

## FIFTH LECTURE The Earthmother or *femme fatale*

- I. Definition of the female archetype in religion, myth and literature.
  - A. Positive Type-
    1. earth goddess – pre-Christian
    2. Great Mother (Gaea)
    3. Virgin Births
    4. Planetary Mothers
      - a) every culture has its planetary mother, whose fatherless Son become Savior of the world.
    5. The earth mother as Creative Principle-
      - a) in biblical scripture - Sarah, Rachel, Rebecca and Asenath;
      - b) goddess - Coatlicue (Mexico)
      - c) goddess – Xilonen
      - d) god - Cocijó (male Rain god)
      - e) Sun god
      - f) Poseidon (male Sea god)
      - g) god – Xipe-Totec (god of Renewal)
    6. Earthmother as goddess of fecundity
      - a) Navajo woman baking bread
  - B. Negative Type-Temptress
    1. Medusa
    2. A Gorgon
    3. Delilah (biblical)
    4. The Sirens (mythology)
    5. Sylla/Sphinx/Harpies (Mythology)
    6. Cleopatra (History)
    7. Marilyn Monroe (modern day *femme fatale*—*sex object*)
  - C. Platonic Ideal-
    1. Laura (Petrarch)
    2. Beatrice (Dante Aligheri)
    3. Percy Shelley's women characters
- \*Search and the Return to the Womb overlap.
- D. *Femme Fatale* in Literature-
  1. "The Middle Drawer" (Hortense Calisher)
  2. "A Rose for Emily" (William Faulkner)
  3. "Yellow Woman" (Leslie Marmon Silko)
- E. Star-Crossed Lovers in Literature-
  1. "Araby" (James Joyce)
  2. "Romeo and Juliet" (drama by William Shakespeare)
  3. Tristan and Isolde"
  4. Hero and Leander
  5. "Love Story" (20<sup>th</sup> Century movie)
  6. "Westside Story" (20<sup>th</sup> Century movie)

- F. The Unfaithful Wife-
    - 1. "The Astronomer's Wife" (Kay Boyle)
    - 2. Guinever in "Morte de Arthur"
  - G. The Love Object-
    - 1. Madame Bovary
    - 2. Lady Chatterley
    - 3. Marilyn Monroe
  - H. Fantasy-
    - 1. Frodo, Sam & Shelob in "The Two Towers" (J.R. Tolkein)
  - I. Dionysus depicts the feminine principle (the ID in Freud; while Apollo depicts the masculine principle;
- II. Early Symbols that Represent the Feminine Aspect
- A. Xipe-Totec (god of renewal-god of Spring)
  - B. Viking's ceremonial cart
  - C. "The Lottery" (Shirley Jackson)
    - 1. Rejuvenation of nature
    - 2. Human Sacrifice
  - D. The forest (symbol of mystery)
  - E. Water-Rebirth
    - 1. Baptisms/Floods/Washing
  - F. Literature:
    - 1. As I Lay Dying (William Faulkner)
    - 2. The Scarlet Letter (Nathaniel Hawthorne)
- III. Importance of *Femme Fatale*-
- A. Important in literature/religion/mythology/folklore
    - 1. a temptress
    - 2. a witch
    - 3. a vampire
    - 4. succubus
  - B. *Femme Fatale* has been traditionally destructive
    - 1. "The Middle Drawer" (Hortense Calisher) an example;
    - 2. not always consciously mean;
    - 3. delights in torturing victims in various ways;
    - 4. doesn't always destroy them physically;
    - 5. keeps them alive and forces them to commit to humiliations;
    - 6. destroys their souls rather than their bodies.
    - 7. Circe captures Odysseus in the Odyssey
    - 8. Mario Praz The Romantic Agony's presents-
      - a) Lilith
      - b) Scylla
      - c) sphinx
    - 9. "The Queen of Sheba" (Gustave Flaubert)
    - 10. "Carmen" (Opera by Prosper Merimee)
    - 11. "Cleopatra" (Theophile Gautier)
    - 12. "Fastasia Filippovna (Fodor Dostoevsky)

13. "Atalanta" (Algernon Charles Swineburne)
14. "Sister Helen" (Gabriel Rosetti)
15. "A Rose for Emily" (William Faulkner)
- C. The Temptress is often a Sensuous Woman
  1. "Yellow Woman" (Leslie Marmon Silko)
- IV. Earth Mother Qualities-
  - A. forgives everyone
  - B. self-sacrificing
  - C. forebearing
  - D. forgiving
  - E. fertile
  - F. the Jewish mother is a sub-type
    1. the mother may appear domineering and possessive
    2. she becomes the parasite
    3. she devours her progeny
      - a) destroys anyone who attempts to rescue them
      - b) "she wolf" who attempts to rescue her twins.
      - c) "The Revolt of Mother" an example (Penn Warren)
      - d) "The Astronomer's Wife" (Kay Boyle)
      - e) "Chrysanthemums" (John Steinbeck)
      - f) As I Lay Dying (William Faulkner)
      - g) Coatlicue (goddess of the Tehuacan people)
    4. Heaven and Hell balance the scales
      - a) All the Penelopes balance the Circes
  - IV. Conclusion
    - A. Literature-
      1. relates to other intellectual activity
      2. is set against an unfolding cultural panorama
        - a) clarifies the author-work-audience relationship
        - b) Stanley Hyman says archetypes "exist along the chain of communication."
        - c) and are part of the reader's unconscious so they touch a familiar chord.