

Sarah Durham Wilson

Maiden to Mother

*Unlocking Our Archetypal
Journey into the Mature Feminine*

 sounds true
BOULDER, COLORADO

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Introduction

When you have no inner Mother,
Inside, you're still just a little girl
trapped in a woman's body.
Do you know that feeling?
I know it because I was her.
I was a little girl
Lost at sea
With no one
To watch over me.
Why don't I know how to live my life?
Why don't I have a map?
Why don't I have a key?

I thought I needed a map, but what I needed was a Mother—an inner Mother.

An idol of mine, the great Jungian analyst and author Marion Woodman, said if we don't tend to the fire inside, it will kill us. But if we nourish it, it will guide us.¹ She is referring to a voice inside that we often silence because it terrifies us: It will change everything we know. It will demand our greatness. It will require we accept the adventure life is calling us into. It calls us to the heroine's journey that we were born for.

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So we ignore it, this voice of our destiny, of our ultimate destination. And ignoring that voice will bring us nothing but discontent. But if we can listen to this voice, accept its challenges, and expand instead of contract into suffering, we will find our true selves.

We must do this for ourselves—and the world—before it is too late. We must walk with beauty and courage. We must become the Mother: the Mother we needed when we were little and the Mother we need to be for ourselves now and for the world that is so desperately crying out for Mother. She is unconditionally loving, compassionate, wise, intuitive, infinitely creative, strong, sensual, serene, capable, fierce, gentle, reliable, a lover, and a queen.

Many women I work with initially think that our journey from Maiden to Mother must have something to do with their capacity to become mothers of children. After all, that is what the word *mother* means. Yet, I'm asking women to think about *mother* in an entirely new way. When I write about Mother, I'm referring to an archetypal mother, a birthright for all humans. This may or may not resonate with your experience of being mothered. It may also relate to your own experience of becoming the mother of a child, or it may not.

So many women can birth or raise children and remain in Maiden, which is the immature feminine. And, of course, we know so many women who age but don't mature. And unfortunately, what tends to happen when a woman is desperate to stay young on the outside is that she often stays young on the inside. And that's where it gets unnatural; that's where a woman becomes a wounded Maiden. Because to come into archetypal Mother is to come into the mature, fully developed, self-actualized feminine.

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When I say it is time to become the Mother, I mean:

It is time to do what you came here to do.

It is time to become who you came here to be.

I did this for myself before it was too late.

I want you to do this for your-
self before it is too late.

And I want you to do this for the
world before it is too late.

I sincerely believe the pain and losses we experience in wounded Maiden can be and are meant to be culled into the extraordinary wisdom of the Mother. That if we are willing, our pain will not be in vain. We can make meaning of our maiden pain, and we can turn it into Mother medicine. But first, we must face that pain. We must hear, tend to, and mother our inner little one: our Maiden, who has been deeply wounded by living in this patriarchal nightmare that told her she was bad or wrong, too much or too little.

All of my wounded Maiden's pain was not in vain; it has transformed into wisdom.

In Mother, our hearts break with compassion for ourselves and the world. And when the heart breaks, it expands to hold all of life. We can now hold ourselves and the other. In Mother, we learn to live more deeply, sensually awakened, and connected to our bodies and the Earth.

Through this journey, your pain won't be in vain either.

When I began Maiden-to-Mother work, I studied the behavioral blocks of my wounded Maiden state. My chief wound was not receiving the love of my mother as I desired it. She had never

provided me with the security and acceptance that I craved, and before I knew it, she was gone. She died of cancer when I was seventeen, and we never had the chance in this life to reconcile and build a healthy connection. As a result, I developed the widespread feminine wounds of smallness, terror, hysteria, fragility, reactivity, vanity, and victimhood. I was desperate for attention and validation, and this was expressed in multiple abusive relationships with men.

