

THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER DYAD AS MODERNIZED ARCHETYPAL
MYTHOLOGY IN *THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT* AND *CARRIE*

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Kelsi Elizabeth Murrow, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Media Studies, has presented a thesis titled, ***The Mother-Daughter Dyad as Modernized Archetypal Mythology in The Last House on the Left and Carrie***, in an oral examination held on January 6, 2020. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes *The Last House on the Left* (1972, Wes Craven, USA) and *Carrie* (1976, Brian De Palma, USA) – two horror films from the 1970s – in terms of Carl Jung’s concepts of the collective unconscious, the shadow, the feeling function, the dual nature of the mother archetype, and specifically, its constellation as the negative mother complex of the daughter. It examines the mother-daughter relationship as female-specific and a unique psychological experience, asserting how the sexual likeness to her mother imbues the daughter with a deeper understanding of her darker unconscious contents. Stressing Jung’s notion of mythology as a ‘language’ of the unconscious, this thesis presents the mother-daughter relationships featured in the films under scrutiny as contemporary manifestations of well-known Greek myths – Demeter/Persephone and Clytemnestra/Electra – and argues that their violent manifestations of mother-daughter relationships gone awry construe the films as compensatory reactions to fears of the liberated woman, bringing “to the consciousness what [has been] *ignored or repressed*” in the collective consciousness by patriarchal culture (Rowland, *Psyche and the Arts* 189-90).

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Dedication

To my beautiful loved ones, family and friends alike, whose patience, understanding, and unbridled support mean everything to me. Thank you a thousand times over for never doubting me.

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Introduction

The mythopoetic theme of the child's utter dependence on his or her mother is a prominent motif of horror cinema. The travails of a damaged son because of an unresolved Oedipus complex, for example, is perhaps most effectively represented through Alfred Hitchcock's Norman Bates (*Psycho*, 1960, USA), but also in other famous works such as *Peeping Tom* (1960, Michael Powell, United Kingdom), *Friday the 13th* (1980, Sean S. Cunningham, USA), and *Halloween* (1978, John Carpenter, USA). The ambiguity of the mother-daughter relationship, on the other hand – the daughter's psychosexual competition with her mother for the father, or the so-called Electra complex¹ – has been seemingly less explored, although many horror films investigate the psychology of the multifaceted relationship between mothers and daughters – *The Brood* (1979, David Cronenberg, Canada), *The Exorcist* (1973, William Friedkin, USA), and in more recent years, *Black Swan* (2010, Darren Aronofsky, USA), *The Witch* (2015, Robert Eggers, USA and Canada), and *Hereditary* (2018, Ari Aster, USA).

On a superficial level, my interest in horror cinema stems from a place between aesthetic enjoyment and thrilling euphoria, as the horror-fueled cathartic experience – from the safe confines of one's home or a theatre – is unrivaled in terms of marrying viscera with comfortable exhilaration. Deeper yet, horror cinema uniquely moulds to varying social and cultural influences; this is something I had taken note of well before my research endeavours. Namely, as an American teenager, the onslaught of early- to

¹ The Electra complex, a term coined by Carl Gustav Jung in 1913, is the girl's sense of competition with her mother for the affections of her father. It is an elaboration on Sigmund Freud's notion of the feminine Oedipus attitude.

mid-2000s American horror films were overtly – and at times, needlessly – gory in the wake of the post-9/11 resurgence of what George Romero coined “splatter films” (later labeled “torture-porn,” a term branded by film critic David Edelstein). Many of these films, including James Wan’s *Saw* (2004), Eli Roth’s *Hostel* (2005), and Rob Zombie’s *The Devil’s Rejects* (2005), to name a few, aptly reflected the United States’ nihilistic sentiments brought on by the Iraq War. However, I found that earlier horror cinema, namely from the early- to mid-1970s, held this same level of violence-ridden meaning in the wake of the Vietnam War, though with an added layer of gender-fueled commentary. These films would inevitably end with one of two outcomes: the teenage girl would rise as the archetypal Final Girl,² or she would be brutally slaughtered. While my academic ventures have led me to countless essays on the Final Girl trope, there seemed to be significantly less on the latter. Thus, my research expanded from oft-explored works of female body horror stemming from puberty, to misogynistic depictions of teenage girls, to their familial relationships as the catalyst for their destruction. Further, their relationships with their mothers piqued my interest the most; as I am exceptionally close with my own mother, the psychological potency of this relationship seemed an especially captivating perception.

In this light, Brian De Palma’s 1976 adaptation of Stephen King’s eponymous novel, *Carrie*, is perhaps one of the most psychologically potent American films, echoing preoccupations with threatening womanhood and the creation of monstrous children – in this case a daughter – because of a repressive upbringing. Outcast Carrie White (Sissy

² The ‘Final Girl’ trope, common to slasher films, refers to the last female character alive to confront the killer. Carol J. Clover describes this as “the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril” (35).

Spacek), a shy, naïve, friendless, and incredibly repressed teenage girl who has been sheltered and abused by her religious-zealot mother, Margaret (Piper Laurie), is relentlessly bullied by her classmates. After menstruating for the first time, an event causing her utter panic and fear, she begins developing telekinetic powers. When one particularly malicious classmate, Chris Hargenson (Nancy Allen), entreats her boyfriend to collect pig's blood and dump it on her at the senior prom as a cruel prank, Carrie's destructive powers overwhelm her, causing her to slaughter the entirety of her peers in the gymnasium. When she returns home, her mother stabs her in the back, to which Carrie reacts with her telekinesis and effectively kills Margaret. Carrie, too, dies, as the Whites' home burns to the ground.

A less studied yet significantly more controversial American film of the same decade, Wes Craven's *The Last House on the Left* (1972), is equally profound psychologically, primarily in terms of its archetypal manifestation of the duality of the mother archetype as the nurturing and the destructive mother, where the maternal grief is featured as the ultimate weapon of destruction. *Last House* follows Mari Collingwood (Sandra Cassel), a teenager on her seventeenth birthday, whose parents reluctantly allow her to attend a heavy metal concert with her best friend, Phyllis (Lucy Grantham). While searching for marijuana in the city, they are kidnapped, raped, tortured, and eventually murdered by a vicious gang of escaped convicts led by the psychopathic Krug Stillo (David Hess). When Mari's parents unknowingly let the gang into their home, they eventually put two-and-two together, learning of the gang's role in their daughter's horrific demise. They subsequently seek brutal revenge against the perpetrators, viciously murdering them.

Reading both *Carrie* and *Last House* as evocative explorations of the psychological ambiguity of the mother-daughter relationship gone terribly wrong is crucial for understanding the significance and enduring longevity of these films. Through the primary framework of concepts and terms borrowed from the works of Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, who refers to mythology as a kind of ‘language’ of the collective unconscious, I aim to examine these films in light of two known Greek myths – those of Demeter and Persephone and of Clytemnestra and Electra – and read them as mythological antecedents to *The Last House on the Left* and *Carrie*, respectively. This approach would allow, I believe, for a valuable and original scrutiny of these films as meaning-making media artefacts, as the premise of a Jungian cinematic approach is that the cinematic artefact by definition is saturated with meaning beyond the obvious. Undoubtedly, in light of Jungian film theory, the examination of media artefacts as external images of pre-existent psychic states or entities also supports the perception of cinema as a ‘modernized mythology,’ and therefore represents a basic epistemological tool in this thesis.

These two films were chosen because of their pertinence to the subject at hand, as well as for their representative temporal significance. American horror cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, as Linda Badley says, made a noteworthy transition from just being another film genre among many to becoming “a widespread mythology that informed and constructed mass culture, causing people to think and speak about themselves and their feelings in particular ways” (2). Badley further stresses horror of the time as “perhaps the best example of a transmedia phenomenon an emotion and an element present throughout literature, film, and art” (2), whose “iconographies corresponded in ways that

suggested a common coming to consciousness” (3). To elaborate on this assertion, I argue that the effect of horror cinema on mass culture is directly related to the influence of second-wave feminism, since female film characters could be seen as critical players in the creation of the ‘widespread mythology’ of the time; or as Jungians would have it, as time- and culture-specific manifestations of the feminine.

American second-wave feminism has been criticized as primarily concerned with white, middle-aged women, though many texts refute this narrative.³ However, in contrast to American first-wave feminism, which primarily focused on legal issues – namely women’s right to vote and equality in the labour market – second-wave feminism highlighted the “impact of sexism and patriarchy on every aspect of women’s private lives,” declaring ‘the personal as political,’ thus defining personal experience as a direct function of sociopolitical structures (Munro). This proclamation had a momentous impact on the collective consciousness⁴; therefore the qualitative changes demonstrated by the horror genre, flaunting ultra-violent exploitation like the two films under scrutiny here, is arguably no coincidence and could be regarded as a compensatory reaction – at least in the United States – of the patriarchal culture against the widely spreading patriarchy-threatening mythology, more particularly its stance against rape and violence against

³ Feminist scholar Stephanie Gilmore refers to this notion as suspended in “historical – or rather, *ahistorical* – amber, unable to move or be moved” (2). For Gilmore, embracing an expansive definition of feminism – one which ““need not require an unwavering single focus on gender,”” just as ““gender-conscious reform [does not] reside only in all-female organizations”” – allows us to appreciate the complexities and nuances present throughout the entirety of this historical project. However, the patriarchal collective viewed this movement as a threat to the extant gender power dynamics.

⁴ The collective consciousness refers to a set of shared beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and ideas that are common to a social group or society, a term first introduced by the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (Bell).

women. And while on one hand American culture was being increasingly informed by feminist ideas, on the other hand, as feminist and psychoanalytic film scholar Barbara Creed notes, images of monstrous women became ever so frequent on screen, challenging the patriarchal perception of all things feminine as “essentially non-violent, peaceful, [and] unaggressive” (156). The proliferation of images of the abject⁵ woman-as-victim could also be seen as compensatory projections of deep-seated fears in the collective unconscious of the negative feminine, as well as a preventive strategy on behalf of the threatened patriarchal power – and therefore an attempt to “rob woman [sic] of her terrifying – but imaginary – powers” before she can use them (131). Thus, the subgenres of exploitation and rape-revenge grew in popularity, projecting onto mass media culture a disturbance within the collective consciousness, caused by emergent ‘ignored and repressed’ contents from the collective unconscious.

Mari Collingwood, the main character in *Last House*, for example, teeters between two female archetypal figures: the conventional ‘good girl,’ evidenced by her ostensible virginity and somewhat old-fashioned upbringing, and the ‘misbehaved’ liberated woman of the early 1970s, epitomized by her best friend, Phyllis, a clearly more ‘experienced’ party girl of lower social status. To the dismay of her parents, Mari opts to go braless, propagating the ‘bra-burner’ perception of feminism from the 1970s. Both young women are severely punished for their perceived transgressions (which also

⁵ A concept to be further scrutinized in subsequent sections, the abject – in Julia Kristeva’s terms – refers to that which is cast off or repressed as threatening to one’s sense of self or life (such as death, bodily functions, so-called deviant desires, etc.), or signifies a threatened breakdown of meaning between boundaries such as ‘self’ and ‘other.’

include attending a heavy metal concert, searching for marijuana, and appearing to be sexually liberated), efficiently terminating their threat to the patriarchal status quo.

Carrie's eponymous protagonist similarly suggests such a threat to patriarchal power, notably her emergent telekinetic powers upon her first period, embodying Creed's notion of the monstrous-feminine⁶ – or woman as 'menstrual monster' once she undergoes puberty. Carrie is similarly punished for her attempted freedom from the confines of her religiously zealous mother, Margaret; after wearing a revealing dress, then dancing with and kissing a boy, she subsequently falls victim to a cruel prank in which she is doused in pig's blood in front of her peers at the prom. Additionally, all but one female character in the film die a particularly violent death – Carrie and Margaret included. As explained by Serafina Kent Bathrick, director Brian De Palma exploits the position of women in the film "[b]y systematically witch hunting for social wrongs through the sexualizing of women's nature and bodily functions," asserting the film's presentation of Carrie being punished for being a woman (9).

Further, the horror motifs in John Carpenter's *Halloween* prompted renowned film critics Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel to identify the then-trendy slasher genre as perpetuating a "perverse social climate" which harbors "anti-feminine feelings" (qtd. in Winning 11). In his 1981 article, titled "Why Movie Audiences Aren't Safe Anymore," Siskel writes:

⁶ Creed's concept of the monstrous-feminine subverts the common horror trope of woman-as-victim; conversely, Creed asserts that women are often portrayed as monsters, representative through the figures of witches, vampires, and those who possess *vagina dentata* – toothed vaginas indicative of 'woman-as-castrator.'

“... this has something to do with the growth of the women’s movement in America in the last decade. These films are some sort of primordial response by some very sick people saying ‘Get back in your place, women!’ The women in the films are typically portrayed as independent, as sexual, as enjoying life. [So] the killer ... strikes back at them ... [h]e cuts them up.” (qtd. in Winning 12)

In light of Jungian and post-Jungian feminist readings, however, this proliferation of half-nude, sexually promiscuous women in films like *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* could also be seen as a revolt against the millennium-long repression of the feminine by Christianity. Marie-Louise von Franz, a colleague and collaborator of Jung, explains this repression as a backlash against the prominent expression of Eros⁷ in Western Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries amidst the prominent troubadour culture – when the feminine principle was significantly recognized and attended to. She then notes with regret the devastating effect of the onslaught of the Reformation and the “demonic extraversion of the Renaissance”:

Thus a most promising psychological attitude, and a very important beginning, suddenly was repressed through the stiffening of the Christian collective conscious attitude.... [For] the development of the anima, it was a regression.

