



**The Cat and its Relationship with the Feminine:**  
From the Sacred Creature in Egypt  
to the embodiment of the Devil in the Middle Ages for the  
Catholic Church

**Alessandra di Montezemolo**

## **Preface**

Exploring the different religions, their history, rituals and symbols, to understand who we are and what we carry from the past into today's world, seems to be necessary and meaningful.

For us in the West, the three main monotheist religions, Judaism, Catholicism and Islam are the most relevant and influential. But the influence of Buddhism and Hinduism have also developed significantly in our globalized western world.

Religion is not a simple matter that can be studied only in books without personal research for meaning. And to avoid getting lost in its complexity or having a very superficial approach it is necessary to limit the subject and choose a specific approach.

This is why I chose *“The cat and its relationship with the feminine: from the sacred creature in Egypt to the embodiment of the Devil in the Middle Ages for the Catholic Church”* as the subject of this paper:

- 1- I grew up in a Catholic family and environment as most Italians, but I knew very little about my own religion, except what I learnt when I was a young girl in a very superficial way, and later my refusal of Catholicism in my teens.
- 2- I see and feel the role of patriarchal/masculine one sidedness in our lives and in the world.
- 3- Although today I don't “believe” what I was taught in my youth about Catholicism, I nevertheless think I should be open to welcoming the positive aspects of

Catholicism (just think of the amazing artistic achievements it has inspired in architecture, sculpture, paintings, music!) and understand more deeply what does not fit in my own “individuation process”.

Now that Cat Ladies have emerged powerfully into the US Presidential Campaign, with Vance having attacked Kamala Harris as a “Childless Cat Lady”, the meaning of this paper seems to come to life collectively and become relevant way beyond my intentions. I hope that learning a bit more about the symbolism of cats may bring a small contribution to the renewed energy in preparing for a presidential election that will influence the future of the entire world.

-An Italian Cat Lady with a wonderful son, two cats and a dog.

## Introduction: the cat yesterday and today



### *1- The Cat in my early Childhood in Rome*

The superstition (or taboo) of the black cat, is one of the strongest superstitions, along with many others that were absorbed very early in my childhood, through my mother and her own strong beliefs. It has always been a strong emotional belief without knowing or understanding why. In fact, since I was very young, my relationship with cats was ambivalent. I believed that black cats, especially those crossing the road in front of you were signals for bad luck, death.... Fear of and distance from the feline nature of the cat was the essence of my non-relationship with it. I feared their unpredictable behaviour, their deep and mysterious penetrating eyes.... their independence, their distant and their opportunistic relationship with human beings... (dogs seemed to be more reassuring....).

Nevertheless, cats were a natural part of my early childhood environment in Rome.

I regularly saw many cats in the ruins of the city and the very famous “Gattare”, (“Catters”) lonely and often old women taking care of and feeding cats. The memory of

these lonely women is still very strong. My mother used to say that cats should not be fed because this would facilitate their reproduction, and we would be invaded by millions of cats everywhere... Still, I had somehow some curiosity and sympathy for those women....

In my family home in Circeo (a magical place for me, and also the place where Ulysses met Circe the Magician) near the seaside in Lazio, there were a great number of wild black cats who came to find food and were violently chased away... I was attracted to them, by their nocturne love songs, but at the same time feared them as “Hell”....

## ***2- The Cat in my life today***

An important dream appeared a few years ago while I was starting my training in Zurich:

*I was near the sea. There was a small wooden hut. To get into the hut you had to go up some wooden stairs. In the hut with me was a cat. I accepted his presence but kept a certain distance.*

