The background of the cover is a photograph of a stone staircase leading upwards, viewed through a dark, arched opening with vertical bars. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the top of the stairs, creating a sense of depth and mystery. The stone walls on either side are rough and textured.

MYTHOLOGICAL STUDIES JOURNAL

VOICES FROM THE
UNDERGROUND

PACIFICA GRADUATE
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Introduction

Welcome to the Mythological Studies Journal, Volume VII. This year's theme is "Voices from the Underground: Giving a Platform to Marginalized Voices, Cultures, and Practices that Have Been Traditionally Underrepresented in Academia". We are proud of the articles included, and excited to share them with you.

We would like to express our thanks to all of the contributing authors for sharing their work with us and making this a diverse issue, covering topics such as myth and pop culture, Jungian psychology, new takes on old tales, and religious practice in a secular world. Much gratitude is also owed to our faculty advisor, Dr. Patrick Mahaffey, for his guidance and support. And extra special appreciation is due to this year's editorial team: Kiese M. Hill, Deborah Maroulis, and Randall Victoria Ulyate. This publication would not have been possible without their teamwork, patience, and dedication. We hope you enjoy embarking on this mythic journey with us!

Hannah Irish
Managing Editor



“I Woke Up Like This”

Including African Mythology in the Canon by Kiese Hill, MA

I am not a regular Beyoncé listener. However, with the flood of constant racism that people of color face, I find it powerful and wonderful that someone would continue—often in the face of criticism and boycott—to bring into focus what we so often wish to ignore. I find it equally important that, as a woman, she engages nuanced narratives that do not just speak to black and white, but to gender, culture, religion, and the act of re/claiming a voice itself. As Megan Carpentier writes for *The Guardian*, “it’s a story about the ascendancy of African American women in the American psyche; it’s a story about artists of African origin; it’s a story about southern black women; it’s a story about feminism and womanism and—invariably, annoyingly—who gets to call themselves a feminist; it’s another story about the power of social media to connect us and create cultural moments.” Beyoncé’s 2016 album, *Lemonade*, is an artistic achievement refusing to take a backseat and, instead, bringing black mythology, traditions, and politics to the front and center. In her latest piece, a collaboration with her husband entitled “Apeshit,” from the 2018 album *Everything is Love*, she has only added to the narrative by making bold statements about the races and the myths that we choose to include and exclude. The Carters, Beyoncé and her husband, Jay Z, do not just ask the question of representation, they rented out the Louvre and placed their argument inside of it. Nor was this just an artistic show of money. She followed the video at the Louvre with a live performance at Coachella, as the first black woman to headline Coachella, and secured six Emmy nominations for the documentary of the event. Beyoncé is not just a one-off, or a popular genre artist. Beyoncé is an important phenomenon that shows that the world is hungry for a new narrative, or, rather, a very, very old one. We should not only take note as mythologists, but we also need to question ourselves about which myths we pick and choose, or whether we sometimes spend so much time walking the same hallowed grounds that we miss the myths waking right before our eyes.

I had heard of Beyoncé before, but the first time I really *heard* her was with the release of “Formation,” an anthem to black culture and New Orleans. Knowledge of the album floated through the stream of news content regarding the uproar surrounding it. So, I sat down and watched it. As a

mythologist, as a woman, and as a person—I was stunned. *Lemonade*, on one level, is about her relationship with her husband; a journey through love, betrayal, heartbreak, and starting over. But on another level, she is not only making music, she also places her pieces between poems in a film that:

...takes the audience to the origin at the diaspora: images of stonewall tunnels allude to the dungeons of Elmina in Ghana, which Yeboah [an associate professor of Africana studies at Howard University] said was “the last place many African people were brought to before being brought to the Americas.” From Yoruba face markings to invoking the Middle Passage, *Lemonade* connects cultures along with the all-too-common stories of hardships and resilience in black women worldwide. (Roberts and Downs)

This is not just a simple appropriation, of which she is also accused. Her private journey becomes the backdrop for the real story, an African story of betrayal and the reclaiming of self. She marries this dark history of a people to the continuing issues in America, highlighting issues like the flooding in New Orleans, famously rapping about institutionalized racism on top of a police car sinking in the waters of Katrina, and including a shot of graffiti on a wall that says, “Stop Shooting Us.” As Brasted wrote in “On Beyoncé, Hurricane Katrina and Appropriation” for NOLA.com:

You may not like the "Formation" video. You might even be offended by it. But consider this: Maybe Beyoncé wanted to share a message with other black women in America. And, if you let it, her art might have the power to make you stop and consider, to talk with one another and explore your perspectives. That would be a powerful, powerful thing.

Months after the coverage of the levee break's 10th anniversary did its own damage to desensitize everyone to it, Beyoncé has us talking about it in a real way with visceral reactions to the flood, to the government ineptitude, to still-pervasive racism and sexism.

That's real power. And that's real art.

This is one of the richest conversations about myth, culture, and identity we have had in decades. After all, making money on a narrative should not automatically discredit it; what would that do to Shakespeare, Greek mythology, or the Bible? Her album was noted by Billboard as the highest-selling album globally in 2016 and every song debuted in the top 100 (Mendizabal). In a world where we

vote with our dollars, does that not also speak to the value we, as global citizens, no less, place on this message? She was only able to find fame because the myths she brings to our attention strike us on an elemental level. So why was her authenticity questioned?

This is not a new issue on a new topic; it is a question we very seriously need to consider as myth scholars, as Hillman states:

This question is not so different from one put in spiritual disciplines, and it is crucial...And here we fall back into history, the historical ego...the very willpower that brought the missionaries and trappers, the cattlemen and ranchers and planters, ...Can this be let at the door like a dusty pair of outworn shoes when one goes into the sweet-smelling pad of the meditation room? Can one close the door on the person who brought one to the threshold in the first place? (Hillman and Slater 79-80)

And the answer is simple: no, we cannot. That is the defining line between appropriation and art. Do we give credit where credit is due? Or, as mythologists, are we another Louvre, a warehouse of both old and new examples of exclusion and imaginal history?

What is significant here, again, is that the African myths are not just decoration for one song. Ama McKinley writes:

As a practitioner of the West African faith, Ifa,...I watched “Lemonade” recently and screamed. And cried. And stared off into the distance, awestruck...And I stopped breathing at her song “Denial”—“I... wore white/abstained from mirrors/abstained from sex/slowly did not speak another word./In that time, my hair, it grew past my ankles./I slept on a mat on the floor.” These intense steps in her detailed ritual of denial aren’t erratic choosing; they are all some of the basic requirements of the year-long process for an Ifa practitioner to initiate into the priesthood—steps that I took in 2012 when I became a priestess. And this practice is still upheld throughout America, the Caribbean, and South America.

Beyoncé creates an altar of black art and music, rich with history, myth, and gods, one where we can all place our conversations and reimagine our beliefs. She is asking for our participation. But it is not just participation in her exploration of African mythology she is asking for, it is participation in the conversation about the inclusion of African myth and history itself in the Western Canon.

The use of the Louvre in “Apushit,” released June 16, 2018, the first release for the new album, blew up the internet with articles like “How Beyoncé and Jay Z said 'skrr skrr' to the notion that black art has no value.” In it, Dash writes, “Their video is about redressing an oppressive, exclusive power structure. The couple occupy a white space with images of black love, black power, black strength, black unity—understanding that it was the institutional exclusion of these images that allowed a pervasive narrative to dominate the collective consciousness.” Another article from the *New Yorker* gets to the heart of the matter commenting that, “the video is a display of something that can’t be so easily quantified: influence. Beyoncé and Jay-Z seem to suggest that their own footprint will be as indelible as that of the entire canon of Western art. (‘My great-great-grandchildren already rich/ That’s a lot of brown on your Forbes list,’ Beyoncé raps, haughtily)” (St. Félix). Whether Beyoncé herself is as permanent as the art around her almost does not matter. It is her power to reassert the gods, not in the white imaginings of every Hollywood voodoo horror flick, but an authentic look at their meaning and psychological value from a black woman’s gaze. She creates a ritual vessel in the most authentic of ways: in song, in dance, and in art. “Beyoncé Knowles Carter is an artist of the Earth, using her stage and global influence to teach us about the human condition, using symbology and language that is sacred and pronounced beyond a few approved circles” (McKinley).

It is this sacred intentionality that she brings to the stage: “I wanted every person that has ever been dismissed for the way they look to feel like they were on that stage” (Beyoncé in *Homecoming*). She considers this her job, quoting Nina Simone in 2019’s *Homecoming*: “My job is to somehow make them curious enough or persuade them, by hook or crook, to get more aware of themselves and where they came from and what they are into and what is already there, and just to bring it out. This is what compels me to compel them and I will do it by whatever means necessary.” *Whatever means necessary* means not just opening the Louvre, but typically white masculine spaces in popular culture like Coachella: “When I decided to do Coachella instead of me pulling out my flower crown, it was most important that I brought out our culture to Coachella” (*Homecoming*).

Yet it is not just about opening the spaces for herself. This job is opening the space for others, as Chutel writes for QuartzAfrica in “In ‘Lemonade,’ Beyoncé again celebrates—and not just appropriates—the work of African artists”:

On her last album, 2013’s self-titled *Beyonce*, she not only sampled Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED Talk on feminism, but gave the Nigerian author a featured credit

on the track “Flawless.” And in the video for her 2011 hit “Run the World (Girls),” the pop phenomenon features dancers from the Mozambican dance crew Tofu Tofu. She nails every energetic step (in heels) of their Pantsula moves, a dance style that originated in South Africa’s segregated townships in the 1980s.

She is “once again using her platform to uplift artists of the African diaspora and to show their influence on her and what she thinks should be their broader influence” (Carpentier). Through this weaving of popular culture, ancient mythology, and scholarly work:

Her performance served a sly dual function: For black audiences, it was a masterly celebration of familiar traditions, including social dance; for white viewers, it was an introduction and an assertion of her deeply rooted prowess....It’s fitting, then, that *Homecoming* is now an extension of this artistic double consciousness (and notably quotes W. E. B. Du Bois, who coined the term). Throughout the documentary, Beyoncé weaves in text and audio snippets from multiple black authors, historians, and public thinkers, most often culling from moments when they spoke directly to black audiences. (Giorgis)

Through these voices, Beyoncé, too, speaks directly to audiences and creates a place in the canon of scholarship for those who have often been silenced.

While this is a statement about Black History, it is also a statement about community. Beyoncé draws on this by quoting Audre Lourde, a “ self-identified black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet [. . .] Caribbean-American, writer, radical feminist, womanist [. . .] and civil rights activist and serves as the embodiment of intersectional thought” (Romeo), in *Homecoming*. Beyoncé quotes Lourde’s most well known speech, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” given at a conference for the 30 year anniversary of de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*: “Without community, there is no liberation...but community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist.” This intentional layering of important voices from pivotal moments in community movements add a richness to her narrative that not only shows the community she is listening, but creates stronger communities. It is this sense “she wanted to bring to the community, and caring about current events, and caring about what, you know, her people are going through, and wanting to shed light, and wanting to put, you know a proud moment on stage for us, it gives you a boost. It’s like, ‘Wow!’ They heard her say it without saying it, ‘Let’s get it together. Let’s move

forward, let's unify'" (Fan in *Homecoming*). By not pretending the differences do not exist, and by intentionally leaning into them, she offers all people a place to find inclusion in their own way, effectively establishing her community in its own living canon, regardless of acceptance: a canon of music, dance, and story as it always has been.

In "All Night" Beyoncé writes, "Grandmother, the alchemist, you spun gold out of this hard life, conjured beauty from the things left behind. Found healing where it did not live. Discovered the antidote in your own kit. Broke the curse with your own two hands. You passed these instructions down to your daughter who then passed it down to her daughter." We can only be grateful that Beyoncé handed these instructions down to us, too, we who must have missed them along the way. Not only are they a part of our past, but also the fabric of our being. And we are lucky, despite the pain and fight that it took for all of us to be here at this place, her album concludes with love and acceptance. She offers everyone inclusion, even those who have excluded the African story or only ever viewed it through a white western gaze. How can a people who have endured so much in the face of continued targeted death and exclusion be so psychologically healthy? The myths that hold them together are maybe some of the most important to us, as mythologists, and if we can only learn to do what Beyoncé did, fight for their inclusion in the canon and weave a tapestry of color and myth into our authentic selves, then perhaps everyone can learn the art of turning lemons into lemonade and be "woke up like this" (Beyoncé, "Flawless" featuring Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's speech "We Should All Be Feminists").

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A Midrashic Look at Queen Michal

The Tragic Lover-Hero of the Davidic Narrative

By Hannah Elizabeth Irish, M.A.