(*Feminine in Fairy Tales* 139)

Feminist Jungian scholar Susan Rowland further supports the notion that monotheism as a patriarchal structure – hinged on the idea of a single male authority, or the ‘Father God’ – was detrimental for the feminine, regarding it not only as marginal, but also as coming

⁷ In Greek mythology, Eros is the god personifying love and sex, while in Jungian understanding, the unconscious Eros manifests through the feminine as a desire for psychic connection, making possible the functionality of a relationship (qtd. in Sharp 51).

“to denote all that is other to the paternal God’s masculine creative spirit,” that is, “matter, body, unreason, unconsciousness, negativity and sexuality” (*Remembering Dionysus* 21). Moreover, writings from Antiquity and the Church’s early fathers tend to present women as “the worst evil encountered by humanity,” claiming that they are “more gullible, more impressionable, cannot keep a secret, are more libidinous than men ... [and are] imperfect animals, being born from Adam's rib, a bent bone that is opposite to the masculine straight line: that is why they constantly lie and cheat” (Tremblay 41-2).

Another serious – and concurrent – reason for this outburst of violence on the 1970s screen is the underdevelopment of what Jung calls the ‘feeling’ function due to the overdevelopment of the main one – the overly rational ‘thinking’ function.⁸ Jung’s quaternary structure of the basic cognitive functions – thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition – can be compared, as von Franz explains, to a room with four doors. The door, least guarded and used, could therefore be homologized to the inferior psychic function, through which banished unconscious contents make their way into the room, that is, into our consciousness. Because, as she writes, “the inferior function is so close to the unconscious and remains so barbaric and inferior and underdeveloped,” it is therefore “naturally the weak spot in consciousness through which the figures of the unconscious can break in” (von Franz, *Psychotherapy* 118).

Ideally, all four functions should develop simultaneously; however, this is a virtually impossible feat. As a result, one function differentiates and develops more strongly than others – this is the *primary* (or *superior*) *function*. Jung explains: ““The

⁸ ‘Thinking’ and ‘feeling’ are the two judging (or rational) psychological functions, while ‘intuition’ and ‘sensation’ are the two perceiving (or non-rational) ones. In Jungian context, *differentiated* feeling should not be confused with ‘emotion’ or ‘affect;’ instead, it refers to the way in which we evaluate what something or someone is worth to us (qtd. in Sharp 56-7).

demands of society compel a man to apply himself first and foremost to the differentiation of the function with which he is best equipped by nature, or which will secure him the greatest social success” (qtd. in Sharp 102). In other words, one’s primary function comes the most naturally, mirrors the conscious personality (persona), and must be upheld throughout one’s life – to the detriment of the other two auxiliary functions, but especially to the inferior one, which is pushed even deeper into the unconscious – if one is to succeed socially.

The frequent visual exemplifications of barbarity and evil, which both *Last House* and *Carrie* illustrate, reinforce horror cinema as a psychologically affective art form onto which unconscious contents, channelled through the inferior function, are expressed.

Indeed, Jung insisted on the imperative of addressing the negative contents of the collective unconscious – or the shadow – on both the individual and collective level. And while on the individual level it ensures the psychological balance, necessary for individuation, on the collective level, as Jung notes, “identifying only with one’s ‘good’ side while projecting the dark (or evil) side onto others – people, social, and national entities alike – is ‘disastrous for both the individual and the community’” (qtd. in Sharp 132). Jung then categorically asserts that dealing with the darker side is vital for the future of the world: a notion, taken up in von Franz’s discussion of the inferior function, which – along with Jungian understanding of evil and its origins – is an essential building block for understanding the role of horror cinema.

As texts which compensate for the inferior feeling function, horror films are extremely psychologically potent, as repressed, underdeveloped feeling releases negative

shadow content out from our unconscious, which is subsequently used to frighten us. This allows horror cinema – in Rowland’s words – to “*compensate* culture for its biases” by bringing “to the consciousness what is *ignored* or repressed,” and also to “*predict* something of the future direction of a culture” (*Psyche and the Arts* 189-90). *Carrie*, for example, visualizes and thus makes conscious contents that are repressed in the collective unconscious, such as menstrual blood, the negative mother archetype, the shadow, and above all, the disconcerting dynamic between mother and daughter, that is, between Carrie White and her mother, Margaret. *Last House* flaunts the same psychological device in revealing repressed abject and unconscious content in a manner described as notoriously exploitative, gratuitous, and disturbing.⁹

This thesis therefore aims to demonstrate the ways the unconscious communicates contents through myths and symbols, as they play a fundamental role in translating ‘unknowable’ unconscious contents into the tangible audio-visual modes of cinema, which also happens to be one of the most prominent forms of entertainment nowadays. Further, approaching cinema through the grid of the so-called symbolic approach – and amplification – over the semiotic approach more common to cinema studies, imbues these works with deeper psychological significance. In light of works by Carl Gustav Jung, Susan Rowland, Marie-Louise von Franz, Barbara Creed, Joseph Campbell, and other prominent scholars of depth psychology, the thesis approaches *The Last House on the Left* and *Carrie* as contemporized renditions of two ancient myths about traumatic

⁹ This reputation was heavily capitalized on, as the film’s promotional material regularly showcased the tagline: ‘To avoid fainting, keep repeating: “It’s only a movie, only a movie, only a movie...”’

mother-daughter relationships. The three chapters are structured around three research clusters, as follows:

Chapter 1: Horror Cinema as Contemporary Mythology tackles the Jungian notion of the collective unconscious and its role in the interpretation of horror cinema as a modern-day mythology. Through examination of Freudian-Lacanian approaches to cinema as foundational for Jungian film studies, this chapter emphasizes the prominence of the symbolic approach. It also dwells on the essential role of the mother in Freudian-Lacanian and Jungian scholarship; and on the transcultural and transtemporal nature of myth and archetypes. Last but not least, Chapter 1 looks at film as a communicative interface between the conscious and the unconscious, and regards film viewing as a form of projection of complexes, and a form of amplification process.

Chapter 2: Manifestations of the Dark Maternal focuses on the ramifications of the underdeveloped feeling function and the role of the shadow in the films under scrutiny. More specifically, it focuses on the manifestations of the abject in Julia Kristeva's and Barbara Creed's understanding. Then the chapter looks at the duality of the mother archetype and its meaning in *The Last House on the Left* and in *Carrie* in light of how horror supplements melodrama, especially as applied to the maternal body, and Jung's interpretation of the four extreme forms of the mother complex of the daughter, namely hypertrophy of the maternal element, overdevelopment of Eros, identity with the mother, and resistance to the mother.

Chapter 3: Archetypal Mother-Daughter Dynamics in Myth and on Screen, examines the specificities of the mother-daughter relationship in *The Last House on the Left* in light of the Demeter and Persephone myth. It focuses on how the Mari-Estelle

dyad embodies hypertrophy of the maternal element and overdevelopment of Eros, and interprets Estelle as Mari's 'loving and terrible mother.' The dynamics between Carrie and Margaret White in *Carrie* are then examined in light of the Clytemnestra and Electra myth, with the Carrie-Margaret dyad exhibiting elements of identity with the mother and resistance to the mother, and with Carrie and Electra scrutinized in terms of archetypal 'monstrous children.' Chapter 3 then closes with amplification of the cross and prominent blood symbolism in *Last House* and *Carrie*.

Thus informed by Jung, von Franz, Creed, and Rowland, and performing a deep psychological excavation in order to bring unconscious contents to consciousness, the thesis concludes by asserting that Jung-informed mythopoetic explorations of the mother-daughter relationship and its psychological ambiguity is crucial for understanding the feminine in horror cinema. While this thesis is by no means exhaustive considering the labyrinthine complexities of Jungian psychology, my purpose in this discussion has been to demonstrate the unique ways in which horror cinema – a genre that is often looked down upon by art and academia – is capable of delivering psychologically potent material, and allows for a glimpse at otherwise unreachable depths of experience – in this case female experience in the contexts of the second wave feminism of the 1970s.

Chapter 1: Horror Cinema as Contemporary Mythology

“One thing that comes out in myths is that at the bottom of the abyss comes the voice of salvation. The black moment is the moment when the real message of transformation is going to come. At the darkest moment comes the light.”

- Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth* (37)

A Jungian Conceptual System

Given Jungian theory’s centrality to this thesis, a brief yet detailed conceptual review is in order.

First and foremost, Jung’s notion of the unconscious – perhaps the most vital one for this thesis – envisions two layers: the *personal* and the *collective*. The *personal unconscious* refers to repressed personal contents and is similar to Freud’s concept of the unconscious, while the *collective unconscious* is the deepest layer of the psyche consisting of inherent, primordial structures shared by all humans, harbouring deep layers of unknowable contents under scrutiny here (Jung, *Collected Works* 119; vol. 6).

The collective unconscious includes Jungian *archetypes*, which are inherited structuring patterns of memories, instincts and experiences common to humankind (Rowland, *Jung: A Feminist Revision* 173). These should not be confused with *archetypal images*, which are tangible manifestations of archetypes, or “universal patterns or motifs which come from the collective unconscious ... [that] are the basic content of religions, mythologies, legends and fairy tales” (qtd. in Sharp 29).

The most often discussed archetypes in Jungian scholarship include the *anima*, *animus*, *shadow*, and *mother*. The *anima* archetype is the unconscious feminine side of a man, while the *animus* archetype is the unconscious masculine side of a woman (qtd. in Sharp 18; 23). One of the most crucial archetypes in the current argument is the *shadow* –

the innate ‘dark side’ of the personality related also to the darkest corners of the unconscious (Jung qtd. in Sharp 123). Another important archetype is the *mother archetype* – discussed in this thesis with regard of both its positive and negative aspects. While it is inevitably related to one’s personal mother or mother-figure, it is also manifested as goddess mother figures such as Demeter or Sophia – or – in its negative apparitions – as a witch, Baba Yaga, or Medusa. (Relke).

For Jung, it is imperative to the human condition that our conscious selves recognize and reconcile with our unconscious contents. This process he describes as *individuation* – or optimal personal development that is to be consciously pursued throughout one’s life (qtd. in Sharp 67-8). Individuation can also be understood as the archetype of wholeness and meaning, referred to as the *self*. According to Sharp: “The aim is not to overcome one’s personal psychology, to become perfect, but to become familiar with it. Thus individuation involves an increasing awareness of one’s unique psychological reality ... and at the same time a deeper appreciation of humanity in general” (67).

In terms of reading films through a Jungian symbolic lens, this thesis utilizes the process of *amplification* in order to unpack them as modern mythological manifestations. This approach involves linking, or *amplifying*, psychic images to mythological, historical, and cultural motifs, which allows “to make an image appear less personal [and] so suggests something of the ‘otherness’ of the unconscious” (Rowland, *Jung: A Feminist Revision* 173).

While a Jungian methodological approach to cinema requires thorough attention to particular nuances of the archetypes as manifestations of the unconscious, especially

when applied to art, these primary concepts works as a necessary baseline for Jungian thought.

Towards a Jungian Methodological Approach

Cinema and cinema studies have shown affinity for psychoanalysis as early as their respective beginnings in the first two decades of the last century. It is enough to recall the indebtedness to psychoanalysis of German Expressionism and French Surrealism – as well as that of their theoreticians Siegfried Kracauer¹⁰ and André Breton¹¹ – in order to understand the importance of psychoanalytical theory in academia in the 1970s. With its roots anchored in the theories of Sigmund Freud and his follower, Jacques Lacan, psychoanalytic film theory became distinct from other theoretical approaches to film as it “sets out to understand and deconstruct the operations of the cinematic apparatus, the construction and coding of films themselves, and their subsequent affective impact at the moment of reception” (Bassil-Morozow and Hockley 2).

Psychoanalysis, or the study of the unconscious mind – established by Freud at the turn of the twentieth century¹² – offers a deeper look into the human experience and

¹⁰ Kracauer was a German writer and film theorist who authored the seminal *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (1947), a psychoanalytic examination of the relationship between cinema and Germans’ psychological mindset within the Weimar Republic (Dudley 106).

¹¹ Breton was a French poet, essayist, critic, and one of the principal founders of the Surrealist movement, which aimed to blur the line between dreams and reality (Lewis).

¹² While Freud is generally considered the grandfather of psychoanalysis, his approaches were built on the researches of other nineteenth-century psychiatrists such as Jean-Martin Charcot and Josef Breuer.

its psychology, where the investigation of the conscious and unconscious mind is done through an array of hypotheses and conceptual theorization. In general, psychoanalytical approaches to art – and to audio-visual media in particular – approach art as a complex expression of human psychology.

Jungian film studies, on the other hand, is a relatively new yet rapidly growing academic field, which has not yet reached the influential magnitude of Freudian and Lacanian schools. Perhaps this is due, as Bassil-Morozow and Hockley argue, to the ease of reducing Jungian film criticism proper to categorizing film characters as basic archetypal images, an approach that is far from accommodating the complexities of the modern world nor those of the psyche (8). Indeed, archetypes, with their “potentials for meaning formation and images,” as Rowland explains (*Jung: A Feminist Revision* 173) – while applicable across all cultures throughout history – could only manifest visually as archetypal images. It is thus easy to grasp why – if archetypes are seen as contents, and archetypal images as their containers – audio-visual artefacts are frequently subjected to reductive analyses. Yet archetypal images have always already a “metaphorical connection” to them, and are therefore open to creative interpretation (174). Moreover, archetypal images have been manifested for millennia in various iterations in fairy tales, literature, film genres, and – most significantly for Jung – in mythology.

Further, as Bassil-Morozow and Hockley argue, a Jungian approach to film presupposes “a set of sensitivities that offer a different framework within which to go about understanding how it is that meaning is made in, by and, crucially, with media artefacts” (12). By analyzing the vital role played by the moving image in our personal

psychological development within a Jungian framework, the authors explicate the immense emotional power of the cinematic viewing experience.