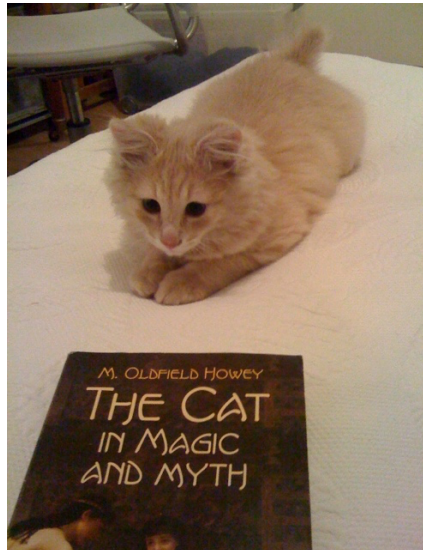
*I decided to go out of the hut and left the cat alone inside. He was very mad at me for leaving him alone...*

*Once outside, it was difficult to walk because of a very strong wind. After a while I met a friend, a past lover, and we embraced tenderly. My sister was there, looking at us. After a while the wind was so strong that I decided to return to the hut. My sister followed me.*

*Entering the hut, I saw the cat. He was staring at me. He was very mad at me. Furious. I thought to myself that it was his fury that made the wind blow so strongly. I went near the cat, took him/her on my lap and started to caress him/her. The wind stopped. The nature outside was appeased.*

Clearly the cat in this dream was related to my own feminine nature and to my study of independence as part of understanding and integrating some important aspects of my shadow. It's a dream about inner transformation as the strong wind indicates. It's about including in a more differentiated way sexuality, aggression, eros and a new approach to the feminine logos. The Cat appeared in several dreams since then and it is also strongly related to the development in my present life of real relationships with men.

Also, thanks to my dreams and to some specific memories I was able to understand that there is a special and invisible link between all these past and present aspects of the cat and its meanings in my life. This new link has emerged day after day through insights, through reading of books, through my work in the analytical setting. It is clearly related to my strong Catholic origins, to my mother's family but also to a wider cultural background about the history of the search of new forms of freedom of women in my country and of the "suffering" of past generations of the women in my family where body and soul were totally split from one another and where independence was totally forbidden.



## The Cat in History and in Religion

### A- The sacred cat: from Egypt to Greece and to the Roman Empire.

#### *1- Egypt: where it all started.*



*The sun, god Atum-Ra in the form of a cat confronting Apophis, the serpent of darkness.*

*Tomb fresco, Deir El-Medina 1300BC*

Wild cats (*Felis Silvestris Libyc*) were first domesticated in Egypt in 4000 BC. The first images of domesticated cats appear 1900 years BC. The protection of barns from mice and men from snakes and scorpions were certainly a very good “practical” reasons for the creation of a long-lasting positive relationship between humans and these small felines. Since then, many have believed that the cat embodies profound spiritual forces. Its beauty, its grace and agility, its independence and its mysterious detachment, its incredible eyes that shine and can “see” in the darkness, its sensory acuity towards the weather and in feeling earthquakes before they happen, its incredible fertility have led humans to believe in a very special power of cats.

In 1500 BC the belief that the Solar God Ra could embody in a cat started.

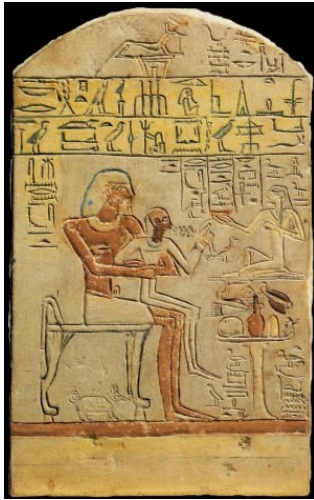
Ra is a solar masculine god who journeys into the underworld to kill his worst enemy Apophis, the serpent demon of darkness.

In 950-720 BC the cat becomes a central part of the Egyptian Religion through the cult of Bastet (called Bubastis by the Greeks), the feminine moon goddess, Ra’s daughter (later considered as Isis’ daughter) with a human body and a cat’s head.

If Ra represented the masculine solar principle able to travel through the underworld and fight the dark demons, Bastet brings with her the lunar feminine principle.

