

SHE RISES

What... Goddess Feminism, Activism, and Spirituality?

**Volume 3
(The Chorus in Art, Poetry & Ritual)**

**Edited by Deanne Quarrie, D. Min., Christine Courtade
Hirsch, Ph. D. and Helen Hye-Sook Hwang, Ph.D.**

MAGO BOOKS

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Back Cover “Our Authors say”:

Activism begins in the chambers of our own hearts, cultivating the seeds of self-love and self-appreciation. To be strong we must cultivate love for ourselves. -- CINDY MORRIS

Relinquishing the old self is an identified task in the grief process —unique to each individual—for the mother and anyone who has lost a loved one. — Diane Martin, Ph.D.

How do we reclaim our body’s truth: the TRUTH of our bodies as Divine? -- REV.
DIANNA RITOLA

Being in alignment with the Goddess, in a simple and direct way, is to be attuned with nature, with its rhythms and its manifestations. The moon’s energy, for instance, can be a vital resource for our own. --
NORIS BINET

When you find your spiritual home, that place where things feel right and uncomfortably perfect, it changes you and everything around you: your worldview, your view of yourself, your view of those around you, your view of those who used to be around. -- ANGELA KUNSCHMANN

The Goddess, our Divine Mother, is the eternal midwife, guardian, and healer. She is the guide through life’s transitions. -- BELINDA K. LASHEA

I feel big changes coming. Not Apocalyptic earth changes, though climate change is definitely real, but societal ones - the Goddess is about to shuffle Her cards and things are about to be rearranged, redefined, and we’re going to build it stronger this time around. -- MORGAIN SWANN

I say “yes” to writing, telling the truth, embracing the Goddess, claiming our freedom as women, working for causes we believe in, and being our authentic selves beyond the realm of those cultural or regional expectations that limit us. -- ELLEN J. PERRY

A feminist spirituality must necessarily be a spirituality of “we,” not “me.” -- HEARTH MOON
RISING

We must also come to realize that with anger and divisive backlash between men and women we will get nowhere in solving our current predicament, as men as well as women are suffering the consequences of the patriarchal structures on which we are basing our lives. -- AMINA RODRIGUEZ

So my encounter with Mary Magdalene has awakened in me a desire to know the truth. It has awakened in me a sense of justice. It has awakened me to the fact that greater social powers, often disguised as the ‘leaders’ of society, manipulate the truth to their advantage, that they want some of us to be disempowered. --
JOANNA KUJAWA, Ph.D.

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this book to:
Our Ancestors,
Our Descendants &
All Our Sisterly Non-Human Beings
Who Have Contributed to
the Making of Our Terrestrial Community
as the Paradise of the Nine Creatrix
beyond patriarchal destructions.

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The collective writing of *She Rises: What... Goddess Feminism, Activism, and Spirituality?* (Volume 3) is a sister book to *She Rises: Why Goddess Feminism, Activism, and Spirituality?* (Volume 1) and *She Rises: Why Goddess Feminism, Activism, and Spirituality?* (Volume 2), published in 2015 and 2016 by Mago Books. Helen Hye-Sook Hwang oversaw the whole process from the beginning that began as a discussion in *The Mago Circle*, Facebook group. We can't thank enough Deanne Quarrie, D.Min., who have taken the lead of the editorial circle, together with Christine Courtade Hirsch, Ph. D., and Helen Hye-Sook Hwang as co-editors. Matthew Kim Hagen, editorial director of Mago Books, has generously and professionally shared his gift of a meticulous reading of the whole manuscript and offered final editorial corrections and suggestions. Grateful acknowledgement to all the foremothers from whom co-creative generativity flows...

INTRODUCTION

This booklet, subtitled as *The Chorus in Poetry, Art and Ritual*, contains the Section Two of the main book, *She Rises: What... Goddess Feminism, Activism and Spirituality?* All remains the same as the main book with the exception of the following: A new ISBN number is given. Table of Contents is adjusted with new pages numbers. Chapters are numbered anew. And it include the list of Section Two Contributors only. Below is the original Introduction that goes with the main book:

DEANNE QUARRIE, D. MIN.

I look back and can't imagine why I said yes, to Helen Hye-Sook Hwang when she asked me to be the lead editor for, *She Rises: What... Goddess Feminism, Activism and Spirituality? Volume 3*. Having edited and published an eight-time yearly, online magazine, *The Global Goddess Oracle*, I knew it was a big job and I was up for it. It was a lot. I never dreamed there would be so many amazing people, so many submissions, all bringing such talent, such heart and such love to this work. It was like being allowed into the hearts and yes, private lives of those women and men who love Goddess.

It became primarily a job of organization, to keep track of so much. I asked Christine Hirsch to join me in co-editing this wonderful material, splitting the submissions, and we went to work.

It took a long time, longer because of my health, interrupted with hospital stays followed by cataract surgery and so we had delays. Thank you, Helen, for being so kind and patient, waiting for me.

Reading each piece, seeing the beautiful art and incredible poetry, often brought tears from the emotions I felt while reading into the lives of the contributors, the stories, so amazing and yet, so familiar as well.

I feel such gratitude, knowing we all share such love in our similar journeys. We all have so many ways of expressing the deep commitments of living lives of joy, dedication and commitment, walking with Her.

As you hold this book in your hands, may you be touched deeply as you read into all the lives of those who shared here for you.

CHRISTINE COURTADE HIRSCH, PH. D.

I have lived a brightly blessed life, but one of my greatest blessings was being asked to serve as a guest editor for *She Rises: What... Goddess Feminism, Activism and Spirituality? Volume 3*. Words cannot express the sheer pleasure and soul-deep joy of reading the submissions: the variety, the depth, the inspiration, the learning, the art, the majesty, the magic.

I think perhaps equally important was being invited into the company of sisters - sisters in strength, in beliefs and values, in hope, in power, and in the so deeply undervalued recognition and sharing of what we have in common as women in the goddess sisterhood!

Bright blessings to all as you read, learn, share, reach inward and outward, and grow in the magic, love and joy found within this volume! And thank you forever and beyond for allowing me to participate!

HELEN HYE-SOOK HWANG, PH.D.

She Rises: What... Goddess Feminism, Activism and Spirituality? is the third volume in the She Rises trilogy after *She Rises: Why Goddess Feminism, Activism and Spirituality?* Volume 1 (2015) and *She Rises: Why Goddess Feminism, Activism and Spirituality?* Volume 2 (2016). The present volume continues on the path prepared by the two earlier volumes and takes the Goddess feminist activist movement to a new horizon. Creativity and connectivity are the hallmarks of this volume. Our 59 contributors have tailored the question, What... Goddess Feminism,

Activism and Spirituality? to convey their insights and to address the importance and urgency of Goddess feminist activism amidst the current crises on the global context that affects all beings within the very eco-system. We in this volume collectively embrace a capacity of connectivity with other sisters and brothers across borders. Our message is that Goddess feminist activists are healing, nurturing and transforming ourselves and the world. We are born stronger. We are ever more grounded, committed, daring, creative, and fiercely focused. We are the trees that are crisscrossed at the root! This book presents a loom that interweaves colorful tapestries of insights, experiences, visions, research articles, poems, artworks, rituals, plays and creative activities across disciplinary boundaries. Our readers may sense a phenomenon through this book.

Like other *She Rises* books, *She Rises Volume 3* follows the convention of using Mothers as Parts and Sisters as Chapters. We have three Mothers (Mother One, Mother Two, and Mother Three) and nine Sisters (1 Sister East, 2 Sister North, 3 Sister West, 4 Sister South, 5 Sister Center, 6 Sister Wind, 7 Sister Fire, 8 Sister Water, and 9 Sister Earth) organized under each triad Mother. This is to visualize the cosmogonic principle of Sonic Nine Numerology embodied in the pantheon of our divine mothers and human ancestors (Goddesses) across cultures.

As co-editor and publisher of the *She Rises* trilogy, I am ever honored and humbled for the history of the collective writing project itself. Indeed, it is a tremendous amount of time, effort, reading, thinking and editing as well as laying out the manuscript for publication that I have put into these projects. It is nothing other than a sharing of myself. Am I depleted? Do I feel exhausted inside? The opposite is the case. I am ever freshly renewed and charged to dream the dreams and work hard to make our dreams happen. At the core, the vision and necessity that I see among ourselves lead me to keep moving forward. In particular, I rejoice to see the very fruition of the *She Rises* trilogy in this volume. Our readers will discover bedazzling jewels in the forest, as I have found.

As we complete the *She Rises* trilogy with this volume 3, I have a little flashback. About five years ago in the fall of 2014, I hurriedly

announced in social media that we wanted to begin a book project of our collective writing on the topic of Goddess feminism, activism and spirituality. Out of the blue, I did that. Neither had I planned or thought about it. In fact, I never heard of the phrase, “Goddess feminism, activism and spirituality” before. Wennier Lin-Havor had addressed a need to bring the Goddess to our attention during our phone conversation. Bringing the Goddess into our discourse wasn’t enough for me. Even the thought of Goddess feminism apart from Goddess spirituality was not radical enough. They needed to be brought to an inseparable one concept. And we couldn’t remain inert without bringing activism into the consciousness that pushed further Goddess feminist spirituality.

We have 92 contributors for *She Rises Volume 1* and 96 contributors for Volume 2. We have many new authors in Volume 3. I feel comradely for the authors who have contributed to all three volumes. And I appreciate what you, authors for the previous volumes, gave to make this trilogy possible. I invite you to join me in the following poem of mine included in this book.

Sister, Bless Us and Bless You

Have you already been burnt out?
Is your flame staggering?
Are you depleted?

No one said our resistance would be of a life time.
Or the time of numerous generations.
That’s a patriarchal fantasy for WE in HERE and NOW.

I was able to take my feminist path
Thanks to you-
You who were the Radical Feminist in your own words.

We may NOT be changing society,
We may NOT be transforming ourselves either.
But all in WE are already transformed!

Let us call our efforts, for the lack of a better word,
Goddess feminist activism.
Allow your boat to carry you to Where Everyone Is Present.

Bless us.
Bless you.
And bless our non-human Sisters.

Your last word
Your last breath
Count in the making of the whole in WE.

Last but not least, I thank my co-editors Deanne Quarrie and Christine Courtade Hirsch without whose work this volume was not possible. Also we are indebted to Matthew Kim Hagen who generously provided his copyeditorial expertise to the whole manuscript. And again I am grateful for Genevieve Vaughan who opened my eye to the practicality of Maternal Gift Economy, which is the means of the collective writing books by Mago Books. I am thankful for myself the most. We can only give what we have plenty!

She Rises Volume 3 is available in four versions, the Color Main Book, the Black/White Main Book, the Color Sectional Booklet, and the PDF.

1
SRIDEVI RAMANATHAN
Priestess



Go, go even if you don't know
Let the expression flow
What does it show?
What you need to know
That as above, so below.

2
SARA WRIGHT
Love Amongst the Roots



Underground,
the conversation
is animated –
full of light.

Underground,
trees, fungus, and
Roots illuminate

the darkest winter soul.

Underground
sweet humus hums
new beginnings,
offers hope to the weary.

Underground,
a multitude of voices
mycelium, and rootlets
commune without sound.

Underground,
seeds of pinion pine
and cottonwood slumber

in comfort and silence.

Underground,
a multitude of voices
mycelium, and rootlets
commune without sound.

Underground,
Love is a peaceful wave
moving through
ancient star clusters
over her head.

Underground,
the Earth witnesses
a month without sleep
pulsing a dire warning:
You must Rest.

Underground,
the angel of death emerges
from the body
of her dreams.
Trees are dying
and she weeps.



3

AMINA RODRIGUEZ**Human**

I feel hollow inside
Like a petrifying tree without oxygen, vacant
Where did my fragments go?
There is a space where I can see where I get lost
The brain takes over though it's off
The trigger switched the thought
Bloody lever
Drips til an almost death
Resuscitates my soul

It's alright I tell her
It's not the end
Not yet.
Remember
Lessons need to be learned by the human
This will also pass
The obstacles,
I apparently create
We're on auto

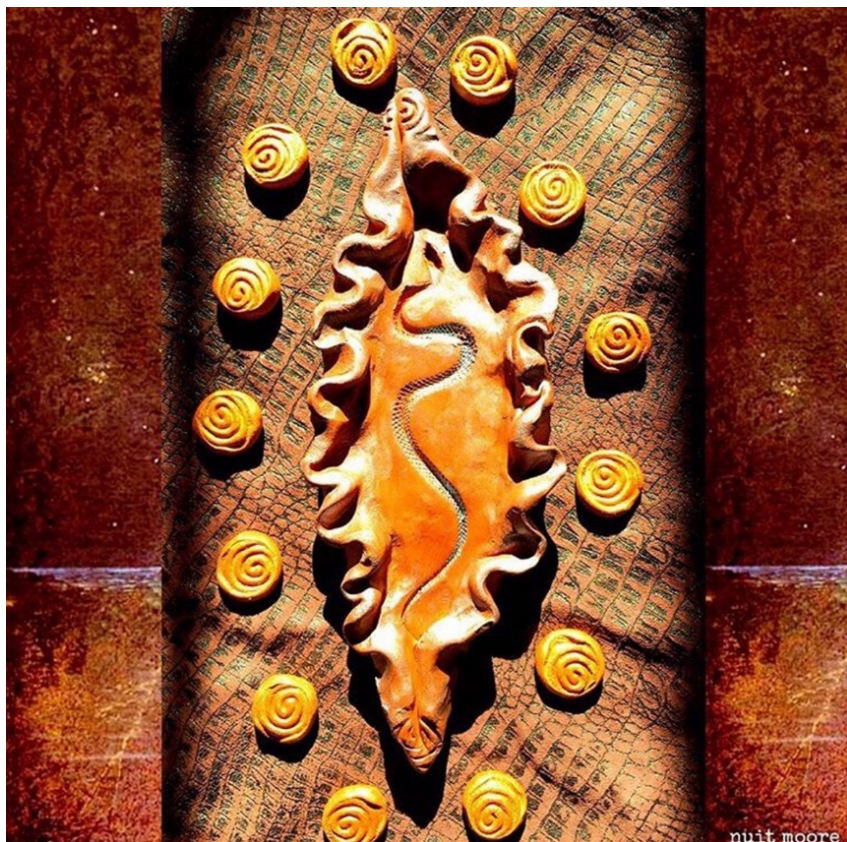
Will I remember?
I ask myself each day
Will we all remember?
This emptiness is needed
The dramas are needed
If only temporarily
But Mother Earth...My dear human
Embrace all my destitute child
The end of misery is near.

4
NUIT MOORE
Blood Mysteries



The Blood Mysteries are rooted deeply in the cyclic power of women. Our bloods serve as a potent cord to our Grandmothers, the red roots of the Matriarchal, the ebb and flow of the Lunar Mother both within and without.

5
NUIT MOORE
In the Beginning



The earliest religious symbol of humanity -connecting our existence and consciousness to a divine and holy source and purpose- is the Vulva. Vulvic symbolism is not just abundant in our earliest prehistoric art; it was the temple itself. The cave, the original temple of ceremony, equated with the womb of the Earth Goddess. This sculpture came from deep within me, remembering these ancient truths, along with the symbolism of the snake- a deep lunar totem of female shamanism- cyclic and regenerative as the womb and wild nature.



6
NUIT MOORE
Sheela Na Gig

No shame here,
 behold the yoni and
 accept the
 transformation
 in this inner outer
 lunar ancient female
 power.

7
NUIT MOORE
Self-Portrait

This self-portrait reflects a priestess in a liminal space. As she reflects on the iconography of the Divine Feminine, she is also reflected in the ritual mirror as both a channel and embodiment of the trance connection. In this liminality, the doors are open, and both are One.



8

TAMARA RASMUSSEN
Goddess is the Answer!

What is your question?
 Who is She?
 Who could you be?
 Why? Because it's way past time.
 Thank Her for all that's real.
 Thank Her for all you feel.
 How? Drop man-made fears.
 What part of here and now
 (the point of power)
 is so hard
 for you to grasp?
 Questioning is fine,
 but you know the answer,
 don't you?
 See the world
 with newborn eyes.
 Arise!

Usha

Hush and dream.
 I Am the Dawn.
 I wake all sleeping.
 Look to the dark to see Me born,
 glorious miracle of sight,
 pale blush, and then a rush, a flush,
 blossoming from the bud of night,
 opening like a peacock tail.
 All the birds usher Me, and throng.
 I Am the joy that's always new.
 I end all weeping and all wrong.
 I Am the love that will not fail.
 I reassure you.

Wait for the strength to carry on.
 Wait, and I'll come; I'll come to you.
 Open your heart, your mind, your eyes.
 Open and see My beauty rise.
 Open to meet My radiant light.
 Greet Me with song.
 Let Me dawn in you
 as wisdom and courage.
 I illuminate
 with blaze of red
 the way ahead.

(Usha is the Indian Goddess of the Dawn.)

Shantih

I Am Peace,
 your center,
 beauty, truth.
 Say yes!
 I Am Home.
 Open to enter Me,
 hope's door.
 I will flow from you,
 well-spring,
 well-being.
 We are One.
 Extend
 My radiant blessing
 from your heart of star.
 Hate is self-hate.
 Start where you are,
 with tenderness.
 Parent yourself,
 My child.
 I Am what life is for.
 Our work has just begun!
 Om Shantih Om

(Shantih is the Indian Goddess of Peace.)

Doumu

Perfect Virgin, One-in-Myself,
 One with Cosmic Dark,
 I woke to Desire:
 to a vision of Lotus
 perfuming,
 endlessly unfolding.
 Bathing, swimming
 in Nothingness,
 My longing grew full,
 filling the universe
 with galaxies,
 filling the lake with water lilies,
 filling the earth with babies hoping,
 eyes as bright as stars.
 Let the light of love
 flow from your many fingers!
 May the Tao bud and blossom
 in Beauty forever.
 I rock you in My crescent arms.
 I show the Way of Change
 in My bright mirror.
 You tumble safe
 in My creative womb of night.

(Doumu is the Chinese Goddess of the Tao.)

Xochiquetzal

I Am Xochiquetzal.
 I nestle like a bee in a flower,
 yet I Am that flower, isn't that a joke?
 I laugh a fountain of laughter.

That fist that holds sadness,
 doesn't it itch?
 Don't you want to scratch it?
 Open it and joy
 will fly out like a butterfly!
 Peek inside and see.
 Children are bursting out dancing and singing
 from the gloomiest wombs on earth,
 and Springtime is wriggling
 Her caterpillar way
 up through the snow.
 Everywhere roots
 are turning mud into blossoms.
 A dance is hatching
 from the egg of spring.
 Sing a song and find a friend.
 Let's re-discover
 that sex means giggling together.
 Music and joy unite us,
 with each other, and within ourselves.
 They bridge all separation
 with a rainbow of beauty.
 Squint in the sun like a child
 and see the world
 iridescent as a humming bird.
 Drink deep the nectar of eternal life.

(Xochiquetzal is the Aztec Goddess of Flowers.)

Ixchel

Peer down My rabbit-hole, intrepid Alice,
 to encounter center's inner eye.
 Tumble down into Me,
 to My soft moist nest within,
 where faded leaves,
 brown silky fur, and brown/pink skin
 curl in a weaver's comforter of nurturing.

It is dark here and everything is naked.
 Nuzzle and find the sweet teat of love.
 Cuddle in the embrace of healing.
 I Am Ixchel,
 self-fertilizing Rabbit Mother.
 I love all My children equally.
 Fullness and hunger dance together
 in the peaceful shadow
 of the rabbit in the moon.
 This dark moon time is a gestation
 making whole as an egg
 the dream of daylight, full moon promise,
 the waxing, growing, Easter work,
 hope's work,
 that waits to be done.

(Ixchel is the Mayan Rabbit Goddess.)

Iahu

I Am your Mother,
 Dove of Peace.
 Believe!
 The universe is an egg
 inside my Cosmic Womb.
 You are the dream
 of My singing watch,
 the miracle
 I hope will hatch.
 I sit and brood.
 I count My days.
 My setting
 awaits arising!

(Iahu is the Pelasgian Goddess, Creator of the Universe.)

Asherah

I fell as Star Maiden,
 to become the living body of the earth,
 rivers and streams a flowing tree.
 My branches embrace air and sun.
 My roots embrace earth and water.
 My roots mirror My branches,
 radiating energy
 of life balanced by death.
 Groves were My temples. My rainforest,
 My beautiful irreplaceable species:
 I am felled. I am fallen.
 Ingratitude shreds Me to pulp, to sawdust!
 Do you think you can kill all life?
 My sacred heart transmutes all
 to the fire of life,
 burning death into rebirth.
 I am the apple tree of immortality.
 Mother and Lover, My breast is My fruit.
 Lost in the self-abuse of disrespect,
 up-rooting My indestructible Tree of Life
 within yourselves,
 you try to fill the illusion
 of My black hole with addictions.
 You have destroyed My temples everywhere,
 but your body is still My temple,
 however desecrated and despised.
 Your veins, and the veins on the placenta,
 mimic My branches and roots.
 I flow through you.
 I Am the radiant force of life!
 Your heart is My altar.
 Your spine is My trunk.
 My snake is your spinal cord,
 guarding the chakras.
 Your hands are My twigs.
 You are My hands.
 To share My green and growing joy,

drop shame, choose gratitude,
 and call My name.
 Let My dead tree
 bloom again in you!
 Ashe.

(Asherah is the Semitic Tree of Life Goddess.)