Michal, youngest daughter of King Saul, and David's first wife, is a biblical character that commentators love to hate—or pity. A quick look at some of the literature shows that Michal is most often vilified due to her angry confrontation with David when he brings the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem (perhaps the episode for which she is best known). In a literary analysis tied distressingly loosely to the text, Buckner B. Trawick claims that Michal “bring[s David] great sorrow” and her story is “one of the most pathetic domestic stories” (101) in the Davidic narrative as, after their confrontation, “David punishes her by refusing thenceforth to cohabit with her” (102). Edward Edinger interprets the story as “a typical mythological pattern,” (86) paralleling it to the myth of Jason and Medea. By winning Michal's hand in marriage, David the hero rescues “the anima from the father” and then Michal “helps David escape from Saul,” but later “the relationship sours” (86). He also sees Michal's childlessness as a punishment for her confrontation with David: “Since she would obstruct the ego's relation to God it turns away from her” (86). There are two other elements for which she is vilified. Michal's possession of the teraphim, household idols, suggests that she “persevered in idolatrous practices” (Kuyper 225). Regarding her marriage to Paltiel, which occurs while David is in exile, Michal is accused of political ambition and abandoning her husband: ““Soon after that incident, however, her ardor for David waned. [Paltiel], she thought, was making a better bid for royalty than he, and she would do anything to secure and hold the glamour of royalty”” (Kuyper 224).

Others, however, see Michal as a victim, a powerless woman who is merely a pawn in the men's game of king-making. Alice Ogden Bellis labels Michal a victim (140), and distinguishes her, among David's three primary wives, as ““the dissatisfied daughter/wife of divided loyalties”” (Bach qtd: 151). Bellis asserts that, “we are accustomed to the split between the nurturing, mothering wife [Abigail] and the sexy wife-mistress [Bathsheba]. To this duo is added the angry feminist, not content with subordinate roles” (151). While labeling Michal as a feminist who is “not content with subordinate roles” seems an affirmation, Bellis' earlier label of Michal as victim rather implies that

Michal's feminism fails her, as the final words after her angry confrontation with David are that she was childless until her death. Irene Nowell calls Michal's story "a tragedy" (107): forced to return to David, "the man she loved and whose life she saved," but who "uses her only as a claim to power," she is taken from Paltiel, "the only man who truly loved her" (107). After their confrontation, "whatever love that may have remained between these two members of rival royal families is now dead [. . .]" (Nowell 107). Regarding her childlessness, Nowell states that "Michal is doomed to seclusion in [David's] harem for the rest of her life. David will never send for her" (107); she "is a sacrifice to the claims of Israel's monarchy" (107).

However, rather than accept Michal as villain or victim, there is a subversive view that venerates her. Benjamin Morse argues that "the proliferation of commentary that 'confines', 'erases', and 'murders' Michal does not seem to do justice to the compelling persona that surfaces" (21). It is in this vein that her story in 1 and 2 Samuel will be explored, emphasizing her rescue of David and her final confrontation with him. Michal is an intriguing character in her own right, despite often being overshadowed and manipulated by the men in her story. Though she is a tragic figure in many respects, she is far from a villain, and has far more agency than other biblical victims.

Michal is married to David (1 Samuel 18:17-27)

Michal's introduction includes two very important pieces of information: she is Saul's daughter and she loves David (1 Samuel 18:20, *The Jewish Study Bible*). After David kills Goliath, Saul promises David his eldest daughter, Merab, in marriage, as long as David continues fighting the Philistines. As Saul hopes that David will die in battle, he marries Merab off. Then, Saul learns that Michal loves David, and, as David is still alive, Saul promises Michal to him, for a bride-price of one hundred Philistine foreskins. Again, Saul hopes that David will die in the endeavor. However, again, David survives and brings Saul double what he asked for. Saul is forced to fulfill his end of the deal, and in so doing, he hopes he will be able to use the marriage to his advantage.

Though the scenario thus far seems nothing more than political marriage negotiations, much has been made of Michal's love for David. Morse notes that "critics note that [Michal] is the only woman in the Hebrew biblical narrative who is said to love a man" (21). Looking closely at the detail that Michal loves David, Robert Alter points out, "Nothing is said, in contrast, about what David feels toward Michal" (*The David Story* 115). Hayyim Angel notes that, "For that matter, the passionate David is never explicitly said to have loved anyone in the book of Samuel!" (41). While scholars have

used this to argue emotional imbalance in David's relationships, it has been "observed that in most biblical relationships involving the term *ahavah* (love), only one of the parties is explicitly said to love" (Angel 41). Thus, it is not necessarily that David does not love Michal, but rather that the more important fact is Michal's love for David. This question of David's feelings toward Michal is important to keep in mind, however, as their story progresses, and in noting that "the ongoing emphasis on Michal's being Saul's daughter may suggest that this aspect [is] paramount to David" (Angel 48).

Many writers romanticize Michal's love for David, and imagine, also, that David reciprocates her youthful, passionate, devoted, loyal affection (Eskenazi 159-169; Ewing and Thompson 175; Ginzberg 201). However, as her actions in the next episode highlight, Michal's love for David is certainly of a strong and courageous nature, and any youthful passion that she may feel is overwhelmed by quick and clever scheming and decisive action in a moment of crisis.

Michal rescues David from Saul (1 Samuel 19:11-17)

Not long after Michal's marriage to David, she learns that her father plots to kill him. She proves her loyalty to David by telling him, "Unless you run for your life tonight, you will be killed tomorrow" (1 Samuel 19:11). She helps David escape through the window, then takes teraphim from their room and places them in the bed, putting goat hair in the head place, and covering it all with the bed linen. When Saul's messengers arrive to seize David, Michal tells them that he is sick. Saul responds by sending the messengers back to get David in the bed and bring them both to Saul, "that [David] may be put to death" (v15). When the teraphim dummy is discovered, Saul asks Michal why she helped David, his enemy, to escape, to which she replies that David said to her: "Help me get away or I'll kill you" (v17).

As Alter (*The David Story* 120) and Angel (48) both note, Michal risks a great deal, likely her own life, to save David, and there is no mention in the text as to David's feelings toward her as she does so. Bellis observes that, in helping David escape from her father's murderous plot, Michal uses deception and wit (145) and that her actions are prudent, courageous, and cunning, characteristics which "interpreters are accustomed to laud" in "men who act with such bravery" (146). Additionally, in choosing David over her father, in a moment of tragic irony, Michal loses David: "He flees, with no plans to return to her" (Bellis 145). Though some may argue that it would have been too dangerous for Michal and David to reunite, "When he does return to meet with Jonathan and is in hiding for

three days, he makes no attempt to see Michal” (Bellis 145). Ellen White suggests that perhaps, as a woman, Michal was “more prone to danger,” (455) though she was brave and resourceful when she saved David in the first place. “Also, her near non-status might have allowed her more freedom than Jonathan, the heir to Saul's throne” (White 455). Thus, despite some commentary to the contrary, Michal is depicted as clever, brave, and heroic in her actions to save David. Her love for her husband is evident in her choice to be loyal to him rather than to her father. However, in saving David’s life, she all but loses her marriage.

Following David’s escape through the window, there are two additional details that deserve some attention. The first is the teraphim, the household idols, in Michal and David’s bedroom. As mentioned above, some have interpreted this to mean that Michal was an idolator. However, White notes that, as the teraphim are already in their bedroom, though they may belong to Michal, whose they are is not the main issue (455). Rather, it is that David allowed them to remain in his bedroom. Had he not wanted them there, the cultural gender roles “would not have allowed Michal to defy David and bring something into his bedroom which he condemned” (White 456). Also, the narrator does not comment on the morality of the teraphim: “For all the concern that the narrator shows regarding the teraphim, it could have been rolled up bed linens she used in David's place” (White 456).

The second detail is how Michal explains herself to Saul after he discovers she helped David escape. White notes that Michal is often characterized as reacting coolly and further deceiving Saul (456). While it is clear that she lies to Saul’s messengers when they come to seize David, the text does not state that she is lying when she tells her father that David threatened to kill her if she did not help him. This does not mean that she is not lying, but it is not the focus of the text, though it is often the focus of commentators. According to White, if Michal is lying, it is the contrast between the two lies that matters, more than the act of lying itself: “In her first lie, she is actively protecting David whose life she has already tried to save by helping him escape. In the second, if it is a lie, she is doing what David was unable to do for her—protect herself” (456). (Nowhere does the text indicate that David did anything to protect Michal from the clearly present danger.) Further, in Israel at that time, lying ““for the sake of saving [a] life was seen more as an act of expediency and cleverness than as a morally wrong activity”” (Robinson qtd in White: 456). This interpretation is in line with the narrator’s generally positive portrayal of Michal.

Michal is given to Paltiel (1 Samuel 25:42-44)

After seven years have passed since Michal risked her life to save him, while David is hiding from Saul, he acquires two new wives: Abigail, the widow of Nabal, and Ahinoam of Jezreel. Then the narrator says that Saul has given “his daughter Michal, David’s wife, to Palti[el]” (1 Samuel 25:44). Though the text seems clear that Saul orchestrates her new marriage, there are those, as mentioned above, who interpret Michal as somehow villainous, that she pursues Paltiel out of political ambition. Though this assertion is in no way supported by the text, “this sentiment has been largely shared by the Christian community for ages” (White 457). The text nowhere indicates that Michal has any voice in this matter; as in her original marriage to David, she is a pawn in the men’s political power struggle, and she will remain so in the next episode of her story.

Michal is returned to David (2 Samuel 3:12-16)

After another seven years, in which both Saul and his son Jonathan have died in battle, David has rallied the tribes of Judah behind him, defeated Saul’s son, Ish-bosheth, and general, Abner, acquired four new wives, and had sons by all six of his wives. Rather than continue to fight a losing war, Abner goes to David and offers his allegiance, to which David agrees, provided that Ish-bosheth returns Michal to David. John Kessler notes an “implicit narrative criticism of David’s demand for Michal” (415). The narrator names all of David’s sons and his wives prior to David’s demand for Michal’s return from Paltiel son of Laish, thus the reader is aware that “the man who will deprive Paltiel of his one cherished wife already has six other women” (Kessler 416). Similarly, the readers are aware “of the relationship from which David’s demand will remove Michal—a real relationship with a person whose name and family are known” (Kessler 417).

Further, David first calls Michal “daughter of Saul,” (2 Samuel 3:13) emphasizing her political significance in unifying the northern and southern kingdoms (Angel 49), rather than any personal value. Then, when he does designate her as “my wife Michal,” he immediately follows with, “for whom I paid the bride-price of one hundred Philistine foreskins,” (2 Samuel 3:14) thus emphasizing his legal ownership of her. White observes:

David's actions are not those of a husband who has been torn from the one he loves, but those of a man making the checkmate move against his enemy. [. . .] Michal is no longer the woman who loves David and has acted to save his life from Saul, thus declaring herself to be of the house of David, [. . .] she is the symbol of Saulide power

being surrendered into the hands of David. The image seems better suited to [. . .] a battle narrative than a description of lovers [. . . reuniting]. (458)

This contrasts sharply with the image of the husband from whom Michal is being taken.

Abner is sent to retrieve Michal from Paltiel, after which, “her husband walk[s] with her as far as Bahurim, weeping as he follow[s] her,” (2 Samuel 3:16) until Abner orders him to turn back. Though little is known about Paltiel, “his walking after Michal, weeping all the while, intimates a devoted love that stands in contrast to David’s relationship with her” (Alter, *The David Story* 211). Also, in contrast to David, who has taken six wives and usurped a kingship, “Paltiel is a man whose fate is imposed on him. Michal was given to him by Saul, evidently without his initiative. He came to love her. Now he must give her up” (Alter, *The David Story* 211). As moving as Paltiel’s response is, nothing is said about Michal’s feelings in this episode. Her reaction to yet another maneuver by the men in power over her is conspicuous in its absence. White suggests that, rather than her final confrontation with David, Michal’s ultimate humiliation may be being forced to return to David after he is made king: “In the confrontation Michal is at least granted a voice, but when she is taken away from a husband who loves her and returned to David she is allowed nothing, not even the emotional insight granted upon her original marriage to David. Michal in herself is meaningless at this stage;” (458) she is just the final sign that David has defeated Saul.

Michal confronts David (2 Samuel 6:20-22)

Following one last seven year stretch in which: David has been anointed king over all of Israel; moved the royal quarters to Jerusalem; and conquered the Philistines, David determines, with Yahweh’s blessing, to move the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. As he and his entourage enter Jerusalem with the Ark, David, dressed in an ephod, “whirl[s] with all his might before the Lord” (2 Samuel 6:14). Michal watches the procession from a window, and when she sees David’s antics, “she despise[s] him for it” (v16). When David returns home, Michal confronts him, saying, ““Didn’t the king of Israel do himself honor today—exposing himself today in the sight of the slavegirls of his subjects, as one of the riffraff might expose himself!”” (v20). David responds, ““It was before the Lord who chose me instead of your father and all his family and appointed me ruler over the Lord’s people Israel! I will dance before the Lord and dishonor myself even more, and be low in my own esteem; but among the slavegirls that you speak of I will be honored”” (v21-22).