In my early adulthood, I started developing a theory about this cultural paradigm in which women are abused, our desires and needs are suppressed, and our full power is never realized. This is a society in which toxic patriarchal masculinity grooms us to stay terrified little girls who serve men and appease conflict and never build the confidence to listen to our inner wisdom. Cultural messaging trains us to feel shame for being a woman who bleeds with the moon. We fear aging and believe that we are only as good as we look to the male eye through the patriarchal lens. The world's dominant religions reinforce that females are contaminating forces to the purity of the male and, therefore, must suppress their power. Potent conditioning descends on women, making us conform to this idea that we are secondary and less than our male counterparts. In America, this indoctrination begins early, when we read and are shown versions of Grimms' fairy tales that teach us that women are weak and need to be rescued by a handsome prince. The theme of such tales is woven into our popular culture and fed back to us as we mature, in the form of TV sitcoms, celebrity magazines, Hollywood romance movies, and subtle messaging in advertising. As a result, many women remain focused on the trivial and superficial aspects of femininity instead of understanding that the feminine is one of the most powerful, transformative forces in the universe.

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Do you feel stuck in girlhood, perhaps waiting for a prince and unable to progress into the power and confidence of a woman? If you do, it is not your fault. But it is your responsibility to examine the forces and circumstances that have arrested your development into the mature feminine. It is your duty to rewrite your fairy tale.

I was greatly influenced by the work of Marion Woodman, who at the time of her death in 2018 was heralded as the most influential explorer of the feminine psyche. The first half of her life was spent as an English and drama teacher, but in her forties, the prime time of feminine maturity, she discovered the psychological theories of Carl Jung and trained to become a psychoanalyst herself. She found that Jung's theories didn't necessarily apply to the female experience, as they were steeped in "patriarchal thinking." Her mission was to unearth previously hidden elements of the feminine unconscious, which would assist both women and men in their quest to become psychologically whole, conquering depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and other ailments. She used myth and poetry to help her clients and readers integrate these unconscious, primal needs of the feminine. This book includes my poetic interpretations of the Maiden-to-Mother journey in short passages throughout the chapters in homage to her.

In addition to drawing upon Woodman's insights, I offer up the ancient Sumerian myth of the Goddess Inanna as an example of a strong feminine that counters our dominant culture's ideas of the weak feminine. I use the ancient Goddess culture archetypes of the stages of a woman's life that mirror the cycle of nature from birth to death to rebirth. These are not the stages of life governed by the institutions of civilization, like birthdays, school graduations, first jobs, homes, marriages, raising children, and retiring. The transitions I present here are the

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biological ones accompanied by psychological shifts of increasing maturity reflected in the role a woman plays in relation to herself and others.

The Maiden archetype, like spring, like the waxing moon, is the healthy beginning phase of a woman's life—but it becomes unhealthy when we stay trapped in it, not progressing, not changing, never developing into the mature feminine. Like stagnant water, we get stuck somewhere on our path. And we stay in these small patterns of girlhood even though we are now in women's bodies.

In wounded Maiden, we have the great potential to develop into the mature feminine. Yet, to miss the full moon of our life, miss the Mother phase, miss our summer in full bloom is to miss our true life. That is the great tragedy of the modern feminine.

This stagnation occurs because the bridge we once crossed as women together, this Maiden-to-Mother rite of passage, has been erased. The bridge into our prime, into our power, has vanished. It has been buried in the dominant masculine energy that's currently pervasive in our culture, where men hold most positions of power, enjoy economic and political advantages over women, and still commit crimes against women that go unpunished every day. Despite decades of progress, our culture is still structured for the benefit of men and the subjugation of women. It is patriarchy.

