AN IMAGE OF A LUNAR CHILD

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As re-entering the primordial ocean of unity, that is what it feels like. The immense security of her presence, unconditional, immortal. Like the blindingly radiant beams she emits, the world is a miraculous whole because of her affection. Her perfect round form, everchanging, dependent upon the light. The light that makes her come to life. In his eyes, at least, it always does. Until it appeared to be only a reflection. Just a mirror to something larger than her. Something taking more time, space and attention. But is it not the neck that supports the head? Without one another, neither have a role. To him, she might not be the central figure of existence for ever, but still, she possesses the nights. Sometimes drowsy and blurred, on others, intense and eternal. An other. She will remain.

All her inherited features are amplified by him. Together, they are more. 'They' defines her, and includes him. Dichotomy was the expression of the past but cannot be leveraged in the present. He wanted to capture her through the apparatus at hand. To regress into the cosmic union and hold her for the split of a second where she will stay the same. Stay with him. The mirror in which he will always look for himself, the ever familiar face he will endlessly try to sharpen. The operation is reversed. The rich memory he holds is not of him, but of her. Deeply imprinted on the fragile layer of the mind. Not only sensitive to light, but to other sensations as well. That image, a perceived fragment of reality means all to him. For the photograph is not only the object of desire, the trophy of amour. It is fixed. And that certitude is something which may finally relieve the innate fear of abandonment. The naiveté can be repaired until the fibres of the paper hold together.

Since the picture is the sole conquered matter that can contain traces of the divine light she illuminates. Intangible, transcending. Mastery was the hoax of the enlightened, surrender shall be the guidance of the remnants.

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A proposed reason why photographic philosophy should be more present in the human-cosmic discourse is because it is, after all, the main technical tool for its study; while the cosmos is the source of all light, so conversely, it should also be more received in the photographic one. Without photography we would have a much more limited sense of the universe than we do today, which also partly explains the paradigm shift in astronomy in the past century or so, in parallel with the invention of the photographic medium. Equally, learning of interstellar ecologies can be beneficial in understanding the world around us, and because we originated from, and are part of the same formation, such learning also gives a chance to trace the constellations of our identities. As apparent in the ideas of occultists and Gnostic thinkers of the 20th century, the Moon is one of the key influencers of human prenatal development, the most impactful celestial body on our host planet, besides the Sun. The phases of the Moon are regarded as closely connected to the feminine periods, due to the undeniable forces that our natural satellite has on watery bodies of Earth by cause of her gravitational pull. Her described rhythm is like an astronomical metronome that provides the vital pulse to the fetus upon conception. Aleister Crowley, in the fourteenth chapter of his novel, Moonchild, described the lunar as synonymous to the feminine¹, while Rudolf Steiner declared the human form as a result of lunar influence in his lectures²-³. From the legacies of esoteric beliefs on the galactic evolution, the Moon can be universally accepted as a cosmic mother to us, earthlings, whose interplanetary rays overflow with nurturing energy.

The vital energy from a maternal source is the first experience we most likely have of love, and reciprocating it equally is, in the majority of cases, our first affectionate expression. This special bond is almost unrepeatable, even as our later connections seek to recompose it in other forms, but still only remain auxiliary equivalents. Slowly dissociating from this initial coexistence, the infant starts to recognise their own reflection and compose their self-image through what Jacques Lacan theorised as the "imago" of the mirror stage⁴. Conceptualizing ourselves by this self-image inherently forms from the relation between ourselves and the rest of the world⁵. Ideally, that first point of relation would be our mother, whom we detach from as soon as physical necessities allow. This separation, if disrupted in its organic process, can scar someone for the rest of their lives, resulting in a lack that is experienced as an abandonment by the one who was supposed to provide, emotionally, as much as materially⁶. Not having a mother of the same species, however, does not mean completely living without one. In our human culture,
the Moon is the celestial entity adopted as our cosmic mother. As the symbol of the divine feminine her forces orchestrate the tides of Earth, while her motions guide our bodily cycles. She restlessly guards our dreams, always showing up on time to take the nightly shift on the sky. As a leading figure of almost all spiritual practices she is full of mysteries even at her thinnest of crescents. Her influence on us, complex living organisms, is still obscure just as her dark side that she so carefully conceals from our view.

Ancient human civilizations based their measurements of time, especially of months and years, on her recurring waxing and waning cycles. Indeed, one could argue that our own sense of time, and through that, our experience of reality has been constructed by our lunar companion. With such a pivotal role in humankind's development, it is perhaps not too absurd to avow her as a motherly figure. If we are to understand a mother as a magnetic force in our personal trajectory, then the cosmos is the earliest predecessor of our planetary existence. This can also be traced through light, another vital radiation that we first encounter when leaving the safest of caves, the womb.

Light, deriving from stars, like our Sun, is what allows us to perceive all that is to be found on this planet and beyond it. Everything with a mass will reflect light, acting like a mirror to its source, and the Moon is no exception. Like a body that is portrayed, she is graciously lit by the Sun, transforming this solar light into a hypnotic one, disputably driving certain living organisms into a lunatic state. Besides, her projection viewed from Earth bears an image-like quality that we perceive in only two of the dimensions, due to the distance that separates us. This distance that is measured in a linear time is actual history.

The pain of such separation is what Roland Barthes articulates so poetically in his book, Camera Lucida, when writing about the mourning he suffered when his mother passed away. The paradoxical encounter with a photograph of her catalysed the ingrained feelings he had, which then led him to the realisation that this one portrait is the ontological (or descriptive) source of all photography. A medium that reproduces images, which then the observer can and will conceptualize. The photographic reproduction does not differ so substantially from the mechanics of human procreation, as Elissa Marder points out in her essay on Barthes' work. She compares the practice of photography to one of a midwife, who has the role of a mediator in the labour of creating the technical image in the form of a material print. A picture that has
its own life, the life that will then form into an image. The physical development of the two processes have similarities too. Darkness and sensitivity are critical elements in both, as are the opening holes that serve as partitions preventing unnecessary interference from the external sphere, but eventually becoming a portal for the correct exposure.

According to Barthes, there is a binding law between photography and love, besides the aforementioned aspect. The objective of both processes is to contain reality into an image that portrays someone's animate being, while also demonstrating their mortality. By becoming an indicator of the spectrum of life and death, it constantly balances on the verge of the two. Returning to the example of the Moon: How can we love just an image though? Something to which we do not have any apparent empirical relation? I would claim, through a sense of mutuallyconstitutive possession (something that can commonly be misinterpreted as love). A kind of deviant affection, or fetish, if you will, towards an idealised image to which we become so connected (as to our mothers at birth) that from a certain point we cannot make the rational distinction between us and them anymore. The 'they', therefore, feels ours and the 'we' seems to belong to them.

Photography is an act that is intrusive and possessive by nature. Photography's rather presumptuous claim is to apprehend someone or something transpiring at the intersection of space and time, - like a person's life -to the point where it can be portrayed. Once the image is taken, with a slice of that something or someone's identity exposed onto it, that photograph belongs to the creator. The birthright of the image (the subject's identity) is given by the photographer (the mother) who by operating the suitable instrument, as the camera (or their body), delivers the picture (the child), which is the perfect impression of a combination of physical and chemical reactions entering into being. If contemplating on the Moon with an analogous lens, it is indeed difficult to tell whether we document her, or whether she is the one taking our picture. To her we might be just a reflection of the same light source (the Sun), the same way she appears to us. Visually, we are her "moon", as illustrated in Earthrise, the famous photograph taken on the Moon's surface by William Anders in 1968.
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Reference list:


