

MYTHIC ASPECTS OF THE FEMININE  
IN MADAME DE LA FAYETTE'S  
LA PRINCESSE DE CLÈVES

by:

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## ABSTRACT

TITLE: MYTHIC ASPECTS OF THE FEMININE IN  
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Madame de La Fayette's La Princesse de Clèves was written between 1671 and 1677 at a time in French history when women's rights were beginning to find a voice in the "salons" of a few prominent female members of the leisure class. Although an immediate success with the reading public of seventeenth-century France, Madame de La Fayette's novel attracted a great deal of critical attention of the type that did not convince her to cast off her anonymity and come forth as the rightful author. As a roman d'analyse, La Princesse de Clèves stepped out of the conventions of vraisemblance and bienséance (plausibility and propriety) by the manner in which it followed the rites of passage of a young girl from maidenhood to self-evolved womanhood through the use of the medium of human relationships.

In taking the idea of a psychological study one step further, into the realm of mythology, the reader is able to gain greater insight into the motivational forces at work within the principal character's psyche. Madame de Clèves' mythical journey towards a greater sense of self-awareness is activated by a deep-seated need, found in varying degrees in both women and men but in general more predominantly in women, to establish and maintain positive, creative

relationships with others. This need goes back to the essential and eternal bonding between mother and daughter and the more tenuous bonding between mother and son. Placed within a mythological framework, the princesse's fictional development can be described through the intermediary motif of the quest. The princesse, unconsciously at first, sets out on a search for Self - a search for the centre of undistorted recognition of one's essence. She is stirred to action by feelings of dissatisfaction, loss and incompleteness arising from deep within her being. The initial phase of the journey entails a pulling away from the intense Mother bonding (without totally separating from it) by means of initiation through the "masculine" (her platonic lover Nemours). She is then able to accept and appreciate the parts of her inner nature she had been taught to avoid as a young girl (passion, moodiness, rage) and begin the difficult task of redeeming the Feminine within, in both her beauty and her destructiveness.

During the process of looking at her own life, her own immediate past, the princesse finds herself drawn to the myths of a more distant past as well. She comes in touch with her mythical beginnings, with the unconscious dreams of an ancient people who, unlike their successors, were more at peace with their connection to life's mysterious truths personified by the oldest revered divinity: the ancient Great Goddess, "Union of all things related one to another."



The result for Madame de La Fayette's heroine is a self-realized existence far from the culturally dictated role that society had allotted for her. In her moving away from the French court to the world of wholeness and integrity of country home and convent, the princesse is able to taste the fruits of freedom. She is able to become filled with the "goddess energy" of all aspects of her life and join past and future in her personal quest to bring inner healing to herself and to others.

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and beyond life's apparent absurdities, and my son, Eytan, who reminds me daily that the world is a magical place in which to dance.

For my Father

## INTRODUCTION

Nothing came down the street; nobody passed. A single leaf detached itself from the plane tree at the end of the street, and in that pause and suspension fell. Somehow it was like a signal falling, a signal pointing to a force in things which one had overlooked.

Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own<sup>1</sup>

In looking at Madame de La Fayette's novel La Princesse de Clèves from a mythological perspective, we must first concern ourselves with the myth in general. "Myths do not tell us how, they simply give us the invisible background which starts us imagining, questioning, going deeper."<sup>2</sup> This is what occurs when reading La Princesse de Clèves. Even without consciously doing a mythological reading of the text, one is left with the feeling that there is much more going on in the depths of the princesse's\* being than is first evident. If the reader allows the search to begin, s/he cannot avoid looking at the psychological aspect of the inner workings of the princesse. This path leads us back to the concept of myth. "It was Jung's conviction that a psychology really attuned to the soul's processes admits our implication in a variety of myths."<sup>3</sup> Jung encourages woman's re-engagement with ancient images. He talks of the importance of the collective unconscious, how there is more to us than the personal and the historical. There are myths, myths which we

\* Throughout this study, the French spelling of the word princesse will be used.



are living and which are living us. In discovering and appreciating mythical patterns which seem connected to our own lives, we can begin to understand how certain seemingly accidental and unconnected events of everyday life belong to the whole. The whole is important to Jung. We will see this same concern for the integrity of the whole being in the *princesse*. Jung encourages everyone to look at themselves, to study their dreams and imaginings and to recognize where myth leads them. For women, these mythic impulses lead back to the ancient mother goddesses, to the depth of the feminine forces which will re-emerge sooner or later in chaos or in harmony with their masculine counterparts.<sup>4</sup>

"Like Jung I needed to learn which myth was living me, and learned there were many."<sup>5</sup> We are all living our myths whether we know it or not. We all give expression to the myths, to the plot, the connecting thread, the story of our lives, in different ways. We act, sing, write, teach, choose a certain person to live our lives with, a certain job to survive within this world, and at times it all or part of it seems quite by chance. As stated by Christine Downing: "Appreciation of the connection between myth and my life seems simultaneously to make me more attuned to the myth's unity and to help me understand how moments in my life which otherwise might seem accidental or fragmentary belong to the whole."<sup>6</sup> How many times have we done something which causes us to wonder afterwards why on earth we did such a thing? Yet at the time, our actions seemed somehow "right" or true

to our nature or even totally essential to our survival, as if we had no other choice. In following this mythic interpretation of life's motivational energies, we see that Madame de La Fayette's way of giving expression to the myths affecting her inner being is through her writing. Her masterpiece La Princesse de Clèves was composed between 1671 and 1677 in France at a time when women's rights were beginning to find a voice in the "salons" of a few well-to-do respectable female members of society. As far as the majority of men were concerned, this is where they were meant to stay. Marriages were, in general, purely of convenience, as was Madame de La Fayette's to the comte de La Fayette (a widower and eighteen years her senior), although "they seemed to have held each other in real affection . . ."<sup>7</sup> The following statement aptly describes the essence of love and marriage in seventeenth-century France:

An "alliance" between two families was negotiated with as much formality as one by diplomatists. If the parties happened to have a real or fancied inclination for one another, this merely added an element of exquisite perfection and of agreeable luxury to the arrangement - an ultimate touch of whimsicality amounting almost to insolence.

From such an atmosphere of cultural rigidity surrounding the magical world of "love making", Madame de La Fayette's novel emerges. Her story is about a woman who does an extraordinary and very difficult thing. Madame de Clèves is an enigma. She is not comfortable in her environment, in her century, in her being. As a result, she begins listening to

rumblings of ancient forces within herself and instead of pushing them back down and going on with her life, she confides in the only living person she feels she can truly trust, her husband. She voices her confusion about love and marriage, passion and morality. She does not want to do what most women did in seventeenth-century France and elsewhere in Europe: remain dutifully married and sneak discretely behind their husbands' backs to satisfy their passions.

The princesse's aveu or confession to her husband of her passion for another man and her decision to remain faithful to her spouse were viewed as highly unusual actions, not only by certain characters in the novel but by the reading public in general at the time. In a "sondage d'opinion littéraire" taken by the journal Le Mercure Galant, April 1678 edition, the general view of its correspondants was that such a confession was pernicious in nature, because it made married life completely impossible. The major concern was that a woman should never hasard to cause alarm to her husband.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, Madame de La Fayette's intriguing story (credited today as "the first text of women's fiction in France"<sup>10</sup>) was an immediate success. And yet she never formally laid claim to it as her own. It has often been suggested that the author's unwillingness to cast off her anonymity was due largely to the type of attention the book attracted. (xli) For example: "L'aveu de Madame de Clèves à son mari", writes the critic Bussy-Rabutin to his cousin Madame de Sévigné, a close friend of Madame de La Fayette,

"est extravagant, et ne se peut dire que dans une histoire véritable; mais quand on en fait à plaisir, il est ridicule de donner à son héroïne un sentiment si extraordinaire."<sup>11</sup> Madame de La Fayette states at the beginning of her novel that the author wants to remain in obscurity so as not to influence the readers one way or the other in their judgements of the subject matter. She indicates that identifying herself might diminish the success of her book.<sup>12</sup> We can only guess at the true reason behind her resolution to remain anonymous. Did Madame de La Fayette feel that the public would not receive so openly a story about the inner struggles of an "extraordinary" woman if they knew it was written by a member of the same sex? Did she feel on some deep level that she could not claim responsibility for a work whose origins were unknown even to herself? The only thing we can be sure of is that despite whatever concerns the author had about the reception of her published manuscript, she felt compelled to write it. Madame de La Fayette, like her heroine, was also heeding her own rumbling forces within. The myths that were living her were demanding to be expressed in some way.

As Christine Downing says, we do not consciously seek out information on mythological stories or legends and start experiencing whatever myth we happen to have absorbed that day. Myths choose us.<sup>13</sup> Every individual has his own baggage, his own essence, his own soul filled with the activity of many divinities.<sup>14</sup> Madame de La Fayette is no

exception. Often characterized by critics as having a strong "interest in the human heart" (xii) (which in Jungian terms could be called an interest in the psychological and mythical workings of a person's nature) Madame de La Fayette creates a princesse, a woman who begins a psychological search for the divinities in her soul, and who is not satisfied until she has reached her destination.

Denis de Rougemont offers the following comprehensive description of the term myth:

Speaking generally, a myth is a story - a symbolical fable as simple as it is striking - which sums up an infinite number of more or less analogous situations . . . More narrowly, a myth expresses the rule of conduct of a given social or religious group. It issues accordingly from whatever sacred principle has presided over the formation of this group. Symbolical accounts of the life and death of gods, legends accounting for either sacrifices or the origin of taboos, are examples of myths. It has frequently been noted that myths never have an author. The origin of a myth has to be obscure and so to some extent has its meaning . . . . But the most profound characteristic of a myth is the power which it wins over us, usually without our knowing . . . . The statement of a myth disarms all criticism, and reason, if not silenced, becomes at least ineffective.<sup>15</sup>

In the chapters following, we will be looking at certain myths which seem to have chosen the princesse, and the power they have over her. We shall also go more deeply into this search of the princesse for the goddess within, a search into the dark mysteries of the Feminine, in both its positive and negative aspects. This thesis is not a feminist study in the

sense that it does not deal specifically with historical repression of women and their fight for liberation. We are looking at the inner struggle to liberate the feminine spirit. This struggle goes beyond the historical. It is carried on in the infinite realm of the soul and, although it thus occurs in both men and women, it will be examined here from a woman's point of view and will concentrate on women, notably the *Princesse de Clèves*. We are dealing not just with recent opposition to the free expression of the feminine spirit but with centuries of repression of the essence of soul brought on by the gradual change from a magical, matriarchal and mythological orientation to one of "common sense" masculine values. Edward C. Whitmont, in his book Return of the Goddess, talks of this important transition using the psychological terms of gynolatric and androlatric which "denote the reverencing of respectively, the feminine or the masculine."<sup>16</sup> The gynolatric period, according to Whitmont, extends from the Stone Age into the Bronze Age, at which time a shift to a decisive predominance of male values occurred "possibly sometime during the second millennium B.C. This is the onset of the heroic age when iron gradually replaced bronze. It also marks the decline of what shall later be described as the mythological age, when male divinities replaced the image of the Great Goddess as the central object of worship."

Evidences of worship of the Great Mother Goddess, or Magna Mater, go back to very ancient times. Life itself in

many different cultures throughout Western Asia and Asia Minor depended on the benevolent actions of the Great Goddess. She was the mistress of the moon, of the stars and heavens, of the earth and all that grows. She was also the mistress of death and destruction.

She was known under different names in different countries and in different ages, but her life story, her attributes and characteristics, did not vary greatly even though the name of the religion changed from place to place . . . The origins are lost in the remote past but as far back as history can be traced we find evidences of a Great Mother goddess reigning supreme with her son who is usually also her lover. Ishtar of Babylon is one of the oldest . . . prior to the third millenium B.C., she and her son Tammuz were "already worshipped there."

Astarte and her son Baal were worshipped by the Canaanites, Hebrews and Phoenicians. She is first mentioned in 1478 B.C., although her cult began much earlier during the primitive Semitic times. There was also Isis of Egypt, Mother of the Universe (with her sons and lovers Osiris and Horus), whose worship dated from 1700 B.C.; Cybele, Goddess of Earth and Goddess of the Moon, worshipped in Phrygia before 900 B.C. and often identified with Rhea, Ge and Demeter, Greek earth and moon mothers, as well as Tellus, Ceres and Maia, their Roman counterparts. There was the Celtic mother goddess Anu known to be worshipped from prehistoric times in Western Europe, Aphrodite with Adonis her son and lover, and Anatis of Egypt. A more familiar name to modern day readers is that of the Virgin Mary and her son,

revered in medieval Europe in the same way as the Mother Goddesses of Eastern Asia and Syria. The cult of the Mother and Dying Son was widespread at that time and long before.<sup>18</sup>

Madame de La Fayette, in writing her novel La Princesse de Clèves, most likely knew nothing on a conscious level of these inter-related ancient female earth and moon divinities. However, their influence on her inner being is evident in her work. The mythology surrounding the Great Goddess and her endless flow of creative and destructive energies, her total control in a non-heroic fashion over all phases of life and death (which has since been repressed by the shift from the mythological to the mental epoch<sup>19</sup>) has deeply affected the psychological development of generations of women and men. Such an influence is not to be taken lightly. As Jung points out: "the gods are principles or forces which function apart from man's conscious volition and to whose fiat he must needs bow."<sup>20</sup> The amazing similarities that connect the legends of the Great Mother (often referred to as the Moon Goddess whose daughter is the earth) can only be explained by the fact that "these myths represent a psychological reality . . . perceived by these widely separated peoples, not in the form of abstract thought, but as an image rising from the unconscious and projected into the outer world as a divine being."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore: "the myths of the Moon Goddess and the characteristics she possesses shadow forth a truth which could not be perceived directly by human beings, namely: the inner subjective reality of feminine psychology." This



feminine psychology is not limited to women alone. However, for women, the feminine principle (represented in women's and men's unconscious imagery as the Moon) is "the dominant principle", whereas for men it is "the ruler of the night only, the principle under whose aegis the unconscious functions."<sup>22</sup> Women are closer to the source, to the generative power of creation. Through the ages, we have lost, or so it seems, this supreme power, both the positives and negatives of it. We have lost touch with our souls, our true centers. We have replaced the goddess cults, where achievement and self-will were unknown, with societies bent on rationally destroying the opposition, no matter what the cost. And what a cost it could be. The mystical power of the goddess followed the natural patterns of nature: it was both all giving and all-taking. Death was an accepted part of the continuous flow of the universe. Although at times very violent and not at all logical in a modern day sense, it was forever reaching back towards the creative, generative forces of being. Thus, under the auspices of such a divine power, the ultimate survival of life on our planet would never have been threatened to the extent it is in our present generation. There is still hope, however, as the novel La Princesse de Clèves demonstrates. The goddess can only be pushed back for so long. What is needed now is an integration. "We must use our hard-won rationality to make sure that the emerging Goddess archetype not be used to

rationalize magical regression, but rather that she may guide to higher levels of human development."<sup>23</sup>

By viewing the structure and the content of Madame de La Fayette's "mémoires"<sup>24</sup> through the mythic perspective, we are able to give a cognitive framework to the microcosm that is the world of the princesse, and from there place its rational and irrational dimensions forward in time to present day society and back in time to the days of the goddess. Before, however, continuing in this vein it is important to explain in more conventional psychological terms what is involved in the mythic figure of speech "goddess." We have talked of myths and how they can unconsciously affect patterns of human behaviour. The goddess represents one of the eternal myths that lives within our being. Because she is associated with the psychological phenomenon of relatedness (with the unity of all life through an unbroken connection, through a relationship with all growing things), we can say from a mythological perspective that whenever one is in touch with one's deepest truths one is in effect hearing the call of the goddess. The term goddess can be used to mean different things at different times, however each separate property plays an important role in forming the integrity of the whole Great Goddess essence. The "goddess" can represent sexual passion (Eros), she can show that individuation or the emergence of Self is taking place, she can also represent feminine assertions of rights and freedom. The Self we mention here is what one discovers by

reaching behind the layers of culturally dictated identity; it is the center of undistorted recognition of one's personality and it is experienced, according to Jung, as a transpersonal power which transcends the ego, for example God or the Goddess.<sup>25</sup>

In the case of Madame de La Fayette's heroine, when she feels herself awakening to a love of unknown and overwhelming dimensions in the presence of the Duc, this release of emotional energy can be described as: beginning to hear the call of the Great Goddess. Madame de Clèves feels a split within herself; a part of her wants to merge with Nemours and learn about every aspect of his being (the Eros part) and another part is concerned only with repressing such a frightening desire (the Ego, that is, the central complex in the field of consciousness). In conventional psychological terms one can say that the psyche is not whole. It needs healing. Its integral parts are in opposition one to the other and the result is an inequality which can cause much turmoil once the repressed elements begin to demand recognition. Mythologically speaking, it is the goddess - the source which defines the mythical aspects of the feminine - that can greatly help to effect healing of one's inner being because her energy brings together disparate elements and reunites them. Thus, in regard to the psyche, the "goddess energy" can help integrate the ego forces, the Self and the shadow (an unconscious part of the personality made up of traits and attitudes that the conscious ego

normally rejects ) and bring about a healing of mind, body and soul. The process, however, as the princesse finds out, can be a very painful one.

In reading La Princesse de Clèves, we have no other choice but to follow the path the heroine is taking back into her psyche and into her soul. She needs a guide to light her way, to help direct the emotion and passion of the ancient Magna Mater into creative positive outlets. The Duc de Nemours fulfills this need just as women today require their rational, analytical masculine principle to guide the much needed return of their repressed feminine to the light of day. The ending of a mythological story is very important, as is the ending of the story La Princesse de Clèves. A question continually asked in regards to this ending is whether or not the princesse is facing her life - her deep passion, her chaotic emotions - or escaping from it with her decision not to marry her love Nemours but to choose a life forever sheltered from the amoralities of the French court. There is no simple answer to this. We will reach a conclusion together as the story unfolds before us. This thesis is about a woman, an individual, a princesse, and her mythological quest.

Notes to Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (London: Granada Publishing Ltd., Panther Books, 1977), p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> James Hillman, Re-Visioning Psychology (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 158, cited in Christine Downing, The Goddess: Mythological Images of the Feminine (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1984), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Christine Downing, The Goddess: Mythological Images of the Feminine (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1984), p.27. The Jung she is referring to is the Swiss psychiatrist and psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, 1875-1961.

<sup>4</sup> Downing, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Downing, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Downing, p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Madame de La Fayette, La Princesse de Clèves, ed. K.B. Kettle (New York: MacMillan, St. Martin's Press, 1967), Introduction xxxvii. Subsequent citations from the Introduction of the above edition of La Princesse de Clèves will be indicated in this thesis by Roman numerals within parentheses.

<sup>8</sup> Denis de Rougemont, Love in the Western World, trans: Montgomery Belgion (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 206.

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Pingaud, Mme de la Fayette par elle-même (Paris: "Ecrivains de Toujours", Éditions du Seuil, 1959), p. 145.

<sup>10</sup> Nancy K. Miller, "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction", The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Panther Books, 1985), p. 339.

<sup>11</sup> Marcel Hervier, Les Ecrivains français jugés par leurs contemporains, tome I, le XVI et le XVII siècle, ed. Paul Delaplane (Paris: Librairie Classique), p. 302.

<sup>12</sup> The direct quote is: l'auteur n'a pu se résoudre à se déclarer; il a craint que son nom ne diminuât le succès de son livre." This comment by Madame de La Fayette is found at the beginning of La Princesse de Clèves (New York: MacMillan, St. Martin's Press, 1967) under the heading "Le Libraire au Lecteur". Madame de la Fayette wanted it to

appear that the Publisher, not the author, had written the explanation as to why the author had chosen to remain anonymous.

<sup>13</sup> Downing, p. 27.

<sup>14</sup> James Hillman, "Psychology: Monotheistic or Polytheistic", Spring, 1971, cited in Downing, The Goddess, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Denis de Rougemont, pp. 18-19 (emphasis deleted).

<sup>16</sup> Edward C. Whitmont, Return of the Goddess (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 42. The quotation immediately following this one continues with the explanation of the terms gynolatric and androlatric, p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> M. Esther Harding, Woman's Mysteries: Ancient and Modern (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1976), p. 98.

<sup>18</sup> The above references to the Great Mother goddesses are from Harding, Woman's Mysteries, pp. 98-99.

<sup>19</sup> Whitmont, p. 43.

<sup>20</sup> Carl Jung, Contributions to Analytical Psychology, trans. H.G. and Gary F. Baynes (New York and London, 1928), p. 161, mentioned in Harding, Woman's Mysteries, p. 96.

<sup>21</sup> This quotation and the one immediately following are from Harding, Woman's Mysteries, pp. 96,97.

<sup>22</sup> Harding, pp. 96-97 (emphasis deleted). It is Harding who describes the feminine principle as being represented in one's unconscious imagery as the Moon.

<sup>23</sup> Whitmont, p. 48.

<sup>24</sup> This is the word Madame de La Fayette chose to use in referring to her novel in a letter to Lescheraine. Bernard Pingaud, Mme de La Fayette par elle-même, p. 142.

<sup>25</sup> Sylvia Brinton Perera, Descent to the Goddess: A Way of Initiation for Women (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1981), p. 96.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PRINCESSE: MYTHOLOGICAL CONNECTIONS TO THE GREEK GODDESSES

We need the goddess in a culture that  
tears us from woman, from women, and from  
ourselves.

Christine Downing, The Goddess<sup>1</sup>

As was mentioned in the Introduction, Madame de La Fayette was in all probability not consciously aware of the mythological forces at work in affecting her own psyche during the preparation and writing of her great work La Princesse de Clèves. The fact that she produces a novel in which different aspects of her main character's being are strongly connected to ancient female archetypes in the form of goddesses, might have been of interest to her; yet her conscious knowledge of these mythological entities is not of utmost importance. The connections are there whether Madame de la Fayette was aware of them or not. In studying these mythic relationships, in other words, in looking at the princesse's mythos - the connecting thread in her life linking her with generations long past - her actions which may have seemed fragmentary or unbelievable for many readers in the seventeenth century, and in centuries following, suddenly have new clarity and meaning.

The Greek goddesses are a good place to begin. They have been extolled in songs and poems, worshipped faithfully and at times fearfully since early Mycenean times. Homer, the tenth-century B.C. Greek epic poet, has forever etched their names in history in his classic works the Iliad and

Odyssey. They are the myths of female divinities most readily available to us (whether we consciously know of them or not). The Greek goddesses are not as untouched by social and political factors as the earlier Mother goddesses of Sumeria and eastern Asia. Standing influentially beside them and often looming powerfully over them are the male deities of Zeus, Hades, Poseidon and so on, deities of a patriarchal culture.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the roots of the Greek goddesses are to be found in the powerful essence of the ancient goddess. The differentiation of female attributes and powers into separate goddesses (one major aspect of the feminine per goddess) appears to be a splitting off into separate figures of the traits and characteristics carried in an integrated way by the one Great Goddess of ancient cultures. Yet despite their watered-down version of female sovereignty, the Olympian heroines still carry the truths of the more obscure period which was dominated by female deities, of the time when the role of the male consort was one primarily of obedience and sacrifice. We begin with what we have most obviously before us: that which is "alive to some degree in the unconscious of each of us, and deeply embedded in our language, literature and social institutions"<sup>3</sup> - the tales of the Greek goddesses - before we start to peel off the layers, before heading into earlier matriarchal traditions to the realm of the All-Supreme.

### The Persephone/Demeter myth

Madame de La Fayette introduces her heroine into her



story in a very direct, straightforward way. There is no fanfare, however her message is quite clear:

Il parut alors une beauté à la cour, qui  
attira les yeux de tout le monde, et l'on  
doit croire que c'était une beauté  
parfaite, puisqu'elle donna de  
l'admiration dans un lieu où l'on était  
si accoutumé à voir de belles personnes .  
. . elle [sa mère] ne travailla pas  
seulement à cultiver son esprit et sa  
beauté, elle songea aussi à lui donner de  
la vertu et à la lui rendre aimable.<sup>4</sup>

Mademoiselle de Chartres, who is soon to become the Princesse de Clèves through marriage, is never given a first name. On the one hand, it seems that we are only meant to know her as a princesse, a mythological character whose education and moral upbringing have made her so different from other women her age that she stands apart from the real world - a myth. This difference or uniqueness, stated clearly by Madame de la Fayette in her first description of her heroine, is emphasized throughout the novel. On the other hand, as the novel progresses, the formation of the princesse is "executed with such care"<sup>5</sup> that we cannot help but begin seeing her as a real woman. She is a woman facing problems that women have had to face since very early times when their supreme power began to be usurped by a need for a more rational evolution of humankind. The princesse is confronted with a fierce struggle between her emotions and her reason. Because of her uniqueness and her gradual awakening to her mythological roots, she is unable to follow unquestioningly the culturally defined model for feminine behaviour and character in her century. And so she must look elsewhere in

order to redefine her place in the world. This is a search not for external support systems but for internal intuitive knowledge that will bring greater meaning to her life. What Madame de Clèves discovers behind the layers of culturally dictated identity is a new definition of her personality, one combining both the forces of tumult and of tranquility. She is reaching back to the centre of wholeness deep within her psyche. Described in more mythical terms, Madame de Clèves experiences the call of the goddess within and responds to it. Not many women of her time had the opportunity to do this coupled with the inner strength to carry out, with such integrity, what can be called the journey back to Self.

As demonstrated by Jung in his Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, contact with the inner or spiritual world is governed not by masculine but by feminine laws.<sup>6</sup> These feminine laws or principles have to do with the world of human relationship. It is important to clarify the use of the terms masculine and feminine as used in our study. To begin with, the idea of the masculine principle or spirit (Logos) does not exclusively apply to the male population, and the feminist principle (Eros) to the female population. We find both principles in both sexes to varying degrees. Eastern cultures which use the term Yang to indicate the Western idea of masculine energies and Yin for the feminine energies are able to avoid the confusion Western cultures run into in describing these life principles. However, through our readings we have discovered that due to the simple and at

the same time miraculous fact that women have forever been the bearers of the children of the universe, it is they who have remained through the ages in closer contact with the realm of nature and its all powerful cyclic patterns of life, death and renewal - the eternal flow of the universe. Men, on the other hand, have forever carried the role of the protectors of this eternal life cycle and have thus evolved in a different direction than women, away from the natural laws of existence with its creative and destructive elements living together in harmony, into the world of responsibility, focused thought, logical conclusions.