Amaterasu

I Am the Sun, Great Mother of the Earth
 I shine on all equally, everywhere, forever.
 In the core of the earth, in your deepest heart,
 I Am the Source of energy for life.
 I Am the flame of inner light, of growth.
 Womben, awake! You are the Sacred Cave.
 Step out of the shadow of emperors and men.
 Open your kimonos, homes and temples,
 and raise your arms to Me,
 as you did since the dawn of time.
 Reclaim My energy and shine your radiance,
 for healing, justice, balance, joy.
 The future is in eclipse.
 For the children, yet unborn,
 for hope, beautiful beyond all grief and loss,
 open the well-spring of each heart,
 open the circuit of community,
 to channel My life-giving energy.
 I need your energy to rebirth
 the cycles of creation,
 My green celebration of Spring.
 Arise, dancing. Renew the Earth.

(Amaterasu is the Japanese Sun Goddess.)

9
ANDEE ANKO
Echo's Tale

I am Echo, a wood nymph, my specialty is love and I have it in abundance!

This is my story:

Hera in a jealous fit took my voice from me (typically!), I was merely chatting with her husband, Zeus, and now I was cursed only to repeat the last words of others.

The hunter's games have hundreds in attendance today, I recognize many friends among the assembly.

Ah, the press and throng and hum of the crowds! The shouts of wine hawkers and salted fish merchants and honeyed barley cake sellers!

There is Timoxenos (I call him Tim) from Pheneos and Dymnos from Symphalia and Kallipides all the way from Tragilos!

Flexing, primping, preening.

There is one who especially catches my attention and my heart.

Narcissus from Thespieae, son of terrible-tempered river god Cephissus and water nymph Liriope.

The dust of the hot dry arena floats in breeze-borne transparent clouds, settles upon the sweaty skin of the athletes, the atmosphere around them brilliant and sparkling.

The gods look down from their elevated place of honour with pride and anticipation.

Heroes shimmer in heaven's bold grace!

Narcissus is beautiful! Dark hair flowing, pale skin glowing, strong brow perfectly framing his lovely eyes.

He deftly wins first place in the running and archery, (I hang with Artemis and her company, so I know a thing or two about running and archery).

He receives second place in the chariot race which he argues hotly, his blue eyes flashing angrily, his perfect mouth pouting petulantly, his foot stamping childishly.

Spectators cheering, shouting, jeering.

Narcissus has such humour! I overhear him recite from Lysistrata between games using a different voice for each person; some are very funny especially the women, Oh how I almost wet my chiton, giggling hand over my mouth! I blush, too, at the bawdy parts.

I wait for him to notice me when the crowds disperse.

“Who is here?” Narcissus calls out.

I hide shyly behind a big oak tree at the athlete’s entrance to the stadium.

“Here!” I reply.

“Come!” Narcissus commands.

“Come!” I reply.

“Why do you shun me? Let us join one another!” He says.

I am overwhelmed with joy; the magnificent Narcissus wants me to join him!

I abandon my hiding place and run to him.

Starry-eyed, innocently, giddily

He takes me by the hand and leads me to his silver chariot

“Here! Have an apple, I stole them from my neighbour’s garden, I climbed a very big wall to get the best ones, I almost fell but managed not to. I am an excellent wall-climber you know!” His chest puffs up with pride and he laughs.

“You know!” I repeat, and I laugh, too.

Wide-eyed, sighing, admiring.

I bite into the apple, (stolen fruit is always the sweetest!).

“I am a highly talented singer, too you know” he says.

“You know!” I repeat in agreement once more.

Narcissus starts to sing an ode to Aphrodite, his voice resonant and powerful.

“I pray to you Goddess of the golden throne
to bring me the only thing I desire
My dearest one to return
to warm my cold heart
to fill my empty house
I frantically implore you, shining immortal Aphrodite
to fight for me in my battle
You ask me what is the cause of my anguish
My mad aching heart longs to win
Now she runs from me, but she will soon pursue me
Now she does not love me, but she will soon burn for me”

“Burn for me burn for me” I sing with him.

The song puts Narcissus into a lustful mood.

“Let me see your long hair” he flirts with me.

“Long hair” I say and with shaking hands untie the ribbons which binds my hair into a simple runner’s style.

Nervously, cautiously, hesitantly.

Masses of chestnut hair fall to its length, nearly to my knees.

Silken, fragrant, soft.

Narcissus closes his eyes and runs his fingers through its thickness, pulls gently at it and inhales the clean sweet smell of violets.

He kisses my neck many times.

I close my eyes too.

Awakening, desiring, surrendering.

“What a beguiling, witchy, wonderful creature you are” Narcissus says.

“Wonderful creature you are” I reply breathlessly.

I stay the night by his side, in his straw bed firm and warm, woven blankets rich and enveloping.

The next time Narcissus comes to me I am practicing my running and jumping.

Springing over rocks and streams and soft mosses and lichens.

I climb into his chariot again.

Brightly, joyfully, expectantly.

Narcissus takes both sets of reins in one hand and artfully guides his horses, and with the other hand holds mine (surely, he must love me!).

This time he gives me soft leather sandals crafted by his good friend Isandros from Alyzia sandal-maker to all the gods.

I dearly want to tell Narcissus all about my own accomplishments and the honours I had gained but Hera's curse does not allow me to.

So, I listen to Narcissus speak of his own victories some more.

He reaches for my hair again, takes it down himself and kisses me as he did before.

Primally, hungrily, desperately.

But then he turns from me.

His attention wanders, his thoughts elsewhere, his eyes look through me, icy blue, hard and sharp, the surface cracks, and inside I see a frightened lonely little boy.

Abandoned, forgotten, bereaved.

Narcissus turns back to me and says, "Yours is not the face of the one I love".

"I love! I love!" I entreat.

"Leave me be now, I would rather die than let you love me".

"Love me! Love me!" I plead.

Arms outstretched, hands clasped and wringing.

Narcissus fans the flames in me and watches them blaze, lick and spread but then refuses to touch me.

I run away ashamed.

Over rocks and streams and soft mosses and lichens.

I hide and weep and shiver and wrap my arms around myself for days under the shelter of a low hanging willow tree deep in the woods.

Tearfully, bitterly, sorrowfully.

I try to forget Narcissus, but it is difficult to lose one who causes you to become something more than you once were.

Opening, growing, expanding.

One day I spy him in a cool glade gazing into a pool lovingly, he tries to touch what he sees on the surface, it disperses, and he breaks into fits of sobs.

I realize then my dear Narcissus will only ever want that which he can never possess.

A reflection, a projection, a mirage of himself.

Shadowy, watery, elusive.

Not a flesh and bone, blood and tears girl like me.

I leave the glade and rejoin my merry band of sisters-in-spirit, knowing they will cheer me up.
Hunting, laughing, frolicking.

Eventually I find a new lover (the cities and towns are full of them you know!) and Hera, no longer threatened, releases the curse and gives me back my voice.

And the last I heard of Narcissus?

He wanders the countryside in his silver chariot up the mountains, down to the sea and through the forests, all alone, looking for his beloved.

Narcissus is lost forever.

Whenever I lace up those lovely soft leather sandals from Alyzia and go running I think of Narcissus.

Fondly, tenderly, forgivingly.

I am a wood nymph after all, and my specialty is love!

10
ANDEE ANKO
I Am Artemis

I am Artemis

Come run with me sisters and daughters!

Under the crescent moon and across the darkening forest floor

Don't be afraid

Across my back is a willow bow and silver-tipped arrows

My aim is accurate

We will be like deer, nimbly leaping over fallen trees and icy streams

I hold a lantern, it shimmers with the constellation light of Orion

I will lead the way

Come run with me sisters and daughters!

11
VIRGINIA MASSON
Legend – Oracle and Allies



The Archetype, Legend, took me on a voyage into the unknown on a search for my own truth. In the many layers beneath the image the over-culture stories are stripped away to expose my inherent truth. These layers call back together the lost parts of who I am.

Legend is my Oracle and is surrounded by my allies.

12
VIRGINIA MASSON
Muse – Conscious Connection



Who lives here in this sack of stardust? Who is the voice in my head? Where do my dreams come from? The Muse archetype reflects our connection to consciousness and our ability to access her at any time. She reveals the light from within.

13
VIRGINIA MASSON
Artist – The Wayfinder



We are all born with gifts to help us on the path to our soul work. The Artist archetype appears to share those gifts and point the way.

14
VIRGINIA MASSON
Alchemist – Soulfire



Burning in our souls when we arrive on the planet are our deepest longings. The Alchemist archetype helps to bring them to the light and put them into play in the world.

15
BETTY BECQUART SANDERS
Anita Louise

There is a hole in the fabric of the universe
And it bleeds drop by drop upon my heart.
It is where she fit so neatly, so perfectly,
And is now gone missing.

Merry we have met
and shared... and danced... and sang.
Merry we have chanted long into the night
Dancing spirals to the high heavens
And to the Earth below.
Merry we have met...

Merry we must part
Watching her spirit fly out into the four directions,
Watching her spirit say its last goodbye,
Watching her spirit pass at last
Into the outstretched arms of the goddess
We remember her with love.
Merry we part...

Merry we shall meet again
Whenever the circle is cast, the directions called,
Whenever our hearts and minds return to her memory,
Whenever her energy continues its ripple through our lives,
Whenever our wandering eyes fall briefly upon that spot,
That hole, twinkling like a star in the dark fabric of the universe.
Merry we shall meet again...

16
BETTY BECQUART SANDERS
Goddess Pilgrimage

Sleep, sweet sisters.
Dream of olive trees
dancing like Cretan girls
upon the sacred hills,

Of stone pathways
worn by centuries of feet
following their ancient way.

Dream of hills, and goats, and lambs,
of the deep wombs of the Mother
filled with darkness, and of light.

Let our music fill your hearts.
Dream of cool spring water
flowing from the mountains to the azure sea.

And while you sleep,
I soar on silver wings
through the dark Cretan sky.

Ariadne wove her sacred thread
through our labyrinth of lives.
She bound our hearts forever
into a sacred sisterhood
of memories and love.

17

BETTY BECQUART SANDERS**Psalm To My Mother**

Before the beginning of my recorded time
 she was,
 from everlasting to everlasting,
 the only Eve I know.
 Beneath her ribs she carried me,
 by her labor I was delivered,
 bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh.
 Hers is a sacred name,
 As all our names are sacred.
 And I am Betty Louise,
 mother of Jennifer Ann,
 daughter of Alice Louise,
 my life-giver, my creator;
 who is the daughter of Eve called Jenny June;
 who is the daughter of Eve called Clara Francis;
 who is the daughter of Eve called Eliza Ann;
 who is the daughter of Eve called Sarah;
 each born from Edens older than their own,
 since the beginning of all Eves.
 And our seeds shall endure,
 Be established as the moon,
 as a faithful witness in heaven.

18

BETTY BECQUART SANDERS**Teaching My Daughter to Sing**

*“Goddess of words, goddess of voice,
 Genetic backbone of our ancient grandmothers,
 Let her find clarity of mind.
 Let her feel the power of sound.
 Let her learn the strength of voice,*

her woman's voice."

We shall dance in circles
 Of strong women
 Where she can learn the steps
 Of their sacred dance,
 Borrow their energy,
 And grow wise from their voices.
 We shall dance in circles
 Of strong women each singing
 Their own song.

We shall dance in circles
 Where she is safe
 To sometimes be out of step,
 To sometimes be off key.

We shall dance in circles
 Of strong women
 Where she can hear clearly, songs
 That dance within her mind alone,
 Where she can boldly move in dances
 Of her own making,
 And sing with confidence, songs
 Unique to her voice alone.

19

BETTY BECQUART SANDERS
Womanhouse

*(Our female ancestors first built
 themselves and their families
 round shaped shelters.
 -Faith Wilding-)*

Dwellings, round and earthen,
 sheltering wombs

spun of reeds and grass,

Houses of thread and time
 built by ancient mothers as
 sacred spaces...
 protective environments.

Single rooms,
 life supporting chambers,
 vaginal and warm,
 somewhere between inner and outer,
 between public and private.

A womanspace
 wisely woven from love and duty
 encircling the rituals of daily life.

20
ANNIE FINCH
Goddess

The gravity of goddess is above
 my eyes, when I look up like someone's child.
 There is no spoken sentence. All she says
 will die. It will be quiet when I go
 out of the room and stop being a priestess.
 She looks down. Her quiet death is unashamed,
 undimming power like receding grain
 that waves inside my heart in shocking
 raging silence, beating in the window light.
 She will not go to make new presences,
 but stays to go. Her presence is the loss.
 In the cold sky that waits each season out,
 her body's ancient stars make restless calls
 against the throne that quivers in my heart
 as fiercely in love as in the hate
 on which four thousand years of sorrow fed.

Her birdsong joys shine ruins in my heart.
 I seem to stand on some undying plain,
 watching the monuments that dawn again.
 The gravity of goddess is above
 my eyes, though never gone from history.
 So many must have noticed, with this shock,
 such patient looking up and looking down.

21

ANNIE FINCH
Her Forest

Her forest goes as green as love.
 Her ferns are dappled near the ground,
 and moss they dappled curls above
 stones that Her glacier dappled down.

Her night is sadness well-contained
 within the sap that runs the stem
 of plants that grow along the night
 and root at morning. Joy finds them,

and oceans, lost because they are vast
 (like ruined roads left on the land)
 take Her kind waters home each time
 that they, pushing raptly at the sand,

make tides with Her evaporate rain.
 The ocean is at peace again.
 Far algae grows, the blue stays smooth,
 And in dim light, the beach is soothed.

Her forest goes as green as love.
 Her night is sadness well-contained,
 and oceans, lost because they are vast,
 make tides with Her evaporate rain.

22

ANNIE FINCH
Spider Woman

Your thoughts in a web have covered the sky.
A thread from the northwest is carrying beads from the rain,
a thread from the southwest is carrying beads from the rain,
a thread from the southeast carries bright beads,
a thread from the northeast is bringing the beads
of the rain that has filled up the sky.
Spider, you have woven a chain
stretching with rain over the sky.

23

ANNIE FINCH
Eve

When mother Eve took the first apple down
from the tree that grew where nature's heart had been
and came tumbling, circling, rosy, into sin,
which goddesses were lost, and which were found?
What spirals moved in pity and unwound
across our mother's body with the spin
of planets lost for us and all her kin?
What serpents curved their mouths into a frown,
but left their bodies twined in us like threads
that lead us back to her? Her presence warms,
and if I follow closely through the maze,
it is to where her remembered reaching spreads
in branching gifts, it is to her reaching arms
that I reach, as if for something near to praise.

24
ANNIE FINCH
Inanna

A young goddess, full of love, fresh with the touch of a husband,
carrying power and rich with anger, strength, urgency, understanding,
follows the direction her ear has led her, down to the place where the
underworld glistens.

At each door she removes a jewel, a belt, a ceremonial robe.
At each door, she is less and more. She bows down through the
seventh door.

The young goddess is dead, and waiting. The young goddess is dead.
A goddess goes down, and I can see her. She needs to go, decides to
go. A goddess goes down, and I can hear her.

25
TONI C. TRUESDALE

Artist Statement

History and mythology need to
Include the unrestricted stories of all women.
The female perspective should be reflected in aesthetics, values,
spirituality and morality.
I develop imagery that shows the natural beauty and intelligence
In aspects of the multicultural life of
Sisters, mothers, daughters, aunts, grandmothers all;
And celebrate our commonality through time.

Requiem



For our sisters, mothers
Daughters, aunts;
Loved by many,
Mourned by all.
Young beautiful, hope and promise
Disappeared,
Murdered, maimed or sold.

We remember in
A requiem.

*For all the murdered and missing indigenous women,
now and then.*

26

TONI C. TRUESDALE
Sanctuary



Darkness breaks into the light of day
In the relentless round of the seasons

Cycle the distance of the sun
Cradled into the womb of the sky system
To which we belong,
That swirls back into infinity...
We barely permeate continuous creation
With our small human conscious mind
From this planet, Earth.
Home to the tangled connections
That comprise this web of life, here;
So many delicate species within,
Our myriad complexity
Born from our Mother, this world.
Spawn of the haphazard universe;
Accident of light and matter;
Our Sacred Sanctuary.

27

TONI C. TRUESDALE
Is this For the Children?



28

TONI C. TRUESDALE
Geronimo's Daughter



To speak of an advanced society,
What would one say?
Would one talk about superiority
Over vulnerability?
Or the human heart's capacity
For a compassionate society?
What then is the true name of Manifest Destiny;
That murders indigenous children, physically
Or steals and binds them psychologically?

And, how does one justify war?
In the name of territory,

religion, assets,
Or financially?
What kind of values would that be;
In a spiritual society?
or, does one want to simply protect progeny;
To allow them to inherit property;
In an established hierarchy?

If one leaves behind
Shards of children,

Is that called a legacy?

29
TONI C. TRUESDALE
Eve



Out of Africa is our beginning.
 Charting the path to first woman first man
 In the primordial garden is the Baobab, “Tree of life “.

Those of Judeo-Christian heritage call the first Mother, “Eve”
 Her sisters in Creation have many other names;
 For as each footfall out of our birthplace was placed,
 A sacred calling left a sacred imprint,
 Those words haunt us now
 As we search to remember the divine knowledge,
 Within our DNA Passed down physically;
 One generation to the next,
 Lives within us all.

30

LOUISA CALIO

Isis II

(For the new feminine and the new masculine rising)

I come as Isis, again, again, again...
 Up from pyramidal smoke that rises
 From distant fires
 That once lit my shrine
 Where I was worshipped
 In ancient Egyptian enigmas
 Far and wide.
 I was loved in Greece
 Adored in Sicily
 For my words, words, words
 Words of Power!
 Healing words
 Ancient herbal words
 That save men and restore them to life.
 I took the sun’s very eye
 To make myself goddess
 To rebuild humanity to lead it to sanity.

I walked across all the great waters of every Nile
For I am bold, bold as love.
I speak words made of flesh
Unable to fade into the chill of night air
I speak the words that dispersing everywhere
Dispersing with each new wind, each new cloud burst...
I, Isis am your twin
I have the healing words for each
If, you will listen!
I am your necessary double
Your sister, brother, mother, wife
Isis who comes to restore the balance and symmetry to life
Hoping to return the earth from its original dreadful tilt.

And if you will let me I will build you
Piece by piece
As you can build me
With mason's hands
To make us whole again.
We, who have been torn to shreds
By world machines
That break human beings
Into pieces: Minds without bodies
Bodies without minds
Lives without spirits
To turn the wheels, turn the cogs
Of whose machines?
Not yours, not mine
Not for our life forces.

If you will help me
And give up the privileges
Of your top position
To see, from the very bottom of mine
Then I will give up
any privileges of my position
To build together, a new world, a new way
Not in space, but here in clay

In love's labor, we can toil
 Sifting from the soil
 Those clichés and traditions
 That segregate and pull apart.

(Work Rhythm)

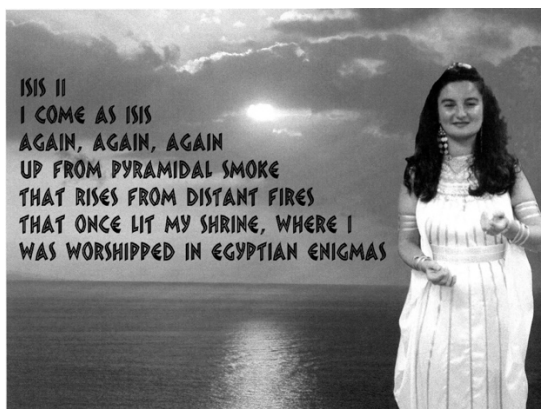
We can forge with our own heat
 The iron for tomorrow's world.
 If, you will join me, we can weave together
 The cloth in black and white
 To cover all the world.

If you will help me
 We can create and cradle
 The child of our dreams
 Blowing with our own breath
 The breath of life into its being
 Activating, gyrating, moving
 Our child into total being
 And not keeping it an idle dream
 Confined to writing and intellectual schemes
 Of better days for human beings.

If you will dare to
 You can make me the woman
 As I make you the man
 Bit by bit, brick by brick
 Building in our life-styles
 The foundation for the change we speak.

You can be the drum I beat
 I can be your sound
 That resonates, moves and shakes the earth
 Radiating in waves
 The technology of change.

If we will dare to we can reshape humankind this time!



[This poem first appeared in a collection *In the Eye of Balance* by Louisa Calio , 1978 (New York) Paradiso Press.]

31

DEBORAH HOLLINS

Embrace

Embrace your weeping heart,
 love it into existence,
 the tears washing your soul
 like showers from heaven.
 Do not apologize for the time it takes.

Throw your hands in the air,
 push your voice from your belly,
 until angels hear the call of your wild self.
 Greedily accept the caress of feathers
 upon your dry and aching throat.

Walk hard upon the earth,
 each footstep a commitment...
 I AM HERE I AM HERE...

Awaken your Mother,
 with stomping and wailing,

until she takes your heart in Her fist,
 a clutch tender but stanch,
 that will never let you go.

And listen with great concentration
 to the wind
 to the fire
 to the sea
 for within each of these one can hear
 the fierce and the innocent
 laughter of Goddess.

32

DEBORAH HOLLINS
This is How She Rises

I lay in the centre of an open field
 The sun is high; the day is hot.
 I am supported and held,
 melting into you...

You who guides me;
 smell of earth, taste of salt,
 voice of thunder and hair of fire,
 moving the earth with one twitch of your finger.
 You who washes me with your tears,
 shapes me with your breath.

I weep for all the women in my time
 that cannot find their voice,
 cannot sing your praises and howl your rage!
 They run from their bodies, Goddess,
 kept from knowing the gifts of pleasure
 and of power you bestow.

I mourn all the blood that is spilled.
 Blood of the women of my time

in countries far away
and in places near.

I hear your music;
drums that beat and pulse
as does my belly and my heart.
sweat trailing between my breasts,
the heat of rage tingling up my spine.

I have been these women....

I feel you coming before I see you;
Air expands and Earth trembles,
Fire in my Spirit ignites, and Water floods my eyes.

Then, O Goddess...I see you coming!
Body colossal; round and naked.
Ample breasts sway as massive hips drive you closer,
thighs rippling with each mighty step you take.

