

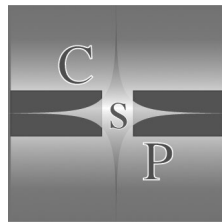
# The Presence of the Feminine in Film



# The Presence of the Feminine in Film

By

Virginia Apperson and John Beebe



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**In memory of John Apperson, Jr. and Patricia Eloise Beebe**



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This book would not have come into being had there not been the idea for a Jungian film festival, to be named “Psyche and Film,” in the mind of Nonnie Cullipher, the farseeing Executive Director of Journey into Wholeness. After Nonnie approached the two of us with the idea, we came up with our own title, “The Feminine in Film.” Under both titles, and with the help of Fran Cronenberg, at that time leading the Commission on Spirituality of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama, the conference took place in Birmingham, Alabama, May 18-21, 2005.

We extend warm thanks to the conference participants; their enthusiastic response affirmed our hunch that the topic is an important one. We didn’t realize that we would be making what had occurred in Birmingham into a book until several months later, when we were contacted by Nonnie with the news that a new press in England had written her a letter about the possibility of making a book that drew on the themes of the conference. In the writing, our ideas have developed, evolved, and found new roots. What hasn’t changed over the past three years has been the vision that it was possible to say something in these pages not just about the image of woman in movies, but also about the image of the feminine in all her many cinematic guises using the tools of the working analytical psychologist in the investigation of films. We have therefore to acknowledge, first of all, C. G. Jung and all the Jungian analysts who went before us to enable us to recognize “the feminine” in imaginal material. Some are named in these pages, but many cannot be. We have to thank our analysands, as well, for showing us both the vitality and the necessity of such an approach in the practical understanding of products of the human imagination.

More than a quarter century ago, John Beebe hit upon the idea of showing and discussing films to allow a public audience some access to how a Jungian analyst thinks about the imagination, and John has been lecturing, writing and publishing on film ever since. Many of his film reviews have appeared in *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal*, and some of these have been included, with a few revisions to adapt them to the present context, here. This journal, founded by John, is now published by the University of California Press under its new title, *Jung Journal: Culture and Psyche*, and John continues to write about

movies for its present editor, Dyane Sherwood. We thank her, the *Library Journal's* previous editor, Steven Joseph, and the constant Mary Webster, who for many years was the Assistant to all of this journal's editors and thus the very first person to see and comment upon John's reviews. As editors, John and Mary both fell in love with Jane Alexander Stewart's review of *The Silence of the Lambs*, which with only a few changes is reprinted here. I am very grateful to John for bringing this remarkable piece to my attention, and to Jane for being willing to make a guest appearance in our book.

For articles of John's included here that come from other journals, we want to thank: guest editor Harvey Roy Greenberg, for the special issue of the *Journal of Film and Popular Television* on "Psychoanalysis and Cinema" in which John's essay, "The Notorious Postwar Psyche," first appeared, Andrew Samuels, guest editor for the Symposium: Post-Jungian Thought, in the August, 1996 issue of *The Psychoanalytic Review* in which John's essay "Jungian Illumination of Film" first appeared and Nancy Cater, the editor of *Spring Journal*, who commissioned the article that became "The Eye at the Heart of the World" for her special issue on "Cinema and Psyche." We are also grateful to the editors of books in which essays of John, reprinted here, first appeared and were improved by their editing: First, Nathan Schwartz-Salant and Murray Stein, editors of the Chiron Clinical Series, who asked for the essay that became "The Anima in Film," in their 1992 volume, *Gender and Soul in Psychotherapy*. This essay was selected by the Parisian analyst-editor Aimé Agnel, a veteran of the French film industry as well as a wonderful writer on Ford and Hitchcock, for a 1995 issue of the *Cahiers Jungiens de Psychanalyse* entitled "*Cinéma : une approche jungienne*." The essay came out again in the seminal book *Jung and Film*, edited by the English analysts Christopher Hauke and Ian Alister. John's essay on *Marnie* developed out of a weekend on "Healing in Film" at the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco during which *Marnie* was shown in full, was refined by presentations of clips from the film at the C. G. Jung Institute Los Angeles, and at Luton University in England (for a program organized by Luke Hockley), and then became a talk given as part of a panel John organized for the 2001 Congress of the International Association for Analytical Psychology, whose Organizing Committee was chaired by Ann Casement and Programme Committee by Robert Hinshaw. These close friends and colleagues of John's have always supported his work on film, and with their encouragement he invited the Cambridge analyst Ian Alister and the distinguished author and screenwriter Diane Johnson, to join him in discussing "The Interpretation of Film as a Psychological Art." His