Modern psychological thinking has indicated that the split which began happening between man and woman since earliest times also deeply affected the internal workings of the species homo sapiens.<sup>7</sup> The intellectual, driven part of man's nature began to downplay and even fear the spontaneous, creative part of his nature. Thus, we find in the psychological framework of the Western world the designation "masculine" being used to indicate these former traits of reason and ego aggression since they seem to have a larger male representational forum in society and the characteristics of fluidity and relatedness to all living things being grouped under the designation "feminine." In regards to woman and the feminine principle M. Esther Harding states:

If a woman is out of touch with the feminine principle, which dictates the laws of relatedness, she cannot take the lead in what is after all the feminine

realm, that of human relationships.  
 Until she does so there cannot be much  
 hope of order in this aspect of life.<sup>8</sup>

Yet the danger is that in order for a woman to get in touch with the feminine principle within, she must open herself up to the dark secrets of her own nature. She must come face to face with "the daemonic power of the nonhuman feminine principle"<sup>9</sup> and use it in conjunction with her developed rational male principle to make what is sterile and infertile in the world more human. This is not an easy task. Some women, in their searching beneath the safety of their learned human manners and emotions, become lost in the ancient and primitive form of feminine instinct. "By the magico-mythological view, nothing can come into existence unless something equivalent goes out of existence. Therefore all creation requires sacrifice . . . Sacrifice appears as the central theme of most mythological cosmogonies."<sup>10</sup> Such sacrifices, often human in nature, served a purpose in the ancient realm of the Great Goddess. They allowed for immediate expression of the chaotic violence associated with the forces of Nature. The other side of this process, however, was that at certain times in primitive cultures the feminine instinctive nature of woman was liable to prove the undoing of men - total ruthless annihilation. Modern women must be aware of this. The princesse herself, during the various stages of her quest, comes up against the strong instinctual force of the feminine principle for sacrificial

hommage. Despite her desperate efforts to sustain a trusting, honest relationship between herself and her husband, M. de Clèves becomes a victim to forces he is unable to understand. His death is recognized as totally unnecessary, an abomination, by Madame de Clèves. As a result, she becomes even more committed to her search for inner truth, for never again will she cause harm to others through her fear to face herself. We will talk more of this later.

Throughout the novel the princesse's story can be read from two perspectives. She appears on the one hand to be skillfully inscribed in a well-defined socio-cultural context. She is placed in the élite amoral society of sixteenth-century France as one of the illustrious members of the court of Henri II. Madame de La Fayette uses this setting as a guise for the observation of her own contemporary society of seventeenth-century France. On the other hand, the heroine is a figure sprung from the depths of her creator - depths which are the natural dwelling place of myth. It is through a "mythic reading" of the princesse's story that we are able to truly comprehend the force behind her struggles, the importance of her quest and of the decisions that resulted therefrom.

In the Persephone/Demeter myth, the bond between daughter and mother is very strong. Demeter, the Great Mother, is "goddess of the grain, of that which grows to

human benefit."<sup>11</sup> She is seen in the Homeric Hymns as a much more human and loving goddess than the ancient Mother goddess figure. Nothing is secret within her cult. Her beloved daughter is the goddess of spring who is abducted by Hades into the underworld. There is a beautiful scene, depicted by Homer, of Persephone playing innocently and joyfully in a sunlit field with other maidens. As she reaches to pluck a magnificent flower the scene changes; the earth opens up and Hades appears in his thundering chariot to take Persephone back with him to his home in the depths of the earth. Not knowing where her daughter is but having heard her cry out, Demeter puts on a black cape and wanders the earth for nine days in search of her. On the tenth day she discovers that Hades is the abductor and a worthy groom. She is, however, inconsolable. She goes into mourning allowing nothing to grow. Finally Zeus, who according to one version of the myth gave permission to Hades his brother to abduct Persephone, sends the messenger Hermes to the underworld to arrange for the release of Persephone. He is too late; due to trickery on the part of Hades or carelessness on the part of his captive, Persephone has already eaten of the seed-filled pomegranate. Partaking of the fruit of the underworld connects her forever to Hades. Thereafter, she must spend one-third of every year under the earth; for the other two-thirds she is allowed to rejoin her mother above the earth. Their reunion is one of great joy for both mother and daughter and their separation one of great sorrow.<sup>12</sup>

There are many versions of this powerful myth, each with numerous gods and goddesses attached to it. The core remains the same nonetheless. Persephone enters the underworld unwillingly it seems, but somehow once there she becomes the very essence of its domaine; she becomes its goddess. In most versions of the myth it is as if she were always there. During late classical and early Hellenistic times, adherence to the Eleusinian cult would take precedence over all other cults for men as well as women.<sup>13</sup> This cult focused on the secret mysteries of life and death with Persephone as the hidden, inexpressible goddess, related to things beyond and with her mother as the first initiate, bridging the gap between the simple and commonplace, such as food on one's table, and those things not meant to be understood by the general public. It is said that Zeus is the father of Persephone, but he is depicted as playing a very minor role in her daily existence. Demeter, on the other hand, is shown as a very caring, all-giving mother who takes in hand every aspect of her daughter's upbringing. At first glance, she seems "to represent an idealized version of maternal devotion - yet a closer reading suggests it may be her very overinvestment in her child that makes Persephone's abduction by Hades a necessary denouement."<sup>14</sup>

Persephone's separation from her mother can be seen as both loss of the most important person in her life and gain of her own self. The Hades that she goes to, the Hades to whom she gives herself is not a terrifying, forever punishing

realm. It is "the realm of souls rather than of egos, the realm where experience is perceived symbolically."<sup>15</sup> Its depth and darkness can be symbolic not only of the end but of an end leading to the beginning of life. To view Persephone in this way, as first the goddess of the underworld and then the goddess of spring and renewal, "to start with death, with the underworld, as a given is to see life in an entirely different way."<sup>16</sup> It is cyclic, it is darkness leading to light and then to darkness again. We need the darkness, the nurturing warmth and moisture within the depths, for it is here that the seed begins to grow and strengthen itself before it reaches out to face the sometimes unforgiving day.

The similarities of the *Princesse de Clèves*'s story and that of the Persephone mythologem are many. Persephone and Demeter represent the unconscious processes of an ancient civilization projected into the conscious realm through the means of a story, a myth. The princesse and her mother also represent the unconscious process, this time of a more recent society, and in particular of a certain woman author. The story that Madame de La Fayette tells does not just stir within her own psyche however. It is a part of the mythos of many of us, to varying degrees, and its roots are deep within the unconscious layers of generations long past.

In La Princesse de Clèves, Mademoiselle de Chartres' father dies at a young age leaving her under the loving protection of her mother. Madame de Chartres is described as "[une] femme, dont le bien, la vertu et le mérite étaient



extraordinaires" (p. 10). She takes on the task of raising her daughter as befits her family lineage. As already mentioned, she does not only cultivate her beauty and her mind, but she also takes it upon herself to instill within her daughter a sense of the importance of virtue, honesty and tranquillity of self. Instead of avoiding talking to Mademoiselle de Chartres about the meaning of "galanterie" (the game of love "incorporating elegance, distinction [and] flirtatious behaviour", p. 156 Glossary), as most mothers do, Madame de Chartres chooses to approach the subject as openly as she can. She tells her daughter stories of the wonders of love, only to persuade her more easily about its pitfalls. She talks of "le peu de sincérité des hommes, leurs tromperies et leur infidélité, les malheurs domestiques où plongent les engagements" (p. 10). In contrast to this is the tranquil life of an honest and virtuous woman who, "par une extrême défiance de soi-même et par un grand soin de s'attacher à ce qui seul peut faire le bonheur d'une femme, qui est d'aimer son mari et d'en être aimée (pp. 10-11), is able to maintain this tranquillity of being. Mademoiselle de Chartres is soon to find out just how difficult such an accomplishment is.

At age sixteen, the sheltered maiden is presented to the French court. On one level, Madame de Chartres is beginning to loosen her grip on her protégée. However, beneath the surface of the mother-daughter bond, which in this case is no

longer a tight-knit unit of two, one finds infinite levels of connection that will never cease. This is illustrated very clearly between Peresphone and her mother when all growth on earth is stopped until mother and daughter are re-united. Marianne Hirsch, in her article "A Mother's Discourse: Incorporation and Repetition in La Princesse de Clèves ", examines "the formation of the Princess' female identity as it is dominated not by adult heterosexual desire, but by another (erotic) longing, one that points back to a pre-history of mother-daughter symbiosis." She goes on to say that "perhaps for us the discovery of the primacy of mother over husband and lover, of early childhood over maturity has . . . the surprise of 'the discovery of the Minoan-Mycenean civilization behind the civilization of Greece.'" <sup>17</sup> The mother-daughter bond has very ancient beginnings. In following the story line of the Persephone/Demeter myth, we sense the age-old continuum of mother begetting daughter who then grows up to pass on the secret of the feminine to her daughter. The Greek "daughters" of Persephone worshipped fervently her secret cult. In more modern times, such ancient mysteries of creation, death and renewal are not so clearly passed on from mother to daughter. Yet within the unconscious realm, the goddess still lives and stirs. For the princesse, her symbolic daughter is her own self, waiting to be re-discovered, in all her wholeness, and brought to the light of day. (This she is able to do only by leaving the

court, as we will later demonstrate). No matter which way one chooses to approach the feminine story, one encounters the element of deep loss. It is the loss of one's daughter, one's mother, one's virginity. It includes more often than not the loss, hopefully temporary, of one's "in-one-self-ness".<sup>18</sup> But it is also the story of new beginnings. Whatever is associated with the feminine is of necessity cyclic - the waxing and waning of the moon, the seasons, death and re-birth. There is no escaping such eternal rhythms. Persephone does not escape them, the princesse most certainly does not.

Once in the society of the French court, Mademoiselle de Chartres becomes quickly known as an almost inaccessible woman of beauty and virtue. She meets her future husband during a rather strange encounter in a jewellery shop. She is all alone, her mother is not with her, which surprises M. de Clèves because of her seemingly young age. Another interesting fact to M. de Clèves is that this young woman is embarrassed by his attentions, "contre l'ordinaire des jeunes personnes qui voient toujours avec plaisir l'effet de leur beauté" (p. 11). Mademoiselle de Chartres, we are already realizing, is not an ordinary young person of her time. As with Persephone, she is a rare beauty whose vulnerability, due to her protected upbringing, appeals to the most handsome and powerful of men. The man who is to become her passionate love is, as fate should have it, not in France during the period of time that her mother is looking for a husband for

her. To further complicate matters, rival factors within the court of Henri II have made the name de Chartres an undesirable one in regard to the serious business of alliance through marriage. Madame de Chartres is honored with M. de Clèves' offer to marry her daughter. "[Il] devint passionnément amoureux de Mademoiselle de Chartres et souhaitait ardemment l'épouser" (p. 13). He even goes against his father's wishes. His father, the Duc de Nevers, is a close friend of the Duchesse de Valentinois (Henri II's mistress) and she is an enemy of the Vidame, Mademoiselle de Chartres' uncle. Such political and social intrigue in the sixteenth-century court of Henri II, about which Madame de La Fayette writes in La Princesse de Clèves, and in the seventeenth-century court of Louis XIV, in which Madame de La Fayette was in her own lifetime a welcome guest, is an essential part of la cour et les cercles sociaux. The literary world of the court, depicted by the author, is no less than a miniature version of the "real" world it represents.

If one has read Homer's Iliad or his Odyssey an interesting comparison can be made between the power-hungry, socially entangled courts of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France and the heavenly court of the gods and goddesses as portrayed in Greek mythology. Social intrigues and amoral complicities, all in the name of power, seemed the order of the day on mythological Mount Olympus. Is it not,

according to one version of the Persephone/Demeter myth, the goddess of love, Aphrodite, who induces Eros to inflame Hades with passion for Persephone because she is jealous of Persephone's apparent decision to remain a virgin. And what of the great Zeus himself who, in the Orphic tradition, as father to Persephone, is actually the one who seduces her?<sup>19</sup> Such stories are endless in the realm of antiquity. In the realm of Madame de La Fayette's La Princesse de Clèves, equally complicated and at times sordid tales hold a common place in day-to-day existence. (Many of these tales will unfold as our study progresses.)

Mademoiselle de Chartres accepts the marriage to M. de Clèves because it is her mother's wish and because she recognizes the good qualities of the prince: "elle l'épouserait même avec moins de répugnance qu'un autre, mais ... elle n'avait aucune inclination particulière pour sa personne" (p. 19). The princesse has no idea, in giving in to the social pressures around her, what internal conflict will begin to well up within herself. As was Hades with Persephone, the Duc de Nemours seems destined to hear the call of the goddess and come to her aid, to reach up forcefully from the depths and abduct the princesse. Her mother hears her cry but it is too late. The princesse's destiny is now forever beyond Madame de Chartres' total protection. By literally compelling her daughter to go against her own maxim, which is that a woman's single hope for happiness is to love her husband and to be loved in

return she has condemned the princesse to a life of internal anguish. (She did this by arranging a marriage for her daughter to a man she did not love.) Bit by bit the chinks are widening. All is not right in the heroine's world. There is, however, a strange twist to this story of over-protective mother and obedient daughter. As mentioned, the princesse does not love her husband (the anecdote prescribed to alleviate a woman's unhappiness), yet in extracting from her mother's words the elements most important to her and sorely missing in her life, she unconsciously begins to rectify the omission; she begins the search for the love she does not feel. The goddess is stirring, passion is stirring and as believed by some: "all passion means fundamentally a search for self."<sup>20</sup> This is the gift that Madame de Chartres and Demeter give to their daughters: through their extreme emphasis on virtue and truth in the education of their girls, they have not just given them a link with the feminine source but also the strength to go into the depths and make of them their home.

The over-possessiveness of the mothers of both Persephone and Mademoiselle de Chartres does seem to lead to the necessary abduction of daughter from mother (as already discussed in the case of Demeter and Persephone). As with the god Hades, Nemours is inflamed with love for the princesse, for the woman who seemingly is decided to remain psychologically a virgin. He becomes her spiritual guide. He opens her being to the pathway back to her soul by

touching her deepest emotions.

Je vous avoue [says the princesse to Nemours near the end of the novell] que vous m'avez inspiré des sentiments qui m'étaient inconnus devant que de vous avoir vu, et dont j'avais même si peu d'idée qu'ils me donnèrent d'abord une surprise qui augmentait encore le trouble qui les suit toujours. (p. 135)

This pathway back to the "realm of souls" does not have to be seen as a negation of the world of the living. Madame de Clèves' decision to leave the French court after her husband's death and to spend part of her time each year in a convent and the rest of her time at her home "mais dans une retraite et dans des occupations plus saintes que celles des couvents les plus austères" (p. 144) does not have to mean that she gave up on life, that she refused to face her emotions, her passions. A mythic interpretation of Madame de Clèves' actions will suggest motives and meanings quite different from what might appear to be the actual driving force behind the choices she makes.

Hades becomes Persephone's inner light: the place where she is fulfilled both sexually and spiritually. She is eternally the goddess of the underworld, and she brings the dark truths and mysteries of this realm with her whenever she re-enters the world of the "living".

I began to see Hades as meaning not "bad" but "deep" - and to recognize how much in me, although not quite consciously, yearned for the depths that Hades represents . . . the Greek underworld is not terrible and horrifying . . . but

simply: beyond life. Hades is not only the god of the underworld but the god of wealth, hidden wealth. I now see Hades very differently than I had previously. Earlier I had welcomed Hermes as the guide out of the underworld; now I have come to welcome Hades as the guide into it. I feel I understand now how Persephone moves from defense against Hades to love for him.<sup>21</sup>

The princesse's "underworld" is also her inner light. It is far from the falsities of life at court. It is symbolized in La Princesse de Clèves by the convent and by her home: places where she is able, after much personal struggle, to find her own form of self-fulfillment. Without Nemours she might never have been truly awakened to the call of the goddess; and for this she is eternally grateful to him: "Ayez cependant le plaisir de vous être fait aimer d'une personne qui n'aurait rien aimé, si elle ne vous avait jamais vu; croyez que les sentiments que j'ai pour vous seront éternels et qu'ils subsisteront également, quoi que je fasse" (p. 140). In saying these words to Nemours, the princesse finally allows herself to expose her love and passion for the only man she has ever truly loved. Such an admission has as strong an effect on Madame de Clèves' being as if she had agreed to commit herself sexually to Nemours.

Persephone becomes goddess of the underworld. A true goddess is at one with herself, she knows the deep truths of life and death and does not abuse them. The princesse could never have discovered such inner truths within the confines of either her marriage to M. de Clèves or second marriage to



the Duc de Nemours. And she certainly could never have found inner peace by remaining married to M. de Clèves and having an affair with M. de Nemours, which is what the latter would have happily accepted, for a certain length of time at least. Within the realm of the underworld, Persephone stands as an equal with Hades; her secret cult, as already stated, was to become the most important mystery in late classical and early Hellenistic times for men as well as women. In direct contrast to the positive reactions elicited by Persephone's contact with the dark feminine truths, are the princess's support systems once she begins her journey back to self (back to the archetype of wholeness which is the very center of one's personality). They are minimal to say the least. The princess, in her search for wholeness, turns to her husband for support, and demands by way of her words and actions that he be her equal. He is unable to rise to the challenge. As the heroine's passionate love for Nemours grows, she realizes that her rational mind cannot possibly stand up indefinitely to the barrage of emotions pushing in upon it. Her mother's words of warning about the destructive nature of extra-marital affairs are not enough to calm the tempest within. "Veux-je m'engager dans une galanterie? Veux-je manquer à M. de Clèves? Veux-je manquer à moi-même?" (p. 86), Madame de Clèves desperately asks herself.

She decides she must leave the court, she must go to a more sheltered environment where she can "express and analyze libidinal feelings that she could not consciously contemplate

elsewhere."<sup>22</sup> In response to her request to spend some time at Coulommiers (their beautiful country home that the princesse helped design to her liking), "M. de Clèves . . . se moqua d'abord de la proposition de ce voyage" (p. 87). He does not take seriously her stated need for seclusion countering that "le repos . . . n'est guère propre pour une personne de votre âge. Vous êtes, chez vous et dans la cour, d'une sorte à ne vous pas donner de lassitude" (p. 88). With such disregard for her feelings, for her "rights of access"<sup>23</sup>, the princesse is pushed to the point of the aveu. She has nowhere else to turn since she does not have the right to withdraw from court life and thus from the constant exposure to her loved one's attentions. Nemours is certainly of no help to her in this regard:

Le fait que Mme de Clèves est mariée ne semble jamais se présenter à lui comme un obstacle ni l'arrêter dans sa poursuite; pour lui comme pour ses pairs, les jeunes seigneurs adonnés au plaisir, l'adultère ne pose pas de problème moral: chacun cherche à satisfaire ses passions.<sup>24</sup>

As Michael Danahy points out in his article "Social, Sexual and Human Spaces in La Princesse de Clèves," the princesse's aveu to her husband and the consequent refus to Nemours are her only chance to obtain "true fulfillment of her personality, a personality seeking total integrity and the magnanimity of spirit which it requires."<sup>25</sup> He goes on to talk of the numerous critics who "commonly invoke neurosis on the assumption that woman's role is to please men. They have labeled the Princess unhealthy, unbalanced, repressed,

inhibited, suicidal, confused, opaque, etc."<sup>26</sup> But what of our heroine? What is her role in this story set out for her to see to its end? In following the mythic direction of Persephone who only becomes goddess of the underworld after her abduction by Hades, Madame de Clèves remains in complete isolation from the goddess energy within herself until her abduction, by Nemours, from the court. Once in Hades, in this "other place" (symbolized by convent and home), the princesse is able to assume the role of queen and begin experiencing her long repressed inner strengths. In Michael Danahy's words Madame de Clèves is described as: "striving toward a form of freedom refused to her by the male-dominated culture, namely the right to her own inviolate space. More than Jansenistic self-abnegation, stoic inwardness, or courtly sublimation, Madame de La Fayette's heroine is seeking the physical space in which to exercise and enjoy concretely the right to be herself" - "her story is that of a woman's quest for integrity".<sup>27</sup>

In the myth of Persephone and Demeter, the young goddess's destiny is to be abducted from the confines of the Great Mother archetype (of which Demeter is the symbol) and to live a divided life in the depths with Hades as her male companion and on the earth with her mother as friend and confidante. No longer is Demeter the overpowering all-possessing force in her life. Persephone has gained her freedom with the necessary aid of Hades as her guide, lover and husband. The princesse's mythos has very similar

components. Her mother fulfills devotedly the role of the Great Mother archetype. As C.G. Jung points out in his essay on the mother archetype: "daughters must come to recognize 'the human being who is our mother' as the 'accidental carrier' of the archetype." All mothers give "a different archetypal perspective to motherhood."<sup>28</sup> Persephone's and Madame de Clèves' mothers, it has been noted, fit into the category of very caring, overly protective Magna Deas. Madame de Chartres' influence on her daughter is so strong that even her death does not weaken the deep connection between them; if anything it more likely served to strengthen her hold than diminish it.

On her deathbed, Madame de Chartres reiterates her fervent beliefs concerning "les malheurs d'une galanterie". She has recognized the passionate feelings her daughter has for M. de Nemours and she leaves the princesse with these words resounding in her very being:

Si quelque chose était capable de  
troubler le bonheur que j'espère en  
sortant de ce monde, ce serait de vous  
voir tomber comme les autres femmes;  
mais, si ce malheur vous doit arriver, je  
reçois la mort avec joie, pour n'en être  
pas le témoin. (p. 38)

To intensify even more the effect of her final maternal warning, Madame de Chartres bids adieu to her beloved child and turns her back to her, never to see her again despite the fact that she lives for another two days. Her refusal to "revoir sa fille, qui était la seule chose à quoi elle se sentit attachée" (p. 39) reverberates with the eternal myth

of feminine loss: mothers losing daughters, daughters losing mothers. Yet, as already demonstrated, the endless cycle of life and death is a necessary and totally accepted part of the realm of the goddess. The princesse is left to establish her own place on this ever winding spiral. And although her mother's words imprint deeply upon her being (she definitely does not end up "*comme les autres femmes*", p. 38), the destiny that she eventually takes part in making her own is far from what her mother would have hoped for her. Madame de Clèves' uniqueness allows her firstly to hear the call of the goddess, to question a life wherein one does not love one's husband, and to start looking for ways of dealing with the ensuing confusion. "*M. de Clèves était peut-être l'unique homme du monde capable de conserver de l'amour dans le mariage*", says the princesse to Nemours. "*Ma destinée n'a pas voulu que j'aie pu profiter de ce bonheur; peut-être aussi que sa passion n'avait subsisté que parce qu'il n'en aurait pas trouvé en moi*" (p. 138). The heroine's husband, whom she is supposed to love in order to find true happiness but doesn't, and who does love her, is unable to support her as she deals with the tumultuous forces of sexual passion rising within herself for the first time. Her respect and caring are not enough for M. de Clèves; he wants or needs all of her and his own intense love seems no match for the relentless emotions of jealousy and mistrust that plague his spirit. The goddess of pure passion and desire takes M. de

Clèves as her sacrificial victim with hardly a leaf stirring.

But this is not the end of the journey for Madame de Clèves. Her awakening sense of what is "right" for herself does not allow her to accept the most obvious and simplest solution to her soul searching. In response to Nemours' continued pressure regarding her next course of action: "je vous dirais même", says Nemours to Madame de Clèves, "qu'il dépend de vous de faire en sorte que votre devoir vous oblige un jour à conserver les sentiments que vous avez pour moi" (p. 136), the princesse counters: "Mon devoir . . . me défend de penser jamais à personne, et moins à vous qu'à qui que ce soit au monde, par des raisons qui vous sont inconnues." These unknown reasons Nemours dismisses by saying: "Elles ne me le sont peut-être pas, madame . . . mais ce ne sont point de véritables raisons" (p. 136). Are these the sentiments of a man who is going to love and respect his wife's needs once they are married? M. de Nemours has no conscious understanding of what the princesse is going through, neither does he seem to want to understand.

In stealing her portrait, in making the aveu a matter of public knowledge, and in trespassing at Colomiers [when Madame de Clèves had purposely gone there alone to get away from Nemours - a fact of which he was aware], Nemours has already acted in a typical manner as a member of the dominant group. He does not offer in marriage, any more than her late husband, spaces that will be sexually, socially and spiritually free.<sup>29</sup>

It is, nonetheless, not with a callous heart that Madame

de Clèves makes her refus to Nemours. She loves him passionately: "Quelle passion endormie se ralluma dans son coeur, et avec quelle violence!" (p. 131), but she has progressed far enough along on her voyage of self-discovery to realize that as a consort to Nemours her quest would have to end. Within the healing warmth of the feminine realm, of convent and home, the princesse can no longer avoid "the necessary and profound connection between soul and solitude."<sup>30</sup> Perhaps in another time, another place, Madame de Clèves could have both married Nemours and continued in her search for self-fulfillment, as did Persephone. In the context of the world she is living in, however, and of the mythos she is working her way through - going deeper and deeper into the unconscious flow of the feminine spirit - she does not have a chance. "Pourquoi la destinée nous sépare-t-elle par un obstacle si invincible?" (p. 140), she implores of Nemours. The obstacle she is talking about goes much deeper than the obvious: "Pourquoi faut-il, s'écria-t-elle, que je vous puisse accuser de la mort de M. de Clèves? Que n'ai-je commencé à vous connaître depuis que je suis libre, ou pourquoi ne vous ai-je pas connu avant que d'être engagée?" (p. 140). Even Nemours knows that such obstacles are not insurmountable. There is something else beyond his and her rational comprehension that is moving the princesse. His tears of sorrow and tender passion seem unable to sway such a force. "Il n'y a point d'obstacle, madame . . . vous seule vous imposez une loi que la vertu et

la raison ne vous sauraient imposer" (p. 140). The obstacle is her own soul. It is her feminine spirit rearing up to fight off the repression of centuries. The amoral court where "personne n'était tranquille, ni indifférent", where men and women alike "songeaient à s'élever à plaire, à servir ou à nuire" (p. 14) symbolizes what exactly the heroine is up against. There can be no inner peace, no eternal love in an environment thus constituted. Women in the princesse's time struggled under the weight of such dictums as that of St. Augustine which declared that females have no souls. They were subjected to pressures such as those designated by the words of the Malleus Maleficarum, authorized by Pope Innocent VIII and regarded as the standard of judgement of women from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century in Europe. "According to Malleus, women are moved predominantly by intensity of affect and emotion. Their extremes of love and hate are generated by the 'lust of the flesh,' . . . 'more carnal than man' they are . . . pleasure-seeking liars and seducers, . . . 'feeble in mind and body'"<sup>31</sup> and so on.

Madame de La Fayette's heroine begins to question the unspoken laws governing life at court. She does this at first unconsciously, gropingly, directed only by an inner voice which will no longer let her rest in peace. Her mother's words say it all: "Si vous jugez sur les apparences en ce lieu-ci . . . vous serez souvent trompée: ce qui paraît n'est presque jamais la vérité" (p. 26). The decision Madame



de Clèves must make in regards to her love for Nemours and his for her is a very difficult one.

