had called upon me to re-examine my relation to my father, Ariadne to a lover, Artemis and Aphrodite to my sister and closest women friends.

The relation between the archetypal image and the actual others present in our lives always goes both ways. That I had five children at all is clearly evidence of the power the child archetype held for me. They were literalization -- and realization. They are expressions both of what is most healthy in me and most pathological, what was most whole in my marriage and most incomplete. I wanted sons and had four, wanted a daughter and had one. She was the gift child, the child of joy, perhaps as like as any human child could be to the divine child of the dreams. I believe that there is a sense in which all children need the love of someone for whom they are a miracle as Emily was for the mother in Tillie Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing:"

> She was a beautiful baby. She blew shining bubbles of sound. She loved motion, loved light, loved color and music and textures. She would lie on the floor in her blue overalls patting the floor so hard in ecstasy her hands and feet would blur. She was a miracle to me, but when she was eight months old I had to leave her daytimes with the woman downstairs to whom she was no miracle at all, for I worked or looked for work and for Emily's father, who "could no longer endure" (he wrote in his good-bye note) "sharing want with us." [10]

Yet our actual children cannot be asked to carry the full weight of the archetype of the divine child any more than our mothers can carry that of the mother archetype. As Jung reminds us the archetype has a cosmic transhuman aspect:

> The mythological idea of the child is emphatically not a copy of the empirical child but a symbol clearly recognizable as such: it is a wonder-child, a divine child,

> begotten, born, and brought up in quite extraordinary circumstances. . . The mythological "child" has various forms: now a god, giant, Tom Thumb, animal, etc., and this points to a causality that is anything but rational or concretely human."

Kereyni, too, recognizes the importance of not tying the archetype too closely to human childood:

> In the image of the Primoridal Child the world tells of its own childhood, and of everything that sunrise and the birth of a child mean for, and say about, the world. The childhood and orphan's fate of the child gods have not evolved from the stuff of human life, but from the stuff of cosmic life. What appears to be biographical in mythology is, as it were, an anecdote that the world relates from its own biography.[12]

The archetype of the child has to do with the wonder of all beginnings and the wonder of all beginning again. We are led by it to imagine being in the world as on the first day of creation, seeing the world for the first time. The child embodies and encourages spontaneity and joy, imagination and celebration:

> "I am cherry alive," the little girl sang,
> "Each morning I am something new:
> I am apple, I am plum, I am just as excited
> As the boys who made the Hallowe'en bang:
> I am tree, I am cat, I am blossom too:
> When I like, if I like, I can be someone new,
> Someone very old, a witch in a zoo:
> I can be someone else whenever I think who,
> And I want to be everything sometimes too:
> And the peach has a pit and I know that too,
> and I put it in along with everything
> To make the grown-ups laugh whenever I sing:
> and I sing: *It is true; It is untrue;*
> I know, I know, the true is untrue,
> The peach has a pit, the pit has a peach:
> And both may be wrong when I sing my song,
> but I don't tell the grown-ups: because it is sad,
> And I want them to laugh just like I do
> Because they grew up and forgot what they knew
> And they are sure I will forget it some day too.
> They are wrong. They are wrong. When I sang my song, I knew, I knew!

> I am red, I am gold, I am green, I am blue,
> I will always be me, I will always be new!" [13]

Otto Rank's The Myth of the Birth of the Hero was the first depth psychological interpretation of the mythologem of the divine child, though (as his title acknowledges) his attention is directed more to the birth and infancy of mythological heroes than gods and entirely to male figures. His careful analysis of fifteen myths and legends leads to this description of the typical pattern:

> The hero is the child of most distinguished parents, usually the son of a king. His origin is preceded by difficulties, such as continence, or prolonged barrenness, or secret intercourse of the parents due to external prohibition or obstacles. During or before the pregnancy, there is a prophecy, in the form of a dream or oracle, cautioning against his birth, and usually threatening danger to the father (or his representative). As a rule, he is surrendered to the water, in a box. He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people (shepherds), and is suckled by a female animal or by an humble woman. After he has grown up, he finds his distinguished parents, in a highly versatile fashion. He takes his revenge on his father, on the one hand, and is acknowledged, on the other. Finally he achieves rank and honors. [14]

