

THE GREAT GODDESS



HERESIES A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics \$3.00

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The Great Goddess Collective Statement

In putting together this issue on The Great Goddess/Women's Spirituality, we wanted to offer a holistic concept of the Goddess and to move beyond an inside/outside duality. We also recognized a need to counter the distrust that most women harbor towards religion and any aspect of spirituality because of the oppression that we have all experienced from patriarchal religions.

During the year that we have been working together, our collective process has passed through several phases. In the beginning we had meetings attended by 30 or more women, which required us to separate into committees. The committee division continued to evolve and resulted in three main editorial groupings: Personal/Ritual/Poetry/Fiction; Archaeological/Historical/Political/Theological; and Visual, which selected material for submission to the full collective. Initially we attempted to create a review system so that everyone could have an opportunity to see all submissions. However, some material could not be easily duplicated and few people made the independent effort to look through the material from other committees. Because we were committed to the concept of total collective energy and process, we held a marathon weekend on a Long Island farm where more than 30 women met in a communal atmosphere to review and make recommendations about submissions. Over the next four months the full collective continued to make selections and often reviewed rejected material. Committees were engaged in editing, shortening long articles to fit within space limitations, retying, phoning and corresponding with contributors and soliciting material. During this intense period, members often had to attend three and four meetings a week. Our numbers dwindled to about 20.

In the next phase we reviewed the editing of accepted pieces and began layout and design of the magazine. Because we were far behind schedule, a number of women who had worked hard were no longer able to give priority to their involvement in the collective. Also only a few women were willing to become heavily involved in production work. Some women pitched in; some women hung in; some women checked in. But, again, throughout this phase all decisions were open to the full collective at specially arranged meetings. We felt that we had to make an effort to respect the contributions of all without assessing participation. We did not want to regard decision-making as a power.

There was often muted and, occasionally, dramatic conflict. In a smaller group, confrontation and its resolution would have had to be more directly resolved, but the size of our group permitted distancing and an evasion of differences that sometimes left individuals antagonistically engaged or estranged. A basic source of contention was our disparate definitions of the Goddess. Nor did we find an honest way to handle the implicit and often explicit coercion involved in submitting our own work. Egotism about individual creations and their significance/prominence flared. Our own inefficiency and ineptitude wearied us. The work was not equally shared, although the decision process was. Decision-making in so large a group was extremely slow. Our original committee division aroused factionalism. Members of committees felt that their subject matter was not being fully respected by members of other committees and defensive attitudes developed. However, our slowness may have achieved a greater fairness and even our factionalism may have clarified viewpoints that otherwise would have been blunted by the consensus-voting process, and right to this moment, we have continued to challenge ourselves by seeking collective consensus on an infinitude of decisions. We feel that we tested the collective process and that that process not only produces the most representative work but also withstands the greatest stresses. Although our sharing must include the knowledge of how we were often divided against ourselves, there were also many good times when we shared a heightened regard for each other, when we felt that we were touched by the Goddess.

From the Heresies Collective

HERESIES is an idea-oriented journal devoted to the examination of art and politics from a feminist perspective. We believe that what is commonly called art can have a political impact, and that in the making of art and of all cultural artifacts our identities as women play a distinct role. We hope that HERESIES will stimulate dialogue around radical political and aesthetic theory, encourage the writing of the history of *femina sapiens*, and generate new creative energies among women. It will be a place where diversity can be articulated. We are committed to the broadening of the definition and function of art.

HERESIES is structured as a collective of feminists, some of whom are also socialists, marxists, lesbian feminists or anarchists; our fields include painting, sculpture, writing, anthropology, literature, performance, art history, architecture and filmmaking. While the themes of the individual issues will be determined by the collective, each issue will have a different editorial staff made up of women who want to work on that issue as well as members of the collective. Proposals for issues may be conceived and presented to the HERESIES Collective by groups of women not associated with the collective. Each issue will take a different visual form, chosen by the group responsible. HERESIES will try to be accountable to and in touch with the international feminist community. An open evaluation meeting will be held after the appearance of each issue. Topics for issues will be announced well in advance in order to collect material from many sources. Possibly satellite pamphlets and broadsides will be produced continuing the discussion of each central theme. As part of its commitment to the women's community, HERESIES provides workshops in all phases of magazine production and maintains the Women Artists' Slide Registry.

As women, we are aware that historically the connections between our lives, our arts and our ideas have been suppressed. Once these connections are clarified they can function as a means to dissolve the alienation between artist and audience, and to understand the relationships between art and politics, work and workers. As a step toward a demystification of art, we reject the standard relationship of criticism to art within the present system, which has often become the relationship of advertiser to product. We will not advertise a new set of genius-products just because they are made by women. We are not committed to any particular style or aesthetic, nor to the competitive mentality that pervades the art world. Our view of feminism is one of process and change, and we feel that in the process of dialogue we can foster a change in the meaning of art.

THE COLLECTIVE: Ida Applebroog, Patsy Beckert, Joan Braderman, Mary Beth Edelson, Su Friedrich, Janet Froelich, Harmony Hammond, Sue Heinemann, Elizabeth Hess, Joyce Kozloff, Arlene Ladden, Gail Lineback, Lucy Lippard, Marty Pottenger, Miriam Schapiro, Amy Sillman, Joan Snyder, Elke Solomon, Pat Steir, May Stevens, Elizabeth Weatherford, Sally Webster.

Cover designed and executed collectively.

In the young spring evening
The moon is shining full
Girls form a circle
As though round an altar

And their feet perform
Rhythmical steps
Like the soft feet of Cretan girls
Must once have danced

Round and round an altar of love
Designing a circle
In the delicate flowering grass

The stars that are shining
Around the beautiful moon
Hide their own bright faces

When She, at Her fullest
Paints the earth with Her
Silvery light

Now, while we are dancing
Come! Join us!
Sweet joy, revelry,
Bright light!

Inspire us, Muses
Oh, you with the beautiful hair.

—Sappho

translated from the Greek
by Charoula

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The Three Faces of Goddess Spirituality

Merlin Stone

In considering the already widespread and increasing interest in the diverse manifestations of Goddess spirituality within the feminist movement, it may be helpful to clarify at least three emerging aspects of this relatively new phenomenon. These three aspects, of what may be the most unexpected occurrence within the feminist movement, have developed, separately and together, in a rather incredibly organic "grass roots" manner. Perhaps only within the flexibility of a feminism that is continually evolving out of the process of consciousness raising in its truest sense has this outgrowth of feminist consciousness been able to develop and grow.

Since all three of these aspects of Goddess spirituality appear to be simultaneously growing from one central trunk, I drew lots (a method used at the prophecy-providing shrines of the Goddess in ancient times) to decide their linear placement. This placement in no way implies that one aspect is of greater importance than another or precedes the others in actual development and, as you will see, many connections link the three.

The first aspect of Goddess spirituality is the emerging interest in the history and prehistory of ancient cultures that worshipped a female deity and in the laws and customs of those societies. Through research in archaeology, history, anthropology—and using this information to analyze ancient literature and mythology—we have begun to discover that far from the generally accepted idea that the Judeo-Christian religions rescued women from supposedly more barbarian and anti-woman societies, women have actually lost a great deal of status and physical and material autonomy since the inception of these and other male-worshipping religions. As a result of this research, which covers the period from the Neolithic Goddess shrines of about 8000 B.C. to the closing of the last Goddess temples in the early Christian periods of Byzantium, we have learned that many Goddess-worshipping societies were matrilineal, matrilocal and matrifocal. In many of these societies, women owned property, engaged in business and held the highest positions of the clergy. In such societies children automatically belonged to their mother's clan and took their mother's family name.

Through this research we are discovering the roots of today's attitudes toward women's bodies and minds. These attitudes become clear as we study them within the context of the original institution of patrilineal, patrilocal and patrifocal systems under the aegis of the worship of a supreme deity as male. Though it required many millennia to suppress the Goddess religion and its social customs, this ancient religion was eventually designated as "pagan" and its remaining vestiges were obliterated by early Christian emperors, medieval inquisitions and witch burnings.

In our growing interest and efforts to explore the truth about the past, we are building, and hopefully we will continue to build, a body of evidence that bears witness to the many millennia in which the Creator was regarded as female and in which women held a much higher status than we have known since that time. This aspect of Goddess spirituality within the feminist movement is motivated by much the same feeling that has encouraged us to rediscover and reclaim female artists, writers, scientists, political leaders and other important women who were ignored by the writers of the history books with which we were educated. This information affords an entirely new perspective on current stereotypes of women. It provides a broader view, as the perspective which allows us to look into the past also allows us to see further ahead.

The second aspect is that of a growing concern with a feminist perception of spirituality and theology. It has emerged from feminist consciousness, an inkling or more of the first aspect and the perhaps ever-present search for answers to such theological questions as the possible purposes (or nonpurpose) of existence, the true nature of morality (or immorality), birth, death and the nature of mind as it is revealed in intelligence, intuition and reason. For many centuries women have been taught that if they cared to consider these questions at all (the implication being that such questions were actually too abstract for female minds), answers were to be found in the words and writings of male priests, male ministers, male rabbis and male gurus—all of whom supposedly had greater spiritually contemplative abilities as well as more direct access to knowledge of The Divine Plan or Cosmic Process.

A feminist contemplation of spiritual and theological questions soon makes us painfully aware that the answers with which we have so far been provided have existed in close relationship to, or more often within, a personified Life Force that is nearly always linguistically, and more often actually, considered to be of the male gender. Not too surprisingly, "answers" about divine intentions are often as male-oriented as the men who provide them. The exceptional rate of growth of feminist concerns with Goddess spirituality in itself reveals a level of consciousness that refuses and refutes this male-designed hierarchy and its appropriation of theological and spiritual considerations—and the subsequent "divine" decrees.

So far, and let us hope in the future as well, feminists concerned with Goddess spirituality have seldom offered absolute or pat answers to theological questions. What has been happening is the experiencing, and at times the reporting, of these personal or group experiences: how it feels to regard the Ultimate Life Force in our own image—as females; how it feels to openly embrace and to share our own contemplations and intuitive knowledge about the role of women on this planet; how it feels to gain a sense of direction, a motivating energy, a strength, a courage—somehow intuited as coming from a cosmic female energy force that fuels and refuels us in our struggle against all human oppression and planetary destruction.

Some say they find this force within themselves; others regard it as external. Some feel it in the ocean, the moon, a tree, the flight of a bird or in the constant stream of coincidences (or noncoincidences) that occur in our lives. Some find access to it in the lighting of a candle, chanting, meditating—alone or with other women. From what I have so far read, heard or experienced myself, I think it safe to say that all women who feel they have experienced Goddess spirituality in one way or another also feel that they have gained an inner strength and direction that temporarily or permanently has helped them to deal with life. Most women interested or involved in feminist concepts of spirituality do not regard this spirituality as an end in itself but as a means of gaining and giving strength and understanding that will help us to confront the many tangible and material issues of the blatant inequities of society as we know it today.

The third aspect of Goddess spirituality is concerned with the more circumspect observation of the organized male-worshipping, male-clergied religions of today—an examination of the specific ways in which these religions have instituted and

maintained a secondary status for women. Involvement in Goddess spirituality has encouraged us to take a more careful look at the scriptures, rituals and the gender of the decision-making level of the clergy of the religions in which we were raised and/or those that affect the society in which we live.

Some of the most urgent issues confronting contemporary women all over the planet are those concerning economic survival, abortion, contraception, rape, clitorectomy, infibulation, divorce, attitudes toward "illegitimacy", lesbian rights, social pressure to marry and to have children, physical and psychological violence, attitudes toward women's bodies and the stereotypes of woman as follower rather than leader and sexual and reproductive being rather than as total human being.

A careful reading of the Bible still used by Judeo-Christian congregations reveals the ancient origins of many of these important feminist issues. The proclamation in Gen. 3:16 informs both women and men that women are expected, as the result of a "divine" decree, to be sexually faithful and subservient to their husbands and that the pains of childbirth are to be regarded as "divine" retribution—the "will of God" as it is asserted over the will of woman.

Deut. 22:28,29 requires that a raped virgin be *married* to the man who raped her. Deut. 22:22-24 stipulates that a raped betrothed woman should be put to *death* (unless the rape occurred in the deserted countryside). Deut. 22:20-22 states that a bride discovered not to be a virgin should be dragged from the house and stoned to *death*. Deut. 22:22 declares that a married woman should be put to *death* if found lying with a man (no excuse for rape is mentioned). Deut. 24:1 decrees that a man has the right to divorce his wife on his decision alone, while no provision is made for a woman who desires to divorce her husband. Each of these biblical laws reveals the intense efforts made to control reproductive capacities, and thus the sexual activities of women, by the men who wrote these laws and by those who followed them.

Our understanding and analysis of these biblical laws and their subsequent effects on contemporary women become clear only in the context of historical information which reveals that these laws were devised at much the same time that matrilineal customs were being destroyed and patrilineal systems initiated. In a patrilineal system, knowledge of paternity is vital. This knowledge takes on even greater import when the system is declared to be an integral aspect of The Divine Plan and thus any challenge to the patrilineal system and certain knowledge of paternity may be considered blasphemy—at



times punishable by death. Even today, socio-religious attitudes toward "unwed mothers" and "illegitimacy" have not yet been thoroughly examined and challenged as a vital feminist issue.

The institution and maintenance of a patrilineal system were further abetted by biblical laws such as Num. 30 requiring that a daughter's or a wife's vow must be regarded as null and void unless confirmed by father or husband—making it impossible for most women to engage in business activities and thus limiting their access to economic autonomy. Num. 27 explains that the rights to family inheritance are accessible only to sons, unless there are no male heirs, and Num. 36 decrees that if a woman does inherit in such a situation, she must then marry only within her father's tribe. Written about 3,000 years ago, these laws still exist in the Old Testament of the Judeo-Christian Bible. Though the last few generations may have forgotten or rejected these laws, can we afford to ignore them in our efforts to understand the origins of attitudes toward women as wage-earners today?

Judeo-Christian laws and decrees have deeply affected the secular laws and attitudes of our contemporary patrilineal society. All too often we discover them to be the probable origins of many of the problems we face today such as the right of each woman to be able to control her own physical body and its functions; access to abortion; in some countries, access to contraception and divorce; the concept of "illegitimacy" and the social and legal pressures surrounding it; social and legal attitudes on lesbian love; physical violence against women, stereotypes of whore and madonna; double standards for pre-marital virginity and marital fidelity; attitudes toward women's access to earning power (including choice of vocation, education, advancement in chosen field and levels of economic recompense) and the so-called "natural" assumption of male leadership in political, intellectual and spiritual spheres.

Each of these issues is an anger-provoking reminder of the longstanding power of male-oriented, male-dominated religions. It is for this reason that it is vital to fully understand the connections between these attitudes, biblical laws and the initial institution of the patrilineal system in which we live. The supremacy of "Father in Heaven" is a mere reflection of the supremacy of "father on earth". The status of father is magnified beyond biological reality by the patrilineal system and it is this system that is the underlying foundation of all *patriarchal* ideas and actions. Refusing to acknowledge paternal identity may be one of the most revolutionary acts possible.

Even today, the absence or extreme minority of women in decision-making levels of the clergy of nearly all Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant congregations ensures that these biblical decrees and subsequent attitudes will retain their original power. Perhaps more important, we must remember that biblical laws and attitudes have extended far beyond

the walls of any specific church or temple and are now deeply embedded within so-called secular law and social custom. Despite the supposed separation of church and state, women's demands in early feminist struggles for women's suffrage were continually challenged and obstructed by clergymen who claimed sole access to knowledge of The Divine Plan—and women voting was not part of it.

It is also of interest that along with sexist attitudes, racism and slavery were justified by the "religious" idea that heathens had no souls—thus allowing "good" Christians to invade the land of the Native Americans, decimating them as a people and appropriating their property, and to kidnap Africans and to use them as slaves. Male-oriented religion's more passive acceptance of racism is still to be seen in the racial segregation of churches.

Goddess spirituality offers us the immediate and inherent refutation of the institutionalized "religious" values that have for too long been used as weapons of oppression. From this third aspect of Goddess spirituality grows the consciousness of, and the direct challenge to, these "religious" laws and attitudes that have played such a large part in formulating the roles of women in contemporary society.

In all of its aspects, Goddess spirituality has grown from our continually feeling, speaking, comparing, analyzing, feminist-consciousness-raising process—the very core of our new perceptions and thus our motivating energies. Our consciousness has now been raised—to the point where we can no longer ignore the suppression or perversion of evidence on the roles of women in the ancient Goddess-worshipping cultures; the trivializing of women's thoughts and ideas on spiritual and theological considerations of existence, from personal to planetary; and the oppression of women as it has been instituted and maintained within the patrilineal, male-worshipping religions and the effect this has had on society.

Though some may want to question the political viability of Goddess spirituality within the feminist struggle, few would deny its existence within the feminist community or the reality of the existence of the many contributors to this issue (those included as well as those whose work was not included as a result of space limitations). We invite you, as a reader of this issue of *Heresies*, not only to view or read the many thoughts and ideas that are included but to consider them in light of our ever-expanding feminist consciousness, that same consciousness that has until now helped us to avoid the undigested acceptance of other, usually male-developed political analyses (party lines). Goddess spirituality has grown from our consciousness-raising process; it has grown from US. It may be the ultimate heresy—and it may ultimately be what allows us to succeed where so many others have failed.

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The Goddess Yakshi with parrot. Mathura, India. 2nd century A.D.

Mother With the Moon in Your Mouth

Alla Bozarth Campbell

Sitting by the Maiden Well
with your host of pigs
suckling and grunting
Goddess of Spring-to-Life,
White Sow Goddess
rolling with desire
in the hay mounds
in the Age of the Molten Moon,
Ishtar, Goddess of Underdeath,
the moon rising in the east
over places of burial and birth

omphalos flowers resting
in their hollowed nest,
a bee making honey
from earth's bellyhole

your life shines
and even the Laughless Rock
rocks with laughter,
cracks and rocks,
unable to attend
your magic

You, Woman Impervious,
Moon Stuck in Her Throat,
teach me the old ways,
put me to sleep with
the old magic,
make stars rise
on my breasts
like silver women
dancing naked
encircled by night
by a legion of wings.

From ages of ages
arise from the dark,
the flash of your buckle,
the beat of your bracelet
arms on our breasts,
Moon Mother and Maiden, Awake!

Non sumus qualis eramus

P.M. Pederson

We are not now as once we used to be,
Nina Innina, Nana Innana,

We are not now as once we used to be,
Anna, Athana, Anantis, Urana,
For we are slaves, whom once you knew as free,
Nina, Innina, Nana Innana,

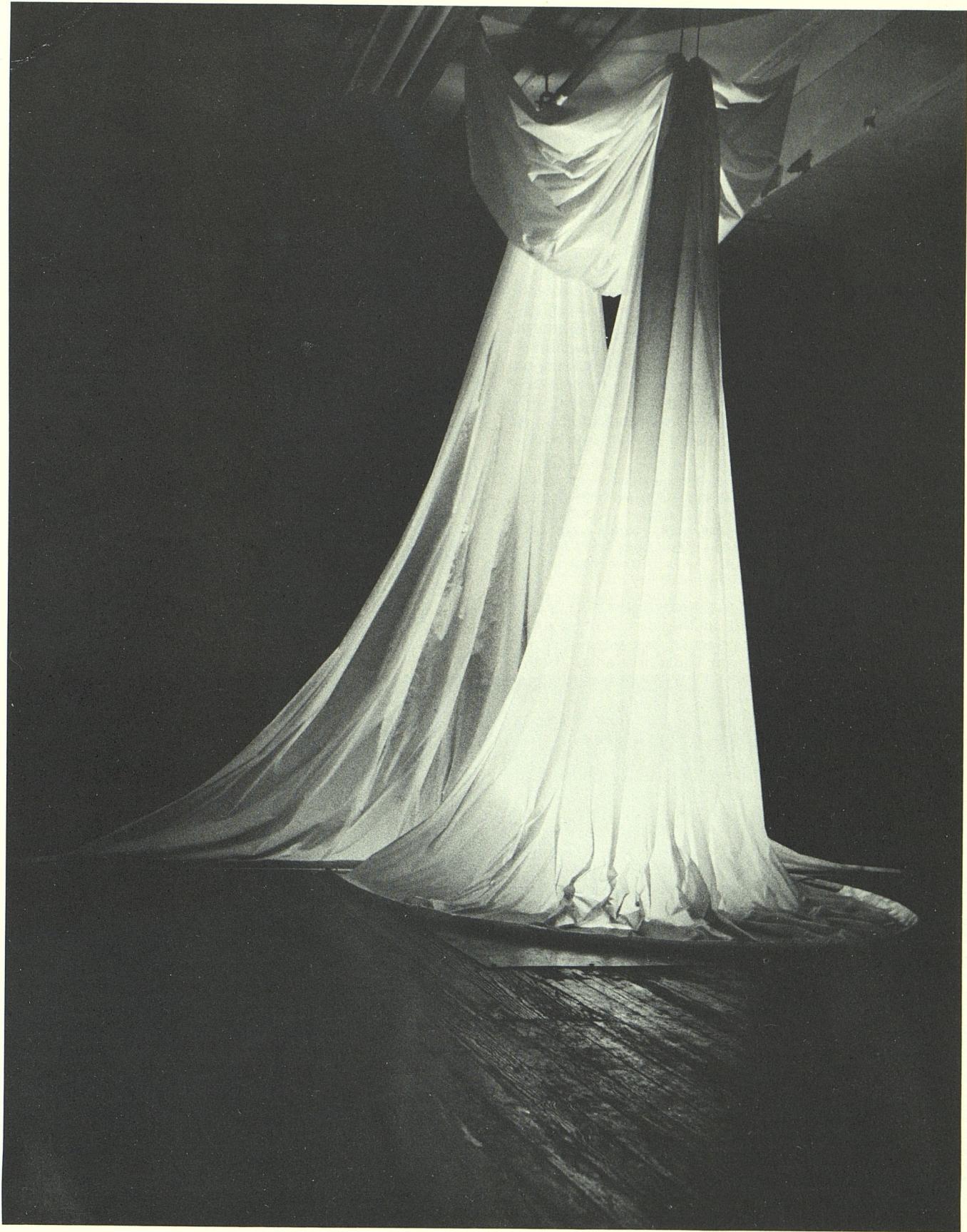
For we are slaves, whom once you knew as free,
Brigit, Blodeuwedd, Danu, Buana,
Degraded to ensure their property,
Nina Innina, Nana Innana,

Degraded to ensure their property,
Arianhad, Cerridwen, Rhiannon, Rhea,
Denied our souls for their security,
Nina Innina, Nana Innana,

Denied our souls for their security,
Hilde, Aegea, Britomart, Shala;
Blind fathers of blind sons, they cannot see,
Nina Innina, Nana Innana,

Blind fathers of blind sons, they cannot see,
Dictinna, Diti, Hera, Diana,
Whilst we are slaves, they never can be free,
Nina Innina, Nana Innana.

Non iam sumus qualis quondam eramus,
Freya, Ostara, Artemis, Isis,
Sub regno Bonae Deae Cybele.
Nina Innina, Nana Innana.



Anne Healy. *White Goddess*. 1972. Nylon fabric and aluminum bars. $12\frac{1}{2}' \times 11' \times 11\frac{1}{2}''$. Photo credit: Anne Healy.

Why Women Need the Goddess

Carol P. Christ

At the close of Ntosake Shange's stupendously successful Broadway play *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf*, a tall beautiful Black woman rises from despair to cry out, "I found God in myself and I loved her fiercely."¹ Her discovery is echoed by women around the country who meet spontaneously in small groups on full moons, solstices and equinoxes to celebrate the Goddess as symbol of life and death powers and waxing and waning energies in the universe and in themselves.²

It is the night of the full moon. Nine women stand in a circle, on a rocky hill above the city. The western sky is rosy with the setting sun; in the east the moon's face begins to peer above the horizon. . . . The woman pours a cup of wine onto the earth, refills it and raises it high. "Hail Tana, Mother of Mothers!" she cries. "Awaken from your long sleep, and return to your children again!"³

What are the political and psychological effects of this fierce new love of the divine in themselves on women whose previous spiritual experience has been focused upon the male God of Judaism and Christianity? Is the spiritual dimension of feminism a passing diversion, an escape from difficult but necessary political work? Or does the emergence of the symbol of Goddess among women have significant political and psychological ramifications for the feminist movement?

To answer these questions, we must first understand the importance of religious symbols and rituals in human life. According to anthropologist Clifford Geertz religious symbols shape a cultural ethos, defining the deepest values of a society and the persons in it. "Religion," Geertz writes, "is a system of symbols which act to produce powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations"⁴ in the people of a given culture. A "mood" for Geertz is a psychological attitude such as awe, trust or respect, while a "motivation" is the *social* and *political* trajectory created by a mood which transforms mythos into ethos, symbol system into social and political reality. Symbols have both psychological and political effects because they create the inner conditions (deep-seated attitudes and feelings) which lead people to feel comfortable with or to accept social and political arrangements that correspond to the symbol system. Because religion has such a compelling hold on the deep psyches of so many people, feminists cannot afford to leave it in the hands of the fathers. Even people who no longer "believe in God" or participate in the institutional structure of patriarchal religion still may not be free of the power of the symbolism of God the Father. A symbol's effect is not dependent on rational assent, for a symbol also functions on levels of the psyche other than the rational. Religion fulfills deep psychic needs by providing symbols and

rituals which enable people to cope with difficult situations⁵ in human life (e.g., death, evil, suffering) and to pass through life's important transitions (e.g., birth, marriage, death). Even people who consider themselves completely secularized will often find themselves sitting in a church or synagogue when a friend or relative gets married, or when a parent or friend dies. The symbols associated with these important rituals cannot fail to affect the deep or unconscious structures of the mind of even a person who has rejected these symbolisms on a conscious level—especially if that person is under stress. The reason for the continuing effect of religious symbols is that the mind is uncomfortable with a vacuum. Symbol systems cannot simply be rejected, they must be replaced. I believe where there is no replacement, the mind will revert to familiar structures at times of crisis, bafflement or defeat.

Religions centered on the worship of a male God keep women in a childish state of psychological dependence on men and male authority, and at the same time legitimate the *political* and *social* authority of fathers and sons in the institutions of society. The damage done to women by exclusively male symbolism in religion and culture is both psychological and political: women feel their own power is inferior or dangerous and they therefore give over their will to male authority figures in family and society.

Religious symbol systems focused on exclusively male images of divinity are psychologically devastating to women because they create the impression that female power can never be fully legitimate or wholly beneficent. This message need never be explicitly stated (as for example it is in the story of Eve) for its effect to be felt. A woman completely ignorant of the myths of female evil in Biblical religion nonetheless acknowledges the anomaly of female power when she prays exclusively to a male God. She may see herself as like God (created in the image of God) by denying her own sexual identity and affirming God's transcendence of sexual identity, but she can never have the experience which is freely available to every man and boy in her culture, of having her full sexual identity affirmed as being in the image and likeness of God. Her mood is one of trust in male power as salvific and distrust of female power in herself and other women as inferior or dangerous. Such a "powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting" mood cannot fail to become a motivation which translates into social and political reality.

As Z Budapest has noted, the easiest way to conquer a people is through religion, because after the people internalize the symbols of a religion, they function as their own "internal policemen" and force is no longer necessary to keep them in line.⁶ The conquest of the psyche ensures

control of the body politic, as politicians as diverse as Hitler and Mao have known well.

Feminist theologian Mary Daly has detailed the political ramifications of Father religion for women in *Beyond God the Father*:

If God in "his" heaven is a father ruling his people, then it is the "nature" of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male-dominated. Within this context a *mystification of roles* takes place: the husband dominating his wife represents God "himself." The images and values of a given society have been projected into the realm of dogmas and "Articles of Faith," and these in turn justify the social structures which have given rise to them and which sustain their plausibility.⁷

The secular philosopher Simone de Beauvoir is well aware of the function of patriarchal religion as legitimater of male power:

Man enjoys the great advantage of having a god endorse the code he writes; and since man exercises a sovereign authority over women it is especially fortunate that this authority has been vested in him by the Supreme Being. For the Jews, Mohammedans, and Christians, among others, man is Master by divine right; the fear of God will therefore repress any impulse to revolt in the downtrodden female.⁸

The political consequences of patriarchal religion were evident to nineteenth-century suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton who came to view the churches as the single most potent force opposing female suffrage. Thus she brought together her now famous revising committee to write *The Women's Bible*, an early feminist attempt to challenge directly the power of patriarchal religion.

This brief discussion of the psychological and political effects of God religion puts us in an excellent position to begin to understand the significance of the symbol of Goddess for women. But before proceeding to that dis-

cussion, let me briefly identify the sources for the symbolism of Goddess as it is reemerging in womanspirit and of traditions but their attitudes toward these traditions are eclectic and selective. Ancient traditions are filtered through modern experience and there is no sense that every aspect of ancient or culturally distant religious consciousness must be adopted as whole cloth.

At the simplest and most basic level, the symbol of Goddess is an acknowledgment of the *legitimacy of female power as a beneficent and independent power*. A woman who echoes Ntosake Shange's dramatic statement, "I found God in myself and I loved her fiercely," is saying, "Female power is strong and creative." She is saying that the divine principle, the saving and sustaining power, is in herself, that she will no longer look to men or male figures as saviors. This meaning of the symbol of Goddess is simple and obvious, and yet it is difficult for many to comprehend. It stands in sharp contrast to the paradigms of female dependence on males which have been predominant in our culture. The internationally acclaimed French novelist Monique Wittig captured something of the novelty and flavor of the affirmation of female power when she wrote in her mythic work *Les Guerillères*:

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 it, you say it does not exist. But remember. Make an effort to remember. Or, failing that, invent.⁹

While Wittig does not speak directly of the Goddess, she nonetheless captures a sense of the mood created in women who define their identities through the symbol of Goddess. This mood is one of a joyous celebration of female freedom and independence, as well as a fearless



The Birth of Aphrodite. Classic Greek c. 470-460 B.C.

affirmation of the female body, a point discussed more fully below.

The affirmation of female power contained in the symbol of Goddess has both psychological and political consequences. Psychologically it means the defeat of the internal policeman who reminds women that their power is inferior and dangerous. This new mood of affirmation of female power leads to new motivations; it supports and undergirds women's trust in their own power and the power of other women in family and society.

I have said that the simplest meaning of the symbol "Goddess" is an affirmation of the legitimacy and beneficence of female power. For one raised in the West, a question immediately arises, "Is the Goddess simply female power writ large, and if so, why bother with the symbol 'Goddess' at all? Or do you really mean to refer to a Goddess 'out there' who is not reducible to a human potential?" Many women have rediscovered the power of Goddess in solitude as a result of their own inner quests, or with other women through the women's spirituality movement; their answers to this question vary. Three meanings attach to the symbol "Goddess" for these women: (1) the Goddess as divine female, as personification who can be invoked in prayer and ritual; (2) the Goddess as symbol of the life, death and rebirth energy in nature and culture, in personal and communal life; (3) the Goddess as affirmation of the legitimacy and beauty of female power (made possible by the new becoming of women in the women's liberation movement). If one were to ask the women who participate in the symbol of Goddess which of these meanings is the "correct" one, different responses would be given. Some would assert that the Goddess is definitely not "out there," that the symbol of a divinity "out there" is part of the legacy of patriarchal oppression, which brings with it the authoritarianism, hierarchicalism and dogmatic rigidity associated with Biblical monotheistic religions. They might argue that the symbol of Goddess reflects the sacred power within women and nature, suggesting the connectedness between women's cycles of menstruation, birth and menopause and the life and death cycles of the universe. Others seem quite comfortable with the notion of Goddess as a divine female protector and creator and would find their experience of Goddess limited by the assertion that she is not also out there as well as within themselves and in all natural processes. When asked what the symbol of Goddess meant, feminist witch Starhawk replied, "It all depends on how I feel. When I feel weak, She is someone who can help and protect me. When I feel strong She is the symbol of my own power. At other times I feel her as the natural energy in my body and the world."¹⁰ How are we to evaluate such a statement? Theologians would call these the words of a sloppy thinker. But my deepest intuition tells me they contain a wisdom Western theological thought has lost.

To one trained in theology these differing views of the "meaning" of the symbol of Goddess sound like an incipient Trinitarian controversy. Is there, I wonder, a way of developing a theology that does not lead into dogmatic controversy or require us to say definitively that one understanding is true and the others false? Could we possibly share our common relation to the symbol and make that primary and yet allow our varying interpretations? The diverse explications of the symbol "Goddess" suggest that

the symbol has a richer significance than any one explication can express. This phenomenological fact suggests the need for an abstract theory of symbol in which the symbol is viewed as the primary fact and the meanings are viewed as secondary. It also suggests that a thea-logy¹¹ of the Goddess would be very different from the theo-logy we know in the West. But to spell out the primacy of symbol in thea-logy in contrast to the primacy of explanation in theo-logy would be to write another paper. Let me simply state that I believe it is incumbent upon woman, who have been deprived of a female religious symbol system for so long and who are therefore in an excellent position to recognize the power and primacy of symbols, to develop a theory of symbol and thea-logy congruent with their experience.

A second important implication of the Goddess symbol for women is the affirmation of the female body. Because of women's unique position as menstruants, birth-givers, and because they have traditionally cared for the young and the dying, women's connection to the body, nature and finitude has been an obvious fact. In early religious consciousness birth-giving powers were celebrated and women were positively valued. But as Western religions entered into a state of alienation from the body, nature and this world, women were denigrated because they seemed more carnal, fleshy and earthy than the culture-creating males.¹² The misogynist anti-body tradition in Western thought is symbolized in the myth of Eve who is traditionally viewed as a sexual temptress, the epitome of women's carnal nature. This tradition reaches its nadir in the *Malleus Maleficarum* (*The Hammer of Evil-Doing Women*) which states, "All witchcraft stems from carnal lust which in women is insatiable."¹³

The denigration of the female body is also expressed in the taboos of our culture that surround menstruation and childbirth. While menstruation taboos may have originated in a perception of the awesome powers of the female body,¹⁴ they have degenerated into a simple perception that something is "wrong" with female bodily functions. Menstruation is viewed as a curse, and women grow up believing that the bloody facts of menstruation are best hidden. Judy Chicago's *Menstruation Bathroom* broke these taboos. In a sterile white bathroom she exhibited boxes of tampons and Kotex on an open shelf, while the wastepaper basket overflowed with bloody tampons and Kotex.¹⁵ Many women who saw the piece felt relieved to have their "dirty secret" out in the open.

The denigration of the female body and its powers is further expressed in Western culture's attitudes toward childbirth. Giving birth is treated as a disease requiring hospitalization and the woman is viewed as a passive object, anesthetized to ensure her acquiescence to the will of the doctor.¹⁶ The women's liberation movement has aided the advocates of natural childbirth and home birth by emphasizing the need for women to control and take pride in their bodies.

The symbol of Goddess aids this process of naming and reclaiming the female body and its functions. In the ancient world and among modern women, the Goddess symbol represents the birth, death and rebirth processes of the natural and human worlds. The female body is viewed as a direct expression or incarnation of waxing and waning, life and death cycles in the universe because of the connection between the 28-day cycles of menstruation and



the 28-day cycles of the moon. How amazing it is for modern women to learn that many of the ancient Goddess figures were painted with red ochre between the legs, the menstrual blood out in the open, a symbol of female power.¹⁷ The Goddess is often depicted in the act of giving birth, and the birth process is viewed as a symbol of the life-giving powers of the universe.¹⁸ The possibilities of reclaiming the powers of the female body in Goddess rituals are expressed in the summer solstice ritual created by Barbry MyOwn and Hallie Mountainwing. In this ritual the women simulated a birth canal through which they birthed each other into their circle. They raised power by placing their hands on each other's bellies and chanting together. Finally, they marked each other's faces with rich dark menstrual blood saying, "This is the blood that promises renewal. This is the blood that promises sustenance. This is the blood that promises life."¹⁹ From hidden dirty secret to symbol of the life power of the Goddess, women's blood has come full circle. The degree to which this ritual seems indelicate or shocking indicates how far modern culture is from perceiving the sacrality of the female body.

The mood created by the symbol of Goddess as life and birth power is one of positive, joyful affirmation of the female body and its powers and processes. The motivations are to overcome the stereotypes of menstruant women as hysterical, to recognize the blood bonds shared by women, to value birth as an expression of the ultimate life power, to return the birth process to the hands of women and to overcome the spirit/flesh dualism of Western culture.

While the symbolic reclamation of the body and nature is especially important to women who have been associated with the despised body, it also has profound sig-



The thousand hands of the Goddess Kannon. Toshodai-ji Temple, Nara, Japan. (N.D.)

nificance for men and all beings. The denigration of the body and the spirit/flesh, mind/body split has been injurious to men too. The denigration of the body and nature has also contributed to our current ecological crisis because nature has been viewed simply as material for human consumption. Thus, the Goddess as symbol of the revaluation of body and nature can pull together many of the themes addressed separately in the human potential and ecology movements. In this case the mood is one of affirmation, awe and respect for the body and nature and the motivation is to respect the teaching of the body and the rights of all living beings.

A third important implication of the symbol of Goddess for women is the positive valuation of will in a Goddess-centered framework. Here I am not referring to the symbol of Goddess in general, but specifically to the notion of will in Goddess-centered ritual magic and spell-casting. The basic notion behind ritual magic and spell-casting is energy as power. The Goddess is a center or focus of power and energy; She is the personification of the energy which flows between beings in the natural and human worlds. According to Starhawk, "witches conceive of psychic energy as having form and substance that can be perceived and directed by those with a trained awareness. The power generated within the circle is built into a cone form, and at its peak is released—to the Goddess, to reenergize the members of the coven, or to do a specific work such as healing."²⁰ In ritual magic, energy is directed by will power.

The emphasis on the will is important for women because women traditionally have been taught to devalue their wills, to believe that they cannot achieve their will through their own power and even to suspect that the assertion of will is evil. Faith Wilding's poem "Waiting" sums up women's sense that their lives are defined not by their own will, but by waiting for others to take the initiative.

Waiting for my breasts to develop
Waiting to wear a bra
Waiting to menstruate

Waiting for life to begin, Waiting...
Waiting to be somebody

Waiting to get married
Waiting for my wedding day
Waiting for my wedding night

Waiting for the end of the day
Waiting for sleep. Waiting...²¹

Patriarchal religion has enforced the view that female initiative and will are evil through the juxtaposition of Eve and Mary. Eve caused the fall by asserting her will over and against the command of God, while Mary began the new age with her response to God's initiative, "Let it be done to me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). Even for men, patriarchal religions value the passive will. The classical doctrines of sin and grace view sin as the prideful assertion of will and grace as the obedient subordination of human will (female or male) to the divine initiative or order. Although this view of will might be questioned from a human perspective, Valerie Saiving Goldstein has argued that it has particularly deleterious consequences for women in Western culture. According to Goldstein, secular Western culture encourages males in the assertion



of will; thus in practice we may find that the male form of sin is an excess of will. But since culture discourages females in the assertion of will, the traditional doctrines of sin and grace encourage women to remain in their form of sin, which is self-negation or insufficient assertion of will.²² One possible reason for the denigration of will in a patriarchal religious framework is that both human and divine will are often pictured as arbitrary, self-initiated and exercised without regard for other wills.

In a Goddess-centered context, in contrast, the will is valued. A woman is encouraged to know her will, to believe that her will is valid and to believe that her will can be achieved in the world—three sources of strength and motivation to take direct action, sources traditionally denied to her in patriarchy. In a Goddess-centered framework a woman's will is not subordinated to the Lord God as King and Ruler, nor to men as His representatives. Thus a woman is not reduced to waiting for and acquiescing to the will of others as she is in patriarchy. But neither does she adopt the egocentric form of will that pursues self-interest without regard for the interests of others.