Often women who are trying to gain access to their own strength and ability give up before they have gone all the way, sometimes by getting into a love relationship and projecting their newly gained strength and power back on the partner, thus losing it for themselves."<sup>32</sup>

The princesse has allowed passion into her life, she has tasted of its delicacies. She has opened herself up to the dark and often chaotic forces of the feminine spirit so long repressed within her being. But now she must leave her catalyst, her loved one, behind. If not, he will begin demanding too much of her hard-won freedom. This is neither Nemours' desire nor intention. Nonetheless, he is fighting against too much past history. He has to live his own mythos as well. He has to deal with the goddesses of ancient times and the myths surrounding them - tales of male sacrifices to the all-supreme Great Mother, of frenzied cult orgies where the dark mysteries of the feminine spirit defied rational explanation. Anthropological examples of such occurrences are found in Edward Whitmont's book Return of the Goddess. The author discusses the magico-mythological phase of consciousness, before the advent of the patriarchy, during which time human sacrificial rites were an integral part of existence. These rites took into account the sacrificial dynamics that occur naturally in nature and in the psyche of humankind. One of the chief roles of a king in ancient times

was to be the honoured sacrifice to the goddess at the end of his term of office. Often included along with the killing of the victim-king were rites of cannibalism and immolation of all those individuals in the royal retenue. The implantation of patriarchal value systems, Whitmont points out, had little immediate effect on the sacrificial customs regarding the Great Goddess. In the Greek myth of Dionysus we see the god, as son and sexual playmate to the goddess, torn apart by maenadic women and dying the sacrificial death only to rise again.<sup>33</sup> A similar theme is found in the ancient mourning festival for the dead god Attis, as discussed by Esther Harding in Woman's Mysteries. The whole ritual has to do with his castration and death in front of his mother who nurtures and protects her son but who also is the necessary force behind his cruel death. Symbolic sacrificial rituals pertaining to the gods and goddesses were accompanied by human sacrifice of varying degree. In Persia, Arabia, Turkey and India a sacred tree, dedicated to the divine cycle of life, death and rebirth, was used for the hanging of dead bodies and human heads.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, in the face of such an overwhelming force, man had to strike out, to repress that which he could not understand, and women allowed their goddesses to topple because fighting to win, to possess, was not the way of the goddess. The setting in which Madame de La Fayette places Nemours, as well as his very nature, offers him little hope of truly being able to give credence to Madame de Clèves' feminine quest for

wholeness. Moreover, he most probably would end up feeling threatened by the direction she is taking.

Nemours is a Don Juan. He is also, as Demeter finds out about Hades, a man of noble character equal to that of the princesse.

Ce prince était un chef-d'oeuvre de la nature; . . . Ce qui le mettait au-dessus des autres était une valeur incomparable, et un agrément dans son esprit, dans son visage et dans ses actions que l'on n'a jamais vu qu'à lui seul . . . [In regards to women] peu de celles à qui il s'était attaché se pouvaient vanter de lui avoir résisté . . . il avait tant de douceur et tant de dispositions à la galanterie qu'il ne pouvait refuser quelques soins à celles qui tâchaient de lui plaire: ainsi il avait plusieurs maîtresses. (pp. 6-7)

His passionate love for the princesse puts an end to his womanizing ways. To his surprise the Duc de Nemours discovers that he has become "entièrement opposé à ce qu'[il] était" (p. 53). Such a change of character is not always easy to accept, especially in one so gallant as Nemours. The princesse wants to believe in her loved one's new found qualities. She is hoping, even in the face of everything she has learned from girlhood, that certain noble spirits may in fact be inspired by a high-minded lady to a love that is both free of intrusions of sensuality and unspoiled by the assertions of male vanity. We as readers also want to believe in Nemours' transformation, to hope for the "happy ending" of fairytales. However, what is considered to be a happy ending in the eyes of one person may be entirely the opposite for someone else. And even an apparent unhappy

ending may turn out to be not as it seems. The many sublime feelings Nemours displays when in or near the presence of his cherished princesse are offset by other hidden thoughts and feelings which display a level of aggressiveness and "hardiesse" not compatible with the image of the respectful, spiritual lover (as already demonstrated in regards to Madame de Clèves' right of access). Nemours' character vacillates throughout the novel. For example, when, from his secret vantage point at Coulommiers, he sees the princesse winding ribbons of the same colours he had worn at the tournament around one of his discarded "cannes des Indes" "il s'éloigna le plus qu'il lui fut possible, pour n'être vu ni entendu de personne; il s'abandonna aux transports de son amour et son coeur en fut tellement pressé qu'il fut contraint de laisser couler quelques larmes" (p. 121). From submissive lover to conqueror we see Nemours overcome with joy after listening in on the aveu scene between the princesse and her husband: "il sentit . . . un plaisir sensible de l'avoir réduite à cette extrémité. Il trouva de la gloire à s'être fait aimer d'une femme si différente de toutes celles de son sexe" (pp. 92-93). On another occasion Nemours is quick to confirm Madame de Clèves' concerns about the integrity of her husband in regards to the delicate, unprecedented nature of her aveu. Nemours "savait que c'était [M. de Clèves] le plus redoutable rival qu'il eût à détruire. La jalousie, répondit-il, et la curiosité d'en savoir peut-être davantage que l'on ne lui en

a dit, peuvent faire faire bien des imprudences à un mari" (p. 101).

We return once more to the scene of Madame de Clèves' refus, not only of Nemours' marriage proposal but in fact of Nemours himself. In response to Nemours' anguished feelings: "Ah! madame, . . . quel fantôme de devoir opposez-vous à mon bonheur?" (p. 136), she replies: "Vous avez déjà eu plusieurs passions, vous en auriez encore; je ne ferais plus votre bonheur; je vous verrais pour une autre comme vous auriez été pour moi" (p. 138). Madame de Clèves could go either way with her decision. She finds herself confronted by the evidence of weakness in both sexes; for even the heroine herself, brought up in such a strict moral fashion, falls prey to Nemours' charms and cannot stop from desiring his love regardless of the fact that she is married to another man. Therefore, at the end of the novel, Madame de Clèves does not condemn Nemours for who he is, no more than she condemns herself. Her female instincts tell her that she must continue on alone. It is not the fear of passion dying that motivates her in the final account; it is not her guilt over her husband's death<sup>35</sup>; nor is it the need to remain a "good woman" with no sexual feelings.<sup>36</sup> The princesse is motivated by a driving feminine force deep within, a force that is learning to emote, to expose the dark secrets of the Persephone cult in a more acceptable way. In more conventional terms, the princesse has reached new awarenesses that are allowing her to make decisions about her own life

apart from what is prescribed by the cultural and social norms of her time. The secrets of the Persephone cult have to do with the acceptance and enjoyment of sexual passion and its transient nature, with sovereignty to the dispassionate and infinite cycles of creativity and destruction which are an integral part of (mother) nature. For man and woman alike this means a return to one's inner intuitive wisdom found in the dimensions of one's centre or self.

Nemours has served the noble purpose of a strong male figure to help the princesse on her journey. This is a journey away from society's blind, repressing forces into a new level of connection with her inner truths. Nemours stirs up the heroine's seemingly non-existent feminine sexual energies, then through his persistent male attentions gives her the focus to collect her new found emotions and sensations into a creative formula. This is also what Hades was able to do for Persephone.

Woman is vaguely aware of being herself in direct touch with the mysterious source, but her awareness is so diffuse that she can seldom even speak of it. She needs, passionately needs, the animus's torch to light up for her the things she already innately knows, so that she can know she knows them . . . [Her inspiration comes from] the Source . . . the Great Mother or . . . the Nature Self which thrusts its children out into the everyday world to seek their own little ego-consciousness before they can find her again, at long last, as the Self of Becoming. But whatever you call her she is the source from which the little girl, unlike the boy, is never separated . . . Through a woman, man finds his soul . . . Through man, woman finds the animus who can express the soul she has never lost.<sup>37</sup>

We will discuss the concepts of animus and anima later. What is important now is the fact that Nemours has been, throughout the novel, the torch for the princesse. Despite both he and the princesse's desires for the situation to be other than what destiny, or God, or whatever one wants to call it, has placed before them, Nemours will never be more than just that - the light guiding the woman he loves. It is not a small role to play.

One last issue to look at in regards to our heroine's connection with the goddess Persephone is the archetypal pattern of existence dictated by the myth of the Puella or the Eternal Girl. As Linda Schierse Leonard demonstrates in her book The Wounded Woman, there are many ways in which the eternal girl syndrome may be manifested. The major factor affecting all the given examples is the lack of a positive masculine figure. For Persephone and Madame de Clèves the combination of an over-protective mother and an absent father helps to keep them "fixated at the girlish level of development."<sup>38</sup> Both women need the influence of the masculine in a positive form to help them in the transformation of self; and they are fortunate enough to get just that. Persephone leaves her passive role of the "eternal girl" by marrying her abductor. In marriage she is able to assume the powerful role of the goddess of the depths. Madame de Clèves has a more convoluted route to follow. "Many women who have lived lives of passivity have

sought for safety and security in their marriages. Yet in the end, most of these women feel they have betrayed themselves."<sup>39</sup> The princesse stops this cycle. After the death of her husband, she trades in the security of married life (where her existence is based on the likes and dislikes of a man) for the realm of the unknown. In this realm the princesse, like Persephone, can allow her depths to emerge, in other words, she can experience the power of self-knowledge. She can only do this by physically removing herself from the French court and from the very man that initiates her transformation, Nemours.

Woman can only become one-in-herself when she is fully awakened to the possibilities slumbering in her own nature, has experienced what it is to be set afire with passion, carnal and spiritual, and has devoted her powers to the service of the god of instinct. Then when the nonpersonal, the divine energy has been aroused in her she attains chastity of soul, singleness or wholeness of her being, by dedicating her deepest emotion to the gods of instinct, by whatever name she may call them.<sup>40</sup>

The princesse goes into the convent because, in seventeenth-century France, there is little other place for a woman to go if she wants to find her rights of access, her access to the soul:

Madame de Clèves's rejection of Nemours on his terms derives its necessity not only from the logic of maternal discourse (Nemours's love, like his name, is negative and plural: ne/amours) but also from the demands of Mme. de Lafayette's dream. In this dream nothing can happen to the heroine because she understands . . . the power and pleasure of the weak



. . . She withdraws then . . . not merely to resist possession, as her mother would have wished, but to improve on it: to rescript possession<sup>41</sup>, self possession.

She knows what she is doing and she wishes only the best for Nemours :

. . . ayant trouvé que son devoir et son repos s'opposaient au penchant qu'elle avait d'être à lui, les autres choses du monde lui avaient paru si indifférentes qu'elle y avait renoncé pour jamais; . . . elle ne pensait plus qu'à celles de l'autre vie et . . . il ne lui restait aucun sentiment que le désir de le voir [Nemours] dans les mêmes dispositions où elle était. (p. 144)

The heroine is at last released from all the external restrictions put upon her. Her "devoir" or her duty takes on a new meaning. It can now be directed inwards to help in achieving a greater understanding of self, of the meaning of wholeness. Once this step is initiated, the princesse is free to turn outwards again and, as a more complete or fulfilled woman, do what she wishes, which in the princesse's case is to help others in need. This becomes the other life ("l'autre vie") to which Madame de Clèves is referring. "Her choice is therefore not the simple reinscription of the seventeenth-century convention of female renunciation, dependant on the logic of either-or, but the sign of both-and, concretized by her final dual residence: in the convent and at home"<sup>42</sup>, as it is for Persephone with her dual residence in Hades and on the earth above. And what of "the stuff of fairytales."? As Nancy K. Miller goes on to state: "The princess refuses to marry the duke, however, not because

she does not want to live happily ever after, but because she does."

We are left to wonder who truly has the knowledge or the right to speculate on the meaning of happiness for another human being other than one's self. Nemours feels that the princesse would bring him much happiness once she becomes his wife. In that regard he would probably have been right. Nemours also feels that he will bring the princesse much happiness, seeing that he is the man "que vous . . . avez distingué du reste des hommes" (p. 137). He is the man that pleases her and the man whom she loves: "Il est plus difficile que vous ne pensez, madame, de résister à ce qui nous plaît et à ce qui nous aime" (p. 139). This is a narrow view of what the heroine is beginning to realize is the meaning of happiness for herself. She is reaching beyond, she must reach beyond the immediate intense pleasures, joy and pain that Nemours is offering her with his love, to seek out "the virginal quality of being at one-in-herself, an inner attitude of feminine centeredness and independence."<sup>43</sup> There would only be a place for Nemours in her life once her inner search had rediscovered her wholeness as a woman, her connection to soul. For the princesse this turns out to be her life's work.

### The Ariadne myth

Although Ariadne does not seem to have as strong a

relationship with Madame de La Fayette's heroine as does Persephone, her mythical significance in the life of the princesse is indeed worth noting. Ariadne is the Mistress of the Labryinth. She is most readily available to us in the form of the Greek myths. It must be remembered, however, that these myths "as we get them from Homer and Hesiod, from Aeschylus and Sophocles, are written from the perspective of the patriarchal period, a perspective that issues in the reduction of ancient goddesses into figures with whom men can safely deal." In the earlier period, before the "transition in Greek cultural history from matrilineal to the patrilineal . . . the sacred was experienced most powerfully as feminine."<sup>44</sup> This began to change as ego development became a necessary part of the continuum of human advancement. Unfortunately, the rationally based patriarchal perspective that henceforth has ruled our planet not only repressed the most chaotic, violent elements of the mysterious feminine realm, but also the most creative and soul-filled elements essential ultimately to the continuation of life.

Ariadne may be looked at from both perspectives: the more recent masculine mythological traditions or those of the "more ancient matrilineal period of mother-goddess worship."<sup>45</sup> Both have their place. With the former, Ariadne is seen as a mortal, a young woman who helps the Greek hero Theseus find his way first into the labyrinth on the island of Crete to kill the terrifying Minotaur and then safely out again, a feat no mortal had ever accomplished. As with all

myths, there are many versions. One thing suggested in all the stories is that this simple maiden has much more going on beneath the surface than is first evident. She is loved by the god of women Dionysos. The heroic Theseus also seems to love her and she him. Theseus takes Ariadne away from Crete as is her wish, but according to Homer, somehow manages to forget her on the island of Naxos on his way back to the mainland. Dionysos then has Ariadne killed as punishment for her rejection of an immortal god for a mortal lover. Another tradition has Ariadne rescued by Dionysos who then marries her and collaborates with Zeus to have her granted immortality. Whatever the tradition, Ariadne has a strong connection with Dionysos. She is "the female other" for this god, his "chosen one"; and she is his bride, his bride in death to be reborn again.<sup>46</sup>

The more ancient Ariadne is a goddess in her own right. Only much later in her mythological existence does she become the mortal one. To ask who Ariadne truly is, to follow the thread until one can go no further, takes us to the core of the labyrinth and it is there that we find Ariadne. This Great Mother goddess, this Mistress of the Labyrinth is linked not only to natural life or animation, but to anima, in other words to the soul.<sup>47</sup> No longer defined by her relationships with men, it is she who has the power. She must leave behind her mortal role as anima figure - leading men back to their soul - in order to rediscover her own connection to soul. (Anima may be adequately described as

the unconscious feminine side of a man's personality, but in its most essential form the anima is soul, to which women need to relate just as sincerely as do men; for our soul is the central force of the universe, the all-encompassing She without which there would be an infinite void.)<sup>48</sup> A woman can become lost if her only raison d'être in life is to be someone else's anima figure. And a man can only use an external female figure for so long before he must incorporate internally the real person with his inner feminine and make it his own. In her goddess form, immortal Ariadne is able to represent "the archetypal reality of the bestower of soul, of what makes a living creature an individual". Moreover, she is able to perform this role without losing her own individuality, her self. She is also seen as "woman unafraid of her own sensuality or of her own capacity for ecstasy."<sup>49</sup> Dionysos, known patrilineally as the god of ecstasy and of madness in its healthiest form, is represented in earlier times as Ariadne's son and lover. This subordinate male figure incorporates the mystery of the Ariadne cult of dying and rising again as well as the eventual element of human sacrifice.

As with Ariadne, the Princesse de Clèves appears before us in more than one form. Her arrival at the French court is comparable to that of a goddess. She is more beautiful than all the other women there, more virtuous. It is as if the whole court stops for a moment, all life stops, to allow for the entrance of such an extraordinary creature. Throughout

the novel the uniqueness of the heroine is emphasized: "Ah! monsieur", Madame de Clèves says despairingly to her husband upon learning that her aveu is current news throughout the court, "il n'y a pas dans le monde une autre aventure pareille à la mienne; il n'y a point une autre femme capable de la même chose" (p. 103). Whenever she appears in goddess form, she stands virtually alone. Whenever she is in touch with her inner powers of strength and self-respect which mythically connect her to the ancient rituals portraying the Great Goddess's three dimensional identity as: source of life, nourisher and cruel destroyer, the princesse can be seen as making a unique and far-reaching statement. The men around her are necessary but at the same time subordinate to her. Her husband takes on the role of "dying-rising male who is son and lover and, eventually, victim."<sup>50</sup> However, he is not a willing victim and thus his death is an unfortunate one, mourned by the princesse.

As a mortal, Madame de La Fayette's heroine leads Nemours back, deep into the labyrinth to its center. She is his anima figure. Nemours lights the way while Madame de Clèves holds the guiding thread. Nemours experiences parts of himself he has never felt before as he approaches the center: "Est-il possible que l'amour m'ait si absolument ôté la raison et la hardiesse et qu'il m'ait rendu si différent de ce que j'ai été dans les autres passions de ma vie?" (p. 133). Through the princesse Nemours has the possibility

of finding his soul - a possibility which is not realized, however. Twice he goes in the dead of night to the princesse's country home, as if into a labyrinth. Madame de La Fayette makes a point of showing that his journey is not without obstacles (a journey back to self is in its very nature an emotionally trying, extremely difficult, at times even a life threatening task). The court is residing at Chambord at the time that Madame de Clèves is at Coulommiers. Nemours takes leave of the king under the pretext of having to return to Paris for a few days. But his ruse does not go unnoticed by M. de Clèves, who suspects that the Duc de Nemours is the man his wife is in love with. He sends his gentleman servant to follow Nemours. The scene that ensues allows for one to partake in the imaginal significance of the experience: Nemours is shown leaving the nearest village to Coulommiers after dark and winding his way obscurely through the forest past M. de Clèves' well-hidden gentleman until he reaches the fence surrounding the cottage. "Les palissades étaient fort hautes, et il y en avait encore derrière, pour empêcher qu'on ne pût entrer; en sorte qu'il était assez difficile de se faire passage. M. de Nemours en vint à bout néanmoins" (p. 119). Once in the garden Nemours approaches his desired objective. Madame de Clèves is in a "cabinet" filled with light. All the windows are open. She is at one and the same time a picture of self-contained unapproachable goddess and alluring, sensuous mortal. Nemours ". . . vit

qu'elle était seule; mais il la vit d'une si admirable beauté qu'à peine fut-il maître du transport que lui donna cette vue. Il faisait chaud, et elle n'avait rien, sur sa tête et sur sa gorge, que ses cheveux confusément rattachés. Elle était sur un lit de repos . . ." (p. 119). Nemours witnesss the princesse's reverie, her dreamworld. He is deeply touched by the vulnerability of the pure love of the feminine spirit. But he is not meant to stay. Filled with emotion, Nemours catches his scarf in the window as he tries to make himself known to the princesse. Madame de Clèves hears the noise, turns toward the window and

... soit qu'elle eût l'esprit rempli de ce prince, ou qu'il fût dans un lieu où la lumière donnait assez pour qu'elle le pût distinguer, elle crut le reconnaître et sans balancer ni se retourner du côté où il était, elle entra dans le lieu où étaient ses femmes. (p. 120)

Many hours pass before Nemours gives up hope of seeing his beloved again and reluctantly retraces his path from "the center of the universe". Although he returns the next night, Madame de Clèves does not risk another surprise visit. She remains in her own room.

Later in the novel, after M. de Clèves' death, the labyrinth effect is repeated, this time with the roles of the hero and heroine reversed. It is Madame de Clèves who is drawn into the labyrinth, into Nemours' dreamworld, his unconscious mythical longings. She has not seen Nemours for several months; she is very confused about her feelings for him. Upon discovering that Nemours has rented a room near



her apartment, from which he can see into both her gardens and her bedroom window, a certain restlessness and agitation begin to replace her reserved "état de tristesse et de langueur" (p. 130). She is drawn intuitively to a garden outside the suburbs where she thinks she will be alone, and she seems not to be mistaken for after walking for quite some time through the green alleyways she has seen no one. As in all mythological stories, however, there is a directing force behind what may at first seem purely coincidental or without meaning:

Après avoir traversé un petit bois, elle aperçut, au bout d'une allée, dans l'endroit le plus reclus du jardin, une manière de cabinet ouvert de tous côtés, où elle adressa ses pas. Comme elle en fut proche, elle vit un homme couché sur des bancs, qui paraissait enseveli dans une rêverie profonde, et elle reconnut que c'était M. de Nemours. Cette vue l'arrêta tout court. Mais ses gens qui la suivaient firent quelque bruit, qui tira M. de Nemours de sa rêverie. Sans regarder qui avait causé le bruit qu'il avait entendu, il se leva de sa place pour éviter la compagnie qui venait vers lui et tourna dans une autre allée, en faisant une révérence fort basse qui l'empêcha même de voir ceux qu'il saluait. (p. 131, emphasis added)

It is almost as if, as in the case of Theseus, Nemours must leave his love to the powers of the goddess: "Just as one needs to wrest Persephone free from her ties to Demeter in order really to see her, so, too, one needs to separate Ariadne from Theseus. Ariadne must be abandoned just as Persephone must be abducted."<sup>51</sup> The princesse fits into both these abandonment themes. Firstly, like Persephone, she has

to be wrestled free from her strong attachment to her mother in order to truly be seen as an individual and secondly, like Ariadne, she needs to be separated from her lover Nemours in order not to lose the vision of her healed psyche that she has begun to formulate. In La Princesse de Clèves no judgement need be passed on who abandons whom. Madame de Clèves and Nemours meet each other, truly meet each other, and then go separate ways. For Nemours, he is not totally willing or able at this time to come to grips with the feminine within. He does not want to relinquish his role of male conqueror for that which looms beyond in the dark, the magical realm of transformation:

Que veux-je attendre? disait-il; il y a longtemps que je sais que j'en suis aimé; elle est libre, elle n'a plus de devoir à m'opposer. Pourquoi me réduire à la voir sans en être vu et sans lui parler?... J'ai dû respecter la douleur de Madame de Clèves; mais je la respecte trop longtemps et je lui donne le loisir d'éteindre l'inclination qu'elle a pour moi. (pp. 132-133)

For Madame de Clèves, as she becomes more and more aware of her connection to self she becomes less and less defined by her relationship to others. It is no longer her mother's well-meaning maxims which control her, or her husband's kind directives on when and how she should take part in the intricacies of court life, or Nemours impassioned advances coupled with his dependance on her to keep him more in touch with his deep inner feelings. It is the princesse herself, she is becoming her own Mistress of the Labyrinth.

### The Call to Solitude

As we look at other Greek goddesses, we discover that Madame de La Fayette's heroine has an involvement not just with two or three divinities but with many. The extent of involvement differs from goddess to goddess: "Living more than one myth does not mean that one is schizophrenic; rather it is what keeps mythic identification from stultification or inflation."<sup>52</sup> The different parts of Madame de Clèves' personality, which from early childhood were given little or no recognition, can now find a means of self-validation in their identification with certain Greek goddesses and the one dominant aspect of the feminine that each goddess represents. As Christine Downing points out, the major Olympian goddesses were created by the patriarchal dissipation of power of the ancient great goddess into something more manageable. "Each goddess is assigned a role; she is wife or comrade, the elusive or the generously available lover. One can deal with each isolated aspect safely, whereas dealing with the whole panorama of femininity, all at once, is much too fearful."<sup>53</sup> Once again, it is from her unconscious that Madame de La Fayette draws the mystical connections between her heroine and the mythologem surrounding the pre-patriarchal supreme mother goddess and/or the less powerful but equally important feminine projections of the male-dominated society

of classical Greece. On a conscious level, the phenomenon of mythological kinship, linking generation to generation through the collective unconscious of the human race, is expressed by the author in a more analytical way. She looks at humanity's difficulty in obeying the high dictates of reason; she deals with the themes of love and honour; she reveals how escape for a woman from a repressive life situation is impossible or disastrous until it is final and decisive. But each issue Madame de La Fayette exposes brings herself and her heroine closer and closer to the deepest truths of the inner nature of humankind. The "repos" that Madame de Clèves is seeking at the end of the novel is the peace that comes from a journey back to one's maternal roots. The logical is integrated with the intuitive, loving aspect of the realm of soul, and the result is healing and wholeness.

#### Hera as Woman and Wife

The goddess Hera stands for the Greek mythological representation of wifeness. In the Homeric and post Homeric period the passage of a woman from maiden to wife is not one to be greatly desired. Hera as Zeus' spouse is viewed as unfulfilled, jealous, vindictive, dependent. Yet as Carl Kerényi states: "Hera cannot originally have been like this! A figure as dependent as this could not have been the object of a cult."<sup>54</sup> There is another Hera living simultaneously

within us, a more archaic Hera worshipped by all Greek women. She stands for the transition of "in-one-self-ness" (maiden) to the fulfillment of marriage with what one hopes to be one's equal (hieros gamos: sacred marriage with the god), to life beyond marriage as solitary widow, divorcee or whatever form it happens to be.<sup>55</sup> In all three stages it is possible for a woman to retain her individuality, her self, if she does not lose touch with the goddess and give men the power to become the new source of her inner fulfillment. Men in general do not want this power and cannot cope with it for long. At any rate, it is not a true power. It emanates from a woman's need to project her own "unlived masculinity, her animus", on to her male partner, "and thence, Jung would say, stems the 'animosity' between them."<sup>56</sup> As mentioned earlier, a man can guide a woman on her path toward self-fulfillment, he can play the role of the strong masculine figure that a woman might not have had as a child, but eventually it is up to the woman (as it is with the man and his anima figure) to incorporate the positive masculine strengths of the external figure into her unconscious and make it her own. Jung views the life of each person as a "complex and mysterious whole." He feels that because of our upbringing, our environment, our culture and our own innate nature, certain parts of our personality are emphasized and other parts become unacceptable and de-emphasized; this is our shadow side. Our shadow does not go away; it remains deep in our unconscious waiting for the opportunity to make itself known to us. Our

shadow side has just as much value as our conscious personality, however, we must learn how to integrate the two so that they can work together and not against each other. An overly repressed shadow can erupt when least expected and cause great tumult in our lives. Within each of us, says Jung, is "a natural healing process which move[s] toward balance and wholeness. In the psyche also are natural patterns of behaviour which he call[s] archetypes and which are available to serve as inner models, even when outer models are absent or unsatisfactory."<sup>57</sup> We are able to make use of these natural patterns of behaviour when an integration has taken place between our conscious and our unconscious. Such an integrated personality can only come about through a continually deepening awareness and appreciation of our dark side. The initial natural consequence of this is a life filled with confusion, uncertainty, pain. This critical atmosphere is a necessary step in the process of transformation and healing.