Rank understands myth formation as deriving from the individual faculty of imagination, a faculty "found in its active and unchecked exuberance only in childhood." Thus he believes the myths about the child may reflect the child's imaginal view of his world or, (as he suggests later in his essay) perhaps myths are created by adults by means of "retrograde childhood fantasies, the hero being credited with the mythmaker's personal infantile history." Rank derives the myths from the necessity of the child's separation fromthe parents, his ambivalence toward them, and the tendency to over-value the experiences of our earliest years. He understands the myths about a heroic childhood as being created mostly to compensate for the disillusions and hurts of the

mythmaker's actual childhood and (even more) of his adult life. He focuses on the child's disappointment in his father's failure to be the great and powerful man he at first seemed and on the child's sense of being neglected. Thus the myth expresses the child's anger and represents an attempt at revenge and retaliation. The child projects his own desire to repudiate his father on to the noble father who in the myth is represented as abandoning him. At the same time through the "family romance" of adoption, he announces that the insignificant father with whom he now lives cannot possibly be his "real" father. The mythmaker imagines a heroic child who is able to revolt successfully against the father. "The ego can only find its own heroism in the days of infancy," albeit that heroism too is illusory. Thus Rank sees the myths about the heroic child as deriving from the adult's sense of failure at not being a hero and from his longing to start anew, to be a child who is heroic and noble and successful. The adult elaborates a fantasy by which the child was already seized; the child and adult share in this imaginal view of the child as hero.[15]

Rank's last pages imply a compassionate recognition of the pathology evident here, empathy for the deep wounds that these imaginings about childhood are intended to heal. However, Rank never moves beyond interpreting the myths as derivative of individual (though not idiosyncratic) personal history; he never tries to explore (as Jung does) how our personal experiencing is itself given shape by archetypal patterns. Jung's very different approach allows him to celebrate the archetype of the child because it enables us to imagine wholeness and happiness. His focus is on this imaginal capacity rather than on those hurts which impel us to turn to fantasy. Thus his "phenomenology of the child archetype" differs significantly from Rank's and yet many of the same motifs appear:

Miraculous birth: Since the birth of the divine is "a psychic genesis, everything must happen non-empirically, e.g., by means of a virgin birth, or my miraculous conception, or by birth from unnatural organs."

Abandonment: "'Child' means something evolving toward independence. Thus it cannot do without detaching itself from its origins; abandonment is therefore a necessary condition, not just a concomitant symptom."

Invincibility: "It is a striking paradox in all child myths that the 'child' is on the one hand delivered helpless into the power of terrible avenues and in danger of continual extinction, while on the other he possesses powers far exceeding those of ordinary humans . . . (The child) is a personification of vital forces quite outside the limited range of our conscious mind; of ways and possibilities of which our one-sided conscious mind knows nothing; a wholeness which embraces the very depths of nature."

Hermaphroditism: "The majority of cosmogonic gods are of a bisexual nature. The hermaphrodite means nothing less than a union of the strongest and most striking opposites."

As Beginning and End: "The 'child' is all that is abandoned and exposed and at the same time divinely powerful; the insignificant, dubious beginning, and the triumphal end."[16]

Jung does relate the child archetype to individual psychology but quite differently from Rank. The mytheme is not seen as disguised representation of personal infancy; rather he sees the archetypal pattern as prefiguring the process by which an adult moves toward individuated consciousness. At the beginning of this process the patients typically identify themselves as abandoned, misunderstood, unjustly treated children. This is followed by a stage of inflation which focuses on the patient's extraordinary powers

(accompanied by a shadow or negative inflation which focuses on their heroic suffering). Only then does it become possible to separate the conscious self from the unconscious images and to shift the center of the personality from the ego to the self. The emergence of the child archetype is thus here viewed as making possible an authentic healing and not only a spurious one.

Jung, like Rank, is speaking though of the archetype of the male child. Clearly the child archetype has profound meaning for all of us, men and women alike; yet I believe the image of the divine child inevitably figures differently in the lives of women than in the lives of men. Hillman takes note of this possibility (though he does not seem to know quite what to make of it):

> The child is one of the faces -- not stages -- of the God, one of his ways of being . . . Perhaps I speak now of men, and the image in which they are made since curiously we do not have comparable images of a Child Athene, a Child Aphrodite, a Child Hera or Demeter. [17]

Why it it that the childhoods of the goddesses are less accessible? What can we discover about those childhoods? How can that illuminate our experience of having been female children, of still carrying our female childhood within us, of having given birth to female children? How is our femaleness shaped by our finding ourselves essentially related to a female divine child? or, rather, to several female divine children?