The text indicates no interaction between David and Michal, since Michal helped David escape, until this moment (Alter, *The David Story* 228): “We can only guess what she may have felt all those years he was away from her, acquiring power and wives, or during the civil war with her father’s family.” Alter characterizes Michal’s accusation as “an explosion of angry sarcasm” (*The David Story* 229) and notes, as does Morse (23), that she addresses David in the third person, “not deferentially but angrily,” and uses his public, rather than personal, title (Alter, *The David Story* 229). Angel observes that Michal, again, is referred to as Saul’s daughter, not David’s wife (49), highlighting her political, rather than personal, position. He also posits that Michal’s angry accusations are rooted in “her deep anguish at being unloved despite her love for David,” (Angel 49) while Morse, though recognizing that a broken heart may be a factor (23), suggests, rather, that Michal is venting the “anger she has built up over her futile relationship with the monarchy” (26).

Michal’s anger is also, of course, rooted in what she has witnessed. While there is debate over what, exactly, David’s being “girt with a linen ephod” (2 Samuel 6:14) connotes—whether he was garbed as a priest (Morse 26), or was wearing only a loincloth-like garment (Alter, *The David Story* 227, Cline 138), and what the implications of either outfit may be—from Michal’s statement, David reveals his body in a way she deems unfitting. Morse suggests that her “offence at the disrespectful wearing of the priestly garment accords with the prophetic distrust of kings” and that she resents David for “buying into the celebrity cult of kingship” (27). If David is wearing only a loincloth while dancing ecstatically in the streets, as it is more commonly understood, it is highly likely his entire body is exposed, and more than once. Either way, it seems Michal’s assessment is fair: David has behaved without propriety, humility, or modesty before God and his people.

That Michal references the slavegirls, specifically, in her accusation is of note for two reasons: it brings attention both to David’s arrogance (as does his response to her) and to Michal’s position as his wife, complicated and despondent as that may be. David J.A. Clines states that, “David finds religious ecstasy a good way of impressing women, and it matters very much to him whether they admire him or not” (139). This interpretation calls out David’s pride in assuming the “king-priest” role, which is something to which his right to do is contested. The idea of the slavegirls enjoying David’s state of undress “suggests an edge of sexual jealousy as well as political resentment” in Michal’s anger (Alter, *The David Story* 229). After all, David acquired six wives in Michal’s absence (thus rendering her sexually disposable) and the text nowhere indicates his current relationship with

her is anything but political. White further details what is at stake for Michal in her role as David's wife:

[. . .] Michal held the highest level of status that [an Israelite] woman could get—wife of the king—and yet, her husband has behaved in such a way that has taken what is rightfully hers and given it to any who would look [. . . stripping] Michal of any status which she had managed to maintain. It appears the final insult in what appears to be a marriage of humiliation. (460)

Thus, Michal's indignation over David's behavior proves warranted.

At this point, if Michal's assessment of David's behavior and motives is wrong, he has the opportunity to explain himself. A common interpretation of David's actions is that he is humbly and jubilantly serving Yahweh, with no regard for his royal status. However, David's defensive and haughty reply to Michal is inconsistent with this interpretation; if he truly believes there is nothing wrong with his actions, that his humility and purity of heart need no defense, it is likely his response to his wife would also be humble and pure. Rather, David lashes out aggressively, further demeaning Michal. Alter suggests "there may also be a sexual edge is his rejoinder: I will display myself to whomever I please, and it is I who will decide whether it is honorable or not" (*The David Story* 230). As White notes, not only does David show no compassion for his wife, he taunts her further by saying the slavegirls honor him, and "at no point does he attempt to demonstrate love for this woman, who has put her life in jeopardy to save his" (460-1).

Michal had no children (2 Samuel 6:23)

Immediately following Michal's and David's quarrel, Michal's story is concluded: "So to her dying day Michal daughter of Saul had no children" (2 Samuel 6:23). The common interpretation is to deduce cause and effect: Because of Michal's actions, she is barren. However, it is not so simple. First, there are two translation issues. Comparing various versions reveals that the "So" in the above quote is not agreed upon. Alter translates the verse, "And Michal daughter of Saul had no child till her dying day," (*The David Story* 230) noting that "translators generally destroy the fineness of the effect of rendering the initial 'and' as 'so,'" ("Characterization" 73) and *Young's Literal Translation* says, "As to Michal daughter of Saul, she had no child till the day of her death." While "So" commonly implies cause and effect, "And" does not. Nor does, "As to Michal," which is fitting wording

considering the verse wraps up her story in the books of Samuel, and does so in a manner that is common in narrating the histories of the kings of Israel.

Secondly, as Morse points out, barrenness in the Bible is never explicitly a divine punishment (31). Thus, it is unprecedented to assume that Michal's childlessness following her quarrel with David is Yahweh's doing. Morse further posits that, "if in choosing a king the people of Israel are rejecting YHWH (1 Sam. 8:7), then what theological sense would it make for God to punish a woman who rejected the human king?" (31). If it is not God's will, then many assume it is David's, "who [lays] out her sentence as retaliation against his wife's tirade and refuse[s] to sleep with her" (Morse 31). There are, however, two other possibilities to consider. Morse argues that it is Michal, not David, who puts an end to the sexual relationship (32), which, in light of Michal's actions up to this point, is quite plausible. Clines also argues it is Michal's choice: "is it likely that a woman who so despises a man is going to bear his children?" (139). And even if it is David's choice, he asks, "Is she not better off to have no child of hers locked in unlovely struggle for the throne, to put no son to the risk of an untimely death at the hands of power-crazed step-brothers?" (Clines 139). And, even if it is true that to be childless is a the greatest dishonor a woman could face, he concludes, "[. . .] how serious can that dishonour have been compared with the double dishonour Michal has already suffered, of being a deserted wife, who is then ripped from her second husband to be kept as property under virtual house arrest?" (Clines 139). Or, perhaps Michal has no children after her quarrel with David due to biology; while David fathers children later in life (as men do), Michal may be past childbearing age: she was a young woman when she was married to David, and at least twenty-one years have passed this then. As White states, the ambiguity may be the narrator's indication that "no fault should be assigned" (462).

Conclusion

With so much left unsaid in the text (we know almost nothing of the twenty-one years between Michal and David's initial separation and their final confrontation, nor do we know how Michal feels during them), it is possible to fill in the gaps in a variety of ways, and writers in both the Jewish and Christian traditions have done so. While conjecturing is a natural aspect of interpretation, we must be careful about making statements that are not, at least vaguely, supported by the text. Thus, in light of the text, and in conversation with other scholarly voices, I conclude that Michal is a multidimensional character who cannot be summed up or tied down by labels such as "villain" or "victim," nor "lovesick princess," "scheming aristocrat," or "disillusioned wife," and neither only by "tragic figure"

nor by “heroine.” Rather, if I am to suggest a label at all, I argue that “tragic lover-hero” is the only one fitting.

Of the six episodes explored above: in three of them Michal is acted upon by her father, King Saul, and or her husband, King David; in two of them she acts first and decisively; and the final is simply a concluding comment. From the three times she is acted upon (her marriage to David, her marriage to Paltiel, and her return to David), we learn that she is a woman who loves and who submits to authority, sometimes. With her father the mad king, we can imagine that she survives a tense homelife after David’s escape, and that she worries about her father, her brothers, and her husband during the civil war between Saul and David. If she knows of David’s marriages to Abigail and Ahinoam, we can imagine that she feels hurt, disappointed, betrayed, or angry, or probably some combination. In this case, perhaps she welcomes her new marriage to Paltiel. If she does not know of David’s marriages, then she may be devastated by being married off to Paltiel.

In either case, seven years is long enough for her to develop some affection toward her new husband, even if she never feels the level of devotion and love toward him that his weeping at her departure indicates he feels toward her. However, after seven years of apparent peace with Paltiel, we can imagine that she feels a sense of loss at leaving him. We can also imagine that she is wary, at best, of David’s reason for demanding her return. However, she may be excited to return to the man she once loved. Or perhaps angry at his initial abandonment of her and now demand for her return over a decade later. Or, likely, some combination. Thus, from these episodes, we see a complex and multidimensional woman who has known many extremes in life, both good and bad, and can genuinely be described as a “tragic lover”.

Considering, now, the two episodes in which Michal is the primary agent (when she rescues David from Saul and when she confronts David about his behavior), a strong figure emerges. In rescuing David, Michal shows herself to be a woman who will act on her convictions, despite the risk. She first acts on her love and loyalty to her new husband by warning him, quickly and concisely, of the danger and helping him escape out the window. She acts courageously in defying her father, the king, and she bravely risks her own life to save the man she loves. It is reasonable to assume that, had she not acted, David would have been murdered by Saul in the morning. In order to buy David more time before Saul sends anyone to find him, Michal quickly concocts a clever ruse to stall her father’s murderous intentions. Finally, when Saul confronts her over rescuing David, she once again acts with

quick wit, telling her father what will hopefully protect her from his wrath (that David threatened her life) but that gives no explanation as to why Michal hides the truth from Saul after David escapes through the window. This lack of a “real” answer defies Saul’s authority as her father and her king, and it does not betray her love of or loyalty to David. Thus, Michal actively takes on the role of “hero”.

When Michal confronts David after the return of the ark, she once again courageously acts on her convictions, despite the potential fallout. Over twenty years have elapsed since she saved her young husband from her mad father. In that time she has endured a great deal; she has been abandoned by her first husband, whom she loved, after risking her life for his; given to a second husband, who seems to have loved her a great deal; and then forced to return to her first husband who has given no indication that he has ever had any personal feelings for her whatsoever, including any gratitude or appreciation for her heroic act two decades ago, and who married six other women, and had children by all of them, in the approximately fourteen years that Michal and David were separated. As the text provides no reason to assume that Michal’s feelings for David have remained unchanged since she was a young woman said to love him, it is logical, not to mention reasonable, to assume that, while she may still respect and esteem him as her husband and king, the love and devotion of her youth has faded, if not completely died. It is also reasonable to assume that she is hurt and angry about the way he has treated her. Thus, her choice to confront David, whatever the outcome, is a choice to act with dignity and integrity, and in righteous anger.

When David further demeans her by his angry and haughty response, rather than the narrator “giving her no reply,” as many commentators suggest, Michal chooses not to reply. With dignity, integrity, and strength, she walks away from a pointless fight. She lets it go, and lets him go, removing him from her life, as much as possible, including refusing to share his bed. She is a woman of strength, not impious or jealous or ashamed, and certainly not to be pitied for bearing no children to David. Thus, I agree with both Alter and Clines. Though David’s kingship may be divinely ordained, “theological rights do not necessarily justify domestic wrongs, and the anointed monarch of Israel may still be a harsh and unfeeling husband to the woman who has loved him and saved his life” (Alter, “Characterization” 72). And, rather than seeing Michal as a never vindicated victim, “is not her dignity and her sarcasm sufficient vindication, in the eyes of readers at least? And is David a character who is ‘flawed but favored’, or is he not rather a truly nasty piece of work who has too

many lucky breaks?” (Clines 140). Thus, she is truly a “tragic lover-hero”. As this episode wraps up Michal’s story, we see a woman that once loved a man and heroically saved his life who now, as before also, must be her own hero, asserting herself while at the same time accepting, with great dignity, the end of her own tragic love story.

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Lessons in Sovereignty

The Transformative Journeys of Two Loathly Ladies in The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle and The Hearing Trumpet By Jennifer Maile Kaku

[T]he loathly lady, whose origins in antiquity are lost to us,
is also something of a fossil lodged within cultural memory.
Susan Carter, *Willing Shape-Shifters*

The Loathly Lady is a fascinating and multifaceted motif associated primarily with medieval literature and Arthurian romance, whose origins date back to the more archaic Sovereignty Goddesses of pre-Christian Ireland. Written in the fifteenth century, *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*¹ contains what I consider the four key characteristics that define the Loathly Lady archetype in the major medieval and Irish narratives: 1) She is physically repulsive, usually likened to a hideous old hag; 2) She is excluded from society; 3) She undergoes a transformation; 4) She is associated with issues of sovereignty. Written five hundred years later, Leonora Carrington's novel *The Hearing Trumpet*, weaves Arthurian legend and Celtic myth into a postmodern journey of initiation that also incorporates these four themes. Sent away to an old folks' home by her family, the elderly heroine, Marian Leatherby, starts out, like Dame Ragnelle, as a repulsive crone living on the margins of her society. She too embarks on a quest that will enable her to undergo a startling transformation that is interconnected with issues of sovereignty. The vast majority of the scholarship on the Loathly Lady theme focuses on the Middle English texts, while little has been written on the evolution of the archetype or its modern variants. This is thus an attempt to explore how the shape-shifting crone, whose roots go back to the ancient earth goddesses, resurfaces in a contemporary narrative.