essay on *Marnie*, "Hitchcock's Opposing Personality" was originally written for the Proceedings Volume, *Cambridge 2001*, which Robert Hinshaw brought out through his Swiss publishing house, Daimon Verlag, in 2003.

The people to whom John and I have to be most indebted in writing a book on this topic, however, are our mothers. Not only did they first introduce both of us to the feminine, but to film as well. In John's case, Patricia Beebe held him at the age of 18 months to see a Bob Hope movie. She was a budding movie critic when John was an infant, starting him on the path of evaluating and analyzing a film. "See!" she used to say to him, when they sat together looking at a movie in a theater (which was usually twice a week throughout his childhood). Barbara Apperson's capacity to be entertained by film, still to this day, is truly something to behold. It has always been a treat to sit by her side watching a film, her peals of laughter delighting my brothers and me, sometimes more than Peter Seller's antics. More than anything else, my mother gave me the best gift a mother can give her daughter, a firm foundation in the feminine.

Three other women, among so many, stand out as having influenced my interest in pursuing the interface between Jungian ideas, broader cultural issues, and film—Sonja Marjasch, Linda Leonard, and Ingela Romare. Each in her own way has taught me how to marvel at the creative psyche's ability to effectively mobilize the stagnant parts of our lives. Their outright refusal to settle for the status quo has helped me to look beneath the surface and experience movies' transforming potential. Others that have supported this endeavor include members of the Atlanta Jung Society, the analysts that comprise the Georgia Association of Jungian Analysts, Mary and Martha's Place, Don Kalsched, and Annette and Jim Cullipher – they have all helped me to find my voice. Thanks go to the Center for Women at Emory University for supporting a briefer version of the Alabama Film Festival and to Cary J. Broussard and Women on their Way's generous support of that event. Jessica Teal is the enormously talented film editor who created the montage of film clips. So many have believed in this project as it has taken shape; would that I could name every single person! I am grateful for my family and friends' patience with my absences during the book's creation. My thanks go especially to Cynthia Williamson, Kitty Deering, Rebecca Gurholt-Sands, Anne Sterchi, Alicia Franck, Vivian Lawand, Ann Pequigney, Tricia Brown, Perry Hooks, Eugene Pidgeon, Cynthia Smith, Jeannie Dubose, Margaret Baldwin, and Germaine and Charles Williams. I am appreciative of Timmen Cermak's correspondence around the development of his concept of *echoism*. John has named Elizabeth Osterman, the first analyst to tell

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In the end, though, John and I are analysts, and it is our clients who have kept us grounded in the process of looking and listening for psyche. I can't speak for John, but when I wondered if what I was working on in these films had any legitimacy, I simply listened to my patients' stories and was reminded of how much help the feminine still needs from us in our world today.

In the course of producing this book, Ursula Egli, our editorial assistant, has been steady, dependable, eagle-eyed, and even cheerful through and through, giving this book its final order and coherence and its index. Another talented contributor and feminine spokeswoman extraordinaire, acclaimed artist Gail Foster, allowed us to use for the book's cover her charcoal sketch *Step Forward*, an image of exquisite feminine energy arising from the depths that catches the spirit we have

tried to convey in *The Presence of the Feminine in Film*. Many thanks go, too, to Gail's husband Tom Swanston, who has been unsparing in his backing of this book. Finally, everyone we have had the pleasure to work with at Cambridge Scholars Publishing, including Dr. Andy Necessian, Amanda Millar, Carol Koulikourdi, and Vlatka Kolic, has been remarkably responsive and endlessly patient.