Jungian film theory offers possibilities for investigation into the ways we make meaningful contact with art. In order to avoid entangled philosophical argument, I would like to point out that the term ‘meaning’ is used primarily here to signify simply “becoming conscious of new knowledge” – as Aniela Jaffé, Jung’s close assistant and memoirist, has put it (22). As Aristotle asserts, any good tragedy is based on “a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune” (*Poetics*). Notably, Jaffé goes on to quote theoretical physicist Wolfgang Pauli – another close collaborator of Jung’s – who affirms that meaning is ““based on correspondence; a ‘matching’ of inner images pre-existent in the human psyche with external objects and their behaviour”” (22).

Mothers and Daughters

Since this thesis looks at horror cinema as a conduit for psychological understanding, I wish to examine its interaction with darker contents of the psyche – or the unconscious. Both Freud and Jung emphasize the vital role of the unconscious in personal development, and although their notorious disagreement over the nature and meaning of the unconscious played a significant role in their 1913 break-up,¹³ broadly speaking, Freud and Jung are in agreement with regard to the inaccessibility of the

¹³ Jung and Freud’s differing understandings of the unconscious, alongside their disagreement over the nature of the libido, worked as two of the many catalysts leading to their severed friendship. Freud described the libido as the energy of ‘love’-related instincts, generally in terms of sexual desire, whereas for Jung the libido is not exclusively sexual, but the totality of psychic energy (Doran 7).

unconscious by the conscious mind, and the importance of its manifestation in dream analysis.

Another area where Freud and Jung, as well as Lacan, meet is the role of childhood, and more specifically, the role of the mother, in the individual's psychological formation. Furthermore, Freud's – and later Lacan's – ideas about the child's desire for the mother as an integral moment in its psychological development, mirror Jung's study of what he calls the 'mother complex' of the son and of the daughter. Attempts at bridging the gap between these two approaches to the complexities of mother-child interactions could be found in the works of feminist scholars Julia Kristeva and Barbara Creed, more specifically in their discussion of the abject and of the archaic mother.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the investigation of the crucial role of the mother during her son's formative years is a staple in Freudian-Lacanian approaches to horror cinema, notably in terms of the Oedipus complex – the son's sexual desire for his mother and rivalry with the father. However, the less explored yet equally powerful Electra complex, that is, the sexual desire of the daughter for the father and her rivalry with the mother – a term coined by Jung in response to Freud's notion of a feminine Oedipus attitude – allows for an equally fruitful approach to horror films, featuring damaged mother-daughter relationships. My interest in such relationships as subjects of horror cinema has thus prompted my research into both Freudian-Lacanian as well as Jungian schools of thought.

The Collective Unconscious and Myth

The collective unconscious, as Jung explains, “contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind’s evolution, born anew in the brain structure of every individual.” In terms of myth, the collective unconscious

[a]ppears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious (*Collected Works* 119-23; vol. 8).

And since Jungian theory sees art in general – and audio-visual artefacts in particular – as tools for excavating and making obvious obscured or repressed contents of the collective unconscious, including ‘mythological motifs’ and ‘primordial images,’ it facilitates the meaningful correlation of two well-known Greek myths about complex mother-daughter relationships – those of Demeter and Persephone, and of Clytemnestra and Electra – to *The Last House on the Left* and *Carrie*, respectively. Further, it allows for their interpretation as commentaries on not only the suffering of the characters involved, but also on the severed potential for individuation. To look at these complex mother-daughter relationships through the prism of well-known myths and recognizable archetypal patterns is immensely helpful for the analyses of the two films. All the more that mythological motifs happen to play a decisive role in horror cinema, and both Freud¹⁴ and Jung admit that myth provides an integral expression of complex psychological states. Indeed, Jungian understanding of mythology as a kind of ‘language,’ in which the

¹⁴ Like Jung, Freud analyzes myth as parallel to dreams, though his primary interest in the Oedipus myth most prominently underlines his theories: ““This is in entire accord with the findings of psychoanalysis, namely, that the nucleus of all neuroses as far as our present knowledge of them goes is the Oedipus complex”” (qtd. in Stenudd).

unconscious communicates with consciousness, provides yet another basic analytical concept used in this paper.

Myth and Film as Languages of the Unconscious

According to Karl Kerényi – a prominent scholar of Greek mythology and Jung’s collaborator – mythology is an “immemorial and traditional body of material contained in tales about gods and god-like beings, heroic battles and journeys to the Underworld ... [of] tales already well known but not unamenable to further reshaping [S]olid yet mobile, substantial and yet not static, [and] capable of transformation” (“Prolegomena” 2). Structurally akin to archetypes, myths are not stagnant – they mold, modify, and manifest through various cultural, temporal, artistic, and spiritual contexts. Myths share with archetypes primordial elements; they are pregnant with meaning.

American cultural anthropologist Joseph Campbell, whose writings on the universal functions of myth throughout various human cultures concur with Jung’s understanding of myth and its symbolic meaning, describes myth as the linchpin that renders human beings psychologically similar. Moreover, mythology, as the language of the self, speaking to the ego, sanctions humans to peer inward in order to better understand the human experience as a whole (“Mythos 1”).

For Jung, the mythological stories and characters are personifications of archetypal content that circumscribe and give an approximate description of an unconscious core of meaning (Waddell 15). Furthermore, their “retelling causes these processes to come alive again and be recollected, thereby re-establishing the connection between conscious and unconscious” (Voss 13). Likewise, art could be perceived as an in-depth psychological testimony; taking it further, film can be seen as a visualized

manifestation of myth, or the mythology of a specific age or culture, given that the impact of cinema on modern consciousness is much more substantial than that of classical mythology – as the effect of diegetic oral tales could hardly stand comparison to the visceral power of the audio-visual mimetic illusion. Jung’s assertion that “the most we can do is *dream the myth onwards* and give it a modern dress” (“Child Archetype” 79) countenances the current analysis of horror film as a form of modernized mythology. Jung also asserts that myths *must* be read as experiential: “The primitive¹⁵ mentality does not invent myths, but experiences them. Myths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings, and anything but allegories of physical processes” (73).

Therefore approaching myth on film and film as myth – an experientially metamorphic process – reflects the perpetual dialogue between the unconscious and the conscious mind. Indeed, as Jung claims, “we can ... study the collective unconscious in two ways, either in mythology or in the analysis of the individual” (qtd. in Sharp 36). While studying the individual is demonstrably imperative in psychotherapy, analyzing mythology provides immense insight into humankind as a whole just as the collective unconscious does. As Terrie Waddell writes in *Mis/Takes: Archetype, Myth and Identity in Screen Fiction*, employing Jung’s ideas in the examination of film involves drawing on core archetypal patterns central to his understanding of the psyche and mythology (1).

It could be therefore argued that the affective audio-visual elements of horror cinema amount to externalizations of deep-seated fears and anxieties – or to visual tropes

¹⁵ The word ‘primitive’ in this thesis is used in the context of Jung’s and Joseph Campbell’s discussions of the psyche, referring to the early stages of psychological maturation, i.e. meaning a person who has not yet individuated.

of nightmares and myths – whose origins could be traced to the collective unconscious. According to Campbell, the darker aspects of myth provide a sort of salvation for the soul: “The black moment is the moment when the real message of transformation is going to come. At the darkest moment comes the light” (*Power of Myth* 37).

For Luke Hockley, psychologically affective experiences can either have a positive or negative charge; often, however, negative events can very well lead to positive personal introspection. While asserting that the gratuitously brutal *Last House* yields *positive* affect sounds like a treacherous reach, being disturbed by screen violence enforces the power of cinema and its ability to harness the cinematic delusion to garner insight into dark corners of the unconscious similar to dream states. As Hockley writes:

[H]ere I want to emphasize how in both states the rational part of the mind ... is temporarily suspended and the delusion becomes psychologically real. Again it is possible to see how cinema occupies a liminal space. It is here, between reality and delusion, that we have a space which we can variously term mythopoetic, affective or full of *temenos*, and it is this space which comes into being as a result of the unconscious encounter of an individual psyche with a collective fiction.

(*Somatic Cinema* 49-50)

In other words, similarly to myth, this ‘liminal space’ is located within the transitional, boundary area between the conscious and the unconscious, where from, according to Hockley, the cinematic illusion emerges. While there are many ways to interpret the Demeter/Persephone myth (as drama, tragedy, even as melodrama, given Persephone’s inexplicable attachment to Hades) – we can read it as an indispensable, culturally unbound manifestation of the mother-daughter complex. Hockley notes that violence-

ridden audio-visual projections of this complex trigger overwhelming, unconscious negotiations of meaning (39). Readers or listeners would certainly sympathize with Demeter and her grief upon the kidnapping of her daughter Persephone, even as she scorches the earth and unwittingly starves thousands; watching Estelle (Cynthia Carr) and her anguish-driven violence in *Last House*, however, especially upon having witnessed the atrocities Mari endures, triggers an intense interplay between the on-screen images and viewers' own deep-seated fears for their loved ones, fears of mutilation, and even fears of Estelle's ferocity, provoked in a way that words cannot rival. Further, Estelle's deep maternal pathos is tangible due not only to her viscerally manifested sorrow, but through the simple fact that she is initially portrayed as an ostensibly good – albeit conservative – mother.

Projection and Complexes

The emphasis on the interplay between unconscious, archetypal contents and filmic images reflects Jung's crucial point that self-realization involves forging and keeping a living tie between the conscious and unconscious mind. This interplay, however, is a complex process, further complicated by projections. For Jung, projection is an inadvertent process where contents – especially the negative shadow content, or repulsive qualities – of one's own unconscious are perceived as belonging to the other person. He defines it as “an unconscious, that is, unperceived and unintentional, transfer of subjective psychic elements onto an outer object” (von Franz, *Projection and Re-Collection* 3).

The cinematic medium offers a unique opportunity for illustration of projection, allowing us to “experience these moments in a spontaneous and affect-laden way”

(*Somatic Cinema* 120). This notion of cinematic experiences ‘replicating’ deeply hidden psychological processes is nothing new in psychoanalytic film theory. It is explicit in the psychological specificity of what the German psychologist Hugo Mauerhofer calls the ‘cinema situation’ (qtd. in Uhde 1), or Metz defines as the ‘machinery of cinema,’ and in the Lacanian mirror phase (695). However, seeing one’s complexes projected on screen kindles a particularly affective experience due to their independent existence from one’s personality, both unconscious and conscious. Complexes are distinct, powerful, “emotionally charged ideas and images... that over the years accumulate around certain archetypes, for instance ‘mother’ and ‘father’” (Jung qtd. in Sharp 37), and usually evoke a physical reaction, whose emotional energy is directly proportional to the severity of the experience which has made possible their constellation (Jacobi 6, 30). As Barbara H. Miller writes,

[E]ach complex is united by the same emotion [...] and organised by a mutual core of meaning. That is, the complex organises experience, perception, and affect around a constant central theme.

Because they stem from both conscious/physical experiences as well as from inherently stored archetypal images, complexes tend to essentially “possess” people (Van den Berk 18-9). And what is of importance to the current argument is that uninhibited identification of viewers with characters, possessed by complexes similar to theirs, could eventually lead to catharsis. Hockley believes that such an occurrence would be akin to psychotherapy, asserting the role of cinema in activating the image-making capacity of the psyche, and creating “an image that encapsulates the reality of an individual’s psychological situation” (*Somatic Cinema* 38). Therefore the mother archetype and the

mother complex are bound to evoke a most visceral reaction when manifested as primordially abject, drawing on the mother's formidable archetypal power as both creator and destroyer of life.

For the female viewer, identifying with an on-screen character with a similar type of mother complex floods the doors between the conscious and the unconscious with self-actualizing potential; this is especially true for mothers and daughters who, according to von Franz, are enveloped in the "natural phenomenon" of projecting their negative unconscious contents onto one another, withholding them from individuation (*Feminine in Fairy Tales* 170).

Symbol versus Sign

The filmic audio-visual aspect – as opposed to diegetic storytelling – renders spectators more invested in whatever is shown; it stimulates their senses, therefore demanding their attention more effectively. As has been recognized in film studies, the filmic illusion leads to viewers' identification with the events on the screen: a process facilitated by the 'machinery of cinema.' The horror film further magnifies the somatic experience of the 'cinema situation,' while enabling the dialogue between consciousness and the unconscious.

The significance of terms like 'process,' 'transformation,' and most importantly, 'symbol' in Jungian film criticism are further buttressed in light of the symbolic approach, propounded in the celebrated essay "Jung/Sign/Symbol/Film" by Jungian scholar Don Fredericksen, where he discusses amplification as a method of transcending the sign/symbol dichotomy, thus aiding the viewer to access more levels of meaning in both the psychological and affective sense.

Fredericksen – as well as Jungian scholar William Smythe – each define symbols in terms of *showing* versus *telling*, with variations of meaning superseding mere rationalization. Considering that a sign represents a known thing which ‘stands for’ another known thing or entity (i.e. the cross representing Christianity), symbols hold deeper meanings which, like archetypes, are adaptable to a vast range of cultural, temporal, or social contexts.¹⁶

Fredericksen further examines the effectiveness of the semiotic and symbolic approaches for film studies. Following Jung, he argues that this distinction brings to bear not only psychological, but also ontological and philosophical importance. In contrast to Freudian, Lacanian, and Marxist approaches to film – which are semiotic by definition since they are aiming to “[explain] rationally every symbol, and [turn] it into a sign once and for all” – Fredericksen designates the symbolic approach as aligning more aptly to “symbolic products of the psyche” – and to cinema, for that matter (qtd. in Stojanova, “German Cinematic Expressionism” 39). The cultural and temporal limitations of the semiotic approaches in film studies, according to Fredericksen, are due to their over-reliance on denotative (and finite) reading of symbols, thus turning them into fixed ideological and cultural *signs*.