As the epithet implies, the Loathly Lady is not merely ugly, she is physically repulsive, and "outrageously so," as the narrator of *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* remarks (Lupack, line 228). This repulsiveness is associated with images of bestiality and, above all,

¹The best known of the four major Middle English versions is Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale." *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* is one of the least studied, although, according to John Bugge "Of the four it best reveals beneath its literal surface the mythic substratum on which all of them ultimately rest" (198).

decrepitude, which why she is traditionally known as the “hag” or “crone.” In other words, what differentiates her from other shape-shifters (princesses turned into frogs or princes into “beasts”) is her grotesquely ageing body. In *The Wedding*, the narrator furnishes us with an exuberant list of her monstrous characteristics, including a nose dripping with snot, yellow teeth hanging over her lips, “bleary eyes larger than a ball,” a humped back, hair “knotted in a heap,” sagging breasts that “would be a load for a horse” (231-241), as well as boar-like tusks and a mouth “foully overgrown / With many a gray hair” (551-2).

Marian Leatherby possesses the physical deformities, the oozing orifices, the unruly, unladylike facial hair and other unsightly details that are common to the Loathly Lady motif. As the ninety-two-year-old protagonist and narrator of the *The Hearing Trumpet*, she tells us, quite matter-of-factly, that her skeleton is bent over by “rheumatics,” she has lost all her teeth and she has a “short grey beard which conventional people would find repulsive” (Carrington 6). More in keeping with the hyperbolic extravagance of the narrator of the *The Wedding*, her grandson Robert calls her “the monster of Glamis” (in reference to a horribly misshapen child), and says she can “hardly be classified as a human being. She’s a drooling sack of decomposing flesh” (15).

The fact that Marian is the first-person narrator of the text, however, enables us to see that loathliness is in the eye of the beholder. In the medieval poem, the reader sees the Loathly Lady first through the eyes of King Arthur, who “marvels” at what he calls “unquestionably the foulest lady that I ever saw” (Lupack 336-7), and then from the point of view of a male narrator who delights in repeatedly telling us how outrageously “foul and hideous” she is. However, in *The Hearing Trumpet*, we only perceive the “outrageousness” of Marian’s appearance through the way other people such as Robert describe her, and through their reactions to her presence. When she comes into the lounge, Robert and his friends are just as awestruck as Arthur is when he comes upon Dame Ragnelle: “They all stared at me and looked away quickly...” (Carrington 10). Marian, who describes her physical condition straightforwardly, without extravagance or exaggeration, is not at all disturbed by her own appearance. On the contrary, she finds her little beard “rather gallant” (5) and chooses to be gloriously toothless because she cannot wear dentures. Moreover, even though they think she is senile, she is in fact quite aware of how they see her, telling her son, “...you all think I am a repulsive old bag and I daresay you are right from your own point of view” (23). In other words, it is the others who view the crone as a monster, it is they who amplify her features until they become grotesque and outrageous:

the horror is in the gaze of the viewer, and that gaze is essentially the dominant masculine gaze. Unlike Dame Ragnelle, who desires to return to her beautiful, young, scopophilically² acceptable state, Marian Leatherby, although a loathsome creature in the eyes of her family (the dominant order in her world), refuses to see herself from that point of view.

The hybrid nature of the Loathly Lady's body makes it profoundly ambiguous, a liminal body, hovering between masculine and feminine, human and non-human, the living and the dead. It is a body that is oozing and leaking, that creates shocking outgrowths, that is no longer domesticated. In other words, it has "gone wild" and is beyond repair. Perceived as such from the outside, it is a site of Otherness. Such loathliness is therefore threatening, and must be kept away from civilized society. And so the second key characteristic of the Loathly Lady archetype is that her loathliness makes her a pariah. She is excluded from the centers of social interaction. In medieval narratives, those centers are the aristocratic courts, while the wilderness of the forest represents the untamed space of alterity beyond the borders of civilization. Dame Ragnelle is forced to remain in exile in the forest of Inglewood, "a wild place where the norms of the Arthurian world do not operate" (Millar 4), until she is able to talk her way out and begin the journey of transformation that will take her back to the court.

Marian Leatherby's world is a residential district in an unnamed city. In the family home, where she lives with her son Galahad, his wife Muriel, and their son Robert, she is excluded from what she calls the "front regions of our residence" (Carrington 5), which include the lounge and the dining room. Her room is in the back of the house; it opens onto the back yard, which she shares with "two cats, a hen, the maid and her two children, some flies and a cactus plant" (4). We learn that Galahad (who has nothing of the chivalric knight in him but his name) rarely ventures out into these "nether" regions to visit his mother. In keeping with the Loathly Lady motif, Marian is thus relegated to the side of the house closest to "nature"—the animals, plants and indigenous servants—and banished from the "urban" side where the family entertains and "holds court." For example, she remains outside looking in on what she describes as "a nice picture of family life" (12) when they gather in the lounge to decide her fate. Simply put, in geographical terms, the Loathly Lady is expelled from the "civilized" social spheres (court, lounge) toward the outlying "uncivilized" natural spheres (forest, yard).

²Scopophilia, the pleasure derived from looking at other people's bodies, and particularly sexual pleasure from the objectification of the female body, has been most notably analyzed by Laura Mulvey in terms of the "male gaze."

Marian and Ragnelle have another loathly trait in common that isolates them: their unseemly table manners. Eating together is a fundamental social ritual of inclusion, with its codes and etiquette that draw boundaries between “civilized” and “uncivilized” ways of eating. When Queen Guinevere, who wishes to maintain those boundaries, suggests an exclusively “private” wedding, Ragnelle refuses and demands to be allowed to “dine in open hall” (Lupack 579). The narrator describes her atrocious eating habits with great relish: “Her nails were three inches long; / With them, she rudely tore apart her food. / Because of that, she ate alone” (607-9). In her house, Marian too eats alone. She is banned from the dining room due to what she describes in more sober terms as her “unconventional” table manners (Carrington 6).

Having seen how Dame Ragnelle and Marian Leatherby share the some of the basic attributes of the archetypal hag, and how as a result they are excluded from society, we come to the third major theme associated with the Loathly Lady trope: her transformation. And just as the first two themes form a pair—loathliness leads to exclusion—the third and fourth themes, transformation and sovereignty, are also interconnected. Both women will journey from their respective places of exclusion to a final place of inclusion and, along the way, undergo a transformation linked to the notion of sovereignty.

From the outset, Dame Ragnelle is the active agent of her journey. As soon as she encounters Arthur in the forest, she assures that him she is the only person who can save his life by giving him the right answer to the question: What do women desire most? She lays down her terms—as repulsive as she is, she wants to wed “the best man in England” (695)—and when he and Gawain agree, she reveals the answer: “Above all other sorts of things, we desire from men / To have sovereignty” (Lupack 422-3). The key to a woman’s heart is thus sovereignty, and by uttering that word, Ragnelle is able to begin her journey out of the wilderness and into the court. Each step of the way—from the ride into town to the church wedding, the public banquet and the nuptial bed—she refuses, with diabolical delight, the hierarchical authority of the King, the Queen or her newlywed husband. Finally, having triumphantly executed the first part of her plan, she goes on to secure her ultimate goal, which is to obtain “genuine sovereignty” from her husband—whom she has handpicked for just that reason. On their wedding night, when she asks Gawain to choose between having her “fair at night and ugly by day” (659-60) or instead, fair by day and foul at night, the compliant knight applies what she has taught him: “I put the choice in your hands. Just as you wish—I give you

control” (678-9). His extraordinary answer frees her from her stepmother’s spell and enables her to permanently become the beautiful young maiden she once was.

The Loathly Lady’s transformation into lovely wife and lady of the court has been interpreted in contrasting ways. Some see it as relinquishing sovereignty, giving up her subversive power and returning with relief to the traditional figure of woman as object of beauty in the dominant patriarchal order (Caldwell 248; Inskip 4). I tend to agree with the view that, on the contrary, far from capitulating, in *The Wedding*, she has played her dice well and retains a significant amount of power and subversiveness within the confines of marriage and the court—significant enough to bring about her death in the end.

In the woods, Ragnelle offers Arthur a theoretical lesson in heterosexual relations. She tells him that it is possible but “foolish” to woo women with “flattery and cajolery and clever schemes” (Lupack 416) because in fact, even *more* than beauty, sexual pleasure, marriage or youth, the “one thing that we all fantasize about” (420) is sovereignty. That, in itself, is a subversive statement about the traditional image of women and their desires. And it is clear from her sermon that Ragnelle, unlike some of the other women in Arthur’s and Gawain’s surveys, does not espouse that image. As we have seen, she designs a strategy that will specifically guarantee her that “one thing” that women fantasize about, and she is not about to give it up once she is married. Paradoxically enough, it is not through her beauty but through her loathliness that she is able to enjoy what few if any other wives of her time would be able to enjoy: in other words, her stepmother’s curse was actually like a blessing in disguise because it drove her to seek and to achieve “genuine” sovereignty for herself.

It is true that the type of sovereignty Ragnelle seems to be advocating is sovereignty within the very limited sphere of marriage. However, as Kathryn Inskip remarks, a medieval Loathly Lady had but two options: “conformity to oppressive medieval social standards and thereby gaining reintegration into a male-dominant society or maintaining their mythic powers and living outside the reach—and presumptive security—of a social world that privileges men” (6).³ Even though Ragnelle ultimately chooses the first option, I see her as a sort of Tiresias figure: she gets a taste of both worlds, and then, in spite of the advantages of being the Other, returns to her original body, while retaining the

³Carrington in fact chooses the second option for her loathly ladies in the denouement of her novel.

insights learned from her experience. In her marriage, for example, she is the one who sets the terms both before and after the wedding. And while she does promise to be “dutiful” (Lupack 784) and never anger her husband, it is only after he has already vowed to give her sovereignty and complete control of his “body and possessions, heart and every part” (682).⁴ How husband and wife worked this out we are not told, but we do know that she wisely chose the man most likely to keep his word. And we also know that her power over him did not wane because he preferred her company to that of his fellow knights and, to the regret of *The Wedding*’s narrator and the King, sorely neglected his masculine obligations to the world of romance and chivalry.

It is clear then that not only in the private, but in the public sphere Dame Ragnelle remains a powerful woman. Having strategically saved the King’s life, she can continue to exert her power in court, for example, by making peace between Arthur and her brother Sir Gromer. However, since she has recovered her appearance of gentility, what has changed is the manner in which she exercises that power. As Mary Leech observes in “Why Dame Ragnell Had to Die,” “[Her] power does not disappear when she becomes beautiful. Even after her marriage, Dame Ragnell performs the role of ideal courtly woman, yet in doing so she reshapes the masculine court of Arthur to conform to her specifications; in other words, as she has done before, Dame Ragnell places herself in the role she wants to perform” (225).

All of this adds up to a woman who, even after her transformation, continues to enjoy sovereignty, to stand up to the male-dominated social order, and even to disrupt it by offering something more alluring to the man who is the acme of all of Arthur’s knights. Her influence is indeed so disruptive that she has to be eliminated. The journey she so astutely planned from the very beginning is unexpectedly brought to an end five years later when the narrative abruptly kills her off without any explanation. Her death allows Gawain to go back to being the gallant knight he once was, while restoring the masculine homosocial bonds, heterosexual hierarchies and patriarchal authority that she challenged—even when beautiful (Leech 227-8). And yet, although Dame Ragnelle had to die, her indomitable voice continues to ring out in the text of the Arthurian romance. Through the narrative of her transformation, she gives the knight Gawain, King Arthur, his court, and the poem’s

⁴Reversing the traditional terms of marriage, Ragnelle has already obtained from Gawain sovereignty over “all his body and his goods,” (698) which is why I disagree, at least as regards Ragnelle, with Ellen M. Caldwell when she says that “Finally, to erase the potential threat of this hideous hag, the Loathly Lady is returned to the conventional role of wife or property.” (Caldwell 250)

(primarily male) audience a theoretical and practical⁵ lesson in gender relations and female sovereignty.

Ragnelle's journey begins as a result of King Arthur's incursion into the forest: in other words, when the chief representative of the socio-political order enters the realm of the Other.⁶ Marian Leatherby's journey begins as a result of her incursion as the Other into the realm of the representatives of the socio-familial order: when she errs into the lounge where Robert is entertaining his friends over cocktails. They are horrified, she is rudely ejected, and this incident leads the family to decide to eject her even further away to an institution in Santa Brigida, a suburb on "the southern extremity" (Carrington 28) of the city in an area which is "almost the country" (24). Dame Ragnelle, who plans her strategy, who chooses to get out of the forest, who chooses her husband and who then makes him choose, is the active agent behind her journey. Marian has no choice but to go along with her family's plans, even though she voices her disapproval by telling her son: "[Y]ou are actually forcing me against my will" (24). Whereas Ragnelle's journey takes her from a place of exclusion to a place of inclusion, Marian's journey takes her at first from a place of relative exclusion (the backside of the house) to a place of even greater exclusion: not only is it further removed from society, it is also surrounded by walls. Inside those walls, however, Marian will become an active agent of change and find a community that accepts her.