John has only occasionally alluded to the role his own anima must have played in guiding him to his understanding of film, but as a woman I can feel how important she is to him. My own inner figures have been steady anchors as well. But finally, as a woman analyst writing about the feminine, I want to speak about my two great male allies in this process. John Beebe has not only been a marvelous writing partner, but as my editor he has gently guided me, while at the same time setting the bar high. My greatest champion throughout this writing venture has been my husband, Pete Williams. It hasn't hurt that he is a great fan of John's as well. Pete is one of the truly great defenders of a feminine sensibility. He has been a pillar in the background of this book, making sure that what is here is not only readable, but real.

Virginia Apperson



# PREFACE

JOHN BEEBE

Trained first as a medical doctor and then as a psychiatrist, I came of age as a psychotherapist by learning to attend to my dreams. I recall, for instance, one I had in my early thirties in which a strong male figure kept exhibiting his sexual prowess, until the good-sport woman under him finally said, “I can’t keep up!” Clearly, the masculine figure was outstripping the feminine one in my dream, and that indicated to the analyst I was seeing at the time a state of imbalance. But what exactly did “masculine” and “feminine”—the major signifiers of these unknown people in my dream—mean? I was in analytic training at the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco at the time, and had already read a lot of Jung. Simply to turn to the language of archetypes, however, and say, “My shadow is stronger than my anima” was no longer helpful to the enlargement of my consciousness. I had to develop my own way to understand the qualities that my dreams were assigning to male and female figures. I had to wonder, in what did their masculinity or femininity reside?

It is Jungian to look for a public, cultural analogue to any private psychological experience. In addition to working out my personal associations to the figures in my dreams, I hit upon the idea of looking at movies to see what they thought “masculine” and “feminine” were. I saw quickly that though movies invariably betray a level of cultural anxiety, including the commercial concern to supply a fickle public with dramatizations of issues already on their minds, so that they will be motivated to sit through the movie, culture (including the sophisticated American culture of post 1970s feminism) could not explain everything I was seeing at the movies.

I decided to try to let the movies themselves tell me what masculine and feminine were, by engaging in a series of meditations on films. This book does not pretend to record every possible nuance of the feminine, but it does record many significant ways that the feminine can present herself in a movie. Although it collects work I have done over the past three decades to promote the Jungian depth psychological study of film, I am fortunate on this occasion to have my viewpoints paired with the

extraordinary sensibilities of Virginia Apperson. Virginia trained as an analyst in Zurich and has watched first hand in a variety of clinical settings, from the hospitals of her original training as a nurse to the consulting room of her private analytic practice in Atlanta, what terms like “matriarchal” and “patriarchal” (to name just one of the pairs of opposites the reader will encounter frequently in the essays of our book) actually mean for people in significant distress. We are grateful that the psychologist Jane Alexander Stewart, from the heart of the film industry in Century City, has consented to let us reprint her classic essay on “the feminine hero” in *The Silence of the Lambs*.

Such a patchwork approach, relying on materials from films chosen almost at random, may seem to some readers naïve, tendentious, and even backward. But it has enabled Virginia and me to turn our attention to a series of themes disclosed to us by films that have already grown familiar. The topic areas we have developed do not exhaust the possibilities of the feminine. Nor should we pretend that all emotion and image belongs to her. Particular movies, however, establish a presence of the feminine in film that goes well beyond both the depiction of women’s lives and the fantasies men have about women, the topics that have dominated film studies in recent years. Everyone recognizes that film has become our culture’s most cherished medium for the exchange of images and ideas. What has not been sufficiently appreciated is that both the content and the process of such exchanges invite the feminine to come forward, and that she has often managed to accept the invitation. Virginia and I have sought to redress that imbalance of recognition by offering our readers ways to notice her presence.