Furthermore, as emphasized by Smythe, Jung’s notion of amplification – a technique which brings in high relief the use of mythological, historical, and cultural parallels in order to interpret, or literally *amplify*, symbols and images found in dreams,

¹⁶ According to Jung, “[e]very psychological expression is a symbol if we assume that it states or signifies something more and other than itself which eludes our present knowledge” (qtd. in Sharp 131). In terms of meaning, a symbol always retains the surplus value, which stands for something unknown.

mythology and the arts – is the preferred method to ““exemplify, elaborate and embellish meaning without ever exhausting or explaining it”” (qtd. in Stojanova, “German Cinematic Expressionism” 38).¹⁷ Smythe also notes that amplification is not necessarily meant to endow a symbol with a meaning, and could be used as a ““discovery procedure”” (38).

Yet, as Fredericksen admits, the majority of films are semiotic in character, representing “disguised or distorted signs for known or putatively known underlying processes” and “manifestations – displaced or otherwise – of known social codes” (27). These films – which, following Jung, we may also call ‘psychological’ – are self-sufficient and closed within themselves, since the author has done all the work there and has left almost nothing to the viewer. Psychological art, Rowland notes, “expresses mainly the collective consciousness of a society” it is art in which “the artist has already done most of the psychic work for the audience” (*Psyche and The Arts* 187-8).

Conversely, the symbolic approach best serves works which Jung calls ‘visionary.’ Rowland notes that visionary art is primarily communicative of contents from the collective unconscious. As such, it “mainly consists of symbols, which point to what is not yet known or unknowable in the culture” (*Psyche and The Arts* 189-90) while also bringing repressed unconscious contents to consciousness, effectively ““*compensat[ing]* their culture for its biases”” just as the best exemplars of horror cinema do (qtd. in Stojanova, “German Cinematic Expressionism” 41).

¹⁷ According to Smythe, “[Such a] distinction between the conceptual’ – or the semiotic – and ‘the non-conceptual’ – or the symbolic – could be compared to ‘the contrast between the denotative function of conceptual language and the expressive function of symbols”” (38-9).

Film Viewing as Amplification Process

The psychological experience of amplification, described by Jung as an affective experience ““*in images and of images*”” – as argued above – is at work in the film viewing process, whereas screen images hold affective meaning in terms of our relationship with them (Bassil-Morozow, “Using Jung” 61). The impact of the filmic image does not stem from the image alone, but rather from “the additional potential [it] carries, in any and all cultural settings, from which the significance is realized by our imaginations” (Winning 24). Furthermore, the filmic image reflects only a physical outline that bears no meaning until the viewers themselves become “a container for that image’s substance” (24), in a way similar to the manner in which archetypes use manifest archetypal images as containers for their content. The “doors of perception” between things known and unknown (Huxley) – or between consciousness and the unconscious – are manifested in the process of the cinematic experience, where the external filmic and the internal psychological image facilitate the dialogue between the consciousness and the unconscious, “and in so doing the ego as a sense of self, or a way of being-in-the-world, is strengthened” (Hockley, *Somatic Cinema* 117). And although the filmic image is more literal, it, too – like the internal psychological one – comes to life thanks to the emotional potential of its metaphors and symbols.

In their introduction to Jungian film theory, Bassil-Morozow and Hockley suggest tackling film viewing as an alchemical process,¹⁸ since we “look at personal and cultural

¹⁸ Alchemy, often considered an antiquated pseudoscience, is described as a “form of speculative thought that, among other aims, tried to transform base metals such as lead or copper into silver or gold and to discover a cure for disease and a way of extending life” (Gilbert and Multhauf). For Jung, alchemy is “grounded in the natural philosophy of the Middle Ages” and “formed the

change,” while at the same time considering the complexities of the unconscious processes (7). All the more that film characters can be analyzed in their archetypal depths, as “manifestations of universals in different social and historical contexts” (Connolly 128), which brings new layers of significance to the tripartite meaning-making process, consisting of the material object, its representation, and the archetypal ideas in the viewer’s psyche. This process also brings into high relief the characters’ transformation, as Jungian film theory emphasizes transformation and change as imperative for seeing ‘the bigger picture’; this notion could be traced to Jung’s keen interest in alchemy, which he saw as a symbolic representation of the individuation process.

bridge on the one hand into the past ... and on the other into the future, to the modern psychology of the unconscious” (*Memories, Dreams, Reflections* 201).

Chapter 2: Manifestations of the Dark Maternal

“There is such a basic archaic identity of mother and daughter that a superhuman effort has to be made for them to get away from each other, and only then can each one become completely conscious of her own personality. Both must take back all their projections and become individual themselves You hear of mothers eating their sons, but in many cases they are in a worse way tied up with their daughters.”

- Marie-Louise von Franz, *The Feminine in Fairy Tales* (170)

The Underdeveloped Feeling Function

As both Jung and von Franz insist, for modern consciousness, the best developed rational function is thinking. The least developed one, on the other hand, is feeling, whose repression manifests in what von Franz calls ‘barbarity.’ Considering that “evil, negativity, and destructiveness do connect in the individual with the inferior function” (von Franz, *Psychotherapy* 136), the ramifications of such repression can have catastrophic effects on both the individual and the collective, as it manifests too powerfully while still in a primitive – or overly emotional – state. Moreover, the primary thinking function tends to override the perceptions or judgment associated with the underdeveloped function, thus leaving feeling-associated contents to be “a symptom of modernity’s weakness – a sign of the fragile ego in danger of being engulfed by an irrational psyche turned dark through neglect” (Rowland, “Jung, the Trickster Writer” 294).

Jung stresses how “a general sense of community is most urgently needed” amidst modern societies in which political powers have undermined personal relationships, “*for [the individual’s] life depends on the human relationship*” (qtd. in von Franz, “C.G. Jung’s Rehabilitation” 15). Therefore both he and von Franz stress that we must develop a

[d]ifferentiated feeling relationship including the postulate of distance to the powers within Relatedness to other human beings outside and to the archetypal powers within go together in a strange way, because, as Jung pointed out in his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, our lives and our relationships count only if the infinite ‘is somehow included’ (18).

The term ‘infinite,’ in this case, refers to the self – the archetype of meaning and wholeness (Henderson).

Most importantly, Jung also notes that – when differentiated – the feeling function is “distinguished from affect by the fact that it produces no perceptible physical innervations, i.e., neither more nor less than an ordinary thinking process” (*Collected Works* 434; vol. 6). And, conversely, it “flares up” as a primitive emotionality and compensation for an overwhelming thinking function (von Franz, “C.G. Jung’s Rehabilitation” 14).

Last House, for example, is a bleak film, which could be seen as a shockingly demoralizing projection of the repressed personal as well as collective ‘primeval feelings’ in Vietnam-era America, as Craven “analyzes the nature and conditions of violence and sees them as inherent in the American situation” (Wood 28). Craven himself notes with regard to his upbringing: “‘If there was a feeling it was repressed. As I got older I began to see that as a nation we were doing the same thing’” (Craven qtd. in Wood 28). *Last House* could – in very broad terms – be studied as a manifestation of how evil emerges as a result of the continuous repression of the feeling function.

Carrie, too, envisions a devastating destruction on a personal and collective level, which stems from a repressed feeling function. Because of her fanatical upbringing,

Carrie has grown up in isolation, without a sense of community, and is therefore unable to maintain healthy relationships. Her inability to connect with anyone – she is relentlessly bullied by her peers, teachers do not pay attention to her, even her mother, a single parent, is a domineering religious zealot who refuses to bond with her daughter – works as a catalyst for the eruption of her powerful telekinetic powers, so that she ends up slaughtering her peers and eventually her mother.

Shadow Manifestations

The shadow, another repressed unconscious element, is a recurrent psychological trope in cinema, offering insightful connotations in horror. It is the counterpoint of the persona – that “usually ideal aspect: of our ego-personality ’we present to the outside world’” (Jung qtd. in Sharp 123). Inhibiting the persona, the shadow is an archetypal manifestation of repressed, unconscious aspects of the personality. Jung describes the shadow as:

[A] moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real (qtd. in Sharp 123).

The shadow – or the shadow self – is also understood as the ‘objective personality,’ as opposed to the conscious ego, or ‘subjective personality.’ Jung asserts that identifying and accepting one’s shadow is integral to individuation:

It is a therapeutic necessity, indeed, the first requisite of any thorough psychological method, for consciousness to confront its shadow This process of coming to terms with the Other in us is well worth while, because in this way

we get to know aspects of our nature which we would not allow anybody else to show us and which we ourselves would never have admitted. (*Mysterium Coniunctionis* 237)

Campbell notes the parallel between the dynamic of the psyche and that of society through the witticism that “[w]hat gets *pushed down* will *come up*” (“Mythos 1”). The function of an organism that does not get recognized (i.e. inner city turmoil [society] or the shadow [psyche]) is to revolt in order to be acknowledged. Repressed material, tucked away in the darkest corners of one’s personal psyche or in the collective unconscious – particularly the underdeveloped feeling function – usually erupts in violence and barbarity, as both *Carrie* and *Last House* demonstrate very well.

Bassil-Morozow addresses the uneasy dynamic between the conscious mind and the shadow as a recurring motif in art and literature, often presented through a split personality or a doppelgänger. Two well-known Gothic literary examples, Robert Lewis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), illustrate this struggle (“Using Jung” 39). Both Dr. Henry Jekyll and Dorian Gray ignore their shadow selves – the increasingly aggressive Mr. Hyde and Gray’s increasingly ugly, aging face on the painting, respectively – therefore rendering the shadows stronger and destructive. More recent iterations of personalities split between subjective ego and objective shadow inform films like *Black Swan*, Denis Villeneuve’s *Enemy* (2013), David Fincher’s *Fight Club* (1999), and most recently, Jordan Peele’s *Us* (2019). While the first two films end rather bleakly with the shadow having taken over the ego personality of the protagonists, in *Fight Club* the Narrator (Edward Norton), destroys, quite literally, his anarchist shadow/double, Tyler Durden

(Brad Pitt), although nearly killing himself in the process by a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Facing and accepting the shadow steers individuals closer to making the psyche whole through bridging the conscious and the unconscious, which in Jung's view would result in the synthesis of the self. In this light, the denouement of *Fight Club* seems somewhat troublesome as it points to the Narrator's lack of genuine acceptance of his shadow and thus to his problematic individuation.

The sole female member of Krug's sadistic gang in *Last House*, Sadie (Jeremie Rain), could be read as Mari and Phyllis's shadow, or "a libidinous double for the victims; a nightmare warning of what happens to good girls gone bad" (Berlatsky 1). She not only champions the vicious treatment of Mari and Phyllis, but partakes in it; further, she efficiently overpowers them, signifying the destruction of pacifist naivety by real-world horrors that were plaguing the long finale of the romantic hippie era.¹⁹ Carrie, similarly, is terribly naïve, with her shadow taking a life of its own, and manifesting itself independently as telekinetic powers, triggered by bullying and aggression against her. Her tragic moment of degradation – a humiliating prank at the prom – works as the catalyst for her unbridled rage, her dark side engulfing her consciousness.

Horror and the Abject

In order to further explore deeper meanings of the films under scrutiny and the importance of horror-as-catharsis, it would be useful to bring in Julia Kristeva's concept

¹⁹ The brutal murder of actress Sharon Tate, her unborn child, and her friends Abigail Folger, Wojciech Frykowski, Steven Parent, and Jay Sebring on August 8, 1969 – committed by three members of Charles Manson's "family" – put a symbolic end to the 'Summer of Love' phenomenon.

of the archaic mother and her ideas about the abject – as well as their further development by Creed – both essential psychological tropes in the arts and literature in general, and for the current analysis in particular. While both authors base their reflections on Freud and Lacan, the abject can be seen as analogous to the Jungian shadow in terms of needing to confront it in order to individuate, or achieve greater knowledge of one’s psyche.

Abjection, according to Kristeva, abstracts the reaction to the breakdown of boundaries between self and other, subject and object, life and death, barbarity and culture, etc. The reaction is generally visceral – whether that of horror, loathing, or disgust, and even inexplicable attraction – which she compares to the trauma of seeing a corpse (‘the body without a soul’), witnessing a car accident, or any other occurrence that breaks down psychological boundaries and reminds us of our materiality, always impending death and loss of self. Bodily fluids such as pus, urine, feces, and (menstrual) blood also fall under the category of the abject.

Building on Kristeva’s further discussion of the inherent attraction to the abject, we could homologize abject horror tropes as bringing to consciousness rejected shadow contents in Jungian terms. As Kristeva writes,

The various means *of purifying* the abject – the various catharses – make up the history of religions, and end up with that catharsis par excellence called art, both on the far and near side of religion. Seen from that standpoint, the artistic experience, which is rooted in the abject it utters and by the same token purifies, appears as the essential component of religiosity. (17)

The exposing and purification of the abject, which Creed asserts is a central objective of modern horror cinema, is done through dramatic confrontation with the

abject, resolved in catharsis – or cleansing. Thus once the abject is cleansed, the boundaries of the Symbolic (in the Lacanian sense²⁰), which have been previously broken, are re-established. Yet the cathartic nature of the horror film in terms of the audio-visual manifestations of the abject is paradoxical. As Creed rightfully notes in *The Monstrous-Feminine*: “Although the subject must exclude the abject, the abject must, nevertheless, be tolerated for that which threatens to destroy life also helps to define life” (9).

Paralleling the conflicting feelings upon confrontation with the abject or other dark aspects of humanity is Jung’s own ambivalent attitude toward evil. In reference to the story of Faust,²¹ Jung asserts that he “‘found confirmation that there were people [...] who saw evil and its universal power, [...] and the mysterious role it played in delivering man from darkness and suffering’” (qtd. in “German Cinematic Expressionism” 52-3), supporting a “coincidence of opposites – or *coincidentia oppositorum*” as “an imperative condition for understanding the workings of the human psyche and human life in general” (53).