Bastet is the guardian of fertility, pregnancy, childbirth, family and the protector of the house. During this time the family cats were mummified and buried with their owners following them after their death, in their after life destiny in the sarcophagus.





*Funerary stele of Dedusobek with his son and pet Basenji (under his chair)/ Bastet and her Sistrum, with kittens 664-630 BC/ and mummified cat*

In opposition to the kind Bast Goddess, was Sekmeth, the mighty and terrible war god with a Lion head. In the earliest times Bast had also been represented with a Lion head, suggesting the possibility of a union of opposites in which the nature of Bast included both the feminine and the masculine principle. This would include both the war/terrible aspect together with the home /family protection side of the lunar goddess. In this ancient Egyptian culture, the care of cats was highly developed and killing one voluntarily could be punished with the death penalty.



*Lion-headed goddess Sekhmet seated, wearing sun disk with pendant cobra on head, holding ankh and papyrus scepter. Egyptian relief.*

Bastet was also associated with an important musical instrument, the sistrum. Cats often on the handle of this instrument. Its music was associated with fertility and regeneration and was linked to the cat's reproductive power.

"The cat is shown as presiding over a union of opposites... Through the sistrum, a musical instrument very much associated with feeling, the cat deity goes farther and even unites the main opposites, male and female, as an archetype" .... "The hierogamus, the archetypal form of the union of opposites...Through The cat's head we can connect to it's amazing ingenuity, by maintaining a living relation to deeper levels of absolute knowledge."

*(B. Hannah The cat: Independence and Self Reliance, in The Archetypal symbolism of animals, Chiron Publications, Wilmette, Illinois 1999, p.48)*

The celebration of Bastet in the city of Bubastis, as reported and described by the Greek historian Herodotus (AD 330), would bring together up to 700,000 people. Abundant sacrifices took place, including of cats bred for this purpose (the sacrifice of cats spread and continued also in other areas in the following centuries).

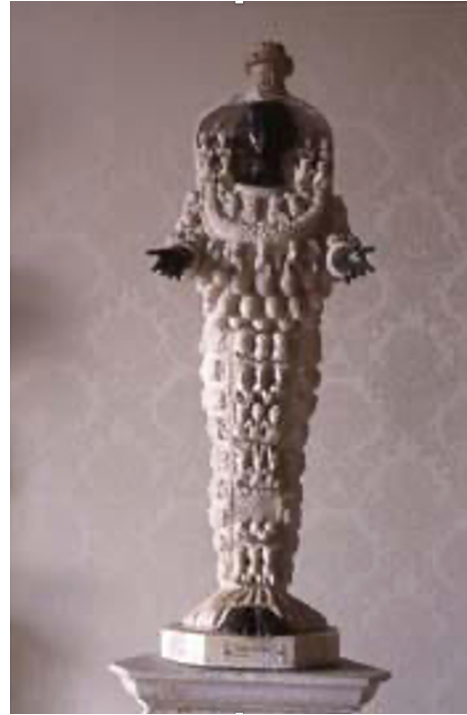
This later Egyptian history would have a profound influence on the culture and the religion of the West, as we will see in the following sections.

## ***2- The Cat in Ancient Greece and for the Romans***

Mycenaean *Merchants* most probably carried the first cats to the Ionian Islands on their ships. But the cat spread further during the Greater Greek era, arriving on the coasts of Southern Italy, in Taranto (Taras) and Reggio Calabria (Reghion).

The Greeks identified Bast with Artemis (later Diana for the Romans) and also considered the Cat Goddess as the daughter of Isis and Osiris. These goddesses were all connected to fertility, childbirth and motherhood.

The clear association of the cat with Artemis in Greece and Diana in Italy began in 500-300 BC.