Once Hera finally realizes that Zeus cannot bring her to fulfillment, that she must deal with her own repressed sexuality instead of blaming Zeus for his wander lust, she leaves him and returns to her birthplace in Euboea. There are several different interpretations of the mythological version of Hera's separation from Zeus, the third stage of her life. Christine Downing agrees with Kerenyi that this third phase is the most dangerous - "dangerous to men, that is, and to patriarchy. It is dangerous also to women as any

phase that implies radical transformation must be."<sup>58</sup> Unlike Murray Stein who talks of the third phase of Hera's life as "ugly, unhappy", Downing looks deeper. She regards Hera's turn to the underworld as essential for her re-acknowledgement of her in-one-self-ness: for it is the dark side of the goddess that is most ultimately connected to her association with transformation.

The *Princesse de Clèves* follows Hera's three mythological stages. At the beginning of the novel she is the maiden, virginal, intact within her being. She has never had any call to question her upbringing or to be tempted away from what she has been taught is morally right. She has systematically been taught to repress any feelings or desires which come in conflict with her mother's maxims on life. As with Hera, she flows from the first stage to the second "as the goddess ready to move from the female-dominated world because it is a world which does not truly fulfill her as a female. She stands for the transition from in-one-self-ness to hieros gamos".<sup>59</sup> It is not enough for Mademoiselle de Clèves to remain a protected maiden in a female world. She looks to her husband for the equal complement to herself; and he is definitely put to the test. Upon hearing his wife's confession that she has feelings for another man (feelings that she has never felt for her own husband), he is left "hors de lui-même". But he finally rises to the occasion and embracing Madame de Clèves he replies:

Ayez pitié de moi vous-même, madame,  
 . . . j'en suis digne; et pardonnez si,

dans les premiers moments d'une  
affliction aussi violente qu'est la  
mienne, je ne réponds pas, comme je dois,  
à un procédé comme le vôtre. (p. 90)

Unfortunately M. de Clèves cannot retain his self-esteem in response to his wife's crisis. He trusts her and yet he dares not trust her. He harasses her when he finds out that M. de Nemours came to their apartment to visit and she refused to see him; he sends his servant to spy on her at Coulommiers when he suspects that Nemours is heading there to see her; and when he questions her, on his death bed, on whether she spent the night with Nemours he does not even then, despite the strong assurances of Madame de Clèves of the opposite, allow himself to be totally convinced of her innocence (p. 128). What can be more agonizing than heroism defeated? "Vous avez attendu de moi des choses aussi impossibles que celles que j'attendais de vous" cries out the Prince de Clèves. "Comment pouviez-vous espérer que je conservasse de la raison? Vous aviez donc oublié que je vous aimais éperdument et que j'étais votre mari? . . . Je ne me trouve plus digne de vous; vous ne me paraissez plus digne de moi" (p. 116).

The princesse must also now turn to the underworld. She was unable to incorporate her shadow side with her conscious being and make it work for her within the confines of her marriage. And yet the acknowledgement of these dark passionate feelings and desires, awakened inside of her by her love for Nemours, is essential to the healing process,



essential to the heroine's return to wholeness. She must grieve M. de Clèves' death and continue on. Her journey follows the path of dark Hera, associated with the dark time of the new moon. Overwhelmed by feelings of confusion, grief, passion, Madame de Clèves herself becomes violently ill. She comes face to face with "la nécessité de mourir" (p. 143) while on her voyage into the depths. She meets the goddess within, that is, she begins to open herself up to parts of her being she had not recognized before, and a new relationship to her woundedness (her incomplete self) begins. No longer will the need to express her unlived masculine within drive her to live out life situations not true to her essence. Transformation for the princesse is initiated through the masculine, which up to the point of her meetings with M. de Clèves and then Nemours had been lacking.<sup>60</sup> The natural healing process, as Jung describes it, helps the princesse to establish her own inner model of maleness based on the respect and love she feels for the two men in her life. As old wounds begin to heal, the conscious and the unconscious parts of the princesse can embark upon the arduous and risky task of recognition and integration. The goddess within can rear her frightful head and, tempered by her masculine counterpart, bring back soul to a soul-less world.

In the case of Hera, she rediscovers her eternal soul or completeness after leaving her husband, and is able to return to Zeus with a renewed awareness and lightness about herself.

(She is able to laugh at Zeus' ruse about his upcoming marriage to a local princess.)<sup>61</sup> This significant change coupled with Zeus' willingness to open himself up more to the veiled feminine realm allows for Hera's fantasy to come true: that is - one can meet one's equal in a relationship and remain together without losing one's sense of self. The princesse's quest is not as clear or easy to execute as Hera's. Her concept of self is much less defined, much more mortal. She is further from the Source than her mythological visitor Hera. And so "such a return to marriage [between Hera and Zeus] might not on the human level necessarily mean remarriage to the original spouse or remarriage at all."<sup>62</sup> The princesse needs more time than Hera to first discover her essential aloneness and then follow its thread back to the "whole". She has more obstacles blocking the path leading to fulfillment in "a fully mutual and sustained primary relationship. . . ." Part of the princesse's search for the repressed feminine spirit includes "an acceptance that something for which one deeply longs may not be granted. What Hera means is the strength not to pretend that some lesser gift is the fulfillment nor to deny the longing."

### She Who Slays

From Hera's pull on Madame de Clèves back towards a greater integrity of self - a pull that for the princesse must of necessity lead first to solitude and then to a life far from the French court and the people deeply involved

therein - we turn to the equally compelling force of the Greek goddess Artemis: she who comes from afar. Artemis' realm is that of the ever-distant wilderness. She is known as the "mercurial queen of solitude", the one who slays.<sup>63</sup>

Artemis is the goddess who, no matter which way one cares to look at her, insists on "inviolability, on separateness, on in-her-self-ness."<sup>64</sup> She is not a goddess that one is drawn to imitate since she is a harsh judge of those who betray themselves. She lives on sensations, not feelings, thoughts or intuitions; and these sensations vibrate from deep within the universe. Sooner or later her call to solitude touches all of us to some degree whether we want it to or not. It is up to each one of us to incorporate or reject it. In following Artemis's lead, Madame de Clèves reaches a point in the novel where she can stand to be violated no longer.

Nemours is constantly intruding on her when she is feeling most vulnerable. He steals M. de Clèves miniature portrait of the princesse because "il ne put résister à l'envie de le dérober à un mari qu'il croyait tendrement aimé" (p. 60). Madame de Clèves, who has seen what he has done, can do nothing without compromising herself. If she demands her portrait back publicly, everyone will know of Nemours' feelings for her; if she asks him for it in private, she is giving him the opportunity to talk to her of his passion; and if she says nothing, she is showing Nemours that she knows of his passion for her and is accepting of his actions. She chooses the introvert/ non-action stance. The feeling the

heroine is left with is one of violation.

On another occasion, M. de Nemours comes calling on Madame de Clèves to help him rectify her uncle's predicament concerning a love letter he had allowed to fall into the wrong hands. She refuses to see the Duc because she believes that the love letter was written to Nemours, not to her uncle (the princesse is feeling the anguish of jealousy). Nemours totally disregards Madame de Clèves' request for privacy and goes to her husband. He tells M. de Clèves "qu'il était bien fâché de ne la pouvoir entretenir, parce qu'il avait à lui parler d'une affaire importante pour le vidame de Chartres." And despite the fact that the princesse is still in bed, "M. de Clèves le mena à l'heure même dans la chambre de sa femme" (p. 80). In this instance the two men collaborate on the intrusion into Madame de Clèves' personal space. This total lack of respect for the heroine and her need for "separateness" is seen again and again during the course of the novel. M. de Nemours hides himself in a "cabinet" at Coulommiers and listens to the princesse's most intimate avowal to her husband (p. 88); he later spies on Madame de Clèves at Coulommiers (as already mentioned), this time in the darkness; and Madame de La Fayette's description of her heroine with nothing on her head and shoulders, deeply engaged in her erotic imaginings of her true prince, Nemours, makes Nemours' hidden presence at the scene a violation - un viol.

Nemours finally resorts to physical restraint in an

attempt to make Madame de Clèves' wishes conform to his own. Tricked by her uncle into seeing Nemours after her husband's death, the princesse finds herself not at liberty to leave his presence, firstly because the Vidame de Chartres has asked her to act as hostess of his house and secondly because Nemours blocks her attempt to end their encounter: "En prononçant ces paroles, elle voulut s'en aller; et M. de Nemours, la retenant . . ." (p. 134). In the context of Jules Brody's remarks about the refus scene and the striking "intrusion of the physical into Madame de La Fayette's remarkably rarefied idiom"<sup>65</sup>, we are left to wonder what actual physical gesture Nemours uses to keep Madame de Clèves from departing. The only course of action left to the heroine is total honesty. Her solution for dealing with her passionate feelings for another man while her husband was alive was to use Coulommiers as her refuge. But Coulommiers is not left intact. M. de Clèves continually wanted her back in Paris at the court. He felt that she needed no other support systems than her own moral fibre to keep her faithful: "De l'humeur dont vous êtes, en vous laissant votre liberté, je vous donne des bornes plus étroites que je ne pourrais vous en prescrire" (p. 95). As for Nemours, Coulommiers offered no barriers; he could and did intrude upon the princesse there whenever he wished. Thus her solution is not allowed to work by the dominant group, who are unprepared to accept such initiative and creativity on the part of a female.<sup>66</sup> It is not only Madame de Clèves' initiative and creativity that

pose a problem for the men in her life; it is the new direction she is taking towards controlling her own life. Jules Brody calls it "a new mood", "a transition from agitation to repose."<sup>67</sup> It might also be called the beginning of a return to self.

We are never meant to conceptualize the princesse's journey as being straightforward, with no detours, just as we are not meant to visualize Nemours as being solely a restrainer to the heroine's personal discovery of her otherness. This otherness is what Artemis demands of women: a delving into the mysterious dimensions of the feminine being to experience that which will forever separate woman from man.<sup>68</sup> Nemours restrains but he also gives the princesse focus. At the end of the novel, Madame de Clèves no longer regards Nemours as someone against whom she must stand her guard. She feels the love he has for her; she feels the love she has for him; and in her aveu and refus to him of this love and of her need to continue her life within and yet at the same time without Nemours, she opens herself up to the grandeur of the soul. "Madame de Clèves céda pour la première fois au penchant qu'elle avait pour M. de Nemours et, le regardant avec des yeux pleins de douceur et de charmes . . ." she reveals her heart to him, her passion, emotions that she had not even been able to admit fully to herself until a few months previously (pp. 134-135). Such a revelation leaves Nemours overcome with joy; however, Madame de Clèves continues:

Il est vrai, lui dit-elle, que je veux bien que vous le sachiez [mon amour pour vous] et que je trouve de la douceur à vous le dire. Je ne sais même si je ne vous le dis point plus pour l'amour de moi que pour l'amour de vous. Car enfin cet aveu n'aura point de suite et je suivrai les règles austères que mon devoir m'impose. (p. 136)

One can sense a new type of strength coming from the princesse. It is a strength which is associated with openness and honesty and self-respect. Her total sincerity is a rare commodity "que vous trouverez malaisément dans les personnes de mon sexe" (p. 134), not to mention in the opposite sex as well. Madame de La Fayette has her heroine resolve her relationship with Nemours "en s'asseyant" (p. 134). It is worth taking note of this seldom used emphasis on the physical positioning of a character in the novel. In this instance, the author is putting Madame de Clèves in charge. Coupled with the motion of sitting down, comes a sense of calm, an end to the agitation of flight.

And so the princesse faces her "prince" - knowing that he will always be an important part of her being - only to leave him. She chooses Artemis' call to solitude of her own accord, at first as a way to escape the complicated love triangle with Clèves and Nemours, then partly as a way to deal with her guilt concerning her husband's death, but, in its final definitive form, it serves as a means to continue the voyage back to her inner feminine (her soul). Nemours helps to jarr Madame de Clèves out of the soul-less world of the court. The rest she has to do on her own. Many women

and men can only bear the call to solitude on the condition of the return to a relationship. The princesse, like Artemis, comes to know simply and unflinchingly "so this is me."<sup>69</sup>

From such a single-minded position of self-affirmation spring the accusatory labels of "coldness" and "cruelty" often associated with Artemis and her inviolability in regard to masculine approaches. Similar characteristics have been associated with the princesse by numerous critics. She is seen as egocentric, frigid, superficial, spineless. Her repose at the end of the novel has been referred to as "a kind of death in life"<sup>70</sup>, a bleak ending to a life unlived, to mention only a few examples. However, as Christine Downing points out concerning "the profound denial [by Artemis] of the world of patriarchy . . . the world of dominance and submission"<sup>71</sup> where one is either hunter or hunted, this refusal is not an expression of frigidity but one of passion. It is the passion of a dream of sharing and of equality that can only become real if one first chooses to look at one's self. "Love your womanly self" is what Artemis means by her choice of women as her primary association. From this center surely will follow the germination of love and respect for others, of both sexes.

Madame de Clèves finds herself choosing more and more spaces where her primary association is with women. At Coulommiers the scenario could be likened to that of a mysterious feminine cult worshipping some aspect of an



ancient goddess. Madame de Clèves spends much of her time there alone yet women visitors are always welcome and find great pleasure in the beauty and peace which emanates from the chateau and its grounds:

Madame de Martiques, qui avait trouvé  
Coulommiers admirable, en conta toutes  
les beautés, et elle s'étendit  
extrêmement sur la description de ce  
pavillon de la forêt et sur le plaisir  
qu'avait Madame de Clèves de s'y promener  
seule une partie de la nuit (p. 118).

Men seem to only serve as intruders on the delicate balance of dreamworld and reality, of the unconscious and the conscious orchestrated by the feminine spirit. M. de Clèves comes to Coulommiers to inform his wife that protocol is calling her back to the court. His total dismissal of the needs of the feminine spirit within the princesse causes an eruption of repressed emotions, and the result is the aveu. Nemours spies on the feminine world of Coulommiers, is touched by its mysteries, but when he tries the final entry he is denied access: the princesse is enveloped by the protection of "ses femmes" (p. 120). The convent that Madame de Clèves goes to after her husband's death is even more symbolic of the choosing of the world of women. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that the heroine, in so doing, does not leave her passion and erotic desires at the door. She enters with them; she takes the risk of coming in touch with her unconscious, with emotions she has hidden from herself and her peers, and she rationally examines them. She brings together within herself her masculine and

feminine sides, creativity and receptivity, courage and vulnerability, the pulling apart and making whole again. Within the mythic structure of the novel there exists this significant opposition of Nature (Coulommiers and convent) and Culture (court and its patriarchal dominance) that is also reflected in the heroine and her own personal struggles.

Artemis' claims on a woman can be bitter and painful. From the first blood of menstruation to the last breath of life, she calls women to know themselves, apart from men, and to keep eternally in touch with their virgin-ity. But her call to women also brings them up against the masculine realm. A woman who knows her otherness can integrate the masculine forces of the universe and remain intact. The result is positive, creative, spiritual energy.

#### The Divinity of Cosmic Love: Aphrodite

An escape from Artemis' often harsh demanding realm inevitably leads one deep into the dwelling place of the goddess Aphrodite, for she is Artemis' essential complement. Goddess of beauty and sexual enchantment, she is not the only Greek divinity associated with love, but her distinguishing feature is that love within her realm represents "its celebration as a self-validating cosmic power." It is "love that begets life, a creative energy that transcends human sexuality."<sup>72</sup> Such love is magic. Within its warmth and truth lies the essence of the soul. On the one side is

Artemis who, as representative of the female being in its own essence, is seen in Greek times as symbolic of "woman untouched" - she is forever virgin. This is her gift to her followers. On the other side is Aphrodite, representative of the free giving and receiving and returning of love. She is passionate love incarnate, but she never loses herself in her love. Her most precious gift comes from her ability to combine the physical and the spiritual. Hers is a conscious sensuousness allowing for the joyful basking in the warmth of love and passion without losing focus of the other side: the dark side of the goddess. This side can overwhelm us in our passion. It is connected with dying, with the transcendence of love and passion. Aphrodite teaches all of this. Her pull is thus both longed for and feared. It is only with the acceptance of the fact one cannot possess love or passion that the worldly limitations are set free and love does become immortal.<sup>73</sup>

For Madame de Clèves, brought up by her mother in such a protected atmosphere where matters of the heart were analyzed not deeply felt, Aphrodite's realm awakens her to a part of herself she has never before experienced. As she slowly allows the delicacies of passion to flow through her being, she also begins to feel the dark side of Aphrodite. Holding the letter in her hand that Madame la Dauphine has given her, which is supposedly addressed to M. de Nemours from his mistress, Madame de Clèves is overcome by "des sentiments de jalousie qui étaient des preuves certaines de passion, elle

ne se reconnaissait plus elle-même" (p. 85). Throughout the novel, the pure joy and ecstasy of love and passion is continually juxtaposed with the elements of violence, anguish and betrayal which can also accompany one's amorous feelings. In the instance of the Vidame de Chartres' lost letter, M. de Nemours is shown by the princesse's jealous reaction that she has feelings for him similar to those he has for her: "L'aigreur que M. de Nemours voyait dans l'esprit de Madame de Clèves lui donnait le plus sensible plaisir qu'il eût jamais eu" (p. 81). Here is an example of reciprocal passion causing, at the same moment, two completely opposing feelings in the two people involved. The realm of love can be so confusing for a mortal as to cause two conflicting feelings within his own being at the same time: "La passion n'a jamais été si tendre et si violente qu'elle l'était alors en ce prince" (p. 121). Nemours has just tried to gain entry into Madame de Clèves' "cabinet" at Coulommiers without success. He is filled with "une joie sensible de l'avoir trouvée si remplie de son idée", but juxtaposed with his joy is another feeling: "il était néanmoins très affligé de lui avoir vu un mouvement si naturel de le fuir" (p. 121).

M. de Clèves is no more at peace with his feelings of love for the princess than Nemours. Even at the beginning of his marriage when he has no cause for jealousy, he realizes that his wife does not love him with the same passion he

feels for her: "il avait toujours quelque chose à souhaiter au delà de sa possession; et quoiqu'elle vécût parfaitement bien avec lui, il n'était pas entièrement heureux. Il conservait pour elle une passion violente et inquiète qui troublait sa joie" (p. 22). A glimpse is shown here of the true essence of love. It is something to wish for beyond the possession of another person. True love (as opposed to the conventional form of love which is riddled with feelings of possession and jealousy) is a cosmic force that gives to all concerned the dimension of soul. Madame de Clèves is searching for this. She is searching for "the male-female wholeness" of Aphrodite, the goddess who is always "present when wholeness emerges from the halves and when the resolved opposites become the indissolvable goldenness of life".<sup>74</sup> As already discussed, there are just too many obstacles in her path - living the life that she is or would be living at court with M. de Clèves, as a widow, or re-married to M. de Nemours - to find what she is seeking. One would be hard pressed to come up with an example in Madame de La Fayette's novel of even one satisfactory love relationship between two people wherein the true joy of love rises above the immediate possession of the physical being. King Henri II is madly in love with his mistress, Madame de Valentinois, but her unfaithfulness is forever a great cause of anguish for him (pp. 29-30 for example). The queen, who is painfully aware of her husband's love for another, seeks a confidant in

whom she can share some of her deepest feelings. As she says: "le plaisir de donner sa confiance . . . c'était une chose nécessaire dans la vie" (pp. 71-72). This friendship she is seeking seems at first a sincere attempt to rise above the corruption of all the "galanteries" happening around her. However, it turns out that she also wants total possession. Her confidant must be a man who has no amorous attachments to any other woman. The Vidame de Chartres is her choice; his flattered ego accepts the role despite the fact that he must hide from the queen his intense feelings of love for Madame de Thémynes (p. 74). Another deception is added to the list. And what of Madame de Thémynes who, after much hesitation, finally shows her "passion violente" for the Vidame de Chartres only to find out later that he had been sleeping with another woman during the whole time he was courting her (p. 66)? The pièce de résistance is M. de Clèves' story about his friend Sancerre's love affair with Madame de Tournon (pp. 42-48). Madame de Tournon, a widow, has given Sancerre reason to believe that as soon as she feels the time is socially acceptable to end her period of mourning for her husband, she will marry her lover. Two years have already passed and, despite M. de Clèves' warning to his friend that perhaps Madame de Tournon is hedging, Sancerre sets off on a three month long voyage reassured by the woman he adores that they will get married when he returns. The day he arrives back in Paris is precisely the day that Madame de Tournon

meets an untimely death (we are not told the cause). To add to Sancerre's overwhelming feeling of grief at the loss of his beloved is the ironic discovery that while he was away, and in fact even months before his departure, Madame de Tournon was receiving the attentions of another lover, Estouteville (a friend of Sancerre who had no idea that both he and Sancerre were in love with the same woman). The afflicted Estouteville leaves the love letters Madame de Tournon has written to him with Sancerre; and with trembling heart Sancerre opens them:

Mais hélas! que n'y ai-je point trouvé?  
 Quelle tendresse! quels serments!  
 quelles assurances de l'épouser! quelles  
 lettres! Jamais elle ne m'en a écrit de  
 semblables. Ainsi . . . j'éprouve à la  
 fois la douleur de la mort et celle de  
 l'infidélité; ce dont deux maux que l'on  
 a souvent comparés, mais qui n'ont jamais  
 été sentis en même temps par la même  
 personne.(p. 47)

Sancerre is left devastated, unable to reconcile his violent emotions of deep loss and of betrayal.

There seems to be little hope for the princesse to experience the kind of lasting love her mother told her could exist between a couple. She has been stirred by the passion that Aphrodite possesses, but it is passion not for her husband, and she is confused and distraught by her longing to fulfill sexually her desires. It is only when she is totally alone that she is able to fly free with her emotions. Her dreamworld at Coulommiers is not based on fantasy. It is based on her deep imaginings that refuse to remain repressed

any longer. Her retreat to the country (to Artemis' wilderness) symbolizes the budding affirmation of her new sense of selfhood, the acceptance of her sexual feelings and her desire to stop running from them. As Nancy Miller has observed: "Her retreat to Coulommiers must be thought of not as a flight from sexuality but as a movement into it . . . Mme de Clèves leaves the court not to flee passion but to preserve it. To preserve it, however, on her own terms."<sup>75</sup> She brings her imaginings to consciousness and chooses "the duke of the portrait, not the man who seeks to step out of the frame."<sup>76</sup> (This refers to the painting of the siege of Metz that Madame de Clèves had hung in her cabinet in which one of the men portrayed is the Duc de Nemours.) The man who seeks to step out of the frame is not content to simply stay with his active imaginings of the strong love between him and the princesse. Nemours must actualize his love on the physical plane and Madame de Clèves realizes that such an actualization will only mean a further possession of her being that she cannot afford to give at this time.

She is beginning to understand and accept the teachings of Aphrodite - to accept that "love and passion are by their very nature evanescent."<sup>77</sup> And in such an acceptance she is able to truly feel the joy and warmth of the cosmic force of love. Any attempts to live by the kind of love that Nemours offers her, within the context of the court and its



atmosphere of total restraint on women's rights of access, would only tend to tie her down, keep her attached to the need to possess (a hollow recompense for one's loss of liberty), to the anguishing cycle of mortal love filled with jealousy and submission - the hunter and the hunted - in which no one finds inner happiness.

Par vanité ou par goût, toutes les femmes souhaitent de vous attacher. Il y en a peu à qui vous ne plaisiez; mon expérience me ferait croire qu'il n'y en a point à qui vous ne puissiez plaire. Je vous croirais toujours amoureux et aimé et je ne me tromperais pas souvent. Dans cet état néanmoins, je n'aurais d'autre parti à prendre que celui de la souffrance; je ne sais même si j'oserais me plaindre. On fait des reproches à un amant; mais en fait-on à un mari, quand on n'a qu'à lui reprocher de n'avoir plus d'amour. (pp. 138-139)

Madame de Clèves realizes her shortcomings and exposes them to Nemours. She is not meant to play the game of love this time around. She has other work to do. Her jealousy and suspicions of Nemours and his gallant ways would undoubtedly serve to keep her from her quest of self-realization. In this final call to solitude, the three goddesses Hera, Artemis and Aphrodite become incorporated as one. The princesse acknowledges the deep longing of Hera to be a part of a fulfilling relationship with a man through her own deep longing to have such a relationship with Nemours. She also acknowledges the impermanence of love - the light and the dark side of the Aphrodite myth. Yet, in regards to where she is along the path of her journey back to self, she must

turn to Artemis. It is in Artemis' unviolated wilderness that the princesse can begin to find her own inner freedom.

### The Child Archetype

"Mythology has to do with origins . . . with primary patterns, with worlds as they are coming into appearance and thus with epiphanies" (the manifestations of deities in their "primal essence").<sup>78</sup> According to the author Kerenyi, when gods or goddesses first appear as mythical entities it is the divine child within them that comes to the fore. Thus "to catch the goddess appearing is to catch her in her child form."<sup>79</sup> We have, as of now, looked at several Greek goddesses in regard to their connection with the heroine of Madame de La Fayette's La Princesse de Clèves. Each one reveals herself to the princesse in a different way. Each one has her story to tell which arises from deep within the unconscious storehouse of the ancients. These stories or myths are not to be taken lightly, for they hold the secrets of the past, the secrets of woman's and man's beginnings. To complete the cycle of the goddesses we must now turn to their first appearances. We must see them through the eyes of the child: innocent yet "full of potentiality", recently created "yet already wholly themselves".<sup>80</sup> These are the goddesses separated from the image of the Great Mother. It is only by separating the mother-child mythologem that we are able to see the child as a distinct archetype. Jung feels that this is important, for the child archetype has a cosmic transhuman

aspect. It is an archetype which encompasses the realm of spontaneity and pure joy. A child does not need to be told the difference between reality and make-believe.