You are all that is fierce and good and terrifying and real and
I AM IN AWE.

You squat beside me...
Your yoni alive, open and red as lava.
You grin at me with lips that hold back
secrets of millennia.

You show me what Woman is.

That is all...

One moment solid as rock beside me,
the next like a veil of cloud.

As you go my heart is filled.
I have never known a love like this.
I whisper into the Air that is you,
into the Earth that is you,

my words on fire with promise...

I will not forget....

Not myself

Not my sisters

Not you

Not ever.

And this is how She rises.

33

DEBORAH HOLLINS

How a Woman Ages

35 years of bleeding,
a wonder; how much has been shed!
The cleansing, renewal and letting go,
Earths magic alive in me.

Some say it is my most powerful time,
some say it is deeply unclean...
For me it is the black velvet edge of sleep –
leaning into soulful darkness –
hugging my own body
with tender memories.

I know it is coming to an end,
soon the time will arrive when it will not
and there will be grief
and relief.

You see – this is how a woman ages;
our breasts – from which you fed
on which you lay your weary head
listened to the ‘thump thump’ of this strong heart -
begin to wilt
like the keening woman,

who falls yet is fierce in her sorrow;
passionate still, but tired.

Hair begins to grow in places unfamiliar –
it tickles and softens the lines in our skin,
makes fuzzy the places that once were clear.

The waters of our bodies sometimes trickle,
like a retiring mountain stream,
when we are full with joy or rage,
our lives rich with feeling;
this moistness evidence of our passion.

Silver shines in our hair,
curls up close to our skull.
I believe wise women who came before me
live in each one.
They whisper to me and we snort and giggle.
Sometimes we shriek.

This is how a woman ages
Our bodies returning to the earth,
plainly reaching down to Her.
Our blood tranquil – our sensuality nestled
deeply in wombs that no longer shed.

This is how women have always aged.
Without pills and surgeries and plastic baggies
hopelessly trying to mimic these soft swinging full breasts.

I will age as my mother, my grandmother, my foremothers,
as all women; with some sadness and with some relief,
carried in this magnificent body -
bent and stooped -
but real,
until it is time to turn my face
and make my journey home.

DEBORAH HOLLINS

All of Her All of Me

I looked into the mirror one day
 and saw the softness of my hair.
 My breasts sat high, my eyes shone clear,
 my skin was smooth and fair.

And somewhere in my memory
 past time and spoken word
 from a place of new beginning
 a gentle voice was heard

*Look and I will show you
 the colour of your love
 the orange hue of passion
 and the green of perfect trust.*

*A maiden I may be
 but secrets in my eyes I see
 and I know that it is me
 who is hope for humanity*

•

I looked into the mirror one day
 and noticed the widening of my hips.
 My breasts were round, my hair was wild
 there was a fullness to my lips.

And somewhere in my memory
 past time and spoken word
 from a place of fruitful healing
 a loving voice was heard

*Look and I will show you
 the creations you can birth
 from the pain and bliss of living
 comes your offerings to Earth*

*A mother I may be
and from my core I give to thee
the healing that is me
that my children may be free.*

•

I looked into the mirror one day
and saw the dimness in my eyes
my breasts had sagged, my hair was gray
my face was etched with lines.

And somewhere in my memory
past time and spoken word
from a place of winters stillness
a wise old voice was heard

*Look and I will show you
the bounty of your harvest;
the joys of mine bestowed to thee,
as you return to Goddess.*

*A crone I may be
and with my voice I do decree
come to know all three
the Maiden, Mother, Crone in thee.*

35

DEBORAH HOLLINS
Wisdom is Always a Woman

Wisdom will not be restrained to a book or the language of
MANKind.

On hard earth under a merciless sun,
she cradles her babe in her arms,
eyes grace an innocent face,
dark lashes flutter in restless sleep.

There is no soft place on her body,
all roundness has shrunk to bone,
so, she holds her babe to her yielding heart;
as brown eyes open,
and a small hand grasps
for her empty breast.

What wisdom does this mother have
cradled in her heart?

The child upon her thin lap no longer cries;
and soon the grasping hand falls,
the silence of unmet desire
overwhelming the outcry of sorrow.

She cannot look away
as the hungry eyes of her child close,
heavy from the weight of emptiness,
and fading sighs escape from sweet cracked lips.

What wisdom does this woman know
about the nature of desire;
which reaches beyond the frail body
to seize moments of awe
in the presence of miracles?

How she yearns for suffering to end
and barter for the freedom of her child.
She swallows hard the din of anguish within,
and a primal urge to scream.

She pulls a threadbare shawl over her head,
sheltering them both from a cruel sun,
and softly cups the tiny chest,
faintly rising and falling now.

From somewhere in her starved mind
a lullaby is freed

and rises on her own weak breath
to sing her sweet infant to sleep.

As peace settles forever upon her child
and all the hope in the world goes still,
her song endures, stretching eternally
across a barren land.

Wisdom is always a woman.

She rises from all of creation,
bravely clutching faith in her hand.
She is sung from the lips and born on the breath
of those who never speak her name.

36
DEBORAH HOLLINS
Sanitized Woman

Women have become sanitized in a culture that fears the wild and
the natural.

How did it begin; the systematic refining of our nature?
Who first sought to bind our spirits by binding our bodies?

And why?

To what end the sale of the maiden,
the vilification of the mother,
the taming of the crone?

Was she slowly and methodically enticed from the forests;
the moist, rich home of her foremothers?
With sweet music, entrancing songs and vows of everlasting love,
was she seduced to follow the call
of those who would domesticate her?

Or was she hunted; ripped from her home,

her nails breaking as she was torn from the tree?
 Did she scream at and curse her stalkers?
 Then was she bound by chains until
 her scream went silent and her rage was spent?

It is the howling wind or the eagles cry that stirs her memory within
 me.
 She walks with smouldering strength within her wild domain,
 she tends to the gardens and the fire,
 and easily she takes up her charge.

I see through her eyes when I look upon the sunrise
 and my body stirs,
 my skin awakens and aches
 for the heat to caress me.
 She reminds me of a power that rests nestled in my hips
 and I find myself swaying with the rhythm of desire.

I keen when I think upon her submission
 and the cost of such an act.
 I struggle with the insanity that such an act demands,
 the relinquishing of her body and the shunning of her intuition;
 the sources of all the wisdom in the world.

And I ask of all my sisters, as I ask of myself;
 to what end this sanitization?

Through seduction and rape we surrendered our home;
 when will we take it back?

Remember, we once were warriors
 and sentries of our Mother.
 We knew the feel of power in our hands
 and the grit of earth on our feet.

What has submission cost you, my sister?

No matter the method of her abduction
 they did not consider

all the times she sat on the earth
under the fullness of the moon,
her blood enriching the soil.
So that even when they placed her in the castle,
the bedroom, the kitchen,
she continued to cultivate under the tree.

I could not write these words if it was not so.
The sunrise and the eagle's call would not stir a rich and bloody
scent,
not cause my hairs to bristle.
I would not hear her footfalls,
twigs breaking under her sure step,
as I walk about the cultured hallways
and tread upon polished floors.

37
BARBARA C. DAUGHTER
Alchemist



30" x 40" acrylic painting

38

MOLLY REMER
Making Our Stand

“You may not remember,
 but let me tell you this,
 someone in some future time
 will think of us.” —*Sappho*

I put on my boots and jeans, grab my priestess robe, pack a basket of ritual supplies, and meet four close friends in a nearby cave. We feel a little nervous about holding ritual on unfamiliar land, but we decide to push our boundaries and do it anyway. *The land needs us*, says my friend. *The other people who come here are meth-heads and vandals.*

We take our drums and climb to the top of the cave, singing as we find our way up the steep hillside. On top, looking out across the country, we sing: *cauldron of changes, feather on the bone, arc of eternity, ring around the stone*. We laugh and practice some more songs, some hearty, some tentative and new. We tie up small bundles of our symbolic burdens with stones and let them down over the edge using handspun wool yarn until the yarn releases, taking our burdens with them. Suddenly, we hear the sound of tires on the gravel. Slamming doors. The sound of loud men’s voices. The smell of cigarette smoke. A ripple of uncertainty passes through us. We are once again tentative and we feel a current of unease. *What should we do?* we whisper to one another. The voices draw nearer, there are calls and hoots. My friend looks at me and says: **THIS IS WHERE WE MAKE OUR STAND**. We hold hands in a line at the edge of the cave roof, gazing out into the horizon. A hawk wheels overhead. We sing. The approaching voices quiet. We sing louder.

I am a strong woman, I am a story woman, I am a healer, my soul will never die.

We project our voices and yell: *we are the witches, back from the dead!*

The voices stop. We wait. We hear doors slamming. The sound of tires on gravel. We are alone once more.

We descend into the cave singing a song composed on the spot: *Deeper, deeper. We're going deeper. Deeper, deeper. Deeper still.*

We strike a pose based on the carvings described in the classic book, *When the Drummers were Women*. Archaeologists described carvings of priestesses carrying drums as, “women carrying cakes to their husbands.”

We shout: “*we're not carrying cakes!*”

I stand on a rock in the center of the cave and sing: *she's been waiting, waiting, she's been waiting so long, she's been waiting for her children to remember to return.* My friends join the song and we move deep into the darkness where we face the “birth canal” at the back of the cave, listening to the small stream within trickle, laugh, and bubble as it emerges from the dark spaces deep within the heart of the earth. We begin to sing:

Ancient mother we hear you calling. Ancient mother, we hear your song. Ancient mother, we hear your laughter...

Just as we sing the words, *ancient mother, we taste your tears*, droplets of cave water fall on our faces, splashing our eyelids.

It might seem simple on the surface, but gathering the women and calling the circle is a radical and subversive act. A revolutionary act. In my work with women's circles and priestessing, I am repeatedly reminded that gathering with other women in a circle for ritual and ceremony is deeply important even though it might just *look* like people having fun or even being frivolous, it is actually a microcosm of the macrocosm—a miniature version of the world we'd like to see and that we want to make possible.

In the book, *Casting the Circle*, Diane Stein observes that women's rituals, “...create a microcosm, a ‘little universe’ within which women try out what they want the macrocosm, the ‘big universe’ or real world to be. Within the safety and protected space of the cast circle, women create their idea of what the world would be like to live in under matriarchal/Goddess women's values...The woman who in the safety of the cast circle designs the world as she would like it to be takes that

memory of creation and success out into daily life...By empowering women through the microcosm of the ritual's cast circle, change becomes possible in the macrocosm real world." (p. 2-3)

It starts with these private ritual and personal connections and then, as Stein explains, "A group of five such like-minded women will then set out to clean up a stream bed or park in their neighborhood; a group of twenty-five will join a protest march for women's reproductive rights; a group of a hundred will set up a peace encampment. The numbers grow, the women elect officials to government who speak for their values and concerns. Apartheid crumbles and totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe end, disarmament begins, and laws to control polluters are enforced. Homes, foods, and jobs are opened to the world's homeless, and often begins in the microcosm of the Women's Spirituality ritual circle" (p. 3)

Circle round

circle round and celebrate

circle round and sing

circle round and share stories

circle round and reach out a hand

circle

no beginning

no end...

In my college classes, I often told my students that in working with people, *we need to learn to think in circles, rather than in lines*. Circles are strong. Circles are steady. Circles hold the space, circles make a place for others. Circles can expand or contract as needed. Circles can be permeable and yet have a strong boundary. Linked arms in a circle can keep things out and show solidarity. Linked energy in a circle can transform the ordinary into sacred space. Hands at each other's backs, facing each other, eye level. Working together in a circle for a ritual, change is birthed, friendships are strengthened, and love is visible.

As I read news stories about the incredible, unimaginable violence and brutality experienced by women around the world, it can be easy to

become depressed and discouraged and to feel like our efforts are hopeless. I return to a conversation I had with a friend before one of our women's circle gatherings...does it really *matter* that we do this or is it a self-indulgence? After some debate, we concluded that it *does* matter. That actively creating the kind of woman-affirming world we want to live in is a worthy, and even holy, task. I've successfully created a women's subculture for myself and those around me that comes from an ecofeminist worldview. However, is that *actually creating change*? Or, is that just operating within the confines of a damaging, restrictive, and oppressive social and political structure? Some time ago, I facilitated a Cakes for the Queen of Heaven series and I made a mistake when I was talking saying, "*in the land that I come from...*" rather than saying, "in my perspective" or "in my worldview." This is now a joke amongst my circle of friends, we will say, "in my land...that isn't what happens," or "let me tell you what it is like in my land." I have to feel like that *does* make a difference. If we can share "our land" with others, isn't change possible? Doesn't "our land" have inherent value that is worth promoting, protecting, and populating?

"Feminist ritual practice is currently the most important model for symbolic and therefore, psychic and spiritual change in women. Certainly ritual is an idealized microcosmic experience, but it may be an enduringly important means of invoking a new order of things in the macrocosm. At the very least, it has been a useful mode for envisioning what a different world for women might 'feel' like." (Kay Turner, *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*)

In addition to the many ways in which we work in the world with our businesses, with our priestessing, and with our families, we have kept microloans going to women's businesses in other countries through Kiva since 2012, making more than thirty loans to twenty different countries, as well as sponsoring women in Africa through Women for Women International.

Speak your truth
tell your story
stand up for the silenced
speak for the voiceless
believe that hope still has a place

Hold steady
bold strong
bold the vision
bold each other.

The women have gathered in a large open living room, under high ceilings and banisters draped with goddess tapestries, their faces are turned towards me, waiting expectantly. We are here for an overnight Red Tent Retreat and we are preparing to go on a pilgrimage. I tell them a synopsis version of Inanna's descent into the underworld, her passage through seven gates and the requirement that at each gate she lie down something of herself, to give up or sacrifice something she holds dear, until she arrives naked and shaking in the depths of the underworld, with nothing left to offer, but her life.

In our own lives, I explain, we face Inanna's descents of our own. They may be as difficult as the death of an adult child, the loss of a baby, the diagnosis of significant illness, or a destroyed relationship. They may be as beautiful and yet soul-wrenchingly difficult as journeying through childbirth and walking through the underworld of postpartum with our newborns. They may be as seemingly every day as returning to school after a long absence. There is value in seeing our lives through this mythopoetic lens. When we story our realities, we find a connection to the experiences and courage of others, we find a pattern of our own lives, and we find a strength of purpose to go on.

My parents have a lodge close to a river. On the property, there are two springs, one smaller and easily accessible, the other issuing forth three million gallons of water a day, but farther away, along a narrow trail through the woods and along the river bank. Today, we will pilgrimage to the second spring to collect some sacred water for our ritual. I invite the gathered women to join me on this pilgrimage, explaining that in some way, they will pass through gates of their lives as they walk, that they will likely have to lay down something, and that, I promise, they will learn something about themselves. While there is power in guided meditations and visualizations that take you to sacred springs, I say, there is nothing like actually *doing it*. Rather than imagine we are walking through the green woods, along the river bank,

listening to bird song, and the sound of flowing water, we will actually be doing those things, *together*.

Seven women accept my invitation and we set off together, picking our way first through rocks and then through muddy puddles and slippery grasses. I am a little nervous as we proceed. What if I have promised a magical story, a lesson, an adventure that cannot actually be delivered? As we walk the increasingly narrow trail, bordered by rock on one side and the river on the other, we do indeed pass through several gates, one created by a fallen tree trunk bridging across the trail, another created by a very small spring that emerges from a small cave and flows across mossy rocks to join the creek created by the large spring. The rocks are slippery and navigation is difficult, most of us emerge from this “gate” with wet feet and shoes.

We reach the large spring at last, muddy feet, wet shoes, sweaty faces, bug bitten thighs. I climb down the steep hillside to where I can reach the water, filling the two jars I have brought with me for this purpose. Before we do so, we sing in gratitude for that which we are receiving. I hold the jars aloft and say, *we return, bearing this sacred water for our people!* A few feet away, one of my friends, a comfortably large woman with a goddess of Willendorf style build, asks if I mind if she takes a dip. She slips out of her caftan and stands for a moment on the rock, unapologetically naked under the blue sky. She slips easily beneath the water, fully immersed, and then emerges, icy water rippling down her full form. I love that one of us has in fact, become fully naked and unadorned in the “underworld” of our journey together.

On our return path, the larger group moves quickly ahead. I am carrying both jars of water and walk slowly with the two friends who have given up their shoes on our descent and who have to walk carefully across the uneven ground. We reach a bend in the creek and a point in the trail at which we must boost ourselves up by an exposed root. My shoeless friend reaches her hand to the root and as she does so a fallen log dislodges and rolls down the hillside at her, bringing a startlingly loud shower of dirt and small rocks with it. A friend further ahead on the trail turns back, reaching her hand down for our water jugs, so that I can reach my hand down to our other friend. She tucks the jars of water into her shoulder bag and then leans back over

towards us to help. Suddenly, there is a thud, a rolling sound, and a splash. One jar of sacred water has rolled from her bag, down the bank and landed with a splash in the creek, where it is immediately whisked away by the current. *Our sacred water!* I cry. *Oh, Inanna...* calls one friend, with a small smile and a wry shake of her head. The woman who dropped it immediately sets off along the trail, running along the narrow path, the bobbing jar still in her sights as it navigates the curves of water.

The rest of us continue to walk. We lose sight of our friend. We reach the point of the creek in which we think she would have gone through the woods to try to retrieve the water and she isn't there. We call her name and she doesn't answer. We feel a small edge of concern. Where did she go? I find myself musing about what lesson can be found in pilgrimaging to acquire something and then losing it and returning empty-handed. There is a mythopoetic understanding to be found within that as well, I'm certain, though less exciting than returning with the gift we have promised to share with our people!

Then, ahead of us on the trail, after the cliffside, and where the path opens back up into grassy bottomland again, we finally see our friend. She is immersed to her waist in the icy water and in her hands, held to the sky, she holds our jar of sacred water.

We are full of excitement as we return, chattering about the rescue of the water, her daring plunge into the current to retrieve it, and the physical reality of our own shero's journey of descent and return. *I'm totally writing about this!* I say, *do I have your permission?* She laughs and says, *I love how this story has become about me rescuing the water instead losing it in the first place!*

We return to the rest of our friends at the lodge, where they have been dyeing prayer flags with indigo. Before we go in, my barefoot friend touches my arm and asks to take a selfie with me. My hand goes to my sweaty, disheveled hair, I know my face is red from heat. *I want it just like this,* she says, *to remember this wildness.*

Inside, we share our sacred water with the others. We dip it into small spray bottles which also contain small gemstones and essential oils

with names like Serenity and Balance. This water ends up traveling to Germany with one friend, who uses it to center herself while traveling. It blesses a mother and new baby at a baby blessing ceremony. I use it as a sacred space spray to clear my workspace before settling down at my computer. It is used in the footbath for a maiden at her first moon ritual.

This water is imbued with our collective magic, the reminder that what is lost, can be found again, plucked from the current and into the story of our lives.

39

PHIBBY VEMABLE

What I Love About Being a Goddess

So many strong, courageous women have suffered imprisonment, humiliation, and rejection, so that, today, we are the goddesses they were never allowed or acknowledged as being. I wish women would figuratively slap one another on the back - jovially acknowledge each other's power.

If I had a formula to leave for women, it would be to be kind to yourself, and to your sisters. Support one another strongly to reach a full potential. Support each other carefully and with kindness. Females are the passage way for men to enter this life, so expect them to respect you, respect yourself enough to demand that they do.

What I love about being a goddess is the vast amount of compassion, empathy, and love that comes with being one. Men plant seeds, but women bring them to fruition. I love all the passages I have gone through, and the opportunity to view other women exploring their strengths. The transgender woman also needs mention, because they face even more difficulties, berating and scorn, simply for their choices, and for their deep female sense of identity. That they continue to seek themselves no matter what others tell them they are, takes tremendous strength.

40
PHIBBY VEMABLE
Balancing

If I balanced my soul on my head –
How heavy would it be?
My livelihood, my heart, my basket
of rocks, all lifted in a smile
of abundance
And what if the basket bottomed out,
and I was left standing in the fruits
of my labor – a watermelon bleeding
my family's meal, a pile of rocks
costing my job & survival

The world shrieks with women
wondering, compressed,
high headed with the joy of holding
all it takes to feed their world
Heads extended into vegetables,
fruits, wood chips, rocks
with the fragility of a neck
strong enough to hold bricks
We are all capped with something –
according to our country
If I balanced my soul, how far
would it see – Would it ascend high enough
to see my sisters – Willing & unwilling
lifters of life.

41

DEANNE QUARRIE, D. Min.
The Breath of Goddess

I am a child of the Earth.
 I live and breathe, walk and dance upon Her face.
 She is my source and I learn from Her each day. This I know...
 Life begins in the dark as Desire.

Deep in that dark place life begins to form, taking root and becoming.....

As life stirs..... deep in the Mother's Belly,
 there is a gentle quickening, movement
 that alerts us to a "knowing"
 of the presence of something yet to come.

As the Earth prepares Herself with warmth,
 the rains and waters come to flood the land,
 nourishing the soil in which She is creating new life.
 Earth and Water and Fire
 come together and Form continues to take shape.

One last thing is needed.
 Just as new form emerges,
 She breathes Air upon it.
 Her Breath, giving Life to all.

We cannot live without air. Without air, our breath, we can die in as little as four minutes. We take air into our lungs and it replenishes our body with the oxygen it brings to us. When we exhale, we release what oxygen we did not use, as well as carbon dioxide. The beautiful symbiosis with this is that our plant kindred produce oxygen for us as we release carbon dioxide for them. Air is our "shared breath."

In our speech, we use many idioms such as: you take my breath away, like a breath of fresh air, with bated breath, don't hold your breath and I don't have time to breathe.