# **FINDING THE FEMININE IN FILM**



## CHAPTER ONE

### O SISTER, WHERE ART THOU?

VIRGINIA APPERSON

The archetypal feminine! How do we begin to describe her essence? As we try to bring her into focus, two crucial points must be kept in mind: she certainly cannot be captured by a simple, clean, “masculine” definition, and she does not just belong to women. Since by her very nature, she leans towards the obscure and elusory, we inevitably (and quite naively) rely upon a rudimentary summation of her fundamental nature. We remember her in the same way that we recollect most anything—by focusing on what is familiar—the feminine in our mothers and grandmothers, our sisters and playmates, our teachers, girlfriends and wives. This inclination to source the same resources is a bit lazy where the feminine is concerned and distracts us from discovering her other talents. Furthermore, as the more single-minded masculine has taken center stage with the rise of the West, his solar brilliance has eclipsed and condescended to her lunar reflection, and we are simply left with a stereotypical packaging of the feminine.<sup>1</sup> Such a narrow take on the feminine offers a sense of comfort and order to a patriarchal sensibility. In this climate, women have a hard enough time fostering a full-fledged relationship to their femininity. For men, the situation is even more dire, because when a man shows an inclination towards his own feminine side, he is too often treated with disdain and considered an embarrassment to the male gender. The dreary result is that much of what is most remarkable about the feminine has been mislaid, along with a more companionable masculine. Lifting the lid off of Pandora’s Box brings chaos to our normal way of thinking and reinforces a longing to get back to the safety of our typecast routines.

*Until we go to the movies.* It is in the cinema that it is socially acceptable for the feminine to morph and contort and blossom in the many different variations of her potential. Anyone who is halfway paying attention can easily access this feminine repertoire for the price of a movie

ticket. So as we search for our “lost sisters,” women, as well as men, have a phenomenal opportunity to discover secreted aspects of their femininity, if they dare to be engrossed by the compelling force fields that they encounter on the big screen.

In the twenty-first century, film is our most available, yet still provocative, form of fairy tale. This multifaceted medium dishes up scenes that not only vividly recreate common experiences, but also introduce us to alternative ways of being. With its visual and auditory power, film has the capacity to confront our lives, illuminating the best and the worst of ourselves, both personal and collective. Moreover, its emotional impact defies the old standards that have guided us, challenging us to reflect on what it is in a particular film that is stretching us right out of our comfort zones. Indeed, films can carry us forward to regions beyond our wildest imagination, rendering images that expose and counter our psychological status quo. Few fully take advantage of such an opportunity, preferring to passively sit back, relax and opt for entertainment and diversion over psychological growth. Watching film “at such a distance” only permits the film’s sway to be mildly felt, rather than sinking past our surface defenses. Nonetheless, any viewer who chooses has the prerogative to allow a film to work its profound magic, letting the film speak to what so longs to be redeemed inside. Outgrowing our past and becoming worthy of our future is truly a heroic task. Rarely does anyone decide to change without a prod from pain and suffering, since it is our anguish that typically demands therapeutic assistance. So, in addition to more traditional psychotherapeutic approaches, studying film is worth adding to a healing regimen.

The feminine’s difficulty competing with the masculine is a theme in the unconscious that Jungian analysts are encountering with alarming frequency in their work with dreams. Establishing a more balanced relationship between the masculine and the feminine has proven to have far-reaching therapeutic consequences. Film provides just the right accompaniment to analytic endeavors because it helps us image the feminine’s successes and failures. On the screen, we can plainly see the propensity towards masculine over-development, which has led to a conspicuous unevenness on the playing field. In particular, when a scene in a film moves us (like when a strong affect occurs in a dream), a quite crucial question should be asked: “what deeply entrenched imbalance is being compensated?” There really is no better tool than film to help us incarnate and visualize the dynamics that re-occur not just between men and women, but more specifically between masculine and feminine energies.

The Jungian analyst Ann Ulanov sums up quite beautifully our challenge of establishing the feminine on par with the masculine when she writes about a “human project” that literally impacts the entire planet:

The wholeness of every individual revolves around the axis of a fully developed polarity of maleness and femaleness....The polar structure of the psyche is the source of its energy and the matrix for its fulfillment. Libido, the life energy which is generated from the tension of the polarities, flows from one pole to the other, thereby differentiating the ego from its nascent unconscious state and effecting the emergence of those distinct elements whose reconciliation makes wholeness possible....Thus, in becoming whole we must grow into a conscious relationship to the masculine-feminine polarity within us....