Unrestricted by adult limitations he or she is able to walk the thin line between the two and soar with the divinity into the land of magic. The same effect is possible for those adults who are able to gain access to their child archetype. Jung's studies exploring how one's personal experiencing is given shape by archetypal patterns has given men and women cause "to celebrate the archetype of the child", for in opening ourselves up to this mythic pattern we are able to imagine "wholeness and happiness" once again.<sup>81</sup> It is this very capacity for imagining that allows one's personal experiences to be influenced by an archetype. At the same time it is important to remember that, as with all archetypes, "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."<sup>82</sup>

Mademoiselle de Clèves arrives at court in the form of a divine child - the emerging child goddess. She is at one and the same time full of innocence and wonderment and yet almost unattainable in her uniqueness. This combination of vulnerability and inner strength brings a breath of new life and hope to the court. The princesse embodies the mythic dimension of new beginnings, wholeness and joy, elements that have been long lost in court life. Her appearing is not

unsimilar to that of the goddess Aphrodite who is often seen as representing the beginning of time or the timeless beginning of all things. Aphrodite appears as the emerging child goddess, born of the foam surrounding her father Ouranos' severed and water-immersed genitals. She is both divine child and full-grown woman.<sup>83</sup> The Greeks perceived her as a "joy-creating sun-like magic".<sup>84</sup> Madame de Clèves is perceived similarly upon her arrival: "La blancheur de son teint et ses cheveux blonds lui donnaient un éclat que l'on n'a jamais vu qu'à elle . . . "(p. 11). She also emerges detached from her paternal ties; she is child yet is immediately expected to take on the role of full-grown, all-seeing, all-knowing woman. Her childhood is as obscure as the childhoods of all the Greek goddesses. These deities are mostly depicted, in the classical literature, in their maiden form and are thus "marked by that adolescent consciousness which 'puts a barrier to the childhood waiting to be relived.'"<sup>85</sup> Nonetheless, they all carry the mark of the divine child even if it is often "obscured, lost or denied." As for the princesse, the divine child aspect of her being, to a large extent, is repressed in her childhood under the strong moralistic guidance of her mother; it continues to be repressed by the position she must uphold as a member of the royal entourage. She is looked up to by men and women alike as a woman of high moral standing, "plein[e] de grâce et de charmes" (p. 11), totally modest in regard to

her many attributes. Yet all the while, the magic of the child within is dying. There is little room in her relationship with her husband to nourish the spontaneous joy of the child; at the core we find her sense of duty coupled with a stifling feeling of gratitude (augmented by the death of her mother and mentor and her resulting intense need to establish a new support system):

Madame de Clèves était dans une affliction extrême; son mari ne la quittait point et, sitôt que Madame de Clèves fut expirée, il l'emmena à la campagne, pour l'éloigner d'un lieu qui ne faisait qu'aigrir sa douleur . . . La manière dont M. de Clèves en usait pour elle, lui faisait souhaiter plus fortement que jamais de ne manquer à rien de ce qu'elle lui devait . . . il lui semblait qu'à force de s'attacher à lui, il la défendrait contre M. de Nemours.  
(p. 39)

M. de Clèves brings his wife to Coulommiers and soon after tells her that it is now time to leave: "Il est temps que vous voyez le monde, et que vous receviez ce nombre infini de visites dont aussi bien vous ne sauriez vous dispenser" (p. 48). She consents without question, for the time being.

The motifs which Jung attributes to the divine child mythologem - miraculous birth, abandonment and invincibility<sup>86</sup> - are present in both the goddesses' primal essence and in Madame de Clèves' personnage. Her "birth" at court has certainly something miraculous or wondrous about it. As already stated, she is the beauty who arrives surrounded by light: "un éclat", "qui attira les yeux de tout

le monde" (pp. 10, 11). Madame de Clèves, like Persephone and Artemis, seems born almost fatherless<sup>87</sup>, caught in her emerging form with no other life prior to that miraculous moment. Her father is made known to us in one short phrase: "Son père était mort jeune, et l'avait laissée sous la conduite de Madame de Clèves" (p. 10). He is thus absolved of all responsibility and is never spoken of again. Although Zeus does not die when his daughters Persephone and Artemis are young, he exerts no more influence over their lives than M. de Chartres over that of the princesse. These absent fathers provide "royal" lineages but leave all else regarding their daughters' upbringing in the hands of the feminine realm. Other wondrous births include Demeter's and Hera's. They, along with three other siblings, are swallowed at birth by their father, Kronos, in fear that they might overthrow him as he had overthrown his own father, Ouranos. Zeus is later responsible for Kronos' vomiting them up and thus for their re-entrance into the world. The "male womb" that Demeter and Hera are introjected into and then later reborn from, lends to a comparison with the male dominated "womb" of the French court into which the princesse is introduced (swallowed up) and then later reborn from. As for the phenomenon of abandonment, there is not one goddess who has not experienced its anguish. Demeter and Hera lose mother and childhood while trapped in the confines of an obsessive father. Artemis not only has to deal with an absent father at birth but also with a dependent at-risk mother who

requires her immediate help to deliver her twin brother Apollo, and thereafter continues to require her daughter's protection. Aphrodite is born of neither father nor mother - total abandonment. Despite all these examples of parental absence, of flawed childhoods, the goddesses have persevered and have risen above the obstacles to be seen as invincible, self-sufficient, beautiful and serenely powerful.<sup>88</sup> The divine child has triumphed in each of the goddesses. Its essence allows Hera and Demeter, Persephone and Artemis, Aphrodite and the others to appreciate both their "light" and "dark" sides and to bring them together within the wonderful image of wholeness of self. The princesse is also seen as rising above the abandonment, the denied childhood, to heights unimagined by the stultified community of the court. She ends up motherless, fatherless and husbandless, and as with Hera, must return to the magic of her lost childhood before she can truly begin to live in harmony with herself.

Retracing our steps in the novel, we arrive at the day of the ball when the Duc de Nemours and Madame de Clèves meet for the first time. The atmosphere is tinged with mystery and excitement as the two dance together, at the request of the king, before formal introductions have been made:

Quand ils commencèrent à danser, il s'éleva dans la salle un murmure de louanges. Le roi et les reines se souvinrent qu'ils ne s'étaient jamais vus, et trouvèrent quelque chose de singulier de les voir danser ensemble sans se connaître. (p. 23)

It is the first appearance of the Duc and the Princesse as a couple. This archetypal image of the royal couple (brought together by hieros gamos or the sacred marriage) is an interesting "bleed-through" from the image of the divine child.<sup>89</sup> The princesse and Nemours definitely fit the mythological representation of a royal couple. They are both unique in the way they are seen at court by others and by each other. Nemours is given many god-like qualities:

Ce prince était fait d'une sorte qu'il  
 était difficile de n'être pas surpris de  
 le voir quand on ne l'avait jamais vu,  
 surtout ce soir-là, où le soin qu'il  
 avait pris de se parer augmentait encore  
 l'air brillant qui était dans sa  
 personne. (p. 23)

The princesse, in no lesser way, definitely holds her own in Nemours' presence: "mais il était difficile aussi de voir Madame de Clèves pour la première fois sans avoir un grand étonnement" (p. 23).

For hieros gamos to take place a woman must be ravished by a god. It is a welcomed event, an initiation into the cosmic transhuman element of love. "The congress of men for the procreation of children makes virgins women", wrote Philo of Alexandria many years ago, "but when God begins to associate with the soul, he brings to pass that she who was formerly woman becomes virgin again."<sup>90</sup> This is the hieros gamos, the marriage with the god which makes women virgin, which reawakens from the depths a woman's awareness of her in-one-self-ness. What this leads to is the welcomed ravishment of the princesse by her prince Nemours. Although



the sexual act does not happen on the physical plane, it most certainly does psychologically and mythologically for the princesse. At Coulommiers, she is clearly shown immersed in her deep feelings for her god-like lover. She looks at the portrait of Nemours depicted in the painting of the siege of Metz "avec une attention et une rêverie que la passion seule peut donner" (p. 120). She allows the essence of Nemours to caress her, to enter her being. The sacred marriage with the god takes place and Madame de Clèves is made virgin again. Another way of perceiving this event is that when the individual human male and the individual human female meet at the deepest level, they transcend their individuality and meet as god and goddess, each carrying and communicating the energy of the archetype of their sex.

According to mythology, it is usually the royal couple who produces the divine child. Such a pattern is repeated in Madame de La Fayette's story, although it is not at first recognizable on a worldly level. In Nemours' presence, whether physically or mentally, the princesse is able to return unconsciously to her divine child state of being, to the world of first appearances where anything is possible. Nemours excites her. He breathes fire and passion and wonderment into the formerly dreamless world of the heroine. However, this magical state is a very delicate one for the princesse because the flashbacks which occur early on in the novel are always tempered by feelings of shame. They are

therefore not truly allowed to permeate the soul:

Elle ne sentait que le plaisir de voir M. de Nemours, elle en avait une joie pure et sans mélange qu'elle n'avait jamais sentie: cette joie lui donnait une liberté et un enjouement dans l'esprit que M. de Nemours ne lui avait jamais vus et qui redoublaient son amour . . . Après qu'on eut envoyé la lettre à Madame la Dauphine, M. de Clèves et M. de Nemours s'en allèrent. Madame de Clèves demeura seule, et sitôt qu'elle ne fut plus soutenue par cette joie que donne la présence de ce qu'on aime, elle revint comme d'un songe . . . elle trouvait qu'elle était d'intelligence avec M. de Nemours qu'elle trompait le mari du monde qui méritait le moins d'être trompé, et elle était honteuse de paraître si peu digne d'estime aux yeux même de son amant. (pp. 84-86)

Further along in the novel, Madame de Clèves progresses to the point where, upon being shaken from her erotic "rêverie" about Nemours by a sound at the window (made by the very man she is dreaming of), the princesse's only dilemma (after her initial reaction to flee) is whether or not she should leave "un lieu dont elle pensait que ce prince était peut-être si proche" (p. 121). She does not feel embarrassed that she has exposed unwittingly her feelings of love for Nemours to him. She does not feel any shame. And finally, the natural progression of the quest leads the princesse to the total acknowledgement within herself and to Nemours of her deep magical feelings for the only man she has ever truly loved (pp. 134-135, as quoted earlier).

In following Jung's theory on the psychology of the child archetype, we are brought to the insight that "images

representing the archetype of the self and those embodying the archetype of the divine are functionally indistinguishable."<sup>91</sup> Therefore the child is in some degree in each of us, as well as also being a separate sacred being. By coming in touch with the archetype of the child, we come in touch with parts of ourselves that enable us to imagine wholeness and harmony, for this is the magic of the realm of the child. It is made up of imaginings that are forever healing, forever intertwining reality and dream-state into one's view of the world. There is a divine child born of the princesse's and Nemours' sacred union. It is the princesse's rediscovery of herself as the emerging goddess, of her own divine child within. As Bachelard says: childhood is "the archetype of simple happiness", it is "an image within us", and there it remains forever available "as a principle of deep life, a 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."<sup>92</sup> The princesse finds her world to be deeply lacking - lacking in joy, in integrity, in simple pleasures, in private moments. She begins at first unconsciously, with the aid of her slowly emerging child, to reconstruct the world around her. Her childhood becomes linked with the childhoods of the goddesses, and this "serves as an initiation into the worlds constituted by them."<sup>93</sup> Although the princesse, Madame de La Fayette, and ourselves (the readers) "may never have heard their names . . . these

goddesses are present in the imaginal experience of our childhoods."

In re-entering the invincible, miraculous world of the divine child, the princesse is able to make her deepest dreams a reality. She is able to begin to create (after much painful and joyful personal struggling) a new world of inner peace and self-fulfillment. She is able to step out of the limits of the novel and speak to women of her generation and generations to come, to show them that one does not need to remain caught in the confines of what woman ought to be and do. Living out one's life without questioning the "shoulds" is the easy path. The difficult path is to reach deep within and know what it is that a woman must do to follow the dictates of her true essence, while at the same time remaining in balance with the outside world. Madame de Clèves "knows herself to be without a text."<sup>94</sup> She is unable to follow the culturally defined dictums imposed upon women of her time and therefore the path that she sets out on is of her own making. This is the gift Madame de La Fayette has given her by the novel's end. She has given her the freedom to put the maxims behind her, to hear the call of the goddess and to return to the world of images where all stories have their beginnings; for "[w]hen one dreams in depth one is never finished beginning."<sup>95</sup>

### Notes to Chapter I

<sup>1</sup> Christine Downing, The Goddess: Mythological Images of the Feminine (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1984), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Downing, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> Downing, p. 71.

<sup>4</sup> Madame de La Fayette, La Princesse de Clèves, ed. K.B. Kettle (New York: MacMillan, St. Martin's Press, 1967), p. 10. Subsequent quotations from the text of the above edition of La Princesse de Clèves will be indicated in this thesis by the page number within parentheses.

<sup>5</sup> Madame de La Fayette, La Princesse de Clèves, ed. K.B. Kettle (New York: MacMillan, St. Martin's Press, 1967), Introduction viii. K.B. Kettle is counterbalancing here the author's "search for vraisemblance" with her concern for the formation of her heroine which is "executed with such care as to be in itself an essential element in the novel". Subsequent quotations from the Introduction of the above edition of La Princesse de Clèves will be indicated in this thesis by the page number within parentheses.

<sup>6</sup> Carl Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, mentioned in M. Esther Harding, Women's Mysteries: Ancient and Modern (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1976), p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> M. Esther Harding, Woman's Mysteries: Ancient and Modern (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1976), p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Harding, pp. 16-17.

<sup>9</sup> Harding, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> Edward C. Whitmont, Return of the Goddess (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 56

<sup>11</sup> Downing, p. 41

<sup>12</sup> The information regarding the Persephone/Demeter myth is taken from Downing, The Goddess, pp. 39-42 and from notes written during a lecture, "The Gods of the Greeks," at the Jungian Institute in Switzerland (July, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> Downing, p. 43. We are discussing Persephone's secret cult and its importance in combining the mysteries of the universe with the mundane activities of daily life. Hades' essential role in bringing Persephone into the underworld with him to remain as goddess makes this myth and the cult that developed from it important for members of both sexes. The mysteries we speak of have to do with the inexplicable and never-ending birth, death and rebirth patterns that men and women find themselves attached to

during their lifetimes. They have to do with the joy and the pain of living, the creative and the seemingly cruel destructive tendencies of Nature, of the Goddess.

14 Downing, p. 134.

15 Downing, p. 45.

16 Downing, p. 44.

17 Both quotations are from Marianne Hirsch, "A Mother's Discourse: Incorporation and Repetition in La Princesse de Clèves," Yale French Studies, 61-63 (1981-82), p. 68. In the second quotation Hirsch is citing the article "Female Sexuality" (1931), reprinted in Woman and Analysis, ed. Jean Strouse (New York: Dell, 1974), p. 54.

18 The term "in-one-self-ness" or "one-in-herself" is introduced by Harding, Women's Mysteries, p. 125, and used by other authors, such as C. Downing and Linda Schierse Leonard, to demonstrate a woman's return to inner wholeness, a return to her soul.

19 Downing, p. 42.

20 René Malamud, "The Amazon Problem" in Facing the Gods, ed. James Hillman (Irving, Tex.: Spring Publications), 1980, cited in Downing, The Goddess, p. 180.

21 Downing, p. 45

22 Michael Danahy, "Social, Sexual and Human Spaces in La Princesse de Clèves," French Forum, Vol. 6 (1981), p. 219.

23 Danahy, p. 212, talks about the need of women to have more control over the environment they live in, their comings and goings, their need for privacy, their need to express their emotions and to have them heard, and so on. He defines this as a woman's "access rights."

24 Marie-Odile Sweetser, "La Princesse de Clèves et son unité," Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, 87 (1972), 483.

25 Helen Kaps, Moral Perspective in La Princesse de Clèves (Portland: University of Oregon Press, 1973), pp. 24-26, quoted in Danahy, "Social, Sexual and Human Spaces," p. 222.

26 Danahy, p. 219.

27 Danahy, pp. 212, 219.

28 Carl Jung, Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious, CW 9, pt. 1 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press,

1969), par. 172, reference made by Downing, The Goddess, p. 75. The statement concerning the different archetypal perspectives to motherhood is Downing's own addition.

29 Danahy, p. 221.

30 Downing, pp. 167-168.

31 Whitmont, p. 124.

32 Linda Schierse Leonard, The Wounded Woman: Healing the Father-Daughter Relationship (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1983), p. 153.

33 Whitmont, pp. 55-58. This discussion continues on pp. 61-62 where the author refers to the "slaying of the royal victim", the male consort to the goddess, as a justifiable release of violence in matriarchal societies. This was "a voluntary self-offering" no longer possible in patriarchal societies where "wars for the purpose of procuring sacrificial victims were either staged deliberately or arose spontaneously - that is, from the unconscious urge to violence." Human sacrifice on a large scale found its rationalization (by men not women) in the name of progress and in the resulting need for protection of one's newly acquired boundaries and possessions.

34 Harding, p. 45.

35 Many articles have been written on this very subject, stating that it is in fact Madame de Clèves' fear of passion dying and/or her guilt over her husband's death that motivate her in regard to her final decision to leave Nemours and the life of a courtier. For example, Jules Brody in his article "La Princesse de Clèves and the Myth of Courtly Love," University of Toronto Quarterly, 38 (1968/69), p. 131, illustrates how Madame de Clèves arrives at the painfully wrought awareness that all passion must die. However, he continues on to show that by virtue of this awareness the princesse is able to "clamber to the heights of tragic wisdom" and discover her own personal victory through the possession of truth. Stirling Haig, in Madame de Lafayette (New York: Twayne, 1970), pp. 108-134 (as mentioned in Michael Danahy, "Social, Sexual and Human Spaces in La Princesse de Clèves, p. 219) bases Madame de Clèves' decision "to get herself to a nunnery" on the motivational forces of "latent fears of sex, an unconscious, irrational guilt complex, or even a secret instinctual death wish."

36 This reference is in regards to Whitmont's discussion in Return of the Goddess, p. 124, concerning the standards of judgement of women from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century in Europe as set out by the "witches' hammer" or Malleus Maleficarum. Whitmont also looks at the beginning of our century where at a gynecological congress "the question

was seriously debated as to whether women do or do not have any sexual feelings . . . the overwhelming consensus of the learned pundits was the the good woman does not have any sexual feelings."

<sup>37</sup> Irene Claremont de Castillejo, Knowing Woman: a Feminine Psychology (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), pp. 84-86.

<sup>38</sup> Leonard, p. 38.

<sup>39</sup> Leonard, p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> Harding, pp. 148-149.

<sup>41</sup> Nancy K. Miller, "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction," The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), p. 349.

<sup>42</sup> This quotation and the two immediately following are from Miller, "Emphasis Added," p. 351.

<sup>43</sup> Leonard in The Wounded Woman, p. 32, is referring to Harding, Women's Mysteries, pp. 103-104, 125. In her note (13) she capsulizes: "Harding has explored the virgin image in relation to the ancient goddesses and has pointed out that symbolically every woman needs to feel and act upon the power and strength of her own unique feminine wisdom, rather than projecting this power upon men."

<sup>44</sup> The last two quotations are from Downing, The Goddess, p. 57.

<sup>45</sup> Downing, p. 62.

<sup>46</sup> Downing, p. 60. All information pertaining to the various traditions of the myth of Ariadne come from the chapter "Ariadne: Mistress of the Labyrinth" in Downing's book The Goddess, p. 51-66.

<sup>47</sup> Downing, p. 63.

<sup>48</sup> Downing, p. 66. See for source material James Hillman, "Anima," Spring, 1974, 1975.

<sup>49</sup> These last two citations are found in Downing, pp. 65 and 62 in that order. The first one is a direct quote from Carl Kerenyi's book Dionysus: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 124.

<sup>50</sup> Downing, p. 63.

<sup>51</sup> Downing, p. 56.

<sup>52</sup> Downing, p. 53.



53 Downing, p. 58.

54 Carl Kerenyi, Zeus and Hera (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 114, as quoted by Downing, The Goddess, p. 71.

55 Downing, pp. 92-95.

56 Downing, p. 86

57 Leonard, pp. 21-22. The author refers to Jung in support of her hypothesis that although "[w]e bear the influences of our parents, . . . we are not fated to remain merely the products of our parents." Our previous reference to Jung viewing the life of each person as a "complex and mysterious whole" is also from Leonard, p. 21.

58 Downing, pp. 94-95. The preceding information on Hera's return to her birthplace comes from these pages, as does the following reference to Murray Stein.

59 Downing, p. 92.

60 Leonard, The Wounded Woman, pp. 39-55, talks about the need for transformation for women caught in the "eternal girl" syndrome. The story of Laura, the protagonist in Tennessee William's play The Glass Menagerie, clearly demonstrates how a woman who loses her father early in her life and becomes more and more withdrawn from the world of men as she grows older, is finally able to rediscover a very important part of herself through a brief encounter with a warm, caring man. Jim guides her back to her own inner life force, to where her personal strengths have been lying dormant for such a long time: "Transformation, in the case of Laura, is initiated through the masculine, which up to this point has been lacking. But it also takes the initiation of Laura to respond to him - to take the leap of faith to risk and trust" (The Wounded Woman, p. 44), just as the princesse finally succeeds in doing with Nemours when, near the end of the novel (p. 135), she is able to express to her "prince" the deep love she feels for him. She responds to Nemours, she exposes her very essence to him and, in this magical moment, her transformation back to wholeness truly begins.

61 Downing, p. 95.

62 This quotation and the two immediately following are from Downing, p. 95.

63 The above denotation of the characteristics of Artemis is found in Downing, pp. 157-162.

64 Downing, p. 174.

65 Jules Brody, p. 127.

66 Danahy, p. 219.

67 Brody is talking about the "new mood" that the princesse brings to the moment of truth with Nemours, in his article "Myth of Courtly Love", p. 127.

68 The feminine experience that Artemis is closely connected with, as mentioned by Downing in The Goddess, pp. 174-175, has to do with biological femaleness: menstruation, conception, parturition, nursing, menopause and death which to the Greeks was brought about by Artemis.

69 Downing, p. 172.

70 Ruth P. Thomas, "Light and Darkness in La Princesse de Clèves," Kentucky Romance Quarterly, 28 (1981), p. 84. Another critic, Claude Vigée in "La Princesse de Clèves et la tradition du refus," Critique, 16 (1960), 741, describes the princesse as such: "Sous des dehors nobles, dignes, et délicats, elle cache une personnalité sans étoffe, ni bonté réelle, une âme avare, calculatrice, et timorée, repliée sur sa peur de vivre et sur sa répugnance mesquine à se commettre avec autrui." Margaret J. MacRae in her article "Diane de Poitiers and Madame de Clèves: A Study of Women's Roles, the Victim and the Conqueror," Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 23 (1985), p. 572, sees the efforts of Madame de Clèves "to triumph over society by her presence and self-contained life" as futile, thus resulting in an atmosphere of bleakness and obscurity.

71 Downing, p. 176.

72 Downing, p. 199. The author goes on to say that soul making occurs under the tutelage of Aphrodite.

73 The preceding references to characteristics of the goddess Aphrodite are found in Downing, The Goddess, pp. 206-210.

74 Downing, p. 202.

75 Miller, p. 350.

76 Sylvère Lotringer, "La Structuration romanesque," Critique, 26 (1970), p. 517, quoted by Miller, p. 350.

77 Downing, p. 209.

78 C.G. Jung and C. Kerenyi, Essays on a Science of Mythology (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 7, referred to in Downing, The Goddess, p. 217.

79 Downing, p. 219.

80 Downing, p. 219.

81 Jung and Kerenyi, Essays, cited by Downing, The Goddess, pp. 219, 228. The Jungian definition of archetype is: "collective universal patterns or motifs which come from the collective unconscious and are the basis content of religions, mythologies, legends, and fairytales. They emerge in individuals through dreams and visions", Brinton Perera, Descent to the Goddess, p. 95.

82 Jung and Kerenyi, Essays, p. 80, quoted by Downing, p. 225.

83 Downing, p. 199.

84 Carl Kerenyi, Goddesses of Sun and Moon (Irving, Tex.: Spring Publications, 1979), p. 55, cited by Downing, p. 204.

85 Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie, trans. Daniel Russell (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 108, quoted in Downing, The Goddess, p. 230. The quotation directly following is also from Downing, p. 230.

86 Downing, p. 228, is comparing Otto Rank's "phenomenology of the child archetype" with that of Jung. Both Jung and Rank agree upon these three motifs.

87 Downing, p. 233.

88 All references to the births and childhoods of the Greek goddesses are found in Downing, The Goddess, pp. 230-234.

89 This reference to the royal couple and their sacred marriage, as well as the following information on the nature of the hieros gamos is taken from Harding, Woman's Mysteries, p. 146.

90 Harding, p. 146, quotes Philo of Alexandria; no note included by Harding to indicate the source material.

91 Downing, p. 221, regarding Jung's essay "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," no note included.

92 Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie, pp. 123, 124, quoted in Downing, pp. 243-244.

93 This quotation and the one directly after it are from Downing, p. 233.

94 Miller, p. 351.

95 Bachelard, Poetics, p. 144, cited by Downing, p. 244.

## CHAPTER II

### CONTINUING THE VOYAGE BACK TO THE ANCIENT GREAT GODDESS

And we, who have always thought of  
happiness climbing, would feel the  
emotion that almost startles when  
happiness falls.

Rainer Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies<sup>1</sup>

We have looked at the Princesse de Clèves and her mythological connections to the Greek goddesses and we find that our journey is not over. We are drawn deeper yet, back to the myth of the ancient Goddess who ruled heaven and earth before the development of the patriarchy and its corresponding religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam. This is the divinity that, mythologically speaking, is re-awakening in more and more people in very recent times, subtle though her recurrence may be for the moment. A sense of this mythic divinity within might be experienced in forms of dissatisfaction with dominant collective values or perhaps, on a more personal level, as a feeling of discomfort with how materialistic one's own life has become. Whatever form it takes, however it is manifested - anti-nuclear marches, protests against apartheid in South Africa, renewing ties with an old friend -, there is a modern day revolution on the rise. Its base is found in men and women's mounting feeling of "dis-ease" within themselves. As Edward C. Whitmont expresses: "The Goddess is now returning. Denied and suppressed for thousands of years of masculine

domination, she comes at a time of dire need," at a time when "[v]iolence within our own society threatens to overwhelm us."<sup>2</sup> By first looking at what this archaic goddess represented in her time, we may begin to understand the extreme importance she holds in the changing life patterns of the princesse as well as the importance she could hold for today's progress-orientated cultures.

Firstly, she is a myth and, as such, she could well be considered one of the ever-recurring collective dreams of humankind. The characteristics she possessed were uncannily similar, whether her guise was that of Inanna of Sumeria, Anath of Canaan, Ishtar of Mesopotamia, Morrigan of Eire, Kali of India. The list continues. People were much more in touch with Nature and her rhythmic cycles in ancient days, and so the myth that arose from the collective unconscious (from the instinctive element of one's nature) was a myth deeply atuned to Mother Earth, to the feminine workings of the universe. It was a myth concerned with all aspects of life's mysteries - with love and war, with both the expression of sexual energies and the retention of these energies, with cold destructiveness and warm nurturing. It was not concerned with the later obsessions of conquest and territorial acquisitions. Rather, the goddesses that represented this myth governed the life cycle throughout its eternal phases of birth, growth, death and rebirth. It seems that our earth is again in need of this divine governess in order to rediscover its balance and sense of continuance.<sup>3</sup>

The ancient Goddess understood the necessity of the rain, the necessity of darkness and destruction, but she also understood the importance of harnessing these forces. The key lies within Rilke's great poetic work Duino Elegies, begun by the author when he himself was in despair, and completed ten years later when, touched by a deep sense of the basic truths of life, he received a vision of the meaning of so much suffering<sup>4</sup>: one can learn to deal with patterns of annihilation if one's motivation is pure, if one follows the rhythm of the universe and trusts in its outcome. Thus, instead of striving for the ultimate in happiness through conquest and the fulfillment of one's need for power (successes that do not touch the soul), one might look for the mystery of happiness elsewhere. By replacing conquest with love of self, an important shift within the unconscious psyche occurs. It might then be possible to truly see the delicate beauty of falling moments as well as climbing moments. For as with "the rain that falls on the dark earth in the early spring" (Duino Elegies), after darkness there is rebirth; and happiness rising would mean nothing without the deep emotion that is felt when happiness falls.