*Artemis was represented with many breasts and animals in the lower part of the body (including cats) as a universal mother, nourishing life many of these statues are found (Clockwise from top left - 1- Fountain in Villa d'Este in Tivoli 20 km from Rome, 2- Musei Capitolini in Rome – 3- Vatican Museum, 4- Archaeology Museum in Naples.)*

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The ancient Greek city of Ephesus (today in Turkey) was central for the worship of Diana. The goddess had a magnificent temple there that took 220 years to construct and was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Within the temple was a famous ebony statue of Diana. The upper body of the statue was entirely covered with breasts, symbolizing Diana's role as goddess of fertility. The lower part of the body was covered with cats and other animals.

It was said that the high priest had to be a runaway slave. In Rome, Diana was regarded as protector of the lower classes, particularly of slaves. In fact, the day of Diana's annual festival in Rome and Ariccia was a holiday for slaves.

The Romans viewed Diana as a many-sided goddess associated with forests and hunting. Artists usually portrayed her as a virgin hunter, often with a bow and quiver, accompanied by maidens, hunting dogs, or deer.

Goddess of Light, Moon Goddess, Queen of Heaven, Lunar Virgin (note that to the Romans, “virgin” meant a woman who had never been married or pregnant, not a woman who had never had sex), Goddess of Wildwood, Divine Huntress, Protector of Animals, Lady of Beasts. As goddess of childbirth, nursing, and healing—also called Lucina—Diana held an honoured place among women.

The most celebrated place of the cult of Diana was a sacred grove beside Lake Nemi, at Ariccia near Rome.

The worship of Diana was widespread in the ancient world. Indeed, early Christians considered the pagan goddess their main rival. Diana's cult continued to attract followers for centuries, despite Christian opposition.

The cat was an attribute of Diana and an important positive symbol connected to the feminine goddesses of nature, fertility, and wilderness until the 4th century AD. With the disappearing of the Pagan Cults and the development of Christian Monotheism and the Catholic Church the cat started to be associated to evil.

In the Middle Ages, Diana was denounced as "queen of the witches". Religious leaders viewed her as a leader of witches and even referred to her as the devil.

Another cult, the cult of Isis, also linked to Bastet and to the cat developed during the Roman Empire also became very popular.

Isis was the goddess of all aspects of womanhood and the cult also required frequent bathing. She was also associated with the intellectual achievement of Alexandria especially in medicine as Isis Medica as well as wisdom, *Sophia*. Women played a prominent role in the religion of Isis and in general had a high status in the classical era. In the Hellenistic and Roman eras women were even elected to the high magistracies.

This important role of women continued into the era of the early Christian Church. Donald Engels writes in *Classical Cats, The rise and fall of the Sacred Cat*: "In the Gnostic tradition, in addition to holding the priesthood and diaconate, women were also bishops. Women are an integral part of the Church, the Body of Christ".

The good fortune of the cat continued for some time into the early Christian era. The cat was viewed as a key partner and symbol of the goddesses. Two temples should be mentioned in this regard: one in Ostia a few kilometres from Rome and one in the heart of Rome, itself. A famous cat marble statue was found in the one in Rome where the

church of Santo Stefano del Cacco now stands. Today the statue is on Palazzo Grazioli in via della Gatta (the street of the female cat) in the heart of Rome.



The fact that a church was built on a former temple of Isis where a marble cat was found is a perfect transition to a discussion of the next stage in the transformation of the cat from a positive symbol of life to symbolizing the embodiment of evil given to it by the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church in its beginnings affirmed the existence of one unique masculine God compared to the Pagan worship of many gods. In addition to converting to the worship of one unique masculine God it also had to fight the existence of the numerous Pagan goddesses and introduce the Virgin Mary as the only legitimate worship of a feminine goddess. The primary rivals to the new idea and ideal of worshipping the feminine exclusively in the form of the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ were precisely the Pagan earthly goddesses who were very popular amongst women.