If a man fails to develop his relation to this feminine element in him, he suffers at least a partial diminution of being and at worst, a serious mental illness....[T]he concern of many women with what a woman’s nature is and with what a relationship with a man should be may be considered as concrete expression of the urge to recover to consciousness the neglected feminine pole of the central masculine-feminine polarity. Seen in this way the struggle for women’s “rights” is not a part of a political platform for women but a human project concerned with all of us as persons (1971, 164-166).

And so we embark on this cinematic journey, rummaging around for the discarded bits and pieces of the feminine that might help her hold her own for such a truly and life-giving “human project.”

## **The Feminine and the Masculine**

Before further imagining how film might assist with this worthy balancing act, let us rephrase our original question: “Who really is the feminine that we propose men and women alike might find in the cinema?” Recognizing her resistance to being apprehended, here is a go at some of her distinguishing qualities. She is deeply rooted in nature, the animal and instinctual world. She is the cycle of life, death, rebirth with all the exuberant spontaneity and morbid suffering that are part of the vicissitudes of life. Rather than denying the emotional, affective realm that is inherent in our human nature, she feels her feelings without shame or apology. She wails; she rages; she squeals with laughter; she gyrates; she laments; she erupts. She can be a mess. She takes her time. And she can, also, be as impersonal, detached, ruthless and unrelated as a tsunami or a drought. She contains us in her womb; she nurses and rocks us against her

bosom. She bleeds; she boasts of her softness and roundness. She does not need to know; she lets us be. She drives us crazy with her desires and moods. When she embraces alterities, unimagined options sprout. She is an ugly, smelly hag, a giggly girl, a fertile field, a juicy tomato, an overflowing breast, and the crazed mare that has been separated from her foal.

Given the outrageousness of some of these traits, it is not hard to understand why the feminine has been denigrated in our hyper-rational culture. Her gifts do not accord with our modern day demands. The masculine, as we know him, is focused, competent, accurate, reliable, and his purposeful drive jibes perfectly with our needs. We choose him to quarterback because he has little trouble proving his superiority to the feminine as a way of consciousness.

Notwithstanding his enormous talents, the masculine may require a longer glance from us to explain the reasons we have privileged him in the West and to elucidate why we are beginning to tire of him. In contrast to the mysterious feminine, the masculine is pretty cut and dry. He sees the world quite simply—in blacks and whites—not the befuddling grays. His linear approach supports competition and power and divisiveness. Aggression and authority come quite naturally, sometimes for good, sometimes for evil. Logic and facts become the only things that really matter. Task-completion, action-orientation, the bottom line—these are what inspire and motivate him. Time is not wasted on the little things. He protects and guides; he procures and commands; he has all the answers. The intellect is his home. He growls and orders and dares to leap tall buildings with a single bound. He is a rapacious and promiscuous Zeus, a visionary and dynamic entrepreneur, a vicious tyrant, a scavenging predator, a vigilant father and a steadfast husband.

But wait! Hasn't feminism effectively taken on the flagrant pedantry and misogyny that such masculine privilege has so famously flaunted? Isn't his power base steadily losing its grip as women come into their own? A truly honest answer reveals quite the opposite. Though present political correctness makes it easy to romanticize and idealize feminine traits, when it comes down to employment, we all too often find the masculine a more efficacious hire. Our preference for simple solutions supports the masculine standard of judgment about her ungovernability, and so we hop into bed with him before we even know it. He is the ruling principle of our modern consciousness, and the principle of the ruler in the sense of how things are measured. Precisely because she is so imprecise, as well as elusive to measurement, the archetypal feminine gets marked as beside the point—the point being to get things right, create structure and

maintain stability. Her natural ambiguity remains a problem to our unequivocal minds. Her comfort in the depths of the unconscious and with catty ways makes her even more suspect, justifying our refusal to take her seriously. As a consequence, equality is merely a mirage.