The heroine in Madame de La Fayette's La Princesse de Clèves experiences her share of rising and falling moments. She, like most of us, wants to avoid the darkness and seek happiness only in its rising form. In the case of the princesse, she senses quite soon after her arrival at court that such a direction in life is meaningless if one has any

hopes of reaching a state of inner peace. Her deeply questioning nature leads the princesse into parts unknown. These new psychological spaces that the princesse is beginning to enter can be attributed to the presence of the Goddess within if one is doing a mythic reading of the text. This deity is not to be taken lightly. She demands recognition and sovereignty. If refused acknowledgement, she may stir up powers of destruction (in the form of violent demonstrations in the name of equality and human rights, for example). If, however, we give the Goddess her due, she may guide us in a more compassionate fashion towards change.

The Feminine Principle of Woman - Eros - in connection with the Rhythmic Cycle of the Moon

From time immemorial in myth and legend the moon has represented the woman's deity, the feminine principle, much as the sun, with its heroes, symbolized the masculine principle. . . . [A]rising from the depths of the unconscious in the form of symbols whose eternal reality is still exemplified to us in our everyday experience . . . [are] the Great Light which rules the day of reason and intellect, and the Lesser Light which rules the night of instinct and the shadowy perceptions of the inner intuitive world.

Masculine and feminine: in the modern Western world we have tried to cover over the differences between these two principles, even to the extent of believing that the only disparity between men and women is a biological one. And yet it is slowly being recognized once again that men and women operate psychologically on very different "principles" or essences, or inner laws. The masculine principle has to do

with focused consciousness. It possesses the power to separate and analyse and thus to formulate ideas and create new inventions. Its counterpart is the feminine principle, another layer of the psyche, which is more concerned with the unity of all life and with a desire for relationship, hence the term diffuse awareness.<sup>6</sup> That the ancient goddess existed as a projection of this part of the psyche and not of the masculine part comes as no surprise. Men who are able to knowingly enter the intuitive world of diffuse awareness gain greatly from the wisdom stored there, and women are able to excel in the scientific world if they remain open to their innate sense of the unbroken connection to all living things. However, Irene Claremont de Castillejo reminds us that the feminine principle is still quite a mystery to most men. As young children they continue to experience a connection to the concept of the wholeness of nature with which they were born, but gradually most men drift away, pulled by the powers of the rational mind. Women, on the other hand, remain more closely attached to their original instinctive pattern; they are less easily separated from their essential soul or center of their being by the development of intellect. They are female, born of the female and they continue to identify with her. We may have heard it said "Woman is soul." Whether one believes in this idea or not, or whether one even believes in the soul, cannot take away from the fact that this theme has been with us for a long time.<sup>7</sup> Primitive cultures believed that a seed was lifeless until the Moon goddess (the ancient



sister of our modern day soul) breathed life into it and made it grow. The soul we are talking about is the spiritual essence of a being which connects him or her to the ultimate creative "breath" of the universe, the Source. As already stated, woman, who is much closer to the "shadowy" mysteries of life and death, can help man rediscover his soul. And man, through his ability to analyse and focus, can help woman express the soul she has never truly lost.<sup>8</sup>

But all is not as easy as it would seem. Even though Madame de Clèves, being a woman, might have a more straightforward connection to the realm of the ancient Goddess, her voyage back to her self - wherein one meets with one's inner truths, one's soul - is neither a quick nor an easy one. As explained in more basic terms in Chapter I, this mythical return to self can also be described as a psychological search for the feeling of peace within one's being. As Jung so aptly points out: "The serious problems of life are never fully solved. If ever they should appear to be so, it is a sure sign that something has been lost."<sup>9</sup> If someone could have passed this message on to the princesse perhaps she would not have felt so alone in her quest, so burdened by the conflicting emotions welling up inside of herself. Perhaps she would have been able to laugh, if only slightly, at her situation, as Hera was able to laugh at Zeus' ruse to make her jealous so that she would return to him (see note 61 in Chapter I). As it was, the princesse was breaking totally

new ground and no one had prepared her for such a struggle. She would have to learn on her own the meaning of the infinite cycle of the Moon goddess; learn that endings only lead to beginnings, and that conflicts are solved only to be undone once again.

It is known that symbolic representations of the moon, of an amazing likeness, are to be found in myths, legends and religions of widely separated peoples in many ages and that this phenomenon indicates that they sprang from the depths of the human psyche where truths of universal validity reside. In order to make a connection between this discovery and our concerns with the mythological aspects of the feminine in La Princesse de Clèves, we must once again briefly review the evolution of humankind up through the centuries. In the age of the ancient Moon Mother (beginning long before the third millenium B.C. and continuing into the first millennium B.C.<sup>10</sup>), the subjective essence of men and women, which comes from the unconscious, was given much more credence than in the later male-dominated periods: post-Bronze Age and up to recent times. The inner instinctive realm was all-Supreme, its deity being the ruler of the night, of the unconscious. She was goddess of love, controller of those mysterious forces beyond human understanding, which attract certain human beings irresistibly to each other, or as unaccountably force them apart. She was the Eros, powerful and fateful, and incomprehensible. Our Western civilization is only just

beginning to turn its attention again to the inner feminine realm of the psyche. Scientists, psychologists, women and men wanting to know more about themselves are coming to realize, and not a moment too soon, the extreme importance of this subjective world wherein human relationships germinate and find their nurturing. Resistance to such a shift in emphasis (from the outer world of intellect and judgement to the inner world of shadows and intuition) is, however, still very strong in our day.

In the princesse's time it was totally overpowering. Any hint of a "regression" to the darker forces of the unconscious was crushed without mercy.<sup>11</sup> Madame de La Fayette was thus dealing with a very sensitive issue and she did so admirably. She was able to expose the two opposing forces of Logos, the seeker of impersonal truth, and Eros, that of love and relationship, within her heroine and not make her look like she was verging upon heresy. The woman Madame de La Fayette portrays is down to earth and yet quite miraculous in what she achieves in her day.

Mademoiselle de Chartres is first shown to us possessing a highly developed rational nature. She is modest and dutiful, living up to the rigid, moralistic education imposed upon her by her mother (p. 10). Quickly accepted into the inner circle at court because of her prestigious family name, her beauty and her intelligence, the princesse has only to look forward to a life filled with comfort and amorous pursuits if she so wishes. This is where the conflict

begins. Her marriage to a man she does not love is acceptable to Mademoiselle de Chartres on the conscious level of filial obedience. As shown in Chapter I, the princesse rationalizes the situation in the belief that she really has no other choice but to follow her mother's subtle yet oppressive wishes:

Comme Mademoiselle de Chartres avait le coeur très noble et très bien fait, elle fut véritablement touchée de reconnaissance du procédé du Prince de Clèves . . . Elle [en] rendit compte à sa mère . . . et Madame de Chartres lui dit qu'il y avait tant de grandeur et de bonnes qualités dans M. de Clèves . . ., si elle sentait son inclination portée à l'épouser, elle y consentirait avec joie. Mademoiselle de Chartres répondit . . . qu'elle l'épouserait même avec moins de répugnance qu'un autre, mais qu'elle n'avait aucune inclination particulière pour sa personne. (p. 19)

Already the seeds of discontent are germinating. When M. de Clèves complains to his fiancée that her feelings of love for him in no way match the passion he feels for her, the princesse is confused: "ces distinctions étaient au-dessus de ses connaissances. M. de Clèves ne voyait que trop combien elle était éloignée d'avoir pour lui des sentiments qui le pouvaient satisfaire, puisqu'il lui paraissait même qu'elle ne les entendait pas" (p. 21). Ashamed that she does not experience reciprocal passion with M. de Clèves, the young maiden equates her feelings of shyness or inexperience with what she thinks love between a husband and wife should feel like. The prince does not accept her attempts to reassure him of his potential sexual appeal:

Vous ne sauriez douter, reprit-elle, que je n'aie de la joie de vous voir, et je rougis si souvent en vous voyant que vous ne sauriez douter aussi que votre vue ne me donne du trouble.

Je ne me trompe pas à votre rougeur, répondit-il; c'est un sentiment de modestie, et non pas un mouvement de votre coeur. . . . (p. 20)

Blatant displays of passion directed towards the princesse from other directions, the Chevalier de Guise p. 47), for example, and the Maréchal de Saint-André "[qui] prenait tant de soin de faire voir qu'il était attaché à elle qu'elle ne doutait point qu'il ne voulût aussi faire croire qu'elle aurait part au divertissement qu'il devait donner au roi" (p. 33), also have no troubling effect on her. She feels pity for the former and neutrality in regards to the latter. Such sincere and non-passionate reactions to one's suitors is not commonplace within court life. Even Madame de Clèves' mother is surprised by her daughter's lack of emotion in the realm of love, as well as a bit anxious especially since this deficiency looks as though it will extend into her marriage and possibly affect its future stability.

Cela fut cause qu'elle [Madame de Chartres] prit de grands soins de l'attacher [sa fille] à son mari et de lui faire comprendre ce qu'elle devait à l'inclination qu'il avait eue pour elle avant que de la connaître et à la passion qu'il lui avait témoignée en la préférant à tous les autres partis, dans un temps où personne n'osait plus penser à elle. (p. 21)

Could Madame de Chartres possibly have over-instilled in her daughter the attributes of virtue and modesty? Her concern,

however, is soon to swing in the other direction once the Duc de Nemours enters the scene.

As Madame de Chartres anticipates, marriage does not bring a change of heart to the newly-wed in regards to her husband. The princesse dutifully loves and respects her spouse but does not feel any more physically attracted to him than before. There is a definite sense at this time in the novel that "destiny" must now inevitably step in and change the direction in which the story is moving. The real prince must arrive to shake up the very foundation of the princesse's education and upbringing. Deep in the unconscious of the heroine smoulder the "darker" forces of her nature, repressed from early age by a mother's well-intentioned instruction. As with the Moon, which represented in primitive times and continues to represent right up to the present day (in the form of images portrayed in art, poetry and dreams) the duality of Nature - abundance and famine, fertility and sterility, light and darkness - we see the princesse suddenly struggling with the duality of her own human nature.<sup>12</sup> The ancient moon goddess represents an education in its own right, an education that takes place by initiation, and it is just such an initiation that occurs unconsciously within the princesse. Her passions begin to rise from her depths as her quiet, controlled life is turned upside down by the arrival of Nemours. She is initiated, willingly or not, into the mysteries of the moon.

In ancient times, worshippers of the Moon goddess were

much less in conflict with the opposing tendencies of the life cycle. They accepted sterility and destruction as indicators that the essential fertilizing spirit of the moon had been withdrawn. And they waited patiently for its return. Objectivity and subjectivity were very closely associated, inner and outer were more at peace. With the appearance of Nemours in her life, the princesse knows one thing for sure, she is not at peace. The dark forces are out, no longer in stark opposition to the conscious attitude; and this is what is necessary if the heroine is ever to activate the healing ("wholing") process within the psyche. What she does not yet realize is that the sense of peace or stability she felt before the goddess began to rear her "frightful" head was a temporary phase of the swinging pendulum. Only a part of herself was being allowed to live - the intelligent, rational, dutiful part; her spontaneous, sexual, instinctual, not to mention at times totally destructive spirit (all integral elements of the moon's mysterious nature) had long since been nullified. This is the part associated over the ages with darkness, with unenlightenment, the part that the masculine principle was to break away from and deny by developing its own individual identity so that it could then rise up and attempt to destroy the very force that had given it birth. The only qualities of the Feminine deemed acceptable by the patriarchal ego were the lifegiving and protecting motherly ones; "the awesomely dissolving and destructive, yet also dangerously attractive, abyss of the dark side of the goddess" was "rejected . . . as

a violence to be feared, avoided or at least controlled as much as possible."<sup>13</sup> However, repression of certain facets of the feminine principle gradually resulted in repression of them all to a large degree; for in the cyclical realm of the goddess there can be no light without darkness, no compassion without the impersonal tempests of Nature's truths.

Throughout Madame de La Fayette's novel, there is a continual play between the elements of light and darkness. Light is recognized, by many critics, as the symbol of the court.<sup>14</sup> It is the king who spreads his light over the courtiers giving them, by his favour, a certain "éclat": "Sa faveur lui donnait [au maréchal de Saint-André] un éclat qu'il soutenait par son mérite . . ." (p. 8) et "le chevalier de Guise lui paraissait le plus redoutable par sa naissance . . . et par l'éclat que la faveur donnait à sa maison" (p. 13). The princesse is described as having her own "éclat" upon arriving at court for the first time: "La blancheur de son teint et ses cheveux blonds lui donnaient un éclat que l'on n'a jamais vu qu'à elle" (p. 11). Her courtly "éclat" sets her apart from everyone else, it does not invite warmth. Nemours also has his share of brilliance (" . . . l'air brillant qui était dans sa personne" [p. 23]) which blinds women and keeps them from knowing or caring to know his true nature. As the novel progresses, one cannot help but realize that the radiance and splendour of the court and its courtiers is a cover for the sordidness and illusion that lies just beneath the surface. The king's light is actually controlled by Madame de Valentinois, his mistress: "elle le



gouvernait avec un empire si absolu que l'on peut dire qu'elle était maîtresse de sa personne et de l'État" (p. 7).

Attempts to "éclaircir la vérité" (p. 85) at court usually result in incorrect assumptions. When the Queen tries to clear up the issue concerning the Vidame de Chartres' misplaced letter, she ends up wrongly believing that the Dauphine is her rival for the Vidame's affections, thus strengthening her already well-established jealousy towards her sister-in-law. Another example of misdirected knowledge occurs when M. de Clèves sets out to "s'éclaircir de la conduite de sa femme" (p. 118) by sending his gentleman servant to Coulommiers to trail Nemours. His servant's report on Nemours' manoeuvres convinces M. de Clèves of his wife's infidelity ("je n'ai pas besoin d'un plus grand éclaircissement" [p. 125]) and this illusion results ultimately in his death. Thus "at times, to be sure, light [or the desire to enlighten oneself regarding a situation] neither totally illuminates nor does it reveal the truth. Instead it deceives and shows illusion rather than reality."<sup>15</sup>

Darkness, on the other hand, leads more often than not to the "light" of inner truth. Visions of truth - this is what Madame de Clèves begins experiencing once she steps away from the bedazzling light of King Henri II's court. It is into the "night" of the "cabinet" that she and other characters in the novel retreat to deal with their emotions, protected from the prying eyes of friends and enemies:

". . . elle prit le reste du jour pour . . . s'abandonner à tous les sentiments dont elle était agitée. Elle s'enferma seule dans son cabinet" (p. 105); "Cette princesse avait même cherché le moyen d'être dans une solitude entière et de passer les soirs dans les jardins sans être accompagnée de ses domestiques" (p. 117). It is "au milieu de la nuit", "dans le cabinet" (pp. 119, 120), in the privacy of her country home that Nemours is able to truly see his princesse for the first time, to see her devoid of the masks of society, deeply touched by the love she feels for him. Nemours himself needs the silence and comfort and protection of the darkness before he can let go of the many emotions he is feeling upon seeing his beloved: "Il s'éloigna le plus qu'il lui fut possible, pour n'être vu ni entendu de personne; il s'abandonna aux transports de son amour . . . ." (p. 121). As Ruth Thomas says in her article "Light and Darkness in La Princesse de Clèves":

Darkness is thus linked to what is natural and spontaneous, the open expression of feeling. As light frequently turns out to be the shadow of appearance, so darkness can be light . . . the light of truth. Yet this type of truth must ultimately remain hidden, for it does not embody the court's social or moral values.<sup>16</sup>

The princesse is forever seeking the darkness in her quest for inner truth (represented by Coulommiers and the reclusion of the convent, spaces which are in direct opposition to court life during France's mythic Golden Age). She learns through her renewed connection with the goddess

that it is not darkness one need be afraid of; it is the falsities of the light of day, held enticingly within one's reach, that lead one away from one's self. As in Rilke's Duino Elegies where the essence of happiness rising can only be truly appreciated when it is juxtaposed with the sister spirit of happiness falling, so here we recognize that light depends for its existence upon the presence of darkness which defines it.

### Early Symbols of the Moon Goddess

M. Esther Harding in her book Woman's Mysteries and Linda Schierse Leonard in The Wounded Woman both discuss the subject of modern-day dreams and active imaginings and how often it is that symbols and forms appearing during the dream state (which may be manifested physically by one's actions or in art or poetry) are amazingly similar to some ancient sculpture or primitive painting.<sup>17</sup> Leonard talks about recurrent motifs (in the dreams of many of her female clients) so similar in nature from client to client that one cannot help but recognize the existence of a common denominator linking them together.<sup>18</sup> There seems to be a kind of universal resource centre, identified by Jung as the collective unconscious, from which the unconscious part of our being can draw cosmic information whenever necessary. Simply put, "[t]he hypothesis of the collective unconscious is . . . no more daring than to assume there are instincts." And instincts, says Jung, are unconscious "impersonal,

universally distributed, hereditary factors of a dynamic or motivating character. . . ."19 The boundaries between the individual and the collective unconscious can be likened to the walls of a woman's dark, moist placenta, which facilitate the easy passage of all essential life-giving elements necessary for the growth of the fetus as well as the elimination of waste from the fetus, while all the while preserving the integrity of identity of each side of the "wall." The whole process is quite magical and miraculous on one level and yet just a normal part of the infinite flow of the universe on another.

Despite the chronological distance between our modern Western world and the primitive world of the ancients, there has always existed this connecting energy that links the ages, that renders the inner experience universal. As with men and women in later centuries who were and still are moved to express their inner experiences concretely, so too in primitive times did people hear the call from within and make it known to the outside world. As pointed out by Esther Harding: "When we consider the amount of work necessary, with the tools at their disposal, to engrave the pictograms and carve the stone images which have come down to us, we marvel at the intensity of the emotion which could have motivated such a concentrated effort."20 These stone carvings and pictures represented gods and goddesses who gave voice to the inner stirrings of numerous individuals in many different areas at different periods of time.

The earliest representation of the moon deity, as well

as being the most universal, was a cone or pillar of stone (see figure 1). In each area wherein the Great Mother was worshipped, whether in Cyprus, Pamphylia, Galatia, among the cliffs of Mount Sinai (known as the Mountain of the Moon), in Chaldea, etc., sacred stones have been found representing her powers.<sup>21</sup> The stones are not always in exactly the same form (some are mere rounded mounds, others, as is more often the case, are more elongated) or of the same colour; in some cases they are left in their natural state, in other cases they are carved. One thing Esther Harding demonstrates is that, in looking at the progression of the ancient stone symbols of the moon (see figures 1 through 10 as examples of some of these symbols) leading up to the archaic statue of Artemis (figure 11) and ending with the later statues which possess more recognizable human features (two examples are reproduced in figure 12), it is "clear that these columns are not phallic, as has often been supposed. They have an entirely different history from the 'Herms' with which they are sometimes confused, and which are usually marked with a phallic symbol, an arrow. . . ." Instead they are "symbol[s] of the generative power of woman and her sexual attraction for men."<sup>22</sup>

As well as the cone or pillar of stone, another symbol of the moon was portrayed in art in the form of a wooden pillar or a tree (as already learned from figures 5-10). The sacred Moon Tree appears again and again in religious works of very ancient date. "In one Assyrian picture it has ribbons like our Maypole . . . interwoven . . . to

represent the decking of the bare tree with bright-colored leaves and flowers and fruits, all gifts of the moon goddess, giver of fertility."<sup>23</sup> This image brings us up short. We are suddenly looking in, along with Nemours, upon the erotic scene of Madame de Clèves, in the still of the night, winding ribbons of Nemours' colours around his discarded Indian cane. Could this not be a subliminal worshipping of the goddess? Madame de Clèves, deep in a dreamlike state, is actualizing the generative power of woman and her sexual attraction for men, talked of by Harding. She is unconsciously offering gifts to the moon goddess, and thus, in keeping with this analogy, Nemours' cane is not phallic. It is symbolic of the ancient Moon Tree, of the feminine essence in all its sensuous and sexual qualities. We, the readers, are able to share in Nemours' sense of ecstasy at seeing his beloved "tout occupée de choses qui avaient du rapport à lui et à la passion qu'elle lui cachait . . ." (p. 120). There is an enormous release of tension at this moment in the novel, both physically and emotionally. The princesse has stopped her flight from her innermost feelings. She allows them to rise to the surface and she erotically experiences her love for her prince. "Ce prince était aussi tellement hors de lui-même qu'il demeurerait immobile à regarder Madame de Clèves, sans songer que les moments lui étaient précieux" (p. 120). As it is known that the Moon Goddess was worshipped in a cave or a natural grove or a garden<sup>24</sup>, so we see Nemours worshipping his goddess in her garden late one

evening.

### Moon Nature in Woman

We have talked of the virginity of Artemis, of her insistence on inviolability, on separateness, on her in-her-self-ness. We now turn to the myth of the Moon Mother, not only as Great Mother but also as virgin. She, as with Artemis - the later more patriarchal version of the All Supreme -, keeps her "one-in-herself." There is no male god who controls her. She is goddess of sexual love, she is dark, moist, shadowy and receptive as well as creative. She does not seek her fulfillment through the opposite sex, she trusts her instincts, she expresses her sexuality towards men without becoming attached to them and she remains forever virgin. In following the path of the ancient goddess, the princesse must go through many psychological changes. She begins as the innocent maiden, pressured into marrying a man not of her choice, and she ends up dealing with the consequences. One of the ways she unconsciously distances herself is to retain her psychological virginity in her marriage (as mentioned earlier in this study). This does not make her happy because it is a reaction to the situation, not a creative, independent motion. She is not virgin by her own choice, therefore she is in no way close to the essence of "one-in-herself." When Nemours breaks through her psychological barriers, the princesse is able to begin to make choices, choices which turn out not to be to

M. de Clèves' liking and, surprisingly to many, not to be to Nemours' liking in the final event. As she allows her feminine spirit to make itself more known to her, Madame de Clèves becomes increasingly affected by the ever-changing cyclic nature of the moon principle. She becomes more in tune with her instincts and, consequently, with the inner laws of the feminine "life-principle":

The moonlike character of the woman's nature appears to man to be dependent only on her whim. If she changes her mind, he may concede that by general accord it is her privilege to do so; it never occurs to him that she changes it because of changed conditions within her own psyche, as little under her control, perhaps, as changes in the weather . . . This is very difficult for a man to understand because his inner principle is the Logos; and by this principle if a thing is right today, it will still be right tomorrow.

The initial introduction to the Eros within is a frightening one for the princesse. She has little idea as to what is happening to her:

Je suis vaincue et surmontée par une inclination qui m'entraîne malgré moi. Toutes mes résolutions sont inutiles; je pensai hier tout ce que je pense aujourd'hui et je fais aujourd'hui tout le contraire de ce que je résolu hier. Il faut m'arracher de la présence de M. de Nemours; il faut m'en aller à la campagne. . . . (p. 86)

It is only in the countryside that Madame de Clèves has "la liberté de se trouver seule, la nuit, dans le plus beau lieu du monde"; this is her haven where she can have "des passions violentes dans le coeur" (p. 118) without worrying about



betraying herself in front of others. The internal buffeting caused by the surfacing of her repressed moon-like emotions - sexuality, creation/destruction impulses, the need for supremacy - so incomprehensible in their first appearances, slows down whenever the princesse is able to take time away from the restricted atmosphere of court life. As when she first seemed to have no other choice but to follow her inner stirrings in regard to her love for Nemours, she also seems to be unable to give a clear and rational explanation to her lover when, much further along in the novel, she follows her instincts again and turns away from a new life with the man she loves and who loves her ("par des raisons qui vous sont inconnues" [p. 136]). A voice from within, a voice that she at first wants desperately to avoid, will not go away. It wants her to grapple with "tous ses sentiments . . . pleins de trouble et de passion" (p. 141), it wants her to truly feel for the first time in her life passionate love, and it also calls her to remember her source, her essence of oneness so impossible to grasp in the outer world of the court. It is in the darkness of the night in the countryside, in the darkness associated with withdrawal from society that the princesse finds healing:

. . . elle le priait [Nemours] de ne pas trouver étrange si elle ne s'exposait point au péril de le voir et de détruire, par sa présence, des sentiments qu'elle devait conserver; qu'elle voulait bien qu'il sût, qu'ayant trouvé que son devoir et son repos s'opposaient au penchant qu'elle avait d'être à lui, les autres choses du monde lui avaient paru si

indifférentes qu'elle y avait renoncé pour jamais; qu'elle ne pensait plus qu'à celles de l'autre vie et qu'il ne lui restait aucun sentiment que le désir de le voir dans les mêmes dispositions où elle était. (p. 144)

Madame de Clèves cannot give any more comprehensible explanations to her actions than this final message passed on to Nemours by an intermediary at the convent. She understands intuitively by the end of the novel that her "devoir" and her "repos" are not personal egotistical desires. They have to do with the very nature of woman which is nonpersonal, an inherent trait of the feminine being. They have to do with her renewed relationship to her inner principle whose essence is one of change; and just as the moon is referred to as "the fickle planet", so might Madame de Clèves' confused emotions leading up to her final decision also make her appear fickle and undependable.<sup>26</sup> Yet this is all that the princesse can offer her prince in the final analysis, not a wordy rationalization, only the invaluable wisdom, love and compassion of the mystical moon goddess, coupled with her often cruel and unbending power.

As a flower soon loses its beauty once plucked, so the feminine essence, when it is talked about, when it is plucked from its dark realm and brought to the light of day of the Logos to be possessed and analysed, also loses its original beauty and integrity.<sup>27</sup> It follows that the princesse seems to lose her internal direction every time she exposes herself to the more masculine-orientated courtly society. In this

atmosphere words are cheap, gossip flows without restrictions, one's private life is an open book to be talked about endlessly or at least until all the magic has been sapped from it, at which point it loses its intrigue and is tossed aside. The pure feminine essence has little chance of surviving here.