Both *Last House* and *Carrie* epitomize the manifestations of the abject and the shadow as negative and barbaric, ultimately leading to the destruction of their female antagonists. Estelle Collingwood, who is good-natured and openly critical of violence,

²⁰ The Symbolic order, one of the three Lacanian orders along with the Imaginary and the Real, is a universal structure which involves the function of speech, language, and culture, or the ‘law of the father,’ as the mother is the primordial Other in the Symbolic (Walton 124).

²¹ The German-based ‘archetypal story’ of Faust, an often reproduced drama about Dr. Faustus and the selling of his soul to Lucifer in exchange for twenty-four years of unrestrained magic and servitude from the devil Mephistopheles, was a significant influence on German Expressionist cinema which threw in “high relief the interrelatedness of evil and creativity, of temptation and inspiration, and of egotism and selflessness in the process of individuation” (Stojanova, “German Cinematic Expressionism 53).

fully embraces her deep-seated barbarity when overwhelmed by the pain and grief over her daughter's brutal murder. Her retribution, which involves fellatio-turned-castration of one criminal and slitting the throat of another, is sadistic yet undoubtedly deserved given the criminals' horrific transgressions. Further, the local police are portrayed as incompetent and blundering, suggesting that the only harbingers of "justice" are Mari's parents and their vengeance. The film's violent resolution, if only for a fleeting moment, is emotionally cathartic for both Estelle and the audience, postulating greater insight into the ambiguity of morality.

Carrie White's full embrace of her uninhibited telekinetic powers – manifested most strongly following her first period – frees her from her utter powerlessness before her vicious peers. It also proves to be the only power she has over her mother, and she uses it to finally escape the mother's abusive grasp – even if that means losing her own life in the process. In a sense, this barbarity reflects an "abjected, vengeful, and destructive rite-of-passage" for Carrie (Coykendall 338); her "meaningful rage" (Badley 156) destroys all who wronged her, subverting the notion of woman-as-victim while empowering her as container of unrestrained feminine power.

The Negative Mother as Abject

The investigations of both Creed and Kristeva of the maternal body as abject in its dissolution of the border between the child and the mother, thus confining the child to the Imaginary realm,²² could be homologized to the Jungian understanding of the maternal body as situated at the border between the conscious and the unconscious. Moreover, as

²² The Lacanian Imaginary order is directly associated with the mother, the womb, and the child's formation of the ego, wherein the "mirror phase" of development belongs as well (Walton 125-6).

Jungian scholar Erich Neumann states, the ‘Terrible Mother’ archetype symbolizes the unconscious; while the positive elements of the archetypal feminine manifest as “generative and nourishing, protecting, and warming,” the negative aspects appear as “death and destruction, danger and distress, hunger and nakedness” in the presence of the “Dark and Terrible Mother” (148-9). Creed makes a similar observation regarding the ambivalent relationship between mother and child:

[Abject images] also point back to a time when a ‘fusion between mother and nature’ existed; when bodily wastes, while set apart from the body, were not seen as objects of embarrassment and shame Their presence in the horror film may invoke a response of disgust from the audience ... [yet] may invoke pleasure ... in returning to that time when the mother-child relationship was marked by an untrammelled pleasure in ‘playing’ with the body and its wastes. (13)

Creed also notes Carrie’s literal and figurative return to her mother’s bosom, which reduces her to “a trembling child” (81). While her journey to womanhood peaks at the prom, only to be thwarted by her peers’ savagery, her regression back into “a state of childlike dependency [turning] once again to her mother for protection and solace,” is both tragic and crucially abject (81-2).

Another point of convergence between Creed’s exploration of the maternal abject and the negative aspect of the Jungian mother archetype could be found in Kristeva’s Freud-inspired notion of the ‘archaic mother.’ It bridges the two seemingly incompatible notions – that of Jungian archetypes as latent patterns in the collective unconscious, with Creed’s idea of the abject mother as a social construct, reflecting patriarchal prejudices. Moreover, the archaic mother is referred to by Freud as ‘primal mother,’ ‘Ur-mutter,’

‘pre-oedipal mother,’ or the “‘first nourisher and first seducer’ ... ‘first and strongest love-object for both sexes’” (Eifermann 98). This archaic mother bears an uncanny resemblance to the nature- and death-oriented archetype of the Great Mother as symbol of the nurturing nature, and the Terrible Mother – as symbol of death and the barren land – both of which are central figures in world mythologies, and more specifically, in the myths about Demeter, the Greek goddess of agriculture.

Last House, seen as a visceral audio-visual rendition of the Demeter/Persephone myth, evokes significant affect in terms of viewers’ cinematic immersion through the abject. Estelle’s brand of vengeance is just as cruel as the horrors witnessed in the first part of the film, in which Mari and Phyllis are viciously raped, beaten, and murdered by a gang of recently escaped convicts led by the merciless Krug Stillo. Estelle murders one convict, aptly named Weasel (Fred J. Lincoln), by seducing and performing fellatio on him, and then biting off his genitals – forcing him to bleed out. While Persephone’s kidnapping and implied rape (depending on the source) are only mentioned, viewers see, hear, and virtually live through the horrors that Mari and Phyllis face, forcing a dramatic confrontation with the abject unique to horror cinema. Unlike the Demeter/Persephone myth – and yet rivalling the cruelty of other myths, especially those related to mutilation and castration as a form of punishment and revenge²³ – *Last House* evokes a primordial level of fear and disgust which is very disturbing.

Carrie, too, imbues a visceral sense of affective horror through the abject, markedly through showing the telekinetic Carrie as a witch. Creed describes the witch as

²³ While castration as punishment has existed for more than four millennia (in China since 2281 B.C.E.), the most famous castration in Greek mythology is that of Uranus by his son Cronos, the latter of whom “bound the Cyclopes and the Hecontoncheires, and shut them up in Tartarus again” (Parada).

[a]n abject figure ... represented within patriarchal discourses as an implacable enemy of the symbolic order ... [S]he is thought to be dangerous and wily, capable of drawing on her evil powers to wreak destruction on the community. (Creed 76)

Yet as it turns out, Carrie is not just *thought* to be ‘dangerous and wily,’ as she does, indeed, destroy her community through telekinesis. Thus, “her evil powers are seen as part of her ‘feminine’ nature [and] ‘synonymous with a radical evil that must be suppressed’” (76).

The Horror of Melodrama

Unlike the Oedipus complex, the Jungian mother-daughter complex subverts Freudian sexuality and considers sexual *likeness* as something which holds more affective psychological potential than the counter-sexual attraction in the mother-son complex. Freud asserts that a mother’s hindering of her daughter’s sexual activity is a “normal” function driven by unconscious motives – therefore it is ultimately up to the daughter to “decide for herself on broad and rational grounds what her share of enjoyment or denial of sexual pleasure shall be” (qtd. in Mitchell 287). Jungian theory, on the other hand, allows us to focus more on the deep psychological aspects of the relationship *itself*, while still emphasizing the importance of the liberation of daughters – and mothers, for that matter – in order to individuate. As von Franz notes in *The Feminine in Fairy Tales*, “[T]he archaic identity between mother and daughter is the unconscious foundation from which the individuation of both begins” (169). Since women seem to identify more strongly with their own sex, von Franz argues, they tend to retain their repressed identity while at the same time remaining overly dependent on

another, though the bond itself is nonetheless crucial. Jung comments on the Demeter/Persephone myth as tellingly illustrative of this situation:

The psyche pre-existent to consciousness (e.g. in the child) participates in the maternal psyche on the one hand, while on the other it reaches across to the daughter psyche. We could therefore say that every mother contains her daughter in herself and every daughter her mother, and that every woman extends backwards into her mother and forwards into her daughter. (“Psychological Aspects of the Kore” 191)

Mari and Estelle share similarities such as profound adoration of their family, being visibly kind-natured, and most importantly, they both weaponize their femininity in dire situations: Mari (fruitlessly) in order to escape the clutches of Krug’s vicious gang, and Estelle to avenge her daughter’s murder. Both women shift from being ostensibly virtuous and grounded in traditional values to being stripped of innocence and dignity when the evil side of their idealized world rears its head. Carrie and Margaret share similarities through their roles as monsters or witches: Carrie through her telekinesis and Margaret through her “archaic and horrific” behaviour and attire: “Her dark cape, severe black stockings, and cascading hair mark her Gothic appearance ... [and] her home is a veritable mausoleum lit only by candles and proverbial lightning flashes outside” (Lindsey 37). Though their monstrosity manifests in different ways, Margaret could be read as equally repressed and maltreated as Carrie, perpetuating a vicious cycle of familial abuse driven by religious zealotry.

As the mother-daughter relationship is uniquely primordial, it imbues a deep understanding into the difficult – yet imperative – task that is detachment of mother and

daughter. Therefore, as Jungians argue, there always should be sought a balance between the extremes of over-attachment and estrangement, which in the films under scrutiny here is mediated by the melodramatic mode and its typical focus on familial relationships and, according to Sarah Arnold, through the theme of maternal sacrifice (3). In both *Last House* and *Carrie*, the familial element, as well as Peter Brooks' notion of melodrama's 'moral occult,' serve as emotional catalysts for their horrific climaxes, playing a crucial yet complex role in their protagonists' respective demises.

Considering that melodrama is a genre of emotional excess used as a superficial façade to "the domain of operative spiritual values ... which is both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality" (Brooks 5), both *Last House* and *Carrie* can certainly be described as exhibiting such elements. More specifically, as Brooks explains, melodrama is also an ethical response to the loss of traditional values and spiritual order as it "offers a complete set of attitudes, phrases, gestures coherently conceived toward dramatization of essential spiritual conflict," which Brooks calls the 'moral occult' (20-1) – one of his key concepts in analyzing bourgeois melodrama when aiming to uncover unconscious emotions and desires, deeply buried by social turmoil.

Last House's first act is imbued with heavy melodrama and manifestations of occulted traditional moral values, notably through the conversation between Mari and her parents before she embarks on her fateful birthday outing. The flowery flute-driven musical score borders on cheesy as Mari and Estelle playfully argue over notions of peace and love, Phyllis's reputation as a low-class delinquent, and Estelle's old-fashioned attitude toward bras and rock and roll. Their dialogue denotes Mari's longing for independence against her parents' old-fashioned – and already occulted – values,

sounding basically like any typical familial melodrama. *Carrie* is a bit less heavy-handed, though Carrie and Margaret's conversations about the prom, including the exaggeratedly pious overtones, could be read as exhibiting morally occulted values, which in this case amount to an overly-sentimental dialogue between a loving mother and her daughter prior to a significant social occasion. However, in order to offset this hyper-sentimentality, director De Palma encourages Piper Laurie's over-the-top emotionality, thus blurring the line between horrific and almost comical, making her all the more unsettling.²⁴

Typical melodramatic "women's" films rely heavily on pathos. Thomas Elsaesser notes that this results from the inability of the characters to communicate with each other "where highly emotional situations are underplayed to present an ironic discontinuity of feeling or a qualitative difference in intensity" (88).

Most importantly, as Arnold asserts, "melodramatic films are concerned with the same issues and familial matters as horror even though they provoke different emotional responses (pathos or anxiety)" (Arnold 122). Thus while *Last House* and *Carrie* use pathos in order to make viewers emotionally connect with their characters, the pathos is eventually replaced by visceral anxiety and fear as the films progress, which steers them away from straightforward melodrama while still effectively utilizing the complicated mother-daughter relationship as connective tissue between the two modes.

Another crucial reason for the excess of sentimental melodramatic emotions erupting into visceral horror and anxiety is the underdeveloped feeling function – on the collective level in the case of *Last House*, and on the personal level in *Carrie*. Although

²⁴ The actress who portrayed Margaret, Piper Laurie, once stated that she saw the film as a parody, or at the very least, a black comedy. She felt that her character was "preposterous," giving way to her famously over-the-top performance (Blair).

the underdeveloped personal feeling function plays a more substantial role in the characters' destruction in *Carrie*, it also manifests on the collective level, making the film so quintessentially horrific.

Manifestations of the Mother-Daughter Complex

There is a crucial distinction between 'archetype' and 'complex': while archetypes are inherited structures found in the collective unconscious, meaning they are the same for all (though their manifestations as archetypal images vary), complexes are found in the personal unconscious and constellate *around* archetypes, informed by our own personal experiences and forming into "powerful feeling-toned thoughts and emotions" which, consequently, take over our consciousness. As Jung explains, we do not necessarily have complexes, but rather, "[c]omplexes have us" (qtd. in Jacobi 9).

Like all archetypes, the mother archetype constellates in the personal psyche of the daughter in the form of the mother complex,²⁵ which must be healthily resolved in order for the daughter to undergo individuation, and not live externally through projections. Importantly, especially as applied to the film's mother-daughter dyads in the following chapter, the mother and daughter can *both* have unresolved mother complexes. Considering the notion of every mother containing her daughter in herself and every daughter her mother, analyzing Estelle's and Margaret's mother complexes is just as crucial as analyzing their daughters', which the following chapter will discuss.

²⁵ The daughter's subsequent attachment to her mother while still a child activates the child archetype within the unconscious of the mother, thus forming a "perceptual field" within the dyad (Stevens 50).

According to Jung, the mother complex is informed primarily by one's own experience with their personal mother, and then by collective assumptions about the role of other women from one's culture (qtd. in Sharp 84). Crucial, however, is the fact that the mother complex of the daughter "ranges from 'stimulation of the feminine instinct to its inhibition'" (85). In *Four Archetypes: Mother/Rebirth/Spirit/Trickster*, Jung lays out four extreme aspects of the daughter's mother complex, determined by the daughter's desire to be like her mother, or to be her direct opposite: hypertrophy of the maternal element; overdevelopment of Eros; identity with the mother; and resistance to the mother. This piece of Jungian theory, along with the following complex forms, is central to this thesis in general, and will be examined in depth as applied to the characters in question in the following chapter. At this point,, underlining the theoretical baseline of these forms is in order.