## Archetypes and Film

How can an entertainment medium like film begin to address such a fixed paradigm where the feminine gets short shrift? The answer becomes clearer when we consider the care with which films are made. At the center of the production of a memorable film is a director. The director does not control every effect, as the auteur theory would have it, but his (and increasingly hers) is the shaping consciousness at the center of things, enabling the meaning of the finished product to cohere. A good director approaches the work of filmmaking in a fashion similar to that of a Jungian analyst approaching psychotherapy. They both know they are drawing upon the energy of archetypes, the cheapest yet most valuable and abundant currency available to any creative entrepreneur, to enable them to do their jobs. The word archetype comes from the Greek *arche*, which takes us back to the beginning of time, the source, the very nuclei that are common and shared by all of humanity. *Typoi* are the innumerable and nuanced impressions that through history have given this ancient core shape and image (Moon 1991, viii). With the freedom to pick from an endless supply of characters generated from the archetypal field, the director is able to break away from stereotypical roles that determine what a mother or father, husband or wife, daughter or son should be or do. Like an analyst who counts on the symbolic world to provide answers when a client is stuck, whether or not a film works on a psychological level is dependent upon the director poring over the archetypal prospectus and shaping the characters so that the archetypes can deliver something more than what the viewer already knows.

## The Archetypes at Work

A film director's job is to tell a compelling, captivating and credible tale. The Jungian analyst's job is to tap into the archetypal possibilities that lie within their analysands' dreams and neurotic symptoms, helping them discover that which blocks them and that which will lead them into a more meaningful existence. With a shared reverence for image, the movie director and Jungian analyst carry a confidence that this instrument that they most rely upon, the archetypal image, "is a living, organic entity

which acts as a releaser and transformer of psychic energy” (Edinger 1972, 109). Without the symbolic possibilities found in the many layers behind the image, neither could do their job. Without the vitality of the symbolic, there would be no growth, no dynamism, no effective movement, no transformation, no redemption.

In an analysis, this evolution occurs when an archetype is recognized, when the symbolic image is seen behind a symptom. For example, a faultfinding figure in a dream reminds the dreamer of the constant criticism she experienced whenever she spoke up in her family and that left her chronically dispossessed of her own authority. What is different in the dream, however, is an adorable, but impudent little girl who scoffs at the attacks and slights of the dream “Critic,” refusing to be disenfranchised. This young upstart gives the dreamer a tangible example of not only how to survive future vitriol, but the hope of thriving in the face of it. Such knowledge can help her in the future, as long as the dreamer remembers “to borrow” the cheekiness expressed by her dream companion. Encounters with caustic people will likely still be painful, but now the dreamer has something more substantial with which to work. Instead of perpetually feeling isolated by external (or internal) judgment, she can strike a brand-new posture to the once self-limiting critique. Like the filmmaker who develops certain characters to enhance and enliven and move the movie’s plotline, Jungian analysts rely on compensatory archetypal images that act as catalysts, breathing life into the tattered scripts upon which their clients have repeatedly relied. This only works, though, if a relationship is established between the client and the image: the presumptive and carefree dream parvenu who has so much to teach.

To further help the uninitiated reader get a feeling for what is meant by the dynamics of an archetype, let us take a closer look at how a relationship with the mother archetype (the first archetype that any of us encounter) might evolve. We discover the archetype of Mother through our experience of (or failure to experience) our personal mothers. For all of us, that experience begins in the womb, and for most of us continues throughout infancy and long beyond. Rarely are people indifferent to their experience of their mothers. As much as we keep hoping that our personal mothers will fulfill all of our needs, no mortal mother can fit that bill, which is finally contained not in our actual mothers, but in the mother archetype itself (perhaps the “inherited” image in Jung’s collective unconscious for which there is the most incontrovertible evidence through such common experiences of fantasy, emotion, and expectation, of her universal importance). So how do we move beyond our experience of a personal mother and make use of the archetypal mother?

To better understand this process, let us suppose the reader had a mother who was a homebody, a cook, an introvert. You may have preferred one that yelled at the ref, taught you how to socialize rather than bake, and openly discussed the political issues of the day, rather than how to harmonize with your surroundings and work quietly behind the scenes. The archetype that fuels your discontent is simply more inclusive than the mother you happened to have. If received, this “other mother” archetypal energy becomes an effective change agent in your life helping you to grow in ways that your personal mother simply did not know how to facilitate. As inspiring as this option sounds, however, since our original experience of mother is so familiar and the alternatives utterly foreign, we refuse too often these archetypal urges, reducing and limiting the archetypal mother to our personal mother. It is hard to believe that there could be another way because the old way is so deeply ingrained. In such a case, the conservatism of the archetype is at play. Most of us live in a tension between longing for something new and a desire for the comfort of the status quo. Maybe, this is why we covet others’ experiences of parents and are at the same time offended by them.