Madame de Clèves herself is at times her own worst enemy when it comes to letting the feminine spirit within find a safe unrestricted passage into the conscious realm. Instead of feeling the pure joy that comes with new beginnings, the princesse's highly developed masculine side of her nature constantly puts up blocks, little different from those created by courtly society, and makes the rites of passage for the goddess a very difficult one. For example, after passing a wonderful afternoon enclosed in a room with Nemours (and her husband) in an attempt to rewrite the letter that the Vidame had received from his former mistress, Madame de Clèves takes little time to destroy "cet air de mystère et de confidence" (p. 84) established between her and Nemours. She systematically transforms "une joie pure et sans mélange" into self-criticism and shame, feelings unknown to the ancient moon goddess:

Quand elle pensait que M. de Nemours  
voyait bien qu'elle connaissait son  
amour, qu'il voyait bien aussi que,  
malgré cette connaissance elle ne l'en  
traitait pas plus mal en présence même de  
son mari, qu'au contraire elle ne l'avait  
jamais regardé si favorablement . . .  
elle trouvait qu'elle était

d'intelligence avec M. de Nemours . . .  
 et elle était honteuse de paraître si peu  
 digne d'estime aux yeux même de son  
 amant. (p. 86)

The duality of one's nature: the rational conflicting with the emotional; analytical strategy doing battle with spontaneous creation - such human conflict has been going on for a very long time (with the masculine value systems coming out on top). But something is changing. There are echoes of an even more distant past breaking through the barriers, evening up the balance between masculine and feminine forces. As is beginning to happen in our present day, we see in a more confined intense fashion happening three centuries earlier within the princesse. Mythically speaking, the goddess is fighting back. And the princesse fights with her. She learns instinctively how to emanate the ever changing nature of the goddess, the essence of duality, at peace with its opposing forces. Madame de Clèves gives in to the tempestuous, spontaneous, liberating feminine essence that is rising with unleashed fervour to the surface (as we witnessed in the night scene at Coulommiers [pp. 119-120] and in the scene in the garden outside of Paris where the princesse comes upon Nemours unexpectedly and causes him to leave his secluded shelter without looking up to see who had disturbed him). The discovery of her loved one in such a vulnerable state, filled with thoughts only of his princesse, has a very strong effect on Madame de Clèves: "[quelle] passion endormie se ralluma dans son coeur, et avec quelle

violence! . . . Ce prince se présenta à son esprit, aimable au-dessus de tout ce qui était au monde . . ." (p. 131). Her passion reborn, the heroine is able to represent it as she wishes. This time she views it positively. By the end of the novel she is able to ride with the rising and falling moods of the moon cycle while at the same time retain some objectivity; the princesse has come a long way from when she first set out on her quest - a quest for inner harmony.

"J'avoue", she says during her final refus to Nemours, "que les passions peuvent me conduire; mais elles ne sauraient m'aveugler" (p. 138). This is indeed fighting with the goddess, not against her. For in order to truly allow the All Supreme to creatively use her powers in modern day civilizations, one must call upon the support and guidance of the more rational male principle. The goddess, however, is not willing to downplay the importance of her return, as the ending of Madame de La Fayette's novel clearly shows. She is what the princesse's search is all about, her powers are more charming than those of Nemours, the perfect example of manhood. The goddess is at the center of both woman and man. She has the power to create wholeness and health and this is all the justification she needs for her reappearance.

### The Journey back to Self

In reading Joseph Campbell's book The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology, one is struck by the fact that since the earliest recorded periods of human existence man and woman

have been involved in mythological or ritual games of "make believe" which "unite groups in the way not of economics but of freely patterned action - that is to say, of art."<sup>28</sup> Campbell takes us back to the Paleolithic Age, then back further yet to the Old Stone Age; he spans some fifty thousand years of human living searching for the deepest levels of connections among the people of our universe (and his findings show just that). As with Edward C. Whitmont in his book Return of the Goddess, Campbell talks of "the mythological age, when the great mythological event took place that brought both death and reproduction into play and fixed the destiny of life-in-time through a chain reaction of significantly interlocked transformations."<sup>29</sup> What this means is that the time had come for a meeting of the spirits, for a deep connection to life's infinite cycles to be enacted. This was a time when the mythology of the goddess evolved as a focus of divine force and when a system of rites was dedicated to its mystery. Evidence of goddess worship has been found in the Aurignacian period (one of the most ancient levels of the Paleolithic Age fixed at about 30,000 B.C.) in the form of female figurines which were apparently the first objects of worship of the human race.<sup>30</sup> No other actual objects of human art have been found earlier than this period when the female statues abruptly appear. (See figure 13.)

Along with the female carvings, the earliest known rock engravings and paintings also find their place. Rare figures

of men appear interspersed among the predominant animal forms of the paleolithic caves. They are masked and modified and do not imitate in any way their human models, whereas the sculpted feminine figures (there are no complementary male carvings) are "nude, and simply standing . . . radically stylized in a remarkably 'modern' manner to give dramatic - and, no doubt, symbolically intended - emphasis to the great loins, the pubic triangle, and the nourishing breasts . . ."<sup>31</sup> There is no pretense, no deviation from the true feminine essence. These little "Venuses" simply are. In their pure form they represent the magical force and wonder of the female; they come to us

as the earliest detectable expression of that undying ritual idea which sees in Woman the embodiment of the beginning and continuance of life, as well as the symbol of the immortality of that earthly matter which is in itself without form, yet clothes all form.<sup>32</sup>

The age-old human tendency to project onto the material or outer world one's deep internal stirrings in the form of paintings, engravings, sculptures, oral legends, written works, in other words in the form of art, arises from people's basic need to communicate (or commune). This was the purpose of the female statues - to communicate one's reverence for the forces of Nature, to connect with the Goddess, the bearer of rain and the keeper of life's mysteries. There are many ways of communicating but, no matter what means are used, one element remains the same: to truly communicate one must

experience a real meeting with another person, or people, or perhaps with some force within, a meeting which in a certain inexplicable way breaks through the realm of logical conventions and allows one to soar into a different, more mystical realm. "For there to be a meeting," says Irene Claremont de Castillejo, "it seems as though a third, a something else, is always present. You may call it Love, or the Holy Spirit. Jungians would say that it is the presence of the Self. If this 'Other' is present, there cannot have failed to be a meeting."<sup>33</sup>

Mademoiselle de Chartres is brought up by her mother to place great importance on the art of communicating. From an early age she is encouraged to form a very close mother-daughter bond - a rare thing in that era - wherein confidences are a natural occurrence. This bonding, linked to communication or shared confidence, is even more enforced once Mademoiselle de Chartres becomes a part of the "agitation sans désordre" (p. 15) of court life:

Madame de Chartres voyait ce péril et ne songeait qu'aux moyens d'en garantir sa fille. Elle la pria, non pas comme sa mère, mais comme son amie, de lui faire confidence de toutes les galanteries qu'on lui dirait, et elle lui promit de lui aider à se conduire dans des choses où l'on était souvent embarrassée quand on était jeune. (p. 15)

At this time in the princesse's life she is deeply connected with her mother. She is very sensitive, very atuned to the delicacies of a sharing, loving relationship. Madame de Chartres is her moral and social guide,<sup>34</sup> her friend and



her confidante. It is only natural that after her mother's death the princesse would turn to her husband to fill the huge gap left in the wake of maternal loss. However, the prince only succeeds in fulfilling one of the many roles left vacant, that of social guide, not that being her moral guide would have helped the situation to any great extent. What the princesse really wants to replace are the roles of friend and confidant(e). M. de Clèves is unable to truly accomplish this, that is, to reach his wife on a level that appeals to her deeper nature. He talks with the princesse; he does communicate but only on issues that do not encourage a return of sharing, for instance he expresses his anguish that the princesse does not feel passion for him in their marriage: "je n'ai jamais pu vous donner de l'amour" (p. 90). The princesse can only acknowledge that this is true and then move emotionally even further from a connectedness with her husband.

During the scene of the aveu, the princesse presents her deepest feelings to her husband and her concerns about these feelings: "Eh bien, monsieur, lui répondit-elle en se jetant à ses genoux, je vais vous faire un aveu que l'on n'a jamais fait à son mari; mais l'innocence de ma conduite et de mes intentions m'en donne la force" (p. 89). She is there undisguised, with no pretense. Just as the "Venus" statues of southern France, created so long ago, simply are, so too is the princesse. She stands alone, vulnerable, she simply is. At the same time, however, there is the chosen "stance"

of the extraordinary act (the aveu) which is very consciously engaged in. And Madame de Clèves takes part on this level also. It is a bit like choosing to wear the costume of nudity when everyone else is clothed (not a "natural" act, if that means unconscious or spontaneous or dictated by nature as opposed to intellect). The heroine's confession springs, therefore, from both an unconscious and a conscious drive to alleviate the threat she is feeling to her inner integrity. M. de Clèves cannot allow such an example of pure feminine essence, complete in its duality, to enter his being. He gets lost in the outer realm of concrete questions and answers: "Et qui est-il, madame, cet homme heureux qui vous donne cette crainte? . . . Qu'a-t-il fait pour vous plaire? Quel chemin a-t-il trouvé pour aller à votre coeur?" (p. 90). And so the tragedy for M. de Clèves and the princesse is that they never truly meet despite the strong desire on both their parts to do so.

Nemours and the princesse, on the other hand, set off vibrations that touch each other deeply every time they see each other or think about each other: "La passion de M. de Nemours pour Madame de Clèves fut d'abord si violente qu'elle lui ôta le goût et même le souvenir de toutes les personnes qu'il avait aimées . . ." (p. 30), and in regard to the princesse, "[l]'inclination qu'elle avait pour ce prince lui donnait un trouble dont elle n'était pas maîtresse" (p. 53). Neither of them need any effort to reach this level of deep affiliation that the princesse had been hoping to

experience with her husband since the first days of their courtship. It just happened, as it has happened for centuries past and still continues to happen today. There is no logical explanation for such occurrences. We may, however, after experiencing just such a moment (a real meeting) suddenly find ourselves more able to comprehend the phenomenon Joseph Campbell calls "the great mythological event" (see note 29). We, like the princesse, might become more in touch on an unconscious level with the concept of destiny being defined mythologically through a chain reaction of significantly interconnected transformations. In the case of Madame de Clèves, Nemours sets off a chain reaction very similar to the relationship the princesse shares with her mother. It is the first time she feels conflict regarding her strong bonding with the "(m)other" in her life<sup>35</sup>: "Elle ne se trouva pas la même disposition à dire à sa mère ce qu'elle pensait des sentiments de ce prince qu'elle avait eue à lui parler de ses autres amants; sans avoir un dessein formé de lui cacher, elle ne lui en parla point" (p. 31).

Nemours reaches a part of the princesse that only her mother, behind whom stands in mythical terms the Great Mother archetype, had laid claim to. He is allowed in, he is able to meet the princesse because his contact with her is made on the inexplicable level of instinct and darkness. Unlike M. de Clèves, Nemours can respond to the princesse's emotions with equally stirring and heart-felt emotions of his own (for example, his tears of ecstasy after witnessing Madame

de Clèves' deep love for him [in her "rêverie" at Coulommiers]). Nemours does not always stand apart and analyse situations. He is able, at certain pertinent moments in the novel, to experience events in their wholeness, without judgement, to engage in a form of undifferentiated, "organic" thinking (as shown by his own state of meditation - reverie - in the garden scene outside of Paris). Thus, he has access to what Jung calls the archetypal feminine - the vision of continuity between mother and maiden, Demeter and Persephone, creator and created, self-conscious individual and universal Great Mother (Nature). It is the realm of deep emotion and chaotic, impersonal life, death, and rebirth creations of which female writers and psychologists have spoken so movingly:

. . . every woman contains her daughter within herself and every daughter her mother, . . . every woman extends backwards into her mother and forwards into her daughter. This participation and intermingling gives rise to that peculiar uncertainty as regards time: a woman lives earlier as a mother, later as a daughter. The conscious experience of these ties produces the feeling that <sup>36</sup>her life is spread out over generations.

Such a strong bonding between mother and daughter often leads to ambivalence on the part of the daughter towards the mother and an intense searching for one's identity as a separate individual, as is shown with the princesse when she begins to hold back from her mother her feelings for Nemours. The chain reaction that Nemours sets off is a positive one. It drives Madame de Clèves deeper into her search for self with

its inviting lure of passion and it adds a needed masculine counterpart to the symbiotic bond between mother and the female child.

Real meetings between people do not as a necessity need to happen on a passionate level. There are many other levels upon which one can meet with another; the living relationship that results can be long-term or only for a fleeting moment. Whatever it is, the communion, the interrelating is surely to be something not easily compartmentalized by the rational mind. We label it destiny, a meeting of like minds, we call certain people soul brothers and sisters. (And yet it is simply a time line connecting the ancient mythological patterns with modern ones, connecting, for the princesse, the archaic goddess of mythic lore with aspects of her own present day life.) Encountering the goddess, in other words, facing parts of her psyche that she was unwilling or unable to deal with before (such as feelings of passion and destructive energies) leads to revelations in the form of active imaginings which in turn lead to changes in Madame de Clèves' make-up that demand recognition. The result is the heroine's own artistic way of telling her story - of communicating - and sculpting its ending. Suzanne Relyea corroborates this idea in her article "Se manquer ou se prononcer: Presence and Self-Possession in The Princesse de Clèves":

She will not fail herself in the end, for she has left the court now, and can speak up. She will not return to the hunt and she does not trust Nemours to have quit

it. . . . the princess no longer represents anything at the conclusion of her story. She just is. Will, selfhood and power coincide; the heroine escapes narrative and the story must end along with Nemours' hopes. The princess too will soon die, but not before she inscribes herself as difference: a self-possessed woman who<sup>37</sup> lives for others, but not by them. . . .

Modern psychological theory demonstrates that: "women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliations and relationships."<sup>38</sup> And as stressed by Jung, by recent feminist psychoanalysts in North America, and by many other professionals in the field of psychology, the acquisition (for a woman) of a sense of self through relationship derives from the essential early bond between mother and daughter, a bond which is of the utmost importance for female identity. We are only looking here at the mother/daughter bond. There is also an equally important bonding system between mothers and sons, very different from that between mothers and their female infants (for example: "Ego boundaries between mothers and daughters are more fluid, less defined than those between mothers and sons"<sup>39</sup>). However, we are more concerned here with information regarding the feminine cycle of continuance, and what its effects are on the *Princesse de Clèves*.

Using the facts we have acquired about a woman's sense of self through affiliation and relationship, we can follow Madame de Clèves' psychic journey with a greater understanding or at least appreciation of the deep motivating

force behind her rather questionable actions (at the end of the novel), given the society in which she is living.

Intuitively the princesse is drawn towards relationships that have meaning to them, lasting value. Her intense education as a child, solely under the auspices of Madame de Chartres, highlights even further this inner drive (an integral part of most women). We see just such a need, for having and maintaining relationship, with the other women in La Princesse de Clèves as well. Beginning with Madame de Chartres we are shown the tragedy of a lost love which cannot even be expressed publicly because of its nature. We are never told the identity of the beautiful woman who loved passionately and was loved in return by M. le duc d'Orléans because, as Madame de Chartres tells her daughter, "elle a vécu depuis avec tant de sagesse et . . . elle a même caché avec tant de soin la passion qu'elle avait pour ce prince qu'elle a mérité que l'on conserve sa réputation." As chance would have it, this mysterious woman "reçut la nouvelle de la mort de son mari le même jour qu'elle apprit celle de M. d'Orléans; de sorte qu'elle eut ce prétexte pour cacher sa véritable affliction, sans avoir la peine de se contraindre" (p. 29). We, the reader, store this information and move on, yet its memory does not leave us and at some point in the novel we are made to wonder: could this bereaved woman of years past be the same Madame de Chartres that we have come to know? Had she like so many other women of her time lost touch with her own internal truths and given over her

daughter in marriage to a man she knew Mademoiselle de Chartres did not love in order to retain her own standing in society (which was "extrêmement glorieuse" [p. 111]) as well as that of her daughter? No wonder Madame de Chartres was so concerned regarding the lure of "galanteries" and their painful consequences. For she herself (assuming that it was she who was the secret mistress of M. le duc d'Orléans) had been condemned to lead a loveless life through an arranged marriage and had chosen unconsciously to search elsewhere for a passionate, meaningful relationship wherein she could rediscover her sense of self.

The Queen, we remember, seeks desperately for a loyal confidant amongst the horde of courtiers vying for the king's favor and that of his mistress Madame de Valentinois. The reine Dauphine is certainly prepared to head into a "galanterie" with Nemours, perhaps to compensate for what is lacking in the relationship she has with her husband Le Dauphin. It is only because of Nemours' change of heart that she does not do so: "il y a néanmoins une si grande différence de la manière dont il a vécu avec moi à celle dont il y vit présentement que je puis vous répondre", she says to Madame de Clèves, "que je ne suis pas la cause de l'indifférence qu'il a pour la couronne d'Angleterre" (p. 51). Madame de Thémises, led by her desire to form a loving relationship with the Vidame de Chartres, loses first her reputation as a virtuous woman and then her lover when, upon discovering that he has been seeing another woman, she tries



to win back his affections by pretending not to love him anymore (pp. 66-67).

Even the calculating Diane de Poitiers, who is able to hold on to her position as royal mistress by seducing the son once the father had replaced her with another woman (from François I to the future Henri II [pp. 26-27]), is shown to be searching for something beyond the power and riches that her lover-king can offer her. She has many other affairs: "Le comte de Taix, grand maître de l'artillerie, qui ne l'aimait pas, ne put s'empêcher de parler de ses galanteries . . ." (p. 29). It might appear that, of all the women at court, she is the one closest to the true nature of the ancient goddess who is virgin in the archaic sense of the word, one-in-herself, symbol of eternal, unpossessive passion and sexuality. Yet such an assumption is illusory. For Madame de Valentinois is seen to use men to further her own needs. Her motivational force is based on personal power and greed. And this is not at all a part of the essence of the goddess.

Because of the uniqueness of the princesse, she alone seems able to break the pattern of filling one's life with love affairs in order to keep experiencing real meetings with other people. Husbands certainly do not satisfy this need, as the text clearly shows. And Madame de Clèves' exerted efforts to bring her and her spouse closer are met ironically with mild derision from a friend: "il n'y a que vous de femme au monde qui fasse confidence à son mari de toutes les

choses qu'elle sait" (p. 83). It is true that, like the other women in her social circle, the heroine's inner senses are craving for a Nemours to come along. She needs a release; the goddess within is demanding a release. Nemours arrives and the mythical transformation begins. For, once the feminine forces of passion and sexuality are allowed to rise to the surface, the princesse is freed from her intense dependance on her mother. Yet the real bonus is that she can now extract what is right for herself from all the information (the maxims) Madame de Chartres has passed on to her and discard what is keeping her from being whole. She does not have to reject totally the mother-daughter bond. Instinctively she knows that this is what forever connects her to the Source. And as for Nemours, he has done his job this time around in the archetypal realm of mystery. He has shared the precious gift of "meeting" with the princesse. All that is left to do is to await her final response. She decides not to watch love sour within the confines of an unbalanced, uncaring society. She turns the gift even more deeply inward to effect transformation and healing of self (a process that once begun is never ending) so that she can then have the strength to turn outwards again to help in the "healing" of others.

One can but greatly admire Madame de Clèves. Here is a woman who has done what was deemed "extravagant", "extraordinaire" for the majority of women in seventeenth-century France (words penned by Bussy-Rabutin in a letter to

his cousin Madame de Sévigné describing the confession of the Princesse de Clèves). Our mythological and fictional princesse who represents the high-minded strivings of women of her time as well as their deepest failings heads into the dark realm of transformation to fight the dragons of reason and emotion, just as Gawain does in his search for the Grail. The Grail myth is an embodiment of the quest motif just as is Demeter's search for her abducted daughter, a hunter's search for a new hunting ground, a lover's attempt to rekindle a dying love, the princesse's search for self-fulfillment and independence from her paralysing life situation. She is basically involved in the pursuit of self-knowledge which is a quest. In comparing the princesse's quest with the activating forces behind the Grail myth, it must be remembered that, although there is a state of union reached at the "end" of each quest, the meanings of these journeys on a depth-psychological level are diametrically opposed. The Grail quest (the search for the lost chalice of Christ - symbol of the lost sacred tradition) is essentially a male individuation myth. As such it recounts the separation of the individual from the collective unconscious and the eventual reunion of the masculine and feminine in a hieros gamos or sacred union. Madame de Clèves' quest, on the other hand, is not one of male individuation, of separation from the pre-conscious state of "union of all things." Her journey takes her back home, not further away from it, back to the undifferentiated cosmic energy of the Great Mother.

However, despite the fact that the Grail quest and that of the princesse move in opposite directions, they have one major component in common. They both are searching for the restoration of the pure state, the former for the reestablishment of the original essence of Christ's message to humanity (regeneration of the life cycle through love, love of one's self and love of others), and the latter for the reconstitution of the undifferentiated bond between the Source (Great Mother) and her beloved children.

Unfortunately, a large number of Grail questers lost touch with the true meaning of the liberation aspect of the myth and ended up turning more to Yang modes of combative control and exploitation of others to achieve their goals. (The Crusaders led by Richard I of England - 1189 to 1199 - are an example of this. Hitler is another example. Obsessed by the idea of purifying the human race, he used elements of the Grail legend to justify his attempted annihilation of all Jewish people.)

Edward Whitmont tells us that "[s]earch is an expression of the urge to discover what 'holds the world together at its inmost core' (Goethe, Faust), to establish an order and meaning for our place in the cosmos."<sup>40</sup> This sounds very similar to what the princesse is doing. With no hope of finding order and meaning for herself as a member of court life, she starts out, like the Arthurian knights, on a mystical journey. The beam of sunlight that is said to have been the carrier of the vision of the Grail to the knights

could be compared to the light or "éclat" that brought the vision of Nemours to the princesse.

In the "pre-Judeo-Christian primitive myth" from which the Grail myth evolved, there was one tree only: knowledge was based on experience, analogous to sexual union. Patriarchal redaction separated the tree into two, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge,<sup>41</sup> and thus began the estrangement from the pure experience of the Golden Age of the goddess in which, according to Ovid's Metamorphoses, "fear and punishment were absent since everybody of his own will did the right thing."<sup>42</sup> In one version of the story of origins, the mistress of the world, Lilith, is banished because she disobeys God and her husband's words. The next step was the outlawing of graven images, which resulted in the separation of imaginal experiencing - one's dreams, one's deep inner feelings - from spirit. The unitary nature of the Goddess thus violated, a sense of separateness and accountability developed, coupled with conflict and guilt, fratricide and the scapegoat disposition. Small wonder then, states Whitmont, that a yearning began quietly growing from the depths of the wasteland created by man himself, a yearning for a return to the realm of the Goddess in all her glory and her terror. Such an expressive force of dissatisfaction has been manifested in various redemption myths and has culminated in the Grail myth which has haunted the unconscious dreams of civilisation over the past millenium.

Madame de Clèves' story fits in well here. Her imaginal experiencing is definitely separated from spirit at a very early age by her mother's overemphasis on controlling one's emotions and always doing the right thing. Knowledge and sexual experience are as divided within the princesse as the violent split of the ancient sacred tree of life, which in its singular form symbolized unity of nature, unity of the goddess. From this internal split comes a yearning to rise beyond the wasteland of the environment she finds herself caught in, and such a yearning begins to haunt the unconscious fantasies of the heroine. A part of her wants to penetrate that "air" attributed to her personality "qui inspirait un si grand respect et qui paraissait si éloigné de la galanterie" (p. 22) to find out what really is there, lying in the darkness of her shadowy being. In magical, dark moments the princesse is seen to bring together again the one sacred tree representing both life and knowledge, wholeness and sexuality. The princesse takes Nemours' cane, a symbol of the mythological Cosmic Tree (with its "weaving goddess of the moon"<sup>43</sup>) that Joseph Campbell so vividly describes as "world-uniting and supporting . . . , World Mountain, axis mundi, or sacred sanctuary, to which both the social order and the meditations of the individual are to be directed"<sup>44</sup>, and she unites image and spirit in her worshipping.

In returning to the legend of Gawain's quest for the Grail, we follow adventure after adventure, with one version of the story leading to another, and at the end (which must

of necessity lead to another beginning) we are finally able to discern the chief elements of the hidden myth. Firstly we recognize the initial phase of the myth: that of individuation. Gawain presents himself filled with the "hero" drive to develop, on a psychological level, his individual self apart from the collective body or matrix (identification with the Great Mother). This is a necessary phase in the evolution of the fully-realized male and it differs from the evolution of the princesse who is catalysed to develop her unique self in relation to the cosmic whole. However, the second part of Gawain's quest brings him inevitably back to the rejected feminine nature. For in order to recover the sacred service of Christianity, he must return to the center of wholeness where all things have their beginnings. This is in keeping with the original meaning of the Grail myth which Whitmont paraphrases as follows:

the angry or insulted Feminine, hidden away in a bewitched, grim and joyless yonder, is to be redeemed by a quest into the threatening, roadless "other" land. The quester is to offer himself to the rite of renewal by besting the terrible shaman, the horned companion with the power of death and renewal. Through reverence for the sovereignty of the Goddess in her repellant no less than her beautiful aspect, the quester thereby receives her boon and may<sup>45</sup> drink again of the ever-flowing waters.

By giving sovereignty to the goddess, the terrifying "'other' land" can be transformed. The part of the feminine realm which appears chaotic and terrifying becomes no more than just the necessary complement which gives meaning to the

other feminine aspects of beauty, joy, nurturing compassion, continuity. Gawain, we learn, partly frees his loathsome bride from an enchantment (he had offered himself in marriage to this dreaded maiden in order to save king Arthur from having his head struck off) by first pushing down his revulsion and kissing her as she so desires - she then becomes the loveliest woman he has ever seen, for one half of the day. And then he frees her totally by leaving the choice to the damsel (instead of making it himself) as to whether or not she wants to retain her hideous and shameful form during the daytime at court or at night in the boudoir with her knight. The very act of giving the power over to Lady Ragnell transforms her into a beauty by day and by night.<sup>46</sup> Gawain uses a combination of intelligent deduction and instinctive compassion to break the curse and turn the arid wasteland into a bountiful garden. The princesse does the same. She gives sovereignty to her inner feminine forces by allowing her imaginal experiences, her dreamworld to take hold. Then, guided by the light of her own archetypal masculine principle, which Nemours as animus figure has helped to actuate as a positive and creative aspect of her psyche, she makes peace with both the beautiful and the loathsome parts of the goddess and is able to "drink again of the ever-flowing waters" (see note 45).

The heroine's purpose now is to carry on the divine message of continuance, of love and faithfulness to one's true essence. Her written story is almost over. But the



inner mythic callings she has felt so deeply and has managed to allow to surface to the conscious realm will still be felt three centuries later. The legacy the princesse leaves behind is one of feminine strength and courage, made attainable, against all odds, in a rational society bent on destroying all that is mysterious and undefined. With regard to such an accomplishment, we are able to view the anti-climatic final phrase of the novel: ". . . et sa vie, qui fut assez courte, laissa des exemples de vertu inimitables" (p. 144) in a new light.

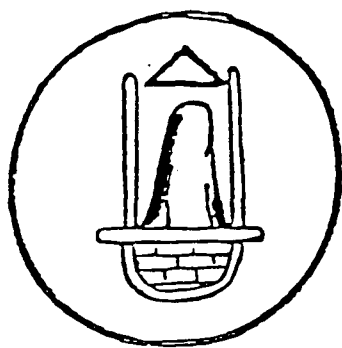


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Fig. 1. The Sacred Stone of the Moon Goddess, enshrined in her temple. The image is shown as a simple cone or omphalos. (From Religions de l'antiquité, Georg Frederic Creuzer, 1825.)