That the childhood of the goddesses is mostly obscured, lost or denied in the classical literature is itself significant. That they appear in their maiden form rather than in their child form means that they are given to us as limited by that adolescent consciousness which "puts a barrier to the childhood waiting to be relived." [18] To go in search of their childhoods is to go in search of their archaic history, before they were so clearly defined in relation to a particular life-stage as they seem to be on Olympus.

To go in search of their childhoods is also to go in search of our own.

I have a sense that there may be more direct acceptance of the sadness and pain, the vulnerabilities and weaknesses, inherent in childhood in the mythological accounts of the child goddesses than in those devoted to the child gods or heroes -- less denial, less fantasy.

Yet the fantasy element seems evident in the myth of Persephone's childhood. Clearly, this representation of a primal dyad between mother and daughter, not broken into by a father or siblings, could fairly be called "a family romance." As though those blissful first weeks at the breast could be prolonged forever. The father is the most royal and powerful imaginable but he never appears, so the mother never turns away from the child and is never disparaged. This is truly a divine childhood, and though Persephone outwardly becomes a maiden she remains this dreamy self-enclosed child.

But Demeter's own childhood is different, spent within her father's alone, with the other four children he swallowed as soon as they were born. Robbed of a connection to her birth from birth, it is no wonder that she tries to create a fantasy bond with her daughter, no wonder that she overidentifies with her, seeks to give her the childhood she was herself denied. No wonder either that she is childish (not harmoniously childlike) in her raging grief when Persephone is taken from her. Because she had no real childhood of her own, she remains caught by the child archetype, sees it too sentimentally and is too easily overcome by its negative aspects.

Hera's childhood is essentially the same as Demeter's but she as an adult lives her unlived childhood differently. First she, too, tries living through her children, but her daughters, Hebe and Eilytheea, are not more beautiful vibrant versions of herself, only her pale shadow; her sons (because reduced in her mind

to being but pawns in her battles with Zeus) are each crippled, Hephaestus physically, Ares psychologically. She had sought to mother Zeus, to make him her well-sheltered son; she had asked him to mother her, wholly enclose her as her father had when she was young. When she discovers the inadequacy of all these modes of asking others to provide her with a childhood, she realizes she must herself go in search of that lost childhood. She returns to her motherland and re-imagines the unlived childhood; only then, knowingly carrying her own childhood within her, is she ready for real relationship.

Artemis' childhood has some of the same elements as Persephone's. Zeus is again the absent father; experientially Artemis has only a female parent, one who is inordinately proud of her. But Artemis, too, is robbed of her childhood -- by having a mother much more obviously childlike, dependent, vulnerable than is Demeter, a mother who immediately needs help as she struggles painfully to give birth to Artemis' twin, Apollo, and then must be defended against all kinds of real and imaginary dangers. That fantasy of having to mother our mothers from the very beginning will seem very familiar, very "real," to many women I know, as it is to me. Perhaps it functions as a kind of parallel to the male hero's having to reduce his original noble father to a poor and simple peasant. Both are in a sense true stories about the painful discovery that our mothers cannot really mother us as their fathers could not really live up to the expectations aroused by the father archetype. Yet the hero's eventually being able to overcome the father is nevertheless signficantly different from the child goddess being able to support and care for her mother. Yet that childhood testing may lead Artemis to be too insistently self-sufficient in her adult form, and to be unwilling ever to renounce the solitude of the child. She remains tender towards children but easily becomes impatient

with the childishly dependent adult. There is something eternally young in her way of being alone and distant; she too carries her childhood with her always.

At first glance Athene seems truly to have no childhood. She emerges full-grown out of the head of Zeus, dressed as a warrior, emitting a triumphant battle cry. She seems to begin life as the adolescent, closely identified with her father, with so-called masculine attributes like self-confidence and courage, intelligence and dispassion, and with the male world. She epitomizes the particular kind of strength that can come by denial of childhood, and of the mother bond. The denial is hers, she seems proud of having had no mother. Yet we feel something missing, feel that until we can connect her to her maternal origins there is something one-dimensional about her. Without her childhood she is incomplete. So we go in search of it and discover Metis, her intrepid, wise mother, whose potential progeny threatened Zeus, and we understand Athene differently. (And recognize perhaps how our own denigration of our mothers, our too uncritical identification with our fathers, may echo Athene's.) Yet her version of her childhood, though it ignores or denies important aspects, is still a fantasy that deeply colors her life.