Since each of us channels the mother archetype in such a partial (and partisan) way, looking past a version of mother with which we are identified and making room for other kinds of mothers in our lives requires considerable faith that there is something to the archetype beyond our experience so far. Such trust is not for the faint-hearted. Part of growing up is accepting our parents for who they are, graciously receiving what they gave us and taking responsibility for how we live from here, and it is really that process that opens us up to the possibilities of the larger archetype. (Much easier said than done!) When we grasp that our mothers are simply mortals and will never be able to completely fill the Great Mother’s shoes, the payoff liberates us from being limited to our childhood experience. Once we can venture beyond the family system and issue an invitation to other aspects of Mother that might suit our present purposes, we are ready to learn from the vast reservoir of cultural images that can instruct our widening perspective.

## **Archetypes, Analysis and Film**

Since what we first know about Mother is fairly specific and concrete, it can be difficult to envision how to break the mold unless we have at hand alternative images. As we search to find an image of mothering that will satisfy our psyches’ demands for wholeness, we encounter characteristics of Mother in all sorts of places. One place where

unanticipated maternal qualities reveal themselves is in the therapeutic relationship, especially if the analyst is female. A “mother transference” arises with a surprising energy that is really more like a primal bonding that is experienced for the first time rather than something transferred from earlier experiences. A similar maternal charisma can be exerted by a teacher, a nurse, a celebrity, a neighbor—each one offering their own flavor of mother. Even a particularly nurturing male can become the incarnation of the mother archetype for us. As already mentioned, an archetypal approach to dreams can be enormously helpful when customizing a maternal experience that complements our original experience of mother. Bodywork, ventures into nature, great literature, theatre—really, participation in any of the arts—are avenues to find more of what one is looking for. Each way offers up its own value. The reason John Beebe and I are featuring film as a therapeutic tool is because of the particular energy the picture show lends to the process of personal development. A film, when we go out to see it, visually commands attention. It is meant to overpower us, to take us off our beaten paths. As we let it in, a film widens our narrow ego consciousness time and again. We are drawn out of ourselves and have an opportunity to grow something new from the film’s expansiveness. Since the shift from being affected by a symbol to being transformed by it requires psychological muscle and heft, it makes a lot of sense to let film’s unparalleled and deliberate bigness help us along.

Just look at this small sampling of movie mothers from which to choose (or reject). In *The Sound of Music*, Mother Superior believes in Maria’s potential.<sup>2</sup> As *Mommie Dearest*, Joan Crawford sadistically destroys her daughter’s spirit.<sup>3</sup> Mother Nature, having toppled the *Titanic*, shows off her capacity to generate “the perfect storm.”<sup>4</sup> On a humbler, but equally provocative, note from mother earth, Scarlet is inspired by a lowly radish (everything else is *gone with the wind*) to turn her life around.<sup>5</sup> *Being Julia* entitles a woman who prefers her identity as an actress over that of mother.<sup>6</sup> A fairy godmother—a magical mother—converts pumpkins and tiny mice into coaches and fine steeds, while an ill-willed stepmother tries to cram her daughters’ not so dainty feet into petite slippers.<sup>7</sup> As a wicked witch attempts to usurp the feminine realm, the temporarily motherless Dorothy is forced to grow up.<sup>8</sup> *The Hours* move slowly as we watch the quiet desperation that eats at the heart of an unmothered mother.<sup>9</sup> An orphaned cub is adopted by a bear whose protective instincts are keen and well-attuned to the cub’s vulnerability,<sup>10</sup> while *Mrs. Doubtfire* returns love to a household that has been devoid of a motherly spirit.<sup>11</sup> On the conventional side of the archetype, weekly TV

reruns provide steady comfort to our culture as June Cleaver<sup>12</sup> and Aunt Bea<sup>13</sup> remain indefatigable in caring for their families.