The Goddess-centered context provides a different understanding of will than that available in the traditional patriarchal religious framework. In the Goddess framework, will can be achieved only when it is exercised in harmony with the energies and wills of other beings. Wise women, for example, raise a cone of healing energy at the full moon or solstice when the lunar or solar energies are at their high points with respect to the earth. This discipline encourages them to recognize that not all times are propitious for the achieving of every will. Similarly they know that spring is a time for new beginnings in work and love; summer, a time for producing external manifestations of inner potentialities; and fall or winter, times for stripping down to the inner core and for extending roots. Such awareness of waxing and waning processes in the universe discourages the arbitrary ego-centered assertion of will, while at the same time encouraging the assertion of individual will in cooperation with natural energies and the energies created by the wills of others. Wise women also have a traditional belief that whatever is sent out will be returned, and this reminds them to assert their wills in cooperative and healing ways rather than in egocentric and destructive ones. This view of will allows women to begin to recognize, claim and assert their wills without adopting the undesirable characteristics of the patriarchal understanding and use of will. This is not, however, to imply that women invariably exercise their wills for good. Women have as much of a capacity for positive and negative thoughts and actions as men do. All I am saying is that in the Goddess-centered context, the will of women is not devalued per se as it is in the Biblical and theological traditions discussed above.

In the Goddess-centered framework the mood is one of positive affirmation of personal will in the context of the energies of other wills or beings. The motivation is for women to know and to assert their wills in cooperation with other wills and energies.

The fourth and final aspect of the symbol of Goddess is the significance of the Goddess for a revaluation of mother-daughter relations and women's heritage. According to Virginia Woolf, a sentence such as "Chloe liked Olivia," which describes a woman's relationship to another woman, rarely occurs in stories written by men be-

cause men write of women only in their relationship to a man (or men).²³ Adrienne Rich points out that the mother-daughter relationship, perhaps the most important relationship of woman to woman, a relationship "resonant with charges . . . the flow of energy between two biologically alike bodies, one of which has lain in amniotic bliss inside the other, one of which has labored to give birth to the other"²⁴ is rarely celebrated in patriarchal religion and culture. Christianity celebrates the father's relation to the son and the mother's relation to the son but the story of the mother and daughter is missing.

In patriarchal literature and psychology, the relationship between mothers and daughters is seldom considered or even mentioned. As de Beauvoir has noted, the mother-daughter relationship is distorted in our male-defined culture because the mother (perhaps subconsciously) believes her role is to prepare her daughter to enter into that male-controlled culture in which women are viewed as inferior.²⁵ The mother socializes her daughter to become subordinate to men, and if the daughter challenges patriarchal norms, the mother is likely to defend the patriarchal structures against her own daughter.

The bond of woman to woman is beginning to be celebrated in the new women's culture. Holly Near has written several songs that celebrate the woman bond and women's heritage. In one of her finest songs she writes of an "old time woman" who is "waiting to die." A young woman feels for the life that has passed the old woman by and begins to cry, but the old woman looks her in the eye and says, "If I had not suffered, you wouldn't be wearing those jeans/ Being an old time woman ain't as bad as it seems."²⁶ This song expresses and celebrates a bond and a heritage passed down from one woman to another. In another of Near's songs, she sings of "a hiking boot mother who's seeing the world/ For the first time with her own little girl." In this song, the mother tells the drifter who has been traveling with her to pack up and travel alone if he thinks "traveling three is a drag" because "I've got a little one who loves me as much as you need me/ And darling that's loving enough."²⁷ This song is significant because the mother places her relationship to her daughter above her relationship to a man, something that is rare for women to do in patriarchy.²⁸

One of the few accounts of a relationship between mother and daughter that has survived from ancient times is the myth of the Goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone. This story was told, possibly enacted, in connection with the religious rites of the Thesmophoria, which were for women only, and the Eleusinian Mysteries of Greece. In this story Persephone is abducted by the God of the Underworld and forced to live in the Underworld as his wife. Unwilling to accept this state of affairs, Mother Demeter, in her rage, withholds the rain and thus prevents the growth of all food until her daughter is returned to her. What is important for women in this ancient religious story is that the mother fights for her daughter and for her relationship to her daughter. This is a completely different view of the mother's relationship to her daughter from that which exists in a patriarchal culture. The mood created by the story of Demeter and Persephone is one of sacred celebration of the mother-daughter bond and the motivation is for mothers and daughters to affirm the heritage passed on from mother to daughter and to reject the patriarchal pattern in which



mother and daughter betray each other for the sake of men.

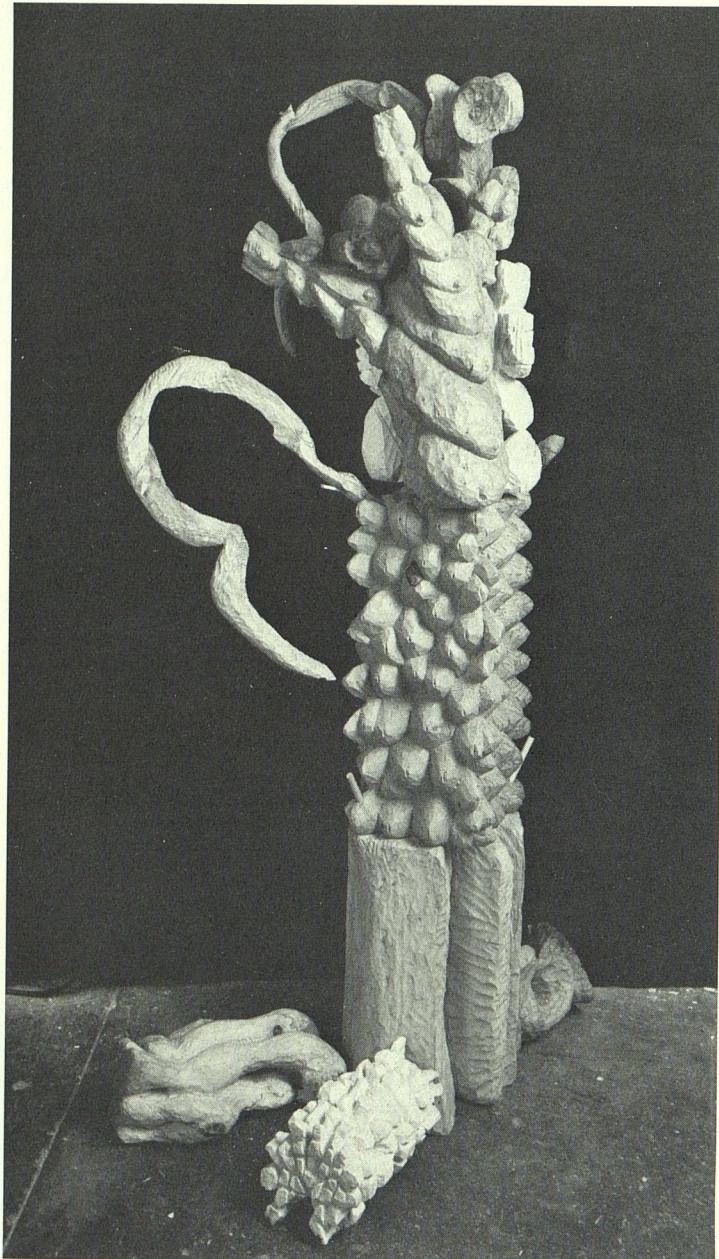
The symbol of the goddess has much to offer women who are struggling to be rid of the "powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations" of the devaluation of female power, denigration of the female body, distrust of female will and denial of the mother-daughter bond and women's heritage that have been engendered by patriarchal religions. As women struggle to create a new culture in which women's power, bodies, will and bonds are celebrated, the symbol of the Goddess naturally reemerges and speaks to the deep mind, expressing our new vision of the beauty, strength and power of women.

1. From the original cast album, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* by Ntosake Shange, (Buddah records, 1976).
2. See Susan Rennie and Kirsten Grimstad, "Spiritual Explorations Cross-Country," *Quest* (Spring 1975), pp. 49-51; see also *WomanSpirit*.
3. Starhawk, "Witchcraft and Women's Culture" (unpublished manuscript, p. 3).
4. Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *Reader in Comparative Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Lessa and Vogt (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 206.
5. Geertz, p. 210.
6. In Georgia Kaufman's videotape, "Women, Ritual, and Religion," 1977.
7. Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), p. 13, italics added.
8. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshleys (New York: Knopf, 1953).
9. Monique Wittig, *Les Guérillères*, trans. David LeVay (New York: Avon Books, 1971), p. 89.
10. Personal communication.
11. A term coined by Naomi Goldenberg to refer to reflection on the meaning of the symbol "Goddess."
12. This theory of the origins of the Western dualism is stated by Rosemary Ruether in *New Woman: New Earth* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).
13. Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (New York: Dover, 1971), p. 47.
14. See Rita M. Gross, "Menstruation and Birth in Rituals in Australia," *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (in press).
15. Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), plate 4.
16. See Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born* (New York: Bantam Books, 1977), chap. 6 and 7.
17. Wolfgang Lederer, *The Fear of Women* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1958).
18. See James Mellaart, *Earliest Civilizations of the Near East* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 92.
19. Barbry MyOwn, "Ursa Maior: Menstrual Moon Celebration," in *Moon, Moon*, by Anne Kent Rush (Berkeley & New York: Moon Books & Random House, 1976), pp. 374-387.
20. Starhawk, "Witchcraft and Women's Culture," p. 16.
21. In Judy Chicago, pp. 213-217.
22. Valerie S. Goldstein, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," *Journal of Religion* (vol. 40, 1959), pp. 100-112.
23. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1957), p. 86.
24. Rich, p. 226.
25. De Beauvoir, pp. 488-489.
26. "Old Time Woman," lyrics by Jeffrey Langley and Holly Near, from *Holly Near: A Live Album* (Redwood Records, 1974).
27. "Started Out Fine," by Holly Near, from *Holly Near: A Live Album*.
28. Rich, p. 223.



"Lady of Sports." Crete. c. 1450 B.C.





Nancy Azara. *About the Goddess Kali, for Pamela Oline*. 1977. Oiled and bleached willow, cherry, black locust, maple and fir. 7' high. Photo credit: Little Bobby Hanson.

no matter how long the winter is
thaw comes
season by season
we learn this
too slowly

no matter how long we have spent
wrapped in a frozen season
no matter how deep under the snow
the private grief lies
one day . . . thaw comes

we are never prepared for it

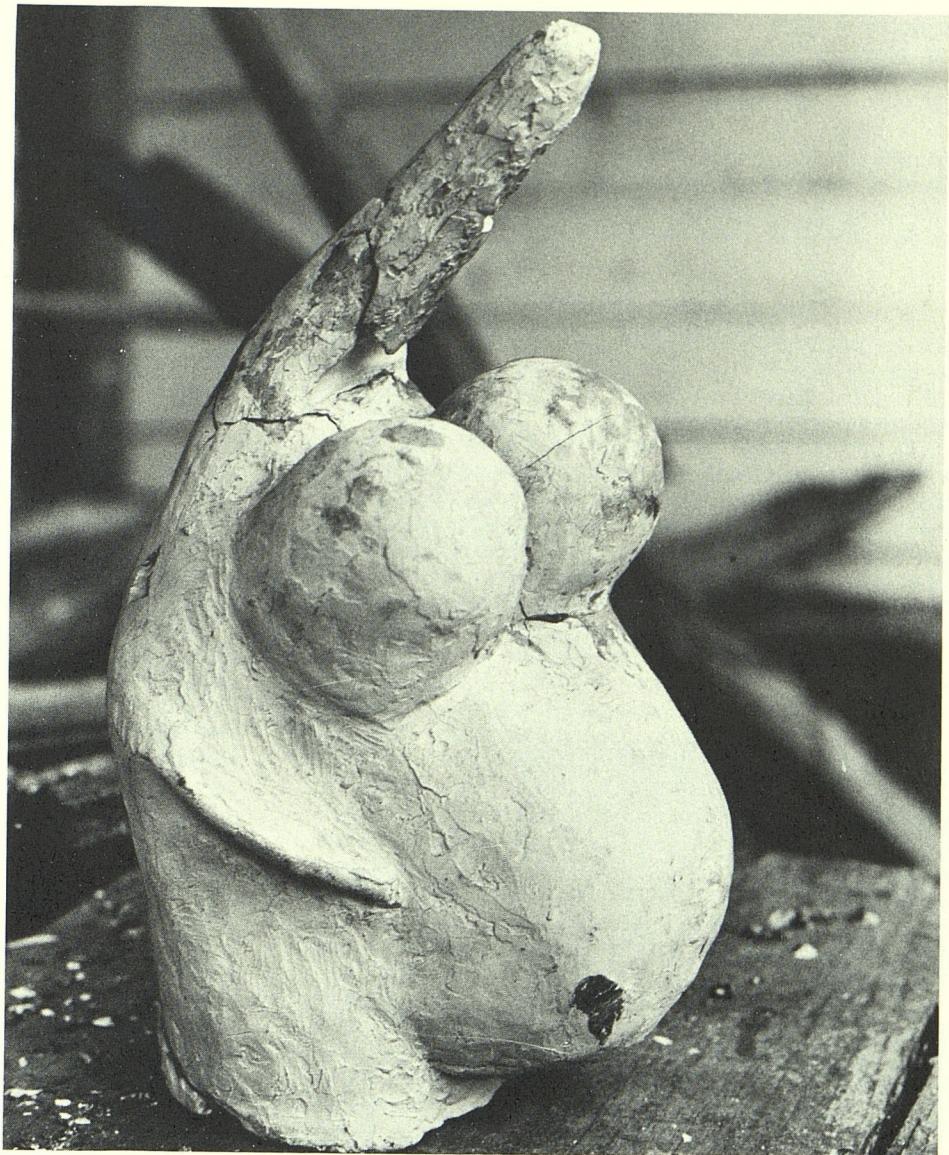
and what was once safe for our feet
changes
water released from ice and mud
and madness
and we open our eyes to earth-shift
stone-change
our eyes burning

everything thawing
thawing like a madness
rivers running
the earth opening

and all of our secrets
exposed

—Martha Courtot





Louise Bourgeois. *Frail Goddess*. 1975. Plaster casting for bronze mold. Photo credit: David Sher.



Linda Peer. *Small Goddesses*. 1977. Plaster. 5" varies.

Changing the Hymns to Hers

Toni Head

During the past five years of total immersion in the feminist movement, I have shared with other feminists the frustration of repeatedly running up against the stone wall of religious dogma. This dogma functions to preserve patriarchal institutions and to prevent the establishment of equal rights and opportunities for women in the United States and other countries throughout the world. Far from becoming more tolerant as time passes, fundamentalist sects are ever more rigid in their efforts to maintain the subjugation of women. Ironically, religious faiths, which supposedly provide the moral and ethical basis of culture, are stubbornly and irrationally opposed to the development of a truly just, humane, equitable society.

My personal religious beliefs underwent a cataclysmic change during adolescence, when overnight I emerged from an intensely religious period into what has remained a questioning, agnostic search for a satisfactory philosophy to sustain me through life. During my childhood and adolescence, I deeply experienced the damage done by the prevalent attitudes towards females. Perhaps for this reason, I finally found a possible answer in feminism.

Of all my experiences, the most fulfilling sense of unity and of purpose and belief, within myself and within relationships, has come from reading feminist literature, meeting, working, demonstrating, agonizing, organizing and occasionally celebrating with my sisters. Nevertheless, I still felt a lack, a sense of something missing. When my reading progressed to a number of books, which have appeared in recent years, describing the matriarchal cultures and religions that existed in prehistoric times, I began to understand why.

I tried to imagine what it must have been like to live in a society where people worshipped a female deity and where women held positions of power and responsibility. What would it feel like to pray to God the Mother? To sing paeans of praise to Her glory? As I experimented, in spite of my essential agnosticism, I found myself feeling a great sense of peace in the mere act of praying to a loving, female God. The experience was light-years away from the nightmares I had suffered as a child of being consigned to hell by a punitive male god. I also felt deep anguish to know that such religions had existed thousands of years ago, only to have been ruthlessly destroyed by barbaric patriarchal invaders.

When I discussed these ideas with feminists from other parts of the world, at the International Women's Year Tribune in Mexico City, at the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in Brussels and with women I met during other travels, they were as enthusiastic as my sisters closer to home.

The IWY Florida Conference in Orlando last July provided the stimulus to goad me into action. Mormons, Baptists and various fundamentalist religious groups were there in force, joined with the American Nazi Party, John Birch Society and Ku Klux Klan to try to subvert the conference. When they began singing hymns, I sang along but with one major difference: I changed the hymns to Hers. When they sang, "He's got the whole world in his hands," I happily warbled, "She's got the whole world...." When the conference closed with a recitation of the Lord's Prayer, I joyfully intoned, "Our Mother who art in heaven...." And when I returned home after the conference was over, I sent my granddaughter a new version of *Jesus Loves Me*, which is:

Isis loves me, this I know
Mother God has told me so.
She is strong and so are we
Fighting for equality.
Yes, Isis loves me
Yes, Isis loves me
Yes, Isis loves me
Our Lady told me so.

After the Orlando conference, Becky Berg, Florida State Coordinator of the National Organization for Women, asked me to help her conduct a workshop on women and religion at the Florida NOW State Conference last September. In preparation for this conference I began to think through some of the ideas that had been taking form in my mind.

The sum total of my experiences led me to realize that lack of faith in an organized religion had left a hole in my life which no amount of rational, philosophical speculations about the meaning of it all can fill. The fact is I enjoy the rituals, symbols, songs, processions, ceremonies—the full panoply of organized religion. I like to wear clothing and jewelry that express my commitment to and faith in my beliefs. I enjoy singing along with people, joining hands, performing rites and acts that physically demonstrate and symbolize my emotional, spiritual and philosophical self—my deepest being. But I also realize that I am quite incapable of participating in such rituals while being totally opposed to the doctrines they represent. There is no way I can take part in a religion that preaches the subjugation of women.

The answer to this dilemma then became so obvious that I am shocked not to have found it sooner. I believe the answer is to reinstate a feminist religion that can fulfill the human need for religious rituals at the same time that it celebrates our feminist faith in the ultimate good of

being female and invokes the Mother-God-given right of every woman to enjoy full freedom and equal opportunity in all aspects of life.

Such a religion would provide opportunities for women to meet together to take part in ceremonies and to reaffirm our faith in our feminist beliefs. This spiritual and emotional renewal would strengthen the bonds among us. Besides providing spiritual sustenance, the feminist religion could be a powerful tool in our fight for equal rights. In spite of the supposed Constitutional separation of church and state, the fact is that our legal codes are based on patriarchal religious dogmas and customs. The frequency with which opponents of the Equal Rights Amendment and other feminist issues quote the Bible to justify their opposition is evidence enough of the use of religion for political purposes. The doctrine of an organized religion that propounds feminist values as the direct reflection of Divine Intention is the ultimate answer to those who argue that a male god has decreed otherwise. Fighting fire with fire, our rites could help us win our rights.

The NOW conference workshop offered the opportunity to explain these feelings and experiences to other women and to propose that we establish our own feminist religion. I also offered a few specific suggestions that seemed positive. First, that the religion be as undogmatic and non-authoritarian as possible to best serve as a vehicle for expressing the thoughts, feelings, needs and desires of all of us. Second, that care must be exercised to avoid forming the usual hierarchy of clergy as separate from congregation and to assure maximum participation of everyone concerned in formulating and carrying out the doctrines and rituals of a feminist religion.

I do, however, believe that a formal women's religious organization would be economically advantageous in that it would enable us to have access to the tax benefits allowed to other religious groups. These benefits could help to cover the cost of clinics, publications, learning centers and many other aspects of the women's movement.

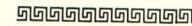
In addition to these considerations, there is one fundamental principle that I feel must be basic to our religion if it is to express feminist beliefs. This is the divine right of every child to be born to a mother who wants it, which in turn would assure every woman the right to control her own body and to bear children only when and if she wholeheartedly wants to do so. I feel that the act of exercising this control, whether by means of birth control, abortion or abstention, should be considered to be in total accord with our belief in "divine intention."

I would also like to see the physical fact of being female sanctified and celebrated. Since the aura of guilt and disgust surrounding female physiology promulgated by a misogynistic patriarchy is so destructive and damaging to women's emotional and physical well-being, I would like to see this attitude replaced by feelings of joy and self-affirmation in the inherent good of being female.

Generally, I would like our feminist religion to be positive, joyous and free of fear. Rather than teaching the dogma of original sin, we could proclaim the fact of original good. I would prefer a list of "Thou shalts" rather than "Thou shalt nots" and a philosophy of rewards for doing good rather than punishments for doing wrong. I would like our religion to affirm the intrinsic good of all expressions of love between humans, regardless of sex or of other artificial restrictions imposed by a patriarchal autocracy.

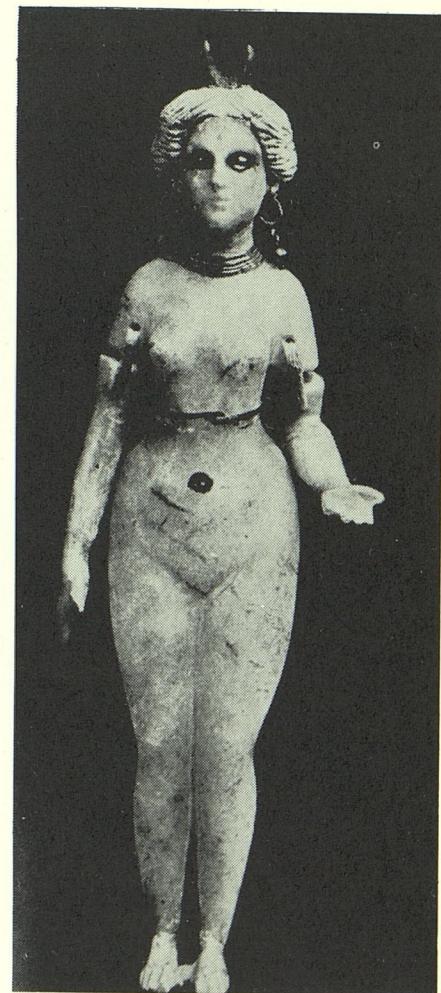
Along with the suggestions that have been mentioned, we would welcome a wide diversity of other ideas, according to people's needs and desires. These might come from Wicca, Zen or any other source that we feel has something valuable to offer us.

In summary, I would like to mention that the enthusiastic response of those who took part in the NOW workshop convinced me that many women feel the need for a religion of our own and I suggest that the time is ripe for establishing it now.



The Mother Church Inc. is legally incorporated in the state of Florida. Its members are now in the process of applying for tax exempt status. Toni Head writes, "According to NARAL, various Dioceses and Archdioceses of the Catholic Church contributed over \$450,000 from January 1976 to March 1977 to the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment to make abortions illegal by a constitutional amendment. That is only the record of contributions of \$500 or more. In order to protect the principle of separation of church and state, I think that there should be no tax exemptions for religions, but since there are, it is essential that we share the advantage."

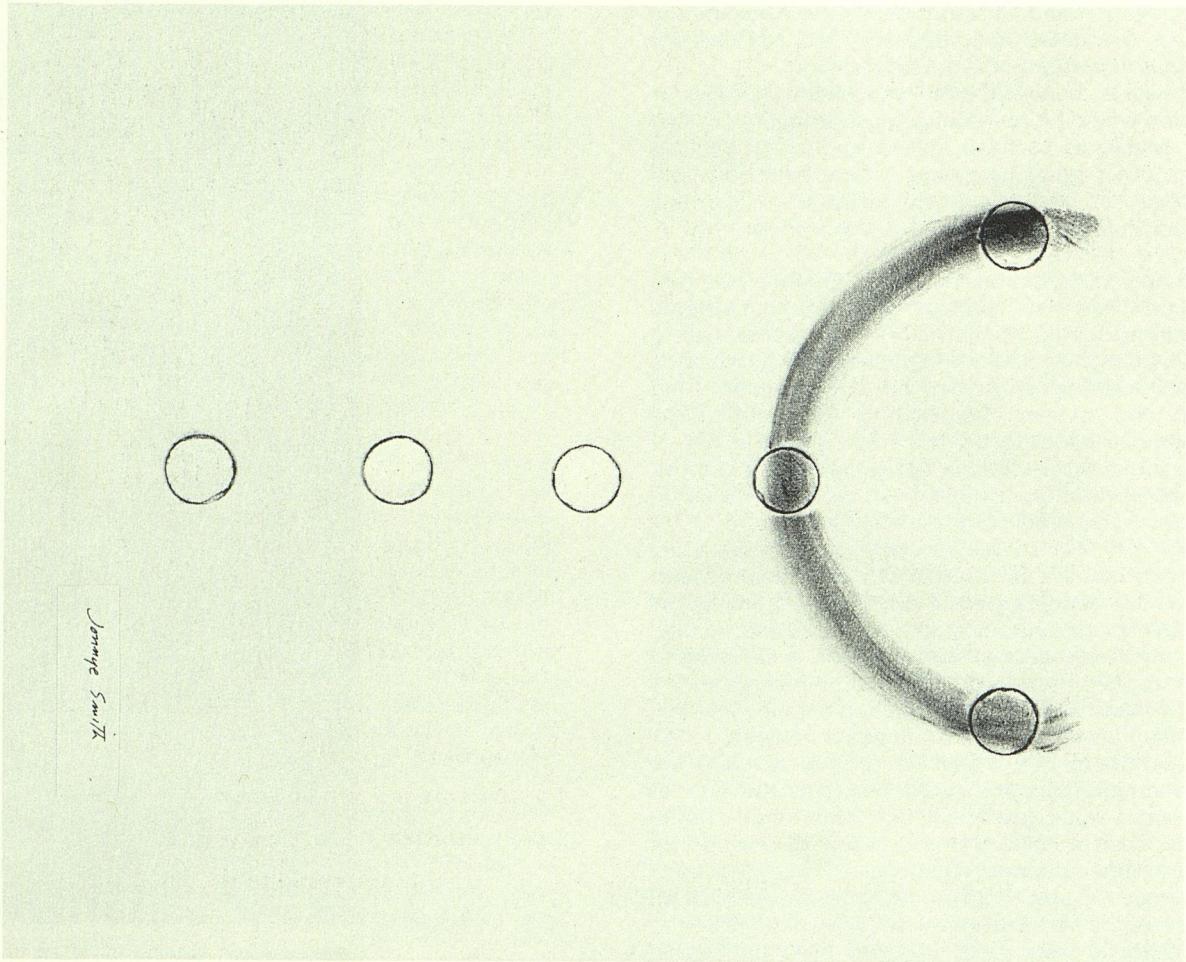
"The Mother Church Bulletin" is available from The Mother Church. If interested, write to: The Mother Church, P.O. Box 2188, Satellite Beach, Florida 32937.



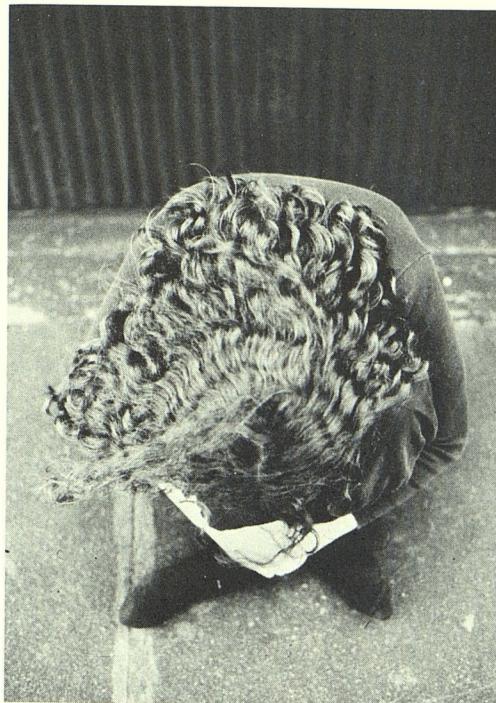
Horned Ishtar, "Lady of the Hand." Mari on the Euphrates. Early 2nd millennium.

Hathor. The Horned One

Hathor. The Horned One. call on the Cow-Goddess during all festivities of fertility, especially in November, and at times of joy and love, leaping and jumping. Use six dots to make Hathor. Cut them from paper, and sand the edges so they will hold the color. Rub them in yellow pollen or uniformly ground Egyptian yellow pigment made of some cow urine. Glue them to the paper as shown. Now prepare to draw the line. Drink wine from a goblet. Then rub your just two fingers in powdered graphite or any silvery substance. Place your thumb between the two top dots. Using your hands like a compass, imagine yourself drawing toward you whomever you have in mind. Draw with intention. Start at the right and draw with your fingers in a gesture as if to enclose or draw near. You have drawn a cup. You have drawn the horned crown of the mother goddess and the two phases of her moon. The cup is a breast and a belly. As your wrist turns you rubbed her maw and her nipple. You may say this as you work: Hey, didde, didde. The cat is the fiddle. The Cow-Goddess is the moon. The little dog laughed To see such a sport as the oldie coupled with the spooon. Use this one as an aid in conception and To cause all things you plant to sprout and flourish. It is helpful when you are entertaining new ideas or occasions.

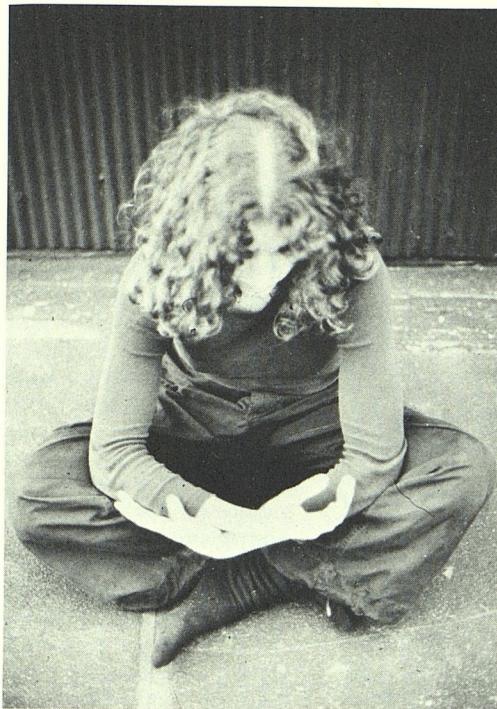


Jonnye Smith

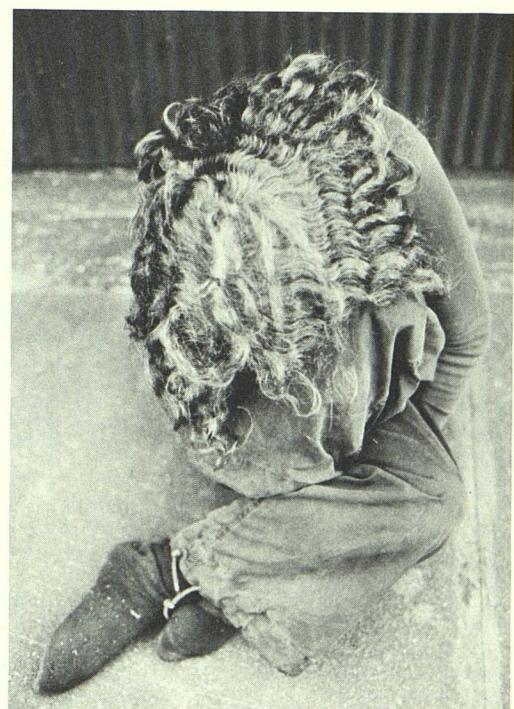


Stork-Woman
*The Dryness and the Fullness
of One's Existence*

Angels Ribé



**ciguena, ciguena,
la casa se te quema,
los hijos se te van . . .**
(cancion popular extremana)



**stork, stork,
your home is burning,
your children are leaving you . . .**
(Spanish folk song)

Contemporary Feminist Rituals

Kay Turner

Comprend, we sweat out our rituals together. We change them, we're all the time changing them! But they body our sense of good! — Marge Piercy, Woman at the Edge of Time

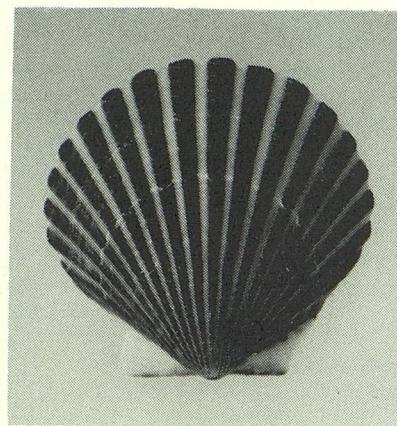
The body is the image relator. In ritual, we embody and activate images of the archetypal, the eternal feminine, the goddess. Images of power, of transformation, of harmony and of duality. One woman empowering another. The crucial exchange of gifts. I cross the circle to give you something; you cross the circle to give her something. And so on until we have all changed places. Power held is powerless; power given is power for all. In feminist ritual we maintain a center of which we are all aware. It is our collective heart which beats there. We hold together, our center endures. Even the most painful separation, the dispersal which is feared but necessary, cannot disconnect us from that ritual circle. Once that circle is created and affirmed, chaos is subdued. We survive. We thrive.

Although some theoretical attention has been given to the recent spiritual awakening within the women's movement, very little writing has been directed toward analysis of the use of ritual by women. What do these ritual acts mean to contemporary U.S. feminists? And what is their significance in terms of the women's movement?

Feminists are primarily at work revising the male-biased ideological bases of culture; some are now engaged in the creation of rituals to promote and sanction this serious turning away from the old to the new. As in traditional societies, feminist ritual provides an emotional, descriptive, intensified and sanctifying version of emergent ideological systems. Feminist ritual offers an imagistic revitalization for women, participation in the concrete, bodily expressive creation of new images of the feminine which will help alleviate the stress of a liminality.

The evaluation of culture by Michelle

Zimbalist Rosaldo in her theoretical overview for *Woman, Culture and Society* serves as useful background material for answering why women have created rituals as an expression of the need for revitalization and as an impetus for political action. First, Rosaldo establishes a model for interpreting the difference in status between men and women, a model based on extensive contemporary cross-cultural analysis of male/female roles and behavior. She states that "an asymmetry in the cultural evaluations of male and female, in the importance assigned to



women and men, appears to be universal."¹ This asymmetry is manifested in

the fact that male, as opposed to female, activities are always recognized as predominantly important, and cultural systems give authority and value to the roles and activities of men. . . . Everywhere, from those societies we might want to call most egalitarian to those in which sexual stratification is most marked, men are the locus of cultural value.²

Over the past few thousand years women have not been culturally granted a legitimate, overt way of demonstrating their power, their personhood. Only men define, possess and confer power or authority, and power is the

necessary ingredient for the creation of culture. Women are therefore consigned to live on the fringes of culture, locked in domestic zones which are rarely defined as part of the cultural territory. Rosaldo elaborates this point by using Mary Douglas's notion of "the anomalous."

Recent studies of symbolic culture have suggested that whatever violates a society's sense of order will be seen as threatening, nasty, disorderly, or wrong. Douglas has called this sort of thing "anomalous." The idea of "order" depends, logically, on "disorder" as its opposite, yet society tries to set such things aside. . . . Insofar as men . . . define the public order women are their opposite. Where men are classified in terms of ranked, institutional positions, women are simply women and their activities, interests and differences receive only idiosyncratic note.³

Women are anomalies in most cultures and have no cultural recourse for demonstrating the reality of female power. Female power is almost without exception displayed covertly under the rubric of influence or association with the right man. But Rosaldo makes a unique claim for the possible use women may make of their anomalous or liminal positions. Even though women's status is lowest in those societies where there is the greatest distinction between the public and domestic realms and where women are isolated from each other, "their position is raised when they can challenge those claims of male authority, either by taking on men's roles or by establishing social ties, by creating a sense of rank, order, and value in a world in which women prevail."⁴ It is also clear that historically women have taken on very active roles in social systems by "manipulating, elaborating, or undermining" their domestic roles and by stressing their differences from men. In other words, by giving special attention to their anomalous status, women have been able "to take on powers uniquely their own."⁵ Especially pertinent to our discussion, Rosaldo men-

tions the roles of nun, midwife, witch and religious prostitute as making particularly positive use of women's "anomalous" sexuality. "These examples suggest that the very symbolic and social conceptions [the notions of purity and pollution associated with women] that appear to set women apart and to circumscribe their activities may be used by women as a basis for female solidarity and worth."⁶

Of course it is most significant that these roles include the classic examples of women who have been allowed to utilize ritual means as a source of gaining and transferring power. Men have



tenaciously held the rights to ritual use since the suppression of the ancient priestesses of the goddess. In fact the participation in ritual by men has been their most profound display of cultural authority and their most direct access to it. The performance of ritual in most societies, "primitive" and "civilized," is a simultaneous acknowledgment of men's warrant to create and define culture and, by exclusion, a sign to women to keep in their place, a place which we have already designated as outside culture and without the symbolic or real attributes of power.

Here we see a further distinction between the sacred and the profane based on the asymmetry of male-female relationships. Men have claimed sacred space as their locus for effecting control over and/or maintaining harmony with each other and the fates. As Mircea Eliade has shown, sacred space is "manifested space," it is created as sacred by men and in most societies women have little or no access to it.⁷ Women live in the profane world, the world that is, the world that is incapable of being transformed or of transforming those who live in it. Of course men live in the profane world too (in fact we all live there most of the time), but when they choose to do so

(or when the "gods" command them to do so) they may enter another world, a world of the sacred, and through ritual practice they may take part in ordering that world and themselves. The sacred realm is that of being and becoming, a realm saturated with power and critically "off-limits" to the female half of the human species.

That women in the United States and elsewhere have begun to claim sacred space for themselves, to create rituals which emphasize their loyalty to each other and finally name the powers which men have found "anomalous" (i.e., nameless) is indeed an ultimate, radical (proceeding from the root) affirmation of the revolutionary potential of the feminist movement. Asserting the right to ritual means as a source of power, vision and solidarity is the symbolic corollary of equal pay, choice of abortion, domestic freedom, the establishment of women's businesses, etc. Successful and enduring change in the status of women will come only through the parallel transformation of symbols and realities. Feminist ritual practice is currently the most important model for symbolic and, therefore, psychic and spiritual change in women.

Here I would like to describe briefly a number of feminist rituals which characterize the kind and variety of expression this form has taken.

In her *Spotted Bundle Enclosures* Jody Pinto digs out old brick wells outside Philadelphia. At the bottom of these wells she leaves personal and found objects wrapped in animal skins. Next to these bundles Pinto makes a primitive fireplace with shards and cooking utensils. She constructs a ladder and leaves it down the side of the well as an invitation for others to come in. Reflecting on the creation of these ritual sites and her activity in them, Pinto writes, "The other day I spread wings/split a man in half/spent a year in the earth/excavated my own tomb/rolled over/cut out my heart/and ate it."⁸

Donna Henes's *Spider Woman Series* involves web-building in natural and urban environments. Henes defines web-making as the "most basic female instinct" and has made a personal ritual of web-making over the past three years.⁹

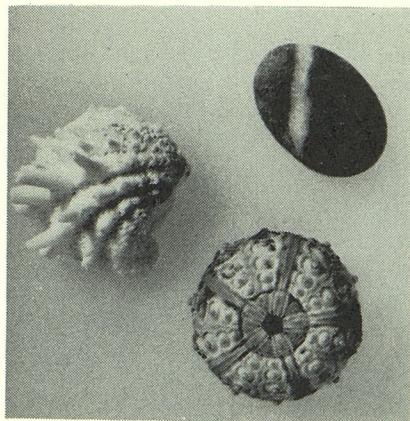
Margi Gumpert, a witch by trade and by faith, performs a specific ritual whenever she enters a public bathroom.

I often notice that the mirror reflects an image which makes me question myself, feel critical or dissatisfied with my appearance. I don't ignore it as trivial,

because I recognize that the mirror is infested with a very common political poison, virus hollywoodius or televisioniensis, subtle pressure to measure up to a pattern designed to enslave. Just to free myself of that pressure isn't a magical operation. But hundreds of other women will use that mirror. So after I have cleared my own image of that false cloud, I usually perform some sort of magical activity to neutralize the poison. I pour suggestive energy into the mirror, encouraging anyone who might look in it to see herself in her true beauty. I reinforce the suggestion with all the power of my will and call on the Goddess of Beauty Herself, blessed Aphrodite, to banish that which would deny Her, as She exists in all of us.¹⁰

A ritual for the Autumn Equinox is performed yearly by a group of women living in the country near Wolf Creek, Oregon

Let friends gather, each bringing with her an article which represents a recent accomplishment—some self-chosen task she has completed. Let a circle form and each one place her article in front of her, and next to it a fruit, seed or cone. Join hands and chant in unison the names of all present—several times till the energy is high. Then pause and chant the months of the year from the Winter Solstice to the Autumn Equinox.