The transformation of the archetypal Loathly Lady usually happens via the intermediary of a questing knight or prince. When the eligible young man kisses or sleeps with the hag in spite of her repulsiveness, she turns into a gorgeous young woman. In *The Hearing Trumpet's* geriatric female version of the Grail quest, the young male's services are no longer needed.⁷ Marian starts out as the Loathly Lady and then becomes the questing knight herself. Like Parzival, she must first ask the right questions—Who is the Winking Nun? Who lives in the tower? And like Gawain (and Arthur) she must find the answer to not one, but three riddles. Indeed, Marian's first question, which spurs her to

⁵At least for Gawain, since literary history remains silent on whether the King and the other knights also heeded her words.

⁶Bugge, for example, suggests that Arthur is an intruder in the forest. (Bugge 200)

⁷The only young men in the narrative are far from princely or chivalric. Galahad and Robert send Marian away; in a certain way, they could thus be seen as starting her off on the transformative journey, like the stepmother who is the cause of Ragnelle's exile. And Muriel, who pushes for Marian's exclusion, makes an excellent wicked daughter-in-law! As I have suggested, these exclusions could ultimately be seen as a blessing in disguise.

search for the identity of the nun, is the key that unlocks the rest of the narrative; or more precisely, it unlocks the narrative within the narrative—the story of Doña Rosalinda—that will lead to her transformation.

Ragnelle's metamorphosis takes place in the nuptial bedroom with her husband: in other words, within the patriarchal and Christian institution of marriage and with an icon of chivalric masculinity. Marian's metamorphosis takes place in the "Womb of the World," a subterranean chamber associated with underworld goddesses such as Epona or the hermaphroditic Barbarus/Barbara, and the Abbess of Santa Barbara de Tartarus.⁸ Inside the cavern, she comes face to face with a double of herself stirring a cauldron, which is an archetypal symbol of feminine power associated with the Celtic goddess Ceridwen. The "Womb" is clearly a lair for the energies of pre- or non-Christian female deities, and Marian's transformation will be one hundred percent feminine. This other self prods her to jump into the pot and when she emerges, she finds herself stirring the broth containing her own carcass. She looks into a mirror of polished obsidian and sees "a three-faced female whose eyes winked alternately. One of the faces was black, one red, one white and they belonged to the Abbess, the Queen Bee and myself" (Carrington 176). From this pagan baptism, Marian is thus reborn as her other self: in other words, as a triple goddess who is none other than herself.

The metamorphoses of the two loathly ladies occur in very different ways with very different results, but they do have one particularly interesting point in common: in both cases, the women shape-shift into new versions of older versions of themselves. Or, to put it differently, the persons they turn into are the persons they always were. Ragnelle's transformation enables her to recover her lost looks and her former identity, while Marian's transformation enables her to reconnect with the divine selves that were always a part of her. The medieval hag acquires youth and beauty via a physical transformation, whereas the postmodern crone acquires agelessness and knowledge via a transformation that is both intellectual and spiritual.⁹

⁸Her family name is "della Cueva," meaning "of the cave." Tartarus is an abyss of suffering in the Greek Underworld, sometimes translated as Hell in the New Testament. Marian is told that Hell is actually the Womb of the World.

⁹In addition, though not any younger, the transformed Marian is more youthful: her hearing and eyesight improve, and she makes it a point to say that she no longer hobbles, but climbs back up "as spry as a mountain goat." (177)

Agelessness is an attribute of the Great Goddesses, such as those who are called up in the narrative: Venus, Epona, Hecate, Ceridwen, Barbarus/Barbara, Diana, Mary Magdalen, and the Queen Bee. They live on in the Abbess who in turn, as Christabel tells Marian, lives on under other names in other times and places. If the fanciful name that Marian makes up for the mysterious nun—Doña Rosalinda Alvarez Cruz della Cueva, Abbess of El Convento de Santa Barbara de Tartarus in Castile—later turns out to be her real name, it is because the Abbess was already a part of her, even though she was unaware of it. Moreover, Marian's unladylike beard already connected her to the unladylike Rosalinda (who disguises herself twice with a beard, most notably as "the bearded cavalier" Don Rosalindo de Tartaro) and the hermaphroditic goddess Barbarus/ Barbara. As Julia Salmerón Cabañas notes, the Grail was guarded by Barbara in the pre-Christian era, fleetingly recovered by Doña Rosalinda in the eighteenth century and finally restored to the Goddess by Marian in the twentieth century:

However, as these bearded females are presented not as an evolution of each other in a chronological historical time but as the same character inhabiting a multiplicity of times and spaces, the bearded female inhabits an eternal *aión*. . . By virtue of their cyclical reappearance in historical time and by one uniformity in their physical appearance, Santa Barbara, Dona Rosalinda and Marian are presented as three faces of the same female figure. (Carrington 210)

This explains why Marian's double in the cavern looks like her, and yet "may have been a hundred years older or younger, she had no age" (172). Her other self inhabits the timeless dimension of the goddesses. In reconnecting with that eternal continuum of archetypal feminine energies, she goes from being old and impotent to ageless and empowered!

Marian's transformation takes place in the crucible of Ceridwen's mythological cauldron of knowledge. A significant part of her quest is devoted to gaining knowledge. At the beginning of the novel, she tells Carmella, "I have lived for ninety-two years and really haven't understood anything" (Carrington 17) and she has a lot of unanswered questions, notably with regard to religion. For example, she wonders, "[Why] was Eve blamed for everything?" (26). It is through her quest to solve the enigma of the winking nun that Marian will become more and more active as a seeker of knowledge. Through the priestess-like Christabel Burns, who lends her the texts about Doña Rosalinda, she discovers a vast otherworld of knowledge that she never knew existed, such as Mary

Magdalen's "high mysteries of the Goddess" (95). This "forbidden knowledge" (99), as the Abbess's Catholic confessor calls it, was suppressed during the monotheistic, male-dominated reign of Christianity. Along with her friends, Marian is able to recover and liberate these essentially feminine mysteries associated with the Grail or Cup of Venus and, in the process, find the answers to many of her questions.

The theme of sovereignty is, as we have seen in *The Wedding*, an essential component of the Loathly Lady motif, whose roots go back to the so-called Sovereignty Goddesses of pre-Christian Ireland.¹⁰ In the Celtic tales, when a young man agrees to sleep with a loathsome hag, she turns into a beautiful woman and proclaims him the rightful king of the land. This "divine hag" is an earth or fertility goddess whose role is to protect the land by choosing the most valiant male ruler and then advise him in matters of sovereignty. The sovereignty being promoted in these original tales is political sovereignty. In the medieval English tales, the issue of sovereignty has been narrowed down to a riddle that concerns female sovereignty within the context of marriage. It is a gendered sovereignty that is being promoted. And while it is still the hag who teaches the male authority (king, knight, husband) about sovereignty, it is actually the husband who grants it to his wife.

In Carrington's postmodern novel *The Hearing Trumpet*, although the word itself is never used, I would argue that sovereignty—in the sense of independence, self-determination, being able to make one's own choices—is an underlying issue from beginning to end. In the beginning, Marian lacks sovereignty: she complains to her son that they are sending away against her will, and that she has no choice but to be "reasonable," meaning she won't put up a fight. However, by the time she goes down into the underworld to undergo her transformation, things have changed. When Marian's other self invites her to jump into the cauldron, she says, "[A]fter all it is your own decision. Nobody made you come down here did they?" (Carrington 175). And as we know from Ragnelle's teaching in *The Wedding*, the ability to decide for oneself is the basis of sovereignty.

Moreover, Carrington's novel is not just about individual sovereignty; it is above all about collective sovereignty. The old ladies at the Institution stop being "reasonable" when they decide to go on a hunger strike and rebel against Dr. Gambit and his wife. This leads them to greater

¹⁰On the motif's Irish sources, see, for example, Carter, "Hymenation" and *Willing Shape-Shifters*, Passmore and Coomaraswamy.

consciousness of how they have been dominated by others all of their lives. Through Georgina Sykes, their spokeswoman, they proclaim:

“We have absolutely no intention of letting ourselves be intimidated by your beastly routine ever again. Although freedom has come to us somewhat late in life, we have no intention of throwing it away again. Many of us have passed our lives with domineering and peevish husbands. When we were finally delivered of these we were chivvied around by our sons and daughters who not only no longer loved us, but considered us a burden and objects of ridicule and shame. Do you imagine in your wildest dreams that now we have tasted freedom we are going to let ourselves be pushed around once more by you and your leering mate?” (Carrington 154)

Leonora Carrington even takes the issue of sovereignty to a planetary level. First of all, in a rather incongruous “political” discussion between Carmella and Marian, the former says, “It is impossible to understand how millions and millions of people all obey a sickly collection of gentlemen that call themselves ‘Government!’” (Carrington 158). She then makes this prophetic declaration: “I am sure it would be very pleasant and healthy for human beings to have no authority whatsoever. They would have to think for themselves instead of always being told what to do and think by advertisements, cinemas, policemen and parliaments” (159).

This rather Anarchist vision of the ideal society in fact announces what will happen in the novel’s apocalyptic ending. With the onset of the New Ice Age, the poles will be reversed, cities (with their ads, cinemas, policemen and parliaments) will collapse, Taliessin the ageless bard will carry out his mission “to help human beings to realize their state of slavery and exploitation by power-seeking beings” (Carrington 183), and people will set up their own authority-free egalitarian communities as Marian and her motley crew of bees, wolves, goats, old women, three men and a werewoman will learn to do: sovereignty in theory and practice.

Through the ages, the figure of the Loathly Lady has thus been associated with differing notions of sovereignty: the sovereignty of the land under a male ruler in the early Celtic narratives, the sovereignty of women within the patriarchal institution of marriage in the Middle English narratives. Carrington’s novel proposes an overarching and absolute notion of sovereignty as freedom from all

rulers, from all husbands¹¹ and all patriarchal institutions. It even encompasses sovereignty for animals and werewomen!

The narrative journeys of Dame Ragnelle in *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* and Marian Leatherby in *The Hearing Trumpet* take them from alterity and exclusion to transformation and sovereignty. Examining them through the prism of the Loathly Lady motif reveals several key points in common: both women seek to recover aspects of themselves that were always theirs, both draw their strength from mythological goddesses of the past, and both lend their voices to promote female sovereignty. The medieval hag recovers her lost youth and beauty, and temporarily succeeds in maintaining her position of transgressive sovereignty within the patriarchal institutions of marriage and the Arthurian court. The postmodern crone recovers lost knowledge and the archetypal energies associated with the ageless goddesses who were driven underground by the patriarchal institutions and narratives of history and the “Revengeful Father God” of Christianity (Carrington 184).

The journeys of these two Loathly Ladies come to an end in opposite ways. The beautiful young maiden dies a premature death, while the ageless crone begins a new life. Dame Ragnelle’s lesson in sovereignty was unable to tilt the poles; her death brings closure, re-establishes the masculine narrative of chivalry and restores the social order. In spite of this conventional ending, her voice retains its subversive power in the text of the Arthurian poem, signifying that the answer to the question of what women desire most is a worthwhile quest for kings, knights, poets and husbands.¹² Marian Leatherby’s ability to answer her riddles leads to an earth-shattering reversal of the poles, ushering in a new social (dis)order and leaving the future of the planet wide open to new forms of sovereignty and mythology.

¹¹In Pamela Robertson-Pearce’s video, Carrington says, “You have to own your soul, as far as it’s possible to own a soul, or let your soul own you. But to hand it over to some half-assed male, I wouldn’t recommend it.”

¹²As Susan Carter says: “The central quest of *Wife of Bath’s Tale* (*sic*) is the answer to the riddle, ‘What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren’ (WBT 905), proposing that this is a worthwhile consideration” (Carter, *Willing Shape-Shifters* 42).

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Shedding the Corset

A Feminist Post-Jungian Re-Evaluation of Anima and Animus By Emily Ruch, M.A.

The anima and animus archetypes are two of C. G. Jung's most challenging contributions to the field of psychoanalytical thought—perhaps in part because the conceptual development of these archetypes has coincided with the gradual shift away from the rigidly patriarchal culture of Jung's time and the simultaneous rise of the feminist movement. Fundamental elements of Jungian depth psychology, anima and animus—the unconscious compensatory, and therefore contrasexual, characteristics of man and woman respectively—have undergone considerable reconfiguration in the increasingly egalitarian sociocultural context of post-Jungian thought. Although they have proved tremendously valuable to the field of depth psychology, Jung's gender-biased conceptions of these archetypes and their inevitable implications concerning the nature of masculinity and femininity do not work for many contemporary men and women. In order to retain the value of Jung's visionary work while shedding its metaphorical corset, this paper will examine the conceptual development of the archetypes from the writings of Jung and Emma Jung through the post-Jungian work of Edward C. Whitmont, James Hillman, Claire Douglas, and Gareth Hill. These updated theories remain limiting, however, and I believe that further reconfiguration is still necessary.