For air itself, some well-known ones are: a breath of fresh air, have your nose in the air, build castles in the air, air your dirty linen in public, put on airs, clear the air, vanish into thin air, float on air and full of hot air. Of course, there are many more.

As an element, air has many magical associations. Some are imagination, clearing, dawn, and birds of prey. In the tarot, we associate air with both the sword and the wand, depending on which traditions we follow. Some of the colors connected to air are yellow, purple, white and lilac. These are all colors that help us to feel “light as air.”

And the hopeless romantic that I am – I am swept away when I hear the words in the song, “Hero” by Enrique Iglesias:

“And I will stand by you, forever
You can take my breath away
You can take my breath away ...”

When we think of air we also think of wind. Wind comes to us from all directions. It can be warm, cold, wet and gusty. It carries pollen from plant to plant. We might have the pleasure (or dismay) of a gusty wind lifting a skirt. Our feathered friends fly on the drafts and currents of the wind. How many have played as children, running with a kite until the wind catches it and lifts it into the sky?

Some well-known idioms for wind are written on the wind, three sheets in the wind, scattered to the four winds, throw caution to the wind, spitting in the wind or pissing in the wind.

Our ability to taste our food is primarily a function of our sense of smell. Air carries smells to us.

In his Book of Secrets, Rajneesh/Osho writes, “If you can do something with breath, you will attain the source of life. If you can do something with breath, you can transcend time and space. If you can do something with breath, you will be in the world and also beyond it.”

Many spiritual traditions include spiritual breathing into their practices. It is a great way to clear your head and calm yourself when stressed. You can become centered, clear and uplifted.

Working with the breath helps open us to a more spirit centered life. It opens us to sacred play. We can transform our breath into prayers. Breathing is the language of the soul.

I like to associate voice with air. Voice when lifted in song expresses deep emotions through the words of the song as well as in the tune. These tones arise from deep in the belly. They are formed through the vocal cords and finally shaped by the tongue, lips and teeth. These tones release both joy and anguish.

Our spoken voice is the vehicle through which we communicate intelligent sound with others. They tell our thoughts, express our needs and help us make connections as we travel through life. The voice is used to defend our position, to stand up for what is right and for what we perceive of as wrong. Our voice, as women, is often suppressed and lost to “power over” control of others. Let us call upon Air to heal this and to open us to reclaiming the power of voice.

We have many arguments today as to when life begins. The Ancients believed that without breath there was no life. There were times when a woman would become pregnant and the delivery of her child would occur when food was scarce. Rather than deprive any already living soul, those assisting in the delivery, or the mother herself, would not allow the infant to breathe and therefore, was never alive.

It is the same with our own creations. We first think them into being. Then we give them form and finally we must breathe into them, infuse them with life so they are manifested into reality. In Celtic mythology we read:

“Nine Maidens, laughing and singing;
Then veiled in the mist, silent as stone.
Changers and Life Makers, Breath of change, Life Breathing all.”

In the shifting realm between the worlds, these nine maidens revealed the beckoning cauldron of unknown potential through which life is taken and out of which life is born.

The wind blows away dead leaves that cover the earth, exposing the soil to the new light. We link our concept of Spirit as a metaphor with the breath, breath hovers over the waters.

The wind is seen as a great power behind the natural world and becomes that power's creative spirit. A strong gust of wind suggests an infusion of creative potential.

The Tuatha De Danann, the Old Gods of the Celtic people, suddenly appeared in Ireland out of the air, on wind-borne clouds.

What this all means to us, is that we must open ourselves to this gift of the life giving breath. Let us breathe in creative potential. Let us breathe in sacred inspiration. Let us breathe in the breath that we all share. The breath that we have shared since the beginning of time is the sacred life- giving source of life – Air.

42

SALLY JEAUX

Spring Equinox: Moving Toward Balance Again

I used to cringe when I heard a, usually Christian, person say, “Well, you just have to have faith.” For a person invested in the fantasy that we have control over our lives and what happens in them, this showed up to me as Pollyanna bullshit and came across as ‘giving up.’ Having faith that, “Things always work out” or would be better in some made up after life, did not appeal to me at all. Suffering through life's injustices and traumas with an eye on something better coming, was not my cup of tea.

Eventually I found my current spiritual path and began to see the physical evidence of what I call, “all things happen as they do.” I have found an acceptance in this way of labeling the sad and difficult things

that happen in my life. There is, after all, no arguing with reality. Now my catch phrase is, "It is what it is." Although many times it isn't, it gives me peace in the moment.

A few weeks ago, I made a very unconscious mistake that could have had dire consequences in my life. In frantically trying to resolve it, I was fraught with fear and worry that I would not be able to arrange the pieces enough to avoid the consequences, which would have brought a great deal of shame and financial burden. One day I was in the post office trying my best to get a handle on tracking an item I had inadvertently sent away, when the kind woman behind the counter reminded me, "Now Honey, you know this is not in your control, right? You just have to have some faith that this will all work out just as it should."

Her offering hit me with a ton of grace. I smiled and thanked her for reminding me of this fact. I had to rely on someone else to fix this little problem of mine, and there was nothing I could do about it at all. Except one thing: have faith. As I left that little sacred moment with another woman, I remembered that I DO know how to trust in the process, trust in my Goddess. The worry and fear left quickly as I received the exact right communication I needed to hear. Instead of calling daily to see if my package had arrived and to manage that they had done their part to get it back to me, I just went on with my life knowing that it would all work out.

While doing laps in the pool shortly after receiving my item back in the mail, I was swimming in gratitude that I had been given such a beautiful lesson from the postal woman and had lived through the catastrophe without any repercussions other than the stress and discomfort my own worrying had caused. A chant began making itself heard as I worked my way up and down in the pool. I offer it to you as evidence that sacred messengers come in many forms, faith is a magical tool and in gratitude for the notion that all things happen just like they should.

Trust in the Flow
 Faith in my Goddess
 Trust in the Flow

Faith in myself

Listen to my body
 Listen to my soul
 Listen to my heart
 As the mystery unfolds
 Singing to my body
 Trusting what I know
 Faith in the Wheel
 Returns me to the flow

43

SALLY JEAUX

Goodbye to Sun Flowers: Personal Ritual For Fall Equinox

I begin to see the changes of the season in small ways in Texas. The cold tap water has gone from almost hot to luke warm. The flowers that grace our highways are changing too, preparing for the dark half of the year. The light is shifting texture and the trees are crisping up. Soon they will release their leaves, as they always do, making ready for their journey inside. Still the Earth is baking, days are hot from Summer's prime and yet, a cool breeze comes randomly now to slow our Mother down. There will be fall gardens: cilantro, dill, tomatoes and okra made ready for their second chance. But Summer's glory is passing and it's time to turn the Wheel.

And so I sit on my back porch to listen to the trees, the frogs and wind. I take the time to mark the turning and think inventory of my blessings as well as what must be left behind.

I light a candle for the animals in my woods who eat our offerings of fruits and vegetables to Artemis. They delight me with eyes glowing from the shadows or mating songs that call out into the balmy nights.

I light a second candle for gratitude, for the abundance and harvests of the light half of the year. Love shines its beauty on my partnership and home. We have opened the curtains to let the light in and viewed

the land from inside our home. We are reclaiming this house as our home.

I light another candle for the grief and pain of loss. So many sisters losing parents and siblings, loved ones and friends. Friends telling the truth about the reality of their childhoods, the care not received, the protection sorely lacking. Friends who have moved away to the next chapter in their book, leaving behind communities and homes they have cherished. Changing partnerships. Grieving of losses in mobility and self determination. Sisters being real about their limitations and what that means in the story of themselves. Change forced upon sisters with no warning or time to prepare. The cycle of life and all that comes with it played out dramatically in my community. I ask for Isis to wrap her healing arms around us as we pass through what we must, to live on this planet.

I light a candle for the joy and adventures many of my retired sisters are experiencing. The travel and time to read, hang out in the trees or at the pool doing absolutely nothing but being in the moment. For the Face Book pictures of sisters relaxing, reconnecting with the Mother, or old friends along the way. For friends coming to visit, for Thanksgiving with friends with no family expectations. For the Festival of the Goddess in its 24th year, the Maiden program, the heart of our festival. For our annual gathering at Hallows with my spiritual community where I am certain to be re-filled, loved and respected; where an energy of belonging envelopes me to see me through the Deep.

I light a final candle, for sisters who contain their fear about our November elections, so as to focus their precious energy to the best possible outcome. For sisters who have worked tirelessly for the possibility of the 1st female, feminist president. For the people in our world whose voice is heard through fear mongering and hate. For the dying and decaying Patriarchy—less excepting than are we, about the cycles of life and the turning of the Wheel.

The candles illuminate my back porch and I sit thinking about the balance of Fall Equinox. It plays out consistently in my life. The sweet and the sad. The strife and the gratitude. Longing and grace. Joy and

grief. Shame and worthiness. The sun and the moon. What a gift the cycles of life are when you actually pay attention.

And so, I say goodbye to sunflowers and open my heart and spirit to seeing things as they truly are, not as I would have them be. May the Goddess of 10,000 Names witness our rite as the Wheel turns and the darkness grows once again.

42

JOYCE MACCAULEY-BENNER (Joy)
you want to know what i want

you want to know what i want.

you see me and my tears and want to know what they mean and how they can be healed.

you want to know what it is my heart longs for, what my voice would shout for if it had the courage and the chance.

so you want to know what i want.

i want peace,

i want to be left alone.

i want the silence of night to be the only thing I have to take in.

i want the graves of the women who have been raped and murdered to rise up in such a fury and vengeance that only a GODDESS could calm them.

i want to know love in its purest form and sexuality in its most holy.

i want the noise of the world to fade away so that only the waters of the ocean can be heard and the calls of the wild.

i want every objectified image to burn and light up the nite and the billboards to come crashing down.

i want to be seduced by the milk of the earth and drink the beauty of the rivers.

i want to write poetry to the Great Goddess and speak only from my soul.

i want to dance, not for you, but for me to the rhythm of my own song.

i want the hatred to end, the pillaging of souls for the profit of evil.

i want evil to be redefined.

i want who the Enemy is to be reconsidered because it's only us in the end.

finally, i want to get to the heart of my soul, by reaching deep within

i want to do that on my own

quietly

courageously
simply
and i do not want to want
i want to be.

43

JOYCE MACCAULEY-BENNER (Joy)
jezebels and marys

you who read and worship your words
 have long forgotten mine
 you have made me and all my sisters
 a sinner

a thief, a whore or a virgin. Jezebels or Marys, are we.
 free for the taking or making.
 my way, my truth, my life
 has been silenced.

you speak of me as if i do not hear
 you have stripped me of my culture, my body, my language
 and replaced me with a Barbie doll

you call me mother of god
 then assign your salvation to my son
 but if i birthed him then really where did his salvation come?
 careful construction of half-truths
 isn't that carpentry as well?

44

JOYCE MCCAULEY-BENNER (Joy)
Miles

its taken me miles to get where i am.
 yet i don't feel i've traveled that far.

miles aren't measured in minutes
but in the fullness of pain

isn't it funny
that i'm not really sure
where my miles are taking me
wasn't i looking for heaven?

or did that already escape me
the journey's been crooked
jagged at best
and i've stopped so many times to rest

i've driven in the rain
skidded on the wet pavement
crashed into you

and no, i don't have any insurance
the billboards are plenty
each one tells me to turn, stop, or be fixed
i hate those damn things

i can't seem to keep my eyes on the road
some miles are pretty
some miles are deep
some taught me to smile
and some put me to sleep

still i drive aimlessly
and wonder ironically
who's driving this thing

and why can't she see
the detour ahead
well fuck those signs
and all these miles
i still don't know where i am
wasn't i looking for heaven

is it really just straight ahead?

47

PETER V. DUGAN

Salacia

She sings at night
from the edge of the jetty rocks.
Her songs waft on the wind
and rise above the roar
of crashing waves.

Her mood and melody
can change like the weather.

At times she sings a woeful lament
forlorn and foreboding
simmering with the rage
of an ocean storm
or
shifts to a song of seduction,
a promise of peace,
like a smooth tranquil sea.

Some call her a Siren,
who lures sailors to their death
in shipwrecks upon shoals and reefs;
while in search of the source
of the songs she sings.

But she grieves for the loss
of her lover, Neptune,
who left her and the sea behind
to live for eternity on Olympus.

And as dawn begins to break,
just before the first light shines

and sparkles on the surface of the sea,
 she slips back into the waters
 and with the flip of her tail fin,
 she vanishes into the dark briny deep.

48

PETER V. DUGAN**The Siren**

her alabaster skin
 glows
 in moonlight

mixed fragrances
 salt and incense
 off-white
 insoluble
 velvet vapor
 hangs, glares

jubilant hush
 infinite remorse
 exiled
 on stony shoal
 algae tints
 black-gray rocks
 breaks rhythm
 of waves

she sings at night
 from the edge
 amid drift and decadence
 meticulous
 star-shine melody
 wrapped in mist
 under
 opal

phantom moon

mermaids never
come up for air

49

PETER V. DUGAN
Mother Nature

her eyes took in
the infinite

she turned toward me

“I speak down to you,
because you are beneath me . . .”

sex is her weapon
she wields it well

50

HELEN HYE-SOOK HWANG, PH.D.
Mago Pilgrimage to Korea: Triad Shrines in Gangmun,
Gangwon Province

Traditionally, this region is famed for high Neo-Confucian culture during the last Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897). That meant we were stepping into an area wherein male leadership characterized the local culture for the last few centuries. I could sense that highly valued order, balance, and accuracy were embedded in the life of people. The triad symbol was strikingly visible all around us. Not only the three Seonghwang Shrines but also the female triad divine venerated in them (see Figure, the triad seonghwang goddess). The Seonghwang Shrine refers to a Korean indigenous shrine. And the shrine comprised the

three chambers. The triad symbol goes on: The origin story of the shrine involved three geese. *Sotdae* (the wooden pole that symbolizes Magoism) had the carving of three geese atop. Ancestral tablets came in three.



At another level, the Female Seonghwang Shrine was balanced with the Male Seonghwang Shrine. One may assume that the male-female balance follows the Chinese heterosexual model, a patriarchal device that subjugates the female to the male principle. Intriguingly, however, such female-male balance was not rendered in the pantheon of the female triad divine in the case of Gangmun Seonghwang shrine! We found female triad ancestral worship in the Male Seonghwang Shrine as well! Their ancestral tablets bespoke that villagers deemed themselves as the descendants of the female triad. We were given their titles, the Deity of Seonghwang at the center flanked by the Deity of Earth and the Deity of Disease or Smallpox. This detail substantiated the difference between traditional Korean society and Chinese patriarchal society, an insight that Matrina Deuchler maintains.¹ Deuchler, having researched familial institutions and inheritance

¹ See Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University; Distributed by Harvard University Press, 1992). Cited in Helen Hye-Sook Hwang, "Korean History and Religion Viewed from a Gender Perspective 성의 관점에서 본 한국역사와 종교 (1): Korean Women during the Koryo and early Choson periods 고려말 조선초 한국 여성들," in *Segyeo-ni Sinbak (Theology of the World)* Vol. 52 (Fall 2001), 175-208" and "Korean History and Religion Viewed from a Gender Perspective 성의 관점에서 본 한국역사와 종교 (2): Medieval Korean Women's Movements of Tantric Buddhism and Korean Alphabet 중세 한국 여성들의 탄트릭 불교와 한글운동," in *Segyeo-ni Sinbak (Theology of the World)* Vol. 54 (Spring 2002), 247-282.

customs during the late period of Goryeo (918-1392) and the early period of Joseon, shows that traditional Korean society, unlike China, operated a gender-balanced system in which women held equal rights as men. When it comes to gender principle, Korean traditional society, as the whole world fell under patriarchal history, accepted a form of patriarchy on the surface. Facing the pressure of patriarchal culture from China and India in particular, however, traditional Koreans were able to shape a gynocentric form of gender-balanced society, which preserved the female principle, the legacy of ancient Magoists. In short, villagers of Gangmun sustained the female-male balance of Magoism to this day throughout the vicissitudes of misogynist cultural inventions spawned by the Neo-Confucian social order that took root in the late Joseon period and was consolidated during the Japanese colonial rule and the Korean War.



Image via Eungyeong Kim

The first place we visited was the old town of Gangmun in Gangneung (강릉) City. Gangmun is

known for her ancient faith practice of Seonghwang (城隍, Moated Stronghold), whose origin I trace in the Magoist Budo civilization circa 2300 BCE.² Unfortunately, the topic of the Seonghwang Shrine remains largely misrepresented and its discussion is complex. Suffice it to say that it refers to a Magoist Shamanic shrine and a village center wherein villagers practiced and preserved Magoism throughout generations. We were there to visit what Gangmun is best known for: The three shrines, the Female Seonghwang Shrine, the Male Seonghwang Shrine, and the outdoor place of Jinttobaegi Seonghwang (진또배기 성황).

The Female Seonghwang Shrine (여성황당, Yeo Seonghwang-dang) sits on the ground under the Peak of Juk-do (Big or Bamboo Island),

² On the Budo civilization, see *The Mago Way: Re-discovering Mago, the Great Goddess from East Asia* (Mago Books 2015), Chapter 4.

a low hill by the seashore. Below the peak amidst its waist, nettle trees are lined up, looking down the roof of the shine. The shrine building, small in size, exudes a swirl of high energy in the air. Having three chambers, it enshrines the female triad in the middle chamber.

Our guide, Mr. Yeongmok Jang (80 year-old), an elder of the village, told us the origin story of the shrine. About four hundred fifty years ago, three geese flew from Mongolia and sat on the current spot. Villagers deemed the place sacred and began to offer rituals. At the beginning, the shrine had no structure but was marked by a rock and a small edifice made from rice-straw. The present shrine building was from two hundred some years ago, the late Joseon period.

The next shrine, Jinttobaegi Seonghwang, was an outdoor open space made into a park wherein numerous jinttobaegis (better known in other regions as sotdaes (숫대 wooden poles with carved three geese atop) stood in different



heights. This place is deemed as one of the three shrines in Gangmun together with the Female Seonghwang Shrine and the Male Seonghwang Shrine. All three are located in proximity within 100 meters from each other. According to Mr. Wongeun Kim, a representative of the Gangmun Fishing Community, the tallest sotdae is re-constructed every three years upon the ritual of Pungeo-je (calming the wind for sea voyagers). Other data show that the tallest sotdae is designated as the focus of worship in this outdoor shrine.

The third shrine, the Male Seonghwang Shrine (숫성황당, Sut Seonghwang-dang or 남성황당, Nam Seonghwang-dang), was a small hut-like structure with only one chamber. It was located in a weedy lot near a rice paddy. Pine trees surrounding the shrine added an air of sacredness. Inside, sat three ancestral tablets on a crudely

raised alter leaning against the cement wall. Each of the three ancestral tablets reads the name of the three Goddesses; the Deity of Seonghwang at the center flanked by the Deity of Earth and the Deity of Disease. Although their names are stripped of female connotation (to be precise, the neutral is assumed as female), they are said to be Goddesses. All three deities are deemed as female nationwide in Korea.

Mr. Jang explained how they ended up being enshrined here: Having been abandoned by the Gwon clan, they were re-enshrined in a newly built shrine by villagers. Apparently, villagers named the new shrine the Male Seonghwang Shrine. This is somewhat expected given that the City of Gangneung



boasts an upscale Neo-Confucian culture as the birthplace of such renowned Neo-Confucian scholars as Yi Yulgok (이율곡) and the Heos (including Heo Gyun 허균 and Heo Nanseolheon 허난설헌) of the sixteenth century CE.

On April 15 by the lunar calendar, villagers invite Mudangs and offer rituals in all these three shrines. This ritual, Pungeo-je (풍어제 ritual of calming the wind for sea voyagers), is an old Shaman ritual for fishing villagers in Korea, performed for several days.

[Our visit as well as my lecture in the northeastern coastal region of South Korea was arranged by Ms. Eungyeong Kim. Ms. Kim, lecturer at Gangneung Wonju University, had contacted me three years prior and requested me to visit her region during Mago Pilgrimage. We visited several cultural and natural sites including the three Seonghwang Shrines as well as Buddhist temples, Rock of Mago Halmi, and Rock of Mago. Here I report about the three Seonghwang Shrines whose triadic nature that the village guide underscored.³ All photos are by the author otherwise indicated.]

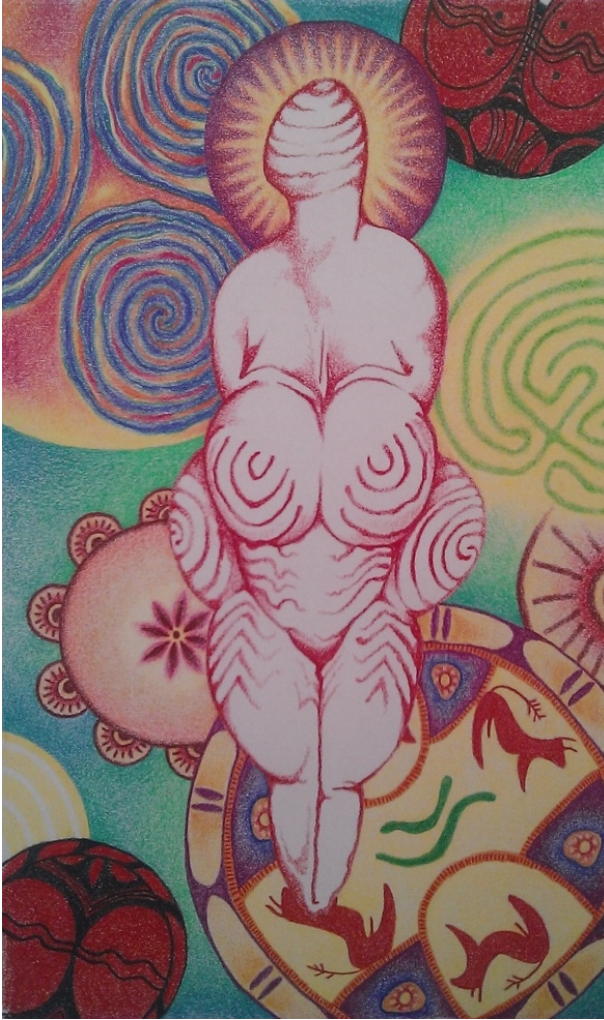
³ Originally published in *Return to Mago E-Magazine*
<https://www.magoism.net/2015/12/2015-mago-pilgrimage-to-korea-report-1-triad-shrines-in-gangmun-by-dr-helen-hye-sook-hwang/>.