The worship of Diana was very popular in Rome and spread throughout the Roman Empire, especially in the rural communities. This worship survived in the beginnings of Christianity within a tolerant and multireligion/multicultural attitude during the Imperial Roman era (30BC-AD500). It continued to survive in rural communities also in the following centuries because its rituals were incorporated into the worship of the Virgin Mary.

With the decline of the Roman Empire and the growing strength of the Church that started to develop its “earthly power”, the conversion to Catholic monotheism was imposed by every method. Very sophisticated theological theories such as Saint Augustine’s “summum bonum and privatio bonis” were developed and promulgated. As the Catholic Church grew in earthly power, it became increasingly intolerant of and violent against polytheistic beliefs by affirming the unique authority of the Catholic God and its expression in the Trinity of the “Father, Son and Holy Ghost.”

Just as with many of the other ancient religions, the cult of Artemis/Diana disappeared, although it did hold precedence within the city of Ephesus for some time. When St. Paul visited Ephesus to preach Christianity in the first century AD, he was confronted by worshippers of the Artemis cult who had no plans to abandon their goddess or their temple. The fierce loyalty of the citizens of Ephesus to Artemis forced St. Paul from the city and, along with the help of the Romans, kept Christianity from making inroads among the city inhabitants. The Goths destroyed the temple in 262 AD, and the Ephesians vowed to rebuild, although it would never return to its former glory.



## **B- The cat and the feminine as symbol of evil for the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages.**

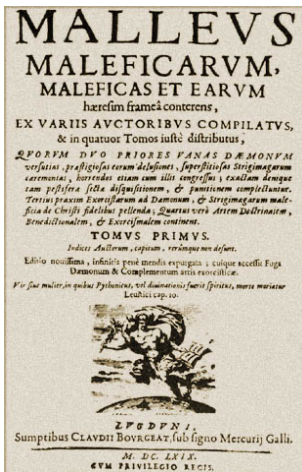
The turning point between the classical tolerant multi religion era, and the beginning of the dark intolerant times seems to be linked to the conversion to Christianity of Constantine in 312 AD. “At that time” as stated by Donald Engels (“Classical Cats, The Rise and fall of the sacred cat”, Routledge 1999, London & New York, p131) “only 5% of the Empire’s people believed in some form of Christianity, while the remaining 95% preferred other religious traditions”. As early as in 317 AD persecutions against heretics and Jews as well as pagans throughout the Empire, started.

It is in the Middle Ages, within the transformation of tolerant polytheism into strict, intolerant, and one-sided monotheism, that the cat is transformed into an obscure animal, linked to instincts and sex, to death, to evil and to the devil himself. The cat would become associated with the Heretics, with the Christian Gnostic Sect of Cathars (from Catto=Cat) that, in opposition to the belief of evil as “privatio boni” thought that the world had been created by the devil.<sup>1</sup> They were accused of worshipping the devil as embodied in cats and were also associated with the “worst demoniac” women, who continued to worship the pagan Goddess, Diana. They were condemned as witches. In the 1233 papal edict “Vox Roma” of Pope Gregory IX, the black cat was considered to be

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<sup>1</sup> “ Evil is Privatio Boni. This classical formula robs evil of absolute existence and makes it a shadow that has only relative existence dependent on light...” (C.G. Jung *CW11 Psychology and Religion*, pp247, page 158)...” The Christian definition of God as the summum bonum excludes the Evil One right from the start...Hence the devil remained outside the Trinity as the “ape of God” and in opposition to it”...” (C.G. Jung *CW11 Psychology and Religion*, pp252, page 172)

the reincarnation of Satan. In 1484, Pope Innocence VIII, excommunicated all cats and ordered that those found with the witches should be burnt with their owners.



“*The Malleus Malificarum*”, usually translated as *The Hammer of Witches*, was first published in Germany in 1487 as a handbook for witch hunters during the Inquisition and was used for 300 years, well into the Age of Reason. It justifies and details the identification, apprehension, interrogation, and execution of people, especially women accused of consorting with demons, signing pacts and even having sex with the devil, and performing *malefic*, or harmful magic.