According to Jung, the anima represents the unconscious, inner feminine personality of man. "The inner personality," he writes, "is the way one behaves in relation to one's inner psychic processes; it is the inner attitude, the characteristic face, that is turned towards the unconscious. I call the outer attitude, the outward face, the *persona*; the inner attitude, the inward face [of man], I call the *anima*" (C. Jung 100-101; Jung's emphasis). She is a she, Jung believes, because she complements and compensates for all the characteristics of a man that are not outwardly expressed—foremost of which were, in Jung's time perhaps, his feminine traits (C. Jung 101). Woman's animus is the masculine counterpart of man's anima and derives in the same complementary and compensatory fashion (C. Jung 102). As archetypes, anima and animus are phenomenologically experienced as individualized personifications of the unconscious that are "conditioned by the experience each person has had in the course of his or her life with representatives of the other sex, and also by the

collective image of woman carried in the psyche of the individual man, and the collective image of man carried by the woman” (E. Jung 1-2). As complexes, they function as liaisons between the conscious and unconscious aspects of the individual psyche (E. Jung 1).

We often experience anima and animus through unconscious projection¹³ onto a member of the other sex, especially one to whom we are romantically attracted: “This person is the object of intense love or equally intense hate (or fear). The influence of such a person is immediate and absolutely compelling,” Jung writes (C. Jung 103). Eventually, as Emma Jung observes in *Animus and Anima*, “we become aware, to our great confusion and disappointment, that the man [or woman] who seemed to embody our image does not correspond to it in the least, but continually behaves quite differently from the way we think he [or she] should” (E. Jung 11). This, she goes on to say, “forms one of the worst complications in the relations between men and women” (E. Jung 11). We also regularly experience anima and animus as figures who “appear spontaneously in dreams,” and they “can be made conscious through active imagination” as well (C. Jung 116).

Although it seems natural to think of anima and animus as male and female versions of the same psychological entity, Jung makes many (often biased) distinctions between them. In *The Woman in the Mirror*, Claire Douglas observes that Jung “deduced the existence of the animus” after he “discovered the anima within himself,” likely as the logical result of a generally dualistic philosophical attitude influenced by such German Romantic thinkers as Goethe, Kant, Schiller, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer (Douglas 14, 61). “Much of Schopenhauer’s polarizing, alas, creeps into Jung’s ideas about women,” Douglas writes, and later notes that “Jung’s tendency to organize his thinking in nineteenth-century Kantian polarizations¹⁴ [. . .] is especially pronounced in his treatment of the sexes” (Douglas 16, 54)—as his conception of anima and animus demonstrates. For instance, Jung equates masculinity with thinking (logos) and femininity with feeling (eros)¹⁵ and thus assigns this division to anima and animus accordingly (Douglas 63). He writes of the archetypes:

¹³ As described by Jolande Jacobi: “By *projection* we mean the unconscious, automatic extrapolation of a psychic content into an object, as an attribute of which it then appears to us. Everything that is unconscious in man is projected by him into an object situated outside his ego” (Jacobi 48; Jacobi’s emphasis).

¹⁴ Here Douglas refers to William Willeford’s essay titled “Jung’s Polaristic Thought in its Historical Setting.”

¹⁵ “The thinking mode is declared inferior in women,” writes Douglas. “As a thinking type myself, I have the odd and disconcerting experience, in reading Jung, of seeing my way of functioning in the world allocated to men.” (Douglas 57).

The animus corresponds to the paternal Logos just as the anima corresponds to the maternal Eros. [. . .] I use Eros and Logos merely as conceptual aids to describe the fact that woman's consciousness is characterized more by the connective quality of Eros than by the discrimination and cognition associated with Logos. In men, Eros, the function of relationship, is usually less developed than Logos. In women, on the other hand, Eros is an expression of their true nature, while their Logos is often only a regrettable accident.¹⁶ (C. Jung 111)

Additionally, Jung defines the anima as singular while the animus is a multiplicity: "we know from experience that it would be more accurate to describe [the animus] as an image of *men*, whereas in the case of the man [the anima] is rather the image of *woman*" (C. Jung qtd. in Hillman 146; Jung's emphasis). Douglas notes that in response to "a question about the possibility of a woman having a single animus figure," Jung answered that older souls could be represented by a solitary animus "who shall perhaps be many in one" (Douglas 62; C. Jung qtd. in Douglas 62-63). The obvious implication is that women's souls are younger, less developed, and more immature than the souls of men (Douglas 63). Worse, Jung repeatedly remarks—as his Latin terms *anima* ("soul") and *animus* ("spirit") problematically imply—that woman has spirit but no soul and vice versa: "Woman has no anima, no soul, but she has an animus" (C. Jung qtd. in Douglas 60). At other times Jung refers to the animus as if he represents woman's soul: "If, therefore, we speak of the *anima* of a man, we must logically speak of the *animus* of a woman, if we are to give the soul of a woman its right name" (C. Jung 102; Jung's emphasis). Such biases and theoretical inconsistencies can make Jung's thought concerning anima and animus difficult for independent, educated modern women (and sensitive, open-minded modern men) to accept. However, when they are liberated from Jung's personal prejudices, the archetypes themselves can be remarkably powerful and illuminating.

Whitmont makes a modest attempt at such liberation in *The Symbolic Quest*. His first move is to challenge Jung's eros/logos dichotomy as it has been applied to our understanding of masculine and feminine psychology¹⁷: "the Eros-Logos concept gives expression to only a part of the male-female archetypes. Moreover *the mythological male figure of Eros is more likely to fit masculine than*

¹⁶ Douglas observes that Jung's narrow perspective of women's psychology may result from his attempts "to understand woman through his own anima," and rather than "women and 'the emotional life of women,' he therefore appears to be describing his own thinking typology's feeling type anima" (Douglas 62).

¹⁷ As noted by Douglas (Douglas 140).

feminine dynamics. In my opinion, the mythologem of male-female can be approached more profitably in terms of the ancient Chinese concepts of *Yang* and *Yin*” (Whitmont 170; my emphasis). By employing the terms “yin” and “yang,” Whitmont means perhaps to enrich analytical psychology’s understanding of masculine and feminine (and thus anima and animus). However, his application of yin and yang is ultimately not that different from Jung’s anima/feminine/eros and animus/masculine/logos equations, though his tone is less disparaging:

We are comparatively more familiar with expressions of the Yang principles of order, understanding, initiative, separation and consciousness which determine our conscious life. The Yang gives the manifest characterization to the conscious orientation of the man and, paradoxically enough, to the unconscious traits of the woman (her animus) which constitute a vector toward awareness and differentiation. The woman’s manifest or conscious orientation—her Yin—is rather averse to conscious differentiation. The Yin [. . .] operates in the (often distorted) feminine orientation and in the man’s anima. (Whitmont 171)

Building on Toni Wolff’s typology of feminine types,¹⁸ Whitmont develops a corresponding masculine typology. Wolff’s four types are Mother, “who nourishes and supports her husband and the family;” Hetaira, “who devotes herself, often erotically, to an individual man;” Amazon, “who is independent, less related, and [. . .] a companion of men;” and Medium, “a vehicle through whom men can gain access to the unconscious” (Douglas 114-115). Whitmont’s male counterparts of Wolff’s types are Father, *Puer Aeternus*, Hero, and Wise Man (Whitmont 178-184). There is some unacknowledged overlap here with the work of Emma Jung, who elaborates a similar though less systematic differentiation between types of animus figures: “Just as there are men of outstanding physical power, men of deeds, men of words, and men of wisdom, so, too, does the animus image differ in accordance with the woman’s particular stage of development or her natural gifts” (E. Jung 3).

Although systems of classification can be helpful for identifying the nuanced character traits of individuals and their anima and animus personalities, typologies also limit through dramatic and unnecessary oversimplification and should thus be applied with caution. For example, Whitmont

¹⁸ Whitmont notes that Wolff “has been criticized for defining femininity predominantly in relationship terms,” i.e. in terms of women’s relationships with men, but he argues that the four primary archetypal “patterns were correctly discerned by Wolff” when “considered in relationship to a woman’s self, rather than” to a man (Whitmont 184).

writes that “anima represents the eternal feminine—in any and all of her *four possible aspects* and their variants and combinations” (Whitmont 189; my emphasis). As archetypes, however, neither anima and the feminine nor animus and the masculine “can be reduced to a simple formula;” they contain infinite possibility¹⁹ and must be recognized as “[vessels] which can never empty, and never fill” (C. Jung qtd. in Jacobi 53).

Here and there Whitmont carefully inches the conceptual development of anima and animus forward. In stark contrast, Hillman runs, leaps, and takes flight, boldly reconfiguring Jung’s original conceptions in *Anima*. “Since [the] literature provides a goodly phenomenology of the *experience* of anima, I shall look here more closely at the rather neglected phenomenology of the *notion* of anima. Experience and notion affect each other reciprocally. Not only do we derive our notions out of our experiences,” he says, “but also our notions condition the nature of our experiences” (Hillman 1). Aware that Jung’s original notions of anima and animus were somewhat disfigured by prejudice and inconsistency, as discussed above, Hillman examines how this disfigurement has shaped our experiences of these archetypes. “The first notion of anima as the contrasexual side of man,” he explains, “is conceived within a fantasy of opposites” (Hillman 9)—the fantasy of Kantian/Schopenhauerian polarization that Douglas also criticizes. After pointing out that “the anima as a syndrome of excessive or inferior feminine traits” has grown less evident as the “collective values” of the culture have shifted, Hillman urges us not to “identify a *description* of the anima in a rigidly patriarchal, puritanically defensive, extravertedly willful and unsoulful period of history with her *definition*” (Hillman 13; Hillman’s emphasis). He continues:

Today the notions of “masculine” and “feminine” are in dispute. This dispute has helped differentiate gender roles from social ones, and even to differentiate kinds of gender identity, i.e., whether based on primary or secondary, manifest or genetic, physical or psychic gender characteristics. It has become difficult to speak of the anima as inferior femininity since we are no longer certain just what we mean [. . .]. (Hillman 13-15)

Touching again on a puzzle that troubles me—why Jung chose a male deity to represent the “true nature” of woman—Hillman insists that the anima is not eros but “the [object] of its longing” (Hillman 21). Furthermore, “Socratic/Platonic Eros,” he argues, “is definitely masculine,”

¹⁹ Whitmont later contradicts (and corrects) himself by writing that “the anima and animus are forever defiant of complete understanding or taming. [. . .] They connect us with the limitlessness of the psyche itself” (Whitmont 215).

and he proposes that the “confusion of soul with eros” originates with “the archetypal perspective of Aphrodite,” only one among many archetypal perspectives of the feminine (Hillman 29-31). Like Whitmont²⁰, Hillman challenges Jung’s identification of the anima, eros, and the feminine with feeling and relationship/relatedness. When relatedness and relationship are determined by the anima, argues Hillman, they are obscured by “an archetypal fantasy playing through” two individuals, and “the specific complexity of the relatedness” of these two is replaced by “an archetypal drama directed by the anima” (Hillman 41). Jung is aware of this anima (and animus) tendency to impede genuine relatedness and relationship:²¹ “when animus and anima meet,” he writes, “the two partners find themselves in a banal collective situation. Yet they live in the illusion that they are related to one another in a most individual way” (C. Jung 112). He still repeatedly insists, however, that “anima gives relationship and relatedness to a man’s consciousness” (C. Jung qtd. in Hillman 36). Such contradictions seem to show the discrepancy between Jung’s empirical observations and his (perhaps) unconscious patriarchal biases. Similarly, Jung’s habit of “blurring distinctions between feeling and anima” can be traced to his background in German Romantic philosophy (Hillman 43). Informed by his own observations, Hillman makes important distinctions between anima and feeling:

The muddling of anima and feeling contributes to that primrose path in analytical psychotherapy which considers the cure of souls to be an anima cultivation of a specific kind, i.e., feeling development. But anima cultivation, or soul-making [. . .], is first of all a complex process of fantasizing and understanding of which only part is the sophistication of feeling. Besides, the feeling that is developed through soul-making is [. . .] more impersonal [. . .] than it is personal. This development does *not* proceed from the impersonal to the personal, related, and human. [. . .] She [anima] does not lead into human feeling but out of it. (Hillman 45; Hillman’s emphasis)

Thus far, Hillman has focused primarily on ironing out the inconsistencies in Jung’s thought, offering relatively minor adjustments in the process, but his most dramatic reconfigurations are true departures from traditional Jungian thought. Hillman suggests that the psychological phenomena of

²⁰ “Full human I-Thou relatedness cannot simply be called an Eros function, as it has usually been presented in the writings of analytical psychology;” he argues instead that “Yin can be quite averse to, even destructive of, relatedness,” which requires “the interaction of Yang and Yin in their double polarity” (Whitmont 173-175).