Jung links the first aspect to an *overabundance* of feminine instinct, manifested as hypertrophy of the maternal element within the daughter, which focuses on a singular goal of procreation once she reaches childbearing age. She consequently demands complete possession over her children, driven by a fanatical insistence on her maternal right. Such a woman eventually clings to her children so intensely that both hers and her daughter's – and her son's, for that matter – personal lives dissipate.

A second aspect of an extreme mother complex, conversely, involves the daughter's *inhibition* of the feminine instinct, which is compensated through the overdevelopment of Eros. In Greek mythology, Eros is the god of love and sex, or the personification of such; in Jungian archetypology, the unconscious Eros is manifest in

women as the antithesis to men's Logos,²⁶ always expressing itself as "a will to power," or a desire for psychic connection (qtd. in Sharp 51). In this case, the maternal instinct is severely lacking, instead potentially leading to the daughter's unconsciously incestuous relationship to the father due to her placing "an abnormal emphasis on the personality of others" (Jung, *Four Archetypes* 22).

A third extreme aspect of the daughter's mother complex involves the inhibition of both feminine instinct *and* of Eros, for which the daughter unconsciously compensates by completely projecting her personality onto her mother. Jung asserts that she feels inferior to her mother and views her as perfect and unattainable. She lives vicariously through her mother and clings to her; she is "often visibly sucked dry by her mother, and she prolongs her mother's life by a sort of continuous blood transfusion" (23). This complex correlates with von Franz's reflection on mutually over-dependent mothers and daughters and the need to detach in order to begin the individuation process, so that the daughter becomes capable of leading an independent psychological existence.

A noteworthy fourth aspect, resistance to the mother, is referred to by Jung as an 'intermediate type' along the mother-daughter complex spectrum. This type does not represent an overabundance nor inhibition of feminine instinct, but rather, "an overwhelming resistance to maternal supremacy" (33). This type, Jung asserts, is the ultimate example of a negative mother complex, acting as the important intermediate stage, linking all three aforementioned complexes together. The motto of the daughter with this type of complex, he notes, is "Anything, so long as it is not like Mother!" (33).

²⁶ In Jungian archetypology, 'Logos' refers to the masculine principle of rationality, judgment, insight, etc. (Jung, "Archetypes" 96).

As the following chapter argues, none of the film characters in question perfectly match any one of the above complex manifestations; rather, all four characters reflect particular elements of each, with some manifesting more intensely than others. Both mother-daughter relationships stem from unresolved complexes, enhanced by the underdeveloped feeling function and shadow material gushing out from the unconscious, effectively destroying the two mother-daughter dyads psychologically and inflicting suffering around them, thus bolstering Campbell's assertion that the dynamic of the psyche mirrors that of a society. Moreover, the characters' woman-ness plays an especially integral role in this multifaceted devastation, cementing the films as substantial commentary on the immense power of the negative feminine.

Chapter 3: Archetypal Mother-Daughter Dynamics on Screen

“The symbolism of the Terrible Mother draws its images pre-dominantly from the ‘inside’; that is to say, the negative elementary character of the Feminine expresses itself in fantastic and chimerical images that do not originate in the outside world. The reason for this is that the Terrible Female is a symbol for the unconscious. And the dark side of the Terrible Mother takes the form of monsters The dark half of the black-and-white cosmic egg representing the Archetypal Feminine engenders terrible figures that manifest the black abysmal side of life and the human psyche.”

- Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype* (148-9)

The aforementioned extreme mother-daughter complexes, like most Jungian concepts, are not cut-and-dry. Further, neither Mari-Estelle nor Carrie-Margaret perfectly fit the mould of the Jungian mother-daughter complexes; rather, each dyad embodies certain elements of the complex manifestations – with Mari-Estelle primarily representing hypertrophy of the maternal element and overdevelopment of Eros, and Carrie-Margaret effectively personifying identity with the mother and resistance to the mother. As previously mentioned, the mother’s psyche – and by extension, her own mother complexes – play an important role in the analysis of the daughter’s psyche, thus keeping the psychological trajectory of mothers and daughters virtually symbiotic. It is a symbiosis that in spite of its varying effects on both personal and collective level, becomes particularly emphatic in light of the films’ mythological antecedents and the role of the underdeveloped feeling function plays in the characters’ destruction. Further in this chapter, I will demonstrate how the negative mother and child archetypes and unresolved complexes enhance deep-seated evil tendencies which also contribute to the characters’ downfall. In concluding the chapter, I will also amplify a few significant symbols,

including those of the cross and blood, as they play a pivotal role as metaphoric tropes in the films under scrutiny.

The Constructive Mother-Daughter Dyad

A mythological antecedent to *Last House*, the story of Demeter, the goddess of fertility and agriculture, and the kidnapping of her daughter, Persephone (often referred to as 'Kore' in Jungian texts), is one of the Greek myths frequently referenced by Jung and Jungians. While Mari (*Last House*) is significantly more fleshed out than Persephone, both stories are primarily manifestations of Demeter's and Estelle's motherly suffering, thus providing more insight about the *mothers* rather than about the daughters' plight.

The disastrous nature of Demeter's violent outburst, provoked by her suffering over the kidnapping and rape of Persephone by Hades, the god of the Underworld, is at the center of the myth. Demeter is a mythological manifestation of hypertrophy of the maternal element, as her possession over Persephone subsequently squanders the lives of those around her. She torches random parts of the earth, causing a worldwide famine, inevitably killing many. The devastation, brought on by "the earth's unfruitfulness," compels Zeus to order Hades bring Persephone back to her mother (Jung and Kerényi, *Essays* 114). However, since Persephone has eaten pomegranate seeds while in Hades' realm,²⁷ she is obliged to descend to the Underworld for three months of the year, a period – associated with winter – during which Demeter would not allow crops to grow. Demeter's unrestrained rage "overwhelms the ego" and "obliterates the symbolic process and blurs boundaries between ourselves and others" (Martin 31). This mythopoetic rage

²⁷ Eating the pomegranate seeds ties Persephone to the Underworld since the seeds symbolize eternity of marriage in Greek mythology (Langley).

symbolizes the shock of change within the family dynamic, as such changes “are not always easy or painless. In Demeter's case they have cosmic repercussions” (Makowski 74). As Froma I. Zeitlin elaborates, “the initiation of the daughter into the mysteries of sexuality provokes the angry response of the mother” (qtd. in Makowski 74).

Demeter represents the dichotomy of life and death – the *loving and terrible mother*; she is a “paradox beyond contradictions . . . [s]he is the flux of life in which creation gives place to destruction, destruction in service to life gives place to creation” (Woodman and Dickson 7). She is both an archaic, or primordial mother (‘Grain Mother, giver of crops’), as well as the mythological embodiment of death and devastation. Von Franz notes Demeter’s “changing double aspect – standing for fertility, for help in childbirth and for the grain in corn,” but also emphasizes that after losing her daughter, she “becomes the goddess of revenge and sorrow,” and switches between these two extremes “depending on her relationship to the daughter” (von Franz, *Feminine* 24). Demeter’s harmonious relationship with her daughter symbolizes the well-being of humanity – thus a forceful manifestation of the complex mother-daughter dyad. Persephone’s suffering, in contrast, is Demeter’s suffering – and ultimately – the suffering of humanity.

Moreover, in line with Jung and von Franz’s assertion that every mother contains in herself her daughter and vice versa, Marcia W. D-S. Dobson asserts that many iconographies denote Demeter and Persephone as one and the same – “simultaneously death and birth goddesses; both represent the flowers of spring and the furied destruction of the underworld; both have been raped,” which effectively offers a “two-in-one representation: an older and a younger manifestation of the goddess which together

express the cyclical nature of the story and of the seasons” (47). Because of this, their separation is especially vehement:

It seems as if in this particularity of violence, time is struggling to be born in the only way it can: through the recognition of violent separation, the splitting apart of the whole into the halves of mother and daughter, or the older and younger parts of the female. In this way, Demeter's grieving is understandable, not only as the grieving of a mother for her daughter in today's individuated terms, but also as that of a woman for a younger self that had to be renounced. (47)

Interestingly enough, Persephone is a rather dubious figure in this myth; upon being asked by Demeter if she wishes to return to Mount Olympus, she says no, as she wishes to stay in the Underworld with Hades. Demeter ignores this, instead coercing Persephone to return home, and the myth thus construes her as merely a vehicle through which Demeter's powerful maternal love could be manifested. Persephone's attitude toward Demeter – her mother complex, so to speak – is ambivalent, though it can be read as lying anywhere between overdevelopment of Eros (evidenced by her decision to spend time with Hades), and identification with the mother, as her psychological existence heavily relies on Demeter. Kerényi belabors Persephone's independence from her mother as “unthinkable.” But “what *is* thinkable,” he goes on to write, “is the original *identity* of mother and daughter... [as] Persephone's whole being is summed up in an incident that is at once the story of Demeter's own suffering” (“Kore” 121).

The myth of Demeter and Persephone gives us an indispensable commentary on the transformative power of the feminine, disguised here as “the disappointment of the goddess of nature” (von Franz, *Feminine* 196). Yet Demeter not only faces unimaginable

grief – a most powerful primordial emotion – but she cannot be *whole* without her daughter, therefore her anguish-driven destructive behaviour can also be seen in light of her mother complex, triggered by her hypertrophy of the maternal element. Thus her maternal pain overwhelms reason, prompting her to scorch the earth and kill its inhabitants in violent vengeance, a common narrative trope in horror cinema.

Estelle's hypertrophy of the maternal element is similarly manifested in inflicting incommensurate suffering prompted by the loss of her daughter, this time around targeting the perpetrators themselves. In tune with the then-fashionable slasher genre, however, Estelle's vengeance is a shockingly grotesque gut-punch; while viewers sympathize with her grief, they are still repulsed. Based on Ingmar Bergman's 1960 film *The Virgin Spring*, *Last House* follows Mari Collingwood on her seventeenth birthday. When she and her best friend Phyllis look to buy some marijuana before attending a rock concert, they are kidnapped, raped, and beaten by a gang of recently-escaped convicts. The convicts take the girls into the woods – mere yards from Mari's home – and force them to perform sexual acts on each other, coercing Phyllis to urinate in her pants, and subsequently disemboweling Phyllis while leaving Mari for dead. After their horrible travails, the gang, posing as traveling salespeople in search for a shower and rest, unknowingly stumble upon the Collingwood residence where Mari's kind-hearted parents allow them inside. While helping one of the criminals, who is violently ill due to heroin withdrawal, Estelle notices her daughter's necklace around his neck. She and her husband, John (Richard Towers), eventually rummage through the gang's belongings, and discover their daughter's blood-soaked clothing. After finding Mari barely clinging

to life and dying in their arms, they seek vengeance on the convicts, effectively murdering them.

Like Demeter, Estelle's mother complex is activated by her deep love for (and subsequent grief over) her daughter. Estelle lashes out against the world around her as both her mother complex, alongside her underdeveloped feeling function, brutally overwhelm her consciousness. This eventually leads to the destruction of her own life as well as her daughter's, as Mari, the naïve teenager wanting to rebel against her traditional parents, is severely punished for attempting to escape her mother's influence. Such as in the case of Persephone and Demeter, however, Mari and Estelle's bond is only *strengthened* by suffering, and even in death.

Demeter and Estelle both challenge ideas of the 'Good Mother,' as both prove capable of wreaking pain and suffering upon others in the name of their children. Arnold notes this slight ambiguity in terms of what the 'Good Mother' entails, as this mother's "desperate attempts to find her missing child" signify "an effort to regain her only access to power: the child" (Arnold 41). For Jung, this well encapsulates the duality of the mother archetype.

Last House reflects this notion: while the convicts are undoubtedly evil, Estelle becomes equally sadistic in her vengeance, making her an interesting maternal paradox. The majority of the film shows Estelle to be a good yet clearly protective mother to Mari, and further, when one gang member is violently ill in the bathroom, Estelle's maternal instincts shine through as she comforts him. Following Mari and Phyllis's plight, viewers primarily identify with Estelle as she grieves and subsequently seeks revenge; however, she is still something to be feared, as her retribution is notoriously violent as she bites off

Weasel's genitals, slits Sadie's throat, and leaves her to drown. The convicts' climactic retribution literalizes Estelle's suffering while forcing viewers into her perspective; though her revenge is vicious and brutal, this allows the cleansing of the audience's own feelings of disgust and anxiety over witnessing the vicious treatment of Phyllis and Mari through the actions of Estelle, the loving yet mercilessly monstrous mother.

Viewers' identification with Estelle reflects the complex sentiments associated with grief, rage, and violence. In this sense, this identification relates back to the underdeveloped feeling function, which on the collective level, reflects the collective desensitization to violence brought on by the Vietnam War. On the personal level, Craven seems to be punishing viewers for their own repression of their feeling function, resulting in Estelle, the Good Mother, turning into a Terrible Mother – an instrument of horrific vengeance and reflecting viewers' own deep-seated capabilities. Further, as mentioned in the Introduction, Mari and Phyllis are punished not only for their apparent indiscretions, but for being ostensibly naïve women, as they “naively assume that the world is there for their pleasure, just as the spectator does when savoring a top-less shot of Mari during the opening credits” (Benson-Allott 75). As Caetlin Benson-Allott states, “*Last House* punishes such naiveté twice over by savagely insisting that the audience identify with the girls during their torture. The film contends that everyone is capable of and vulnerable to violence – not only characters, but viewers as well” (75).

Mari's mother complex is expressed as an overdevelopment of Eros, as she strives for external affection and validation based on her recent physical entry into womanhood (she brags to Phyllis that she “finally developed” over the summer). Mari is more concerned with impressing Phyllis than catering to her mother's wishes, viewing her as

the rebellious and liberated woman that Mari idealizes outside of her traditional mother's influence. This plays a substantial role in Mari's gruesome fate, as following Phyllis to New York City, and consequently into the gang's grips, seals her demise. In the same light, Persephone's overdevelopment of Eros, or longing for a psychic connection, arguably entices her to Hades when he kidnaps her, effectively causing her mother further anguish and, consequently, further suffering among the earth's mortal denizens.