These characters quite efficiently engage the viewer with the personal and collective range of what we might call Mother. Renditions of movie mothers, like the archetypal mother, are endless and irreducible to a simple description—one single image will never satisfy our longing for more. Savvy moviegoers understand that entering a theatre opens their psyches up to an inexhaustible panorama. They allow the symbolic archetypal image in and feel its affective heat. They wonder about what has been stirred and evolve its energy by reflecting on what is being awakened inside. For example, if the scene works on our behalf in *The Sound of Music* when the Mother Superior sings “Climb Every Mountain,” it is because we imagine a positive mother standing by us in our darkest moments and giving us the courage to move into the struggle, rather than running away. The inspiring energy that comes out of such a spiritual mother fills the hearts of every person sitting in the movie theatre, and at least for a split second, they believe in themselves and their own actuating ability. Why not bring that conviction home with you? Why not remember that kind of encouragement in the face of dark times? Her vote of confidence is there for the taking, but requires accountability and connection on the viewer’s part. Such a Mother cannot do Her life-enhancing work by Herself; She needs to be treated as a legitimate life force that deserves to be related to and reckoned with. C. G. Jung encouraged the development of an active imagination, as opposed to a passive one, which means an ongoing dialogue with your very own Preeminent Mother who lives on even after the picture show. But remember, if we leave her on the screen, her innervating power will become null and void.

## **A Montage of the Feminine**

Throughout the course of this book, which records how two Jungian analysts have come to see the feminine with the aid of film, we will be tracing the cinematic history of the feminine. Our intent is to use films’ “feminine” tactics to help us uncover how the rejection of the feminine has taken place. More important, our movie selection will also show innovative ways to reinstate her. As a way of setting the stage for the chapters to follow, here is a montage of familiar film clips to help the reader start to appreciate how films can expose the nature and dynamics of the feminine. We encourage, you, the reader, to take your time as you “watch” this set of well-known sequences again with us. Let yourself

imagine that each clip has something personal to say to you, that it is intended to awaken something inside yourself. Consider what the never-been-taken-seriously lass, the infernal vixen and the shrinking violet (among others) have that you need.

The first clip reveals a haughty Bette Davis standing mid-way up a staircase. She is clearly taking a stand and practically growls these cautionary words at us: *Fasten your seat belts. It's going to be a bumpy night.*<sup>14</sup>

In 1950, the seat belts Bette was referring to were still mostly on planes, but the message to the audience is the necessity of preparing one's self by buckling up when faced with the feminine who has had just about enough. Davis's restless character insists, if we are going to ask that films give room for the feminine to do her thing, then we had best be prepared to accept some pretty significant turbulence; so hold on. With this premonitory advice, we go on to meet more of the feminine, perhaps a bit more prepared for the inevitable disturbance that comes with Her movie message.

Now the scene changes from the seasoned and starting to be cynical Davis to Shirley Temple as the feisty and refreshing "Little Colonel."<sup>15</sup> Beneath her frilly crinoline, Shirley embodies a pint-sized tigress. She refuses to be cowed by her military-minded grandfather's gruff and dismissive authority. Determined to have the last word, she defiantly flips the table on which their game of toy soldiers resides. In his very own parlor, the Senior Colonel faces his first defeat, and we marvel at the mighty ingénue's victory.

Like the Davis clip, this one has reverberations in our minds, which lead to questions. How did the little Colonel manage to defeat the big one? Doesn't she know that a young lady is to be seen and not heard, at all times deferential to grandfather's experienced mandates? Why is she freer to oppose him than we would be? What has kept her spirit from being broken? If this was a therapy hour, we would have to ask, "When did you last glimpse your own audacious and curly-headed cadette?"

Next, the camera zooms in on the saintly convent Sisters who gather and deliberate musically on how "to solve a problem like Maria." They tell us (through Oscar Hammerstein's lyrics) that their clerical charge is a "flibberti-gibbet, a will-of-a-wisp, a clown." We hear about her disgraceful escapades: tree-climbing, stair-whistling and waltzing to mass. The Sisters remind us that this novice, Maria, must be fixed, regulated, and contained. Above all, she must learn not to be, but to "behave." But how, they wonder, "do you keep a wave upon the sand or a moonbeam in your hand?" Then a door slams, and with a frantic rush of feet, we see Maria