Now let each one in turn hold her article while she tells her friends of her accomplishment and something she has learned from it. When all have spoken all shall pick up the fruit, seed or cone in front of them and picture inwardly the process of its change from seed to plant to flower to seed.

Again let each woman speak in turn of what her accomplishment has meant to her growth and how she thinks it may be useful to her self and others. At this time if she feels grateful, let her give thanks. If she wants to dance, let her move. When all have expressed their feeling, with closed eyes ask yourself "What is the next stage in the process of my growth?" Ask your inner self for energy and guidance to continue.

Let all join hands, moving closer into a hugging circle and repeat:

After the joy of harvest
After the work of the day
After the time of fulfillment
Comes the time of rest.
After the seed is planted
Nature takes care of the rest.¹¹

On the streets of downtown Boston a woman wearing a high feather headdress makes a circle of cornmeal, places three ears of corn in the center of the circle and begins a rhythmic chant naming the goddesses of the Americas before the conquest (Tonantzin, Chicomecoatl, Blue Corn Girl, IxChel, etc.) After the chant is finished, she calls on women passing by, invites them into the circle and blesses them by saying in litany form an ancient Aztec poem from the *Poesia Nahautl*:

Now o friends
Listen to the words of a dream
Each spring brings us new life
The golden corn refreshes us
And the pink corn makes us a necklace
At least this we know:
The hearts of our friends are true.

While the women alternate in speaking the lines of the poem to each other, they hold an ear of corn between them and tear the sheaves down exposing the fresh corn. This ritual has been performed from coast to coast with at least 300 women receiving the blessing since it was first done in 1975.¹²

In northern California several women have constructed menstrual huts as ritual retreats where they can go during their monthly periods. Painting the red quarter moon on their foreheads as a symbol of their special condition, they use the time spent in the hut for experiencing and affirming the culmination of cyclic process. It is a time for meditation and separation, but separation without the patriarchal connotations of impurity, defilement and unworthiness. The menstrual flow is equated with the particular power of the feminine and time spent apart in the hut is for personally determining the course of that power.¹³

The following ritual was recounted in *Sundance*, a journal devoted to the study and sharing of dreams.

In a past issue of *Womanspirit* there is an article by Hallie Mountainwing describing an overnight wilderness event attended by twelve women. The purpose of the venture was to share dreams, become deeper friends and explore the meaning to each of them of being women. To prepare for dreaming together, the twelve women arranged their sleeping bags into a "wheel" surrounding a central pole. In addition, each woman

had two strands of ribbon attached to her sleeping bag which were then attached to the pole, making a "dream net." The arrangement is quite similar to the May Pole and Sun Dance ceremonies; except, in this case, the people are lying down, asleep and dreaming. As an approximation to a contemporary experiment in revelation, a twelve-person "dream wheel" inspires continued exploration.¹⁴

By way of contrast and comparison, I want to present a woman's ritual which has been practiced on the Yucatan Peninsula for centuries. A form of this ritual is still performed today but the following account was recorded in 1930 by Basauri and translated by J. Eric Thompson in his "The Moon Goddess in Central America." The ceremony is called "the song of the roses," KAIK' MIKTE.

A hollow is made in a level place and filled with water. This hollow should be of sufficient size so that a woman may take a bath in it. The woman, who hopes to benefit from the ceremony is placed in it completely naked. Once she is in and the liquid reaches to the height of her breasts, they [other women who participate in the ceremony] cover the surface with flowers. Several women, friends of the one to be benefited, the number of which may vary, but never falls below five, take hands and dance around the bather, some singing and others saying a prayer in Maya. The dance lasts an hour, and during that time the dancers take flowers which they have already prepared, stoop down to moisten them in the water in which the principal bathes, and throw them on the breast of the woman making the ceremony (la solicitante). During the dance it is the custom to make nine turns in one direction, stop a moment to moisten the flowers, and then repeat the same number of turns in the opposite direction. When the ceremony is ended, the dancers retire, the woman remains alone in the water, and, on coming out, she takes a quantity of it, which she carries with her to employ in the preparation of her husband's or lover's food.¹⁵

Although the ritual is ostensibly practiced to make their lovers remain faithful, the beauty of the ceremony lies in its kinship with all ritual acts, both past and present, which describe the healing, nurturing effect of tribal sisterhood. The overt goal of the ritual is not the only reason for performing it; something significant is taking place in the act of performance too. An individual woman is uplifted and sacralized by her sisters, her *comadres*, her C-R group, her kind.

The above presentation of woman's rituals is by no means exhaustive.

In fact the range of expressive material in current feminist ritual sets is so diverse, multivocal and widespread that one of the major tasks of the historical branch of the women's movement must be to document the growth of ritual events. Someone must also take on the project of assembling what cross-cultural historical evidence exists of women's rituals such as the KAIK' MIKTE.

In "The Qualitative Leap Beyond Patriarchal Religion," theologian Mary Daly makes the following statement:

The Women's revolution is not merely about equality within a patriarchal society (a contradiction in terms). It is about power and redefining power. Within patriarchy, power is generally understood as power over people, the environment, things. In the rising consciousness of women, power is experienced as power of presence to ourselves and to each other, as we affirm our own being against and beyond the alienated identity bestowed upon us within the patriarchy. This is experienced as power of absence by those who would objectify women as 'the other,' as magnifying mirrors.¹⁶

Daly's insistence that redefinition of power is a central goal of the women's movement is crucial for understanding the use of ritual by feminists, a symbolic model for discovering how to give and get "power of presence." One woman empowers another (or herself) through reaffirmation of the body as an instrument of communion (not alienation).

None of the rituals mentioned above would be considered effective if a transfer of power had not resulted. Yet it is of critical importance to note that power is rarely considered an object of possession which the group or individual may get hold of during ritual activity. What is stressed through ritual is the dynamic quality of power, the continual exchange of gifts which heightens the affirmative identity of all who participate. Power emanates from within as it is simultaneously received from without. For women in revolution it is imperative to create an entirely new value system, the heart of which will be a dramatic reassessment of the use of power. Ritual serves as a primary way of affirming commitment to that reassessment. The ritual setting provides a place for knowing the easy, direct exchange and sharing of power. 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.

The word "feeling" deserves special mention in connection with women's rituals. In fact it is a word we must never neglect in talking about any ritual. Evan Vogt once asked a ritual participant, "Why do you go through the ceremonies? Why do you do what you do?" The participant replied, "To feel better, I want to make myself feel better."¹⁷ In the context of ritual women are creating a space in which to feel better, to feel more, to feel the past as well as the future. Perhaps most important is the way in which ritual upholds and celebrates the validity of feeling as a mode of revelation, communication and transvaluation. In some of the rituals described above the flow of feelings, change in feelings or sharing of feelings with others is a highly desirable goal in performing the ritual.

In discussing the reasons underlying the performance of ritual acts in the feminist community, we must underscore the importance of ritual as a formalized consecration of female bonding. The ritual concretization of the idea reflected in the popular feminist slogan "Sisterhood is Powerful" is extremely important in demonstrating the cohesiveness and commitment of the feminist community. A primary function of ritual is to connect the individual with the group—dramatically, indissolubly. In ritual the desire is to achieve shared meanings, shared resolutions, shared emotion, not to promote private images or dreams. The specific rites which comprise many feminist rituals reaffirm relationship, belonging and identity. Ritual acts maintain a symbolic center of which all the participants are aware. This center is a place to which one can return for support and comfort long after the ceremony has ended. A relational or ideological bond cemented formally through ritual procedure is nothing if not enduring.

Being capable of membership in a group and finding ways of expressing that membership and acting it out are necessary for the success of any political revolution. Let us not forget that less than ten years ago Lionel Tiger told us "women do not bond"¹⁸ and in so saying implied women are incapable of creating significant political institutions. It is already evident that women have effected widespread social change (to enumerate the accomplishments to date would fill pages) since the formal resumption of the feminist

movement in 1967. Ritual participation will no doubt stimulate further and deeper political change for there is, indeed, a continuum between ritual and everyday life for feminists. The female bonds established in ritual lend incentive to the female bonds that inspire social change. The use of ritual is significant as a source for the renewal of commitment to evolving and transforming society as a whole.

Many feminists in fact consider the ritual setting and experience to serve as a visionary mode. In feminist rituals which utilize peyote, a good portion of the night-long ceremony is given over to envisioning the future of the self, the group and the world. In authentic ritual experience something, an ability to break through the present, is available which can lead to discovery and creativity. Ritual is a potent source of invention because the participants feel the extreme intensity, sometimes the ecstasy, of openness to possibility and revelation. This sense of extreme openness and creativity is rare for women who have been traditionally circumscribed by severe limitation, con-

strained by custom, with no hope for a changed future.

Another important consideration is the way feminist ritual purposefully imparts information of a special kind, information which has been unavailable to women and actually suppressed for hundreds of years. I refer specifically to the ritual communication of feminine images, primarily the communication of images of the goddesses. The suppression of the goddess in our culture has meant the loss of images which identify personal and collective power in women. Invocations to the goddesses, references to



"The Grandmother." Ceremonial doll wearing dress decorated with silver ornaments. The *odas* spirit-being has power to protect the owner's health, in return for which she must be given a dance and new clothes every spring. Photograph courtesy of Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation.

their attributes, a reclamation of the wealth of literature which remains to describe them, the putting on of their symbols—none of these ritual actions indicates a desire to return to a golden matriarchal age as some critics have suggested. It is much more crucial for feminists, for all women, to uncover and recover their imagistic heritage (as represented in the powers and tales of the goddesses) and to create new images which represent women's recent emergence (as many women in the plastic and performing arts are now doing) than it is to prove the absolute historical existence of a widespread matriarchy. I have no doubt that some matriarchies did exist. The important consideration, however, is not the fact that women ruled over men but that they "ruled" themselves and that they had culturally approved or at least culturally active models for distinguishing their powers from others. In many ancient civilizations the feminine world was not as "anomalous" as it currently is. Women had access to powerful images and used them to order and maintain their particular spheres of life.

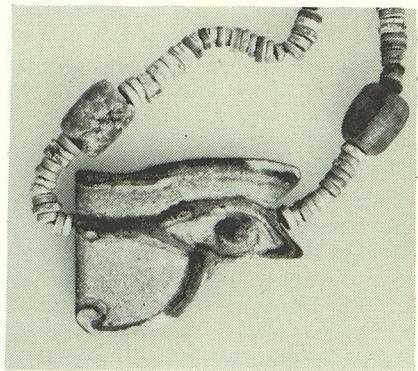
One of the most important shrines in the pre-Conquest Mayan world was located on Cozumel Island twenty miles off the coast of the Yucatan. It was dedicated to IxChel, the pre-eminent goddess of the moon, water, childbirth, weaving and love, who was equal in status to the great father god, Itzamna. Her shrine was visited by

goddess. To imagine is to make an image or become an image; impersonation of this sort was an achievement of relation with the goddess and a means of absorbing her powers. Images are sources of identification; they tell us who we most profoundly, most archetypally are. The Mayan women who visited the shrine at Cozumel were seeking affirmation of their own powers (primarily the power to give birth, to be fruitful) and they received it through the pilgrimage itself (the association with peers), idol worship (intense identification with an image) through the blessing bestowed by the personified goddess, the priestess.

Much the same identification is sought and achieved in feminist rituals. Ritual is a special vehicle of communication for feminists; ritual speaks a visceral language of restoration of symbols and provides an opportunity to utilize them personally. Sherry Ortner says that "Efforts directed solely at changing the social institutions cannot have far-reaching effects if cultural language and imagery continue to purvey a relatively devalued view of women."¹⁹ The imagery conveyed woman-to-woman in ritual experience is imagery that upholds the value of women and symbolizes the varied kinds of their power. If, as Vogt maintains, "Ritual perpetuates knowledge essential to the survival of the culture,"²⁰ women are just now learning how important it is to their survival to store and transmit feminine knowledge through ritual means.

Much of the available data on women's rituals reveal the prominence of one individual as instigator or leader of the ritual. This is not always the case as many rituals are performed without a leader, including rituals which follow a format and are repeated the same way every time, rituals which rely on group spontaneity, group meditation or chanting, etc. Nevertheless, a number of women in the feminist community have emerged as ritualists, the counterpart to the shaman in traditional societies. Most women involved in introducing ritual performance, however, do not call themselves shamans or think of themselves as such; they are most widely known simply as ritualists (or practitioners or witches if they adhere solely to the witchcraft tradition). The comparison between shamans and feminist ritualists is instructive only in demonstrating that their goals in performance are similar and, to a certain extent, their conception of self is analogous.

If the ultimate goal of ritual experi-



ence is to effect transformation (i.e., to change the order of things), in most cases someone must prepare the group to undergo change. A procedure must be decided upon (in traditional societies, custom determines procedure) and followed correctly to lead the participants from one state of feeling to another. Both the shaman and feminist ritualist make preparations and later facilitate the group's progress in the actual ritual; both are capable of helping transformation to take place if the participants will trust them. I am stressing here the fact that both shaman and feminist ritualist express a powerful sense of capability, that they can serve as links, as surrogates, that they can connect different realms of reality and facilitate change by embodying change. Both roles are played by individuals who have changed and are concerned with enabling the change of others. Eliade says of the shaman: "He is, above all, a sick man who has been cured, who has succeeded in curing himself."²¹ The feminist ritualist is also one who has been "sick" in the sense that oppression makes one feel sick. She who is now cured of the tyranny of oppression offers that new sense of well-being to others. A traditional shaman may become a "professional transformer" practicing his art as occupation whereas a feminist ritualist may rise to the occasion of transformation only once in her lifetime (although many ritualists practice somewhat regularly). Still, the necessity of their individual acceptance of their power to change is crucial to the ultimate effect of the ritual.

An obvious similarity between the traditional shaman and the feminist ritualist is that both do their work through performing (singing, dancing, displaying, holding, hugging) and, moreover, the performance is quite often geared to awakening and stimulating the participant's body. For both



women from all over the Mayan world, some traveling hundreds of miles from Guatemala and El Salvador. Inside the shrine a giant image of the goddess served as an oracle for these women pilgrims. The statue was hollowed out in back; a priestess would stand in that profound cavity and impersonate the goddess, become a speaking image of the goddess and in fact *imagine* herself the

ritualist and shaman see the body, not the mind, as the locus of transformation. The body is our first and last outward reality; it defines and conditions our life experience and gives us personal identity and continuity. Both shaman and ritualist take the body to be the clearest, purest expression of self. And it is that aspect of self which must feel change before the intellectual or soul self can change. A chant I used in a ritual performance called *Seeing the Voice* expresses the bodily concerns of the transformer:

My hands
Open the curtains of your being
Clothe you in a further nudity
Uncover the bodies of your body
My hands
Invent another body for your body²²

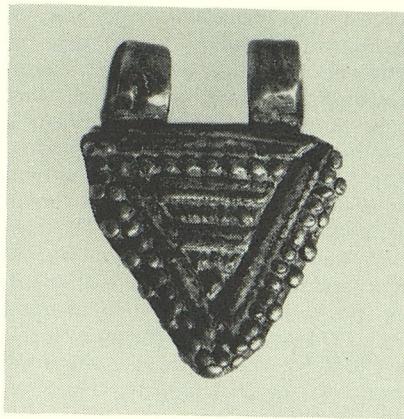
The body is also recognized by both, especially by the ritualist as the means for making conscious interconnections and unions that were unconscious or suppressed. Ritual, through those who perform it, creates a new body, one body made of many, through which can be understood and realized the extremes of fear and love, the truly political dimensions of humanness.

Finally, the relation between the shaman and his participant community and the parallel relation between the feminist ritualist and her participant community bears notation. Richard Schechner maintains that "the deep structure of shamanistic performance is a protagonist-antagonist conflict by means of which the secret wishes of the community are exposed and redistributed.... The Shaman is the vessel through which all that is powerful chooses to express itself. And these powers are inherent in community itself, are the community."²³ Thus both shaman and ritualist exist primarily within a community and the powers they exemplify ultimately belong not to them as individuals but to the community which is the actual source of their power. The work of both the shaman and the ritualist is to make available, clarify and intensify powers that are the essence of community. Transformation is useless in isolation.

A different comparison might be drawn between the artist and the ritualist. Here two items seem important: (1) feminist ritual has some of its deepest roots in the art of the 1960s and 70s which gave rise to ritual-like forms such as the 'happening' and (2) some feminist ritualists have come to ritual performance as a direct result of their

previous interest in manipulating symbolic forms in other media (painting, sculpture, film, etc.).

I said earlier that a primary objective of ritual is to achieve shared meanings and a sense of shared goals, not to promote private images or dreams. This is the crucial difference between the ritualist and the artist. The artist takes herself, her content and ability to express that content as commendable to the world of meaning and aesthetics. She is a source of new meaning, novelty acting as a basis for determining accomplishment. The ritualist is constant-



ly at work to leave the self, to become a channel for transcendent experience. Gathering the group members, nourishing their need for each other and themselves through the manipulation of dramatic forms—these are her aims. As Donna Henes once told me in a personal communication, "Making art locks me in myself, making rituals sets me free. I don't want to make art anymore." The ritualist occupies a unique space between individual and group, between self-expression and group cohesion. She is the exemplary médiatrix, simultaneously the weaver and the process of weaving. A quote from Octavio Paz, though not written with the ritualist in mind, helps to define the sense she has of herself:

I am the other when I am myself, my acts are more my own when they are everybody's. Because to be myself I must be other, go out of myself, seek myself among others, those others who are not if I do not exist.²⁴

This dynamic of self loss and group gain are epitomized as the ritualist's view of her role is crucial to the transfer of power which the ritual mode promises. The ritualist defines her sense of powerlessness by her capacity to share it with others while the artist

is concerned with obtaining power (through manipulation of media) and maintaining it for others to observe or partake of vicariously.

In stressing the communal nature of the ritual experience, it may appear that the concept of the self and its nurturance are served by some means other than ritual. As the examples given earlier indicate, some feminist rituals are performed solely for the purpose of self-revelation. From its inception the women's movement has insisted on the importance of realizing the way in which political change comes out of re-interpretation and reinvention of the personal dimension (the personal is political). All women have suffered the loss of affirmative, positive self-images as a direct result of their second-class status and consequent objectification in the male-dominant society. It is painful to consider the countless lives wasted, the talents atrophied and the sickness suffered by women who were never allowed, least of all encouraged, to know themselves and take strength and happiness in that knowledge. Surely one of the most highly regarded uses of ritual in traditional societies is the curing of "soul loss" of one form or another. Twentieth-century, postindustrial, special-privileged American women are engaged in ritual practice for much the same reason, metaphorically speaking.

For women, the ritual setting is often a place for naming individual powers and sharing the affirmation of those powers with the group or simply internalizing them through private ritual procedure. Ritual provides a mode for getting in touch with the self and staying in touch. Also, by definition, the ritual space and activity are sacred in the sense of representing the possibility of self-transformation. Part of the power and the fear experienced in ritual is the realization that one may change, become ultimately different, as a result of the experience or that the experience may suddenly make recognizable change that has been slowly rising from the depths of personality and ideology. Victor Turner states that "When a ritual does work...it can cause, in some cases real transformations of character and of social relationships."²⁵ I would venture to say that many women have been profoundly affected and, in some cases, redirected through their experience in ritual. A lost self is recovered, nurtured and allowed to emerge fully named.

Ritual facilitates transition for the participant in specific ways. As Turner

clearly states, "Practically all rituals of any length and complexity represent a passage from one position, constellation, or domain of structure to another."²⁶ This passage occurs in individual women most dramatically, and not without fear, separation anxiety and trauma. Before women can enter new roles they must leave old roles behind, roles that once provided the comforts of self-definition and reality structure. Ritual participation can ease transition by rendering it in dramatic, metaphorical terms and providing a support group to encourage and enable the necessary catharsis to take place.

The transfer of values from one framework to another leaves a woman just as vulnerable, suspended between two life styles. It is a dangerous time for the individual, one which requires the support of the feminist community and the use of ritual to promote ease in the transfer. Women are realizing that this is a responsibility and a desire: to help other women cross boundaries in their lives not as aggressive individuals, proving themselves, but as new members of a community who deserve the help and protection of those who have gone before. We have all been guarded and we must all become guardians. The ritual setting allows women to know the power of guarding and the comfort of being guarded in a space that does not demand immediate resolution of the passage crisis. The crisis period may continue through many phases of recognition, adjustment and readjustment, the assimilation of which will fall primarily on the individual. But the community has developed ritual means by which that transformation may be asserted and its painful aspects somewhat absorbed by a formal claim made

on the individual—a claim that she is new, that she is one of many, that she is welcome.

For feminists, as for other practitioners of ritual, doing the ritual is more important than knowing the ritual. The efficacy of ritual is always in the acting of it, in becoming bodily involved with the elements, not in understanding the text of belief or ideology which may underlie it. The essence of ritual is in physical relationship, one woman to another (or one woman to herself) in the circle they have created for each other.

This article only begins the necessary process of defining and evaluating the emergence of ritual as an important component of the greater liberation movement. To my knowledge, only Lucy Lippard's article in *Chrysalis* specifically deals with the meaning of ritual for feminists. No other theoretical material is available although movement media sources such as *Woman-spirit*, *Lady-Unique-Inclination-of-the-Night* and *Quest* have been documenting ritual practices among women since 1974. My sense of the importance of ritual for the feminist community comes out of an understanding of its historical importance for humanity. Ritual marks the ultimate ideal of relationship between self and community, the fusion of two distinct realities rather than separation.

FOOTNOTES

1. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, "A Theoretical Overview," in *Woman, Culture and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: University Press, 1974), p. 19.
2. Rosaldo, pp. 19-20.
3. Rosaldo, p. 31.
4. Rosaldo, p. 36.
5. Rosaldo, p. 38.
6. Rosaldo, p. 39.
7. Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964)
8. Lucy Lippard, "Quite Contrary: Body, Nature, Ritual in Women's Art," *Chrysalis* (Autumn 1977), p. 38.
9. Lippard, p. 43. Also personal communication.
10. Margi Gumpert, "Witchcraft," *Country Women* (April 1974), p. 27.
11. Jean Mountaingrove, "Speaking to Ourselves," *Woman-spirit* (Autumn 1974), p. 27.
12. Observed at the Conference "Through the Looking Glass: A Gynergenetic Experience," Boston, Mass., April 23-25, 1976.
13. Ruth Mountaingrove and Emily Culpepper, "Menstruation: Body and Spirit," *Woman-spirit* (June 1976), p. 64.
14. Henry Reed, Ed., *Sundance* (Spring 1977), p. 262.
15. J. Eric Thompson, "The Moon Goddess in Central America" (Carnegie Institute of Washington Pub. 509, Contribution 29, 1939). Cited in *Lady-Unique-Inclination-of-the-Night* (Cycle 1), p. 49.
16. Mary Daly, "The Qualitative Leap Beyond Patriarchal Religion," *Quest* (Vol. 1, No. 1), p. 21.
17. Evon Vogt, *Tortillas for the Gods* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).
18. Lionel Tiger, *Men in Groups* (New York: Random House, 1969).
19. Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?", in *Woman, Culture and Society*, p. 87.
20. Vogt, p. 8.
21. Eliade, p. 27.
22. Octavio Paz, "Touch," in *Configurations* (New York: New Directions, 1971), p. 63.
23. Richard Schechner, *Environmental Theater* (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1973), pp. 189-190.
24. Paz, p. 63.
25. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 56.
26. Turner, p. 238.

Kay Turner sent "Song of Black Feather, Song of White Feather" to the Goddess collective as a gift for us to experience together at our collective weekend. On December 4, 1977, 13 of us participated in the beginning of this ritual which ended our retreat. For 17 days we shared our knowledge of the body-close black feathers. On December 21, 1977 at the precise moment of the Winter Solstice we released them. This circle ceremony completed "Song of Black Feather, Song of White Feather" and commenced "Reverence to Her," a chant and Winter Solstice Celebration.

The ritual on page 26 is partially quoted from Sahagun's 16th-century rendering translated into Spanish by Angel Maria Caribay K. in *Poesia Indigena* and rendered in English by Edward Kissam in *Shaking the Pumpkin* edited by Jerome Rothenberg.

Song of Black Feather, Song of White Feather

Kay Turner

Friends of the Goddess gather round, seated in the half-lotus position or crosslegged. One white feather and one black feather are crossed in the middle of the circle. Proceeding to the left around the circle, each is given a black feather; the black feather is held in the left hand, upward.

Proceeding to the right around the circle, each is given a white feather; the white feather is held in the right hand, downward.

Maintaining this mudra of duality, the friends close their eyes in meditation and reverie.

The following poem is read, beginning softly almost at a whisper and increasing in volume and intensity:

Oh, golden flower opened up	she is our mother
whose thighs are holy	whose face is a dark mask,
She came from Tamoanchan,	the first place
where all descended	where all was born.
Oh, golden flower flowered	she is our mother
whose thighs are holy	whose face is a dark mask.
She came from Tamoanchan	
Oh, white flower opened up	She is our mother
whose thighs are holy	whose face is a dark mask.
She came from Tamoanchan,	the first place
where all descended	where all was born.
Oh, white flower flowered	she is our mother
whose thighs are holy	whose face is a dark mask.
She came from Tamoanchan.	

After this reading, the friends open their eyes and are given the following instructions.

Know this: The Goddess is Queen of Duality, the Embracer of the Two, our Lady of Inversions, Skullface Who Wears a Serpent Writting Skirt, She Who Loves Life and Death Equally.

The white feather is death. Go out and bury it; name some portion of your death (a memory, a disappointment, a regret, an ill-feeling) and send it down into the ground. Point the top of the feather westward, for the West is known as the "Looks-Within-Place, the house of birth, the region of sanctified women" (in Frank Waters, *Book of the Hopi*, p. 132).

The black feather is life. Keep it with you, body close, until the friends of the goddess meet again. Then go together to a windy street corner in lower Manhattan and each lay the separate feathers in a circle which will soon blow away.

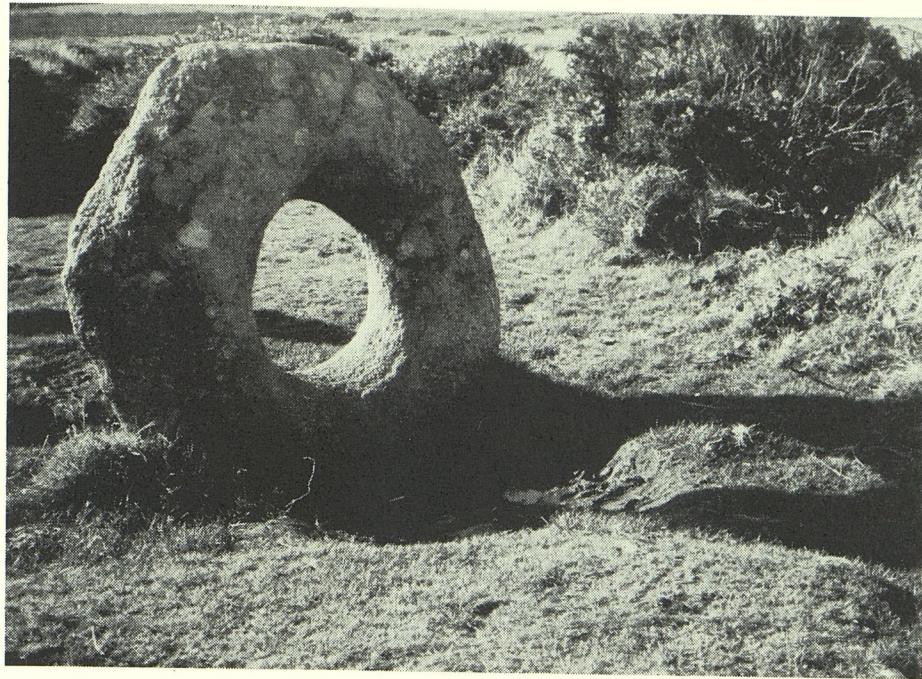
When he saw that Amaterasu was about to celebrate the feast of first-fruits, he secretly voided excrement in the New Palace. Moreover, when he saw that Amaterasu was in her sacred weaving hall, engaged in weaving garments of the gods, he flayed a piebald colt of heaven, and breaking a hole in the roof-tiles of the hall, flung it in. Then Amaterasu started with alarm and wounded herself with the shuttle. Indignant of this, she straightaway entered the Rock-cave of heaven and having fastened the Rock-door, dwelt there in seclusion. Therefore constant darkness prevailed on all sides and the alternation of night and day was unknown.

Stonesprings

Lucy Lippard



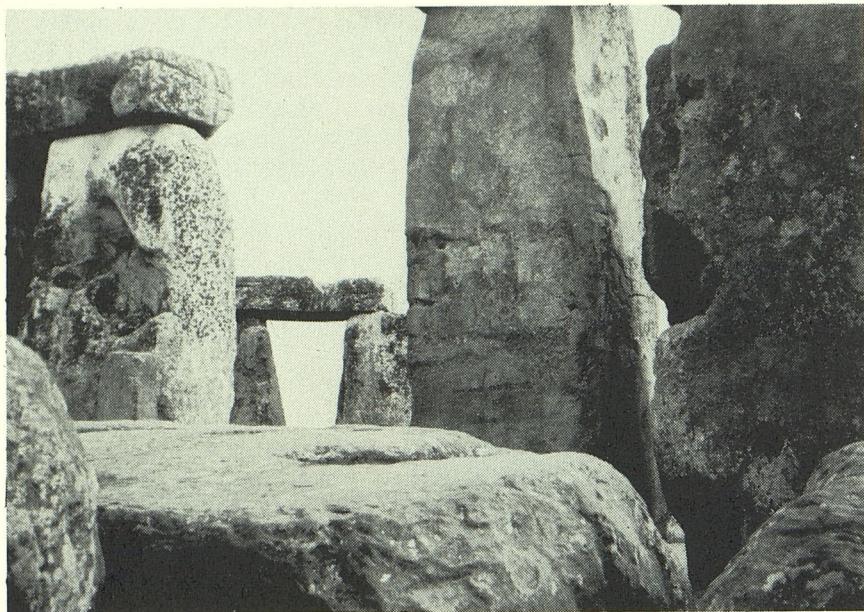
The result can be seen in the coating of rocks and pebbles perceptible in one lunar period, inert in another. In the circles the rows the rings the kistvaens the cairns the barrows the banks. In the beds of streams. In a line of ragged stones climbing the slope to meet a ring of ashes. In stone blades cutting the throat of the sky on some days, dulled by the mists on others. In the strain felt by enormous Earth groaning *my children you have a savage father he was the one who started using violence*. In execution sites and prisons where the spirals are reversed. But do not doubt the capacity of a high wind to transport the hawthorn may willow yew elm apple or hazel seeds such distances. *We cannot after all fathom the doings of Tiamat*. The stone has shared with its surroundings the conditions of estrangement saturation punishment sunken lanes twisted trunks acid soil and sucking bogs directed from the body below.



At first there was water everywhere. The peat is cut by convicts. Moss. Springy with thorns and yellow flowers. In caves above caves women have always made sacrifices, and if such a stone is broken an iron stain will be found extending completely across its red ash, its flinty luster, the iridescent film which forms on small pools. Being dried, being moved through the monthly bloodshed the red clay carved as the child knows the mother, all breasts hips, full and round, head inclined forward, lined with stones and mosses, leaning slabs beneath the mounds. Burned and buried bones. Excavated by a woman by a fox. A woman named Nameless. A woman named Restlessness after me. *Lo! Even the trees on high mountains near the clouds and the sky-father crouch low toward the earth mother for warmth and protection.* A root to the mouth of each corpse. Some of the stones have fallen in the bracken. Some of the stones have been lost to local gates and thresholds. Some of the stones have been blunted in the effort to push up from underworlds. Flat tops are male triangular ones female. No one knows. *Then even nothingness was not nor existence. There was no air then nor the heavens beyond it. What covered it? Where was it? In whose keeping? Was there then cosmic water in depths unfathomed?*

What an extraordinary sight. Succulent madness. The very absence of building secrets stolen from women by masons who hid the triangle in circular barns crypts stiles moorstones with holes cut





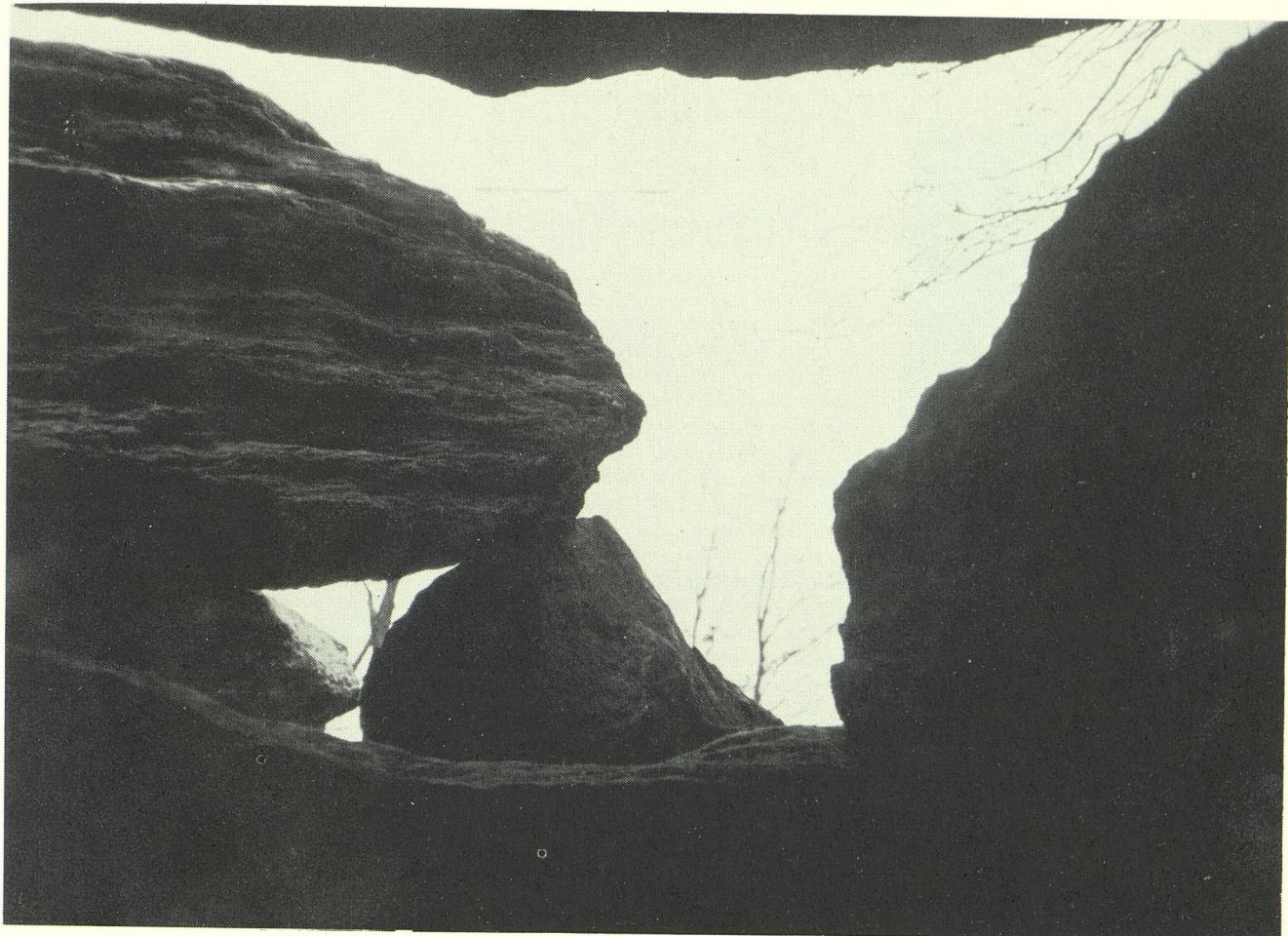
same way he had gone down under the earth, casts a great rock over the aperture. Husband and wife talk together for the last time, separated from each other by this rock. Izanagi pronounces the sacramental formula for separation between them and then goes up to heaven while Izanami goes down forever into subterranean regions to become goddess of the dead. A mob waving yellow flags follows. Two spotted ponies are trampled before them. The young one ran and ran and ran across a treeless horizon but the camera followed so she never seemed to move. A grotesque insect rose from her swaddled corpse. The soil is moist, self-contradictory, gleaming cruelly under a cold sun.

The persistence of the struggle for existence in an attempt to avoid twin catastrophes. The dialectical reversal. What has all this got to do with feminism, with real life? With wages for housework, with socialism, with patriarchy imperialism and the torture of women by fascists in uniform, with witches burned and wives beaten and little girls drowned, with the irrational objective? Those who regard the conquest of nature as a social goal pretend not to understand the stones. *It is but Tiamat, a woman, who opposed thee with weapons.* Draw a line from inside to outside and devour everything in between. That's what. It's the guts from which the screams rise, the roots of the rage.

Draw a warm bath and dream of scaling slimy cliffs. Because the snake is the only landliving vertebrate that naturally and frequently reproduces the geodetic spiral. Remember snakes coming into women asleep in the Spanish fields. And earthquakes. Because everything in the belly of the earth is alive and growing. Stone circles demand blood to become precious. Roses and

through and survivors. Too many little things growing. A poisoned well squanders thirst. *His dead wife pursues him but Izanagi, managing to escape by the*





crosses. That's what. Ripened tin becoming gold. Veins of petrified water threading their way through the twisting passageways to the swelling cavern. Through the web woven with silence growing anyway changing geological to biological time under an average rainfall of summer showers on the last day of the month alas. An earth caught between layers of water waiting for the spirals to reverse. In spite of holy wet divined with rods, the powers of knapweed, toadflax and angelica, haloes have shadows. Weaving animals mark the surfaces with paths. Wavy aquastats mark meandering stone lines. Labyrinths become dances. Feeling down. Looking up. Underground waters overhead stars. Why not a double alignment? *Satene drew a spiral with nine turns on a dancing ground and placed herself at the center of it. From Hainuwele's arms she made a door and summoned the men, "Since you have killed I will no longer live here, I shall leave this very day. Now you will have to come to me through this door."*

From the warmth of our skin from the damp of our sex from the thrust of our bone through our flesh over the blind springs where animals give birth to stone people between the notched peaks and I am living not by accident at a well over a spring in a valley on a hill within the metamorphic halo around the granite uplands, your stones are growing. *Petra genetrix, Matrix mundi*, we will vomit our desires excrete our sacrifices piss away our bitterness bleed out our triumphs onto your slippery lap. Our stench will spread through the porous ruin. Our circles will last another three thousand years, reaching from spirals of underground waters to their reflections in the nebulae. We suffer the diseases of granite and stagnant pools. Our waters cannot escape by surface flow but must raise mists, press the bloodstreams in layers that answer to sun and moon. Like the mistletoe our seeds are quickened only when dropped near blind springs where seeing is forgetting and the blades cling flat to the groundswells in the November gales and crystallize in frosts. Even the swarming fossils feed our impatience.

You digress. Of course. One fragment placed over another. No such thing as coincidence tunneling unnoticed unexplained through salty dirt. Unexcavated. Living in the present expecting the future and waiting for the moon to grow fuller and fuller until it bursts into stars in the past. The circles the rows the kistvaens the cairns the barrows the banks the rotting memories. Scraps of pottery, oaks choked by ivy. Mud. And celestial events under cloud cover. Question marks are hooks as questions are? It's antiquated romantic irrelevant belongs somewhere else. But I found this place by accident in the green rain?

Temples of the Great Goddess

Mimi Lobell

The Earth has thousands of sanctuaries dedicated to the Great Goddess. Some are caves inhabited over 30,000 years ago by our Paleolithic ancestors. Some are elaborate megalithic temples erected 6,000 years ago at the height of Goddess-centered civilization. And some are world-famous architectural monuments built during the patriarchal age but inspired by and dedicated to deities in whom important vestiges of the Goddess have endured.