²¹ Through a close interpretation of the story of Tristan and Iseult in his book, *W&Z*, Robert A. Johnson offers an excellent portrayal of the negative impact of anima and animus projection on love and relationship.

both anima and animus are experienced by both men and women: “we can hardly attribute anima to the male sex only. The ‘feminine’ and ‘life’ [. . .] are relevant to men and women equally. We are now at an archetypal level of anima, [. . .] and an archetype as such cannot be attributed to or located within the psyche of either sex” (Hillman 53). Traditional Jungian psychology deprives women of anima by definition, thereby honoring the archetypal feminine in man as his soul-image and demonizing the same archetypal expression in woman as her shadow (Hillman 59). A theoretical correlation with the animus²² may surely be inferred, and Hillman later confirms that an “archetypal syzygy,” a union of anima and animus, occurs in everyone, regardless of gender (Hillman 175). He argues that anima, not ego, is the true center of consciousness: “ego and all its developmental fantasies were never, even at the start, the fundament of consciousness, because consciousness refers to a process more to do with images than will, with reflection rather than control” (Hillman 93). Finally, Hillman proposes that anima is not necessarily feminine, and (by extension) animus is not necessarily masculine: “Paradoxically, the very archetype of the feminine may not itself be feminine. [. . .] One could raise a similar doubt about the ‘femininity’ of life of which anima is the archetype” (Hillman 65). Although this conceptual gender ambiguity is shared by Jung (Hillman 65), such potentially confusing gender obscurity is often overlooked, it seems, in the dogmatic application of popular Jungian psychology.

While respecting the necessity of ambiguity to some extent, Gareth Hill develops an orderly archetypal pattern of masculine and feminine as a useful counterpoise to the chaos of unexamined gender obscurity. In *Masculine and Feminine*, Hill differentiates between the static and dynamic aspects of the masculine and feminine principles. The four archetypal elements form two polarities of complementary opposites—static feminine paired with dynamic masculine, and static masculine paired with dynamic feminine—and each pair of polarities flows into the other through either watery (feminine) or fiery (masculine) initiations: night sea journeys and trials by fire (Hill 25). In this way, the two polarities form a single, dynamic pattern of psychological metamorphosis that occurs continually in men and women alike (Hill 4, 9, 13; see figure 1).

²² “Hillman’s belief that by discussing the anima exhaustively” he has also adequately examined the animus is frustratingly unsatisfying—just as the feminine is not “a simple reverse of the masculine,” the animus cannot be understood simply as an inversion of the anima—instead “the animus merits its own reappraisal” (Douglas 185).

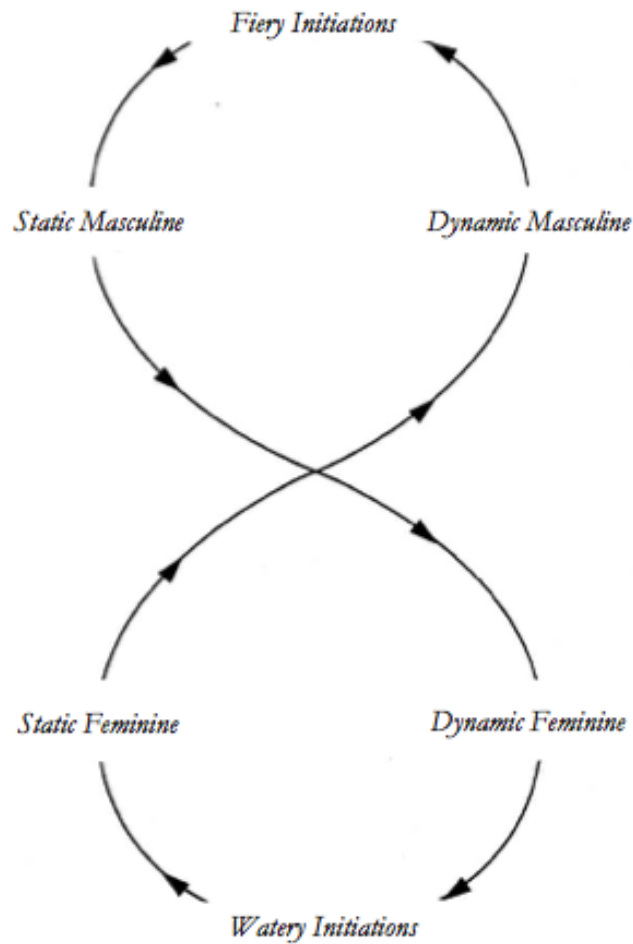


Figure 1. Basic Pattern of Psychological Development (Hill 24; my simplification)

“The static feminine is most simply symbolized by a circle, representing an undifferentiated whole” (Hill 5). The dynamic masculine is symbolized by an arrow, representing “progress,” “linear expression,” and “goal-directed initiative” (Hill 9-12). The static masculine is symbolized by a cross, “representing opposites held in the differentiated tension of an order state” (Hill 16). Lastly, the dynamic feminine is “symbolized by a spiral, representing the disorienting and transforming experience of new awareness” (Hill 20). Certain male archetypes represent a feminine principle, and certain female archetypes represent a masculine principle—Hill gives several examples of each (Hill 7-17). Reminiscent of both Hillman and Jung, Hill associates eros with the dynamic feminine in particular rather than with femininity in general. Eros, he says, is the “central value” of the dynamic feminine, “not in the image of the arrow shot from the bow of Amor, but that which is awakened by the arrow’s piercing” (Hill 20).

Concerning anima and animus, Hill writes that “[in] traditional Jungian psychology, because of the equation of male and static masculine, the anima is the dynamic feminine,” and since most women in Jung’s time were “denied the opportunity to develop masculine consciousness and [were] given roles in society that [were] dominated by the static feminine,” in traditional Jungian thought, “the animus is the dynamic masculine” (Hill 176-177). Jung’s views about anima and animus are too narrow for Hill. He believes that “animus and anima are the archetypal ground for the experience of *otherness*,” they therefore “represent what is least developed—most *other*—in the ego’s relation to the Self” and “bear no direct relation to the masculine and feminine per se” (Hill 178, 181; Hill’s emphasis).

What Jung [. . .] noticed is that, because ego identity is elementally rooted in the earliest experience of body image, otherness for men will typically be personified as female, and otherness for women will typically be personified as male. In the United States in our era, however, maleness is increasingly not equivalent to the masculine, nor is femaleness equivalent to the feminine. (Hill 178)

Hill also challenges the traditional Jungian emphasis on man’s dark, anima moodiness and woman’s irrational, opinionated animus. Like Hillman, Hill observes that both genders are obviously “given to irrational opinions” and both “fall into dark moods” (Hillman 57-61; Hill 182). Instead, he attributes irrational opinions and dark moods to psychological types: “it is the thinking types who fall into dark moods, characterized especially by cynicism, and it is the feelings [sic] types who get possessed by [irrational] opinions” (Hill 182). He makes further distinctions between the moods and opinions of sensation and intuition types (Hill 182-183).

Although I admire Jung’s work, I have long been frustrated with his conceptions of anima and animus, bristling at the blatant sexism in his writings. And although my intuition has insisted that men and women both experience both anima and animus, I never fully explored these alternatives to Jung’s theories within my lived experience of psyche until I found them articulated in post-Jungian thought. Why? “The power of our theoretical notions cannot be overestimated,” writes Hillman (Hillman 63). “Experience and notion affect each other reciprocally. Not only do we derive our notions out of our experiences, but also our notions condition the nature of our experiences” (Hillman 1). This quote reflects my own experience of anima quite accurately. According to traditional Jungian psychology, I have no anima, no female soul-image. As a result, I did not recognize the anima figures in my dreams

until Hillman made me think about my dream images *as* anima figures. As soon as I thought of these numinous, archetypal images *in these terms*, my anima figures became glaringly obvious.

Dream images are not arbitrary, and therefore the unconscious must have chosen these gendered personifications with intention. Thus I began thinking about how my experience of female soul-images differs from my experience of male soul-images, and I discovered that the difference is fairly dramatic.²³ For example, my female soul-images tend to encourage interiority and reflection, and they represent elements and aspects of soul with which I desire to identify or embody. My male soul-images tend to encourage exteriority and projection, and they represent elements and aspects of soul with which I desire to relate or connect. Also, my female soul-images feel primarily archetypal and impersonal and only secondarily familiar—one took the form of my biological mother, for instance, but the intimacy of this relationship was only dimly registered—while my male soul-images feel primarily familiar and personal and secondarily archetypal—the intimacy of my relationship with these figures is essential.

This corresponds well with Hillman's observation that, in contrast with "the historical depth of anima, Eros is forever young, has no history and even wipes out history, or creates its own, its 'love-story.' And where anima withdraws toward meditative isolation—the retreat of the soul—eros seeks unions" (Hillman 21). Moreover, my male soul-images often serve as psychopomps and take the form of men I have identified in waking life with mercurial trickster figures, while my female soul-images simply *are*. This suggests my male soul-images primarily reflect the dynamic feminine (and therefore eros), guiding me toward the watery initiations that lead to the static feminine reflected in my female soul-images (Hill 187-188, 23-26)—both indicate that my waking life is dominated by the masculine principles. As a former soldier working to integrate the warrior mindset with a creative imagination while undergoing the fiery initiation of graduate-level academic study, this rather precise assessment is not only accurate but surprisingly helpful. Such precision would be difficult, if not impossible, for me within the framework of traditional Jungian psychology.

Within that framework, I could not even recognize my own experiences for what they were. Despite my personal response to the concepts of anima and animus, I was blinded by the theoretical limits of Jung's notions. An informal survey of my cohort revealed that my soul image experiences

²³ I will hence use the term "soul-image" in place of "anima" and "animus" in order to avoid, for now, the problematical implications of soul and spirit.

correspond well with the experiences of some and poorly or not at all with the experiences of others—a valuable reminder that one person’s liberating concept is another person’s corset. However subtle and carefully-developed a psychological concept may be, it remains *limiting* by its very nature when it is applied too strictly to the *limitless* possibility of individual experience. Although Whitmont, Hillman, Douglas, and Hill have each helped to liberate Jung’s ideas from his patriarchal, German Romantic biases, their ideas remain unavoidably bound by the limits of their own sociocultural perspectives. Further reconfiguration of the anima and animus concepts might free us from *these* limits, but new limits will inevitably supplant them. Perhaps this is because—however visionary they may be—these notions, like sacred teachings, can only ever point *toward* the truth. The truth, the archetype, is something eternally more than we can hope to define.

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Circumcision

in Judaism and Contemporary Secular Culture

by Randall Victoria Ulyate

Routine infant circumcision has become a hot topic for both secular and religious parents in America and around the world. The practice of circumcision dates back thousands of years and is famously outlined in the book of Genesis as the covenant between God and the Jewish people. As such, it is an incredibly sacred and important aspect of Judaism, and, by extension, Christianity and Islam, for many practitioners; however, opponents of the procedure claim that circumcision is genital mutilation. Many people around the world are calling for a ban on all routine infant circumcision, including for religious reasons. There are religious practitioners on either side of the debate, with some arguing that infant boys can be welcomed into the religion without undergoing circumcision. Further complicating this issue is the secularization and popularity of routine infant circumcision (RIC) in the United States for purported medical benefits. This paper will explore circumcision's religious and cultural history and discuss how that history informs the conversations surrounding the modern-day practice.

The first reference to circumcision in Hebrew mythology is found in Genesis. God commands Abraham that “this is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.” (*New Revised Standard Version*, Gen. 17.10-11). This makes the physical mark of circumcision the sign of the Abrahamic covenant and “the highest commandment in Judaism...Rabbinic law requires that a (healthy) Jewish boy be circumcised on the 8th day of his life [according to Gen. 17.12], even if it is the Sabbath” (*Jewish Study Bible* 35).

To follow this commandment outlined in Genesis 17.12, traditional Jewish circumcisions always happen on the eighth day of life. This just so happens to be when infant's bodies start producing their own vitamin K, which is named for the German koagulationsvitamin, or coagulation. Vitamin K is essential to the synthesis of prothrombin to cause blood clotting. Without vitamin K, a baby is in danger of bleeding out due to internal or external wounds because their blood will not clot.

Because of this, it is routine for all children in America to receive a vitamin K injection at birth to help prevent blood loss from internal injuries resulting from birth. In fact, the eighth day is “the only time in a baby’s life when his prothrombin level will naturally exceed 100 percent of normal” (Mercola). In this case of science catching up with traditional knowledge, circumcising on the eighth day of life is the safest option because it gives the baby the best chance at survival and the least amount of blood loss after the procedure.

The original circumcision as described and commanded in the Hebrew Bible, referred to as *Milah*, was simply the removal of the tip of the foreskin that extended beyond the glans of the penis (Peron). This tiny snip still allowed most of the foreskin to remain intact, and the head of the penis still retained protection and benefits of the foreskin. This is where the Hebrew term for circumcision comes from, Brit Milah, or bris. This tiny cut does not resemble modern-day American medical circumcision, which more closely resembles the type of circumcision that was developed and practiced in Ancient Greece.