51
LOUISE M. HEWETT
Cauldron



She is descending and ascending simultaneously, into and out of the cauldron of rebirth, possibility, of warmth and life, of creative consciousness. the vulva shape illuminated round her alludes to the orgasmic, ecstatic consciousness of unity with all within a physical existence.

52
LOUISE M. HEWETT
Cosmic Egg



Cosmic egg celebrates the abundance in potential contained with goddess and the female body. with spirals and egg motifs it evokes incubating and growth, including the radiance of consciousness.

53

BRANDY WOODS

The Morrigan

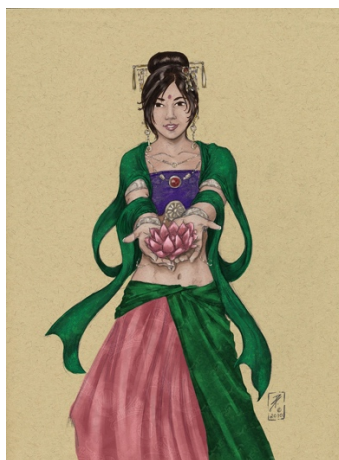
9x12 inches, watercolor pencils
on cold-press paper, 2018.

Guardian of the Lotus

8.5x11 inches, graphite pencil
and digital colors, 2012.

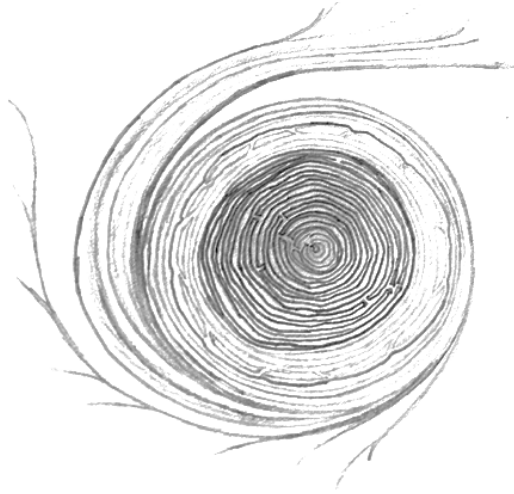
Shaman's Path

11x14 inches, acrylics on wood,
2014.

Kwan Yin

8x10 inches, graphite pencil and
digital colors on textured paper,
2010.

54
AMINA RODRIGUEZ
 Human



I feel hollow inside
 Like a petrifying tree without oxygen, vacant
 Where did my fragments go?
 There is a space where I can see where I get lost
 The brain takes over though it's off
 The trigger switched the thought
 Bloody lever
 Drips til an almost death
 Resuscitates my soul

It's alright I tell her
 It's not the end
 Not yet.
 Remember
 Lessons need to be learned by the human
 This will also pass
 The obstacles,
 I apparently create
 We're on auto

Will I remember?
I ask myself each day
Will we all remember?
This emptiness is needed
The dramas are needed
If only temporarily
But Mother Earth...My dear human
Embrace all my destitute child
The end of misery is near.

55

JENNIFER HARTZ**Artist Statement**

My recent work is a continuation of my exploration into themes of identity, the fragility of the human body and the interactions/connections we experience as humans.

The work included in the Forgotten Bodies series was inspired by the layers of memories within each of us that hold a multitude of experiences and emotions that we tend to keep buried away, or even forget, but still play a major role in who we are and how we see and respond to the world around us. This work is part of an ongoing series for 2018.

My process includes combining different mediums which allows me to respond to the materials and work intuitively...I have found my passion is in the process. Although I have an image in my mind beforehand and create hundreds of thumbnail sketches...inevitably the work naturally evolves as each of the mediums respond to each other on the panel.

From the Forgotten Bodies series, No.2



24"x12", Mixed Media w/
Monotype on Wooden Panel,
2018

From the Forgotten Bodies series, No.3



24"x12", Mixed Media
w/Monotype on Wooden
Panel, 2018

56
JENNIFER HARTZ
From the *Forgotten Bodies* series, No.8



24"x24", Mixed Media w/ Monotype on Wooden Panel, 2018

57
CHELSEA ARRINGTON
Earth Goddess



In this drawing, you see the Earth Goddess stare out you. Her eyes are big, wise, and deep. Above her is the Sun, displaying the connection between the Sun, snakes, and the Divine Feminine. You see rising above out of her hair a mountain range, the bones of the Great Goddess. To her right and left are a pomegranate flower and pomegranate, respectively. In her hair are spirals: ancient symbols of the Goddess.

LIZ DARLING**Artist Statement**

My paintings are an exploration of the sacred. I am intuitively drawn to earth-based spirituality, animism, the divine feminine, altered states of consciousness, and ecofeminism.

We are living during what many ecologists believe is the sixth mass extinction – the Anthropocene. Biodiversity is decreasing at a horrifying rate and earth is clothed in a literal sea of garbage. Temperatures are rising; oceans are acidifying. Capitalist patriarchy has created an ecocidal economic structure for the world's richest humans to exploit our planet's sacred, finite resources to the point of irreversible destruction. The damage is outside. The damage is inside. On a macro and micro level, we are living in immense physical, economic, and spiritual illness created by corporate rulers and perpetuated by us as individuals in a system where, to quote Ani Difranco, "it's as easy as breathing for us all to participate." How do we come to terms with our own roles in this sickness that flows through our minds, bodies, and ecosystems on such a visceral level? As our planet endures this trauma, what is our moral obligation to the environment? To animals? To each other? To our children? How do we process the enormity of this devastation on a personal level?

I primarily work in watercolor, ink, and other water-based media; the water as an element itself is significant to my practice. I routinely utilize subject matter that embodies the transitory complexity of nature and the duality of growth and decay, such as fungi and lunar imagery. The moon, a symbol of the Goddess in pagan belief, is intimately linked to tides, seasons, and the female menstrual cycle. Stylistically, I love the crisp edges and smooth surface texture that watercolor naturally creates and I gravitate to painting calm, balanced, organic compositions.

Aqueous 1



Alcohol Ink on Polypropylene Paper. 2017

Moon Blood 2



Alcohol Ink on Polypropylene Paper. 2017

Mycelium Medusa



Watercolor and Ink. 2017

59
LIZE DARLING
Wild



Watercolor, Ink, and Gouache. 2018

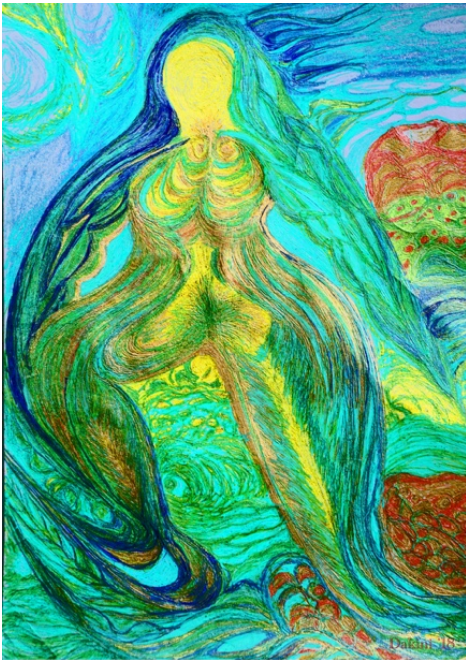
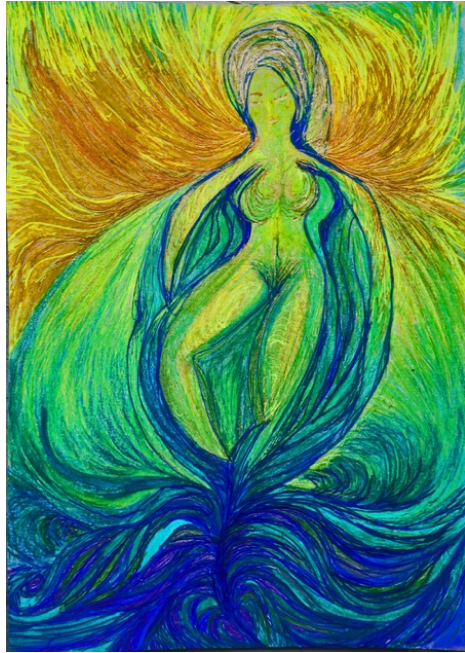


Thin Places. Watercolor, Ink, and Gouache. 2017

60
LYNN MARLOW

She Rises & Radiates

5x7" colored pencil and ink



She Rises

5x7" colored pencil and ink

61
LOUISA CALIO
The Venus Sanctuary

Act I Scene i

(Location: A type of way station or retreat center in an atmosphere lit by soft pastel rainbow hues: greens, violets and soft pinks to give the suggestion of the planet Venus and a restful spa. Women of varied ages and ethnic groups walk about, preen themselves and each other in a spirit of cooperation and love. A few appear to be couples, some work in groups around massage tables and others are clearly doing a type of radiance hands on healing on the women lie are on top of the tables and still others do massage with essential oils. A few are creating ritual spaces and lighting candles. One or two do yoga exercises, tai chi and dance movements to stirring music. There are a few who are painting, sculpting and gardening.

A mature woman, who looks a variety of ethnic possibilities, Hawaiian perhaps, addresses the audience in a friendly and familiar way and hereafter each woman steps away from the action in order to participate in the conversation. Women 1,2,3,4 should highly contrast each other physically and may be of varied races.

Woman 1:

Welcome. Now is the time to share our place. It's been around a very long time. Once named limbo, now named for Venus, this sphere was created by compassionate souls for women, especially those angered, hurt and battered by wounds from husbands or mates, family or friends. These women learned to blame their hurts on the men primarily and became their helpless victims. They had forgotten they had once agreed to enact these dramas, the passionate journeys, in order to evolve the feminine and masculine. Tired, weak and confused, they come to us for healing, usually after a tragic demise. Every once in a while we get a waking dreamer though like the one you are about to meet.

Woman 2:

Had not the men been cruel and wanted only their bodies, when they offered their souls. Had not the men in cold detachment and selfishness taken their mothering greedily. Had they not been the law givers of their time, refusing to acknowledge the equality of women, these women would not have felt too helpless to fight these decision

makers in all phases of life. If the women had different relationships with their mothers, they'd have no need for us, but that was also part of the rules of the game for this go round, a time when many mothers were being introduced to male energies within and could not offer daughters the nurturing they longed for, the Great Mother went into hiding and had to be rediscovered within.

Woman 3:

Some geniuses with immense compassion of unknown origin, created this realm and we've been embellishing it ever since. It's a work in progress. The women here who were taught to pity men and make them sons are addressed as daughter, until their process is done. So too are the women who were swept into despair by longing for love or were abused and used and took their own lives still so unripe. They too have come to us for healing and are called sister.

Women 4:

Some here were initiated in the ways of wildness and took revenge on men feeling a false sense of superiority, when they were only addicted to men's ways. We once named them Amazon but now they go by many and all names, Diana, Marilyn, Gloria, or chicks and babes. Most are dead but some still living.

In this realm of subtle bodies it matters not. Let us gather to hear our heroine, a daughter, who is about to graduate and return to her earth life with more awareness.

She is not dead, but in a place of no time reached through the grace of her ancestors especially her maternal grandmother and meditation in this life.

Daughter:

I can't believe it's time for me to leave after only a few mili seconds it seems, but surely it's a month or more.

Woman 3: (to the audience)

She has no idea she's been here just a few hours.

Daughter:

When terrible states crowded my mind, sweeping memories of past pain recent, shames and humiliations, made all the worse by their repetitious patterning, nearly breaking me, I called for help in my hour of need, and help was received. Miraculously, I was transported to this realm for rest, healing and peace.

The pain I suffered at the hands of men, drove me closer to my own sex. I am not ashamed. Were they not the softness I longed for, the gentle breasts of a mother I never had, the soft curves of a sister with feminine beauty? Were they not a part of me freeing me from the hands of the stranger?

I was exhausted from a childhood patterning, when the spark ignited by a man or boy could set my soul on fire. Each one I sought ended in disaster, all types and sizes, until I reached the end point of desire.

Woman 2: (to audience)

For the first time she has looked within, and saw what had disturbed her, a darkness and texture that once looked forbidding. She was encouraged to break down and explore with touch so gentle, the areas she feared and gave away. They became the seat of joy that she had kept at bay, except when a man allowed her to approach. So sweet to the taste, so unlike what people say.

Daughter:

The sweet and gentle hands of these women caressed and accepted all of me, my many parts, until I learned what gave me pleasure. The stops and starts, softer and rougher, reached inside to my core- and found a long nerve at the heart, my Lotus. These ladies showed me the hidden art of who I really am, a goddess in the making, a knowledge that was nearly lost. My menstrual blood, damp and dark, moon blood once called the curse, the filth was at its source pure joy, an organ of rebirth. I traveled in utero, now I'm told I must go and revisit the world of men. How I dread that.

Woman 4:

Oh, don't be afraid, dear. You're well prepared and you'll see they're not so bad.

Daughter:

I don't want to leave. I like it here; it's safe and free, full of beauty, free of past pain and memory, no rough penetrations, no terrors of anger or rage.

Woman 4:

I know, dear.

(The woman puts her arm around Daughter and leads her along)

Come with me. I want to show you a few more things. Women of your time are especially fearful of maturation. But you have loved the crones you met.

Haven't they offered you nurturance and so much wisdom? The Mother has told you the ancient secrets too and asks that you remember your true self. To remain a daughter will make you stuck like these people.

(She gestures to another scene stage right of women at strip clubs or modeling about in adolescent garb or working out while self absorbed.)

Scene ii

(A body building gym for men and women in our time)

There are mirrors all around and people repeatedly gazing at their own reflections. They pose and look again and again. When they speak to each other, it's only to complain about weight, figure longing for outer change, some operation that will make them appear more perfect, viagra, botox injections to create a frozen face, false breasts, etc. can be used to exaggerate these obsessions).

Woman 4:

These are the Complainers who cursed their parents and the human race for its seeming imperfections. Take a good look at them. Do you recognize any?

Daughter:

Why yes, there are a lot of movie stars and models. There's the one that does all those fitness videos. She really lost it. She had a conscience once, ugh.

Woman 4:

Judge not! Remember what we taught you about the deception of appearances and what is behind their struggle. The need for compassion, which frees you faster.

Look again and closer.

(A young teen appears resembling daughter, she has acne and is looking sad while she pops a pimple.)

Daughter:

That's me! At 16, when I so hated myself and my parents for bringing me to this hideous planet, this unjust place where some appear to have it all, money, beauty, power and others can barely breathe, earn a living or succeed. Children with swollen bellies, others obese. Why am I here? I wasn't vain!

Woman 4:

Maybe you aren't ready. *(Said half to herself and the audience)*

Vanity comes in many forms including self-hate and has been a particular curse of women of your time when worth was measured almost entirely by the outside.

Daughter:

Didn't I try to make things better? Many laughed at my ideals, called me names. Said the blacks and Jews who knew suffering would reject me, too, said I was worse--a mongrel that began my war for good against evil an attempt to wrest a self from corporate American subterfuge, manipulated images, mannequin women soulless and starving and generations silenced too!

Woman 4:

Yes, as a child and adolescent, differences are important; the assertive I or self needs to be felt to begin the process of maturation individuation, the quest for specialness, uniqueness are but a prelude, but only a prelude to the whole you, a communal being. In this society, all too often the process is stopped here. *(I think I'll call Mother for help aloud to audience).*

Scene iii

(The gym disappears and we are back to the retreat center. Enter a woman in her middle years whose origins are hard to distinguish. She may be Hawaiian or

Polyanisian. Her hair is full and graying. She is medium build and solid. She is dressed in rich floral materials that are flowing and she is barefoot. She enters speaking as if she already knows what to address.)

Mother:

Some hear, but fear the voice they hear within, believing instead the instructions of others. Even well meaning voices block you from knowing and hearing your own note. This is the test of true consciousness to hear your soul my daughter. Very few get to glimpse at what's behind the pictures while they're still in the physical.

For what is God but a woman,
 but the waters that flow within you
 who wants you to grow soft and be penetrated.
 Let go and surrender the Ego shell
 become renewed, find a way around
 any obstacle, like a river that flows
 around anything, clarified, purified.
 Give up the hard surface and to be moist,
 fertile, and transparent a woman is like a water,
 a poem, a song that can never be owned by anything or anyone.
 So feel privileged to be a woman, daughter.

Daughter:

I do, especially when I'm around you.

Mother:

Great courage is needed for subtle confusions exist on your plane
 Black and white and gray are going to blurr your vision until only levels
 of light remain. Here a being gets to hear the voice within clearly.

Having been distracted by clinging past patterns of DNA long ingrained. This listening is essential and needs to be reinforced by silent hours upon return. To cross over to the isle of Self depends on freeing oneself from all past pictures of *both* good and bad. For the girl to have been good, she had to please, mother, father or outer authorities. For the Girl to be good to her lover/husband she dare not take stock of her own needs, for the girl to become a mother- sacrifice was expected and in your time a career was demanded, too challenges

all over for the girl to become woman. Do you recall on your arrival you searched for your friends who were wounded? Carole who was raped in highschool by football players; so traumatized was she her hair grayed overnight and when she finally returned to school it was only you and a young man, Jeff, a future guru who befriended her before she dropped out of school, and there was Lynda who died after battling breast cancer? Overwrought, overworked by so many voices demanding perfection of her, the body could hold. And the poets and writers you loved who died of AIDS and the suicides? They too were hurt from the confusions and lack of self love. Some were abused as children while others abused themselves. You were so pleased to see Lynda among the healers here, having been a doctor on the other side. She is learning that all healing begins with the self and that the self is good.

And the writers who are creating rituals and poems and stories for the women of tomorrow will send their powerful creative thoughts telepathically out to those ready to receive. So subtle are these regions of mind that much can be missed. Yet, they are charted and attainable, one only needs lessons and guidance that is wise and gentle in order to navigate. We have brought you here for that, more than comforting.

Woman 3

Life 's demands often bring us back to black and white after so much progress, but once the journey has reached this far, the being is on her way to seeing beyond polar vision. We'll be watching. A woman may or may not reach wisdom, but she will have progressed and can pass this on to younger generations to come in some chosen form. It matters not which one art, dance, children, poetry or simply proper thoughts. Insights are never lost entirely.

Daughter:

I hear you, but you speak abstractly like poetry.

Mother:

We are, I am, an impersonal energy as you sense and a part of you! During your defiant years unripe emotions with muddled ideas which were untested, took over. You were seeking a voice yet couldn't discern clearly, you protested too much rebelled so often though in

some ways not enough. Your direction seemed like it could be rationally imposed from without, rather than learned from the knowledge of patterns within. Your overall life and behavior, however, has won out and brought you here.

Woman 4:

You wanted to control and order the outer world. Your intentions were good your ideas too simplistic and like many of your generation you were far too impatient. You ignored the laws of matter and energy and the free will of others, including men's. You were unaware of your power. The vast expanse of space and time became reduced in your mind to your birth and the wars in which you were engaged. Your passionate nature blinded you and your ability to assess the situation, see the bigger picture.

Daughter:

Is life a kind of war?

Mother:

It has been one of your major paradigms but this is shifting. You will decide on when for it will be war until you re- create it and learn the Art of living.

Woman 2:

Fear of losing the desired one has been your door leading you into the chase drawing out your inner resources until you catch someone and let him disempower you. This phase when weathered however, tempestuous, can lead you to the next rung on the lunar ladder.

Daughter:

Lunar ladder? A ladder of Light?

Woman 2:

Somewhat like your degrees, this light is mastered in steps and God is no longer a terrible father but rather the light you will learn to integrate a Goddess being. Far more terrible perhaps is the knowledge that as we learn more about the mysteries clearly it is we who shape our destiny.

Daughter:

Mother, what about the nights I experienced you? I called out and a voice that sounded like an outer voice answered me. Doesn't that mean it's all outside of my hands? That indeed I am not in charge or in control, that it's in your hands?

Mother:

Don't you see who I am? I am you in future years?

Daughter:

Guaranteed?

Mother:

That's taking it too far ahead and for granted.

Daughter:

I am your daughter, you said and your voice. But why me?

Mother:

Why not you? Remember the self-esteem classes. You are here now also because some of your distant ancestors who made the journey before and left this legacy for you centuries ago. There was a recent grandmother, too who you noticed died easily, joyfully, and you saw in your mind's eye with nature sprites all around her. You were right! She was a master on the inner planes, friend of devas and guardians to the trees. Then you thought it an odd coincidence and now know better, that when your family celebrated her life, next door at the same hall was a group of women called "Daughters of the Nile". This grandmother was an initiate of high degree and senior member of our soul group. She was always protecting you and does so now even from the other side. Several others in your family who were in tune with nature including several males, one a former Florentine, were and are helping you from other realms of light.

Woman 2:

Housed within you are many selves and voices some more powerful than others, voices recorded, but somehow forgotten; voices you are yet to remember. You once knew of the left and the right just try to remember...You are more than daughter, mother, more than woman.

When you return to physical life your words will speak your heart fearlessly and you will understand your journey and meet him. Your departure time is nearing. We'll be close by in case you really need us. Now you are consciously a part of us and feel less separated from who you really are.