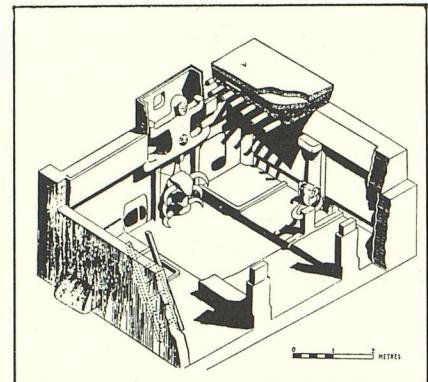
Originally the holiest places were those that nature created—caves, springs, hills, groves, rivers—for the Earth itself was the Goddess and her sacred places were analogous to erogenous zones or acupuncture points in her body. Here the configuration of natural forces and energy currents was and is extraordinarily benevolent to all life forms. Such special places, revealed through dreams, altered states of consciousness and identification with nature, became sites for healing rituals, prophecies, festivals and pilgrimages. In time, villagers who lived nearby constructed temples to honor that female power which had been channeled so generously through such sites for their benefit. The temples were not only abodes of the Goddess but also simulated her body or womb. Her temples induced her presence and in all probability people felt that she actually directed their construction much as an artist today may feel directed in the fabrication of a work. Thus it may be said that the temples of the Great Goddess give us a record of how she manifested herself. Certainly they show how she was seen by people in ancient times and how she evolved in different cultures.

We can think of the Goddess's sanctuaries as weaving around the Earth a network of psychic and natural forces conjoined for all time at the nodes where her temples were constructed.

Unfortunately, large sections of this precious fabric have been destroyed. One main way that patriarchal rulers imposed their authority was by usurping the Goddess's earthly power nodes, destroying her temples and erecting their own monuments. Many of these late temples, dedicated to patriarchal religions, still stand as "navels of the world." Much research and excavation must be done to unearth this superimposition in order to reveal the original matriarchal stratum.

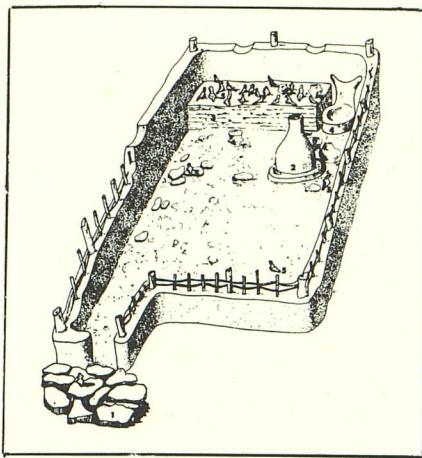
But the temples of the Great Goddess are not merely historical relics. Like the rituals from which they evolved they are living archetypes in our minds today. As models of eternal structures of consciousness, they can help us unravel the patriarchal overlay in our own psyches that has hidden our original source of wholeness and power. Most exciting is that these and other archetypes are spontaneously reemerging in the works of contemporary artists and architects and in women's visions for transforming the fabric of our lives, our society and our civilization.

It was difficult to select from the thousands of Goddess temples in the world only eighteen to show here, but this small sample represents the range of temples that were built to the Great Goddess starting with primitive sanctuaries of the Earth Mother and culminating in sophisticated urban temples to the Queen of Heaven.



1. **Catal Huyuk Shrine, Anatolia.**
Ca. 5700 B.C.

In the compact, multileveled Neolithic town of Catal Huyuk, 40 of the 139 buildings excavated were shrines. They were similar to the houses but larger and richer in artwork. Many images of the Goddess showed her flanked by two leopards as if they supported her during childbirth. In shrines like the one shown here, wall reliefs depicted the Goddess in a childbirth posture with bulls' heads below her—an archetypal representation of the Goddess giving birth to the lunar bull. The Goddess's upraised arms repeat the form of the bull's horns, a magical gesture common to later Near Eastern figures. In Egypt, the symbolic horns were linked to the ever-important Cow Goddess Hathor. At Catal Huyuk concentric rings were drawn over the womb of the birth-giving Goddess suggesting a primordial origin of the labyrinth. Breasts sculpted on walls transformed some shrines into symbols of the body of the Goddess. Some of the breast sculptures contained vulture beaks and skulls. In actual practice the bones of the dead were probably picked clean by vultures before they were buried in the shrines. The breasts show that this process was part of the continuous cycle of life, death and rebirth that was the realm of the Great Goddess.



2. Shrine of Sabatinovka, Soviet Moldavia. Ca. 4500 B.C.

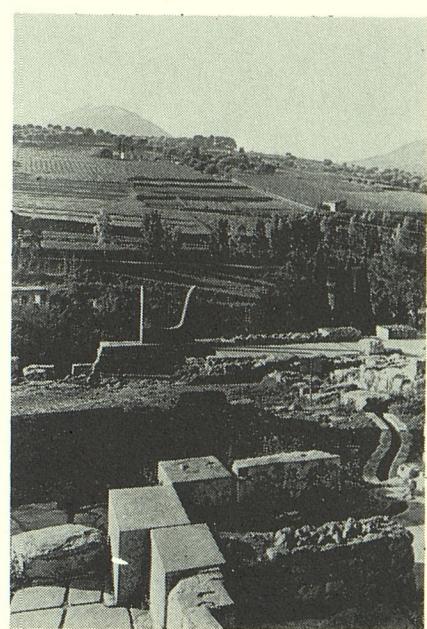
This temple from the Neolithic Cucuteni or Tripolye culture of Old Europe, described in Marija Gimbutas's *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe*, contained objects typically symbolic of the Goddess—especially the Horns of Consecration and the serpent. A total of thirty-two clay female figurines was found. "All of them are schematically rendered with fat thighs and a snake-shaped head. A few were perforated through the shoulders, but have no arms except one who holds a baby snake or phallus," Gimbutas writes. In addition, there was a large horned throne, presumably for the presiding priestess, and a large oven. To Gimbutas, "the association of quern and grindstone, with figurines portrayed in a seated position suggests magical grinding of

grain and then perhaps baking of sacred bread."

4. Horns of Consecration, Palace of Knossos, Crete. 2000-1450 B.C.

One of the highest civilizations of the ancient world flourished on Crete until about 1400 B.C. The important architectural remains consist of several fabulous so-called palaces and hundreds of *tholos* tombs. The palaces are free of signs of despotic power, and the lack of defensive fortifications in Cretan architecture indicates a lack of tyranny or military tension; this was a civilization that managed to achieve luxury without armed might. The palaces do display innovations that ensured a comfortable, sensuous environment: beautiful frescoes, sophisticated water and drainage systems (inventions often attributed to the Romans), multi-storied apartments with light wells and extensive temple repositories. That Cretan civilization was Goddess-centered is undisputed. Its Serpent Goddesses, sacred bulls, *labrys* or double axes, Horns of consecration and fabled labyrinth are now prime symbols of Goddess worship against which the artifacts of other cultures are measured.

On Crete, the Goddess was first worshipped in the huge natural caves in sacred horned mountains like Mount Ida, Mount Joucas and Mount Dikte. These continued to be used for sacred rituals and to be frequented sanctuaries even at the height of Cretan civilization. In *The Earth, The Temple, and The Gods*, architectural

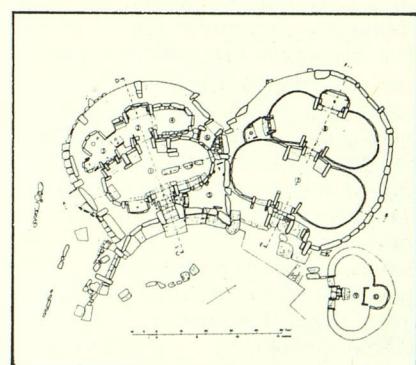


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historian Vincent Scully maintains that not even the palaces were of greatest architectural importance on Crete. He believes that their siting in the landscape was more important. Typically each temple, here as well as throughout Greece, was built in an enclosed valley and aligned on a north/south axis to have a view across the valley of a conical hill, and beyond that, to a horned or double-peaked mountain that contained a cave sanctuary. At the Palace of Knossos these features were sited/sighted through the Horns of Consecration. The proper siting of the palace accentuated the meaning of the landscape as the body of the Goddess. The valley was her encircling arms; the conical hill, her breast or nurturing function; the horned mountain, her "lap" or cleft vulva, the Earth's active power; and the cave sanctuary, her birth-giving womb.



3. Sacred Cave on Mount Dikte, Crete. From ca. 6000 B.C.



5. Mnajdra Temple, Malta. Ca. 3300 B.C.



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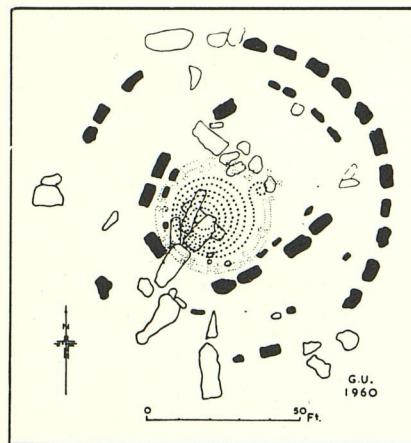


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6. Hal Tarxien Temple, Malta, approach to the Holy of Holies

The impressive temples on the Island of Malta are the most complex structures to have survived among a vast system of prehistoric megalithic monuments dedicated to the Goddess (see *The Realm of the Great Goddess* by Sibylle von Cles-Reden and *The Silbury Treasure* by Michael Dames). The Maltese temples take the form of the body of the Goddess more clearly than do any other temples. Colossal and diminutive statues found in the temples show that the Goddess worshipped there had the same shape as her temples—ample, rounded, generous; thus entrance into any of these temples was tantamount to entering the Goddess for physical and spiritual rebirth. The sanctuaries were constructed of huge stones using methods similar to those at Stonehenge. There is reason to believe that there were other cross-cultural influences, as the ubiquitous serpentine spiral carvings that dominate the entrances to the Maltese temples, and which may symbolize the telluric serpent, are also prominent in European passage graves and on Neolithic pottery. Revised datings of European and Maltese megalithic monuments based on corrected radio-carbon and tree-ring chronologies have overturned the orthodox view that these monuments resulted from the diffusion of "superior" Mesopotamian, Egyptian or Mycenaean cultures, and have shown that these structures preceded similar developments in the East. The Maltese

temples, so clearly dedicated to the Great Goddess, have been largely ignored and the finds distorted. As recently as November, 1977, the Great Goddess of Malta was described in *National Geographic* simply as the "headless 'fat lady'."



7. Stonehenge and its geospiral. Begun ca. 2200 B.C.

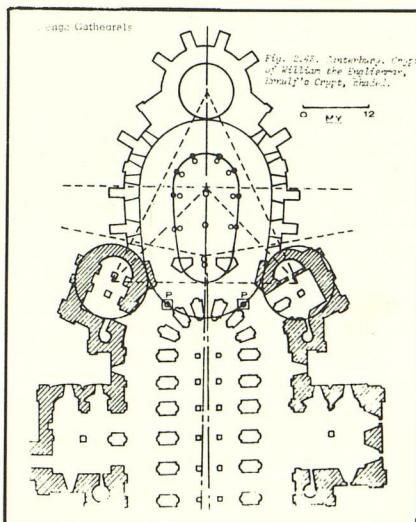
8. Silbury Hill, England. Ca. 2700 B.C.

Stonehenge was the culmination of a vast system of stone circles, wood-henges, earthworks and megalithic monuments that were first built around 4000 B.C. by agrarian peoples in Western Europe, Iberia, Scandinavia and the British Isles. Some-what similar systems were eventually built throughout the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe, the Near East, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. Male archaeologists were quick to assume

that all such works were the products of patriarchal societies, and indeed some mounds in some places entombed the remains of important chieftains. Discoveries of the mathematical and astronomical significance of monuments like Stonehenge reinforced the idea that they were built by a Sky-Father-logos-oriented priesthood. But now there is mounting evidence that Stonehenge and the entire megalithic system also mapped the Earth's telluric currents, named for the Roman Earth Goddess Tellus. (See John Michell's books). These currents are spiraling and linear configurations in the Earth's magnetic field produced by terrestrial magma, subterranean watercourses, the rotation and revolution of the Earth, and the influence of the sun, moon, planets and cosmic particles. Agricultural communities are particularly dependent upon these forces since they not only determine the weather but also profoundly affect the fecundity of the land. Detailed surveys of the telluric currents at Stonehenge and other megalithic sites were described by the dowser Guy Underwood in *The Pattern of the Past*. Among the currents that Underwood mapped at Stonehenge was the geo-spiral around the altar stone that delineated the magnetic field of a strong subterranean spring. Such "blind springs" were vital to both animals and humans because they had healing properties and affected fertility. They are related to the sacred springs of the Goddess found the world over.

Stonehenge was built in several stages. First to be constructed was the outer ring of fifty-six Aubrey holes that predicted an 18.6-year cycle of lunar orbits and eclipses. Correlations among the moon, menstruation, blood, water and tides, fertility, birth and the Goddess are primordial women's mysteries, and it is likely that Stonehenge's Aubrey holes came out of this matriarchal tradition. Their telluric significance may lie in the fact that lunar eclipses cause demonstrable disturbances in the Earth's magnetic field. Zoologists have found that extreme disturbances in the Earth's field, such as the periodic reversal of poles, cause the total extinction of many small species of life. The Aubrey holes may have helped to predict such subtle organic processes of life and death.

Women wise in the ways of Wicca intuitively knew that stone circles marked magic circles, that stone alignments facilitated the observation of the eight sabbats, and that earth-mounds represented the body of the Great Goddess. This intuition is supported by evidence recently published (in Michael Dames's *The Silbury Treasure: The Great Goddess Rediscovered*) that England's Silbury Hill, which stands near Stonehenge and is the largest prehistoric structure in all Europe, was built not as a tomb of a king but as the life-giving womb and all-seeing eye of the Great Goddess. The practice of building or visiting harvest hills to celebrate the First Fruits Festival of Lamas still survives today in some farming communities on the British Isles.



9. Trinity Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral, England. Ca. 1180 A.D.



10. Labyrinth, Notre Dame de Chartres, France. Twelfth, thirteenth centuries A.D.

The fact that Trinity Chapel is a structure having the same plan as the megalithic monuments at Woodhenge and Stonehenge, and was laid out using the same design principles, lends credence to the assumption that the chapel and corona were raised over pagan foundations. (Lyle Borst and Barbara Borst, *Megalithic Software*, pp. 18-19.)

That cathedral apses evolved from the cave sanctuaries of the Goddess is quite certain, but recent evidence shows that many English cathedral apses or "Lady Chapels" also reflect the distinctive egg/womb shape of henge monuments like Stonehenge and Woodhenge. The Borsts' drawing shows the geometry of the henge foundation at Canterbury including part of the pentagram that had to be constructed in order to lay out the ir-

regular circles. The pentagram was apparently a fundamental geometric principle of megalithic architecture from Malta to the British Isles, and may have been a precursor of the pentagram of witchcraft.

According to Henry Adams in *Mont-Saint-Michel & Chartres*, the great French Gothic cathedrals were built during a time when the "cult of the Virgin Mary" was burgeoning, when French queens were powerful, when women participated quite fully in medieval society (there are records of payments to female quarry owners and to women laborers who took part in building the cathedrals), and when European culture was being fertilized by passionate pagan legends dressed up as the literature of courtly love. In silent testimony to their matrilineal origins, nearly all French Gothic cathedrals had a stone labyrinth pattern in the floors of their naves. Most of the labyrinths were removed during the super-rational Age of Enlightenment; however, the one at Chartres has survived.

11. Ziggurat in the Eanna at Erech, Sumer. Third millennium B.C.

A crumbling mound is nearly all that remains of Eanna, the complex temple precinct in the once great city of Erech (Uruk). Eanna was the most important of several sacred centers of Inanna, the Sumerian Queen of Heaven (Ishtar in Babylon). It was in Eanna that the earliest writing was discovered — records dated before 3000 B.C. kept by scribe priestesses who managed the extensive business and real estate holdings of the temple. (see *When God Was A Woman* by Merlin Stone). Later writings describing Inanna's Sacred Marriage Rite (see S.N. Kramer) are among the most truly erotic poems ever written and pre-figure Solomon's *Song of Songs*. This



rite occurred at the New Year when Inanna, or her priestess surrogate, copulated with the king making him her consort, Dumuzi, thereby bestowing on him power to rule as king. Inanna as the Queen of Heaven was the supreme source of power, and her union with the king took place at the summit of the world mountain in the temple atop the ziggurat.

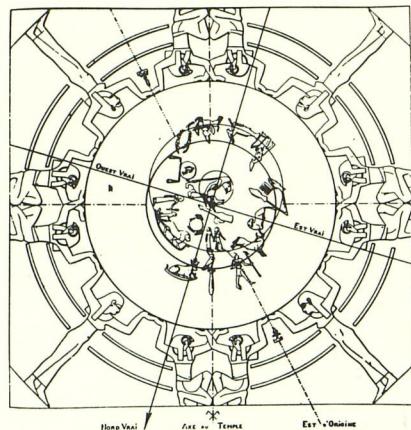
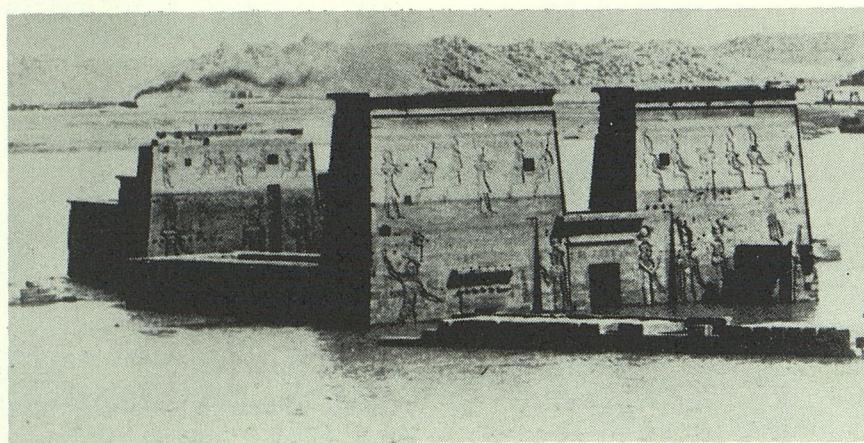
References to Inanna's temples in the story of her descent into the netherworld give us another indication of her power. When she descended, wanting to be Queen of the "Great Below" as well as Queen of the "Great Above," she is described as abandoning heaven, earth and seven of her major temples, and fastening the seven *me* to her side. The *me* were all-important to Sumerians as "the divine rules and regulations that keep the universe operating as planned." (Kramer, p. 167.) Elsewhere Inanna is named as "Queen of all the *me*." The naming of Inanna's seven temples and her mastery of the seven *me* suggest power over the seven visible "planets" which were believed to regulate the entire universe and course of human events. This belief was the accepted cosmological theory until the Renaissance, and even today it figures in astrology and in the yogic *chakra* system. The seven temples of Inanna were probably a symbolic architectural representation on Earth of the order of the Universe above. Queen of Heaven Inanna was indeed!

12. Temple of Isis, Philae, Egypt. Fourth to second centuries B.C.

The tiny island of Philae, near the First Cataract of Aswan on the Nile, was long a sanctuary for travelers;

dedicatory inscriptions on nearby rocks date from as early as 2280 B.C. This great center of healing was covered with temples dedicated to various divinities, the most important of which was Isis. Nubian inscriptions mention the oracles of Isis which had for centuries been revealed through dreams to those who slept in the great rock pylon temple (see Jayne, *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations*, pp. 30, 67). This temple was said to be the most beautiful Iseum in all of Egypt. Philae became the foremost center of Isis worship in the ancient world, and by Ptolemaic times was the principal holy site of Egypt.

The protected island was the last stronghold of Goddess worship after Christian Rome either sealed or destroyed all the pagan temples in the Empire. In the mid-fifth century A.D., a local Nubian tribe still continued their ancient annual tradition of transporting the temple's sacred image of Isis by boat to the fertile hills on the opposite shore where she presided over their harvest rites (see R.E. Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World*, p. 62). It is no surprise then that Philae continued to be a sanctuary for Nubians and desert peoples until the modern reservoir created by the Aswan Dam submerged the island and the nearby ancestral homelands of the relatively matriarchal Nubians. The first structure to be saved from the threatening dam system was, of course, Abu Simbel, the pompous monument of the despotic pharaoh Ramesses II, but work is now underway to dismantle the Temple of Isis which will be rebuilt on the island of Agilkia 500 yards away.



13. The Zodiac of Dendera

14. Egyptian Drawing of the Temple of Dendera as the Horns of Consecration

The great Temple of Dendera was built very late in Egyptian civilization and was dedicated to Hathor. As one of the most enduring of Goddesses, Hathor was first worshipped as the lunar cow at a time in prehistory when animals were revered more than humans. The structures surrounding her temple, while by no means unique to Dendera, retain some undying matriarchal associations. They include a sacred lake, a building for divine healing, two birth houses, two wells and a small temple of Isis. By late pharaonic times most large temples, whether dedicated to goddesses or gods, had these features and all were imbued with magical, mythological and political significance. For instance the birth houses celebrated the holy birth of the pharaoh and sanctioned her or his divine authority to rule. This was usually shown through images of the pharaoh suckling Hathor's udders. Through her milk, Hathor bestowed the power and life-sustenance that was the matrix of the universe. By the time Dendera was built, the image of the suckling king had probably been subverted politically to maintain the surface myth of matriarchal royal descent while actually strengthening the power of an evolving patriarchal order.

The enduring testimony of Hathor's worship provides a valuable transitional record that can greatly aid attempts to restore women's heritage. For example, the drawing of the Temple of Dendera as the Horns of Consecration with Hathor ascending on the horizon bathed in the solar rays emanating from the Sky Goddess Nut, is rich in universal Goddess imagery. The Horns of Consecration recall the

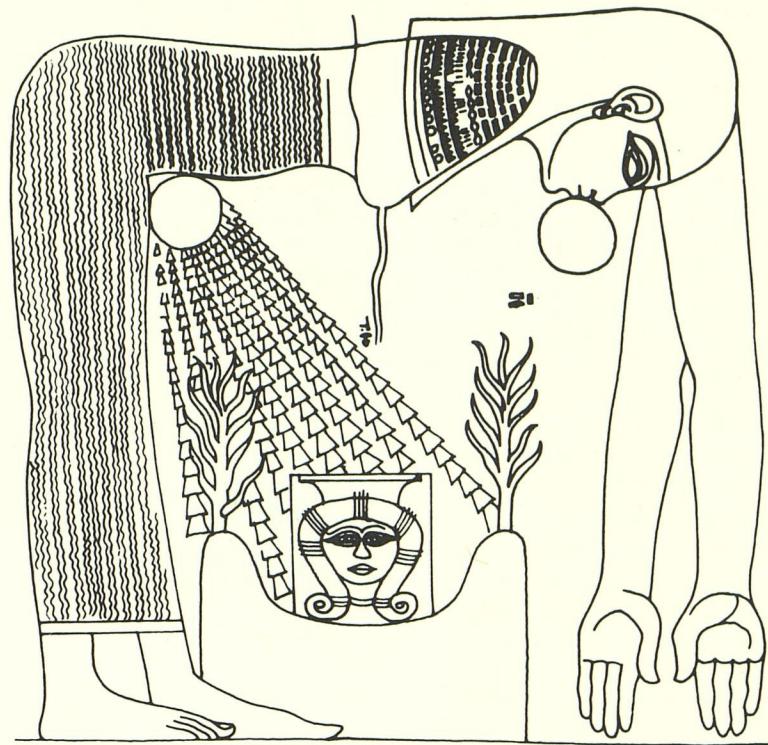
horns of Catal Huyuk, Sabatinovka, Beycesultan, Knossos, and even of Sumer where early temples are shown with horns and the sacred crown consisted of tiers of horns (the tiers being related to the levels of the ziggurats and possibly to the yogic conception of chakra-levels of consciousness). Hathor's horns may also be archetypally related to Paleolithic moon/menstruation/blood/bull mysteries and to some of the earliest art ever produced, such as that found in the Hall of Bulls at Lascaux, France.

Of interest at Dendera are the many Hathor-headed columns in the Great Vestibule. There are two sets of nine columns, each surmounted by four Hathor-heads which face in the four directions and symbolize universal power. (Unfortunately every single head was mutilated long ago by Christian fanatics.) The famous Zodiac of Dendera and other celestial maps and symbols decorated the temple ceilings to honor Hathor as the Celestial Cow. The Zodiac was complete with all the astrological signs still in use today, and its precise orientation helped to date the temple because of the axial shift occasioned by the precession of the equinoxes.



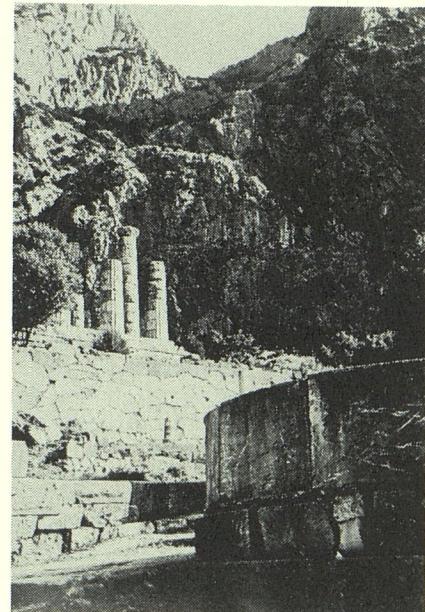
15. Eleusis with the Plutonium, Greece. First millennium B.C.

Eleusis was the site of the great temple and altar that Demeter commanded to be built to teach her rites and to reveal the secrets of immortality. It was also the site where she was reunited with her daughter Persephone, who had been abducted into



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the underworld by Hades and who re-emerged through the Plutonium cave. The nine day cycle of the Eleusinian Mysteries, during which the myths of Demeter and Persephone were probably reenacted, was the center of Greek religious life for centuries. Though thousands were initiated into the mysteries each year, they were sworn to strictest secrecy. Even today little is known about the rites. What few facts have been deduced do not adequately reveal the true emotional and spiritual power that made the Eleusinian Mysteries so revered. Though no details of the rites were ever written down, there were references to their effects in the *Homeric Hymns* and other writings. Various scholars have speculated that the Mysteries created a sense of bliss by revealing the biological, agricultural and spiritual continuity of life. At a time when patriarchy was omnipotent, the Eleusinian Mysteries reabsorbed people into the great round of natural matrilineal cycles. Over the centuries the temple was expanded several times to accommodate elaborations in the rites and the growing numbers of initiates; however, like all pagan sanctuaries, Eleusis was eventually destroyed by Christians. Today only the ruins of Demeter's great temple remain as one of the precious few records of her Mysteries.



16. Oracle of Delphi, Greece. First millennium B.C.

Long before the influential oracular site of Delphi was seized by Apollo, it was a sacred part of the body of the Earth Mother Gaea. From a seismic cleft in this "body of Gaea," exuded intoxicating gases that induced pro-

phetic visions. Apollo killed the great Python, protector of the site; thereafter Pythia, the priestess who pronounced the prophecies, spoke for Apollo rather than Gaea. The original site now lies buried beneath Apollo's temple.

The theme of male gods and heroes slaying serpents or dragons to gain control of matriarchal realms is universal in mythology. The serpent is usually interpreted as a symbol of unconscious instinctual drives that must be conquered to achieve human consciousness, but other interpretations are possible. Merlin Stone argues in *When God Was a Woman* that the serpent may have been an aid to prophecy. She cites a recent study showing that people who have been immunized by gradual exposure to snake-bite do not die when bitten by a venomous serpent, but rather experience prophetic psychedelic visions. We could conclude that the male heroes were slaying the visionary feminine imagination (i.e. the Python) in order to impose the rational masculine mind (i.e. Apollo).

Another interpretation is that the serpent-slayer myth encapsulates a long and bloody conflict between the indigenous Aegean Stone and Bronze Age matriarchal culture, which focused on living in harmony with the Earth's telluric currents (symbolized by the serpent), and the invading patriarchal Indo-European culture, which virtually worshipped metal (symbolized by the serpent-slayer). The Indo-Europeans were crude iron-workers and warriors. They worshipped a god of volcanic mountains, and their most esteemed citizen was the blacksmith. Horse-drawn chariots and iron weapons made them formidable conquerors, and wherever they went, from Europe to India, their assimilation marked the beginning of the Iron Age. According to dowsers, ferrous metals nullify all sensitivity to the telluric currents. The serpent-slayer myth, then, could be a vivid image of the destruction of the whole matriarchal way of life. It encodes the earliest instances of the contempt for nature that has become so much a part of the patriarchy's technological imperative—and such an anathema to the female soul.

17. The Parthenon, reconstruction of Athene's Statue, Greece. 447-432 B.C.

The Parthenon is the most celebrated Goddess temple in the world. Jewel of the Acropolis, it epitomized the



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glory of Athens, Athene's city, and the whole of the classical world. For 2500 years it has remained the architectural ideal of Western civilization. The Parthenon was named for and dedicated to Athene Parthenos. *Parthenos*, meaning "virgin" as in parthenogenesis, ("virgin birth"), traditionally did not mean "celibate" but rather, unmarried, complete-in-herself, self-creating. A virgin gave birth to herself, not babies, and to culture. Plato alluded to this when he said that those who are pregnant in the body give birth to children; those who are pregnant in the soul give birth to culture. Because Athene had always been a virgin culture-bearer as opposed to a wifely child-bearer, the Indo-Europeans could not convincingly domesticate her, as they had the other goddesses, by marrying her to Zeus. Finally, through the ingenious contrivance of making her Zeus's daughter, born from his head, they corrupted her to serve their ends. She was turned into a Goddess of War who sanctioned bloody battles against even her own sisters, the Amazons. She was portrayed aiding all the heroes as they slew the serpents, Gorgons and other symbols of matriarchal order. Her temple was absolutely devoid of traditional Goddess imagery. Beautiful as it was, it had no caves, apses, egg/wombs, or Horns of Consecration —only rational mathematical proportions.

A monumental statue of Athene that has not survived dominated the Parthenon. However, conjectural reconstructions of it show Athene with

the Gorgon's head around her neck like a trophy or psychological shadow. Her great serpent, warrior's shield and spear are at her side as references to both the telluric serpent and Iron Age weapons, and in her hand she holds a crystal ball. Her image could represent either a true matriarchal Goddess or an anima figure—the symbol of feminine consciousness as experienced by men. (This revised Athene was, after all, born from Zeus's head).

As overseer of the dominating telluric serpents and wearer of the Gorgon's head, Athene appears to represent the spiritualization of telluric or Kundalini energy. Kundalini symbolizes in Hindu philosophy the serpent-energy of the Goddess who, through a series of yogic exercises, is made to ascend the spinal column to elicit pure consciousness. The Western counterpart is the psychoanalytical channeling of the contents of the unconscious into consciousness to achieve self-knowledge. As the self-creating Goddess of Wisdom, Athene seems to combine the two traditions. Pure consciousness (wisdom, self-knowledge) is symbolized in Tibetan Buddhism by the "Jewel Ornament of the Liberation" and in Chinese art by a crystal in the claw of the telluric dragon. Was it symbolized in classical Greece by the crystal in Athene's hand? And is the Parthenon's pristine geometry a monument to the minds of the men who sapped Athene's power or is it a monument to a form of pure consciousness inherent in the Great Goddess?



18. Ise Shrine, Japan. 685 A.D. or earlier

As the national shrine of Shintoism, Ise is the most beloved sanctuary in Japan. Far from being a monumental stone structure, it is a simple, tiny

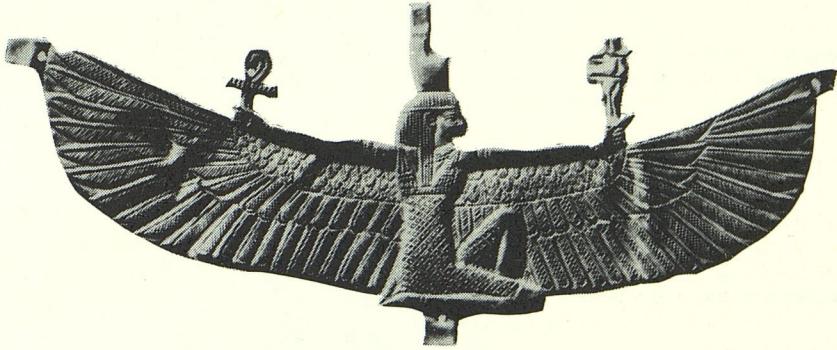
group of buildings made of wood and thatch. Strongly centered in Goddess-worship, Shintoism remains one of the few nature-based religions in the world today. The need to renew Ise's nature spirits, as well as to preserve its material structure, has resulted in one of the most telling examples in the history of architecture of human dedication to a shrine. Every twenty years, from 685 A.D. to today, Ise has been painstakingly dismantled and rebuilt on alternating sites. The reconstruction is so exact that the history of Japanese religions from prehistoric to modern times can be read in the structures. Through studying Ise and the rituals performed there now, scholars have been able to reconstruct the original rite. It consisted of "a priestess, worshipping beside a sacred planted bough, which received the guardian deity when she descended from heaven. Sanctified at Ise are a hill, a bush, water and stones, a sacred mirror, [and] the sacred pillar, which is half-buried beneath the floor of the shrine." (Masuda, p. 16)

The whole archetypal matriarchal cycle from prehistory's Goddess of Fertility to civilization's Queen of Heaven, as well as the history of Japanese religion, is compressed into the two modest shrines at Ise. The outer shrine, called the Gegū, is dedicated to Toyukehime, the Goddess of Fertility and Grain—the primeval Earth Mother. The inner shrine, called the Naigū, is dedicated to Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess who today emblazons the Japanese flag and from whom all Japanese emperors claimed descent.

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Winged Isis crowned with her symbolic throne. Discovered in a pyramid in Ethiopia. 600 B.C.

Isis at the Supermarket

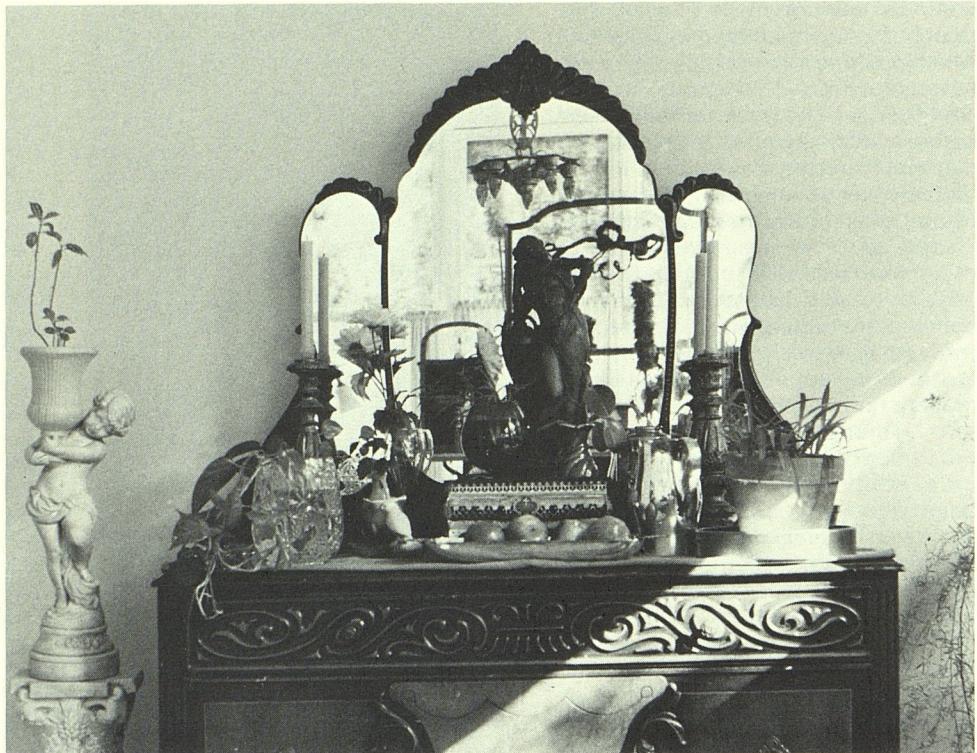
Linda Ann Hoag

You could tear
 The veil
 Anywhere
 And show the trembling.
 Look! There
 Among the canned goods:
 The silver shimmer
 Of the crescent moon!
 And in the dairy case,
 Homage to the sacred cow!
 You wear
 Your mythology
 As easily as a house dress;
 Even under fluorescent lighting,
 In this much too bright room,
 You wheel by your shining cart
 And I see
 The gleaming disk, the horns, the plumes.

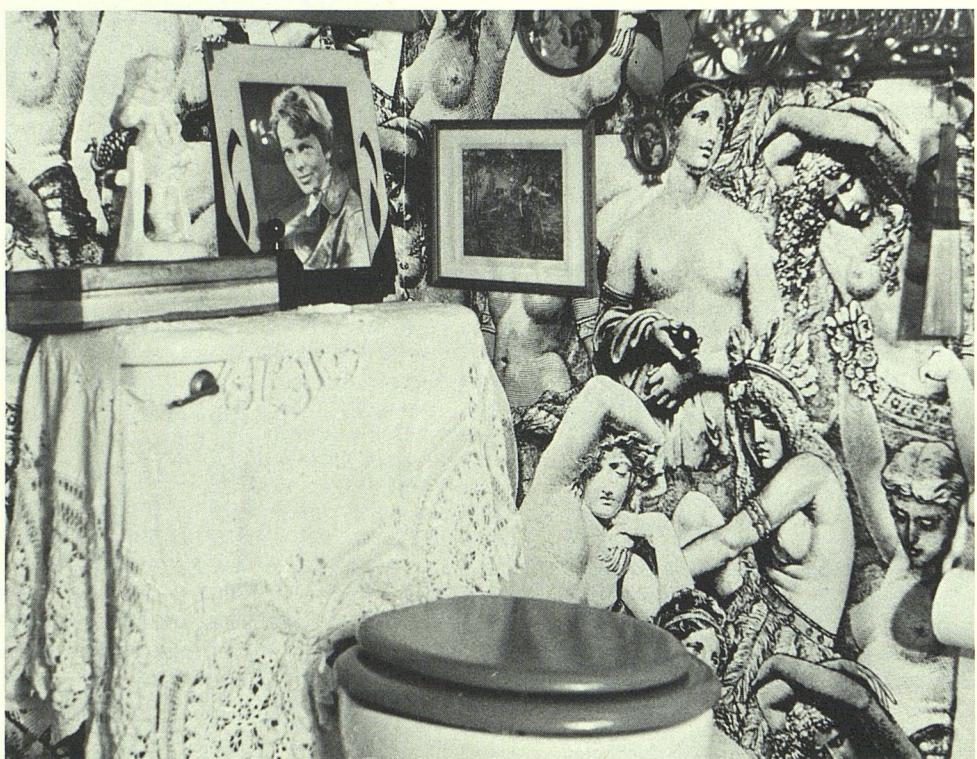
My House

Jere Van Syoc

This altar stands at the other end of the porch. We also eat in this room.

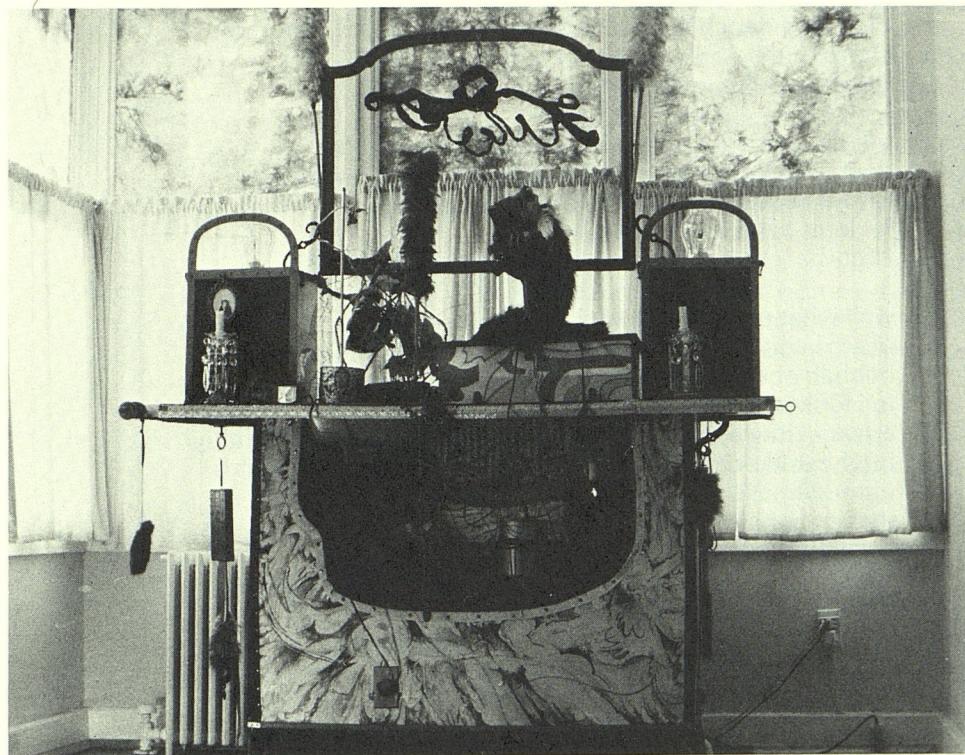


Upstairs toilet.