Kerenyi sees Aphrodite as the prototypical female embodiment of the child mythologem, but he reminds us that Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" represents not her birth but her arrival among us. Her birth is different: brutal and violent. As she steps out of the mussel-shell, she is leaving it behind her as she leaves behind the whole of primitive mythology: the mutilation of Uranos, the casting of his manhood into the sea, the whole terrible foregoing history, the titanic mythology of the world's beginnings. Her birth represents

the "unity of that mythological moment when begetter and begotten were one in the womb of the water."[19] Aphrodite is motherless and fatherless, born of the depersonalized phallos immersed in the impersonal aceanic womb. She represents self-sufficiency which nevertheless is warm, receptive, open. Older than Zeus, co-eval with the Titans, she symbolizes a more cosmic beginning than just individual human birth and childhood. She reminds us that the archetype of the child pertains not only to personal psychology -- part of the divinity inherent in the archetype comes from its transpersonal, cosmic aspect.

Nevertheless the human significance of each of these childhoods is plain. Perhaps we can love the goddesses in part because we feel they have shared our pain. To paraphrase Nietzsche: the goddesses justify human life by living it themselves, the only satisfactory theodicy ever invented. Each goddess implies a different way of viewing our own childhood -- each whole, each very different, each true. Each also divine -- in the sense of representing an eternally recurring pattern of childhood experience -- in the sense, too, of making visible the numinosity present in those patterns. The appreciation of the connection between our childhoods and those of the goddesses also serves as an initiation into the worlds constituted by them. We may never have heard their names (though I still feel blessed that I had) but these goddesses were, at least some of them, present in our own imaginal experience of childhood. My guess would be that we are likely as adults still to feel closest to the goddess whose infancy is most like the image of childhood we held when we were young.

Though the stories about the child goddesses feel different from the stories about the gods or heroes, many of the motifs Jung named are present in them. Not all the births are miraculous but all have something wondrous about them -- Persephone and Artemis are almost fatherless; immediately after birth, Demeter

and Hera are introjected into a male womb and then later reborn from it; Athene is born from her father's head, Aphrodite from Ouranos' severed genitals. All experience some mode of abandonment, some painful spearation from their mothers, even Persephone -- where the separation is the more traumatic for being so long delayed. The sadness of the child goddesses is provoked by that separation (rather than by separation from the father) but the separations seem not to engender anger, perhaps because the mother's are not presented as rejecting their daughters purposefully. It is the intervention of the male order that effects the disunion -- Zeus allows Hades to abduct Persephone and cannot seem to prevent Hera's jealous attacks against Artemis' mother; Zeus swallows Metis, Athene's mother, as his father had swallowed Demeter and Hera at birth and thus taken them from their mothers. Yet there are reunions too -- Persephone returns to Demeter joyously though she will never again live only in her world; Hera returns to her Boetian motherland; Artmeis is always there for her mother and for all mothers in travail. The goddesses thus demonstrate a kind of invincibility. Their mothers are vulnerable but their fathers' power is also shaky. The fathers are not really viewed as "the enemy;" they are rather experienced as absent and ineffectual, or as very fearful, especially of feminine power or of the alliance between mothers and sons.

(I am intrigued by how rarely these myths of the child include siblings, as though they most reflect the fantasy or wish of being the only child. There is actually more of this sibling dimension present in the traditions about the male gods -- as, for instance, in the Homeric Hymn's account of the teasing rivalry between Hermes and Apollo or in the indication of Hermes' tender care for young Dionysus communicated by the lovely statue at Olympia. Where is the sisterhood? With the nymphs, I suppose -- though that seems so anonymous and undifferentiated.

There is Athene and Pallas, Artemis and Calliste, but they are hardly children. Perhaps we shall have to create those sister bonds for them.)