There were many societies, cultures, and vast periods before the patriarchy intentionally targeted, quieted, and all but erased feminine power and matriarchal traditions worldwide. Women once gathered to be seen by each other and the Great Goddess, as we moved through the seasons of our lives, to witness and to honor our transformations into more mature roles. Around five thousand years ago, peaceful feminine-power worshipping

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cultures of the Near East were conquered by chariot-driving, sword-bearing warrior Indo-Europeans. These dominators ushered in a new era of male authority over women, secured by new modes of mass violence. Their patriarchal religion slowly demonized the figures of goddesses, a slow death that was capped by the fall of the Roman Empire. After that, the Christian church worked diligently to root out all traces of the old Goddess culture and the ideas of divine feminine power in order to assert the primacy of a male god. Today, we live with this legacy of the desecration of the female spirit. Women around the globe suffer horrific violence and live with vast inequality compared to the previous, more egalitarian era.

We all lost when we lost the Great Mother and when the Goddess—the feminine energy of God, woman as Creatrix, and the Great Mother of all—was vilified. When her covens, her temples, her stories, and the way of the feminine were destroyed and driven underground, we lost the village, we lost rituals, we lost each other, and we lost ourselves. I often ask, What would the world look like today if we still came together in community for rites of passage ceremonies oriented by the Goddess? The answer that I've come to is that when we rebuild the bridge from girl to woman, we can regain the power of the divine feminine.

Without rituals to mark milestones in our lives, we stagnate. In a rite of passage from Maiden to Mother, we would have laid down our wounded Maiden behaviors in offering as we crossed over into Mother—into the summer of our lives. With a deep need for that lost passage into Mother, I dug. Deep. And eventually, I found this transition we've been missing. I pieced it back together over years of trial and error and fire and failure until it was real, until I became real. I, a Motherless Maiden,

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grew up. I evolved into the mature feminine, as Marion Woodman termed it. I came into my power; I let my wise woman rise. I became safe for myself and safe for others, and I wrote it all down and turned it into a sort of Mother Map, a path from Maiden to Mother.

This Mother work has given my wounded Maiden the protective wise guidance she never had during those “train wreck” years. It’s given her the voice of love and wisdom within that she never had in all her seeking. It saved her life. I learned how to walk with grace and strength, care for myself, tend to my wounded Maiden, live my soul life, and offer my soul gift. I’ve helped hundreds of women across this bridge, from girl to woman. Now, if you’re here, it’s your time, too.

On behalf of our feminine collective, I am so grateful you’re here.

I need to begin by stating that I know this book is flawed because I come from a singular perspective—that of a cisgendered, heterosexual white woman of European origin who was privileged to grow up with financial security and good health. I’m now a single mother of a precious daughter who enjoys the support of a wide community of people seeking the wisdom of the divine feminine. I work with groups of women, holding space for their transformation at retreats several times a year. I also work with individual clients on their Maiden-to-Mother journeys. I hope that this book contains universal elements that will support all of your identities, whether you’re queer, non-binary, BIPOC, from a marginalized or targeted group, rich, poor, differently bodied, or neurodivergent. Whatever wonderful traits make up the authentic you, this book shows you a different path from the dominant narrative of our culture.

This book is an initiation, which means entering a portal to a new way of life. The first thing you need to do is say yes to this

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journey. You're going to have to find a quiet place in your life, right now in this bookstore or standing in the kitchen, whether you're in the fetal position or strong-spined, wherever you are, however you are, is welcome. You're just going to close your eyes and enter your inner world where your Mother lives and know that the Goddess is listening to you.

This will not be an overnight transition. The Goddess works with you deeply and slowly, and mysteriously. But you'll know it has been real because, by the end of this journey, you'll have been forged into womanhood by fire, better able to embody Mother and tend your wounded Maiden until she becomes the healthy Maiden. This Maiden will never leave you—she is an inner rebelle creative genius—free to rest and play and dream and be seen for her gifts.

You're going to have to say, "Yes. Yes, I'm ready to be the Mother."

In doing this, you're saying yes to the end of one way of life. Yes to the death of your smallness, your helplessness. Your self-sabotage. Your reactivity. Your wait to be saved.

Now you're at one end of a bridge—the end of your Maiden life—and you're going to have to walk across this bridge.

Are you ready?