Persephone's journey to the Underworld, Marion Woodman argues, finally allows her to detach herself from Demeter since she is forced to develop her "feminine maturity" (122). Further, Persephone's marriage to Hades – the God of Death – represents the symbolic "marriage of death" for the maiden²⁸:

It is no accident that the husband here is the god of death and that the marriage is initiated by violence. What we have in this narrative element is what Neumann calls one of the central archetypes of the feminine mysteries - the marriage of death This is the motif in which either a maiden dies on her wedding day or a maiden's marriage is an encounter with death. Another common variation of the story is the maiden who becomes, not a bride, but a sacrificial victim to some monster or beast. (Makowski 75)

The horrific ordeal of Mari-as-maiden, however, does not end favorably like it does for Gretel and Persephone but reduces her to a "sacrificial victim" to the monstrous gang of convicts. Moreover, she seems to be punished for her escape from her mother's traditional values, though her horrific ordeal forces her to embrace her femininity as a means of survival and psychological maturity, best illustrated in her attempted bond with

²⁸ Jung's concept of the maiden archetype, or Kore, is one of purity, innocence, beauty, and being "ripe for marriage" (Makowski 74).

one particularly troubled convict, Junior Stillo (Marc Sheffler), who is himself a victim of his sadistic father Krug, the gang's leader. Therefore her 'forced development of ingenuity' is reflected in her last minute recognition of her treasured, albeit temporarily ignored relationship with her parents, and with Phyllis who sacrifices herself for her sake. In sheer desperation, Mari gives Junior her necklace as a token of trust while promising to supply him with opioids if he helps her escape. Thanks to her forced development of ingenuity through empathy and understanding, Mari almost succeeds in escaping her ordeal before the rest of the gang re-captures her. Her sacrificial "marriage of death" – confirmed by the endowment of the necklace to the weakling Junior – reflects the shadow side of her botched individuation, dwelling in sorrow and loss rather than in her accomplished ingenuity (Makowski 75).

The Destructive Mother-Daughter Dyad

The relationship between Carrie and Margaret could be traced to the myth of Electra and Clytemnestra. However, in contrast to Demeter and Estelle, whose suffering is a result of the loss of their daughters, Clytemnestra suffers at the hands of her daughter Electra.²⁹ The plight of Electra is the focus of Greek playwrights like Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides,³⁰ as she is a fascinating yet dark character. In a way, Electra is a perfect embodiment of the negative mother complex: she resents her womanhood – notably her maternal potential – yet sees herself as a reflection of the mother whom she

²⁹ Electra herself does not murder her mother, but she beseeches her brother Orestes to do it; Orestes is hesitant, but finally obliges when Apollo instructs him to do so (Howatson 412).

³⁰ Titles in order of known dates published: *Choēphóroi* (English translation: *The Libation Bearers*) by Aeschylus (480 B.C.E.), *Electra* by Sophocles (circa 410 B.C.E.), *Electra* by Euripides (circa 413 B.C.E.).

hates yet desires: an emotional tangent Carrie mirrors. Thus, both Electra and Carrie's mother complex is an amalgamation of two aspects of the mother-daughter complex described by Jung: identity with the mother and vehement rejection of her. Hendrika C. Halberstadt-Freud elaborates on the matricidal consequence of this sexual self-loathing in *Electra vs Oedipus: the Drama of the Mother-Daughter Relationship*:

[Electra] rebuffs all thoughts of sexuality. She has no desire to marry ... she certainly wants no children. Her histrionic personality inspires loathing from every corner. Electra has become the prototype of a woman with female problems. She is a domineering victim who manages to conceal her insecurity and yearning for motherly love beneath a great deal of noise Taking revenge on [her] detested mother is her only goal in life.... After many bitter and sorrowful years, filled with pain, she succeeds in her scheme: her mother is murdered as she pleads for mercy. (Halberstadt-Freud 1)

Not unlike Electra, Carrie fears her womanhood, as evidenced by her panicked reaction to her first period. Electra's mother, Clytemnestra, embodies the maternal form she so wishes to eradicate, strongly similar to the way Carrie wishes her religiously zealous mother away. In contrast to Demeter and Estelle, the *daughters*, Electra and Carrie, are the primary psychological focus of these texts, while the mothers are used as vehicles onto which their unconscious contents are projected.

Devastated by her husband Agamemnon's sacrifice of their daughter Iphigenia for the sake of receiving favorable winds for his fleet and achieving ultimate victory in the Trojan wars, Clytemnestra (with the help of her lover, Agamemnon's cousin, Aegisthus) murders her husband when he returns home to Greece ten years later. Electra, having

idealized her father in his absence, however, gets notoriously preoccupied with her hatred for her mother, rather than experiencing grief over her father. Halberstadt-Freud characterises the intricacy of these feelings in a way that is curiously close to Jung's discussion of the mother complex:

To a great extent, the child's first relationship is decisive for its identity and sense of self-worth, particularly among women. Subsequent love relationships can be damaged when a woman continues to see herself as the extension of her mother Involuntarily, such a daughter remains inside her mother's range of influence ... [and] instead of her own desires, she must fulfil her mother's wishes. The instinctive result of this is hostility towards her mother, often hidden even from herself (3).

Compared to Carrie, Electra has remained trapped within her mother's sphere of influence in a less literal, but an equally damaging manner, as being expected to bend to her will unconditionally was the custom of the time. Electra's preoccupation with Clytemnestra is complex and ambivalent: as Jung puts it, Electra wishes to be "[a]nything, so long as it is not like Mother!" (*Four Archetypes* 24), yet her instincts are "concentrated on [her] mother in the negative form of resistance and are therefore of no use to her in building her own life" (25), subsequently driving her to murder her mother with the help of her brother, Orestes.

Margaret's mother complex is just as – if not more – complicated than Carrie's. The Carrie-Margaret dyad completely opposes that of Mari and Estelle, as not only do the former abhor their femininity – and find it abject, as is appropriate for the second two forms of the mother-daughter complex – but Margaret is especially negative, both fearing

and loathing life itself. She has a fervent lack of Eros, barring her from any emotional connection. She has more or less passed this dark existence onto Carrie, whose world only contains a few rare glimpses of happiness – enough for her to intuit what it is, yet only momentarily. Like Clytemnestra and Electra, both Margaret and Carrie nurture their negative feelings and destruction of themselves and others, living for – and by – revenge. When they do lash out, they inevitably destroy each other, as Margaret’s main target is Carrie, though Carrie – following her attempt to win her mother’s affection after her prom night massacre – lashes out against her mother in self-defense, as well as the rest of the world.

Jung’s complex form of identity with the mother is most powerfully – and tragically – embodied in Carrie. While she clearly does not see her mother as perfect, Carrie’s incapability of separating herself from Margaret – as well as being “visibly sucked dry” by her – leads to the demise of both women. Further, this aspect of the film plays upon “the fear of identifying too closely with the maternal, of never achieving a selfhood independent from the mother” (Arnold 93). Consequently, Carrie literally dies in the arms of her mother, asserting the tragic – and fundamentally abject – ramifications of this unresolved complex.

Margaret, too, fits the bill of this complex through her projection of religious zealotry and obvious fear of *her* own womanhood onto Carrie. Margaret is horrified at Carrie’s menstruation and believes it to be a sexual sin, punishing her by forcing her into a small “prayer closet,” and is audibly disgusted by Carrie’s low-cut dress displaying her “dirty pillows.” She is enigmatic in her strange place as the resentful mother, ashamed of Carrie’s conception, yet still exhibiting perverse maternal control through religious fear.

Margaret is also the quintessential embodiment of resistance to the mother, while also exhibiting elements of inhibition of feminine instinct and of Eros. Considering that this unresolved complex often manifests as women tending to have problems with conception, and later as a rule, seeming to hate their children – notably the female ones – Margaret personifies a most extreme version of this. Both her hatred of Carrie and evident lack of maternal prowess paints her as a monstrous yet psychologically doomed version of the Terrible Mother, projecting her own lack of maternal authority onto her emotionally weakened daughter.

Contrary to Estelle, who is definitely a manifestation of the Good Mother despite her traditional attitude and vengeance-driven brutality, *Carrie*'s Margaret White is the unrepentant 'Bad Mother.' She is also the monstrous mother in Creed's terms, and a Jungian negative mother archetypal manifestation throughout the film. Margaret's death at the hands of her own daughter – albeit deserved – is imbued with emotional turmoil that transcends the limitations of common slasher-murder tropes. In light of von Franz's notion of the imperative detachment of daughter from mother as a condition *qua non* for their individuation, the dynamics between Carrie and Margaret are all the more tragic.

Furthermore, not only is Margaret the Bad Mother with a hypertrophied motherly instinct for possession and manipulation, but she has projected her religion-fueled fear of her own maternal body onto Carrie, perceived as a monstrous child-turned-woman. Carrie's monstrosity is, as Creed notes, "a creation of the psychotic, dominating mother" (79). To an audience, then, Carrie could be read as a manifestation of Jung's notion of the monstrous child, or rather, the shadow side of the Divine (or 'Golden') Child, who is boisterous, over-confident, and/or jealous. This child eventually turns into Tyrant, who is

cruel, arrogant, “and has grandiose ideas of his own importance” (Ovenstone 3). Though Carrie could certainly be read as the Tyrant manifest during her climactic prom night slaughter, basking in unbridled power over her peers, this depiction largely reflects Margaret’s own negative projections of *her* own tyrannical behaviour onto Carrie. This psychological cataclysm subsequently leads to Carrie’s counter-projection³¹ of Margaret’s own tyranny and monstrosity, destroying both women figuratively and literally.

Further, Margaret’s perception of Carrie as not only that of a monstrous witch, but as an embodiment of her own repressed sexuality and therefore of her shame, presents Carrie as the paradox of abjection: what Carrie stands for is both “heavily desired” and “deeply reviled” by her mother (Mehni 78). This further enhances Carrie’s *need* to break free from the grips of her abusive mother, making her prom night humiliation all the more devastating and catastrophic. This becomes evident after the prom when Carrie, at her most emotionally vulnerable, returns to her mother’s bosom – both literally and figuratively. Dale Mendell expands on this detrimental, abject dependence on the mother, arguing that it is also rooted in fear of being destroyed by the mother:

In her dual and conflicting need for and fear of separating from her mother, the little girl becomes sharply aware of real and fantasied aspects of the mother that seek to interfere with her development and to keep her dependent. Both the

³¹ Counter-projection, according to Jung, occurs when one’s projection unconsciously affects the projection-object: “It frequently happens that the object offers a hook to the projection, and even lures it out. This is generally the case when the object himself (or herself) is not conscious of the quality in question: in that way it works directly upon the unconscious of the projicient. For all projections provoke counter-projections when the object is unconscious of the quality projected upon it by the subject” (*Collected Works* 273; vol. 6)

intensity of the attachment between mother and daughter and the inward directed nature of female sexuality contribute to the erasing of inner and outer boundaries and result in the girl's fearing she will be destroyed by her mother [p. 27]. (qtd. in Silverman 747)

Similarly to Estelle, Margaret still seems desperate in her attempts to keep Carrie away from the outside world as "an effort to regain her only access to power: the child" (Arnold 41), reflecting the true ambivalence of any mother – good and nurturing or bad and terrible. Yet Margaret is not solely to blame for Carrie's calamitous monstrosity; the guilt is shifted between her and Carrie's bullying classmates – that is society, reflecting the nature of Jungian approaches to the psyche – as well as to art in general – as never black and white.

While matricide is the most extreme outcome of the negative mother complex, Electra's murder of her mother to avenge her idolized father is a perfect illustration of Jung's idea that the 'Electra complex' is the female version of the Oedipus complex. As early as 1915, on the basis of the contrasexual Oedipus and Electra complexes, Jung wrote that it is extremely difficult for the child to free itself from its parents and "infantile surroundings," though failing to do so gives rise to the "possibility of neurotic disturbance" ("The Theory of Psychoanalysis" 69), which we see coming to a devastating fruition in *Carrie*. This disturbance, Jung notes, involves the libido, which represents the release and the balance of psychological energy.³² He also notes that a dominating symbol of this stage is the self-sacrifice – that is, one's emancipation from his/her

³² As Jung explains, "[T]he libido, which is already sexually developed, takes possession of the form given by the complex and produces feelings and phantasies which unmistakably show the effective existence of the complex, till then perfectly unconscious" ("The Theory of Psychoanalysis" 69-70).

parents, stating that “the more the sexuality develops, the more the individual is forced to leave [her] family and to acquire independence and autonomy” (69-70). For Jung, the symbol of self-sacrifice is central to Christianity, and vital for the unconscious; while the unconscious fantasy of self-sacrifice – which occurs after puberty – predicates the child’s healthy development, as self-sacrifice is akin to sacrificing “infantile wishes” (70).

Carrie and Electra both yearn for self-sacrifice. By the film’s end, Carrie, quite literally, sacrifices herself as the only means of detaching herself from her mother by succumbing to being stabbed in the back mid-embrace. Electra, on the other hand, remains unable to detach herself from her mother even after the latter’s death, which renders her self-sacrifice futile. In both cases, the botched self-sacrifice is a symbolic expression of the tragic inability to attain individuation. Furthermore, both Carrie and Electra could be defined as monstrous children because of the misplaced affection of their domineering mothers, and are therefore implying, as Halberstadt-Freud writes, the “unconscious preoccupation” of the daughter with contradictory feelings: on the one hand, fears of being engulfed by the powerful mother figure, and on the other hand, longing for maternal affection, intermingled with “masochistic complaints, depression, and sexual inhibitions” (1-2). Repression plays an especially prominent role in this ambivalent mix and, as Halbertstadt-Freud asserts, Electra’s zealous denial of her bond with Clytemnestra clearly indicates the repression of the love she feels for her.

From a Jungian standpoint, such mother-daughter impasses indicate an overdeveloped Eros, informing both Electra’s and Carrie’s desperate craving for motherly love and connection, but also their severe resistance to their mothers. These

psychological tensions manifest as unrestrained barbarity, inflicting suffering and death onto them, but also onto their communities – as evidenced by Electra’s bringing the wrath of the Erinyes upon Orestes³³ and Carrie’s prom night rampage.

The theme of repression – of the feeling function and the feminine – manifests through the unsettling contradiction between Carrie’s pubescent womanhood and her mother’s fanatical religious zealotry. Margaret tries to dominate Carrie by instilling in her bodily shame after the traumatic onset of her first period – an event made all the more humiliating due to Carrie’s complete ignorance of that biological function. With forceful conviction, Margaret ardently prays against a sobbing Carrie as the latter hugs her legs, desperately screaming, “Why didn’t you tell me, Mama?!” Margaret incants as if she cannot hear her: “Because Eve was weak and loosed the raven, or the sin of intercourse, on the world, God punished Eve, first with the ‘Curse of Blood,’ second with the ‘Curse of Childbearing,’ and the third with the ‘Curse of Murder’” (Creed 79). All the more that Margaret sees Carrie not just as one of Eve’s daughters among many, but as a physical signifier for the abject. Carrie’s repressed and undifferentiated feeling function eventually breaks through from her unconscious in the form of an unbridled telekinesis, a dangerous weapon, which eventually annihilates her peers, her mother, and ultimately herself – thus cementing Campbell’s assertion that “what gets *pushed down* will *come up*” (“Mythos 1”).

Amplification of the Cross

³³ Following the murder of Clytemnestra, Orestes is tormented by the Erinyes (also known as the Furies): female spirits seeking vengeance against those who have committed evil acts, namely murder within the family (Howatson 258).

Referring back to the importance of the symbolic approach through amplification versus the often used semiotic approach in cinema studies, there are two images in *Last House* and *Carrie* worthy of scrutiny – Mari’s necklace and blood, respectively. While they can be read as straightforward signs – with the necklace pendant standing for peace and love in the 1960s, and blood for violence and death – they yield much richer affective meanings if amplified as symbols, thus facilitating access of irrational unconscious contents into the hubris-ridden conscious mind, and eventually prompting self-realization.

At the beginning of *Last House*, Mari’s parents give her the gift of a peace sign necklace for her birthday. Designed initially in 1958 as a mobilizing emblem for UK unilateral nuclear disarmament,³⁴ and subsequently associated with the American peace movement against the Vietnam War (director Wes Craven was a vocal critic of war violence), from a semiotic standpoint it is just a sign for the hippie movement and its famous slogan, ‘make love, not war.’ Taking it further along the semiotic path, the necklace can be viewed as an indication of innocence, youth, and purity, associated with the symbolic ‘Summer of Love.’ Therefore on one level it symbolizes the innocent values being, quite literally, ripped away from Mari after she gives it to Junior and is still assaulted and subsequently murdered by Krug’s gang.

An amplification of the peace symbol, however, would take us to its ancient meaning, which transcends the shape or form of any sign. For there could be no concrete

³⁴ It was designed by British artist Gerald Holtom in 1958 for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, its initial design featuring a Christian cross inside the circle. In order to avoid religious controversy, Holtom created the sign we know today. The inside shape now represents “a human being in despair, with arms outstretched downwards in a pleading gesture” (Nozedar 161).

representation of peace in and of itself, it could only inform temporary physical signifiers on which people from various cultures have projected the *idea* of peace, one of them being the Christian cross.³⁵

On a universal level, as Jung notes, “in some traditions the cross is a symbol ... of the suffering of existence” (69), thus casting Mari’s necklace as symbol of the inevitable existential suffering of life. On a personal level, for Mari’s parents, her necklace comes to symbolize their daughter’s fatal plight once they discover it around Junior’s neck. Through what Jung calls an enantiomorphic reversal,³⁶ the peace sign necklace becomes a catalyst for releasing the darkest contents from their unconscious.

Moreover, the peace sign, which represents a flipped upside down cross with bent arms, is often considered a ‘masculine’ symbol, associated with the Tree of Life, and with the phallic symbol of the ‘world-axis.’³⁷ But it also stands for what Jung calls conjunction of opposites by bringing together the vertical with the horizontal – or the positive with the negative, respectively – the superior with the inferior, and life with death (Cirlot 69). In light of this, Mari’s necklace can be seen as symbolic conjunction between life and death, bringing a glimmer of hope into the parents’ utter despair.

³⁵ The fate of symbols, associated too closely with concrete signs, is demonstrated by the ancient Indian swastika, which from an universal symbol of peace and prosperity, came to signify the exact opposite after its appropriation by the Nazis as a sign of their *Urbarmensch* culture.

³⁶ Jung describes this as “the emergence of the unconscious opposite in the course of time. This characteristic phenomenon practically always occurs when an extreme, one-sided tendency dominates conscious life; in time an equally powerful counterposition is built up, which first inhibits the conscious performance and subsequently breaks through the conscious control” (qtd. in *Golden* 31).

³⁷ The world-axis, or Axis of the World as described by Mircea Eliade, symbolizes the place of intersection and correspondence between three cosmic regions – Heaven, Earth, and Hell – a similar structure amidst varying cultures throughout history (*Images and Symbols* 40-1).

The ever-present symbol of the cross is significant in *Carrie* as well. It covers Margaret and Carrie's home, signifying not only Margaret's religious zealotry, but also the bizarre amount of influence it has on the Whites' lives. The cross shows up in various places throughout the film, including an upside-down cross appearing on the street when Carrie looks outside the window for her prom date, the cross-shaped 'For Sale' sign where the burnt remains of Carrie's home lie in her classmate Sue's nightmare, and Margaret's final crucifixion with knives. Most notable, however, is Margaret's motion of the cross with her knife while attempting to kill Carrie – a moment imbued with the duality of the cross itself, notably its conjunction between life and death. Carrie, barely clinging to life after Margaret stabs her in the back, watches Margaret approach her down the stairs, almost floating in a dream-like sequence. Her cross-motion with the knife symbolizes Carrie's imminent death as well as the terrifying duality of her mother, both as giver and taker of life.

Amplification of Blood

While the role of the peace sign in *Last House* could be seen as bitterly ironic, the symbolic significance of blood in *Carrie* stems from the darkness of the abject. The film opens with Carrie showering in her high school locker room. She sensually washes her body, when suddenly she starts menstruating – a shocking episode for the naïve and uninformed Carrie. For Carrie's religiously zealous mother Margaret, menstrual blood is a symbol of the curse of humanity for its original sin, and therefore she hysterically raves that both of them must “pray for their ‘woman-weak, wicked, sinning souls’” (Creed 79-80).

On another level, blood – as is the cross – is imbued with a dichotomous connotation as a symbol of both life and death due to its obvious physiological function. Its uniquely feminine connotation through menstrual blood, however, is especially ambivalent yet substantial. Menstrual blood is known to possess mythological and religious power, both negative and positive, prompting the notion in traditional Judaism of the menstruating woman as *niddah*, or abject, unclean and impure, prohibiting her from sexual intercourse (Creed 81). The Cherokee legend of Nun'yunu'wi, or Stoneclad, on the other hand, proclaims menstruation as the only power able to defeat the titular cannibalistic monster. Furthermore, in Norse mythology, the god Thor bathed in Vimur, a river of menstrual blood, in order to reach the magic land of enlightenment, while in Greek mythology, menstrual blood is referred to by gods as the 'supernatural red wine' given to them by Hera (Walker 27).

For Carrie, blood shares this ambivalent symbolism. Menstrual blood initially unleashes her supernatural powers, with her first display immediately following the locker room incident – which for her ends with her cruel peers throwing tampons at her while tauntingly shouting, "Plug it up! Plug it up!" – in which she shatters the ceiling light. As the film – and her suffering – continues, her abilities become exponentially stronger. For Carrie, blood is not simply a symbol for her womanhood as well as the catalyst for her powers, but material on which she projects adolescent trepidation amidst her inherent fear of her mother, her peers, and ultimately, of herself. Her prom night humiliation involving pig's blood symbolizes how Carrie has come dishearteningly full circle in rejecting her own womanhood.

The infamous image of a petrified Carrie doused in pig's blood, as explored by Robert B. Winning, also works as a visual metaphor for the sexual conflicts presented throughout the film, though it also reveals the very real anxieties present amongst teenaged girls to adapt and belong. He notes how, in a sense, the prank ultimately reaffirms Margaret's previous threats about the prom, a threat which could be read not merely as the negative mother vocalizing wishful thinking, but as a genuine concern over the horrific nature of high school bullies. Further, Creed says, blood symbolizes the complexity of Carrie and Margaret's relationship in their final fight, where they spill "the blood which flows between mother and daughter and joins them together in their life-and-death struggle" (78).

Last House's use of blood is relatively straightforward, as the film has no shortage of shockingly bloody violence. However, blood as a symbol is notably depicted in one of the film's most gruesome scenes involving the disembowelment of Phyllis. The lone female convict, Sadie, fervently screams as she stabs Phyllis, seeming passionately enthralled by this sadistic act followed by an intense examination of her hands covered in blood. As she is the first to pull out an intestine, strangely caressing it, it seems that seeing Phyllis's blood on her hands instills genuine delight in Sadie, followed by apparent shock. The focus on Sadie's reaction to the blood – which has come from Phyllis's lower abdomen, close to her uterus – symbolizes her own complex relationship with her femininity, or a broken relationship with her own feminine body. After the gruesome episode, Sadie, in apparent disillusion, washes the blood off of her hands in a nearby pond. Blood's symbolism as a remnant of guilt recurs throughout temporal and cultural literature and contexts, including Lady Macbeth's infamous monologue on her

bloody hands in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as she fruitlessly attempts to clean them in her growing insanity while sleepwalking. This, in turn, is reminiscent of another infamous attempt to wash one's hands as a way of evading guilt – that of Roman prefect Pontius Pilate, who washed his hands of Jesus' blood following his crucifixion.

Amplification's role in these films further imbues them with meaningful insight into the psychological versatility of horror. While reading the cross and blood with the more commonly utilized semiotic approach arguably brings nothing new to the horror genre, reading them as symbols in *Last House* and *Carrie* imbue both films with longevity and psychological congruity.

Conclusion

Reading both *Carrie* and *Last House* as mythopoetic explorations of the psychological ambiguity of the mother-daughter relationship gone wrong is crucial for understanding the significance of not only these specific films, but other horror films of the period, written off as mere exploitation and/or mindless slasher pictures. For the 1960s and 1970s specifically, the horror genre became a widespread mythology, informing the collective consciousness. Amidst Hollywood's twenty-first century obsession with horror remakes of dubious quality (which *Last House* and *Carrie* both fell victim to in 2009 and 2013, respectively), examining these films in light of their temporal significance affirms their place in American culture. In light of prevalent discussions during that time, concerned with "the silence of women, the repression of the feminine and ... the denial of death in Western culture," these films have worked as iconographies which "suggested a common coming to consciousness" (Badley 3). With the disillusionment of the Vietnam War, the changing dynamics of the 'nuclear family,' and the burgeoning shift in gender politics, it was an especially disorienting time period, out of which psychologically-potent cinema, including horror films, emerged.

On the individual level, acknowledging and accepting one's own dark unconscious contents ensures psychological balance necessary for individuation; thus, on the collective level, as Jung notes, dealing with this darker side is vital for the future of the world. This notion, taken up in von Franz's discussion of the underdeveloped feeling function, is an indispensable building block for understanding the seminal role of horror cinema within our modern culture. Furthermore, the female-centric denotation of the Jungian mother-daughter relationship – and its unresolved complex forms – asserts how

the sexual likeness to her mother imbues the daughter with a deeper understanding of her darker unconscious contents, allowing for a uniquely female experience with horror and thus, stronger potential for individuation. Moreover, this relationship's violent manifestations on screen construe the films as compensatory reactions to fears of the liberated woman in the United States, thus emphasizing the universally significant role of the negative feminine in both psychology and art.

As Rowland rightfully notes, "the archetypal is located, not in some meta-physical never-never land, but in the here-and-now of our relationships" (*Psyche and the Arts* 111), though we cannot usually unveil this on our own; hence, art has the uncanny potential to make this difficult task easier, as the psyche is particularly in harmony with artistic creation (2). Cinema, specifically, acts as a "mass mirror" which "offers fantastic opportunities for reflecting on the fluid border between the individual and the collective, the personal and the social" (Basil Morozow and Hockley 15). As coming to terms with the unconscious allows for one to attain individuation, looking at horror cinema as a form of modernized mythology provides a necessary gateway toward the integrated self. While the unconscious is and remains unknowable by its very nature, "*dreaming the myth onward*" through concurrent art forms grants us a closer reach into its contents.

Likewise, Jung's myth-informed scholarship provides substantial insight into that integrated self, and what it means to be human. Luke Hockley and Christopher Hauke note regarding Jungian thought: "[W]e are beginning to question who we are, what views we hold and how we understand ourselves," as this field "is in a process of becoming as it brings the historical and contemporary debates which have structured our understanding of cinema ever more fully into the Jungian arena" ("Introduction" 2). Jungian film theory

is a nascent, yet undoubtedly blossoming, discipline. Moreover, the feminist approaches of von Franz and Rowland, the feminine in general, and the mother-daughter relationship in particular, are seen in a new – unexpected and little explored – light. My purpose in this thesis has been – on the basis of two classical horror film works, and two classical myths about entangled mother-daughter relationships – to offer an example of the unique possibilities of these approaches in unpacking layers of the human – markedly female – experience.

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