In these childhood images I discern a wonderful promise that these goddesses can be goddesses, self-confident, beautiful, serenely powerful, each in their very individual ways, despite mothering and fathering that is flawed. (Yes they each also have their dark side but in a way that is part of, not diminuation of, their divinity.) I think this is what Kerenyi is getting at in a passage that puzzled me for a long time:

> Divine maidens are so typical of Greek religiion that it cannot be called either a "Father religion" or a "Mother religion," or yet a combination of both. It is as though the Olympian order had thrust the great Mother Goddesses of olden times into the background for the sole purpose of throwing the divine Korai [maidens] into sharper relief. 20

The hermaphroditism Jung found to characterize the child archetype is present here too, at least in a psychological sense (which it is more popular now to call "androgeny.") The myths suggest this by their emphasis on Aphrodite's birth from the phallus, Athene's from her father's brow, Artemis' twinship with Apollo, Demeter's single parenting, Hera's pull to a hieros gamos. The language of masculine and feminine attributes conjoined is there, even though it may not seem to us the best way of expressing the kind of human weakness the goddesses embody.

Freud, in ways that have provoked much anger, suggested that a child often serves as a self-image for women. Of course, the child carries this meaning for men as well; nevertheless for women who can carry a child within themselves this meaning may have even more resonance. In any case, in mythology, too, one's children are viewed as images of the self. Fully to know the gods means to know them in and through their children. This is quite

different from knowing them through the quality or style of their parenting (though that, too, provides a meaningful perspective). We receive a richer sense of the plurality of their childhoods, as we see them in relation to their several children.

Indeed, this may be another way in which their "androgeny" is made evident, for these goddesses have both female and male children. Even Demeter whom we tend to think of only in relation to Persephone also was mother to Cryasor (or Areion), a magical steed whose father was Poseidon. The climax of the Eleusinean mystery was the cry "Brimos is born", an announcement that Persephone had given birth to a son. (The most lovely relief inspired by those mysteries is that which represents the youth, Triptolemus, standing between the two goddesses, Demeter and Persephone.) The myths suggest that the full experience of giving birth means giving birth both to another like oneself (a daughter) and to a being who is other (a son). Aphrodite gives birth not only to sons: Phobus, Demos, Eros, Aeneas, but also to a daughter Harmonia; Hera to Ares and Hephaestus, but also to Hebe and Eulythea.

In the history of my own dreams of the divine child it has always felt self-evident upon awaking whether the child was a son or a daughter. It also seemed clear that the difference mattered; that it was even more important in imaginal life than in actuality to have both a son and a daughter. The difference feels clear even though I don't full understand it and can't adequately articulate it. Perhaps it has something to do with doing and being, or extroversion and introversion. When I try to test that out on the children of the goddesses or on my own dream children, I don't feel content with the formulation. Still, I know that my own well-being is tied up with my imaginal daughter and my imaginal son.

I have spoken already of the daughter, the child in the crib and then in the cave. She has appeared in later dreams as well -- among them a particularly important one dreamt after the first evening spent with a lover who has since become my closest friend but whom then I barely knew. In that dream this man and I were together in my house which now was ours, greeting and then bidding farewell to family members and intimate friends who were stopping by in some almost ritual procession. As he and I stood there, I was carrying on my hip, with her head nestled between chin and shoulder, my beautiful young daughter. She was simply there, quiet yet radiantly happy and healthy as always. It felt wonderful -- but entirely natural -- to have her there (for the first time) in the world of others. Then, just before I woke, as I felt her welcome weight on my hip, I realized that she still weighed exactly what she had weighed months before; I knew that it was time (though there was no sense of its being past time) for her to begin getting nourishment other than what my milk could provide.

I agree with so much in Hillman's essay "Abandoning The Child", including his insistence that:

> The child is one of the faces -- not stages -- of the God, one of his ways of being, of revealing his nature. There is no question of moral improvement, of increase, or of differentiation through developmental process in these child images. These gods do not leave the child behind in order to become mature.

But when he goes on to say:

> The archetypal child personifies a component that is not meant to grow but to remain as it is as a child, at the threshold, intact, an image of certain fundamental realities that necessarily require the child metaphor and which cannot be presented in another manner. 21

I find myself hesitating, for I feel that the child does change and exhibits a mode of change for which it is difficult to avoid saying "growth." Yet I too

question the notion that growth equals health. Furthermore, I would want to affirm that there is always another childhood, another imaginal child. We don't outgrow the child in us, th ough a particular child may in some strange way grow up inside us.