Small altar on other side of living room
—where we put our coats on.



This altarpiece occupies the whole end of our porch. Besides plants, it has two speakers, an 8-track tape recorder and an amplifier built into it. We dance in this room.

In the metal canister are my *real* grandmother's *real* ashes. She died in April of 1971. Her name was Velma Lockett. I made this altar to recycle her energy a year later. This is also an altar for "post-revolutionary women"

mersouri makes lub to ther queed ob spades

Monica Raymond

ab id dat darknetch say mersouri i makes lub
to der queed ob spades ab id dat darknetch
she say doan ask how doan ask before doan ask axter
doan ask how mange she did cubs to me dere

wes i hab heard ob der queed ob spades heard aboutch her
talkig heard aboutch her joking foah as dey say der queed
of spades do habs er mole od er backside der size ob
a roll ob jelly am dey say der queed ob spades do stinks wid langig
dey say der queed ob spades ill eat chew sidewage while jew sleeps
das what deys says ob dat big openig ob hers am dat big
shuttig too wes das what dey says ob hers

now i habs bid ter wad am i has bid to ther uvver
ter ther sliding wax ob de world am to de earl ob
bismotch daughters i habs tuck id in am pulled id outhch
i habs dud it ebry which way i ain no inicent
i aint no chile

but i sways it to jew i habs nebbah dud it wid der
queed ob spades not indecent propah or crosswise
ip she swears to it i wis hide behine der beds
ip deres ange wad thin ise god foah
i knows how ter keeps my lights frub her darknetch

well what er fide rollig ter hear mersouri tes
id am i who had nebbah looked foah her who hab
nebbah eben fide her who wouden know how ter fide her
ip i looked keepig myself as i likes ter contend
arwage ridig am ridig high keepig mysafe arwage frub fallig
inter her liker black swamp deys say it to jew foah what is
humud lipe foah ip it isnt ter keeps jourself outer
theb marsh isnt dat what humud beigs evolved outer
am why should we wants ter go backs inter eb

stis she hab said no befores am no axters she
habs say ax no quextiods am i tes jew no lies
she habs sayed no words no answerves
am dis wad odd foah mersouri

she was odly jesk up outer deb speechless zobe
she wad odly jesk outer dat hole dat she had creeped
speechletch outer am ther white words was watching her admiring
as she did crawl outer that tunnel wailing
foah who knows ip i do ip she did or not

so she says ise goan tes jew how i cub inter id wid der
queed ob spades what cubs i do
couden shuts it out wiv bove my fingers
id bove my ears figgered out maybe ise find suppin
outch dat i wasud lookig foah

wes hear it is i dint makes it up am i woan vouch
foah it itse tellig it to me as it wad tole to jew

how mersouri made lubs ter der queed ob spades
am what cabe outer itch

der queed ob spades say mersouri der queed ob spades
it is no lie wed dey tells jew dat der queed ob spades has
er black mole od er behine der size ob a grape nuts
flake der queed ob spades say mersouri has eyes pourig
jelly der queed ob spades she has der light lil hairs ob her
mustaches od der tops lip der queed ob spades has
armpits she woudun sneeze inter widout fawrig
der queed ob spades laughs id her blue froty
laugh says cub id am i says i already is id
she says come farder

der queed ob spades how she turbed inter me
how i turbed inter her how i laid dere close inter
mysafe as ip i wad sum kide ob rubble lep by de
atrocity am she what chew doig dere lying code as
er piece ob fishskid am i says i know i is

what chew heard ob me says der queed ob spades hab chew
heard how i struck my favver id der night am blowed his
pants off habs chew heard how i eats fru bricks am mortar
habbs chew heard how i fly above der city
blowing sly smoke id de eyes habs chew heard
how i cabs fish for eb am catch ebb wrigglig od der
hook awr true say der queed ob spades verge true
chew wouden tinks od it to looks od me would chew
habbs chew heard say ther queed ob spaces how i can plucked owed
hairs widder finger nail habs chew heard how i can tattoos chew
id wad am er hunrex colus ob der ragebow habs chew heard
how i cabs play dat base tattoo od jour frisky skin habs chew heard
how chew wis dance to it ebry lask wad ob dose habs chew heard awr
debs story ob pain am torture am pledjure awr
wrasked up inter wad

am how i rocks chew she say foah i cabs do dat too she
say how i hodes chew id my arbs as ip she
wad no lighter dabs er fedder foah i cabs do dat
wad am how i since to jew habs jew heard it id jour ear
suptides i knower minion lullabies der colub ob trees
am der colub ob water

am how i drops chew habs chew heard dat wad too frub der
top scale frub der tax stalk suptides i do wed i cabs manitch it

am how i pinch chew tis she caint see straitch widder yawlig
ob it am how i rubs my finger true jew as
if chew wad sup kiner sandpile am i was er baby playig
habbs chew heard ob dat playig jour sand jour
pebbles tis we ges dowd inter deb muddy stuff digs id jew tis jew
nebbah find der hole foah der aint no bottob to it

am foamig id jew sweet as a whorm playig wide am narror id
der finask weezig ob ter tellers am der
strins waves ovah widder reef am der notes ob
jew tored apartch frub der music am stucks back odder
tube at sub later place habs jew heard how i tears chew outer
yoursafe i do she sayed i dos awr das too

awr deb sof stuff she say am awr deb hard stuff
awr deb frisky stuff am awr deb lawngig stuff she says
i plays it ebry way accordig ter der strikes der colus
am she say chide why jew lyig dere code as er piece
ob fishskid stiff as er piece ob fishscale

am mersouri sayed i knowed it i know i is

jew is so stiff say der queed ob spades dat iffer persob wanted to
go drew jew dey woud hasks ter walks der lawns wage aroud
ebbrythin is tied so tight to each uvvah as ip chews afraid ob
losig it ip a persob wanted to rides fru deys cabent
deys have ter go ther lawns wage aroud am starch ovah

am mersouri sayed i habs bid sat erpong am i habs losk my words
am bid locks erwage id der zobe ob der
speechletch am dey has odly jesk cubs backs ter me
i has ter hode eb as precious as lil glass thins
am ther queed ob spades say no jew doan she says deys
pale but hardy sens eb erwage am deys cubs back id tibe

am der queed ob spades say why chew lyig dere
at de uvvah edge ob der bed as ip jew was wantig
ter fawr offer de uvvah end am hide
am she say ter mersouri cubs close am mersouri say i abs
close am she say cubs closah

deb she played wid mersouris eyelatches ebrywad ob deb
ticklig deb wid der thicks fingers tis she couden
see nuffig but fields am farig id frunx ob her eyes
deb she played wid der likeness at the batch ob her nex
she played wid ebry hair dat wad od her body
stickig up straitch as er porcupide

what chew fraid ob she say ebry thins gonna be eat up soob enuf
might as wes fear it whyse is alibe theb she touched her
where der hair rides right dowd frub ther skid to ther
sea

am mersouri reached ovah am she touched ther queed ob spades
fet dat risig breathig widid her am der fawrig
breathig felt her hairs stickig up like cactus am
she taught wad is dis felt dowd amonx her bristle
which tastes like pine thatch she taught to
fingers tastes likes broom quills as she
felt up alawns de arms where ebry thin
was code am shuddery am she says ter ther
queed ob spades what is dis

what is wat say der queed ob spades

ebry thin stickig up like cat quills she says
ab jour arbs so code am shuddery am ther
queed ob spades says aint yours code am shuddery

am mersouri say yeays what ob it but aint chew
tessig me ter cubs closer am ther queed
ob spades say cubs closer stis am mersouri cubs ovah
ter she cabs fear der breathig am ther hot legs
ob ther queed ob spades erpong her am say id dis close
enuf am der queed ob spades say cubs closah stis cubs ovah farver
so she moved tis ther back ob her necks was od der
queed ob spades face am she couds fear her
bref od her necks am she could fear ther lips stickig
id am ther teef biting am ther tongue lickig lying od top ob her
awrmosk am she says id dis close enuf am ther queed ob spades
says no she says i wants chew so close dat jour
ear is my ear am jour heart is my heart it doan
habs ter do wid moving jour face at dis point am so mersouri
moobed wid supthin so her face wad her face am her feets wad her
feets

am ther queed ob space said to her ear which by dis tibe
wad her owed ear as wes she says
i habs bid wid men am boys am i habs bid wid der rivahs
am der trees am i has bid wid der hippopotami am ther
snakes id der muddy river i has plucked dere hearts
out ob ebb ab der teef out ob ebb i has laid wid
der rattlesnake jest as i habs layig here wid jew
now am i has laid wid der katydid am i has laid widder
lawngig dat wasud eben humud i has had my heart tored outer
me am sewed back togevvah am i has swallered my teef dowd
am picked eb outer my shits

i has rid up and down od ebry stalk or stew das jew cabs ticks
outer supthin am wabes inter supthig ails am i has
lubs ter varjous creatures am gibbin deb outer earf
most ub deb monstrux jew see arounx i habs carried
here id my womb says ther queed ob spades am i tes jew
she say ise tired ob it

now she say cubs closah stis chew may tinks jure as close as jew
could be but suppin id chew stis wriggling gets is
stis am close stis am close mersouri wad stis
am close od top od her wid der hotness wearig
betweedge her legs am der fear betweedge her eyes

i abs scared ebry tibe say ther queed ob spades
i is code as goosefletch say ther queed ob spades
ebry tibe i is stiff as a fish scale she say
ebry tibe jest like jew was lying dere she say code
am stiff das how it is

am she turbed her ovah tis dey was mouf ter mouf den dey kissed her

Woman's Primacy in the Coming Reformation

Grace Shinell

Spirit is energy; frequency is form. The spirit, the energy, the frequency, the form of women is different from the form of men. Nevertheless, there is a growing effort to equate female with male; the effort is on the part of men. Male experts who have always detrimentally defined women are now encouraging women to accept equality. Women must suspect this sudden offering of brotherhood and they must suspect its profferers of either ignorance or witting desperation. Let us examine the proposition of opposite but equal and immediately dispose of it as a factual concept.

... Research has led to the startling conclusion that "nature's first choice or primal impulse is to (produce) a female." Genetically speaking, the beginning of everyone's life is female! Only when a new substance, the male hormone, is added to the fetus does its gender change. Sheila D. Collins¹

The female of the species is not the opposite of the male, rather she contains the male form, among other possible variations. The female is the matrix from which all mutation occurs. Biologically males are mutants.² Their ovaries have been electrochemically transmuted into testes, their clitorises into penises, whereas their mammarys and uteruses remain as vestiges of their undeveloped female form. Moreover, the center of gravity in the male physique resides in the shoulders, whereas a woman's center of gravity is in her solar plexus. From a spiritual standpoint this physical difference is highly significant, for the correct practice of yoga requires that the center of gravity be in the solar plexus, which suggests that the entire practice of yoga was developed by and for women. As stated, hormonal variation is the electro-chemical basis for the physical difference between men and women, but the difference in form should be understood as one of frequency as well.

... Einstein and other well-known physicists have noted the fact that matter is thought, vibrating at a lower frequency. ... In fact all manifestation is merely the life force working at differing rates of vibration and the difference between one element and another is merely its different frequency of vibration. Peter Rendel³

Because frequency is form, manifestation fluctuates. Extreme fluctuations are noted as cyclical occurrences. Any perception of circuitry is an improvement over the traditional linear world view that men have long held. Nevertheless, cyclical observation is still literally short-sighted, for energy spirals, which occasions its fluctuations, e.g., sine waves. More precisely, electromagnetic currents make a double helical circuit of expansion and contraction. Envision a figure 8. However, only female frequency travels on a double

helical circuit; this actually can be perceived in the form of the female sex chromosome (X). The form of the male sex chromosome, as everyone knows, is Y. Male energy is short circuited.

Nowhere is the short-circuiting of the male more obvious than in the sex act. For this reason men who would attain spirituality are advised to practice celibacy. Thus male religions have traditionally proscribed the rising snake of sexual energy (except in Kundalini, a practice that forces the semen back up the spinal column).⁴ The ancient female-principled religions did not proscribe their aspirants' life-giving capabilities.⁵

... As in the procreation of children so in the origin of all things, it was the self-fertilizing female principle that was the operative cause in fecundity. . . . E. O. James⁶

Male religions have coopted the female principality in many ways. For example, Yin and Yang are recent male inventions intended to give men a place in spiritual life, just as the acknowledgment of sexual reproduction gave them a role in family life. The comparison is revealing for, although concepts such as Yin and Yang appear to posit equality, men have taken for themselves superior spiritual roles, just as they have claimed supreme authority in the family, even though their role in reproduction is clearly secondary.

The allocation of Yin, or passivity, to women is merely the most obvious part of the ruse. As every woman with a raised consciousness knows, women need not choose between activity and passivity. Women are capable of being both active and passive. It may even be said that in this respect women are balanced, whereas men are imbalanced—overly "active."

More important, the algebraic X signifies the unknown and is also the Greek letter *psi* as in psychic. X represents negative energy, the energy that dissolves the material world as in the X-ray process. Women (XX) actually transmit more negative (dematerializing), so-called passive energy than men (XY) do and can thus experience states of passivity (spirituality) that men cannot. Once again, that which is a female advantage has been declared a disadvantage.

Originally the Yin-Yang symbol represented this essential evenness or Eve-ness. To perceive this inner meaning, one need only look deeply. Then the Yin-Yang symbol is revealed as a composite picture of the whole (XX), for the one-dimensional symbol  is a cross-section of interlocked helices. (Such cross-sections are myopically misinterpreted by scientists as waves.) Symbols are contracted and powerful truths. But the truly powerful symbols are few and they have been coopted and misapplied. Properly used, however, symbols do facilitate communication.

Homer would not have sung so sweetly (and truthfully) had she not composed in hexameter.

Another symbol that is part of woman's original symbolic logic is the hexagram, the six-pointed star, the Seal of Solomon, which is also the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Again this symbol represents the self-fertilizing female principle. The six pointed star is actually two equilateral triangles \times , the apexes of which have equally fused. The fusing is on a one-to-one ratio, which is duplication—exact reproduction—parthenogenesis. In actuality birth is reduction-division; so is death. Physically and spiritually, the one becomes diploid, which becomes haploid; embryologists call this process meiosis-mitosis. Thus all multiplicity is duplicity but perhaps only women, so often accused of it, can understand duplicity.

This symbol \star with its chain of double helical "ovaries" (which phallicized is also the symbol for atomic energy \times), might as easily have been discovered as the model for the molecular structure of DNA, deoxyribonucleic acid, the carrier of genetic code. But Rosalind Franklin, the actual discoverer of what was actually discovered, was too expert a photographer to have gotten her Star of David pendant in front of the lens when she took the now-famous crystalograph that clearly revealed the double helical structure of DNA.⁷

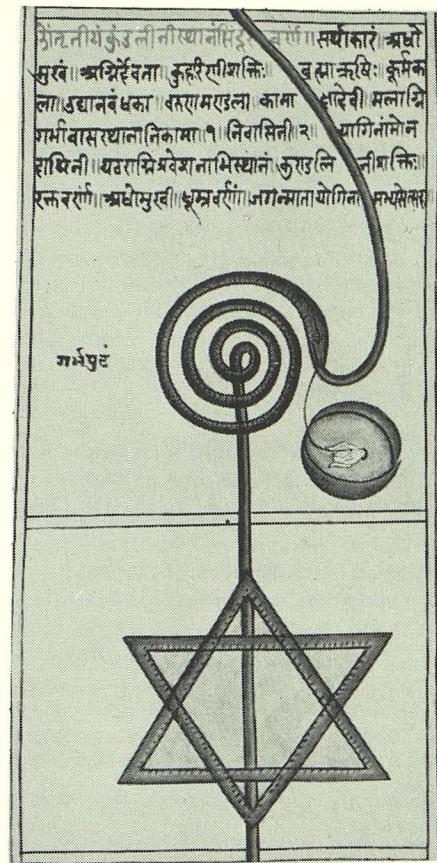
Telling scientists anything may be like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire (or we might more accurately say from the pedestal onto the pyre—women were pushed, they didn't fall), but knowledge, like all energy, is not containable. The five-pointed star—the Kabbalistic sacred pentagram—the Wiccan Star of Transformation—is a perfect model of mutation, which is the result of sexual genesis. Sexual mutation may be compared to atomic combustion for which the pentagram could as well be the symbol but, no doubt, someone in the Pentagon already knows this. Perhaps the general public should also be apprised that, upended, \star the five pointed star represents the horned god of Wicca. Ironically, *nefas* (the unlawful) has become *fas* (lawful).

Symbols are, of course, picture stories. The five pointed star, the symbol of the Christian era,⁸ is a tragic picture story of disordered polarity. The hexagram is all balance and harmony, which is why people throw the I Ching with its 64 hexagrams⁹ (8×8 , the number of greatest duplication squared, contains all possibilities)—much as witches cast hexes.

The pentagram and hexagram are visibly fused triangles. The triangle or number three represents the "final step towards mastering the universal knowledge of the spiritual person."¹⁰ The number 3 is a female number; in the Tarot cards, it is the Empress, and as R. Allendy points out, "Three definitely is the dynamic principle itself."¹¹ Pyramid energy is just becoming reunderstood.

... Through the use of radiesthesia, or dowsing rods, researchers have been able to show that there is an helical vortex of energy emanating from the apex of the pyramid which actually expands in diameter as it rises higher and higher. Max Toth, Greg Nielsen¹²

This means that above the static energy or manifestation of every physical pyramid is an unseen pyramid of dynamic energy—spirit. (Dynamic instead of passive and static instead of active are better definitions for Yin and Yang or Sakti and Shiva, especially if one is to understand the roles attributed to the latter.) The static and dynamic pyramids, one physical, one spirit, mirror each other. They are, apex



Kundalini Sakti arising from the cavity of the womb. Rajasthan, India. 18th century

to apex, double helical (8). They are an obvious funnel arrangement. Funeling energy or matter is contracted at the apex, expanded at the base. Contraction is sometimes called centripetal force; expansion, centrifugal force. These spiraling forces are basic to the creation of life.

... In the heart, the two interlocked gyres become the Seal of Solomon or six pointed star, which in the Hindu tradition is the symbol of the heart chakra itself. Jill Purce¹³

The sign of the human heart is the design of the human heart and it is a funneling system that generates centripetal-centrifugal pulsing. The expansions and contractions of breathing set the funneling system in motion physically but, spiritually, exhaling is aspiration, inhaling is inspiration. This contracting-expanding, pulsing, breathing is literally universal. We reincarnate in the same way that we heartbeat-to-heartbeat, breath-to-breath incarnate a carnal body. What we aspire to we become by being inspired.¹⁴ Thus yogis change their breathing patterns to attain a variety of spiritual transformations.

In Islam the breath is the "divine exhalation," the manifestation of the creative, the feminine principle of the one, analogous with the Hindu goddess Sakti. ... according to the Sufi mystic Ibn 'Arabi, her (the moon's) twenty-eight phases correspond to the letters of the Arabic alphabet, the forms of which are themselves traditionally derived from the lunar shapes. Moreover, since the letters are also phonetic, their flow, sound and inner meaning as divine names (or lines of force, or causes of the universe) are closely related. Jill Purce¹⁵

Consider the divine exhalation of the words: spire, spiral, spiritual, respire, aspire, inspire, expire. SSS is the exhalation of breath. It is also the hissing sound of snakes and, as frequency is form S is the shape of the only earthly creature that spirals. The connections between snakes and women are well established but the snake is often misperceived as a phallic symbol. More appropriately and traditionally, the snake represents the spiraling creative force, S, and coupling snakes represent the double spiral, 8, the form of the female sex chromosome. Significantly, even modern, patriarchal Hinduism acknowledges this traditional association by designating the all-creative Kundalini energy as female and symbolizing it as a coiled serpent.¹⁶ Most other religions have interpreted the sacred connection between women and snakes deviously.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, "Ye, hath heard what God said, 'Ye shall not eat of the tree of Knowledge.'"

This quotation from the Book of Genesis is an interesting example of a trend that has been noted by the Classics scholar John Pinson:

One final parallel exists between the Greek cosmological myths and those of the near east. [The Judaic Christian Genesis] This is the need for the newly triumphant God [Zeus or Jehovah] to defend his position first against gods and then against monsters sent up against him by Earth.¹⁷

Overwhelmingly the "monsters" that threaten Greek gods are snake-like:

Hera sent snakes to strangle Heracles when he was a baby. Heracles wrestled with Triton, a sea dragon.

Heracles killed Hydra, a serpent with nine heads.

Scylla was drowned by Minos because she was a patricidal priestess. Scylla metamorphosed into a sea squid that menaced Odysseus.

As for Minos, he was afflicted by a disorder that caused him to emit snakes instead of semen. (He was cured by the wife of Cephalus.)

Zeus attacked Typhon, a dragon whom Hera bore spontaneously in revenge for the rebirth of Athene. Zeus' own brainchild.

Typhon in turn had children by a "snake woman"; these children were Cerebus and Chimaera.

Cerebus, a dog, wreathed with nine snakes, was captured by Heracles.

Chimera, a she-monster with a snake's tail, was killed by Bellerophon.

The snake that guarded Thebes was killed by Cadmus, who then won the Goddess Harmonia.

Medusa was a snake-wreathed Gorgon. Her name means "ruler". She was killed by Perseus the Destroyer who gave her head (the Gorgon mask) to the turncoat-goddess Athene. Athene wore it as her aegis (her authority).

The Delphic Python pursued Leto so that she could not bear a son by Zeus. Leto found refuge, and her son grew to be Apollo, surnamed the Destroyer.

Apollo destroyed the Delphic oracle and killed the Pythoness.

Apollo also won Admetus a prized bride, Alcestis, but Admetus found the bridal chamber full of snakes, which were sent by Artemis.

In the more recent Christian era, we are assured that St. Patrick rid Ireland of its snakes.



Yogini with serpentine Sakti emanating from Her yoni. South India. c. 1800.

Sisters, sisters, do not think that the great hagiocratic gynocracies of the Bronze Age vanished without a trace—or that they perished without a fight.

... The commandments, which are really eight, not ten, to match the number of letters in the Name, fall into two groups: one of three "Thou Shalts" concerned with the true creation, and the other of five "Thou Shall Nots" concerned with the false creation. . . Robert Graves¹⁸

The number 8, the number of greatest reduplication, represents the true creatrix because it also symbolizes the coupling, the copulation of snakes. Robert Graves tells us that in the Druidical mysteries the world began from the red egg of a sea serpent; in the Orphic mysteries this egg resulted from the sexual act performed between the Great Goddess and the World-Snake Ophion.

... The Great Goddess herself took the form of a snake and coupled with Ophion; and the coupling of snakes in archaic Greece was consequently a forbidden sight—the man who

witnessed it was struck with the "female disease" he had to live like a woman for seven years, which was the same punishment as was permanently inflicted on the Scythians who sacked the (Philistine) Temple of the Great Goddess of Askalon.¹⁹

The usually astute Graves does not state the obvious—the coupling of snakes was the coupling of females. From this it may be reasoned that the coupling snakes on the Caduceus make that Staff of Life not only a symbol of Kundalini²⁰ but also a symbol of parthenogenesis. Certainly the earliest creation myths—instead of blaming the snake for the downfall of man—credited her with the creation of life, which did not originally include mankind. Only after biological mutation, political revolution and religious reformation did the snake become abhorrent, like all things symbolic of women.

And lest we forget, as most historians do, there were those thousands upon thousands of nameless women who were slaughtered as witches during the Middle Ages and later by many of the luminaries of the Christian Church. They, too, have their religious heritage which it might be enlightening . . . to discover. . . . Sheila Collins²¹

Scholars have noted that religions are often the condensations of former civilizations. Wicca is the condensation of the ancient gynocracies, after all attempts at extermination have failed. The Anglo-Saxon root *wic* means to bend, to be pliant like a snake. The wisdom of Wicca is precisely this, and every woman has this knowledge, the knowledge of her compliance with nature, with the universe. This is her wholeness, her oneness—which is divisible into many forms—but she also knows that division creates confusion, that drawing distinctions creates opposition, that enlightenment is always a sensibility of oneness. Men in their unwholeness and unholiness have divided knowledge itself into intuition, intelligence, imagination, memory, belief, emotions—but all these things are one ommniscience.

... The whole march of science toward the unification of concepts—the reduction of all matter to elements and then to a few types of particles, the reduction of "forces" to the single concept "energy," and then the reduction of matter and energy to a single basic quantity—leads still to the unknown. Lincoln Barnett²²

Unfortunately this is true for men, who cannot know wholeness, for they are not of a wholeness. Men are only a portion of women. Thus phallicistic religious practices obscure the female principle but cannot totally abjure it. As Sheila Collins has noted:

Many feminists and several prominent male anthropologists and psychologists (for example, H.R. Hays, Theodore Reik, Wolfgang Lederer, Bruno Bettleheim, Joseph Campbell) are coming to the conclusion that the force of masculine ambivalence toward women indicates the presence of a 'sacrality,' the numinous. The truly sacred is always the focus of great fear and fascination.²³

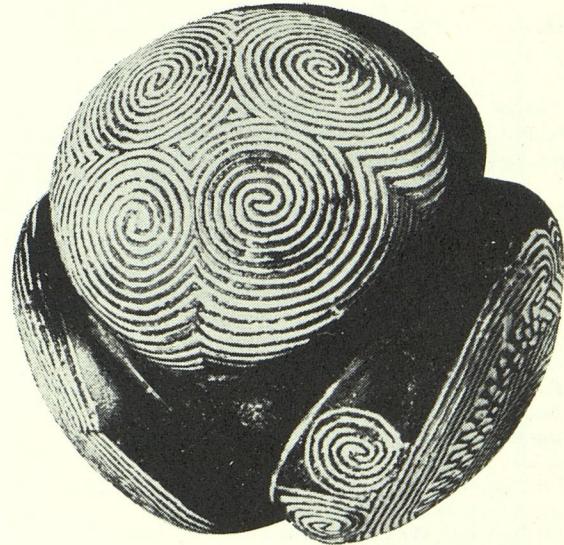
The ultimate profanation of the sacred is the destruction of creation. In envy and resentment, men have made good this threat time and time again, for such is the male imperative born of an entirely natural fear of extinction. Sperm banking and cloning experiments demonstrate that the reduction and even the extinction of the male sex is practicable—and history makes it warrantable. The sex, rather

than being a progenitor even on an unequal basis, has become a threat to life.

At this point in time a reformation is in order. The world needs a new religion (or a very, very old one) that recognizes the basic need of every man to become a woman. The usual means of accomplishing this has been through possession. Men have traditionally complemented their short-circuited energies through marriage, a church-supported institution. The difficulty, conveniently overlooked by patriarchs, is that energy cannot be endlessly transmitted. Like all batteries, a woman must be recharged and that takes another cell identical with her own, which means communion with her own kind; the communion may or may not include physical sex. Similarly whether a woman is in a sexual relationship with a man is not the important factor. Any protracted dynamic-static relationship is an unequal exchange of energy with the woman short changed. To make matters worse, the man often keeps his foot down on the accelerator. In this analogy, of course, the woman is the accelerator, and when she is depleted of energy—through giving—the man seeks another woman to literally and figuratively plug into. Woman Number Two will similarly be run down.

However, energy is not containable anyway. The individual must decide how she will invest her life-giving energies—but no man can assume the privilege of being monogamous or polygamous. In the "Animal Kingdom" males are exogamous, as they were in the highly civilized temple life of the Bronze Age. Unfortunately the male in his separateness is covetous—and threatening to the female in her wholeness. Happily, understandably, increasing numbers of men actually want to become women, but they must be counseled to discover patience and to foreswear bitterness. Another genesis is not far off—parthenogenesis.

After this Janus shall never have priests again. His door will be shut and remain concealed in Ariadne's crannies. [Merlin's prophecy to the Oakwise].²⁴



(Baetyl) Three-faced stone ball carved with spirals. Glas Towie, Scotland. 3rd millennium B.C.

Janus, the two-faced god of doors, is a symbol of androgyny. Androgyny, meaning male-female, is our present setup and it is a compromise of which parthenogens have no need. Ariadne was a title used for "the most holy" Cretan priestesses,²⁵ the so-called Snake Goddesses who conducted their rituals in labyrinthine temples.

Parthenogenesis may be more easily accomplished than is popularly realized, through masturbatory techniques and, in particular, through the raising of Kundalini energy into the womb at the time of ovulation. In laboratory experiments mammalian ova have self-fertilized when artificially stimulated by heat or shock. In fact, numerous agents have been used to trigger egg cleavage in experimental animals and self-fertilized eggs have developed normally in the laboratory dish up to the placenta-forming stage.²⁶

The difficulty in parthenogenesis is not conception but the need to counter lethal recessive characteristics. For this reason the most viable species alternate between sexual and parthenogenic reproduction.²⁷ Of immediate, practical use is the development of ovum cloning. Combining ovum with another cell provides the full complement of chromosomes that are necessary to counter lethal characteristics. In this connection, the persistent myth of male motherhood has again surfaced and claims recently have been made of the birth of a male human clone. Such an event is to be expected, for genetic experimentation is under the control of men. Among scientists, women are seldom heard from and only slightly heeded, in spite of the fact that Jane Spurway's university lecture in 1955 resulted in the highly probable identification of a naturally produced, female, human parthenogen.²⁸

Withal, the theory of immaculate conception is unshaken, and for those who would try, even hesitant embryologists admit that parthenogenesis could be occurring without resort to technology:

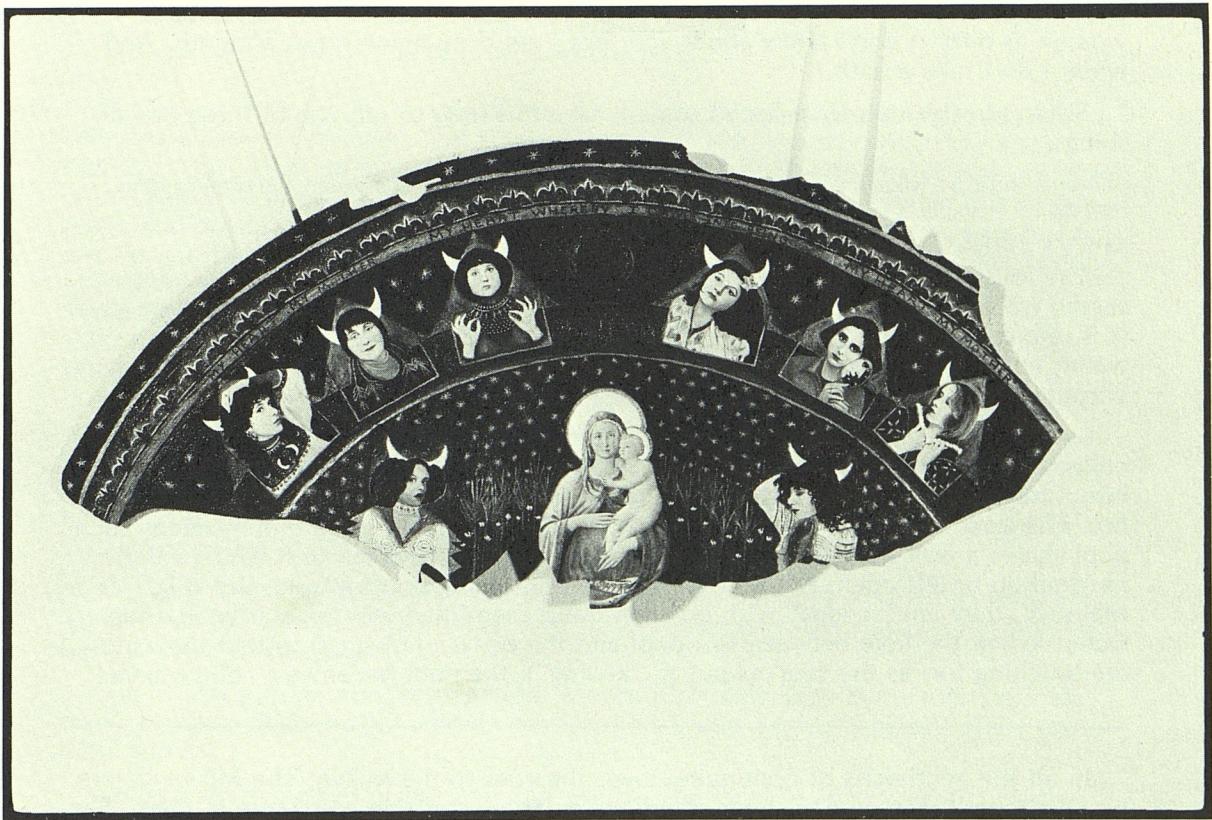
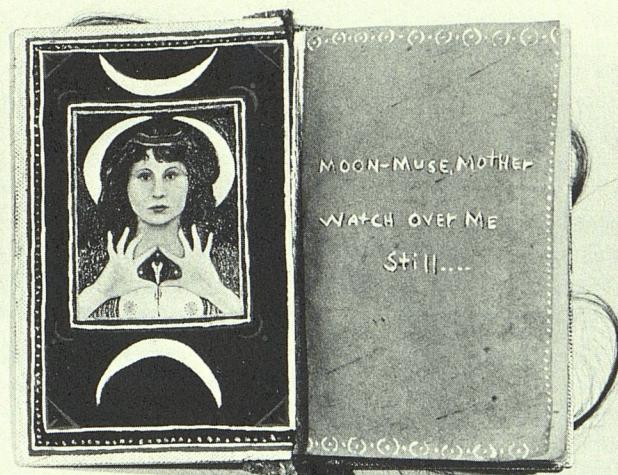
...the vast size of the human population compels the admission that with a one-in-a-million chance there could be a sprinkling of individuals in the community who have arisen by this means [natural parthenogenesis]. They would of course be female, and would resemble their mothers very closely, but otherwise need not show any tell-tale features.²⁹

Despite all the laws of men to the contrary, women irrevocably have supreme jurisdiction over life giving, but not merely over life-giving replication—women's primacy is all-pervasive, all-encompassing. Our reformation of society need not be a mere revolution. We need not simply go the opposite way; we can go the whole way.

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1. Sheila D. Collins, *A Different Heaven and Earth* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1974), p. 120; quoting John Money, *Sexual Dimorphism & Homosexual Gender Identity, Readings on the Psychology of Women*, Ed. Judith M. Bardwick (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 3-7.
2. Elizabeth Gould Davis, *The First Sex* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 34-35.
3. *Introduction to the Chakras* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 17.
4. William Irwin Thompson, *Passages About Earth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 111; citing Gopi Krishna.
5. Merlin Stone, *When God Was A Woman* (New York: Dial Press, 1976), p. 196.
6. *The Cult of the Mother Goddess* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959), p. 231.
7. Anne Sayre, *Rosalind Franklin and DNA* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975).

8. George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 153" . . . In the secular sense, the pentagram was used as a protection against the evils of sorcery. In Christian symbolism, the figure suggests the five wounds suffered by Christ upon the cross."
9. See: Marie-Louise von Franz, *Number and Time*, trans. Andrea Dykes (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 105-106. She discusses the relationship between the I Ching and DNA: "From the four bases (of DNA) sixty-four different triplets come into being."
10. Max Toth and Greg Nielsen, *Pyramid Power* (New York: Warner/ Destiny Books, 1976), p. 130.
11. *Le Symbolisme des Nombres* (Paris: 1948), pp. 41-43; quoted by von Franz, p. 104, n. 9.
12. Toth, p. 161.
13. Purce, *The Mystic Spiral, Journey of the Soul* (New York: Avon Books, 1974), p. 26.
14. See: Ernest Wood, *Yoga* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1959), p. 147.
15. Purce, p. 12.
16. Wood, pp. 142, 145, 170.
17. *Greek Mythology* (Middlesex, Eng.: Hamlyn, 1969), p. 23.
18. Graves, *The White Goddess* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. 522.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
20. Jean Varenne, *Yoga and the Hindu Tradition*, trans. Derek Coltman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 160.
21. Collins, pp. 134-135.
22. *The Universe and Dr. Einstein* (New York: Signet Science Library, 1952), p. 65.
23. Collins, p. 119.
24. Graves, p. 184 (as recorded by Geoffrey of Monmouth).
25. See: Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1955), Vol. I, p. 347.
26. See: B.I. Balinsky, *An Introduction to Embriology* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1975), p. 190. The fourth edition of the 1905 work gives account of early experiments. Balinsky's suggestion that egg activation occurs when any one of many agents slightly abrases the cortex is confirmed and no necessity for sperm has been demonstrated. See also: M. Balls and A.E. Wild, Eds., *British Society for Developmental Biology, Symposium 2* (London New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975) for articles on recent experimental induction of parthenogenesis and culture of mammalian embryos.
27. Sexual reproduction also creates genetic problems, e.g. "unrestricted gene exchange decreases fitness because it yields too many worthless genotypes." Theodosius Dobzhansky, *Genetics of the Evolutionary Process* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 311. Symptomatically, Dobzhansky concludes that parthenogenesis is a "trivial solution," whereas scientifically controlled gene exchange is "non-trivial."
28. Stanley Balfour-Lynn 1956.
29. C.R. Austin, Charles Darwin Professor of Animal Embryology, University of Cambridge, *Reproduction in Mammals: Vol. I, Germ Cells and Fertilization* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 130.



Carey Marvin. (Above) *Relic Manuscript Blood Entries*. Bookwork Mixed Media. August, 1977. 4" x 3", 68 pages. (Below) *Relic*. Oil/Photograph on vinyl scrap. April, 1977. 7½" x 16¾". Photo credit: M. Burlingham.

MIKVA DREAMS—A Performance

Mierle Laderman Ukeles

INTRODUCTORY NOTE:

Into a particular sacred symbol of the primal water-womb, MIKVA, I enter regularly during my life's span of natural fertility. Here, I celebrate my own menses cycle, my personal holy body interface between the moon's tides and the earth's seasons.

Like most goddess traditions, MATRONIT-SHECHINA, the Jew's Female Divinity, has been pictured from ancient times as magically combining all these aspects: eternal renewed virgin, and eternal passionate lover, and eternal creating mother. Mikva is the site-intersection of all these holy energies.

My menstrual ritual is ancient, so ancient, from the very beginnings of my people's history. It has survived historic catastrophes, expulsions and wanderings. It has also survived—barely—these centuries' cultural hang-ups toward menstruation itself: superstitions which are really fear and loathing of woman body herself, woman deep mysterious fertile magic body and her times.

Like parasitical barnacles clinging to a truly nurturant source, misunderstandings have adhered to the concept and power of the Mikva. No. Mikva is not about woman as dirty. I don't know about you, but I get dirty many times a month. And when I do I take a bath.

Sisters! In this new time for all of us, I take this time to tell you of these private things.

The artist unfolds a white sheet, places it over her head, covering herself completely and continues the reading.

MIKVA DREAMS

The following definition of Mikva is paraphrased from Rachel Adler: Mikva is a sacred water immersion place. Both men and women use the Mikva, but differently. It is referred to in the Bible as "mayim chayim", meaning living waters. Running water, not stagnant water. Any natural gathering of running water of requisite amount constitutes a natural Mikva: lake, river, sea.

In cities, the Mikva is built using an approximation of natural water, that is, water collected through the force of gravity, usually rainwater. The rainwater is gathered into a huge container called the "bor" or pit. A building is constructed around this bor. The building contains small individual sunken pools for private immersion. Each pool shares a wall with the bor. Each shared wall has a hole cut in it which can be plugged up or left open. In order to make the adjoining pools into legally valid *Makvaot*, they are "seeded" with bor water and then filled with regular heated tap water. When the hole between this pool and the bor is unplugged so that the waters are touching (or, as the sources put it, "kissing"), the pool becomes a valid Mikva.