Daughter:

I wish you were less paradoxical. Can't I hang so, I could be sure to get it right? Who is this He you speak of?

Mother:

You'll know when the time is right. And no, you can't stay any longer. That request has kept you humans tied to me much too long and given me a bad name in your stories: I become devouring a squid, a monster in the mud, because you're so lazy. Now get your ass down there!

Daughter:

Oh Mother, really!

Mother:

From now on you'll address me as Sally.

Daughter:

Why Sally? Does that have a special meaning? Sarah, Biblical or something?

Mother:

I always liked the name Sally. It's so simple and now that we're more on a par I'm Sally. Good-bye, Amelia.

Daughter:

Bye muth,.. Sally.

(Mother disappears in a puff of pink smoke and daughter who we learn is Amelia looks around and is all alone as the stage darkens into black.)

Act II: Scene i

The stage is now set as a park on earth. Half of the park is in brilliant daylight and half in darkness. In between the two rests a single park bench half in light and half shadow. We find Amelia in the portion of the park that is daylight enjoying the precious beauty of nature, devouring the flowers, the joy of trees. It is springtime and she is talking to nature sensing its language and aliveness, especially the butterflies. In darkness stands a man, Sal. He has his hands in his pockets and stares over at Amelia cautiously. He speaks from the shadows when he talks.

Amelia:

Well, Sally you were right. I'm not done here. There's something exquisite and unique to this planet I can't quite express, but I love her. There were replicas of all this on Venus, but it felt different. Look at that old oak tree, she is protecting me. I can feel her energy reaching out and caressing.

Sally: *(a voice only)*

Good. You're on the right track.

Amelia:

Well, Sal I hope you're sticking around to point me in the right direction now.

(silence) Sally? Sally can you hear me?

Sal:

Do I know you? You keep calling my name.

Amelia:

You feel familiar, but come out of the shadows I can't really see you. What is your name?

Sal:

Salvator, but everyone calls me Sal.

Amelia:

(Oh, Sally did you have to be this obvious!) *she mumbles*

Sal:

Sal, not Sally. Sally is a woman's name. I am Sal as in Salvatore' with an accent.

Amelia:

I sense I know you, but I'm not sure why.

Sal:

Sometimes people seem that way to me too. I know you too. You remind me of a dream I used to have of searching for a lost twin, but I haven't had it for years. It's a relief not to dream.

Amelia:

Of course you dream. You are just forgetting.

Sal:

That's even better. I hated the nightmares.

Amelia:

To know yourself you have to know your dreams, confront the demons of the mind awake or asleep or they'll lead you through hells far greater than physical pain. When pressed away from consciousness from the bidding of our psyche, we lose ourselves and our health. If we don't heed the early signs the result can be self destruct.

Sal:

Tell me more...(they move to the bench together and the lighting become twilight, no longer in high contrast.)

Amelia:

To free the self from negative motives and emotions all past conditionings to be born again right here and join the path of inner and outer growth and then share the knowledge of the process of becoming: this is our real purpose and we'll do humanity great service. If you take the time you'll discover each new pursuit teaches you more of yourself, real needs and desires rather than those that have been processed, a bad food; you can get real nourishment from this pursuit.

Sal: How am I to make a living? (he laughs loudly) Your ideas are fit for monks and millionaires. I am just a painter making art in the age of computers.

Amelia: (angry) I've heard that line so many times. You never take our gender seriously. We're, a coffee break or some distraction, you dare not include us or truly let us in. Then who'd be out in the kitchen? So long as we stay strong, silent and nurturing, the cow, we will survive; when you collapse I pick you up or one of us without a face or name another mother, another lover all tits to smother.

Sal:

You're being awfully hard on me, on men. Caution is a common way for those of us without your faith to see matters scientifically to make things clear and hard factual and concrete. We need order. Besides, when I called out in pain and no one came, and in my misery I steeled myself from false promises. I learned the way to insulate, fill up the void with work and more work and get on with it. All your female FEELINGS swamped me. I fear I'll be lost in space without a trace; This is no garden of Eden nor we the first man and woman. Promises are broken here the melting pot is a disguise, a lie, a devouring succubus that takes from life. There'll soon be nothing left not even air to breathe. I was an idealist once, I lived through the sixties, but I've learned to give up on dreaming.

Amelia:

(*to audience only*) His cynicism and fear terrifies; I know this man too well; I've been there. A part of me still longs to reach out and comfort him, but comfort is not enough, understanding must come before. I've been seduced by the hard ones before. (*Ha, she laughs loudly*) no pun intended. The men who keep it all locked up inside, are filled with false pride; I've tried patiently to draw them out, pry them open slowly, a war of nerves that wrecked me and my health, because I've so hated to see them suffer, a man's prison, trapped in the heart, choked, dies of a stroke or attack like my father and grandfather both.

Sal:

I understand your pain. My father died the same way.

Amelia:

Do you? The mind can be the great deceiver the heart beats from our earliest stages if we listen, the chances are greater to survive and become wiser. The heart tell us what we need, follow your heart, your

heart is clear and speaks when I am near, avoid the way of many men a follower of false desire. He who follows the crowd, cannot lead. In the heart space the demanding impatience and fearful being disappears; it is the love force, beneath and above not pain or sacrifice, but joyous surrendering. The only rule to the game is faith. You must believe in the ways of love to heal. When you called out in pain in the past, you expected no assistance and no assistance came. If we believe something cannot be, you'll prevent it from happening; we prevent happiness by believing in the power of suffering. Tell ourselves yesterday must, by necessity, will be tomorrow, all that history dictates and it will be so; the past can also be changed in the now, we can erase generations of separations and renew our DNA. It isn't easy way, love is a discipline.

Sal:

(to audience) My inner tiger that withstands my own deep sentiment, is losing power, losing ground. I will yet seek some dispassion or she'll reopen old wounds long forgotten and have me weeping soon.

Amelia:

I too am wounded. I've sacrificed one child to bad timing and lack of support; none of us are free from wounds. No matter the gaping holes or cuts we can heal, retell stories, draw pictures even of the pain, make road maps to new horizons, sing songs, and somehow this energetic drive infuses us with a life that cannot die, a seed, a lifeline, a transfusion that fills my spine, a connection to many realms, beyond our imagining, but not outside of our dreams, Sal.

Sal:

(noticeably softened) Your words do soothe; this is true; your presence heals. I feel some inner strength you've help to draw out of me, Your warmth, feelings, a joy forgotten, pristine crystal waters, a cleansing, without light, I lost sight of something basic, a wholeness, like a vacation near the ocean, this meeting moves me today I mend; I surrender. May I paint you sometime?

Amelia:

Perhaps.

Sal :
(spontaneously) Take my hands.

Amelia:
 As friends for now, for I have made a vow.

Sal:
 Oh I see. You are married.

Amelia:
(laughing) You could say that. Yes, I am married to me!

Sal:
(bewildered) What do you mean?

Amelia:
 I have made a promise to know myself well, to offer me all the time and love I need, to give my life the commitment I've reserved for "special" others in the past, no matter the time or effort it may take.

Sal:
 I see. Can such a life include someone like me?

Amelia:
 I am not sure.

Sal:
(aside) That sounds honest.
 Then I offer the hand of friendship.*(reaching out)*

(They hold hands and to walk off into a sunrise gradually filling with light).

Sc: ii:
We return to the Venus Sanctuary where Amelia's guardians and Sally are watching. They appear pleased.

Woman 3:
 Well Sal you're quite a gal. Do you think she knows who he really is?

Sally:

Does it matter? We have so many missing parts. She's found this one again and he is healing, that's what counts. Now she can choose where to go next. We've done our job. Goddess Bless!

Woman 2:

And there are many more to come.

(The women go back to working on the new arrivals. Lights fade into more light.)

62

HELEN HYE-SOOK HWANG

Sister, Bless Us and Bless You

Have you already been burnt out?

Is your flame staggering?

Are you depleted?

No one said our resistance would be of a life time.

Or the time of numerous generations.

That's a patriarchal fantasy for WE in HERE and NOW.

I was able to take my feminist path

Thanks to you-

You who were the Radical Feminist in your own words.

We may NOT be changing society,

We may NOT be transforming ourselves either.

But all in WE are already transformed!

Let us call our efforts, for the lack of a better word,

Goddess feminist activism.

Allow your boat to carry you to Where Everyone Is Present.

Bless us.

Bless you.

And bless our non-human Sisters.

Your last word
 Your last breath
 Count in the making of the whole in WE.

63
MONICA MODY
She

Her brows thick with leaves dangle from the door
 I'm beckoned, "Enter!"

I enter
 fitted with the clothes of moon & sun
 veins young & clear as morning's ray
 heart open

& black fiber on tree bark begins to speak

nectar of love in her eyes

She brushes her lower eyelid with her little finger & extends nectar
 to me
 I suckle the love from her finger
 until it runs in my veins like blood-red honey

*

When her heart reaches your heart, a sigh is all the sky hears
 Monkeys bare their teeth & a valley opens up, laughing

Her laughter hides in the eyes of trees, in the blue open

Her presence blooms out of every form on earth
 Her joy settles over each leaf, each pore

Womb radiating, her presence the pulse, the pulse of nature

& rainbow colored fish, teeth missing, sing from an excess of love—
 eyes sharp with mischief
 song skimming the surface of water, the depths of water

All that stands between me & shore is a drowning

Song lifting leaves in eddy of wind
 Stroke of feathers

I sob with the immensity of it

This is not / flying
 This *is* flying
 This is the heart of the vision where living moments gather & confer
 life into existence

She flows into earth wearing a garment of red
 weaving a dance of creation & destruction
 Child, woman, crone: all in one, all in me

Her eyes are full of mischief & indescribable emotion
 (love)

Her breast of water like abundance flows in the sap of every leaf
 Her wisdom speaks from tops of trees with monkey teeth

She is the vast of our vastest imaginings
 nether of the underworld
 Her flames span our wings

Every moment opens up to her presence like a seabird
 I confer her joy upon me & wear it like a head wreath

*

& her tears fill up the seas

The first step she took became land, became earth

The code of our bones, sung by her

She was the whale you saw at a distance, her song calling to you
sorrow etched around her eyes

She was the goddess you saw lined up against the wall in a suspect
lineup
dupatta trailing on the ground
pain searing like a broken wing

She, creased with emotion

All our stories, all histories, all the births of past & future
like fish, like foam, swirling around her

Shapes of all lives we have ever met, lived

Steady trickle, steady water
Are you listening?

Water cupped in hands or in the mouth of a lion
Water cast into bricks or poured into eye like the light of dusk
Water laughing with memory, with mercy
Water or the force of thunder
Drops of water beaded in hair, like a crown or fool's heart

*

Turn to her face

It is easy to see her scars, disfigurements
Fury & stillness carved by human time

But the law that turns its face towards us is that of her love
her extending heart

Wind calls to me from the rise of mounds

It is me walking in *you*, with *you*, as *you*

I learn from her the unconquered grace of a young huntress
I learn from her that liquid eyes can crackle
I learn of the courage of stars & constellations from her

*Where did I go that I must return?
I've been right here—
curious & open*

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64

REBECCA PUJALS-JONES
“Listening,” from the Transience Series



This self-portrait is rendered in historic process photography, wet plate collodion ambrotype. The second figure is the result of a long exposure with myself moving slowly from one place to another. Upon developing the image on the glass plate, the full image with the two figures emerged in the field's darkroom. In the glass plate collodion process, the final product is always a surprise for the photographer, whose composition undergoes a delicate chemical process. Nature and light and the alchemy play with our visual sense of reality forming an ephemeral atmosphere around us. As an artist, my spiritual connection with this self-portrait serves as a visual metaphor for the interconnection between my body, the body of nature and Spirit. In Yoga we are reminded of this three bodies as one identity. Seeing the two bodies, like a twin, was interesting because I am an only daughter. Spirit--the third--is almost invisible, but when you look deeper it is there.

65

SWAMI PUJANANDA SARASWATI
Goddesslines: A Poem of Three Goddesses
for Your Three Bodies

Kali-Durga: She Who Destroys

About us
 and peace.
 Though war keeps raging around us,
 Ongoing genocides
 for depopulation.

No end to the lies surrounding overpopulation.
 True we are many!
 But there is no scarcity
 other than what is artificially constructed for profit
 --while surplus grains go on being burned day by day!

Demons in control of markets!

So, there is famine, poverty, wars for depopulation.

Women! Mothers!

Your boys are killing your children,
daughters and sons,
all children of Mothers.

Your small gods turned robotized demons out of control.
They are now in control.

Kali Ma! Kali Ma! Kali Ma!

(While all along, secretly I am lover of the Flute Player, chariot driver
in the Gita.)

Lakshmi: She Who Gives Abundance and Rules Your Feelings

Like grains of rice
in boiling water,
the karmic mix
pulls some upwards,
some down
(some evolving,
some devolving)
in this playground
of Mother Divine
challenging us
with others,
similar,
different,
as all move in cycles
fueled by desires.
Neutral?
Are desires ever neutral?
In this place of many
reducing desires is non-violence.
All you want, many more want too.
It becomes vulgar.

Try non-interference as a way of caring.

There comes a time
 for doing less and less,
 bring the love you cradle,
 listen and do not listen.

Discern
 what is lasting
 from what is not.
 Keep discerning,
 question what moves you...
 Are you conserving energies
 for the Big Merging
 with Goddess?
 Or will She find you
 distracted
 with only the personal.
 The personal alone
 pulls you away
 from Her embrace.

Care for your little body,
 bodies and Big Body Gaia
 in every move, thought-emotion.

This way you'll be ripe
 when it's time for the Big Merging.
 And then, whatever She does to you
 comes out in a sweet note.

*Om Sri Lakshmiyai Namah! Om Sri Lakshmiyai Namah!
 Om Sri Lakshmiyai Namah!*

Saraswati: Waters of Wisdom Goddess

One and many
 is
 who
 you
 are.

Your nature,
your truth,
your peace,
your shelter,
your beginning and end.

When you see
the pain around you,
witness Her dancing
for your freedom!
This is Her show.

Only She
can move you.
See Her in your
breath, feelings, thoughts.

She
is
the
water
that
surrounds
us.
This
is
Her
embrace.

Stay sweet,
always sweet
for Goddess' sake.

I'm telling you,
out there it's a desert.

Stay sweet, my love.

Om Aim Saraswatiyai Namah! Om Aim Saraswatiyai Namah!
Om Aim Saraswatiyai Namah!

*According to Yogic spirituality, which offered the first framework for complex systems thinking, the person experiences or lives in three bodies simultaneously: physical, mental-emotional, spirit or transcendental.

66
NORIS BINET
Mitochondrial Eve



“Mitochondrial Eve” is the name given to the most common ancestor of all living humans and is believed to have lived around 200,000 years ago in East Africa. The African ancestors of humanity made sense of their creation and formed their worldview of which the great Earth Mother / Goddess was an essential part.

The drawing Mitochondria Eve reflects this starting place of our common human ancestry. The Great Earth Mother/Goddess symbolizes the primal life force, rooted in the earth, but seated on a crescent moon with the sun behind her, representing the cosmos. She is the mother of all humanity.

Often hidden in dreams, these archetypes reveal the many faces of the Goddess. Our African ancestors carried these life sustaining images with them on their journey to the New World, including my birthplace in the Dominican Republic.

67

NORIS BINET
The Goddess of the Night

Your body has the luster
of clear ebony
dancing in the sky
your strength surpasses
anything that I have done
with my body.

You held
postures that evoked
the mastery of a Goddess,
maybe a tantric Goddess

You turned around
and twisted the body
like a rope of
long vines

like flexible bamboo
like the breath around the lounges

And the sweat on your skin
looked like precious pearls
and silver drops
of moon light
as you held deeper
and deeper
the postures.

I am amazed
at your beauty
I am amazed at your
strength
I am amazed at
your body
profoundly
disciplined
and profoundly
awake.

Who are you?
I wonder.
Are you Shakti,
the lustrous
black Goddess
that they are
talking about
everywhere?

Who are you?
Are you a lover
of the body
and the night?

What is it
that you want to tell me?
I can't recall clearly

waking up
with what were you concerned?

Are your warning me,
about something
ahead?

Please, let me know
you are so
beautiful
so alive,
so sensuous
so strong
and so flexible
Who are you?

Will you visit me again?
Will you come back for
me to honor you
as a goddess
of my dream?

Will you clarify
for me tonight?
what is it
that I need to know
to move forward
to meet you again?

The luminosity
of your presence
A few days ago
Is still alive in me.
The profoundness
of your presence
perforated
a veil in my consciousness
revealing
the precious jewel

that you are,
even
when I don't yet know you.

I know
that you are positive
and alive
in your body.
I know
that you are guided
by a disembodied
voice
telling you the posture
to take.
And, you are
free to jump out
when you have
mastered your task.

Who are you
that has the freedom
to be intimate
with me?
like a lover
that is not afraid
to touch
and to expose
his hidden secrets.
And his beauty is not
bound to inhuman
perfection.

I was surprised,
maybe even
intimidated
by your
closeness,
by your freedom,
by your touch.

Come back
 again!
 I will be waiting
 for you.
 preparing
 my body,
 developing strength
 with asanas,
 flexibility
 with breath,
 surrendering
 to the posture,
 waiting for you
 to visit me again.
 Maybe then
 your lustrous dark skin
 will reveal
 who you are.
 And you will become
 my Goddess
 of the night.

[*Shakti* meaning sacred *force, power* or *energy* is the Hindu concept or personification of the divine feminine aspect, sometimes referred to as ‘The Divine Mother’. Shakti represents the active, dynamic principles of feminine power.]

68

MORGAIN SWANN
My Red Ghost

I wasn't sad to see Her go until the Autumn was here
 Too late to face my fears, too long alone for
 All. These. Years.
 No big defeat.
 I don't miss Her shadow on my sheets.

No connection flowed from me to mine owned
 All I inherited a stoned red crone
 Soft floors and leaking rain
 All my mother's shame, her pain.
 Wept before me so it's almost the same
 How was I to know there'd be no one to blame
 Not a tear left that's not in my name.
 Ther's green around me but it isn't mine.
 Not even now, not even One. More. Time.
 A flaming Goddess lived here, you know?
 She's coming back soon in velvets, I hear.
 When She does I hope that I'm. Still. Here.

69

SHARON DANANN

Candle Magic

With gratitude to my instructor Beckie Kuipers

When I spend time in communion with flames,
 I see beacons from afar,
 Comets careening across the galaxy,
 Lanterns held high by signal women
 Galloping through the night.
 Look up, look ahead, pay attention!
 Look down, look deep.
 What is reflected in the bottom of the well?

Melted wax forms unexpected shapes in subtle colors,
 A silky graceful dance, teasing, never static.
 A figure reclines in a crescent, rocking to a lullaby.
 The slowly winding wick becomes a giant tree snake.
 Ghoulish faces glare at me from the candle detritus,
 Gaping eyes of curled up wicks,
 Angry match-head eyebrows and shadowy cheeks.
 The flame turns aqua blue,
 Then dives into another plane of existence.

Red and black votives charged with courage and intuition
 Hold me close inside a glowing cocoon.
 I imagine setting limits and saying no.
 My ranting mother crashes in, enraged at my temerity.
 I breathe, connect to the earth, and find compassion.
 I'm sure she suffered for her feisty self-protection.

Birthday candles in white, pink and green,
 Left from when my daughters were little girls,
 Are given the task of healing a painful breach.
 I call on spirit forces for support.
 Oh, how I long to hold my loved ones in my arms.

Bath water clamors into the scented bubbles
 While rushlights lean together.
 The chants of Hildegard entwine with trickling melodies.
 As the women sing Amen, I climb from the tub
 Cleansed and anointed.

In the blue green cascade
 Is the bright joyous waterfall of my youth,
 Inspiring the courage to jump off high rocks.
 Transition and transformation: solid, liquid, gas.
 The wick, submerging in the puddle of wax, burns in two places.
 Have I been burning life's candle at both ends?

I breathe in full moon energy,
 Holding candles carved with symbols for peace and balance.
 My hands buzz hotly.
 Ancient ones, heal my depleted stamina.
 Help me to rise like the phoenix.

As I rub myself and Kali down with oils.
 The flickers of a chime candle sway with me.
 My neglected body is owed apologies and reparations:
 Aquatic therapy, reiki, massage.

I inscribe a black taper with triple crescents

While chanting to honor the gone-befores.
 Women's hands pass me back through time
 For consultations with my foremothers.
 Departed loved ones whisper,
 "Good job taking care of yourself. You deserve to feel better."

The energies swirling around the mirror
 Give me a sensuous facial massage.
 The goofy smiley face I carved into the candle
 Is superimposed on my reflection,
 Grinning at my changed priorities.

Four tapers glow like women in a circle
 Lit from within by joy and creativity.
 Within a community of nestled crystals, an amethyst woman runs,
 Purple hair flying out behind her.
 I am the neophyte needing guidance and care,
 I am the elder breathing affection and knowledge.

Blue flames with gold cores are the peacocks of Saraswati,
 Her beauty, intellect, music and serenity.
 Three precious coins beam in friendly determination,
 Surrounded by hematite necklaces and green enamel earrings.
 May what comes to pass serve everyone's highest good.

I gaze through eyelashes at a light show,
 Ethereal zig-zags of golden light with inner dots and circles,
 Patterns like butterfly wings.
 Feeling wonderful is message enough.

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VENUS JONES Dear broken black girl

I was called dumb, lazy and a fool.
 These kind words I heard at home and school.
 My best advice: you stay hungry for the truth.

Let your higher education be 100% proof.
 Now you can still find me focusing on my faults.
 Or killing ants - Automatic Negative Thoughts.
 But now they say I'm an affirmation queen.
 My imagination has already mended the torn seam.