I have had this experience particularly with my male dream child. He first appeared in the initial dream with which I began that attending to dreams which has so occupied me for the last twenty-five years. At that time I was pregnant with my third or fourth son - but it was clear that the child in the dream was not to be confused with any of my actual children, living or still unborn. This is a dream I refer to in the chapter on Persephone, the one, which begins with my standing with the other young women of our tribe at the edge of a moonlit clearning watching our men go through the ritual of choosing a new chief. Then the young and handsome youth who has just been installed as chief comes to me and invites me to join him in a ceremonial dance, thus signalling his choice of me to be his bride. Years pass. Our people are suffering the consequence of season after season of drought. We reluctantly realize that if the tribe is to survive it must go elsewhere in search of water and, of course, the chief must go with them. But I stay behind, confidently awaiting the birth of the son I carry in my womb, the future leader of our people. I stay as token of their expectation of returning to this land which is ineluctably <u>our</u> land.

Then just a few summers ago, I took a trip to New Mexico. I spent the morning at Acoma Pueblo, the sky city, now inhabited by only twenty-odd persons all year around, though many more appear at festival time. The Indians we met are so proud of their skills and traditions: I could not help but wonder what it would be like to be part of a tribe whose existence as a people seemed

on the edge of extinction. That evening in Santa Fe, I joined an old friend, a former colleague who grew up in New Mexico and has a deep sense of connection with the Indians who live there. The night of our reunion I had a dream so powerful that for the first time in many years I got up in the middle of the night to write it down. The imperative to record the dream arose in large measure from my sense that somehow the dream had come to the wrong person, that it wasn't my dream at all, that it really belonged to my friend and that I therefore owed it to him to remember every detail. For though not mine, it felt like a singularly important dream, one that could change one's life, a dream one would have to obey.

I knew the dream was not mine because the dreamer was clearly a young male. I do not mean that I had had a dream whose central figure was a male youth or that I was dreaming that I was a man - but rather that when I awoke it was absolutely clear to me that a young male had had the dream and that this dream was the continuation of a dream series he had been attending to faithfully over a period of years. I will tell the dream in the first person for it was an "I" that experienced the dream, though that "I" seemed so clearly not to be me.

The message of the dream is clear: after many years of honest reluctance, I must now agree to be the tribe's keeper of symbols and the interpreter and renewer of those symbols. The "I" of the dream has but the smallest trace of Indian blood and has never lived as a member of the tribal community, yet for years "I" have devoted myself to being a loving student of "my" people's lore. Over and over again one of the few remaining members of "our" tribe has come to "me" and said, "You have been chosen to be the keeper of our symbols." Each time "I" have answered, "No, it cannot be I that is meant." Now they are

back again. They have always respectfully accepted "my" refusal, but now they say, "It has to be you." They hand "me" a beautiful book made of heavy buff paper, containing page after page of beautifully painted symbols, flowing geometrics and stylized birds, plants and animals -- always composed of the same four colors, turquoise, coral, black, white. These are the tribe's symbols which no one fully understands but which they all revere. "I" take the book from their hands and agree, yes, this time "I" must accept. There followed a ritual, a ceremonial exchange of blood between "myself" and a young man of "my" own age who was a full-blooded member of the tribe and had grown up living in its ancestral home. When the ritual was complete, he and "I" were truly one and "I" was now someone who really could take on the awesome responsibility that had been laid on me. "I" felt a calm certitude, "Yes, I can do it. Yes, it is time. Yes, it is intended."

When he woke the next morning, I shared the dream with my friend. He said, as perhaps one always does in such situations, "Yes, I see how it connects with me, but I also believe, Chris, that it is <u>your</u> dream." Because I still was not ready to accept that, I sent an account of the dream to a young friend, a poet very conscious of his debt to shamanic traditions. He responded, "Yes, Chris, the dream does have something to do with me and my work but, still, it <u>is</u> your dream." Then he spoke of having shared my letter with his wife who had said, "You know, that dream reminds me of another dream Chris told me years ago." Of course, she meant the dream about the young Indian bride. Only then after she had made the connection, did I understand at last how the recent dream was mine after all. The dreamer was the young male child who had been in my dream-womb almost twenty-five years earlier. It had never occured to me that an inner child could grow up. It felt strange and wonderful and absolutely

true though, that was what had happened. I also knew then that in some truly necessary way I did now need to take on the role of Keeper of the Symbols, a role which I feel I may have begun to discharge through this series of Goddess papers.