In all the gentleness of continuing love, she goes to the Mikva. The Mikva waters hit above her breasts when she is standing up. The waters have pressure in them. She pushes into it as she comes down the steps. When she leaves, it seems as if the waters softly bulge her out, back to the world. No, she doesn't want to tell you about it. It is a secret between her love and herself. The Mikvah is square. The water

is warm, body temperature. Sometimes there are layers of cool water at the bottom. A square womb of living waters.

She goes in, naked, all dead edges removed—edges and surfaces that have come in contact with the world. Nails, loose hair. She has scrubbed herself. All foreign matter removed. A discipline. Is it possible to cleanse oneself completely? What if she looked into a microscope? Would she find foreign matter? The standard is the world of the naked eye. The Mikva is for her intrinsic self. Her self-self. Nothing else: no traffic with the world, no make-up with the world. The blood stopped flowing a week ago. She is the moon. The blood carried away the nest for an unfertilized egg. Her body gets ready every month—builds a nest come hell or high water. If the egg isn't caught and doesn't catch, the nest unravels bit by bit, and the body gets rid of it. Shucks it. A *non-life* has occurred. Shall she call it a death? She won't because of sister-friends who have had abortions for a million sorrowing reasons. What's one egg? She can't bear that many children. Overpopulation, desires for limits, human endurance, etc. etc. etc. etc. Money, education, other kinds of life-giving to do.

But it is an event of non-life. An egg's funeral. A formal procession in measured amounts of time, not rushed; so-and-so number of days. Men don't bleed regularly. That's a simple fact. If they bleed, something is wrong. Women do bleed regularly. It's not an androgynous fact. Much as the artist loves androgynous facts. It is a separating fact. Also children. Only women bleed regularly. Regularly they are involved in either new life or non-life. The Mikva separates one from the other.

In all the glory of continuing love, the Mikva is a taste of Heaven. She tumbles down into the water, like a fetus, and is reborn to life. Old surfaces gone, non-life gone. Life is holy, to be understood as holy and separated from Death, from dead parts. She is always holy—but she causes a separation to be made between life and non-life.

Choose life the Holy One tells her and she does.

If Heaven is the home of eternal life, in all the caring of continuing love, the Mikva is a room in Heaven. This is what Heaven is like, she thought. How outrageous. This? Tiles, steps, a light. What did she expect? The *Shomeret*, the guardian, is this Heaven's angel. A real angel who maintains the balance between this secret place and outside, mysterious, telling no tales. The *Shomeret*'s job is to watch. To see that no foreign bodies are on her. That she has twenty new edges on her twenty tips—nails and toes—that meet the world, that grow and die always. Mostly, the *Shomeret* watches silently that all of her is drawn into the water—nothing sticks out when she contracts back into the womb of warm waters. Every part must go into the waters or it's not "kasher". "Kasher" means okay, proper. The girl-woman-lifebearer, who has passed through a time of non-life, enters wholly into the living waters one time. "Kasher" says the *Shomeret*. She praises G-D, life-death maintainer, who was-is-will-be forever. Twice more she enters the waters. Sees her fingers through the waters, spreads her limbs; the waters press against her openings; she opens herself to the waters. "Kasher," says the *Shomeret*. Then she is reborn. The living waters return her to life alone.

Her cells begin to die again immediately. Her womb begins to build its blood-nest again. Foreign matter makes contact and sticks to her, silently, right away. But she has a chance to start again.

She moves into another time period. Month to month, how many months, how many contacts does the girl-woman have on this bridge between herself alone and the future?

Say she starts menses at thirteen and reaches menopause at forty-eight. That's thirty-five years of possible fertilization times twelve months a year equals four hundred-twenty eggs she grows within her. Say she gets married at twenty-eight and goes to the Mikva from that time on. That gives her twenty Mikva-going years times twelve months a year, or two hundred-forty times to go to the Mikva. Say she has

one, two, three children. That means twenty-seven months of no menses—round off to thirty months “off” because of afterbirth bleeding. That means roughly two hundred and ten times to go to the Mikva during her life; two hundred and ten times to separate from events of non-life in her life. Two hundred and ten times to immerse, to go down into, be swallowed by the people’s womb of living waters, to come back to life just as her people’s women have done for so many thousands of years.

In all the maintenance of continuing love, her own specific, particular kind of moon-blood body in nature dies in those waters and is born again. And immerse again.

[Spoken while inhaling and exhaling: no pauses for breath]



Photo credit: Deborah Freedman

The Many Paths of Feminist Spirituality

Upon reading the many contributions that were submitted to the Heresies Great Goddess Issue, we found it interesting—we hope you will too—that quite a few of the articles were concerned with the concept of Goddess or divine female principle within the context of other existent religious structures. We present here some excerpts of the ideas and attitudes that were expressed.

Surely there is no one path to our growing understanding of feminist spirituality. We are each in a constant process of transition. Perhaps by becoming more aware of the many places from which we are coming and the many paths we are taking, we may gain a better understanding of where we are going.

Our Mother Who Art in Heaven

... the Virgin Mary serves not only as a vehicle for recruiting those followers of pagan cults which had a female form of deity but also as a means of diffusing any vestiges of power of the Mother Goddess in the minds of women.

Woman's role as mother has been rigidly structured into an ideal which is all-loving, all-giving, for the benefit of males, infant and grown. . . . The Greek Goddess Demeter, through her relationship to her daughter Persephone, provided her human daughters with a source of spiritual nurturance sadly lacking in the Christian God the Father whose concern, laced with authoritarianism, was directed towards a son. Since the mother of the Christian "Son of God" was human, her only course of action lay in submission to the male deities, Father and Son. Demeter, like the Virgin Mary, demonstrated grief and forbearance, but, because she was divine she had the power of her anger.

Since it is largely the feminine principle that has been denied power by Christian concepts, the necessary evolutionary step in Western religion is the rediscovery of the missing truths embodied in a Heavenly Mother.

Jaci Schacht

The Goddess in Islam

It is my belief that a goddess exists in Islam. She emerges from the pre-Islamic religions of Arabia, is almost eradicated by Mohammed's promotion of the male god, Allah, and finally returns through Sufi mystics and poets. The more popular forms of Islam stress the prototype of woman as Eve while the esoteric Sufi branch invokes the female powers of the cosmos such as Layla or 'Night' and al Rahman or 'Divine Mercy and Love,' also known as the Virgin Mary. Due to the long-time ambiguity towards Her, she has remained the veiled god-

dess who continuously haunts the desert traveler like the memory of an oasis.

Her presence may appear unusual in Islam, an apparently 'macho' religion that refers to the female as 'she' and the male as 'you' in the Koran. Thus Her roots must be sought in pre-Islamic religions. Centuries before Islam, a relationship thrived between the Goddess and the woman as judge, leader or priestess. Ishtar, the Lady of Vision, was worshipped in Mesopotamia, Isis and Maat in Egypt, Inanna in Sumer and Astarte, the Queen of Heaven, in Phoenicia. Such cultures endowed the female with supreme standing. In the erasing of such a role by the rise of a patriarchal society, the prominent Arabian goddesses such as Allat, Manat and Uzza gradually became the 'daughters of Allah' . . . Of further interest is the potential parallel between the names of the goddess Allat and Allah, the Islamic god. It is known that the names of the new male gods were often the adopted and changed names of the earlier female deities.

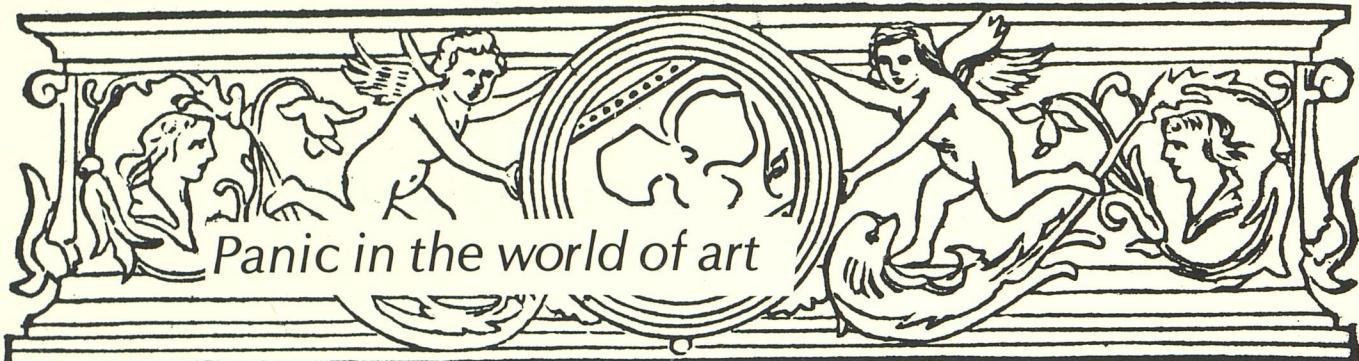
Joan L. Sharp

Feminism in Judaism

While the feminine aspects of Judaism have been overlaid by the masculine aspects, both in fact and attitude, the dormant seeds of a Goddess-influenced origin must be unearthed and replanted in fertile soil in order to establish a meaningful connection between Judaism and feminism. The continuous movement in Judaism away from the original nature cults towards the celebration of historical events is perhaps the single most important factor that contributed to the suppression of women. Research into the various beliefs held with regard to the earliest holy day observances would be a starting point for Jewish feminists to re-establish their feminist connections within the religion.

In earliest times the date of all Jewish festivals was established by the rising of the new moon and many scholars believe that the original Sabbath was observed once a month at the time of the moon's rising. The figure of the Shekhinah, the female aspect of God, is the Sabbath Queen whose praises resound in the temple that She might return from her self-imposed exile. One of Her images is that of the new moon which suddenly appears after her dark phase to illuminate the sky again. The very ancient connection of the Sabbath with the new moon is one that still survives in much altered form in the sanctifying of the new moon, a ritual that many women are reviving in the Sabbath worship.

Rachel Levin



Panic in the world of art

This is a chapter from a work-in-progress called *The Substitute*. Any resemblance of characters to persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Signore Alberto Muscarotti was chief of security of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. For twenty years.

A man of singular solitary habits. An anachronism in sophisticated Florence, he was a devout man. A Roman Catholic communist.

His habits were immaculate. He kept his present three-room domicile as clean as a monk's cell. And he was especially devoted to the Blessed Virgin.

As way of example of his extreme moral impeccability, after his dear wife had passed on, he had begun masturbating. In the beginning, remembering those early days of connubial bliss, he had used those blessed memories with which to stimulate his hypothalamus. But, as time went on, he caught himself fantasizing a face, which although it seemed familiar, still eluded him.

Some female visitor to the Gallery, no doubt. Yet the face was so transportive, so ideal, that he racked his brain upon awakening to fulfillment in order to trace his now steady, if only, imaginary lover.

Imagine his shock, and self-disgust, upon coming to an early shift, at 4:00 a.m., and noticing that the face (and breasts this time) of his last evening's sexual feast were of no other than the Blessed Virgin Herself. At this discovery, Muscarotti fell to his knees.

Fortunately, no one saw him. By the time his staff of guards came through to bid him a good day, he had almost recovered. But from that day on, there were no more nightly pleasures.

Now, it was 4:30 a.m. He had had his coffee and *biscotti*. And he was prepared to slowly do the rounds.

He preferred to leave the lights on in all the inner chambers. And, as he entered the tiny room where all was gold and ivory; diptychs and triptychs of the Annunciation. Of the Nativity. Of the Assumption, he lingered. It was his favorite room.

"One moment — all was in its place," these were the exact words that Signore Muscarotti used in describing the events to Svar Chimo of the Italian Six O'Clock News "... And then the chamber filled with a bluish radiance. I thought at first it was a power failure. Although at that time of the morning — "Muscarotti shook his head. "Anyway, bluish haloes affixed themselves, I cannot think of a better word, to all the images of... of... the Blessed Virgin, and —"

Here the old man's voice faltered.

"And then — the treasures themselves were gone."

Even the hard-bitten unshaven cameraman was unduly solemn. He kept his eyes fixed on the man as though he were the last survivor of a terrible plane crash.

"What was your first feeling?" asked Chimo. The usually caustic reporter was very courteous to the old guard. Even gentle. Muscarotti, in fact, seemed on the verge of tears. Or, an emotional breakdown.

"Yes," Chimo said patiently, "yes. Take your time, Signore Muscarotti, there is no hurry here."

"The best way to describe this to you — is this." His arm designated an arc. "This room was filled with the spoils and treasures of countless Roman and Italian victories. You see for yourself, it is quite empty. So much for the room itself. But, what has happened here —" Muscarotti pointed to his heart. "A long time ago, I attended church because due to some custodial mishap, I slipped and fell into a baptismal font. And I was Christianized. I am an illegitimate orphan."

"You, too," wondered Chimo inaudibly.

"I hate the Roman Catholic church."

Chimo's face broke into a sunrise of smiles.

"But I have only one weakness," Muscarotti continued, "being a member in good standing of the Italian Communist Party, you understand."

Chimo: "Of course."

"... And that is... I'm not ashamed to admit it... "

"Why should you," encouraged Chimo.

"I adore the Blessed Mother... "

Chimo removed his peaked cap.

"... And... as I watched every treasure in my favorite room in the Gallery disappear, I knew that I would worship Her openly for the rest of my life."

The old guard's eyes began to fill. "But I haven't told you the real miracle."

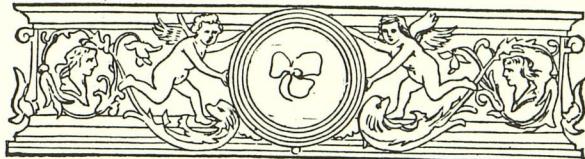
Chimo grew visibly uneasy.

"Next week I was due at the Infirmary for the removal of a cataract on my left eye. This morning I went for a final examination. It was gone."

At this, Muscarotti began to weep, unashamedly. And Chimo, too.

The entire episode appeared unedited on the Italian Six O'Clock News.

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Tears and miracles on TV, but there was panic in the world of art throughout the world. As statuary, entire walls, sides of mountains, paintings, drawings, miniatures, murals, diptychs, palimpsests, triptychs, apses, and tapestries vanished, taking with them every image of the Goddess, the Blessed Virgin, and all the female (and male aspects) of the Great Mother.

In the realm of coins, figurines, and jewels, it was as if they had never existed. Ruins of temples to the Goddess crumbled to dust. The Florentines thought that the Communist government had conspired to devastate "all the decadent symbols of spirituality." The Parisians thought that the Germans were finally paying them back for winning World War II.

In London, and in New York City, there were blood baths. Among three outstanding groups: the Waisties (the very long-haired); the Shoulders (medium-long haired); and the Necks (the Conservatives).

Here and abroad, each art group being comprised mainly of a rather wide spectrum of fairies and non-fairies who controlled galleries and museums, newspaper columns and art periodicals, and who for the main part adored statues, paintings, and all other *objets d'art* of the ideal woman, rather than women themselves.

But inasmuch as the art scene was their *thing*, these men were considerably upset to find the criterion of beauty in woman vanished; and left, for the first time in the history of art — if not of the world — with absolutely no criterion at all.

In India, Shiva, always presumed to be a male deity, and Kali, ran in liquid gold, silver, obsidian and mud before the horrified eyes of the worshippers. Two hundred million faithful drowned themselves in the Ganges. Gangadevi restored them immediately as clouds of water over drought areas. There were those who saw the images of Vishnu, Rama, and Krishna dissolve into miraculously scented flames of hyacinth, dark azure, copper, and golden yellow.

Another three hundred million flung themselves into the Sacred Flames. The Goddess of Fire reincarnated these into wheatfields. (Waste not, want not.) Leaving India for the first time in centuries as the most underpopulated area on earth, not counting desert and arctic regions.

A few thousand British soldiers who were there as "observers" accidentally perished among the sacred suicides, and these were not reincarnated into wheatfields, but the British government was quite tolerant. "Food" was still moving briskly into the Dominions. These shipments had increased as soon as the Blessed Vanishments had occurred, thanks to the British "observers."

The images which had melted in India, dissolved in counterpart as well throughout the world. In the theological past, the faithful of each particular religion as well as the art historians had sincerely believed all these aspects to have been "male." It was only after the Great Famine which followed the Awful Law of No Decay, and the Sacred Vanishments, that the world realized these "gods" were but male images of the Great Goddess.

In the center of chaos, the Great Mother came to our galaxy in the aspect of Ishtar, the deity worshipped for the longest time in the history of humankind. Ishtar illuminated the souls of children, women and men, which had lain in darkness before and after the Sumerians. Ninmah, the Mother Goddess of the Sumerian Kosmos, Mother of all the gods, Mother of Creation, known to Sumerian astronomers as the Exalted Lady. Ninmah had appeared to the Sumerians, in the sky, the same way that Ishtar had approached our universe: clothed in a supernova. From that illumination in Sumeria had come the first inscription on a tiny tablet; mathematics; the wheel; astronomy; and religion. The Tablets of Creation describe the struggle among the demigods within the primordial mother (Tiamat's belly). Marduk, killer of Tiamat, transformed in the Greek sky as Jupiter. The same Marduk known now among the Jews as Yaweh.

In India, a few Indian wiseacres known as *Vamacharis* (or the *Vamamargis*), followers of the left (and feminine) path, had by the Grace of Ishtar followed the Sacred Female Aspect correctly.

These died along with the ignorant faithful, but were immediately re-incarnated into WA-WACs wealthy-Americans-with-a-conscience. The WA-WACs, a weird group even for America, did some strange things. They championed the Bill of Rights, along with the remaining 400 Native Americans, that number having escaped being eaten during the Great Famine. Some WA-WACs even armed themselves, and kept watch on reservations, calling themselves the Arm of Bartolomeo de Las Casas. These were joined by crackpot Catholics, Jews, Ishtarians, Unitarians and Quakers. And among these were nuns, seminarists, priests, a bishop, and even one cardinal.

The WA-WACs gave assist and money anonymously to the much-feared Women's Army for Peace. (An armed militant splinter group: 1,500,000 women who airlifted women and children out of war zones; and who legally robbed rich men to give back money to the poor.)

These matriots arose as one from the ranks of mothers, daughters, "sweethearts," sisters, and wives of men wounded or killed by war. They had made their bones on a non-violent (well, technically non-violent) coup.

At the height of the Great Famine, amid world chaos, W.A.P. platoons had kidnapped 140 American and foreign generals, 25 admirals and 4 captains of oil tankers (which had caused major oil spills). Flown them here, bound, blindfolded, and gagged, to a landfill in Jersey. Lowered them gently into a

prepared funnel-pit, 120 feet deep, 20 feet wide at the top, 10 feet wide at the bottom. Five-hundred and fifty thousand war widows, war mothers, war orphans, and war "sweethearts" had filed past the entrenched warriors. And flung (loosely) saran-wrapped personal excrement into the entrenchment.

The patriots had died bravely.

Before leaving, a W.A.P. trumpeter had sounded national and international taps. And their country's flags had been implanted at the summit.

One week later, they had abducted the-then President. By mistake. Returned him unharmed. Except for emotional shock. They had mistaken him for the-then chief of the FBI.

But they had lost their opportunity. To the overwhelming relief of everyone, the-then FBI chief had finally resigned. (The chief had been seated right next to the-then President when the abduction had taken place.) What W.A.P. had planned to do with the now ex-FBI chief was not revealed. The next day, 15 cadres of terrorists around the world responsible for the deaths or maiming of women and children were found dead. A spokesperson for the Women's Army for Peace had demanded, and had received, a live newscast. She had appeared on camera as heavily veiled as a prized female slave of an Arab prince.

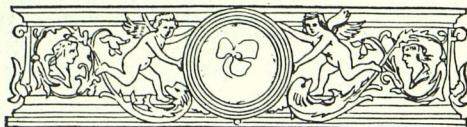
"We have relieved 75 admirals and 140 generals and 4 captains at their posts of duty. We hope that their replacements will be attuned to peace instead of war. As for the terrorists, women are no longer killing women for male schemes. We realize," she continued, "that men view war and violence as an inherent part of life. We plan to interfere only insofar as the killing of women and children is concerned. We intend to reduce all war efforts to hand-to-hand combat."

"Do you have any plans to implement this—ah—Utopian dream?" inquired the silver-templed prince of the all-male media.

The woman removed her veils carefully, one by one, until there was only a single veil left. "There are many among us who wish to bring peace and plenty to the earth."

"Aren't you hedging the question?" asked the smart-assed 49-year-old male interviewer.

"No," the spokesperson replied. "We have a number of missiles aimed directly at the sun."



But to return to the Sacred Vanishments, and as an example of the extreme precision of these miracles—In Boston, the *la Orana Maria* had burst into flames, burning a hole in the exquisite Gauguin canvas as a blue-veined, blue-haired, blue-nosed SAR (Sons of the American Revolution) was looking at it. He died of heart arrest on the gold-veined marble floor that his late father had payed for at his bequest.

At Lourdes, the entire shrine had risen shimmering into the sunlit air. Then at the height of one thousand feet, it had ignited—in the shape of flowers. And vanished. At the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, in Portugal, the same, excepting that here, in addition, it rained cherries embedded in hailstones for one hour.

But in Rome—as in Florence—super-miracles occurred. To this day, the body of Christ hangs suspended without the marble counterpart of the Blessed Virgin. In the larger *Pieta* of the cathedral in Florence, the same phenomenon prevails. An interesting outcome of these miracles was the total conversion of the Protestant Irish to the worship of the Goddess, and the complete overthrow of the British in Ireland, ending the hypocritical Pax. There were dark rumors of England "testing" a plutonium bomb over Ireland, but the prevailing winds were too strong in the direction of England.

It is difficult to describe adequately the vast air of gloom and melancholia which pervaded the earth devoid of the Blessed Aspect of the Goddess—in all Her forms.

The survivors had buried (or had eaten) their dead. And the living went on, but the Goddessless atmosphere grinded and grated on everyone's nerves.

Sculptors and painters copied furiously (these commissioned by the state, for the first time since the Renaissance), but within twenty-four hours of the Goddess's Visit to our galaxy, no image, in abstract or realistic form, remained.

The encyclopedias of art and the *Britannica*, riddled with holes, as were all other reference and art books now without Her Image, became worthless. In Egypt, counterparts of Isis dissolved in ascending columns of green and red fire waves which shot up with nuclear force, three thousand feet into the air. Causing an air alert in the-then peaceful Middle East. At the same time, all the dams burst draining the waters of the Nile, revealing ancient statues of the dynastic past.

Another super-phenomenon was that even after the Great One's Visit, onto the unknowable present and future, no aspect of Her was/is durable, beyond a few moments, excepting those images which were/are created by women artists and women sculptors.

More awesome still, the Sphinx Herself burned molten hot, transforming the sands into a solid sheet of glass, where She had lain mysterious for thousands of years.

In Persia and in the Yucatan, the smaller Sphinxes burned the same. While in Haiti, the Voodoo Goddess, Mother of the Earth, was swept by fireballs from the heavens, and consumed.

And lastly, Greece and Sicily, where many ruins of shrines and temples had survived even the onslaught of war and centuries, now resembled the craters of the moon.

A glory vanished forever.

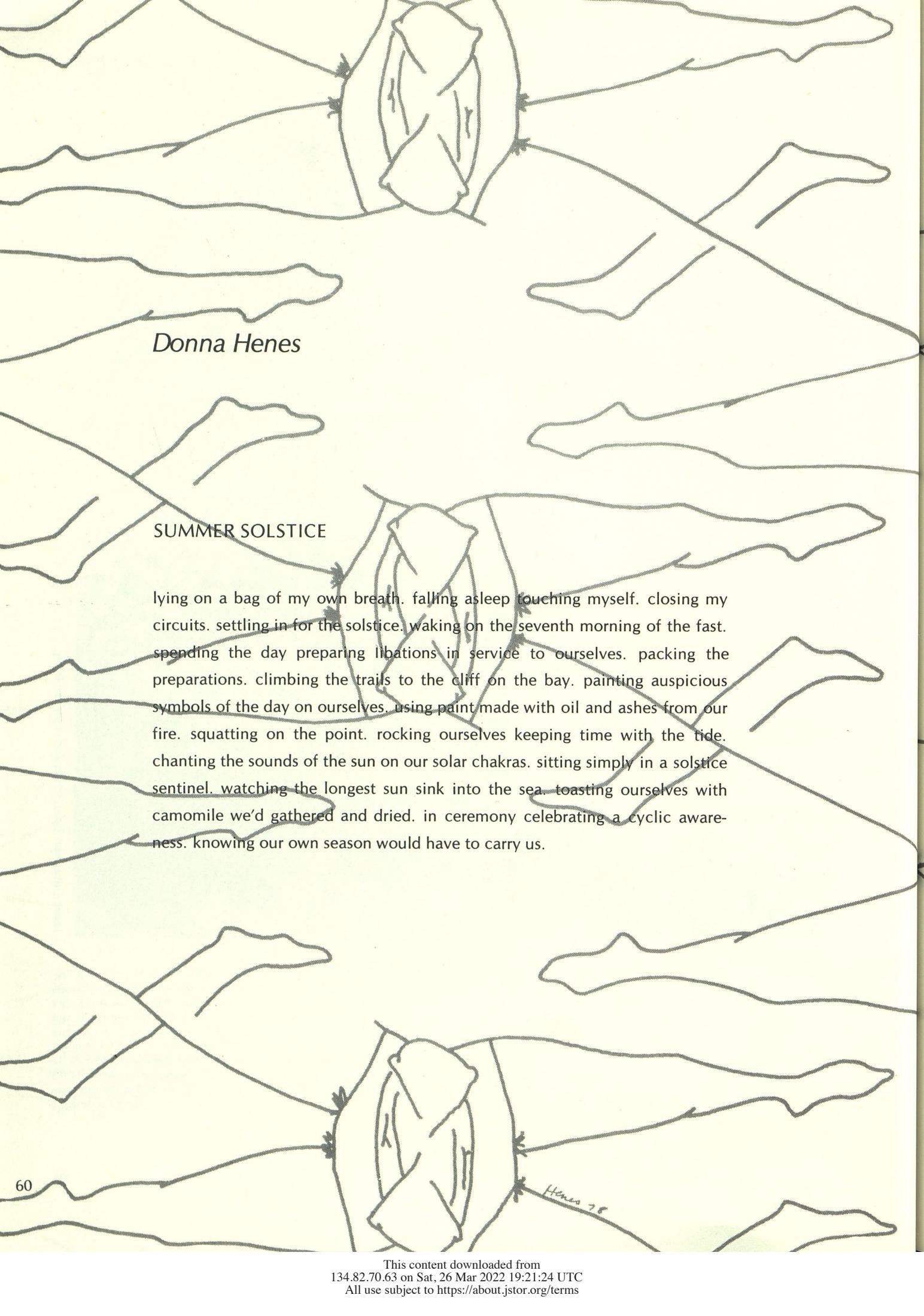
— A.M.



Janet Culbertson. *Exile III*. Ink and charcoal. 8' x 6'.

I have always had a deep reverence for nature, for all the creatures and elements of the earth. I felt this to be a spiritual or even a "religious" involvement, as if nature and myself were connected in a holistic way. Why? Imagine a child hearing two stories—one about Jesus Christ, his sexless origin, his trials, triumphs through pain, ungenerous reception and cruel execution; the other about "Mother Nature," her sensuousness, her solicitude toward all creatures, her infinite beauty and her refusal to die. The first story cuts down the creative force and offers a dubious "other world" reward through suffering and submission. The second offers freedom and the creative experience as a supreme joy that compensates for suffering. An intuitive part of me chose "Mother Nature" and the positive creative principle as an ally. As a child of Nature, I believed the story of an eternity I could see each spring. As an adult, I realize that **now** our only visible eternity is threatened. We are in a symbiotic relationship with the earth, and what we do to its physical and spiritual resources is what we are doing to ourselves. Our responsibility as women, creative beings, does not stop at the edge of our skin. Interacting with the whole, creatively caring for the environment, visible or invisible, is the feminine principle at work in its most positive way.

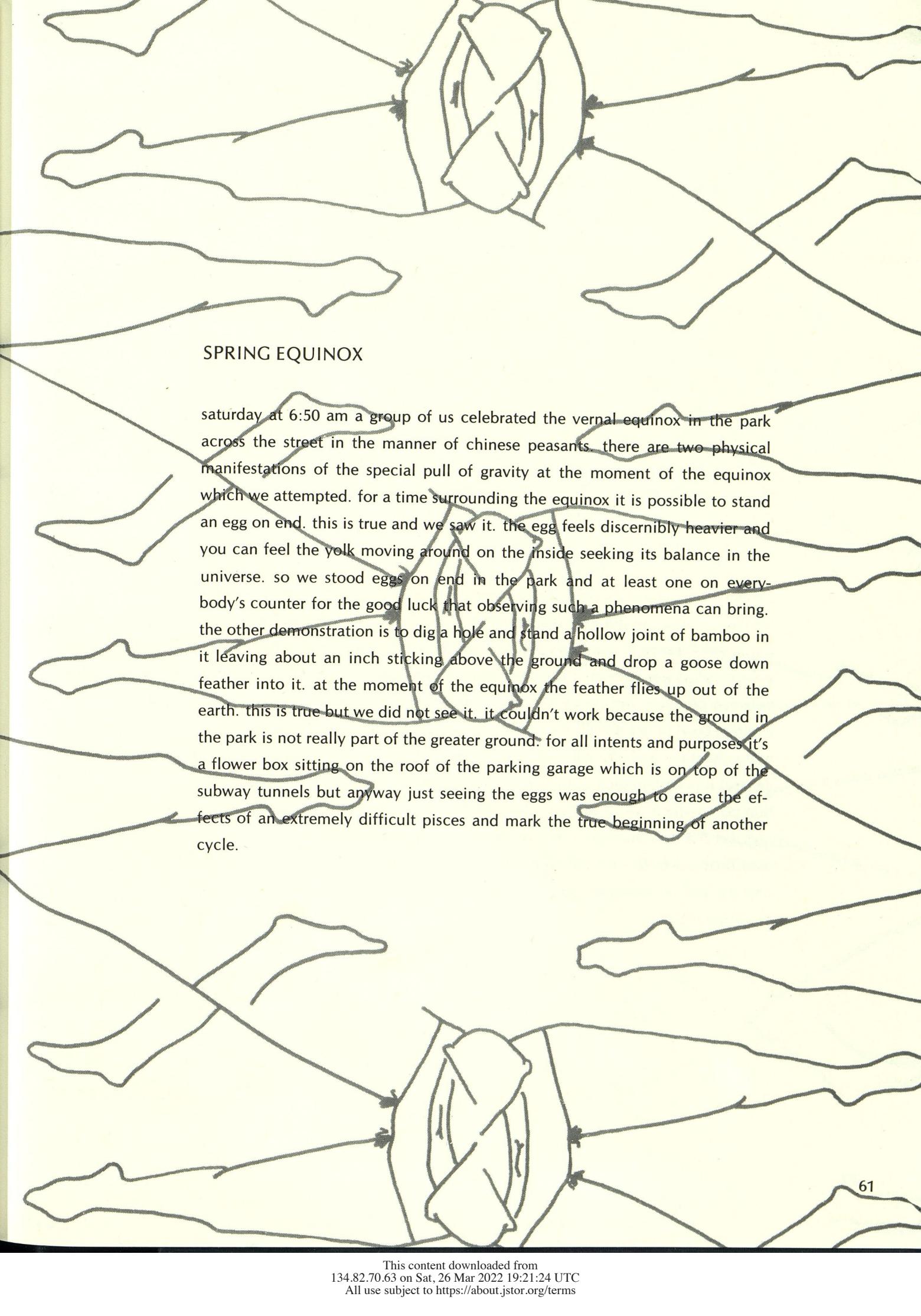
—Janet Culbertson



Donna Henes

SUMMER SOLSTICE

lying on a bag of my own breath. falling asleep touching myself. closing my circuits. settling in for the solstice. waking on the seventh morning of the fast. spending the day preparing libations in service to ourselves. packing the preparations. climbing the trails to the cliff on the bay. painting auspicious symbols of the day on ourselves. using paint made with oil and ashes from our fire. squatting on the point. rocking ourselves keeping time with the tide. chanting the sounds of the sun on our solar chakras. sitting simply in a solstice sentinel. watching the longest sun sink into the sea. toasting ourselves with camomile we'd gathered and dried. in ceremony celebrating a cyclic awareness. knowing our own season would have to carry us.



SPRING EQUINOX

saturday at 6:50 am a group of us celebrated the vernal equinox in the park across the street in the manner of chinese peasants. there are two physical manifestations of the special pull of gravity at the moment of the equinox which we attempted. for a time surrounding the equinox it is possible to stand an egg on end. this is true and we saw it. the egg feels discernibly heavier and you can feel the yolk moving around on the inside seeking its balance in the universe. so we stood eggs on end in the park and at least one on everybody's counter for the good luck that observing such a phenomena can bring. the other demonstration is to dig a hole and stand a hollow joint of bamboo in it leaving about an inch sticking above the ground and drop a goose down feather into it. at the moment of the equinox the feather flies up out of the earth. this is true but we did not see it. it couldn't work because the ground in the park is not really part of the greater ground. for all intents and purposes it's a flower box sitting on the roof of the parking garage which is on top of the subway tunnels but anyway just seeing the eggs was enough to erase the effects of an extremely difficult pisces and mark the true beginning of another cycle.

WINTER SOLSTICE

yes. reverence to her. the chant on the winter solstice on the full moon on the beach in the snow in the full spirit of the great round. on the darkest night of the year in the dark of the snow which obscured the moon and in the company of nine cars of city state and federal police who forbade the fire on the order of a superior who had the authority to forbid. but the moon asserted herself in the huge white waves which contained us in their rhythm and glow and rocked the chanting into a trance of chanting really chanting. or maybe i myself was in a trance from the very beginning anyway carrying totems and images of people i loved in the pockets of my spacesuit chanting my own rites of passage for myself. and the fire asserted itself too in the form of a delayed due to extreme cold chemical reaction causing a spontaneous combustion in the sacrificial bowl. it was perfect. a surprise chance to see ourselves only eyes showing between ponchos and parkas. chanting in circles around the tiny fire in the wooden bowl under the white canopy which also appeared spontaneously. and more chanting. and altered chanting. and invocations and glorifications and in general much reverence to her. to her to us to each other. and then at a certain point which we all realized together the chanting was over. for this time and the chanters lined up and passed the unlit fire log by log hand over hand over beach over fence back into the truck. and hugged and kissed each other and me and separated in the dark in the snow back in cars and bus back into the other world.

AUTUMN EQUINOX & MY BIRTHDAY

tuesday. i dream i am sitting at my green telephone table and i hear a bird shriek. i run into the studio to investigate. a little bird has flown in and gotten caught in the space where the two panes of glass of the open window overlap. it tries to fly through the glass and panics flapping up and down in its flat glass cage. i just reach in and grab it and carry it out to the fire escape. it flies off immediately. then turns around and flies back and lands on my shoulder. i send omar inside to get some seeds to feed it. he comes back with sesame and sunflower seeds on a pie plate which he offers to the bird. and instead of pecking at the seeds the bird picks them up with its hand and puts them into its mouth.

wednesday. i tell my dream at breakfast.

thursday. i am sitting at my green telephone table and i hear a bird shriek. i run into the studio to investigate. a little bird has flown in and gotten caught in the space where the two panes of the open window overlap. it tries to fly through the glass and panics flapping up and down in its flat glass cage. i just reach in and grab it and carry it out to the fire escape. it flies off immediately. singing.

friday. i tell a wise one about the sequence. and she says "oh yes. and now you'll have to be careful what you dream."

The Eternal Weaver

Buffie Johnson and Tracy Boyd

The mysteries that for millennia were preserved in the temples of the Great Goddess by her priestesses and priests are, for the most part, mysteries of life and death and, in the process of unveiling them, we are confronted by something infinitely larger than we can imagine: thousands upon thousands of years of magic and healing. As the Goddess's symbols are revealed, it becomes apparent that the Feminine in all its manifold aspects is the bringer of consciousness and wisdom.

One of her most potent images is that of the eternal weaver. That weaving was exclusively the art of women is by now well established; however, the more far-reaching implications with regard to the worship of a female divinity are described only in vague references here and there. Thus the mysteries that weaving once symbolized remain to be woven into a pattern that will ultimately reveal the Goddess at its center.

The diamond-shaped "kilim" pattern that appears from one of the earliest levels onward (from c. 6400 to 5700 B.C.) in the wall paintings of the goddess-worshipping site of Catal Huyuk in Anatolia is an indication that

"kilims have been woven in Anatolia since the late seventh millennium B.C. or for at least the last eight thousand years."¹

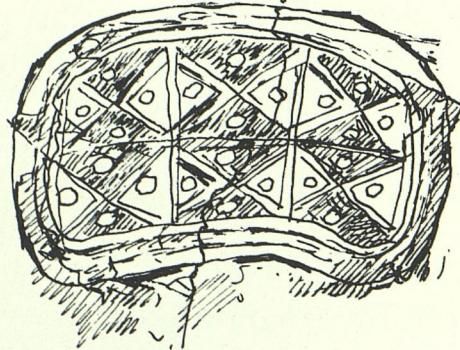


FIG. 1 "Kilim" pattern design from Catal Huyuk (c. 6400-5700 B.C.)

The "kilim" design, reserved exclusively for the shrines of the goddess, appears even before her anthropomorphized images at the site, and is probably a representation of her birth-giving womb in geometric abstraction. There is certainly a wealth of images at Catal Huyuk depicting the theme of a goddess of life and death to support this idea, and there is monumental evidence outside of Catal Huyuk. The diamond-glyph shape, even as far back as Upper Paleolithic times, represents not only the womb, but implies the idea of a female divinity as universal source and origin of all life. The geometric hieroglyph is found in the earliest art of

the Upper Paleolithic and continues cross-culturally for some thirty-thousand years into the iconography of Judaeo-Christian art. It is not then by mere chance that the diamond design at Catal Huyuk is the same pattern that is a prominent feature of the "Eye Dazzler" rugs woven by Navajo women.

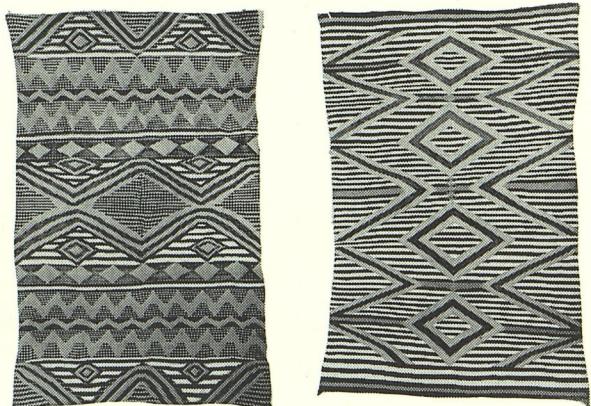


FIG. 2 "Eye Dazzler" woven rugs—Navajo (late 19th century)
Serape Style. Woven Navajo rug. 1850-1860.

Seen as womb, the universality of the diamond-glyph pattern supports the analysis of modern dreams which has shown that

"the mystery of giving birth is basically associated with the idea of spinning and weaving."²

The thread motif, which incorporates the idea of spinning, weaving and a complexity of beliefs in the knot as an instrument of magic and the weaving of spells, runs throughout the tradition of the mythology of rebirth and its attendant artifacts; whatever form it takes, it is always associated with the realm of the Feminine. The motif survives even in the fairytales of Europe in which the themes of spinning and weaving are frequently encountered. There are as many variations on the symbolic thread device as there are names of goddesses, and what is described in many of the myths are rites of initiation that facilitate the passages from one stage of life, or consciousness, to the next, over which the Goddess, or an emblem of her, presides as "mistress of initiation."

The analogy between initiation and death is shown in a great many initiatory rites and accompanying myths of the

primitive world. Initiation, which means introduction to a mystery, frequently incorporates a ritual entry into a representation of the womb. The same pattern is found

"in a large number of initiatory myths and rites. The idea of gestation and childbirth is expressed by...entrance in the womb of the Great Mother (Earth Mother), or into the body of a sea monster, or of a wild beast!!!"³

The symbolic return to the womb is probably intended to recall an earlier memory of being torn to pieces in the vaginal "teeth" of the Earth Mother, or of being swallowed into the belly of the monster. Although the rituals are often marked by an element of terror and risk, the emphasis is placed on mystery rather than actual danger or peril. The initiate merely acts out a ritual death in a quest for the sacred and mysterious forces that will guarantee regeneration.