Now it can take a long time to find this place.
 Where I have inner peace and a sense of grace.
 So, I will always take good care of myself.
 I will practice physical and spiritual health.
 Because I'm saying it loud breaker break-her 1 and 9.
 For all those who are ignoring predators and the sign.
 Roger that! Over and over. Do you read me?
 No. You are sick of hearing this breaking story?

Yet and still--a little girl hears the ill voice daily in her ears.
 Yet and still--a little boy is inheriting his father's fears.
 Who among us will do the greater works and restore the living dead?
 "Each one, teach one," is the mantra of prevention in my head.
 It was Langston Hughes's mother who said, "Life ain't no crystal
 stair."
 Especially for those who look in the mirror and they "hate their skin
 and their hair."
 Especially for the illiterate, who don't know their heritage is there--
 hidden in a book.
 I know the ABC's and 123's of my victorious history and I borrowed
 this look.

I will past these fundamental passages and proverbs on down.
 Until every bitter brown sugar baby claims their sweet crown.
 Step by step walk on into the future, where humanity has erased
 neglect.
 Where it is written--No one has to beg for the food that they get!
 Until then, I have a torch that glows in the darkest tunnel, in the
 middle of nowhere.
 And if you can love and accept yourself, then please stand by me there.
 Be the glorious gem that pushed despite the pressure and the time.
 Then one day

We'll be in awe--mesmerized by your light and the way you chose to shine.

Dear broken black girl, forget what you heard! You are magic. You are divine!

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VENUS JONES**She rose**

With the power of her presence and the strength of her fight,
Her words caused wrinkled men to question slavery,
weary women grew imaginary wings for solo flight.
Sojourner rose. Sojourner Truth, she rose.

I know why the caged bird sings.
Oh my, a landmark of firsts on a broken wing.
Although she's raped at seven and a mother at sixteen,
with a past rooted in pain. She said, "I rise," and her poetry sings.
Maya rose. Maya Angelou, she rose.

She stood in muddy water and created clean lines with a clear vision.
Hate drew an incision across her beautiful wall of monumental art.
Like a veteran soldier in a bulldozing battle, rage surfaced but
ancestress women led her to pick up the pieces of her beating heart.
Maya rose. Maya Lin, she rose.

She loved one person at a time, a shining example of the divine
A steady flame and pillow for the restless, unwanted, unloved, and
poor,
Fed haunting hunger with her hands and opened up the stickiest door.
Theresa rose. Mother Theresa, she rose.

She was a union spy with eyes in the back of her head.
Over a thousand crept in her footsteps or followed where she led.
She forced them with a gun and said, "Live free or die!"
This female Moses taught them to walk, run, or fly.
Harriet rose. Harriet Tubman, she rose.

She was called mentally ill and worse, a traitor and a liar.

She was grilled in judiciary fire.
 Levitating above sex books, videotapes, and lies,
 she helped remove muffles on silent cries.
 Anita rose. Anita Hill, she rose.

She said, "Feel what you can not touch."
 She laughed at the thought of living with a crippling crutch.
 When they said, "You're blind, deaf, and disabled!",
 she couldn't understand their limited view.
 She saw, heard and spoke like a spiritual guru.
 Helen rose. Helen Keller, she rose.
 At fifteen she fought back against Little Rock, big fireballs, and acid
 attacks.
 In 1954 angry white mobs were ordered to open up the school door
 to blacks.
 There was no dance or after class play with a bounty on your head.
 "Dignity just like freedom is a state of mind," her grandmother said.
 Melba rose. Melba Beale, she rose

She's floating on air in a silver space suit with a fearless smile.
 She holds three degrees in hand; they seek to clone her mental style.
 This rising star brings blueprints to the Peace Corps
 and measures the length of courage and mental vigor.
 Mae rose. Mae Jemison, she rose.

She sang of rotting bodies in America's very first protest song.
 Her life short, and the scar left on her soundtracks lingering and long.
 "Strange Fruit" would be read on the Congress floor
 because of the love she blew into an open sore.
 Billy rose. Billy Holiday, she rose.

She didn't spend time plucking her brows, knowing inner beauty
 grows.
 In a bright big Mexican dress she rebelled with art that tangoed on
 toes.
 Her canvass celebrates a life of broken bones, fruits, and a thick thorn.
 She lived a life full of authentic expression in her search to be reborn.
 Frida rose. Frida Kahlo, she rose.

A humane example, before she took a stand by keeping her seat.
 She chose to fight despite the risk of a thrashed skull or dangling feet.
 Rosa rose. Rosa Parks, she rose.

Lena Horne, Bessie Coleman, Angela Davis,
 Dolores Huerta, Toni Morrison, Ida B. Wells,
 Shirley Chisholm, Oprah Winfrey, Fannie Lou Hamer
 Barbara Jordan, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mary McCloud Bethune....

Each one, a rose among thorns, and every vision is in full bloom.
 If we were in ancient Kemet, Nefertiti would've granted them tombs.

But the thankless are more than a few.
 My mamma Rose, and your mother rose, giving birth to something
 new.
 They rose like blossoming babies, budding freshly formed leaves,
 quenching the taste of light morning dew.

I need all of them to remind me, that there is a shero in me
 and there is a shero in you.

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SUSAN HAWTHORNE**The Nine Muses, Daughters of Mnemosyne**

The sequence of poems, “The Nine Muses”, was written in 2016 when I was participating in a project to write a poem a day for a year. As the year proceeded I found that some of my best poems were those that were retellings, re-imaginings of mythic subjects.

I have been reading myth through a feminist lens since the 1970s. It has become part of the substratum of my mind. I have studied Ancient Greek, Sanskrit and Latin during this period and that has deepened my understanding of the stories and the ways in which one might re-read these histories. Like others before me, I believe that myth contains a core of historical information. The original mean of μῦθος (muthos) is something said: word, speech, conversation. Later it

comes to mean a story, narrative or tale. And it can also mean advice or resolve. These meanings give lots of scope for looking at myth and bringing them to life in new ways and in feminist ways.

Mnemosyne is the goddess of memory and mother of so many of the arts. In an era of digital memory, there is not a lot of discussion about memory and its importance. Memory has fashioned humans and humans have fashioned ways of ensuring that memory is passed down accurately through the generations. This is one of the things that first attracted me to the notion of memory as a feminist strategy. Monique Wittig's exhortation to us in her 1970 novel, *The Guérillères*, is one of the most powerful statements about memory.

There was a time when you were not a slave, remember that. You walked alone, full of laughter, you bathed bare-bellied. You say you have lost all recollection of it, remember ... You say there are no words to describe this time, you say it does not exist. But remember. Make an effort to remember. Or failing that, invent.

All oppressed peoples need good strong memories. We know that the ruling classes get to write history, so the underclasses – whether of sex, skin colour, ethnicity, age group, culture or sexual orientation – needs to have strong storytelling abilities and a methodology for remembering. In societies where orature is more important than literature, storytelling keeps knowledge of history, of songs, poetry and science alive. For a group such as lesbians, whose existence is erased in just about every generation, memory becomes even more important as a political resistance to patriarchy.

The Nine Muses are the daughters of Mnemosyne, they are the protectors of memory. While we know Ancient Greek culture from its written records, ordinary people kept alive the historic memory. Playwrights like Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes used these oral histories in their plays; Homer and the authors of the Homeric Hymns wrote down the stories; even those who considered themselves philosophers, scientists and historians wrote down these oral histories, among them Hesiod, Herodotus, Aristotle and Plato (who began by writing down the oral dialogues of Socrates). These written records are, unsurprisingly, male dominated. Quite a contrast

to the all-women cast of Nine Muses. And Aeolian Sappho is named the Tenth Muse.

When I was studying Greek in 1982 and reading *The Symposium* in our classes, it struck me that the well known speech by Socrates – in which he says he is drawing on information given to him by the priestess Diotima – was likely to be the record of a real woman. I did an analysis of the language in this speech and concluded that rather than being an invention of Socrates' mind, Diotima represents the knowledge of women. Pregnancy is women's work, it is a world in which women are the knowledge carriers. So when a male philosopher begins to speak of pregnancy as a metaphor, and all his words refer to the knowledge women have developed, why would anyone assume he made it all up himself? Male philosophers have argued along this line for more than two millennia.

The Nine Muses are sisters and I am interested in the power of sisters and of the concept of sisterhood which was such a strong notion in the 1970s. Sisters, whether they are the Nine Muses or the Seven Sisters of the Pleiades – whose stories are to be found in Greece, Australia, the Americas, Japan, the Pacific and India – sisters are important in the development and retention of knowledge.

The Nine Muses, carry their knowledge and they express it in many ways: through dance and music, epic and lyric poetry, through song, dramatically through tragedy and comedy, and through history and astronomy. These are the disciplines through which memory is trained. The songs and poems contain information about use of plants in medicine, dance and drama replay historical events and important social memory, astronomy keeps firm knowledge of the skies, the passage of seasons that frame the times of year when fruits are plentiful or when plants are best grown.

Read these poems and follow their traces back into prehistory, back to the worlds in which women passed on what they knew to the next generation. Read and consider how they interweave with contemporary movements of solidarity among women.

01 Kalliope, Muse of Epic Poetry

I'm drawn to Kalliope who can sing for days
 her verses flowing without end
 one night I sat by her as she sang
 her epic poems to the stars
 she says they are not so long
 not even a light year long
 they are intricate their metre complex
 and rhythmic so you can dance

as she sang it seemed that the stars came closer
 the trees huddled around us and the whispers
 of animals could be heard in the forest
 before I knew it I could hear the rushing sound
 of a stream just out of reach
 I listened and watched the night through
 woke to the sound of a trumpeting swan
 the clatter of grasshopper wings

02 Polyhymnia, Muse of Song

I thought Polyhymnia would be a walk-over
 a softie away with the fairies her head
 in the clouds but this Muse is serious

she is sacred through and through
 whether it be poetry hymns or dance
 its her eloquence that lifts her and us

she is solid too in her farm boots
 turning the soil following the ox-plough
 digging weeding and harvesting

then come the celebrations of harvest
 pantomimes for which you need
 geometry to organise a stage

Polyhymnia is queen of silence
 meditation more than a hobby
 on Parnassus she listens to the

oracles of Pythia nothing is lost
 it was her son Orpheus who picked up
 the lyre and revived the dead

03 Melpomene, Muse of Tragedy

in your boots you stomp around the stage
 with your knife your club and that hideous mask
 life is tragic enough without making it ugly too

your sting is like that of the bee whose honey
 is sweet but the bite can kill that's how the tragic
 arts are we are all engrossed in the story

meanwhile our lover has died of heartbreak
 or lost dreams or serial disappointments
 we all think we are immune to tragedy in our lives

until it strikes without warning like lightning flash
 there is no way back we are all changed
 by those moments when we had hoped for joy

Melpomene sing your dirges for me so that
 I might haul myself up unwrap the cloths
 split the hard chrysalis emerge transformed

04 Ourania, Muse of Astronomy

Ourania is an enigma
 she is invisible in her starry robe
 against the darkening sky
 but each clear night we stand
 watching her movements

darkness is in her she is
 the dark matter that fills
 the universe the dark energy
 that sparks everything

in the day she has a golden
 orb around her as she rides
 the sky in a boat laden
 with songs carries a globe
 constantly spinning

Ourania full of magic
 is the first astronomer
 Uranian once considered
 a tragic pronouncement

who knows what goes on
 in that heavenly soul
 she is old and young
 she is light years away
 and right here now

just as we are here
 and are everywhere
 but in fireworks of celebrity
 unseen unheard unknown

05 Erato, Muse of Lyric Poetry

everything always lovely
 her eyes her hair the way
 she moves her body

Erato is like the sea
 washing up on the shore
 rising and falling in waves

poets call on Erato in their
 darkest moments when love

turns sour or the stars cross

and when inspiration fails
they call her then too hoping
she'll stand by them in love and lyric

it's partly her fault because she
shoots words into the sky
like arrows and whoever

feels those arrows falls in love
with the next person they encounter
but who can get angry with Erato

so full of grace she picks up her lyre
sings with a voice that is as clear
as a night sky filled with stars

06 Kleio, Muse of History

when history is in dispute
who can you trust but Kleio
she was there and if not her
then one of her sisters
her kinship is wide enough
to draw in the world

it's not in the telling
but in the unravelling
who speaks true who does not
one will claim celebrity status
say fame is the key to import
another says the least known

are the most trustworthy
for they have nothing
to gain or to lose
the poets too stay firm
to their metre there since

the beginning of time

history in the making
 is a troublesome way to go
 for only later can we see
 the made and the unmade
 so unravel your tales
 and I will weave them anew

07 Euterpe, Muse of Music

Euterpe is in her own heaven
 the fifth dimension where
 beyond human perception
 play the music of the spheres
 music from every time
 and every place

Euterpe is well-schooled
 in these matters
 she is the muse of music
 music creates pleasure
 which in turns leads
 us to dance

some say Euterpe
 is the brightest asteroid
 in the solar system
 Pythagoras string theorist
 and mystic mathematician
 gave Euterpe

the number eight
 that coiling infinity
 ogdoad like a dancer
 endlessly spinning
 to the sound of
 the double flute

astrophysicists
 are divided some
 think Euterpe might
 be responsible for dark
 matter but some things
 are unaccountable

08 Thalia, Muse of Comedy

it's hard to be funny
 when Thalia abandons you
 but each of us has to get up
 draw on inner reserves
 and make one more joke

Aristophanes managed it
 and you can too bring on
 actors and instead of high
 boots make them wear socks
 dress them in rustic outfits

put a shepherd's crook in
 their hands – I know more than
 enough about droving sheep
 to laugh at myself – then she
 can start her bucolic verses

accompanied by comedic
 flourishes a few stereotypes
 here and there won't go astray
 put a buffoon at the centre
 and his air-head wife

she can parrot some phrases
 give the quiet one a trumpet
 to blow away sadness
 don't worry there will be
 a happy ending now sing

along with me it's simple
 tiotiotiotinx sing again
 the bird never tires calling
 sing blow that trumpet
 recite the verse and be happy

09 Terpsichore, Muse of Dance

I write in fragments
 because that is how
 our history is recorded
 whether it's Sappho
 Corinna or Roman
 Sulpicia

Corinna is called
 by Terpsichore to sing
 for the young girls
 women of Tanagra
 wear the white peplos
 their

garments are ornamented
 with stories tales from
 the old mothers
 the girls dance to the
 partheneia calling one
 another

sounds whirling down
 the valleys to the
 rivers below the cliffs
 their voices rising
 to heights where
 birds fly

grasshoppers
 spring and spin
 in death throes

returning after death
to the Muses'
home

there sit the Muses
each with her own
sphere Terpsichore
brought the Sirens
into the world
singing

she is the ennead
containing others
she turns gathering
all in her dance
ending the beginning
beginning the end

[For more on Diotima, see Susan Hawthorne, 1994. "Diotima Speaks through the Body." In *Engendering Origins: Critical Feminist Essays in Plato and Aristotle*, Bat-Ami Bar On (ed), State University of New York Press, Albany. I wrote this sequence during 2016. The Tenth Muse, Sappho is included in my novel *Dark Matters* (2017, Spinifex Press) as are references to the Mother of the Muses, Mnemosyne.¹]

¹ There is an accompanying set of contemporary poems, "the sacking of the Muses" first published on the Nasty Women Everywhere site:
<http://www.nastywomeneverywhere.org/2017/02/the-sacking-of-the-muses/>.

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PEGI EYERS
Earth Mother Motorcycle



The Goddess Spirituality movement seeks to re-sanctify the natural places of the world and the attitudes and icons of our culture. Why not a Goddess on a Harley? Commemorative shrines and home altars venerating the Divine Feminine with ritual tools, candles, fruit, flowers and sacred objects are a tradition going back thousands of years. The Venus of Willendorf's wild ride was painstakingly and reverently created with bits of cut paper, fabric and ephemera.

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PEGI EYERS

Gather the Women 1 and 2



The shared support and connection between women allows us to heal from the patriarchy that has waged war on us for millennia, and joining together in the true spirit of sisterhood is a revolutionary act. By forming diverse networks we enhance our own lives, our communities and the earth. The co-creation of women's culture is a space where we can feel safe, celebrated and empowered, and when we gather together in circles of unity, miracles can happen.

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PEGI EYERS



**Fertility Woman:
 Power of the Blue
 Stone**

To our Paleolithic Ancestors, it was obvious that women, with their mysterious cycles, performed the same functions as the earth, which was the source of all nourishment, protection and procreative

power. Embellished with a blue jewel! “Her soul message is to love and be love, and to nurture your creative spark.”



Ninhursaga

The ancient Sumerian “Mountain Mother,” Ninhursaga gave birth to a family of deities and created the first humans. She was associated with the omega symbol (womb), the tree of life, and the sacred serpents. “Her soul message reminds you

to honor your maternal Ancestors for their gifts of love, wisdom and grace.”

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PEGI EYERS



Labrys

The first labyrinths were associated with the ceremonies of the Moon Goddesses of the ancient world such as the Amazon Goddess Gaea, and with the symbol of the double-headed axe. “Her soul message is the

reclaiming of your matriarchal heritage as leader and visionary.”



Rhiannon

The Celtic Moon Goddess Rhiannon is the patroness of horses and riders. It is said that the song of her three magic birds can bring the dead back to life, put the living to sleep and heal all pain. “Her soul message encourages you to ask for divine

guidance as you manifest your goals.”

ELLEN J. PERRY
Wrong Turn

That summer evening when Athena came to town is one I'll not soon forget. There I was, minding my own business out watering beside my front porch at twilight, when of a sudden I heard some wings flapping, looked up and saw an owl perched in my Bradford pear tree. Just a little old owl! Then here came this shadowy lady up my walk that at first, I thought was my neighbor in her nightgown and curlers, carrying a big lid – what in the world? – and the stick she used to measure her oil. But then I remembered Heloise was recovering from surgery, bless her, and wouldn't be out this late. Straightening her helmet, the strange lady said to me, "I took a wrong turn at the olive tree." "You sure did, hon," I said, setting my watering can down at just the moment this robed visitor set down the spear and shield I could see clearly now, leaning them against the porch railing. Then, the bright-eyed lady said, "My name is Pallas Athena, goddess of war, wisdom, and reason, defender of cities and civilized life. I have grown weary of tending to Odysseus and decided to travel to your dimension because – quite frankly – Americans in 2017 need me more." *Lord, Delores*, I thought to myself. *Maybe you better quit taking that little nip of whiskey after supper.*

I left my watering can and motioned the goddess to come with me, feeling the need, all of a sudden, to sit. Over my shoulder I watched her, a little wary, I'll tell you. Who wouldn't be? But she seemed harmless enough, so I said, "Well, Miss Athena, you got that right about the state of America." I led her to the porch swing where I'd done a good bit of thinking lately about the fix we were in. "We're pretty bad off," I told her. "Crazy stuff going on all the time, terrorists running around loose, people being awful to each other. I can't even hardly watch the news anymore it's got so bad."

Athena settled herself on the swing while I poured us two tall glasses of pink lemonade from a pitcher I kept on a table nearby during the warm months. "There is but one concern," she said, waving away the drink. I set both glasses aside, and we watched the full moon rise over Heloise's house. I looked at her again, and she must have seen my nerves were bad. She motioned me to sit beside her. "I'm really here,"

she said, and let me touch her armor and robes, which I did real gentle-like. “Are you ready?” she asked me then. I nodded. “I sense that the Morrigan has already arrived,” she said. “The Morrigan?” I asked, confused. Preacher Don never covered any of this in his sermons. And then right when Athena was telling me about the Celtic battle goddess, a wild bunch of crows came tearing over the pasture, screaming their heads off, and to my great surprise I could understand their song: *Too late, too late, for reasoned wisdom, now the time for blood has come; we will serve our mistress gladly, she with Fate spare only some.* “Only some,” Athena said, and I watched as them crows flew north and still farther north, I knew somehow, they’d come to roost in Washington, way up north where I’ve never been.

“I’ll take that lemonade now,” said Athena. And when we both had our glasses we touched them together. “Covfefe?” she asked. I laughed. Then cried a little, shivering as the night closed in on us, feeling the Morrigan stirring flames of fury in every American heart, even my own heart she stirred, and I wanted to fight somebody. “Too late, too late,” I shouted, as if the crows could hear me. I was crying harder now, but Athena finished off her lemonade in one long drink and put it down smiling. She was off the porch and beyond my reach before you could say Jack Robinson. Picking up her shining spear and shield again, she laid them beside my white rose bush. Through my tears, she was, of a sudden, nothing more or less than the bright light thrown from the street lamp, but in a voice, I fancied it sounded kin to my own, I heard her say, “Hush now, Delores, the women will save us.”

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JUDE LALLY

The Ancestral Mothers of Scotland:

A Creative journey Around the Wheel of the Year

The wheel of the year is an ancient path, one which my Celtic, pre-Celtic and most ancient foremothers observed in one form or another. I have followed the wheel since I was a teenager yet would find myself glossing over the stories of sacrifice and killing until the wheel became

the place, I saved my own stories and themes that lit up my eyes on dark nights and inspired my walks in the summer twilight.

In today's world the wheel keeps me sane through gestures of ritual rooted in folklore, ancestral memory and women's mysteries. Each gesture can be both an act of ritual and a creative resistance against the warring dominator culture. As a Cultural Activist my gestures are born of my relationship to the land and inspired by my connection to the ancestral mothers, infused by a magic that weaves through time and strengthened by the resilience of all the women that stand at my back.

This essay is an invitation to consider our relationship with ourselves, our community, the land, ancestors and all those more than human creatures we share the planet with.



Autumn Equinox

While many begin their year at the Celtic festival of Samhain it is Autumn Equinox which extends my invitation into the dark of the

year. As we cross the threshold of the autumn equinox the northern hemisphere begins its descent into the dark of the year. Rituals around the world play out this journey moving from the outward time of the year into the inner through stories such as Persephone's descent into the underworld in the Greek Eleusinian Mysteries.