I was intrigued that this assignment should come to me and my young dream son at that time in my life when I would soon be entering upon the post-menopausal stage that in many cultures is the point of entry for women into a shamanic vocation. At this point a woman is believed to cease being only woman; she is no longer defined by her biological femaleness and may consciously and visibly adopt her own "maleness." Thus the female shaman is androgynous: as in some sense my dream son and I together consitute an androgynous being. (Again: ideologically, I would prefer a different way of expressing such wholeness; experientially, this is the symbol that appeared.)

I began to understand that getting past literal childbearing might represent a deeper initiation into the archetype of the child. I also began to appreciate more than I had before a recognition Jung's reference to the pardoxical connection of the child archetype with endings and death. I knew, of course, that birth (especially in Artemis' realm) is itself connected with the possibility of death and remembered Freud's rediscovery of the interchange-ability of symbols for womb and tomb. By now I should have been well prepared to recognize that every archetype has its dark side.

Toward the end of the Ariadne paper I alluded to the child she gives birth to in the underworld, the child born in death, who is thus clearly a psychic child, a soul child. I included there a veiled reference to the experience which taught me part of what such a birth into death can mean. A few years ago I discovered I was pregnant with a child I knew was not meant to be born, a child conceived on a strange occasion when I had felt my partner to be not the

dear friend who was actually present but Dionysos. My friend knew that; he did not know of the child's conception. Perhaps I did not speak because I dimly remembered a warning Eros gives Psyche as he is about to leave her: "Thou shall give birth to a child which will be a divine infant if thou dost keep silent, but a human being if thou dost reveal the secret." Then, in what felt like another visitation of the god, the child was spontaneously (and simply) aborted. I experienced that miscarriage not only as the death of the child and ritual ending of my childbearing but, more importantly, as the birth of a death child, an underworld child, child of soul, a child who in some sense replaces that young son who grew up. The death was in some way a birth into another phase of my life.

That the death of a child can in some way mean rebirth I had also experienced years earlier in a dream which marked the end of a long period of deep despair during which I had seemingly not dreamt at all. In the dream I found I was pregnant with a child fathered by the lover whose departure had in part initiated my near-psychotic depression. Within the dream I understood this as a sign that it was time to leave my husband and yet also realized I did not want to leave him to be with my lover but rather to be alone. Yet because I was not ready to bring up a child by myself, I knew I would have to end the pregnancy. I stuck a knitting needle up my vagina -- and bled to death. I woke feeling alive for the first time in months: I had dreamt again, something deep within was still living.

These experiences seem less strange when I find my interpretations anticipated by Hillman:

> The dead child is also the child belonging to death, alluding not only to the death of life but the life of death . . . The child aborted then signifies life

> aborted, for the sake of Hades. The dead child may also be an image for the soul's child, performing the role of psychopompos which . . . leads the psyche to reflections about all that belongs to the child archetype but from a wholly psychic viewpoint. [22]

Then came last winter's discovery that I might have uterine cancer. During the week of waiting to learn whether that was indeed so, it seemed important to suspend belief and disbelief and live within the imaginal possibility. I found this mode of death, entirely different from any I had ever imagined as mine, deeply appropriate. It seemed a meaningful culmination of the long series of imaginal conceptions now to be carrying my death within my womb. I had such a strangely beautiful sense of what it would mean to give birth to my death. I didn't yet know Anne Sexton's poem, "Madonna" then:

> My mother died
> unrocked, unrocked.
> Weeks at her deathbed
> seeing her thrust herself against the metal bars,
> thrashing like a fish on the hook
> and me low at her high stage,
> letting the priestess dance alone,
> wanting to place my head in her lap
> or even take her in my arms somehow
> and fondle her twisted gray hair.
> But her rocking horse was pain
> with vomit steaming from her mouth.
> Her belly was big with another child,
> cancer's baby, big as a football.
> I could not soothe.
> With every hump and crack
> there was less Madonna
> until that strange labor took her.
> then the room was bankrupt.
> That was the end of her paying.[23]

but I know I would have rejected its sadness and anger as missing the point (for me, not necessarily for her mother.)

The child's dark side is not confined to this association with death.