Fig. 2. The Sacred Stone of the Moon Goddess. (From Sur le Culte de Vénus, Felix Lajard, 1837.)

Fig. 3. The Gateway of the Shrine of Venus at Paphos. Here the stone resembles the Emblem of Isis. (From Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Religion, R. Payne Knight, 1892.)

Fig. 4. Emblem of Isis

Figures 1-4 are found reproduced by M. Esther Harding in Woman's Mysteries: Ancient and Modern, 1976, p. 40.



Fig. 5

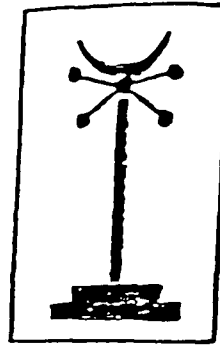
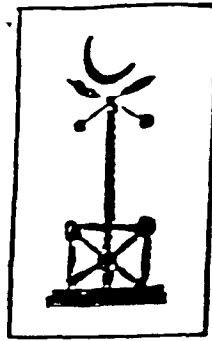


Fig. 6

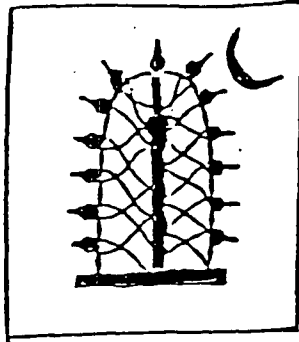


Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Fig. 5. The Sacred Moon Tree of Babylon. The lower branches bear torches, symbolizing the light of the moon. (From A New System or Analysis of Ancient Mythology, Jacob Bryant, 1774.)

Fig. 6. The Sacred Moon Tree of Chaldea with fruits

Fig. 7. The Sacred Moon Tree with trellis and torches

Fig. 8. Three forms of the Sacred Moon Tree of Assyria, showing the gradual conventionalization until it is a mere stump or pillar. (Figs. 6-8 from Sur le Culte de Mithra, Felix Lajard, 1847.)

Figures 5-8 are found reproduced by M. Esther Harding, in Woman's Mysteries, 1976, p. 43.

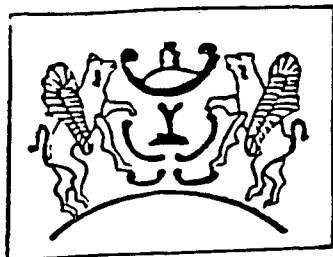


Fig. 9

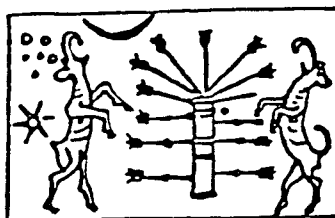


Fig. 10

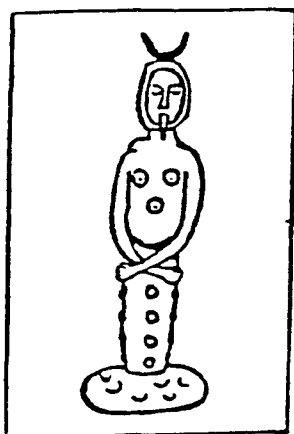


Fig. 11

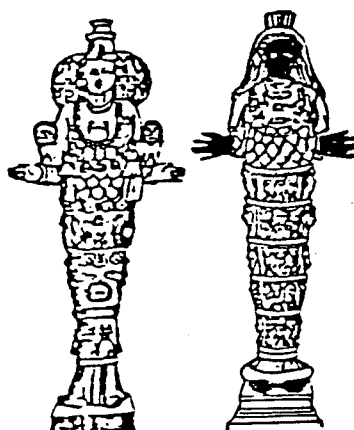


Fig. 12

Fig. 9. The Sacred Phoenician Moon Tree, guarded by Winged Lions. (From the Migration of Symbols, Goblet d'Alviella, 1894.)

Fig. 10. Assyrian Moon Tree guarded by Unicorns. (From Sur le Culte de Mithra, Felix Lajard, 1847.)

Fig. 11. An archaic statuette of Astarte, or Ishtar, or Artemis. (From Religions de l'antiquité, Georg Frederic Creuzer, 1825.)

Fig. 12. Diana, or Artemis, the "Many-Breasted", in her dual aspect, dark and light. (From Ancient Pagan and Modern Christian Symbolism, Thomas Inman, 1876.)

Figures 9 and 10 are found reproduced by M. Esther Harding in Woman's Mysteries, 1976, p. 44.

Figures 11 and 12 are found on p. 108.

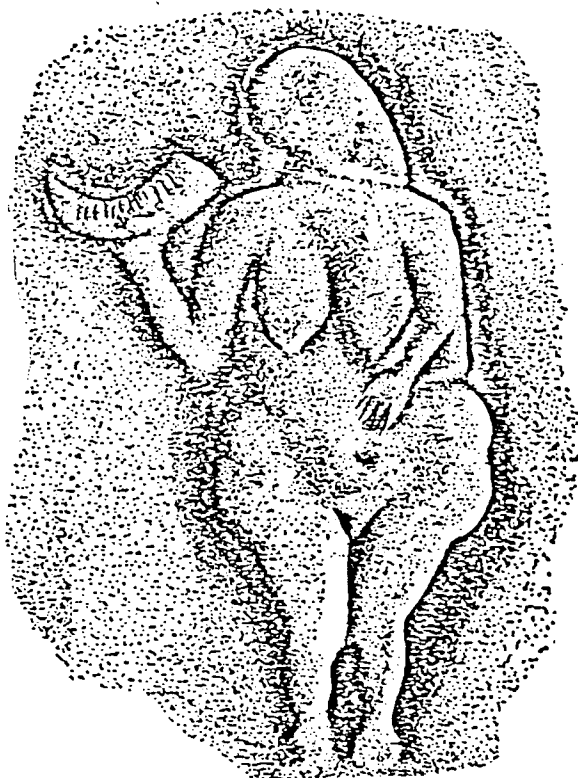


Fig. 13

Fig. 13. The Venus of Laussel: "the famous paleolithic figure of a naked female . . . which was carved in bas-relief on the wall of a rock shelter in southern France as the central figure of what was apparently a hunting shrine." (Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology, 1959, pp. 287-288). Campbell says that the significance of the bison's horn in the woman's hand is unknown. Although we find no fault in the deduction that it "surely was a bison's horn and surely, too, the sanctuary served the

covenant of man and beast in connection with the hunting rites," we cannot help but add our own perceptions in regard to the significance of the horn. Could not this crescent shaped object be symbolic of the moon deity and this sanctuary therefore be a worshipping place of the Moon and her powers in all life and death cyclical patterns (and thus in the hunt)?

## Notes to Chapter II

<sup>1</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies, trans. J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1963), p. 21, as quoted by Linda Schierse Leonard, The Wounded Woman: Healing the Father-Daughter Relationship (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1983), p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> Edward C. Whitmont, Return of the Goddess (New York: Crossroad, 1982), Introduction viii.

<sup>3</sup> Whitmont, viii.

<sup>4</sup> Linda Schierse Leonard, The Wounded Woman (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1983), p. 135. Leonard talks about Rilke's poetic cycle which resulted in his masterpiece Duino Elegies. During the ten years of its creation, Rilke passes from lament to praise ending "in a spirit of hope and affirmation."

<sup>5</sup> M. Esther Harding, Woman's Mysteries: Ancient and Modern (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1976), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Irene Claremont de Castillejo, Knowing Woman: a Feminine Psychology (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), pp. 14-15.

<sup>7</sup> Irene Claremont de Castillejo in Knowing Woman, pp. 169-170, says: "I began to notice that women really were identified with their souls. The idea was not new . . . I recall Philip Metman saying 'Woman is soul.' Mrs. Jung had said it and so had Barbara Hannah." Castillejo goes on to talk about Erich Neumann who in his Origins of Consciousness demonstrates that "the ego is masculine in women as well as in men." It would not be very surprising therefore "to find that the soul appears as a feminine figure not only in men but also in women."

<sup>8</sup> Claremont de Castillejo, p. 86.

<sup>9</sup> Cited by Whitmont, ix, no note given.

<sup>10</sup> See Whitmont, Return of the Goddess, pp. 42-43, for references to the chronological period corresponding to the reign of the Great Goddess, as well as Harding, Woman's Mysteries, pp. 98-99.

<sup>11</sup> Refer back to Chapter I, note 31, which talks about the "witches' hammer", or Malleus Maleficarum. The dreaded and dreadful witch hunts, supported fervently by the Malleus Maleficarum, were seen as a justifiable means to an end by

god-fearing people. They were still in existence in England and the European continent in the sixteenth century (seventeenth century in Spain), and their origins go back a long way. Among the Ona of Tierra del Fuego, for example, the ancient legend describing the origin of the lodge of Hain of the men's secret society has as its core the theme of witchcraft and its consequent annihilation by men:

". . . witchcraft was known only to women of Ona-land. . . . The girls, as they neared womanhood, were instructed in the magic arts, learning how to bring sickness and even death to all those who displeased them. The men lived in abject fear and subjection . . . until it occurred to [them] . . . that a dead witch was less dangerous than a live one. . . . and there ensued a great massacre, from which not one woman escaped in human form." This is taken from a summary of the legend by Lucus Bridges, cited by Joseph Campbell in The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), pp. 315-317.

<sup>12</sup> Harding in Woman's Mysteries, pp. 10-11, discusses the opposing tendencies found within every man and woman: they are "expressions of the duality of human nature which is both objective and subjective . . . In the Western world of today this conflict is most severe and bears hardest upon women because Western civilization lays especial emphasis on the value of the outer . . . The feminine spirit [which is the governing principle of a woman's being] is more subjective, more concerned with feelings and relationships than with the laws and principles of the outer world. And so it happens that the conflict between outer and inner is usually more devastating for women than for men."

<sup>13</sup> Whitmont, pp. 135, 136.

<sup>14</sup> Ruth P. Thomas, "Light and Darkness in La Princesse de Clèves," Kentucky Romance Quarterly, 28 (1981), p. 76.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas, p. 80.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas, p. 82.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas, p. 82.

<sup>18</sup> The recurrent motif that Leonard is discussing here in The Wounded Woman, p. 86, is "a common image in the dreams of many female analysts and in my own dreams as well - the image of a perverted and sadistic old man."

<sup>19</sup> The Portable Jung, ed. Joseph Campbell, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), p. 61.

<sup>20</sup> Harding, p. 39.

<sup>21</sup> This information concerning the Great Mother and the

following references to the various types of images representing her are found in Harding, Woman's Mysteries, pp. 41- 46.

- 22 Harding, p. 42.
- 23 Harding, p. 45.
- 24 Harding, p. 46.
- 25 Harding, p. 66.
- 26 Harding, p. 66
- 27 Harding, p. 65.
- 28 Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), p. 359.
- 29 Campbell, The Masks of God, p. 290.
- 30 Campbell, The Masks of God, p. 325.
- 31 Cited from Campbell, The Masks of God, p. 313.
- 32 Franz Hancar, "Zum Problem der Venusstatuetten im eurasiatischen Jungpaläolithikum," Praehistorische Zeitschrift, XVI Band (1939-40), 1/2 Heft, p. 152, as quoted by Campbell in The Masks of God, pp. 314-315.
- 33 Claremont de Castillejo, p. 12.
- 34 Georges Forestier, "Mme de Chartres, personnage-clé de La Princesse de Clèves," Lettres Romanes 34 (1980), p. 68.
- 35 Luce Irigaray, in "Et l'une ne bouge pas sans l'autre" (Paris: Minuit, 1979), "pleads for distance and separation, laments the paralysis she feels as a result of the interpenetration between mother and daughter, calls desperately for a new kind of closeness possible only between two separate individuals." This synopsis of Irigaray's lyrical appeal to her mother is from Marianne Hirsch, "A Mother's Discourse: Incorporation and Repetition in La Princesse de Clèves," Yale French Studies, 61-63 (1981-82), p. 69. This is what women must constantly work with in their search for independence - an acceptable balance between connection to one's mother and connection to one's self. The distinguishing lines between the two, for a woman, are not at all clear cut. One thing we have learned, however, is that woman cannot survive as a whole human being without an acceptance on some level of the mother-daughter relationship. From there begins the search back into the impersonal, incredibly demanding realm of the Great Goddess (demanding in the sense that once there one cannot ever again hide behind



the veil of false knowledge of the universe's mysteries).

36 C. G. Jung and C. Kerenyi, "The Psychological Aspects of the Kore," Essays on a Science of Mythology, p. 162, as cited in Hirsch, pp. 70-71.

37 Suzanne Relyea, "Se Manquer ou se prononcer: Presence and Self-Possession in The Princesse de Clèves," Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature, 18 (1983), p. 45.

38 Marianne Hirsch, in "A Mother's Discourse: Incorporation and Repetition in La Princesse de Clèves," Yale French Studies, 61-63 (1981-82), p. 69, is citing from Toward a New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon, 1976), p. 83. The information immediately following about Jung, etc. is taken from Hirsch, pp. 69-70.

39 Hirsch, p. 71, is referring to studies done by Nancy Chodorow (The Reproduction of Mothering [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1978]) and Jane Flax ("The Conflict between Nurturance and Autonomy in Mother-Daughter relationships and Within Feminism," Feminist Studies, 4, 1 (Feb. 1978), 171-189) which investigate "in what ways mothers may treat female infants differently from male infants and what influence those differences might have on adult personality." One of the findings Hirsch mentions is that "indeed . . . mothers identify more strongly with their female infants, seeing them more as extensions of themselves."

40 Cited from Whitmont, p. 152.

41 Whitmont, pp. 157, 158. The term "pre-Judeo-Christian primitive myth" is Whitmont's.

42 Whitmont, p. 157. The following discussion of the essence of the Grail myth is found on pages 157, 158.

43 Campbell, The Masks of God, p. 212.

44 Campbell, The Masks of God, p. 359.

45 Whitmont, p. 171.

46 Whitmont, p. 170. The story goes that once Gawain has agreed to marry the loathsome Lady Ragnell she tells King Arthur the true answer to the question: "What thing is it that women most desire in the world?" The answer - "what women desire most is to have sovereignty over men" - saves his life. Gawain's life, in a sense, is saved as well by paying heed consciously and/or unconsciously to this important message.

## CONCLUSION

The spirit of the fountain never dies.  
 It is called the mysterious feminine.  
 The entrance to the mysterious feminine  
 Is the root of all heaven and earth.  
 Frail, frail it is, hardly existing.  
 But touch it; it will never run dry.

Lao Tzu, Tao Teh Ching<sup>1</sup>

The end of the journey is at hand. It is an important moment. Yet, as is shown by Madame de La Fayette, endings are not to be emphasized more than beginnings or the events that occur in between. Each part has its worth, just as each part of an individual's life has its worth, its own internal essence which is an intrinsic part of the whole. The path that the heroine of La Princesse de Clèves follows in her fictional life as daughter, wife, lover, widow, self-realized woman is seen mirrored in the psychic journey (inner as opposed to outer) that she embarks upon early in the novel. And this psychic journey, this development by the princesse of her life print, is attached in a mythological sense to the collective past or collective journey of all humankind. During the course of our study - having looked at numerous mythic aspects of the feminine in La Princesse de Clèves - we have come to realize that, as in the case of the princesse, one cannot achieve a sense of self-fulfillment without the acknowledgement, acceptance and integration (even if it occurs solely on an unconscious level) of one's personal

being with the collective or cosmic whole. But this is not the only "mythic truth" to be learned. If one is to truly integrate with the cosmic "union of all things" in the pre-conscious Great Mother state, in other words, if one is going to find his/her inviolate place in the scheme of the universe, one must first realize as completely as possible the potentiality of one's unique self or psyche.

In the modern Western world, men and women can work on their feelings of detachment from life, their feelings of insecurity, their difficulties in maintaining relationships, whatever it is they feel they need help with, through many different types of therapy. There are no guarantees in the realm of psychological healing. However, the type of therapy that works for an individual is the one that brings him in touch with his own inner strengths, his own deep truths. For once this happens, even if it is only for a fleeting moment the first time around, a small magical force is activated within the psyche and the journey of transformation begins. It is a journey back to wholeness, a very difficult voyage for many. During this journey, male and female alike may be pushed to their breaking point, but the healing powers of the regulating centre of one's personality (called "Self" in Jungian terminology) is unfailing no matter how long it has been ignored or repressed by other forces within the psyche. This self-activating archetype of wholeness pushes the individual towards a greater knowledge of his own unique being which comes about through an acceptance and appreciation of all

parts of his/her psyche: Ego forces, Self and Shadow. For a woman, her connection with the cosmic whole (the natural cyclic power of the universe) is never totally broken, although it is essential for her, in her drive to become a person of value, to reach an awareness of her contrasexual side (her masculine side often hidden in her unconscious) in order to establish and then retain a healthy creative identity alongside the Feminine Source. A man, on the other hand, is pushed to follow the stronger calling of his masculine energy and often loses complete touch with the source of all life (there are of course exceptions in both sexes). It is by opening himself up to the value of the feminine principle within that a man will be able to return to his roots and blend in strength and wholeness with the "soul" of the universe.<sup>2</sup> This union, we must remember, possesses the important element of mutual respect, for the grain or core of one's unique self or personality is not lost in the blending.

The psychological journey that the princesse sets out on is motivated by the unrest she feels within herself once installed in her new life at court. She cannot find her place in the outer world around her and this pushes her to depths of self-reflection that would not have happened if she had been like the other women that surround her. She is meant to be different. Madame de La Fayette ensures this. She is meant to serve as an example of a woman that readers can look to for inspiration if they are stirred to do so.

For the most important signification of Madame de Clèves' reactions and actions in the novel is that she is not afraid to stand alone. In seventeenth-century France such behaviour in a woman is bound to draw attention. The princesse does not follow the norms of her century for social behaviour. She arrives at court with all the attributes (and more) for a successful turn at society's "play the game and you will get your prescribed reward." However, she soon begins to stray from the accepted path. She struggles with the issues of honesty and love within a marriage; she, unlike other virtuous and not so virtuous women at court, does not give in to her and her lover's passionate desires and consummate their love. But the pièce de résistance occurs when the princesse confesses to her husband her feelings for Nemours and her intentions, nonetheless, to remain faithful to her spouse. Many critics have drawn the line here: in their opinion the author had definitely taken the princesse's uniqueness too far. As Nancy K. Miller states: "If no maxim is available to account for a particular piece of behavior, that behavior is read as unmotivated and unconvincing. . . . A heroine without a maxim, like a rebel without a cause, is destined to be misunderstood. And she is."<sup>3</sup>

The princesse does not stop here. After her husband's death and the appropriate period of mourning, with no social obstacles whatsoever left to prevent her from marrying her patient and devoted amant, the princesse refuses to do so. Again numerous critics have expressed their opinions

concerning this situation. They have described the heroine's so-called refusal of passion as suicidal, "the delirium of a précieuse."<sup>4</sup> One cannot help but wonder, it is true, why Madame de Clèves was willing to give up so much: her secure and illustrious place in society, many of her friends, the opportunity to experience a passionate love relationship with the most desired man at court. This is where a mythological reading of the text becomes invaluable in understanding the motivational forces underlying the heroine's unconventional life script. In mythological terms, the feelings of unrest that the princesse experiences once she arrives at court are a result of the deep rumblings of the goddess energy within her being. This goddess energy can manifest itself in many ways (as has been shown in our study), for example, as sexual passion (Eros), as the emergence of one's undistorted recognition of self, as the feminine assertion of rights and freedoms. The Goddess had her beginnings in an era long past when humankind was more in touch with the infinite cycles of Mother Nature, both nurturing and destructive. She arose from the unconscious stirrings of the ancients in response to their need to pay homage to forces they did not understand but which they recognized as being all-powerful. And her myth, exemplifying the eternal life cycles of birth, growth, love, death and rebirth has forever remained one of the collective dreams of humanity. As with the mysterious spirit of the fountain (that Lao Tzu talks about in his book

of poems the Tao Teh Ching) which never runs dry no matter how unnoticeable it becomes, so we see the spirit of the mysterious ancient Great Goddess, suppressed for thousands of years by patriarchal cultures, retaining a subtle yet ominous presence deep within the collective unconscious.

The time has come for the Goddess to return in all her glory and, if repressed much longer, in all her fury as well. Once her greatest oppressor, the evolved ego consciousness of modern day societies now desperately needs the instinctive powers of regeneration, integrity, compassion (to name a few), possessed by the spirit of the Feminine, to complement its own resources.<sup>5</sup> And the feminine principle needs a tempering of her most destructive tendencies in order to be of any lasting positive value in our time. Cursed by the wasteland it has created around itself, the masculine energy of the psyche (defined by rational, focused thought and power seeking objectives) seems ready to fulfill the function of helping to raise to consciousness the feminine nature, with its reverence for all things related one to the other.<sup>6</sup> If there is to be any hope for the future of our planet, it lies here within the delicate integration of masculine and feminine forces found within the microcosm of the individual being. Madame de La Fayette's heroine follows a very similar developmental pattern, on her road to transformation, to that discussed above. In beginning to explore her innermost emotions and desires (hidden in her individual past) she also becomes involved, without even being aware of it, in the

exploration of the active imaginings and ideals of the collective past. She is touched by the archetypal and compelling energies of the archaic goddesses. Although not literal persons, these ancient goddesses (and gods) personify energy forces generated from deep within the minds of their creators. Edward Whitmont refers to them as "symbolic representations [which] are real and powerful . . . and [which] can elicit tonifying responses not possible through mere abstract thought."<sup>7</sup>

Mademoiselle de Chartres arrives on the scene with a "wounded" personality. Fatherless from a very early age, she has experienced no strong male figure in her life to help shape her inner masculine side in a positive and creative way. She relates to the world through the maxims of her mother who neglected the feminine qualities of passion, spontaneity, chaotic "moon" moodiness and emphasized those of virtue, modesty, charm. Intelligence and deductive logic (referred to as "masculine" traits in Western cultures) were rigidly cultivated. Romantic notions had little place in the education of the young girl, being capsulized by the moral principle that a happy woman is one who finds reciprocal love within the marital arrangement without engaging in galanteries elsewhere. It is only through the "awakening" function that Nemours plays in the story (from a Jungian perspective, the push to differentiated consciousness is a function of the masculine energy of the psyche) that the princesse is able to recognize within herself all the potentialities of the father archetype and pull internally



away from the connection with (Great) Mother - without separating totally from this deep and essential feminine bond - and begin to discover her own individuality.<sup>8</sup> This is a very distressing period for the princesse. However, she seems to be following the call of a mysterious force that will no longer let her be. We have shown in our study how the specific characteristics of individual Greek goddesses are reflected in the once repressed, now newly surfacing personality traits of Madame de Clèves: the secretive and awesome nature of Persephone, goddess of the underworld, the seductiveness of Ariadne, the unflinching need for solitude as illustrated in different ways by Hera, Artemis and Aphrodite, and the courage of the Divine Child to believe in miracles and to never be afraid to begin again. All these traits come together in the deepest moments of self-reflection for the princesse. This is where the ancient Great Goddess lies in wait, all supreme in her beauty and her repulsiveness. The princesse, in her state of healing transformation, is able to meet the goddess energy without losing her own unique core that has slowly been taking form throughout the novel. Her masculine and feminine parts, including the unacceptable attitudes of the shadow element of her psyche - passion, anger, intense mood swings, love of self before all else - arrive at the moment of integration where all things are possible. The result is wholeness of being. The princesse chooses her own destiny and steps out of the culturally dictated place that society has allotted for her.

At this point there is nothing left for Madame de La Fayette to do but to end the story and the fictional life of her heroine. Her novel, read from a mythological perspective, and her principal character, seen in the context of her connection with the goddesses of a far distant past (and thus with the people who created these deities in their minds and then brought them to power in the outer world through secret cults and legends immortalized in various art forms) are no longer misunderstood. Madame de La Fayette's heroine has taken her search as far as it needs to go. She has listened to the deep instinctive feminine healing force within herself; she has experienced the confusion and sense of loss that comes with breaking away from the conventional fold and following one's innermost dreams. Her dreams are a link with the past and an extension into the future, for there will be many more women like Madame de Clèves, women who want to experience their full individual potential without having to give up their sensual, compassionate, at times erratic and raging nature, women searching for wholeness through a return to Self.

We would like to end our study with these words from Muriel Rukeyser's poem entitled "Kathe Kollwitz":

What would happen if one woman told  
the truth about her life? The world  
would split open.

## Notes to Conclusion

1. Lao Tzu, Tao Teh Ching, trans. John C. H. Wu (New York: St. John's University Press, 1962), verse 7, reprinted in Edward C. Whitmont, Return of the Goddess (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 147.

2 Irene Claremont de Castillejo in Knowing Women: a Feminine Psychology (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974, pp. 84-86, describes the Source as such: "You may call her the Great Mother or you may call her the Nature Self which thrusts its children out into the everyday world to seek their own little ego-consciousness before they can find her again, at long last, as the Self of Becoming. But whatever you call her she is the Source from which the little girl, unlike the boy, is never separated." In Linda Schierse Leonard's The Wounded Woman: Healing the Father-Daughter Relationship (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1983), pp. 30-31, we learn of the task of personal growth for men and women: it is the integration of their masculine and feminine sides within their psyche through awareness of the value of the qualities each principle possesses and through expression of these qualities on a conscious level in the appropriate situations. This will greatly help in the healing process of the psyche of individual men and women as well as in the creation of harmony in relationships between men and women.

3 Nancy K. Miller, "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction," The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), p. 340. Gérard Genette in "Vraisemblance et motivation," Figures II (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969) begins his article with an analysis of seventeenth-century reactions to La Princesse de Clèves. Genette shows that "vraisemblance and bienséance, 'plausibility' and 'propriety', are wedded to each other; and the precondition of plausibility is the stamp of approval affixed by public opinion" (Miller, p. 340).

4 Jean Rousset, Forme et Signification (Paris: Corti, 1962), p. 25, is one such critic. He is referred to by Nancy Miller, p. 345.

5 Edward C. Whitmont, Return of the Goddess (New York: Crossroad, 1982), Introduction viii-ix.

6 Whitmont, p. 142.

7 Whitmont, Introduction x.

<sup>8</sup> Linda Schierse Leonard, The Wounded Woman (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1983), pp. 21-22. Leonard talks about the deep roots of the father-daughter wound and how healing and transformation can be effected in the feminine realm of the psyche through initiation of the masculine, in other words, through a relationship with an external masculine (animus) figure who replaces the absent father and who is then integrated into the psyche as an actuating force for the positive and creative aspect of the inner archetypal father.

<sup>9</sup> Muriel Rukeyser, "Kathe Kollwitz", eds. Howe and Bass, No More Masks (New York: Doubleday-Anchor Books, 1973), p. 103, quoted by Leonard, p. 164.

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