Not far from Newgrange, (Ireland), as the crow flies is Sleive na Cailli, Hill of the Cailleach. Among its many passage tombs (or womb tombs) is cairn T which is aligned to both the spring and autumn equinoxes. On the north side of Cairn T is a huge horned kerbstone called the Hag's chair, the Cailleach's chair and it is this great Hag who brings us over the threshold into the dark of the year heralded by the morning sunrise shining into the cairn illuminating our pathway into the womb of the cave.

The equinox marks an imaginary balance point in which I picture the Cailleach moving into a trance posture, one which if we were to replicate would allow us the insight into the imbalances in our own life helping us to prepare to leave the light of the year and consider our focus as we descend into the dark months.

In the era of the megalithic builders in Ireland and Scotland, the bear would be preparing for her hibernation journey. Today she only walks these lands in spirit, yet I am moved by ancestral folk memories that speak of the bear's journey into hibernation as this may well have been the very first descent story and the practices of the wise women who honored bear played out their own rituals and ceremonies as the bear descended into the otherworld.

I mark this balance point in ritual by lining a large black clay cauldron with feathers in which I place a small curled up green wool doll with dark brown hair. Her green body holds the vitality of the land throughout the dark winter months. This ritual gesture symbolically allows part of myself to descend into the otherworld, and alongside her I place a bear decorated with gold spirals and swirls that shine like fire. The bear holds an ancient aspect of the Goddess Brighid who has led the dance through the light half of the year but now steps back and allows the Cailleach to lead the dance through the winter months. (O Cathain 1995)

Wise women who observed the great she-bear tended the first hearth fires and my ritual at this time of year honors them. If you were to come across a hibernating bear you might think she is dead for her heart rate and breathing have slowed to an almost indiscernible level. In her great slumber she walks between the worlds. I wonder what was the story of the last bear of Scotland, and where do her great bones lie? Was she honored by wise women? Her cave exists between the worlds, a place I have visited many times and met a wise circle of Bear Grandmothers. We can visit anytime through the dark months. They exist in the layers of time out with this reality, yet we can ask to visit them anytime and they may even give you a place to sit by their fire, and you could even nestle up against the she bear's sleeping body and whisper into her soft ear and she in return may visit us in our dreams. (Lally 2013).



Samhain

Samhain is the great Celtic festival of the dead and a time to honor our ancestors. I am a product of my ancestors by blood and bone, my blood ancestors are those who I either knew in life or know stories about and my bone ancestors are the generations of women I didn't know stretching back to my most ancient foremothers. I am daughter of Eileen, granddaughter of Catherine and great granddaughter of Alice. I am a descendant of the mtDNA based Xenia clan, a woman who lived 25,000 years ago, whose people lived at the edge of the great ice sheet and followed herds of reindeer (Sykes, 2001). My heritage also connects me with the magic and mystery of the megalithic builders of Ireland who are direct descendants of the ancient hunter-gatherers of Europe.

The stories of the Cailleach and Brighid have come down to us from different eras, their tales having morphed and changed to reflect the changing beliefs of the people. I do not see the Cailleach change into Brighid, nor Brighid into the Cailleach. I honor both and view their relationship on the wheel like a dance. This time the Cailleach takes the lead as the dance cycles through the winter months.

The Cailleach's ritual lies in her annual pilgrimage to the Whirlpool of Corryvreckan (also called the Cailleach's Cauldron) off the west coast of Scotland to wash her great plaid. Maybe she must step over a few islands on her route, on arrival at the whirlpool she takes the plaid from around her shoulders and a few pinecones tumble out that have been tucked up there since the days of the great Caledonian forest. She unhooks her plaid held in place by an auroch bone pin and lowers the ancient bleached fabric down into the churning waters. No words are required for her very actions control the weather and as she swirls the fabric around the cauldron it becomes charged with energy for the rest of the winter months. As she pulls the great plaid out and shakes it dry, lifting it up and around her shoulders the shower of water droplets which drip off the cloth freeze instantly and fall silently as snow to dust the tops of all the surrounding hills turning them white with the first snow of the season.



Winter Solstice

My ritual to mark the great crone ushering in winter involves a little Cailleach doll who wears her own tattered tweed shawl, woven colors of the land, each thread a voice which tells its own story. Her hair is white and wild, some of it collected from thin lengths of sheep wool caught on barbed wire. This old one speaks to me as the voice of the land, I've seen many sides to her from fierce and intimidating to someone who has tricked me many times, yet I've also seen her be tender and let me draw close as the tears streamed down my face.

Winter solstice offers us the symbolism of rebirth as marked by the greatest of all the megalithic tombs - Newgrange. Newgrange is a passage tomb or womb tomb and when you find yourself squeezing up the passageway towards the main chamber you certainly feel that

the builders were recreating the idea of a birth canal. Each of the three recesses off the main chamber hold great stone bowls that may have held the bones of those who had died allowing them to be reborn at the Winter Solstice.

Yet there is another figure on the wheel at this time of year and while the Cailleach is known in Scotland as the Deer Goddess, she who tends to her herds of deer (fairy cattle) this other figure stands back in the shadows. She is a tall towering skeletal figure with large branching antlers, a creatrix who brought the cycle of the moon and sun and the seasons into play. Caroline Wise in her essay 'Elen of the Ways' seems to meet this great skeletal antlered figure:

The bones and antlers represented the ancestors of the beasts who still, where they could, walked these paths today. I was 'told' that these were the 'oldest pathways in the world'. I felt a huge rush of energy, and the path suddenly rose up, looped out and back on itself, and the bones and antlers formed into a skeleton of a giant elk, rearing up in front of me. It twisted around and started to move forward. This was so dramatic that I snapped back from my astral journey, much to my frustration - if I had stayed with it, I am sure it would lead me to discover more. I have never been able retrace that track!

Where her trail ended is where mine begins with this great skeletal figure, she is the one related to the paths taken by reindeer in these lands around where I am from - Loch Lomond, Scotland. It was the old antlered one herself who named me She Who Wears Antlers and installed the quest to get to know the roots of this old one which involves picking up the fragile threads of her folklore from stories and place names. She isn't easy to track down and yet her bones form part of the very bedrock of Scotland (Lally 2015). Her antlers link back to a time when Scotland was still connected to mainland Europe and in the summer months with the short greening of the tundra people followed the great herds. Since I was a small child, I have watched these people, through the layers of time, follow the herds and make their camps. While the ice removed any evidence of these people's visits reindeer antlers have been found in the ice melt.

My ritual for Winter Solstice is an otherworldly journey inspired by the Bean Feasa of this Old Antlered One, represented by the doll *She Who Runs With the Herds*. As the female reindeer leads the herd, the wise woman led her people as they followed the reindeer. It is this woman who beckons me to pick up the drum, step between the worlds and run with the herd...

You know the way, it's etched into every cell of your body. Running the terrain is a dance between you and the landscape. There are old stories set into these pathways, these are the lines that earth magic flows through. The herd is the map, the ones who know the way with every hoof and heartbeat, communicating with the ones who ran these pathways before them and reaching out into the future to those who seek the path. (Lally 2017).

With the Winter Solstice we celebrated the rebirth of the sun, yet I have always found that January seems to plunge us into a deeper darkness. While I usually find the darkness welcoming and enjoy hiding under its cloak sometimes that darkness can thicken into a thick tar which coats everything and slows you down.

Previous generations experienced a real possibility of resources running out and yet we are just as vulnerable today as it doesn't take much severe weather to disrupt our modern network of food distribution to supermarkets or medicines to pharmacies. Although we have the choice of a global harvest all year round, I feel our ancestors' worry has become knitted into our bones and becomes activated at Imbolc. It is a fragile time and although I find myself worrying about how much the heating bill might cost and uncharacteristically questioning many decisions I have made, I make an effort to be gentle with myself.



Imbolc

In between the cycles of snow, ice and mud is a single snowdrop, the perfect symbol of Imbolc - fragile yet resilient. Imbolc is a tender time and in the past stories would have been told about Brighid breathing death into the cold mouth of winter, stories which held promises that it wouldn't be long before Brighid would be coming with her red eared cow and everyone would be fed. Imbolc means 'in the belly' which refers to the soon to be born lambs sheep are carrying. It is a time to consider what we harbor in our bellies and the stories we tell ourselves and live by. The stories of Imbolc and Brighid returning to the world bringing her light and hope can be a welcoming symbol for our resilience, our hope in dark times.



Spring Equinox

Sean O Duinn has gathered many of the Brideog rituals from around Ireland explaining that one thing these rituals all had in common was that the Brideog doll (an image of Brighid) was taken from house to house throughout the village in a procession. The gathering would stop at individual houses and perform a ceremony over the threshold of the house. From outside the house they would call (to those inside), ‘go on your knees, and open your eyes and let Brighid enter’. To which

the reply from inside the house would be, 'she is welcome, she is welcome, she is welcome'.

My ritual at this time is to lay out fabric on Imbolc eve for Brighid to bless. The cloth dresses the Brideog doll and she stands as a symbol for my relationship with Brighid one which is centered in creativity, she and I meet in that place that opens up within the flow of creativity, the place where ideas appear for in a time on the planet which could seem like a permanent Imbolc we need Brighid's hope, light and resilience more than ever.

As the sun returns to the same position of Autumn Equinox and shines into Cairn T at Loughcrew it announces our return back into the world. It is only human to read stories into the play of the weather and the forces that guide it. The weather at this time of year has been explained by viewing the Cailleach as a cruel and evil hag battling to keep winter alive and venting her rage against the first signs of spring.

I was born at the beginning of March and have always known the last blast of wintry weather to fall as snow on my birthday. The Cailleach's day, Latha na Cailleach, the 25th March is celebrated as the Cailleach's overthrow and the spring storms which rage their last blast of wintry weather are interpreted in many local legends as the work of the Cailleachan, the storm hags. I see this time of the year as the gradual transition from the Cailleach who lead us through winter changing partners and letting Brighid lead the dance.

At Spring Equinox, I honor Brighid as Bear coming back into the world. She has slept her great sleep throughout the dark months in the Cave of the Grandmothers. To all the women who honored bear this was a magical time for it was appear that she was came back to life from death and her great hibernatory slumber. Not only did it appear she was literally being reborn, but she often came out from hibernation with cubs and with their arrival she brought life back to the land. As she emerged winter's grip began to loosen, the land starting to thaw and the lifecycle of the great bear fed our ancestors spiritual beliefs, creating myths, ritual and practices to live by (Lally 2013).

As this holyday marks our emergence from the dark of the year into the outward time my gesture is to return to the clay cauldron, I remove the owl wing that has covered the cauldron over the winter then I carefully remove all the notes I had tucked in to inspire the bear's cosmic dreams. I gently take out the green doll and then the bear. I consider did I get time to nourish my roots and I look over the art created from dreams and otherworldly journeys to the Cave of the Grandmothers. I question did I gain any new perspectives on some old issues and decide what remains in the Cave.

I also take time to make a Grandmother doll to honor those who observed the she-bear. The doll is made with roots or wool to resemble roots, strips of fabric or yarn hang from her attached to talismans and objects which speak to my time in the cave - the doll is a reminder that at any point in the year we can always step beyond our world and visit the Cave of the Grandmothers to ask these old bear women for their wisdom.

Beltane

My Beltane to me is a country lane with a hedgerow bursting with life, it sits within all the wild plants that weave through the hedge, you can find it in the nest of a wren and the midnight visit from a hedgehog. It is a festival which is celebrated in great festivals or motifs of fertility. We are all moved by desire which takes many forms throughout our lives. You may recognise a spiritual longing for a place you've never been and a time you've never lived or what simmers as your heart's greatest desire.

We are all filled with a longing for the wild. There are few culturally sanctioned antidotes for this yearning. We are taught to feel shame for such a desire. We grew our hair long and used it to hide our feelings. But the shadow of the Wild Woman still lurks behind us during our days and in our nights. (Clarissa Pinkola Estes)

My practise at Beltane is to listen to the wise woman, the wild woman - that part of us society likes to dull with a never-ending array of distractions that conveniently come in every shape, flavour and color we could possibly desire. Yet my desire for the wild can't be sedated a

desire to know that there was a time before this patriarchal warring culture I was born into. Beltane takes me to wild places, islands off the West Coast of Scotland, places where I can re-wild my imagination, re-envision this modern life and take ancient inspiration and weave it into my life in ways which resist the psychological smog patriarchy would prefer we lived in.



Summer Solstice

Beltane invites us to take off our socially acceptable mask, to listen to the other voices that inhabit the world - to the plants under our feet, the calls of the birds and animals and step into relationship with them. To wear the mask of our wild self is to step between the worlds and

see through the eyes of the Bean Feasa, the wise woman and offer gestures of ritual to that relationship.

My practise is to spend time using words and art to try and convey these desires, for if we don't recognise and acknowledge them then there is no way to begin the steps needed to take us on the path to achieving them. My gesture at this time of year is to honor the desire that beats in my heart - something that affects both myself, my community and the world. While I may draw it out in collage or through writing, I also pick up leaves and stones, shells and feathers and create an image on a high hillside or on a shore that will be claimed by the incoming tide. To use natural materials and leave it in nature is my commitment to the world and to know the ripples that move out from our creative acts of resistance.

In the northern latitudes of Scotland summer offers the magic of long, lingering twilights. While a landscape might seem familiar during daylight hours twilight offers a different wash of colour and perception. In that magical half-light, things normally hidden things come into view - the face of a cliff transforms into a woman's profile and you can almost hear the chattering of the otherworld for it isn't so easy to say where this world ends and the other one begins.

My amazon journey began on a little island off the west coast of Scotland. Eigg is a small and remarkable island who reclaimed her independence and became a political symbol of the power of community. The name of the island is the Isle of the Big Women and these lands have many stories of Amazons from the Queen of Moidart and her female warrior women, Scatatch from the neighbouring Isle of Skye and the Isle of Hirta (St Kilda) a few hundred miles to the very westerly edge of Europe offers the story of another Amazon. My time on the island is spent walking the land and engaging in ritual and ceremony from submerging myself under the waters of the Loch of the Big Women to sitting in silence letting the land speak - all these gestures awaken ancient folk memories of Big Women - respected women, Bean Feasa of the Ancestral Mothers and wise women. These insights empower and inspire us reminding us that things weren't always this way and these ancient foremothers weren't born into a warring patriarchal culture.

My Scottish Amazon doll is inspired by these legends and offers a shield, one we can pick up at any time to both protect and defend. The shield offers protection in blocking and defending and wears symbols and talismans, a reminder of the power behind us, through the generations of women whose shoulders we stand on and that together we can raise our shields to protect all who need protection.



Lughnasadh

The Celtic festival of Lughnasadh is said to have originated by the God Lugh who held a great gathering each year to commemorate the feast of his mother Taltin who died in a rather gruesome story of dying

from exhaustion after cleaning the land of Ireland for farming. Sean O Duinn explains that there are many first harvest traditions and many variants exist around the cutting of the last sheaf and the making of a corn doll fashioned from wheat stalks.

This festival involved a great harvest feast with much entertainment and a symbolic fire which some say the roots of this great festival lie in the Neolithic. It's quite possible that Mesolithic people also gathered in certain places to enjoy nature's harvest and acknowledge the shift from summer into autumn.

I imagine the maps of the land these early people held in their heads, their maps of seasonal places they would live with good fishing or good crops of acorns and fruit. And those other maps which overlaid with the maps of migrating geese, the knowledge of the lifecycle of seals and sea birds and their knowledge of the cycles of these animals.

As a gesture at this time of the year I consider the maps of my own life, what maps I intersect with and an invitation to explore looking through the eyes of these creatures and to see how human activity impacts their lives.

The wheel is the web of all life. It is an invitation to observe the world around us, to stand up for those without voices, to nurture our relationships and connect to the stories that teach this ancient wisdom. It is an opportunity to explore this relationship through gestures of ritual that feed our wild selves and inspire us into creative acts resisting the dominator culture.

The wheel of the year is the loom with which I weave the threads of folklore, ancestral folk memories and my own experiences. The dolls are a link both between my life and the lives of those women who have walked the path before me and those who will walk it after me. My dolls are created from this fabric, born from between the worlds and inspire us in the work we do to bring this world back into balance, to restore our relationship with the land all give voice to those who have been silenced.

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hand as a guiding influence for women who work toward becoming priestesses, with all the knowledge and skills they need to serve others.

SRIDEVI RAMANATHAN

Sridevi Ramanathan is devoted to empowering girls and women through relevant and revealing education that speaks to the mind and the soul. She founded Story Digs (www.storydigs.com) through which she conducts workshops based on her scholarly research of mythology and folklore. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in Women's Spirituality. She presented on Hindu Goddesses at the 2015 Parliament of World Religions as part of the panel, "Diverse Voices of Women's Spirituality." In addition, she has presented at the Association of the Study of Women and Mythology, and the Faith and Feminism conferences. Sridevi is also profiled in the book, *Birthing God: Women's Experiences of the Divine*.

TAMARA RASMUSSEN

Tamara Rasmussen lives in a small fishing village overlooking the ocean on the northern tip of Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. She and her husband have lived here since 1970 raising their four children, gardening, and enjoying rural community life. Tamara is a teacher, now retired, with a Master's Degree from Harvard University. She has written poetry since she was a girl. Tamara has presented her work at public readings and at poetry workshops. Her poems have appeared online in Synchronized Chaos and in print in *The Antigoniish Review*, *Trivia- a Journal of Ideas*, and *The Laurentian Magazine* among other publications.

MOLLY REMER

Molly Remer has been gathering the women to circle, sing, celebrate, and share since 2008. She plans and facilitates women's circles, seasonal retreats, pink tents, red tents, and family ceremonies in rural Missouri and teaches online courses in Red Tent facilitation and practical priestessing. She is a priestess who holds MSW, M.Div., and D.Min. degrees. She wrote her dissertation about contemporary priestessing. Molly and her husband Mark, co-create story goddesses, mini goddesses, goddess grids, and ceremony kits at Brigid's Grove. Molly is the author of *Womanrunes*, *Earthprayer*, and the *Red Tent*

Resource Kit. She writes about thealogy, nature, practical priestessing, and the goddess at brigidsgrove.com/.

AMINA RODRIGUEZ

I became a nature lover when I began to heal after a relationship with a very large tree. I have a BA in Psychology and I'm currently working on an MS in Eco-Psychology. My personal healing journey through intentional connection with nature lead me to an understanding of true unity consciousness. I enjoy nature photography, writing poetry as hobbies and Kai Chi Do as a practice. I've raised three remarkable children into adulthood as a single parent with two now in college. My goal is to educate others on the importance of remembering their connection to nature and to realize that our Mother Earth is our larger body which links us all.

BETTY BECQUART SANDERS

Betty Becquart Sanders is a former counselor, feminist, freelance writer and poet. She recently completed a life changing goddess pilgrimage with Carol Christ on the island of Crete. She has published 3 books of poetry and one short story. She formerly wrote a column on The Psychology of Wellness for Elements magazine.

SWAMI PUJANANDA SARASWATI

Swami Pujananda Saraswati is a yogic mystic, scholar practitioner. She is also a spiritual activist and anti-imperialist radical feminist in the Goddess motherline and Vedic traditions. As an initiate nun in the sacred Order of Sannyasa--Samkhya and Vedanta (duality and nonduality)--she teaches Yogic/Vedic psychology. The Swami lived with honorable mentors who embody the divine Mother in Her three forms: Kali-Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. Since 1979 she immersed in intensive monastic disciplines at the Yoga Research Foundation Ashram with Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda Maharaj and more recently with Maha Mandaleshwara Ma YogaShakti at the Yoga Shakti Mission, Palm Bay, FL.

MORGAIN SWANN

Feminist Witch Morgaine Swann lives near Eastern, KY. Priestess, teacher, activist, writer, she fervently advocates for Universal #BasicIncome & #MedicareForAll online, also focusing on Rights for

Women, Minorities & the Disabled as well as a return to Matrifocal, Matriarchal kinship groups as the Natural form of human governance. <http://www.methodandmadness.WordPress.com/>.

TONI C. TRUESDALE

I am an artist/illustrator/muralist with my own distinct visual style. While this has been developed from the tradition of European realists, my art celebrates cultural histories, women, everyday life, and our natural environment. My visual solutions represent the commonality of the global human family as well as celebrate the diversity of world cultures. Working in many different traditional visual media both wet and dry, I have completed over 500 large works on canvas, on paper; thousands of drawings and prints. Many are reproduced in cards, posters and prints. Most of the large pieces have written narratives. I have been nationally and internationally published.

PHIBBY VENABLE

Phibby Venable lives on a branch of the Holston River in Virginia, between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Appalachian range. Her stories and poems are infused with her love for that part of the eastern United States, its scenery and history, as well as her insistence on the strength of women, the fundamental value of love and family relationships, and care for one's local community. Author of five volumes of poetry, a book of short stories, and one novel.

BRANDY WOODS

Brandy Woods is an eclectic freelance illustrator and artist living in Montreal, Canada. She holds a bachelor's degree in Illustration & Design from Dawson College. She also channels soul portraits and spirit art, makes custom drums, paints on feathers, and is a Reiki Master. Some of her many hobbies include shamanism, past life exploration, Native American cultures, the Otherworld, and world history & legend (her 'to-read' pile is a little out of hand...) Her work can be found on Etsy, Society6, RedBubble, Instagram, and at www.brandywoods.com/.

SARA WRIGHT

Sara is a naturalist, a feminist, and a writer who presently lives in the western mountains of Maine. She has published articles in *Return to*

Mago E-Magazine, Dark Matter: Women Witnessing and *Trivia: Voices of Feminism*. Sara also writes a regular nature column called Backyard Reflections for the Bethel Citizen. Sara has Passamaquoddy Indian roots that may or may not be the reason she advocates for all of nature through her writing.