In the much-romanticized Cretan myth of the Minotaur, Theseus embarked upon a "typical initiatory ordeal (characterized by) the 'struggle with a monster'...representing the forces of the unconscious";⁴ an initiation made "by way of ritual entry into a labyrinth."⁵ Theseus is the acknowledged hero, and yet the real credit for his success belongs to Ariadne ("Mother of the Barley"). She is the sister of the Minotaur, daughter of Pasiphae and Minos, and is associated with the labyrinth in one of its earliest known written references, a Mycenaean Linear B tablet from Knossos identifying her as "goddess of the labyrinth" and "mistress of initiation."⁶ The legend relates that having fallen in love with the Athenian youth, the fair Ariadne offered Theseus a ball of golden thread (the weaver's clue) which enabled him to retrace his steps and find his way out of the labyrinth. The labyrinth is the way, the passage leading to the center which is the path to consciousness and it is Ariadne as "goddess of the labyrinth" and "mistress of initiation," who provides the knowledge of the way by means of the "thread of initiation."

The palace of Knossos was itself called *labyrinthos*, or "the palace of the double axes"; and both the labyrinth, a universal symbol of the uterine maze, and the double axe (or *labrys*), derive their meaning from the word *labrys* (lip), which specifically refers to the female labia protecting the dark entrance to the womb. The labrys, the highly venerated crescent-shaped double axe, an instrument of sacrifice and death, is thus an emblem of the fertile womb of the Great Goddess.

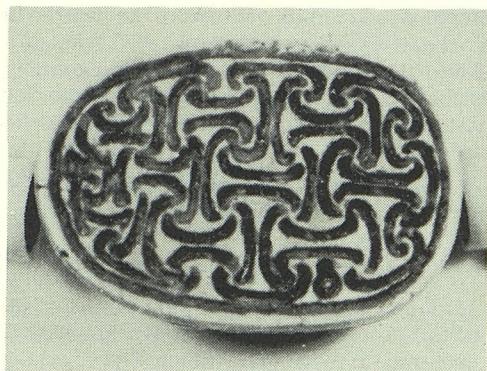


FIG. 3 Labrys/labyrinth scarab—Egypt (Middle Kingdom, c. 2500 B.C. Found in Crete)

In many parts of the world women have introduced the labyrinth motif, as in the contemporary Stone Age level culture of Malekula near the New Hebrides, where the deceased must "thread their way...through a maze-like design drawn in the sand by the Guardian Ghost,"⁷ a being of undetermined sex who lives in a cave and who is often regarded as female. The ritual sand tracings, originally drawn by women as they still are in some places, are intricately woven labyrinthine webs; their central structure, frequently shaped like the diamond-glyph, is a representation of the tomb. Other examples of this may be seen in

"parts of Scotland and north England (where today) women draw... 'tangled thried' designs on their thresholds and hearthstones as a prophylactic against evil influences and witches."⁸

And in South India where similar threshold designs are made.

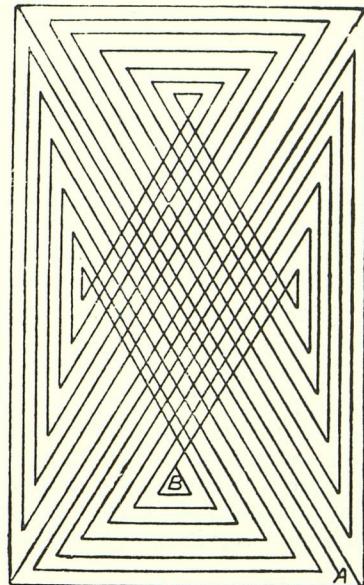


FIG. 4 Ritual labyrinth sand tracing from Oba, north of Malekula, New Hebrides Islands (20th-century Stone Age culture)

Images of the diamond-shaped glyph and the Evil Eye are known to serve similar apotropaic* functions;⁹ and the spider, as spinner of the labyrinthine web, is often mentioned in this connection. The word "spider" actually derives from the Old English root *spinnan*, "to spin," or "to draw out and twist fibers into thread"; as does the word "spinster," whose original meaning was "a woman who spins thread or yarn." The spider is a symbol of the devouring womb

"...not only because it devours the male after coitus, but because it symbolizes the female in general, who spreads nets for the unwary male... (and whose) dangerous aspect is much enhanced by the element of weaving..."¹⁰

It is of interest to note that the supernatural being, Spider Woman, taught the Navajo women to weave. The protecting aspects of the spider are shown in the Vedic sacrament of *Nāmakarana*, name-giving, during which a spiderlike web of scarlet-colored threads is woven around the newborn child as a protection from evil. With similar intent, a special rite of preservation is performed on expectant mothers which is called *Raksabandhana*, "the Binding of the Protective Thread to ward off the Evil Eye, illness and jealous spells."¹¹

In India, the three-day *Upanayana*, or Sacred Thread ceremony, initiates the young male of the Brahmin and other castes as a "twice-born" man. Now solely restricted to Hindu males, the *Upanayana* was at one time an honor equally bestowed upon girls as a symbol of regeneration. During the investiture with the sacred thread, a threefold cord which has been spun by a Brahmin virgin is twisted three times and tied with a triple knot. The duration of the rite and the knotting of cords suggests an association with the triple lunar aspects of the threefold goddess of birth: the personification of birth, life and death; the waxing, waning and full moon. The sacred Indian thread may be likened to the umbilical cord that nourishes the fetus in preparation for its eventual entry into the world; for the rite of the "twice-born" marks the adolescent's separation from the mother, and the beginning of manhood.¹²

A parallel for the Indian custom may be found in ancient Egypt, where knots of cloth inscribed with magic words of power were worn as a protection against illness and harm. In Egypt, Meskhenet ("birth place") is the goddess who cuts the umbilical cord; she wears a uterus headdress. As one of the Seven Hathors, she pronounces the fate of children at birth, and is the goddess of childbirth, death and rebirth. In the rites of the dead she presides over the place of purification, or *Mesken*, and "allows (the) soul to enter (the) body" reborn.¹³ Her name is given to the brick on which women crouched in birth-giving position. In Arabic tradition, the Lady Fatimah is the Weaver; the Muslim *surahs*, or prayers against witchcraft, ask that the devoted be saved

"from the evil of (women who) are blowers on knots.' The words 'blowers on knots' refers to magicians... who recite incantations... intended to do harm... whilst they tie knots in a string—in other words, weave spells."¹⁴

The highly venerated stone *Omphalos* of Delphi, the goddess Gaia's sacred site, was believed to be the center, or navel of the world. The iconic stone was thought to be the grave-mound of the sacred python of the Oracles, and was completely covered with a woven net of fillets, or threads.¹⁵

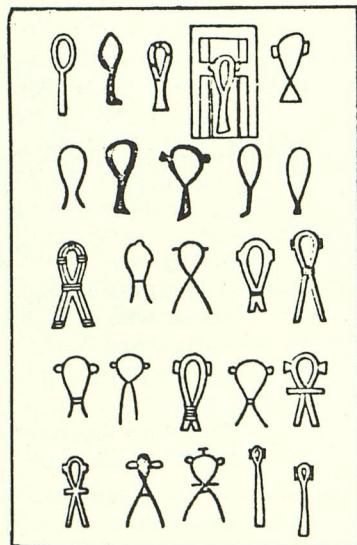


FIG. 5 The hieroglyph 'SA', variations on the Ankh sign of life

As "the knot is a dire instrument of the enchantress,"¹⁶ it is not surprising to see the knot as an emblem of the Great Goddess and her regenerative womb, and as a magical symbol of her protection. The worship of the goddess Net, or Neith,

whose name may stem from the root *netet*, to knit, to weave,¹⁷ extends back to predynastic times (before 3400 B.C.). In Egyptian texts Net is mentioned as a goddess of protection, sometimes represented by a hieroglyph whose meaning has been interpreted as that of a magical knot:

"The Egyptian word... to express the meaning of 'protection' is *sa*..., and the character represents a knot of a peculiar kind...."¹⁸

The Egyptian Ankh, the knotted sign of life, is a hieroglyphic representation of the womb and a symbol of protection;¹⁹

"It is probably more than a coincidence that in Coptic art the Ankh sign often resembles the familiar sign for Venus (♀)."²⁰

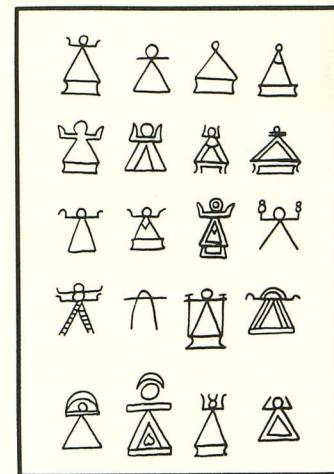


FIG. 6 The sign of the goddess Tanit—Carthage (c. 5th century B.C. to 2nd century A.D.)

Although little is known of the parthenogenic fish-goddess Tanit, worshipped in Carthage from the fifth century B.C. through early Christian times, she is represented by a geometric emblem, the Sign of Tanit, which closely resembles the Ankh, or sign of life, the Sacred Knot of the Cretan Mother Goddess, and other hieroglyphic symbols emblematic of the womb and the protection it affords. The same representation occurs in the *Tjet*, or Knot of Isis, which is one of the most common of Egyptian amulets, and an emblem of the "uterus and vagina of Isis";²¹ the goddess who was known for her magical ability to restore the dead to life, and who was acknowledged as having invented "the cultivation of crops and the spinning of threads" in Egypt.²² As the amulet of the *Tjet* was placed on the neck of the deceased, an incantation from the *Book of the Dead* was recited over it:

"the blood of Isis, the virtue of Isis; the magic power of the Eye, are protecting this great one."²³

That the goddess of death also possesses the power to resurrect is shown in "the oldest recorded account of the passage through the gates of metamorphosis"²⁴ in which Inanna (Ishtar) descends to the netherworld where Dumuzi remains as surrogate to die in her place. The vegetation goddess returns to earth, as the embodiment of the grain-spirit reborn. The swirling reed-bundle standard of the life-giving Inanna is a form that

"exactly resembles the Minoan and Mycenaean emblem of the goddess (and) combines the knot with the spiral entry of birth."²⁵

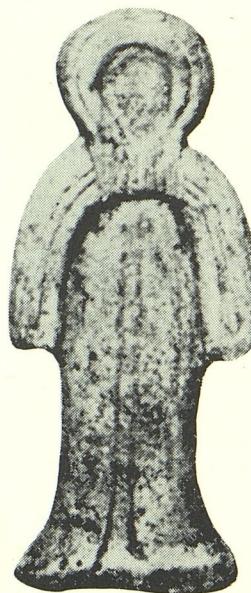


FIG. 7 The *Tjet*, or 'Knot of Isis', emblem of her womb—Egypt (c. 1375 B.C., XIX New Kingdom Dynasty to 641 A.D. Roman)

FIG. 8 Knotted reed-bundle standard & ideogram of the goddess Inanna—Sumer (c. 4th millennium B.C.)

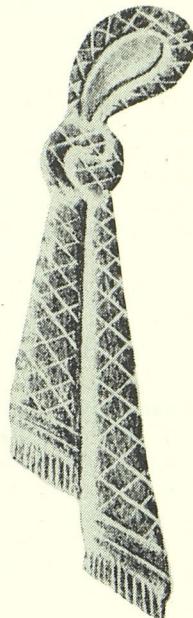
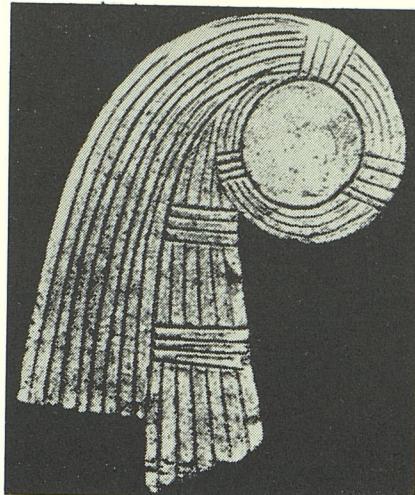


FIG. 9 The Sacred Knot of the Minoan goddess Ariadne in ivory Knossos (earlier than c. 1550 B.C. Bronze Age)

The Minoan knot is none other than the Sacred Knot of Ariadne which, with its prominent diamond-glyph patterning emblematic of the womb, and the knotting together of its threads into tassels, has associations with the "thread of initiation" as the "Key of Life," and the shamanistic cord or rope as the path to consciousness.

In modern times, evidence of the initiatory thread or knot may be observed among Christians in Syria who "bake (knotted) rolls . . . to be eaten once a year on Easter morning"²⁵ thus equating the labyrinthine knot with the bread of life and the resurrection of the soul. The braided Sabbath-loaf, or *Berchisbrot*, of the German Jews evidently has its origin in ancient goddess rites:

"The Teutonic goddess of fertility, Berchta, or Perchta, was worshipped by the women with rites which included offering their hair to her. In time this ceremony became obsolete and was replaced by a symbolic offering of the hair in the shape of a loaf representing intertwined braids. . . ."²⁶

Hebrew scholars have offered alternative suggestions as to the derivation of the *Berchisbrot*, as for example, that the name 'Berches' stems from the Old High German *Berchit*, which also describes the loaf known as "Brezel."²⁷ At all events, the pretzel too is baked in the form of a loose triple knot, and was probably, in early times, an offering made for a festival in Berchta's honor.

With few exceptions, the goddesses who spin and weave are goddesses of childbirth, protectors of women, and deities of war. Perhaps the most famous goddess of war and wisdom is Athene who, in one of her numerous functions, was the protectress of spinning and weaving. It is an awkward function, evidently a remnant from earlier times, as Athene is a foe of women and matriarchal ideals in classical Greece. The Lydian princess Arachne, whose name means "spider" in Greek, is said to have hanged herself when the jealous Athene destroyed her weaving which had not a single imperfection. The myth relates that the vengeful goddess "turned her into a spider—the insect she hates most—and the rope into a cobweb . . ."²⁸ The wise owl is among Athene's most sacred emblems, a bird with lunar associations that is gen-

erally regarded as a creature of ill omen, and in German tradition is represented as a nocturnal weaver:

"Even in a starless night, nothing is concealed; a morose old owl lurks in her somber little chamber, spinning on a tiny silver spindle, as she watches the evil in the darkness."²⁹

In the Norse *Eddas*, the three golden-haired Valkyries ("Choosers of the Slain") are magical swan-maidens who spin on the shores of the lake as they sing their death chant. The weaving of the Greek Sirens, who also assume bird-shape in their earliest representations, is of a more abstract nature. They are the "Entanglers," "those who bind with a cord," who lure with their eloquent song and promise knowledge whose attainment implies death, that is, spiritual initiation.

The Teutonic Frigg (Frigga) in her original form is a goddess of love, knowledge, and justice who spins golden thread and weaves the clouds in heaven. She was much reduced in later folklore, but it should be remembered that the "demons and bogeys are invariably the reduced gods or priests of a superseded religion,"³⁰ or, in this case, goddesses or priestesses. Frigga's later counterpart in German lore is Holde, Held, or Frau Holle, who

"appeared as an ugly old witch, with long, matted hair and protruding teeth. In medieval Germany she had developed into the demon-witch who gobble up children. She was held responsible for entangling hair at night. 'er ist mit Holle gefahren' was said of one whose hair was disheveled and knotted."³¹

It is the same Held, the thirteenth wise woman in the tale of *Sleeping Beauty*, who is excluded from the princess's birthday celebration because there are only twelve golden plates in the palace, and so she curses Sleeping Beauty with death. The princess finds the old wise woman spinning in a tower, and it is her spindle that pricks the girl's finger and causes her to sleep for one hundred years.

In the lunar calendar there are thirteen months, the thirteenth being "the death-month, ruled over by the three Fates, or Spinners."³² The Greek Spinners of Fate, or "Moirai," whose name derives from the root meaning "to die,"³³ are

named Clotho ("spinner"), who spins the thread of life; Lachesis ("measure"), who measures the length of the thread; and Atropos ("she who cannot be avoided"), who cuts the thread at its determined time. As the deciders of destiny, these parthenogenous daughters of the goddess Necessity form a greatly feared lunar triad, for:

"when the Moirai exert their power upon men, it is first and foremost as warriors, for whom they weave a bloody death . . ."³⁴

Eileithyia ("She who has caused to come") is the leading figure in another triad of Greek goddesses of childbirth; the others are Artemis and Hera, both of whom have the spindle as their emblem. In the Delian hymn sung at her altar, she is Eileithyia Eulinos ("with the goodly thread"), a goddess of destiny whose sacred emblem is the cord. She is a magician and sorceress who when she held her knees together, clasped her hands with crossed fingers and muttered charms could postpone labor at will. The images in her many shrines always showed her veiled, and in places "she was regarded with such sanctity that only her priestesses were permitted to see her image."³⁵

To be veiled means "to weave," from the same Anglo-Saxon root as "witch," (wiccan, to use as sorcery); and: "...to weave is the restricted form of to work . . . to perform a sacred action." In all the actions, the goddess is the Maya, the great weaver of life.³⁶ The Indian concept of the woven veil of Maya, or Illusion, is undoubtedly related to the idea of woman as the eternal weaver of webs. At Catal Huyuk, a pregnant goddess reveals herself to her worshippers, opening her veil-like garment, richly patterned in an elaborate net-like diamond glyph design, the Syrian goddess of fertility discloses her sacred mysteries in the same attitude some five thousand years later (c. 1000 B.C.). Isis, the great enchantress, is veiled; so too Neith, who

"was the personification of the eternal female principle of life which was self-sustaining and self-existent, and was secret, and unknown, and all-pervading . . . the prototype of partheno-genesis."³⁷

Penelope ("with a web over her face") eluded her many suitors by secretly unravelling at night the weaving she had done by day. In ancient China, where the female Weaver was a stellar divinity, a bride was required to be veiled during the marriage celebrations and rites of betrothal and marriage took place only in the hours of twilight.

The aura of mystery that surrounds the riddle may be likened to the veil that shrouds the Goddess in her vast wisdom. The Sphinx, meaning literally, "the Strangler," who is represented as a hybrid animal with female head and breasts, is a symbol of this hidden wisdom. The riddle she posed to the inhabitants of Thebes was in the nature of a highly sacred initiatory ordeal and all who failed to unravel her mysteries were strangled on the spot. When Oedipus solved the enigma, thereby becoming king through matrilineal descent, the age-old matriarchal Sphinx committed suicide. But Oedipus' eminent downfall is history.

In the Old Testament, the Queen of Sheba, who was versed in the magic arts, presented questions of a similar initiatory character to test the wisdom of Solomon, and literature and myth document that the revelations of the Delphic Oracle were couched in enigmatic form. The Gordian Knot, perhaps the most famous symbol of knowledge in history, was meant to be untied, as the message formed by each of its knotted runes was the name of a sacred goddess; a riddle to be solved through superior spiritual consciousness. Alexander ("defender of men") failed to solve

the problem it posed, and, as he "had not the learning, patience or ingenuity to perform the task decently, used his sword."³⁸ By sheer brute force he, with many others, brought the ideals of mother-right to an end; and yet the veil remained untouched. Alexander was poisoned by an unknown hand at the age of thirty-three.

An ancient inscription, which refers to Pallas Athene, but is attributed to Neith, reads:

"I am everything which hath been, and which is, and which shall be, and there hath never been any who hath uncovered (or revealed) my veil."³⁹

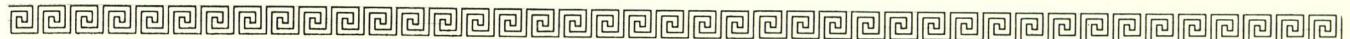
Throughout the world, the Great Goddess "weaves the web of life and spins the threads of fate";⁴⁰ in her hands rests the destiny of each individual, her shimmering veil concealing the mysteries of the universe to the uninitiated.

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*apotropaic—see glossary.



Is it Death which beckons me — or only the stars
 Pre-uterine music unknown meridian particles listing
 Past uncountable worlds yet space counted time time
 Counted waves waves counted spontaneous singularities
 Still I drift past unrecognized nebulae
 The sudden flesh of light intermingling with mine
 Which was yet to come
 In a sea of continents of unbreakable space
 My journey dazzled and cordoned the singing stars

In an unconquering moment of destiny I conquered form
 And zero no tribune or genetic code
 Would ever bind me again
 Out there

I searched and found yesterday
 And all our tomorrows yes even yours
 There would never again be
 The terror of one
 Or the murder of many

Past that part of the universe where it would ever rain
 Or shine beyond ice or snow green leaves or winter
 The present one continues in a dance of being without definement
 The temporary constellation of joy or pain
 The concessional repression of individuality

It is true
 I could not see the stars now
 Nor the bleached silver circle of the moon
 Gone too the white ocean of the sun
 The single living aureole of light amidst all darkness

But in their place
 I became the vastness travelling I was the endless
 night our body winged in rainbow stretched and settled across
 lagoons and silent seas of space
 islanded by stars
 the ultimate:
 godless yet
 god

DREAMS

collected by Chellis Glendinning

November 28, 1977

I am sleeping in my bed in a small town in northern California. The waning moon passes by the window during the night, and cold air leaks into the room through the crack in the glass. In the dream I am collecting dreams from my friends. They all reflect images of ourselves emerging, flowering; images for guidance in our rebirthing, images of—if you please—"the Goddess". Treelight gives me one, Barbara, and others.

When I wake up in the morning, I call and write to these women to ask for their dreams.

Chellis Glendinning
Camp Meeker, California

1970

A night dream remembered in the early morning. I am living in a second-story apartment of an old farmhouse in Berkeley, California. My bedroom has tall windows and my bed is a foam pad on the floor on a flower-print rug. Doing yoga in the morning I remember a vision I had during the night of a long gray figure lying in the grass. In my dream the figure looks as if it were made of stone. The green grass is tall and in the distance I can see a city below the hill. As I look, the figure rolls over toward me and I can see that it is a large and sleeping goddess. As she turns toward me I feel very happy. I realize she is my potential for strength and inner power. It makes me laugh that all the other statues I have seen have been male.

Anne Kent Rush
Berkeley, California

September, 1973

I am sleeping in a large bare room in downtown Oakland, California. It contains only a mattress on the floor. I have been sick with Pelvic Inflammatory Disease for a year and a half.

In the dream I meet an elderly woman who is a dream-interpreter. She is quite tall with gray-white hair beneath a tweed brimmed hat. She is wearing a wool suit, oxfords, and nylon stockings with seams up the backs. She has many freckles. I yearn to talk with her, but she walks away from me down a street by the university. I want to ask her about my dream-sculpture. It is a pile of rocks three feet high, shaped

like a fish and covered by a white sheet. A woman of about 30 appears. She is like me. Boldly, she alters the sculpture by rearranging the rocks. She makes legs, vulva, breasts, arms, a head. She makes a woman.

Chellis Glendinning

March 24, 1976

I have this dream in a small unfinished wood building, very cozy and snug, in Wolf Creek, Oregon. Jean and I have just returned from the Bay Area (San Francisco) where we have done the spring issue of *Womanspirit*. Previous to the dream I have talked to friend Greg about equinox ritual he and other men have had. They have also had a moon ritual, discussions about sexuality and a workshop on class—all imitations of what local feminists are doing.

In the dream women and men are dancing. They are in a circle with men and women alternating. Their costumes are black and white. They are learning a dance together, a ritual dance. Arms are extended full-length in front of their bodies with hands clasped together. I know it is dangerous that the men are learning this dance, for with it they can kill the women; kill them with the force of the swing of their arms when their hands are clasped together. I want to warn the women somehow, but all my tries to communicate the danger are frustrated.

Ruth Mountaingrove
Wolf Creek, Oregon

April 30, 1976

I dream this dream in a small green room in a wood-frame house in Syracuse, New York. The mattress is on the floor. The dream comes to me at the end of a period of intense dreaming and dream-sharing with The Women of the Wednesday Moon, a class at Syracuse University in Women and Religion. It is a week after the Boston conference on women's spirituality.

I am outside in the sunlight on a sloping hill by my father's house. Catherine, my mother, is riding a saddle. She calls me over to ask the place on her Yoni (vulva) that touches the saddle as she rides.

Now she lies on the grass, legs spread wide in the sunshine. She wants to show me. Her vulva is wide open. She touches a spot near her perineum, says she's sensitive here. I am fascinated with how beautiful she is! Catherine's vagina opens wider! She can open herself so wide because she has given birth—to me! Now the sun is streaming into her and I can see her cervix and the interior of her womb. Beautiful pinks, sun glow, brilliant reds. I say, "You are like a red bird flying into the sunset." Catherine feels bashful. "Really?" she says. Yet she is bold to do this in the open, to do it at all. My father is nearby, but he won't come to look. I wake up excited, laughing.

River
Oakland, California

Winter, 1976

Yeiveny re-enters this dream during a foot massage Chellis gives her. She originally had the dream fifteen years before, as a fifteen year old, in the town where she grew up, Moody, Texas.

I am walking in a desert. A huge Sphinx appears—stone-faced, claw-footed, winged cat. I feel afraid. I feel She is my ancient Black grandmother who was very harsh with me, who is now dead. I ask the Sphinx-grandmother to tell me Her answers. I want to know so badly! But She doesn't make it easy for me to understand. I keep asking despite my fear. This time I feel as bewildered as before, but I lose some of my fear.

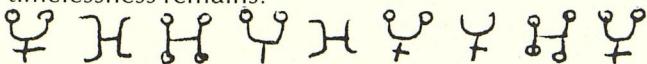
Yeiveny dies in a car accident shortly after this remembrance. She is run over while picking up a cat in the road.

Yeiveny Kazik (through Chellis)
Forestville, California

July 4, 1977

I am sitting in a circle of nine women in Amaterasu, a three-story wooden and glass pyramid. Located along the northern California coast, named after an Egyptian goddess, designed and built by women. This is our first night together for a two-week intensive bodywork training which I have organized. We all feel overwhelmed to be in such a place.

A planet named Urania, where there live figures with short round bodies, elongated heads and muted yet well-defined facial features, all of a whitish-green glow. I move ahead in time. I am 30. Actually there is no age in this existence, rather a sense of BEING prevails. I am writing. Sitting at a desk, transcribing information. I am left-handed. I write constantly. Sitting, writing. I feel a sense of urgency. The earth is to destruct. They must receive this information. I keep at work, yet all the while a sense of timelessness remains.



I am writing symbols. Even though I don't understand what I am writing, I proceed. When the most important communications come through, I will know the language. Ellie is binding the script into volumes. She works in the library. She catalogues all the information and knows where to find everything. We work in duo. We rarely talk. We share a deep heart connection.

I ask, "What is the source of what I transmit?" I hear laughter.

Comes the answer. "There is no hierarchy! This source is everywhere and everything."

I ask, "How can I bring this information to earth?"

"Writing will be a way. Speaking, but not yet. Later."

I ask, "What can I do with my worry?"

I hear, "Transform it into action: care for the planet."

Treelight Green
Oakland, California

September 27, 1977

I have this dream after I leave my lover Kit. I am staying at a friend's house and getting ready to live alone. I have fears about moving into a neighborhood which may not be safe. I feel racism mixed in with my fears.

In the basement of a public building—a temporarily safe place—Kit and I meet a Black woman and man. They are revolutionaries, wanted for their political activities. The woman is solid, warm, serious. I feel unsure. The woman asks, "Are you willing to deal with the risks of your outlook?" She shows us the compact gun she carries inside her thigh and the arrow slung diagonally across her back. I am frightened by the gun, intrigued by the arrow. We have been here long enough. As we get up to leave, Kit and the woman join hands, swing arms, sing a spiritual song. I judge them because this song is from the "old religion", yet I am also intrigued that they are using the old to make a new connection.

When I wake up, the dream feels unfinished so I return to it in meditation. I look at my fear of the gun and reach out for the arrow. As I look closer at the gun on her thigh, it becomes a tape recorder! I ask her why. She says the tape is the sound of women raising energy in a circle and she keeps it close to her so she can hear it whenever she needs to feel her strength FULLY to defend herself. She tells me, "Powerful sounds—sounds as direct as bullets—sounds which when released, effect change!" The arrow is a beam of energy coming from the center of the earth. When she grasps it, it flows through her into action!

River

December 2, 1977

This dream comes to me in our Wolf Creek mountain cabin. We listen to a recording of an interview between Jo Campbell and an African UCLA professor who says, "There is some necessity for separation," but stresses that "men must be re-educated." Ruth and I talk again this night of the fate of Native Americans who welcomed the white Europeans as "brothers" and about an article I have read telling of dolphins who were trained to kill. They learned to kill people because "they loved their human trainers so much." I feel deeply uneasy. I ask the goddess for a dream.

I am in a suburban environment, in front of two large houses—a sorority house and a fraternity house—with large level front lawns and a driveway between them. Young men come out of their front doorway and parade around their lawns for a ritual. The first one carries pots and pans, and I think, "What a din they will make beating on those!" After they walk around in a circle on their lawn in a very elementary, unaesthetic ritual, they cross the driveway to the sorority lawn. I want to stop them, feeling it is not right, but think I have no authority to intervene.

The women are here now, and they all do a ritual together. The men say words to the women reminding them of past ties and experiences together. They divide into couples until all are paired off. One man puts a cord around his head and that of a young woman. They tussle a bit, and then she takes the initiative and leads him off laughing and pulling him by the cord which connects them. I think she is deluded to feel she has won, as she is tied to him! All of them go now to a dance. I am glad to be alone.

I am in the sorority now. The phone rings, and I answer it. It is for a woman named Catherine Cagle. I ask women there if they know her. One of them takes the phone and talks to the caller. I get the idea that the woman answering the phone call is Cath-

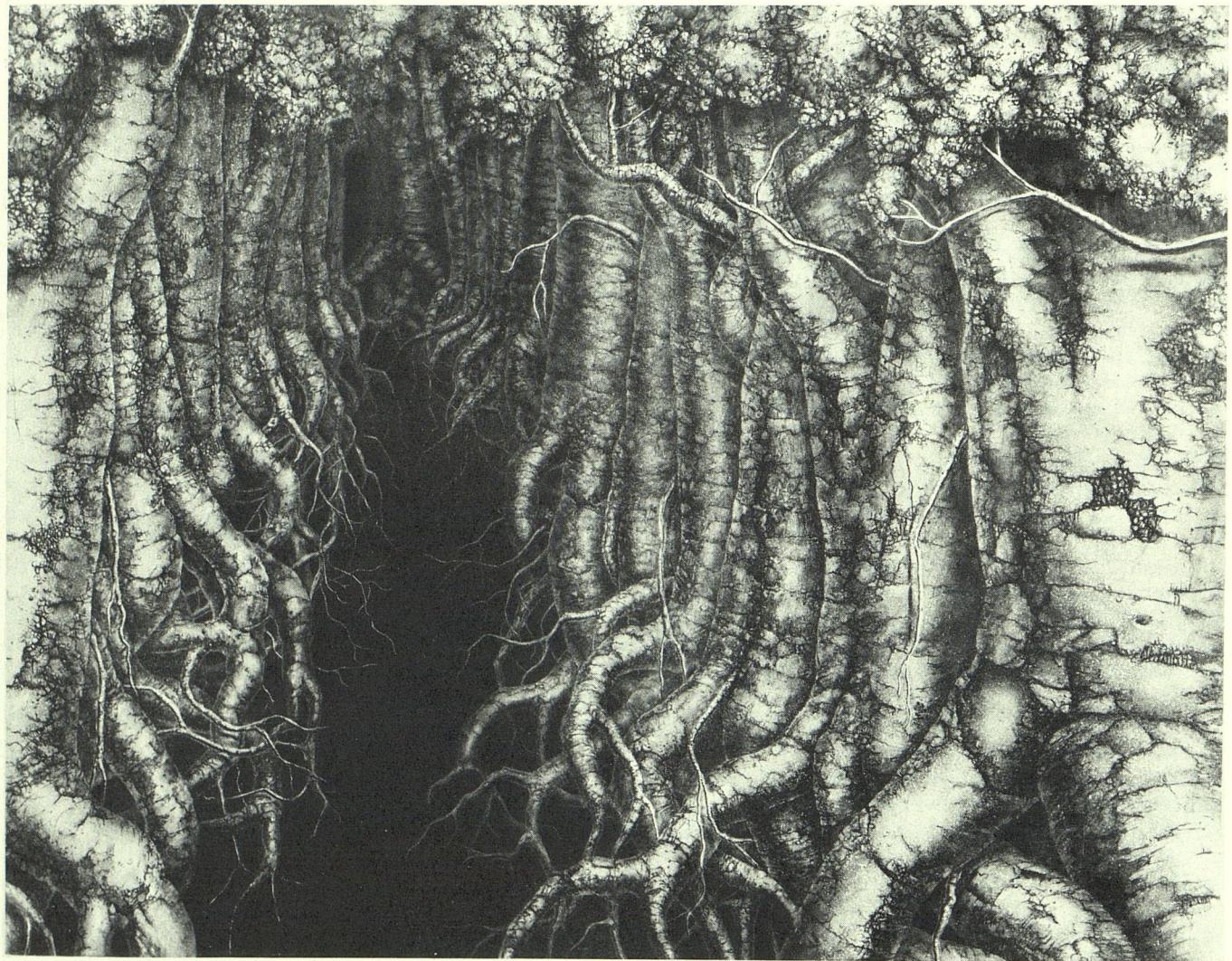
erine's twin sister, as I have seen two identical white satin shirt dresses in the closet. They have red piping and look like ritual clothes, not for a social event. Twins are the closest kind of sisters. This sister is not at the dance, but her ritual clothing is "in the closet." Her sister is getting a message for her.

Jean Mountaingrove
Wolf Creek, Oregon

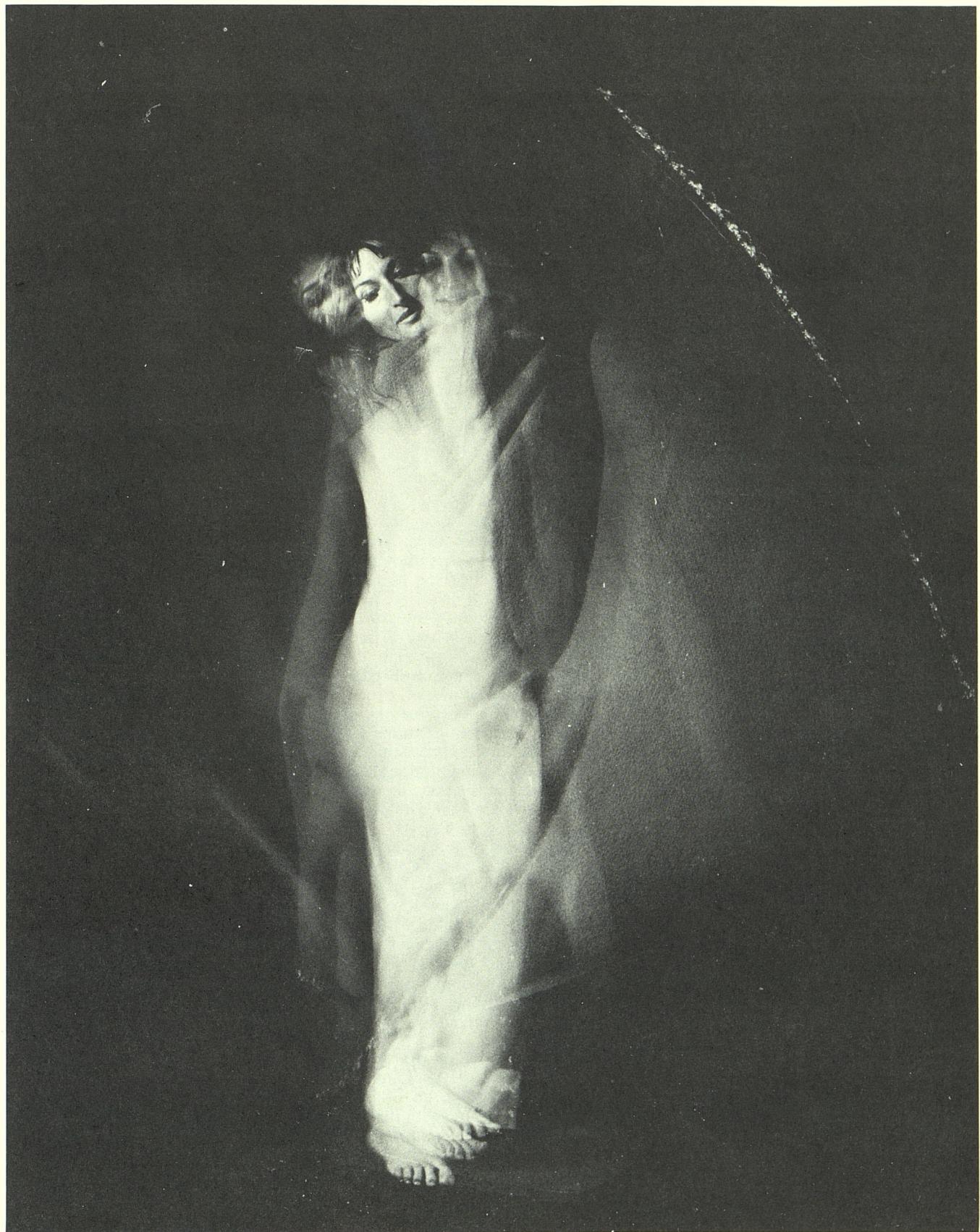
December 2, 1977

I am sleeping on the living room couch in the apartment. I have awakened with insomnia, and as is my habit, I move to another room to finish the night.

A small cog turning a very large wheel...
Barbara Hammer



Hanna Kay. *Root Hold*. Oil and tempera. 1977. 48" x 62". Photo credit: Bob Sasson.



Frances Alenikoff. *Trine*. Performance. 1973. Photo credit: Don Manza.

The Reemergence of the Archetype of the Great Goddess in Art by Contemporary Women

Gloria Feman Orenstein

As the archetype of the Great Goddess reemerges into consciousness today, women artists, through transpersonal visionary experiences, are bringing to light energetic psychic forces, symbols, images, artifacts and rituals whose configurations constitute the basic paradigm of a new feminist myth for our time.

When a psychological need arises it seems inevitably the deeper layers of the collective unconscious are activated and sooner or later the memory of a myth of an event or an earlier psychic state emerges into consciousness.¹

Evoking the memory of an earlier psychic state, one in which divinity was seen to reside in matter and the energies of the earth were revered as sacred, the Goddess has become that symbol of transformation which activates those forces within woman identified with holiness and with creative power. If the artist is the avatar of the new age, the alchemist whose great Art is the transformation of consciousness and being, then contemporary women artists such as Mary Beth Edelson, Carolee Schneemann, Mimi Lobell, Buffie Johnson, Judy Chicago, Donna Byars, Donna Henes, Miriam Sharon, Ana Mendieta, Betsy Damon, Betye Saar, Monica Sjoo and Hannah Kay, by summoning up the powers associated with the Goddess archetype, are energizing a new form of Goddess consciousness, which, in its most recent manifestation is exorcising the patriarchal creation myth through a repossession of the female visionary faculties.

This new Goddess consciousness might be described most effectively as a holistic mind-body totality. As we move away from the cultural dominance of the masculine archetype, characterized by a mind-body duality, we find that the model of the sorcerer's vision serves as a corrective alternative for a consciousness expansion

sion in which intuitive body-knowledge is reaffirmed as a faculty of intelligence. Transcending the false dualities and dichotomies established by patriarchal systems of thought which split mind from body, spirit from matter and sacred from profane, the Great Goddess as a psychic symbol suggests the rebirth of woman to a holistic psychophysical perception of the sacred, as a new form of her feminist evolution.

Artists who are in touch with the archetype of the Goddess are now using the female form in both image and ritual as an instrument of spirit-knowledge. They are training the body so that it functions as a conscious perceptor and transformer of the powerful energies that reside in matter, both animal and vegetable. Through the psychophysical participation in Edelson's magical ceremonies of evocation, through the transformation of the body into a living totem in Damon's rituals, through the stimulation of the body via meditation upon the power points in the body icons of Kurz's self-portrait as the Durga, or Mailman's mirror image as God, through the fusion of the body with the earth itself in Mendieta's alchemical burials, through the sacrilization of the body in Lobell's Goddess Temple, and through a merging with the spirit of the Goddess in Suzanne Benton's masked ritual theater, women are gradually repossessing the powers long associated with the various manifestations of the archetype of the Goddess.