The earliest documentary evidence of an actual European witch trial (not trials for heresy or sorcery, which did not necessarily involve corporeal interaction with demons) is circa 1430. The sanctioned, organized pursuit and persecution of witches peaked from 1560 to 1630 and was almost entirely a western European phenomenon.

In the 15th century, theologians seeking proof of the existence of spirits had become attentive to stories of witches. The poor ignorant peasants simply wanted an explanation for why their wheat had fungus or their new baby, seemingly healthy, had died the night

before. The theologians had something else in mind. The confessions of accused witches were useful if taken as the expert testimony of people who *knew* demons existed because they hadn't just seen them or heard them -- they had sex with them. Intercourse with one of Satan's own met even Aristotle's tough standard for experiential evidence, because you can't have sex with something imaginary.



*Goya (1746-1828) – Penitent Procession*

### **The cat and the feminine: from a historical and religious perspective to a psychological approach.**

“In our countries, the cat comes from Egypt, where he was once considered a sacred animal. The Cat Goddess, was worshipped by the Egyptians as the goddess of music, of sexuality, of the pleasures of life; she was the feminine fertility, the unique source of life; opposite to the dog the cat has never sold its soul to man. He has a special egocentric reserve. He tells us: you can caress me and serve me, but he never becomes your slave. And if you bother him, he just goes away. In women’s dreams he represents often femininity, independence and self-confidence, qualities often missing in modern women. The Cat goddess in dreams

represents therefore, a positive model of feminine behavior” (*ML Von Franz, La voie des rêves, la psychologie de la femme, p.196, La Fontaine de Pierre, Ville d’Avrey, 2008*).

The Classic era (prior to Constantine) permitted the worship of many gods and goddesses and embraced a tolerance towards different cults and religions. But with the decline of the Roman Empire and the development of Catholic Monotheism by the Church, a clear split between opposites was introduced and a clear devaluation of feminine qualities was established and still persists.

**1- *Many gods/goddesses in the Classical era versus one unique masculine God***

“With the assertion of patriarchal monotheistic cultures, a creating god, superior to nature, was generated. It represented the acquired assurance by the masculine conscience, able of dominating the forces of nature. The woman is therefore confined in an inferior nature, excluded from the divine and the sacred... The forces of nature are associated to the forces of evil and to the powers of Satan”. (*Silvia di Lorenzo, la femme et son ombre, chapitre 8, principe masculin, principe féminin, p.124-125, Albin Michel, Paris 1997*)

**2- *The Virgin Mary versus the earthly/wild/fertile and “flesh” “mother earth” goddesses.***

“The Virgin Mary is worshipped, but she is not adored as a goddess, and in Protestantism she is abolished. We can therefore define the Virgin Mother of God as a divine image of second order and dependent, an instrument of the masculine Trinity: she is the immaculate breast... She is a container, more than a substance having her own value. She is more an object than a person; she is the model of woman only seen as a mother that can live uniquely through procreation as her only objective in life, and as her unique reason to live. The mythical and divine

figures, that used to express all the complexity of the feminine principle in the Pagan world seem to have completely disappeared.” (*Silvia di Lorenzo, La femme et son ombre, chapter 6, l’archetype de la femme vierge, p.78, Albin Michel, Paris, 1997*).

Until 1950, when the Assumption was decided through a decree by Pope Pio XII, the Virgin Mary only had an earthly “flesh and blood” identity compared to the Trinity of God the Son and the Holy Ghost. Jung welcomes this decision as a positive step towards the integration of the feminine in Catholic religion.

The shadow, as well as the independence attributed to the Pagan goddesses was excluded from the conception of the Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, and projected onto the “evil witches”.

Nevertheless, the goddesses survived in peasant and agricultural areas and populations where the Virgin Mary incorporated most of the traits of the goddesses and was worshipped as a real Goddess.