The child Freud's dream analyses discovered was a child very different from the romantic sentimentalization of the infant predominant in the conscious attitudes of his time. This dream child displayed primarily his sexuality, his wounds, his unsatisfied longings and fragmentation. Hillman reminds us that there is childishness, as well as childlikeness. The child means not only joyous spontaneity and creativity but vulnerability and dependence. The " cry that is never cured," the "things we never learn, cannot help," "the inaccessible places where we are always exposed and afraid." The child is not only "future springing from vulnerability itself" but "that which never grows."[24] The past that stays past, being stuck.

That the child in us stays stuck, stays child, is, of course, not necessarily only a dark truth. Such an inner child can be very alive and enlivening:

> I found myself before a man who summarized and clarified singularly, in a single look of his blue eyes, the idea of a maturity, invaded and somehow renewed by the freshness of a childhood which had not stopped growing within him without his knowing it.[25]

Though the childhoods growing within us are many and each is unique, I would be more ready to speak of the child than of the goddess. I could agree that "child" is more image than story, perhaps because that is the child's own view. There is much in this archetype that pulls us to the simplicities of fairytale and its happy endings to the pure anonymity of the child, the village, the forest, the sea - an anonymity to be filled by our most precious memories and longings.

I am struck that Rank in his book on the birth trauma says that dreams of birth and childhood tend to occur at the end of our analysis -- as though

the child appears to keep us imagining. Bachelard speaks of childhood as "The archetype of simple happiness," as "an image within us, a center for images which attract happy images," "childhood remains within us as a private of deep life, of life always in harmony with the possibility of new beginnings . . . The archetype is a reserve of enthusiasm which helps us believe in the world, love the world, create our world.

"When one dreams in depth one is never finished beginning . . ."[26]

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NOTES

1. Alexandrew Arnoux, Petits poèmes (Paris: Seghers, n.d.) p. 31, quoted in Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie (Boston: Beacon, 1971) p. 112.

2. C. G. Jung and C. Kerenyi, Essays on a Science of Mythology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) p. 7.

3. Jung and Kerenyi, Essays, p. 52.

4. Jung and Kerenyi, Essays, p. 55, 56, 103.

5. Bachelard, Reverie, p. 101, 104, 110.

6. Bachelard, Reverie, p. 126.

7. Jung and Kerenyi, p. 25.

8. Bachelard, p. 99, 100, 101, 112.

9. Robin Morgan, "The Child," Lady of the Beasts (New York: Random House, 1976), quoted in Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born (New York: Bantam, 1977) p. 208.

10. Tillie Olsen, Tell Me A Riddle (New York: Dell, 1976) p. 10.

11. Jung and Kerenyi, p. 80.

12. Jung and Kerenyi, p. 45.

13. Delmore Schwartz, Selected Poems (New York: New Directions, 1967) p. 161.

14. Otto Rank, The Myth of the Birth of the Hero (New York: Vintage, 1959) p. 65.

15. Rank, Myth, passim but esp'ly p. 66, 71, 75, 84.

16. Jung and Kerenyi, Essays, p. 85, 87, 89, 92, 98. Kerenyi's description of the primary motifs associated with the Primordial Child closely parallels Jung's: The divine child is typically an orphan, threatened by extraordinary dangers often associated with his father; he is solitary and yet at home among the animals of the primeval wilderness; he is at once the orphan child and the cherished son of the gods -- lowest and highest, weakest and strongest.

17. James Hillman, "Abandoning the Child," Loose Ends (Zurich: Spring Publications, 1975) p. 31.

18. Bachelard, Reverie, p. 108. Kerenyi describes how in the classical literature (from when derives our most familiar traditions about the goddesses) "the images of divine childhood are relegated to the margin of the new Zeus world, and the Primordial Child of mythology remains outside its borders. In this religiion the youth (and maiden) is a more acceptable manifestation of divinity than the child." (Jung and Kerenyi, Essays, p. 65f.

19. Jung and Kerenyi, Essays, p. 102f.

20. Jung and Kerenyi, Essays, p. 106 (somewhat modified and reordered.)

21. Hillman, Loose Ends, p. 30, 31, reordered; emphasis eliminated.

22. Hillman, Loose Ends, p. 39.

23. Anne Sexton, The Death Notebooks (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) p. 14.

24. Hillman, Loose Ends, p. 19, 20.

25. Franz Heliens describing Gorki, quoted in Bachelard, Reverie, p. 135.

26. Bachelard, Reverie, p. 123, 124 (somewhat reordered), p. 114.