The amount of foreskin removed in Jewish circumcision increased in the Hellenistic period to ensure that Jewish men remained looking circumcised. During naked athletic competitions, Jewish athletes would try and blend in with the intact Greek men by pulling their remaining foreskin over the heads of their penis and clipping it, a process known as epispasm (*American Circumcision*). By increasing the amount of foreskin removed during a circumcision, it was no longer possible to pass as a gentile by stretching the foreskin, as the entire head of the penis was now exposed. Epispasm seems to have been a fairly common practice, as “evident from 1 Maccabees 1:11-15, where we are told that some [Jews] built a gymnasium in Jerusalem and ‘made themselves uncircumcised’” (Hall).

Epispasm was largely practiced by Jewish men who were trying to blend in with the socially acceptable Greek aesthetic, and some who may have even been ashamed or embarrassed about their Jewish background. In addition, “other Jews who accepted Greek culture attempted to explain circumcision to the Greeks—and to themselves. A certain Jew named Artapanos (third to second centuries B.C.E.) took a novel approach: Moses founded the religion of Egypt and gave circumcision to Ethiopia. If Egyptians and Ethiopians in following their ancestral practices still keep the teachings of Moses, why should Hebrews not keep them as well?” (Hall).

Roman society was also largely against circumcision. The Roman emperor Hadrian (117-138 C.E.) considered circumcision an “offense against the Greek idea of natural beauty of the human

body” and outlawed it (Hall). While this policy seems to be purely made for the aesthetic aspect, there was also an anti-Semitic precedent in Roman culture in regards to circumcision.

After the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66-70 C.E., punitive measures against Jews were more easily enforced against those who could be identified because they were circumcised. Suetonius tells of an old man claiming exemption from the most hated of these measures, a two drachma tax to fund the worship of Jupiter. The court stripped the old man in court, found him to be circumcised and fined him. A Jewish man could escape such oppressive measures and the stigma attached to them by submitting to epispasm. (Hall)

Today, as in ancient times, many bris ceremonies are performed by a mohel, a male Jewish rabbi or doctor specifically trained in circumcision, or mohelet, a female mohel. The baby’s father is present for the circumcision, and the mother has the option to remain in the room if she wishes. Blessings and prayers are performed, the mohel blesses the wine and gives the new baby boy his Hebrew name. A few drops of wine are given to the child to produce a sedative effect, then the father has a few sips, and then the rest of the wine is for the mother. Then the cut is made. In typical festive Jewish fashion, the ritual is followed by a celebratory meal. The argument of purported medical benefits of circumcision are not the motivation for these bris rituals, as “the Torah knows nothing of [reported hygienic benefits of circumcision] and sees circumcision as a religious duty incumbent only on Jews” (*Jewish Study Bible* 35).

The United States is one of the few countries that has a high number of non-medical secular circumcisions performed on infant boys. Most of these circumcisions are not faith-based, and take place in hospitals immediately after birth. There are strong social and cultural stigmas in the U.S. surrounding circumcision, and the majority of the American male population is circumcised for secular social reasons; however, the CDC shows that RIC numbers are declining, dropping 10% from 1979-2010 (CDC.gov). In the 1970s, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended RIC to help protect boys against issues such as STDs and HIV, and to decrease risk of penile cancer and urinary tract infections. Opponents of circumcision claim that these benefits are minimal, and do not outweigh the risk and trauma of circumcision.

Opposition to circumcision has a long history, and in several instances in the New Testament Paul speaks against the need for circumcision, stating that “for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through

love.” (Gal. 5.6). Many people see this as a human rights issue of informed consent, believing that men should be able to choose for themselves if they want the procedure done or not. There is of course no presentation of choice to infants about RIC, but only to the parents. It begs the question: who owns a child’s body, the parents or the child himself? If a baby is left intact, then he can decide for himself. If a baby is circumcised, they cannot undo it when they get older. Circumcision is a permanent decision that parents are making for their sons, and while there are several methods to stretch foreskin to appear intact, simply stretching the existing skin does not bring back any lost nerve endings. A common argument is that there is a federal law prohibiting female genital mutilation (FGM), so there should be the same protections afforded for boys.

Today, there are many vocal groups of varied faiths that oppose routine circumcision, collectively known as the Intactivist Movement, gaining momentum in mainstream American culture. Contrary to what some believe, these groups are anti routine infant circumcision (RIC), not anti-circumcision in general. One such group is a 510c3 non-profit organization who call themselves Bloodstained Men and Their Friends (BSM), and actively protests circumcision around the U.S. in what many consider to be an aggressive manner. The men dress in all white with red “bloodstains” on their crotches, holding signs up about circumcision choice. They claim that they have been mutilated and robbed of the choice to have autonomy over their own penises, and they are very vocal about it. Like many intactivists, BSM views RIC as a sex crime and consider it male genital mutilation (MGM). BSM organizes scheduled protests in Washington D.C. and around the U.S., and their photos are frequently shared on social media both by members of the intactivist movement and by people who support RIC to make fun of them. The BSM Facebook page frequently shares shocking photos and videos of real circumcisions that are bloody and painful to look at, using the shock value to bring attention to their cause both in real life and online.

In today’s social media culture, information is more palpable when shared in a short burst to hold people’s attention. On Facebook, many article thumbnails now tell you how long it will take to read an article (usually around 3 minutes), because people do not want to take the time and get started on an article that will be a 20 minute commitment. Because of this, there are several online intactivist groups that have folders organized with memes about circumcision on both their websites and their social media sites. These memes offer quick bursts of information contained in one photo file, much like an infographic on a billboard or magazine. These memes can be easily posted on social media to

quickly share information, and are more eye catching than straight text when someone is scrolling through their newsfeed. Sharing information on social media platforms, in addition to several articles and documentaries that have come out in the last several years, has led to an increase in attention to the debate over RIC in American secular society.

In 2011, a ballot measure was introduced in San Francisco to criminalize those who would "circumcise, excise, cut or mutilate the whole or any part of the foreskin, testicles or penis of another person who has not attained the age of 18 years," making the act a misdemeanor with penalties up to \$1000 or one year in jail (Conley). The bill faced fierce opposition from Jewish and Muslim groups, who claimed that it violated their religious freedom. It was struck from the ballot later that year after it was found to violate California law that states that medical regulations are a state matter, and cannot be changed at the city level.

In response to this measure gaining traction in San Francisco, California Governor Jerry Brown signed a bill in the fall of 2011 that prevents local governments from banning male circumcision, since city governments are not permitted to pass laws for medical issues; this is left up to the state (Evangelista). So far, the state of California has not passed any legislation regarding circumcision. While no medical organization in the world recommends RIC, and several countries, such as Germany and Denmark, actively oppose the practice citing lack of medical need and inability to consent (Circumcision Resource Center), many countries, such as the US, choose to take a vague official stance in order to take religious and cultural beliefs into account. In 2012, the American Academy of Pediatrics published their current stance on RIC stating that the "health benefits of newborn male circumcision outweigh the risks, but the benefits are not great enough to recommend universal newborn circumcision," and that the "final decision should still be left to parents to make in the context of their religious, ethical and cultural beliefs" (AAP.org).

The debate around RIC is not limited to the United States. In 2018, Iceland introduced a bill to ban circumcision for minors for non-medical reasons. Icelandic members of both the Jewish and Islamic faiths have spoken out about this proposal saying that it is insensitive and akin to Nazi Germany, targeting specific religious groups (Smith). While there are no synagogues in Iceland and the total Icelandic Jewish population is unknown, estimates say there are between 50 and a couple hundred Jews living in the country (Smith). While the impact on Iceland's population would be minimal, it would set a world-wide precedent for ritual religious circumcision. Many doctors argue

that performing infant circumcisions go against their hippocratic oath to do no harm, as many studies on the benefits of circumcision come from America where there is heavy cultural bias for RIC in the secular medical community, and the most frequently cited studies on circumcision benefits come from problematic, and many would argue unethical, studies performed on men in rural Africa. These studies contain issues such as small sample size, monetary compensation, selection bias, and lack of placebo control (*American Circumcision*). If passed, this law would punish people who perform circumcision on non-consenting minors with up to six years in jail (Smith). While this bill would ban circumcision on minors, it leaves the choice up to consenting adults to get circumcised if they wish.

Even if circumcision becomes illegal for minors in the future, there is still precedent in U.S. law that would allow Jewish communities to continue to follow their ritual traditions. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993

prohibits any agency, department, or official of the United States or any State (the government) from substantially burdening a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability, except that the government may burden a person's exercise of religion only if it demonstrates that application of the burden to the person: (1) furthers a compelling governmental interest; and (2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest. (H.R. 1308)

Of course, this act is widely open to interpretation. Some illegal acts that are deemed in violation of religious freedom can be granted governmental exceptions, like one instance of an import of the illegal hallucinogen dimethyltryptamine (DMT) that a church was able to argue for its religious merit in 2006, and the Controlled Substances Act that allows Native Americans to use peyote for religious purposes (Singer-Vine).

Regardless of local secular laws, there is precedent for Jewish naming ceremonies that do not require circumcision. Naming ceremonies for girls have become increasingly common in both liberal and traditional Jewish communities and are “often called a *simchat bat*, ‘celebration of a daughter,’ or *brit banot*, ‘daughters’ covenant’” (MJL). These ceremonies mirror the bris in all ways except the physical circumcision. It stands to reason, then, that these ceremonies can happen for both girls and boys without the physical circumcision, and that the boys can choose for themselves whether they want to undergo circumcision once they reach adulthood. Religions have the option to grow and change, although oftentimes there are severe growing pains associated with the breaking of tradition.

Perhaps these ceremonies could be like Catholic confirmations, where a man confirms his commitment to Judaism by undergoing circumcision as an adult. While legally in America adulthood is reached at 18, the Jewish tradition considers males adults at the age of 13 once they have their Bar Mitzvah. This is yet another ritual once expressly for men that women are now able to participate in during their Bat Mitzvah, showing a willingness in Judaism to change with the times in certain progressive communities.

Some Jewish parents are breaking tradition for their newborn sons, as well. While many parents opt for an in-hospital medical circumcision over one performed by a mohel, some parents are participating in naming ceremonies without circumcision for their sons as well as daughters. This ceremony is known as a “gentle bris.” These parents often cite concerns in line with the intactivist movement, such as the worry of pain, the belief that it is genital mutilation, and their desire for freedom of choice and bodily autonomy for their sons (Greenburg). Of course, this is not standard practice and happens mostly in very progressive or liberal Jewish communities and is looked down upon by Orthodox Jews, many of whom still perform oral suction on boys’ penises to clear the blood at a bris. Cantor Philip Sherman, an Orthodox mohel who has performed more than 21,000 bris ceremonies, states that parents who choose to opt out of circumcision rites for their sons “don’t have a connection to their Jewish heritage” (qtd. in Greenburg).

Jewish history, however, does have a precedent when it comes to being welcomed into the Jewish community without the need for circumcision. There are stories that demonstrate gentile converts simply needing ablution to become Jewish instead of a circumcision. One example of this is Ananias, who convinced Izates, prince of Adiabene, to become a Jew, and argued that he should not be circumcised. The Jewish author of the *Fourth Sibylline Oracle* urged gentiles to repent and immerse themselves in water but said nothing about the requirement to undergo circumcision. Afterwards, “rabbis debated whether circumcision or immersion in water really made a proselyte. Philo tells us that the real proselyte circumcises not his foreskin but his passions” (Hall). The ease of converting to another religion in today’s society begs reconsideration of permanent surgical procedures performed on children in the name of their parent’s religion.

A common argument for secular circumcision in America is that men want their sons to look like them, so circumcised dads most often will circumcise their sons. This is in line with the original circumcision—it marks men as members of a certain social or cultural group. What if a child grows

up and chooses to join a different group or religion? Then he is permanently marked as belonging to Judaism before he can make the choice himself. In today's largely secular society, it is common for children to grow up and adopt a new religion or lifestyle that is different from their parents. What if any child born into a gang was tattooed in his first week of life, permanently marked with a tattoo? Permanent body modifications on minors, such as tattoos, are illegal in 45 states, regardless of parental consent (NCSL). However, circumcision carries more risk with it than tattooing, such as bleeding out, permanent genital disfigurement, loss of sexual function, and death (Krill). Arguably, a tattoo is simply aesthetic, while supporters of medical routine infant circumcision claim that there are health benefits to the procedure, which opponents of RIC fervently deny.

In the end, this issue boils down to an argument about religious freedom, informed consent, and bodily autonomy in American society. There is an argument for religious freedom for the parents to have the freedom to make this decision for their children, but there is also the issue of religious freedom for the children themselves. Bodily autonomy is something that every human has the right to, and, where there is risk, there must also be choice. Essentially, circumcision marks children as belonging to a certain tribe, whether religious or cultural, and takes the choice away from them themselves. They cannot consent to the procedure and are either forced to join the religion of their parents' choosing or, if they choose to make a different decision when they are older, they are permanently marked.

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