“Wherever the Roman Empire spread, there the Isis cult rooted. There you find the Black Madonna...Wherever the cult of the Virgin Mary and the Catholic mission has spread the Virgin Mary has always picked up, or taken on, the local characteristics of the great fertility goddesses” (*ML Von Franz, The Cat, Inner City Books, Toronto 1999, p 41*)

### ***3- The primacy and ruling of the masculine versus the reduction of the feminine to obedience and dependence***

“The witch hunt is the expression of the fear inspired in men by the mysterious nature of the feminine. This is why Mary had to be an ‘Immaculate Virgin’

excluded from the original sin, and emptied of the power of the ancient goddesses: of their creative strength of Eros, of sexuality and of instincts” (*Silvia di Lorenzo, la femme et son ombre, chapitre 8 principe masculin, principe féminin, Albin Michel, Paris 1997, p.125*)

Through the notion of the Virgin Mary, the Church attempted to redeem the original sin of Eve. In doing so, it contributed to a definitive split in women’s identity between virginal vs. fallen. In this scheme of things, women had no choice: they could be white, good and pure, dependent and obedient, wives and mothers or black, bad sinners, evil witches (or bitches) and be incarnated as cats.

“If you could have talked to persecutors, they would have said that a woman must be pure, must be chaste, must obey her husband –some absolutely demanding, inhuman ideal of femininity, and any woman who doesn’t fit into that is a witch” (*ML Von Franz, The Cat, Inner City Books, Toronto 1999, p 69*)

#### **4- Dogma and exclusion of the feminine: Trinity versus Quaternity.**

For C.G. Jung, one of his main concerns about Catholicism is the dogma of the Trinity of the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost. And this is for three very good reasons:

- Because the Catholic dogma of the Trinity excludes evil and therefore the shadow is projected onto the devil as totally external from God (in opposition to the Gnostics who believed that Satanaël was the other son of God, the brother of Jesus, making the Trinity a Quaternity). “*Good does not become better by being exaggerated, but worse, and a small evil becomes a big one through being disregarded and repressed. The shadow is very much part of human nature, and it is only at night that no shadows exist*” (C.G. Jung, *CW 11, Psychology and Religion West*, p193 par 286)

- Because until 1950, with the decree of the dogma of the “Assumption Marie” and the coronation of the Virgin as “a sort” of goddess (this is at least what C.G. Jung thought at the time), the feminine, through the Virgin Mary, was only considered the earthly human mother of God, without any divine attributes.

(The mother quality was originally an attribute of the Holy Ghost, and the latter was known as Sophia-Sapientia by certain early Christians);

- Because “*The quaternity is entirely absent from the dogma*” and C.G. Jung considers, through cross-cultural and natural cases and examples, that “*the quaternity is an archetype of almost universal occurrence*”. For instance, there are 4 elements, 4 orientations, the cross of Jesus, the 4 ways of spiritual development in Buddhism, the Mandalas as well as the 4 functions of psychological orientation.

### **Concluding remarks**

“...The population consists of different historical layers. There are people who psychologically, might be living in the year 5000 BC...There are countless troglodytes and barbarians living in Europe and in all civilized countries, as well as a large number of medieval Christians. On the other hand there are relatively few who have reached the level of consciousness which is possible in our time. It is psychologically quite legitimate when a medieval man ...treats his shadow as the devil incarnate.... for his belief is that of a thirteenth-century Christian” (C.G. Jung *CW 11, Psychology and Religion: West, p 308 par 463*)

What I have found in this journey the cat in the history of western culture and religion is that in my country together with the existing layers of monuments of the different times and centuries, today in the 21st century some of the customs, taboos, superstitions, and values of the past millennia also continue to exert a powerful influence. The coexist

along with the more visible and concrete layers of monuments from different times and centuries. They contribute to the real psychological difficulties of women becoming and being independent human beings in Italy and around the world.

### **- The Cats in Rome and the “Gattare”**

The “gattare” are women who take care of cats in Rome and they are today’s link to the thousands of women worshippers in the past centuries of the pagan Goddesses and, in particular of Diana. They care for cats, feed them and tenderly look after them, as they have always done in the past. They carry the positive heritage of the very special relationship with this small feline that existed since the times of the cult of Bastet in Egypt regardless of the persecutions and the base reputation these wonderful animals acquired in the Middle Ages until the Renaissance. It is interesting to observe that the extraordinary woman and actress Anna Magnani was known to be a Gattara.





**- The superstition of the black cat**

The emotion of Black Cats crossing the road will continue to influence my behaviour. I will still stop and wait.... But maybe now I will do it with more awareness and knowledge of where my emotion comes from and what it means....

**- The difficult relationship with cats and the feminine in my mother's traditional Catholic family.**

I have always been aware of the split and the terrible/tragic non-union of opposites that existed in my mother's experience and education. The need to be perfect, as a daughter, as a wife and as a mother.... Avoiding a true existence as a woman with her ideas, her desires, her creativity, and her own life....

The refusal of any approach to sexuality, for herself first of all, but also the denial of ours.... And the terrible guilt feeling around this subject.... The rules within her family were loud and clear... Married at 20 years old, totally dedicated to her husband (my father) and her three children, with the prohibition of divorce (external and internal...) there was no way she could ever think of becoming herself....

**- My mother's generation, my own generation & Italian women today.**

Whether we like it or not, whether we believe or not in the Catholic creed and in God, it is clear that we carry more or less consciously, the deep heritage of our religion.... And this heritage still influences our choices and our life. In the 70's I participated actively in the women's liberation movements, but what many of us had to recognize, is that not much can be achieved externally if our inner world is not evolving as well. I have certainly climbed the achievement ladder as a manager in business, but I am aware that

this does not mean I have achieved and fulfilled my true identity as a woman... On the contrary...Often times, I experienced how much women in corporations feel forced to adapt to this very one-sided masculine world, and to develop their masculinity against their femininity. It is essential to deal with our inner patriarchy as we fight to acquire the place we deserve in our societies.

As The Beatles would sing, there is still “A long and winding road” ahead of us. But it’s a challenge that the women of our generation should not forget, especially for our own daughters and the generations to come!

Our responsibility is to help develop a truly independent freedom of the feminine thought and feeling (or feminine logos as Marie Laure Colonna a French Jungian analyst calls it), more accomplished freedom in sexuality, and more self-assurance, more creativity. Hopefully this will allow the upcoming generations to finally overcome the past difficult one-sided patriarchal heritage and find the place and the role that women deserve in society.... and that society urgently needs as well....

“It is above all the task of women to become conscious of the archetypal image of the cat that can be so disastrous to her if allowed to remain unconscious.... All that each of us can do is to work honestly on the archetypal image of the cat in our own souls. Perhaps we may each then add ‘an infinitesimal grain on the scales of humanity’s soul’ - Jung 1966, par 449” (Barbara Hannah, *The Cat: Independence and Self-Reliance* Chiron Publications, Wilmette Illinois 2006, page 52)

**- The many cats still living within the ruins of Rome**

During the Christmas holidays a few years ago, while I was visiting my family in Rome, I went to Piazza Argentina where the temple of the fertility Roman Goddess Feronia stands and found dozens of wonderfully healthy cats.... in the middle of all the cars and pollution....



*Photos taken with my iPhone in the heart of Rome on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010*

Here ends this short exploration of the significance of the cat in history and today which helped me understand how my own life is still influenced by the past generations. And here also continues my effort to help women, “childless cat ladies” as well as men, bring their powerful feminine energy and kind leadership into the world. We cannot go back to the dark, Middle Ages of real or metaphorical witch hunts, when women and cats were burnt as incarnations of the Devil.

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