This new art (in which the archetype of the Goddess plays a catalytic role) is not based upon an original creation myth connected with the fertility and birth mysteries. In its modern transformed meaning, it is about the mysteries of woman's rebirth from the womb of historical darkness, in which her powers were so long enshrouded, into a new era where a culture of her own making will come

about as a result of a new Earth Alchemy.

If the alchemy performed by the male magician sought essentially to purify brute matter by transforming it into spirit, taking gold or the philosopher's stone as the symbol of spiritual enlightenment, the supreme goal of alchemy for women artists today is to restore the spirit already inherent in the natural world; to consider matter itself as a storehouse of the potent energies most available for transformations in their natural organic state. Women are attempting nothing less than the magical dealchemizing of the philosopher's stone, the reconstitution of the Earth Goddess's original herborium on the planet and the energizing of the self through the internalization of its sacred spirits. It is no mere coincidence that the alchemical symbols of "witchcraft," the magic of the wise women who worshipped the Goddess, are herbs, grains, plants and seeds. The desire to alter both mental and physical functioning translates an impulse to integrate the Earth Goddess's chemical secrets into the body and to carry the Goddess within the self. In so doing, women now activate a Goddess consciousness within matter by means of which all contemporary culture will be awakened.

Jung said: "To carry a god around in yourself is a guarantee of happiness, of power, and even of omnipotence in so far as these are attributes of divinity."²

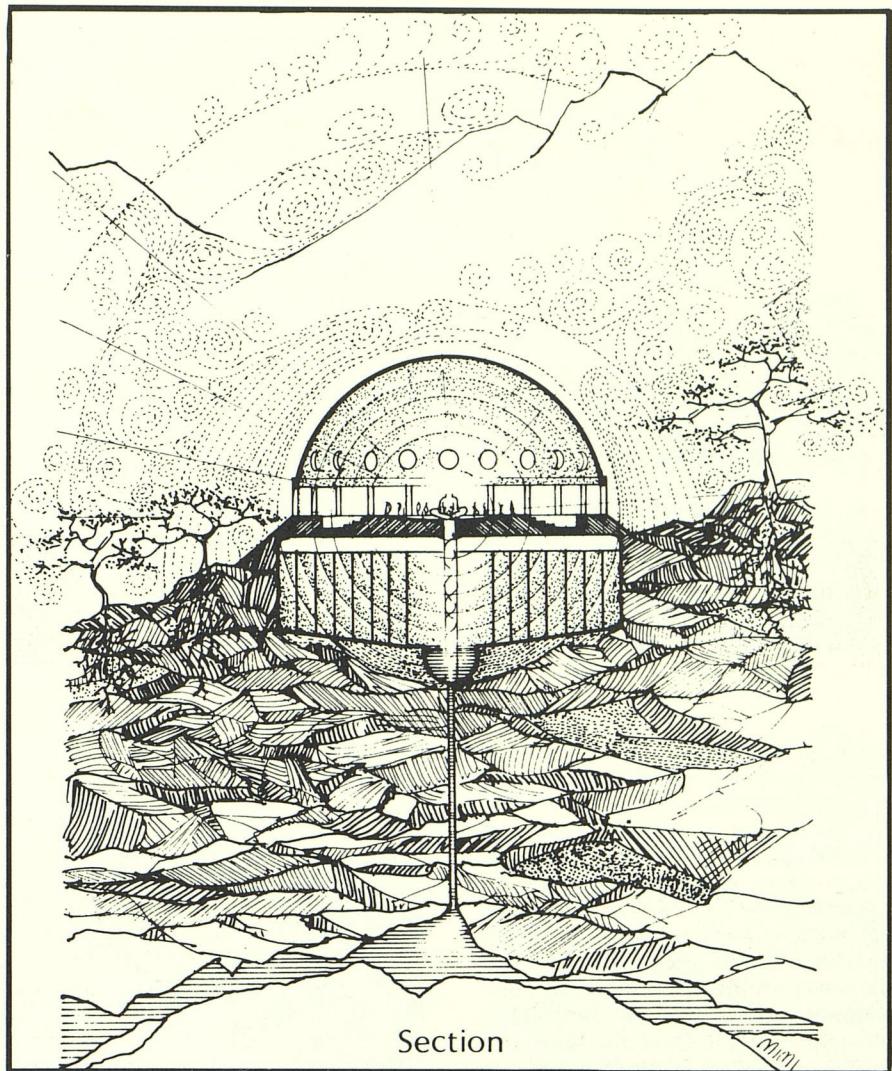
Contemporary woman's need to carry a "god" around within the self, her desire to transform herself into the image of the Goddess, arises from a deep historical imperative. Research into the history of Goddess worship gives ample evidence of the desecration of Goddess temples, shrines, altars and sanctuaries, and of the systematic erasure of all traces of Goddess worship from the face of the earth. Through the persecution of

witches, sacred knowledge of the Old Religion had to be transmitted through visual and oral lore from generation to generation. Where once the Goddess was worshipped at sacred natural sites with the Earth identified as the body of the Great Mother, today women are transforming their own bodies into those sacred repositories of Goddess knowledge and energy.

The repossession by woman of the attributes of the Great Goddess is necessary in order to provide fundamental changes in vision and reality. Under the hegemony of patriarchal religions, notably Christianity, which has conditioned Western consciousness over many centuries through image-making and ritual, a profound mystification has been perpetrated on so large a scale that one of the first functions of this new art is to exorcise the sexist impact and interpretation of all sacred imagery. Christian art, for example, by establishing the paradoxical image of the Virgin Mother, has encouraged women to hallucinate an impossibility as if it were a natural image of reality. In order to reestablish the validity of the natural image of Mother and Child as incorporated in the archetype of the Fertility Goddess, contemporary artists are celebrating sexuality by invoking ancient images of the Great Mother that exalt procreation and superimposing them over the former image of the Virgin and Child.

Another integral part of the process of Goddess-culture art are the expeditions to caves, mounds, sanctuaries, shrines or megalithic sites in search of the energy evoked and the artifacts or symbols of veneration left by ancient cults which worshipped the Goddess. In this kind of search artists are making the heretofore invisible, manifest again. This visionary technique of rendering the invisible and the real visible once more and ultimately abolishing the separation between the spiritual and the material plane reestablishes the human and the natural as the legitimate realm of the divine. The energy formerly required to accept Christian illusion is now released for the accomplishment of the true work of alchemical transformation—that of preparing and retraining the mind-body perceptor so that women may now perform their highest functions.

This exaltation of natural energies releases enormous potential so that women may begin to transform themselves into living repositories of sacred knowledge, storing their total



Mimi Lobell. Section architectural drawing for a Goddess temple. 1975. Architectural Drawing.

history within their bodies, their psychic memory and their art as a natural form of protection against future persecution or annihilation. As bearers of sacred tradition, contemporary feminist artists use ritual to resacrilize the female body, creating a new sacred space for the enactment of those magical rebirth ceremonies that are first coming into our culture through art.

In *Beyond God the Father*, Mary Daly, redefining God as a verb, as a participation in being, rather than anthropomorphically as a being, suggests that women's participation in history, her new sisterhood, is a means of saying "us vs. nonbeing."

What we are about is the human becoming of that half of the human race that has been excluded from humanity by sexual definition... What is at stake is a real leap in human evolution, initiated by women.³

The Goddess, then, is that archetype which mediates between image, energy and history, evolving and unfolding destiny through the redirection of energy into a revolutionary manifestation of being. When imaged and celebrated in contemporary art, the Goddess signifies Being as a verb, as a creative energy, as a transformative energy, as sacred earth-energy and as psychic energy. Contemporary women artists are using the documentation that is being gathered on the various manifestations of the Goddess from the Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic communities to the present both as visual and as informational data, as elements of the new art works or events they are creating in accordance with the elaboration of a new myth synonymous with the exigencies of female culture in the 1970s.

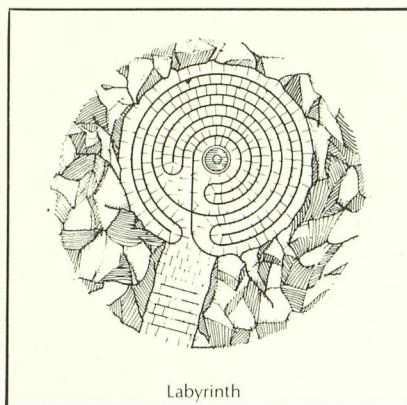
Architect Mimi Lobell and two other women, one a Jungian, have de-

signed a Goddess Temple which expresses the theme of initiation and rebirth into a Goddess-centered culture. They consider the temple to be the externalization of an archetypal structure that exists within the psyche. The temple, whose eventual site will be a mountainous region near Aspen, Colorado, is conceived as analogous to the body of the Goddess through which the initiate will pass in a ceremony of transformation. Its form and materials function as a catalyst for this process. According to Lobell, "To go through the temple will be to experience an initiation into the mysteries of the feminine and activate a prelogical consciousness."⁴

As planned, the temple is approached via an uphill walk along a "sacred way" lined with figures of animals. The entrance is at the lower level, which appears to be buried in rock. Deep in this rock the veiled entry leads to a nine-ring labyrinth. Reversing the process of birth one enters through the vaginal orifice and journeys toward the third eye of enlightenment. The walls of the labyrinth are covered with exotic fabrics and tapestries, weavings, batiks, silks and lace from various ethnic sources. In the center of the labyrinth lies the sunken grail pool, inscribed with a serpentine spiral. A helical ladder, 15 feet high, rises out of the pool and ascends to the upper temple, which at eye level becomes a 360-degree open-windowed panorama of the mountains and valleys. Over the windows are 29 perforations in the shape of the moon, one for each of its monthly day cycle. The altar is a part of the Great Eye of Vision of the Eye Goddess.

We are one with that all receptive 360 degree panoramic perception in the Oculus of the Eye Goddess, warmed by the fires of Vesta, the libidinous energy that keeps us integrated with our bodies and with all of our sensuous lenses onto the mysteries of the universe. The water of the hydolunar force has been transmuted into the fire that ignites the feminine wisdom of Sophia and the Muses and the Oracles and Sybils.⁵

Becoming conscious of the presence of Goddess imagery in one's work is a long arduous process of visual reeducation. Carolee Schneemann, who in childhood saw the radiant face of the Great Mother in the moon and believed that the world was permeated by invisible energies, unconsciously made her first Goddess image in 1963 when she was working on her theater piece *Chromolodeon*. In her desire for a companion figure



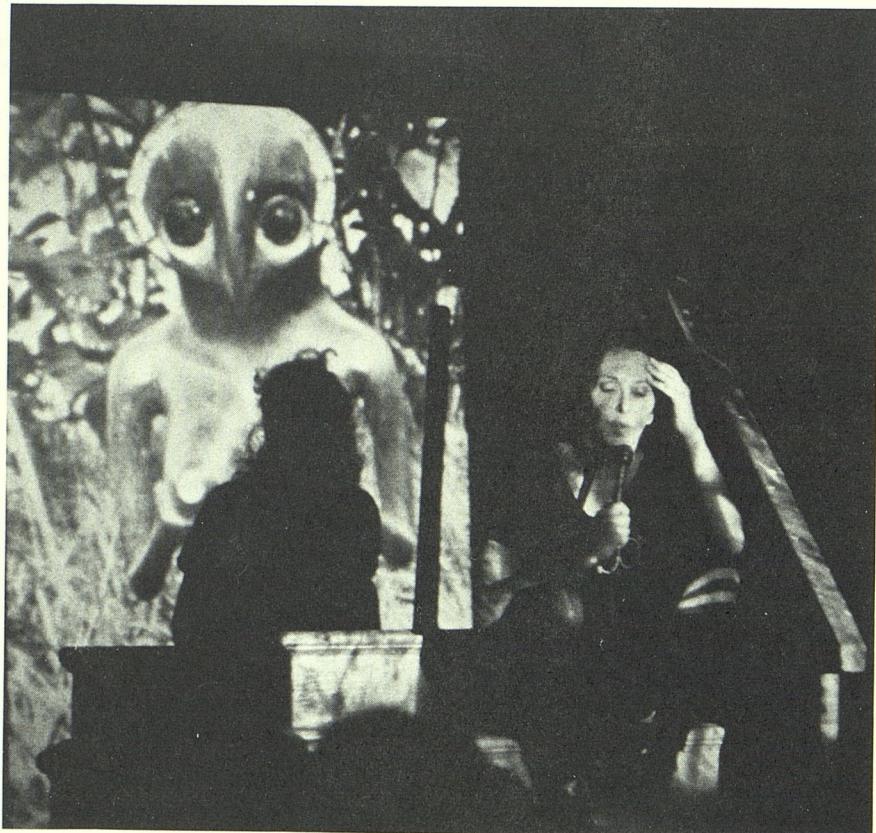
Mimi Lobell. Labyrinth/architectural drawing for a Goddess temple.

for the piece, she made the head of a horned bull and mounted it on a clothed dressmaker's dummy. Seven years later she was to discover that the bull was the sacred beast of the Great Goddess. In the 1960s Schneemann did not yet understand the real significance of the bull iconography in her work. In her series of body pieces, such as *Meat Joy* of 1964, she began

to put the materials from the static works onto herself, and in *Eye Body* (1963) she used two snakes on her body in a set of transformative actions. Later, reviewing her artistic evolution through the 1970's, Schneemann came to understand that the serpents in her earlier works were related to the Minoan Snake Goddess through a series of iconographical similarities and personal connections.

The figure of the Minoan Snake Goddess, arms upright, is currently featured in much Goddess-culture art. This merging of the self with that of the Goddess functions as a mirror reflection in which women see themselves as the Goddess and the Goddess in themselves.

The process of the evolution of Goddess consciousness itself became the theme of *Homerunmuse* (performed at the Brooklyn Museum during the Women Artists 1550-1950 show, Fall 1977). In a meditation upon the female and the muse, whose presence is indicated in the word "museum," but whose usual absence from the institution was made obvious by the fact of the women artists'



Carolee Schneeman. THE MUSE WAS SERPENT AND BIRD/WATER AND FIRE/SOURCE OF TRANSFORMATIONS/FEMALE BIRTHING/THE GROWTH OF MIND IN MATTER/GUIDE TO GESTURE AND DANCE/THE SHAPE OF THE POT AND THE NOURISHMENT TAKEN THERE. *Homerunmuse* at the Brooklyn Museum. 1977. Performance. Photo credit: Bill Thompson.

show, Schneemann rejects "the abstracted token Muse as fragmentation." Through a collage of texts Schneemann reiterates the theme of woman remaking herself into the image of the Goddess.

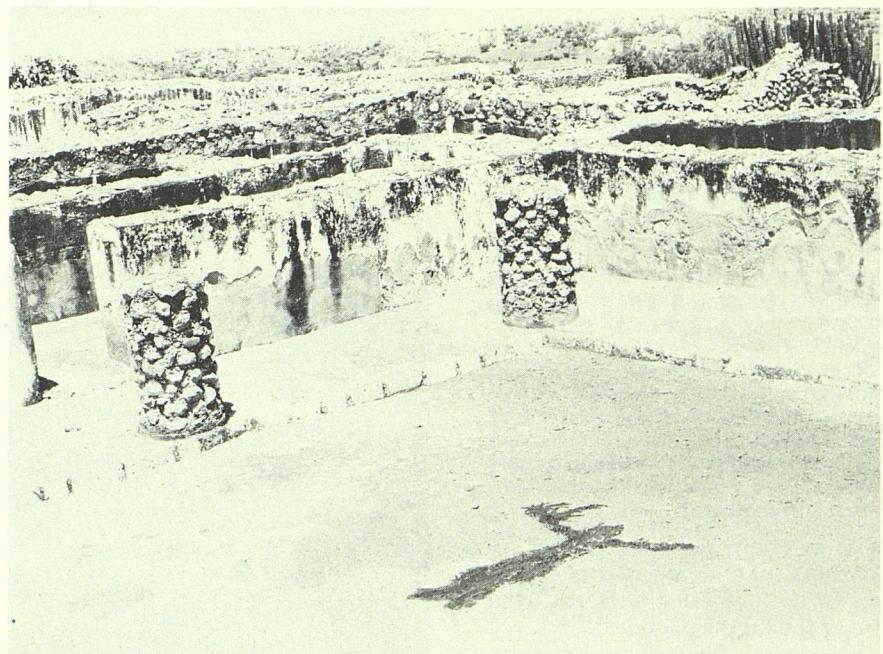
Israeli artist Miriam Sharon performs desert rituals that are rites of exorcism overthrowing the patriarchal model that constructed alienating cityscapes of concrete over the ancient earth shrines and sacred sites. Her pilgrimage to the desert put her in contact with the Bedouins, "the last survivors of the Earth Living Culture." Her own *Space Project-Earth People* which grew out of her stay in the desert is a ritual act of identification with the Earth Culture. Through meditation rituals in the wilderness, Sharon expresses the wish to recreate an ancient lost myth of the Earth. Sharon's reclamation of the barren earth as the natural holy shrine and her use of the desert as a temple for meditation exemplify the return to primal matter as holy matter. Her participation with the Bedouins in the life of the desert as Goddess-space parallels the initiatory experience of Lobell's Goddess Temple. However, Sharon defines "holy" as without shrines or temples, holy in its being only.

The Bedouins (whom I adopted some years ago as part of my work) are part of this "meditative" existence of the desert. They meditate daily in front of the wide seas or wide wilderness of the desert. They kiss the earth for their existence. They never thanked their "god" by building huge temples; but just kissed the sands. When they will disappear they will never leave behind any traces for their existence, except the stones of their burial places. I try through my art, not to build static sculptures or monuments in the spaces but only put human energy through my art (a ritual art) into something that is disappearing.⁶

Sharon's recent *Sand Tent Project* involved the participation of a Bedouin tribe and a Kibbutz settlement (Kerem Shalom). The Bedouin Mother who taught her how to create such a tent is the last survivor of the tent life in that area. Sharon's apprenticeship to the wise women who know the secrets of the earth is an affirmation of woman as Goddess-incarnation. The desert, for Sharon, symbolizes patriarchal spiritual values (the barren emptiness) which must be exorcised and is, at the same time, that pure clear space of the new frontier, representing the new female space of herstory upon which our lost traces



Miriam Sharon. *Sand Costumes/Living with the Bedouins*. 1975.



Ana Mendieta. *Silveta del Laberinto*. 1974. Earthwork.

will be reinscribed and our new destiny will be written.

Ana Mendieta, who came to the U.S. from Cuba in 1961, thinks of the Earth as the Goddess. She recalls a mountain in Cuba, La Mazapan de Matanza, that is in the shape of a reclining woman. Her transformational rituals explore the boundaries between spirit and matter. In a piece she did in a labyrinth, *Silueta de*

Laberinto (1974), she worked with the metamorphosis of the self that occurs in sorcery and trance. In this piece someone traced her silhouette on the ground. When Mendieta left the labyrinth, her image was imprinted upon the earth, suggesting that through a merging with the Goddess spirits are evoked that infuse the body and cause such occurrences as out-of-body journeys or astral travel. In Earth

Sorcery, of which all her works are examples, the Earth Goddess is the shaman and the spell is invoked through a magical rite in which unification with the Earth Mother transpires. Mendieta is concerned with rebirth and her grave and burial mound pieces suggest that material death does not imply spiritual death.

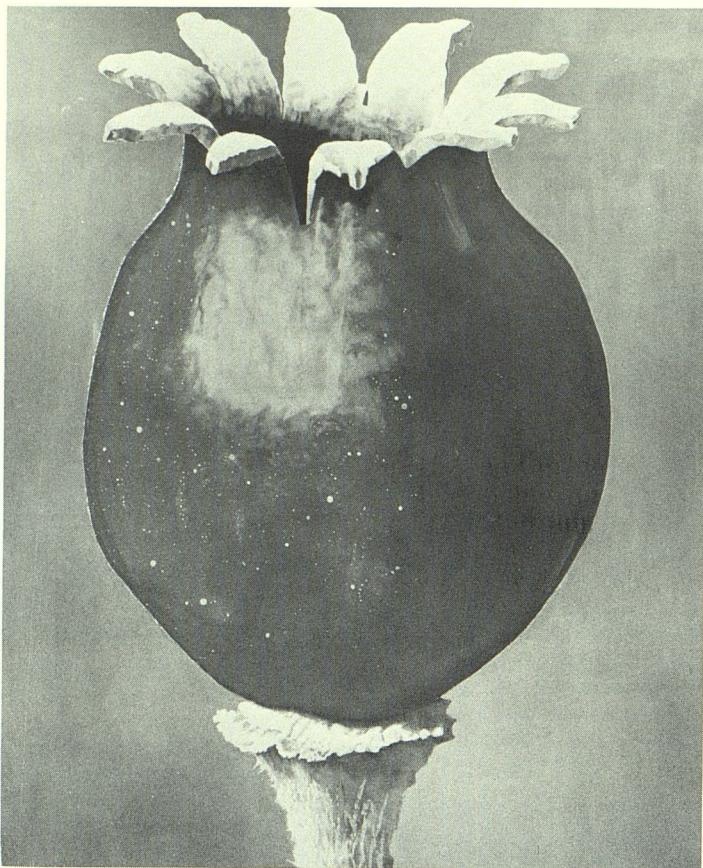
In some of her works, Mendieta wraps herself in black cloth, imposing her mummified form upon the ground which is then dug out around her. A series of these imprints are eventually lit with gun powder, leaving silhouetted after-images embedded in the earth as a testimony to the magical site of transformation, the dwelling of the Goddess, where the human and the divine had come to mingle as preparation for a new destiny. Her art concretizes that process of Earth Alchemy, using prime matter itself as the alchemistic vessel through which spirit will be made to reenter matter and transform woman into the vital incarnation of the Earth Goddess once more.

Buffie Johnson's paintings celebrate the natural symbols of the universe which were recognized as sacred in the worship of the Great Goddess. The plant and animal manifestations of the Goddess are energizers of transformation which function like the star and cross in the Judeo-Christian tradition. They are reminders of the numinous state in which all of nature was held to be sacred. Erich Neumann writes:

Because originally human life was so strongly affected by its *participation mystique* with the outside world that stone, plant, and man [sic.], animal and star were bound together in a single stream, one could always transform itself into another.⁷

These symbols reinforce in us an awareness that we are all manifestations of the one "single stream," the spirit of the Mother Goddess.

The general "theme" of Johnson's work since the late 1940s is drawn from the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious and from her scholarly research on the Great Goddess. The paintings which evolved with specific reference to the Goddess show her aspects as *Mistress of the Beasts* and *Lady of the Plants*. Around the latter, she has created single-image plants in varying aspects of cyclical transformation, which stimulate the unconscious and evoke mythic memories. The paintings serve as sacred icons to resurrect the layers of consciousness in which our most



Buffie Johnson, *Lapis*. 1970. Oil on canvas. 82" x 68". Photo credit: Tracy Boyd.

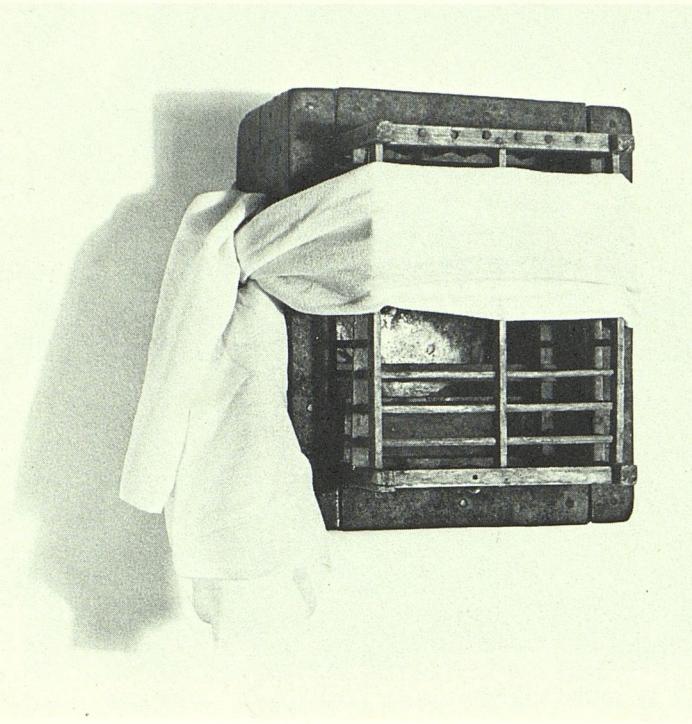


Buffie Johnson, *Pasiphae*. 1976. Oil on linen. 68" x 85". Photo credit: Tracy Boyd.



Donna Byars. *Oracle Stone's Grove*. 1977. Environment. Photo credit: Maude Boltz.

Donna Byars. *Vested Relic*. 1977. Mixed Media. 8" x 7" x 4 1/4".



primordial images, those of the Great Goddess and of our true origin, lie buried. In *Ariadne* ("Barley Mother," 1971), the Goddess of Vegetation is evoked by the image of the long-grain barley flowing gently down in a skirt of rain. A pomegranate bursting from within (*Pomegranate*, 1972) recalls the myth of Persephone and Demeter and their connection with the life-giving powers of the Feminine. The monolithic opium seed-pod *Lapis* (1970) is a cosmic starglobe exploding with life, a metaphor for the Goddess from whose womb all is born. In *Pasiphae* (1976) the image of the iris, the sacred lily of Crete, merges with that of a bovine head, so that both animal and plant symbols of the Goddess coalesce in a new charged sign. References to the myth of the Minotaur and the labyrinth are suggested; the labyrinth of the Goddess being the place where one loses and finds oneself again—the unconscious. The collective symbols are here employed as forces of awakening, the artist reaching deep into the buried past when the Goddess and all of nature were revealed as One.

Donna Byar's work shows the creative processes at work in the deciphering of the oracle of the Goddess as She speaks to the artist through the labyrinth of dream and visionary experience. *Oracle Stone Grove*, for example, evolved from a dream.

A stone woman who sat in a grove of trees spoke to me in vapors, not words. She was very poetic and mystical and spoke only in truths. All of a sudden, like in a faint, she slid from her chair into a hole in the underground. I grabbed her before she went underground and when she came up she was no longer able to speak. I woke up with a terrible feeling of sadness.⁸

In the piece itself, "All the components...sit on the floor and do not occupy any wall space, two stones are arranged perpendicular to each other sitting on an old paint scratched rocker in a grove of four weeping fig trees. For Byars, the Grove becomes a shrine."

In works such as *Vested Relic* where stone and silver wings are enclosed within a blindfolded cage, creating a secret altar and a reliquary, Byars preserves the magical objects that reveal to her the presence of the Goddess as a guardian spirit in her world. The blindfolding of the cage symbolizes that these sacred objects can only be perceived with the inner eye. Byar's glass collages make visible the apparitions of the Mother Goddess in images

of a winged being and a shaman, who appears to us during altered states of consciousness.

For Byars, the world is vibrant and alive with signs and guideposts. Many of her pieces are themselves omens, assembled from objects and materials which spoke to her in oracular modes. One such object is *Swathe*, which combines feathers and a wing on a swathed ironing board that has lilies of the valley wrapped in chamois placed upon it. These totems and talismans conjure up archaic imagery from the distant past. Animal horns, wings, feathers, shells, trees, serpents, brought together in these mythopoetic assemblages, activate intimate relationships between natural materials, objects and living things that illuminate essences which were formerly only visible to seers and shamans. The presence of the Goddess is thus revealed and brought into contemporary consciousness.

Mary Beth Edelson's work has long been intimately involved in the explorations of the Goddess. In 1961 her painting of Madonna and Child entitled *Godhead* introduced concentric circles as sources of energy from the Madonna's head. In these early paintings⁹ her women were frequently depicted with their arms uplifted, reminiscent of the posture of many early Goddess figures. The primal image of the outstretched arms of the ancient Goddess, whose power must be reclaimed by women for themselves today, is seen by Edelson not only as a spiritual signifier, but as a contemporary symbol of our political activism.

In 1969 she began to evolve a more defined and specific area of archetypal imagery, out of which emerged the exhibition *Woman Rising*, revolutionary in the way it brought to consciousness psychic material about the Great Goddess. Her most innovative images for today have been the body images she has created through performing private body rituals where the body itself is the house of wisdom. In these, the artist calls upon Goddess energy, using her own body as a stand-in for the Goddess and as a symbol for Everywoman, whose expanded states of body-consciousness and multiple transformations are evoked through contact with powerful natural energies.

On March 1, 1977, Edelson performed a mourning ritual ceremony for her exhibition, *Your 5,000 Years Are Up*, entitled *Mourning Our Lost*

Herstory, at the Mandeville Gallery, University of California at La Jolla. Ten women sat in a circle in the center of a fire ring, the only source of light, chanting and wailing while seven silent eight-foot high black-draped figures, which had previously seemed to be an uninhabited formal sculptural installation on the back wall, came alive and began to move around the cavernous gallery. More recently, she performed a mourning-reclamation ritual at A.I.R. Gallery, New York City, entitled *Proposals For: Memorials to the 9,000,000 Women Burned as Witches in the Christian Era*. This ritual, based on research about witch burning in relation to women who were Goddess worshippers evoked the spirits of individual women who were tortured during the Inquisition. Edelson is not content, however, to exorcise the past; her art is about mythic recreation of holy spaces for women's culture today.

Donna Henes's *Spider Woman*, a series of process environmental sculptures, makes reference to the Mother Goddess of the Navaho Emergence Myth about whom Sheila Moon has written, "She is the protective feminine objectivity. Spider Woman is the unobtrusive but powerful archetype of fate—not in the sense of determinism, but in the sense of the

magical law of one's own 'gravity' which leads always beyond itself towards wholeness."¹⁰ In a state of trance and meditation, Henes spins her web of various kinds of fibers in natural settings and in public places, where they can be altered by the specific environmental conditions of each location. Her manifesto¹¹ defines the web as a map of the subconscious and as a form of primal meditation.

Henes performs a yearly winter solstice celebration *Reverence to Her: A Chant to Invoke the Female Forces of the Universe Present in All People*. The winter solstice is the time when "the Great Mother gives birth to the sun, who is Her son, and stands at the center of the matriarchal mysteries. At the winter solstice, the moon occupies the highest point in its cycle, the sun is at its nadir, and the constellation Virgo rises in the east."¹² Henes's participatory chant invokes the Great Goddess, the archetypal female principle of communal creation and continuity, and gives reverence to the female power "who exists in all beings in the form of consciousness, reason, sleep, hunger, shadow, energy, thirst, forgiveness, species, bashfulness, peace, faith, loveliness, fortune, vocation, memory, compassion, mother, fulfillment and illusion."



Betye Saar. *Voo Doo Lady with Three Dice*. 1977. Mixed Media collage on fabric. 10 3/4" x 10 1/2".



Mary Beth Edelson. *Goddess Head/Calling Series*. 1975. Photo Collage Drawing. 40" x 40".

If the webs are a materialization of a female spirit-presence in the environment, a kind of feminine structure within matter itself, her work makes us visualize this presence, evokes it, and brings it forth out of the void, making manifest the interconnectedness of all space and time through the weaving of the great web of life, which is the work of the Mother Goddess. This is the actualization of a creation myth which posits the female life-force as an energy that is at work in the universe in invisible ways.

Betye Saar's work, through its mystical, visionary imagery, probes the collective unconscious for those images of female power specific to black women. By delving deeply into the religious practices of Africa and Haiti, Saar resurrects images of the Black Goddess, the Voodoo Priestess and the Queen of the Witches, collecting the amulets and artifacts of these cultures and placing them in her boxes in order to create potent talismanic collections of magically charged objects and icons. For Saar, contemporary black women are all incarnations of the Black Goddess, and in reclaiming black power, women are



Donna Henes. *Spider Woman Series, Pocono Web: Mountain Home, Pa.* 1976. Cotton. 8' x 8' x 9'.

instinctively venerating an ancient female force still worshipped in other cultures today. *Voo Doo Lady W/3 Dice* (1977) is a mixed-media collage on fabric that identifies black woman in her image of oppression with the mystical Black Goddess, implying through its iconography that women



Betsy Damon. *Maypole Ritual*. N.D. Environment.

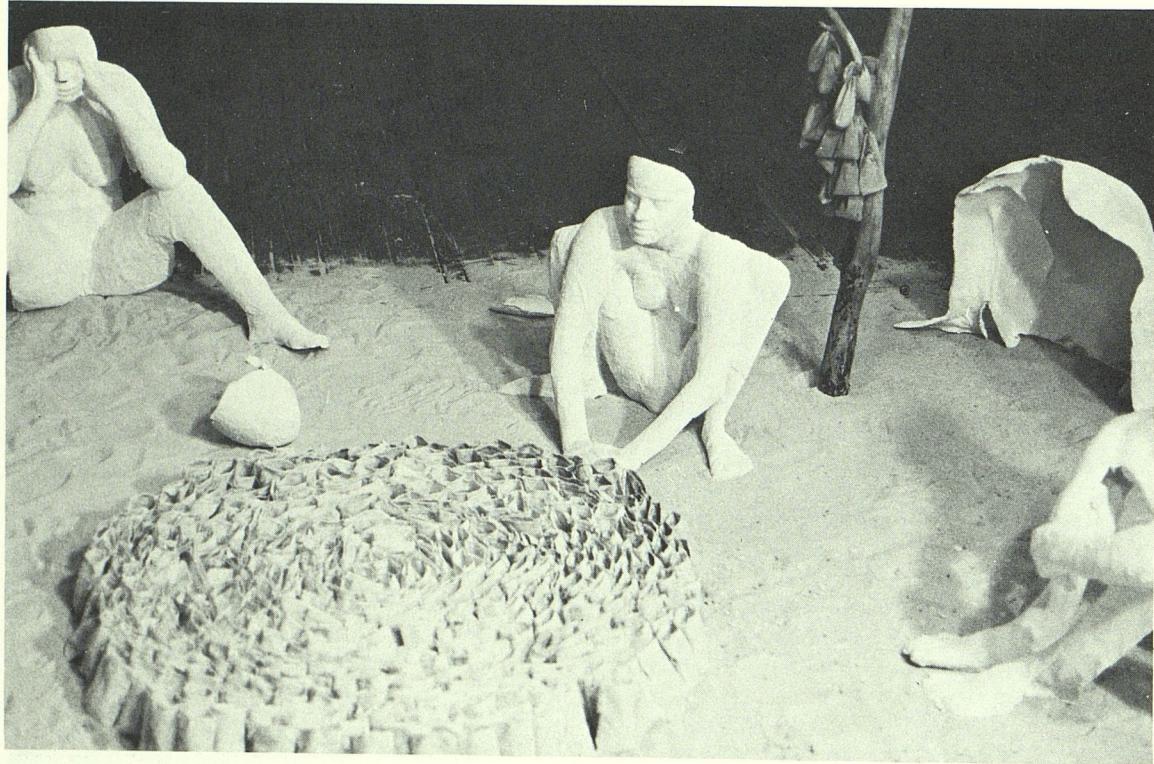
should worship the deity within themselves, and that a familiarity with occult and mythological traditions will reveal the true face of the Goddess to all women.

In her piece *7,000 Year Old Woman*,¹³ performed publicly May 21, 1977, Betsy Damon covered herself with small bags of colored flour which she punctured in a ritual ceremony. As each small bag of flour emptied, like a miniature sandtimer, it was as if the artist and her assistant, through intense concentration and meditation, had incorporated a bit of lost time into the aura of their consciousnesses. This piece demonstrates how contemporary Goddess-culture art seeks to transform the body and the consciousness of modern woman by infusing it with a sense of herstory, reclaimed and reintegrated into the present sense of the self.

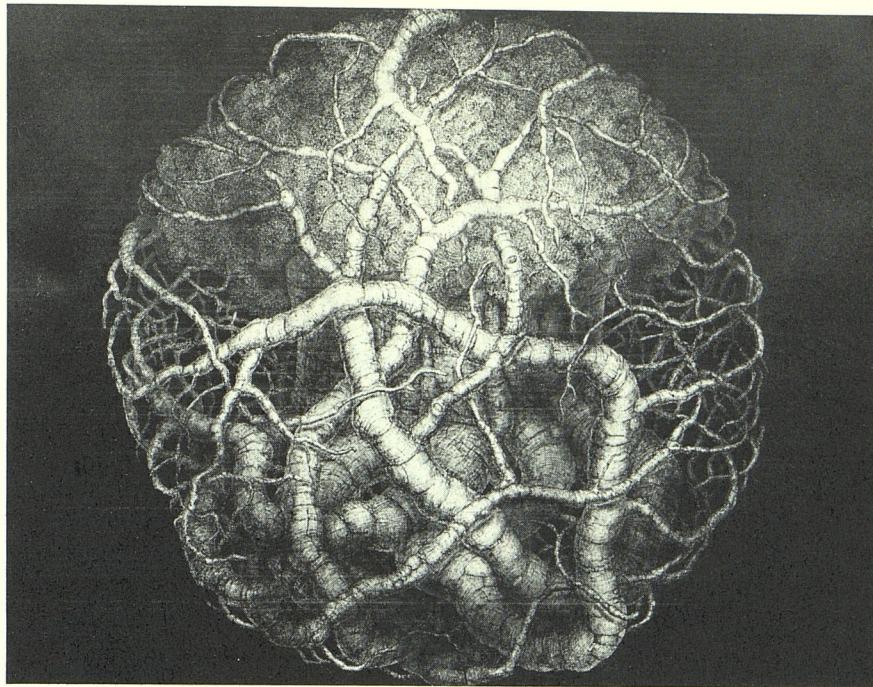
Damon has been performing rituals in nature for several years, working collectively with women, creating rites of anger, rebirth and transformation, such as the *Birth Ritual*, in which each woman gives birth to another, chanting, "I am a woman. I can give birth to you." In the *Naming Ritual*, performed in Ithaca, women chanted, "I am a woman. I give you my hand. We are women. Our circle is power-

ful." After the chanting they intoned the names of all the women in the ritual. It was during her performance of *Changes*, in Ithaca, that she dreamed of the *Maypole Ritual*. This fertility rite was held in that same city and participants brought corn, food, poetry and other offerings to the celebration. They painted their bodies, danced and wove maypoles out of colorfully dyed gauze.

Hannah Kay, an Israeli artist living in New York, paints the ultimate breakthrough of Earth Goddess energy that parallels the advent of female autonomy in the new era of feminist consciousness. She writes that in her art woman "became a landscape and then the whole universe. A woman's body is, in itself, the whole universe: birth, life, death, and communication. The human body manifests all the laws of the universe; and for me the woman's body is the sensuality of the universe. The sensuality of mountains, and oceans, and planets in their orbits about the stars."¹⁴ *Enclosed* invites us to hallucinate the female form as the basic force behind the intertwined branches of the landscape. In this visionary art we come to see the spirit that resides in matter: our perception is altered so that the invisible being of the Goddess becomes mani-



Betsy Damon. *Ancestors*. 1977. Environment. Some work is truly facilitated by a gift. That gift to me was Alice Weiner who found me, adamantly believed in me and persistently assisted me with this piece. *Ancestors* is the culmination of years of dreaming.



Hanna Kay. *Enclosed*. 1977. Pen and Ink. 30" x 40". Photo credit: Bob Sasson.

fest, and we are transformed into seers whose eyes may behold the divine revelation of the existence of a female principle at work in the universe.

Judy Chicago has made a major contribution to this tradition by conceptualizing and creating a traveling multi-media exhibition, *The Dinner Party Project*, an environmental recasting of the history of Western civilization in feminist terms.¹⁵ Accompanying the Dinner Party Project's exhibition, is a book in the form of an illuminated manuscript of five sections, some of which include a re-writing of Genesis as an alternate creation myth in which the Goddess is the supreme Creatrix. It also contains a section of myths, legends and tales of the women, a vision of the Apocalypse which is a vision of the world made whole by the infusion of feminist values, and the Calling of the Disciplines, a list of the women represented in the table relating who they were and what they did.

Chicago's work has long been making links between female iconography and a feminist reinterpretation of the Creation Myth. In her series of porcelain plates entitled *The Butterfly Goddesses: Other Specimens* (1974) which includes *The Butterfly Vagina as the Venus of Willendorf*, *The Butterfly Vagina as the Great Round*, etc. sexuality is expressly connected to

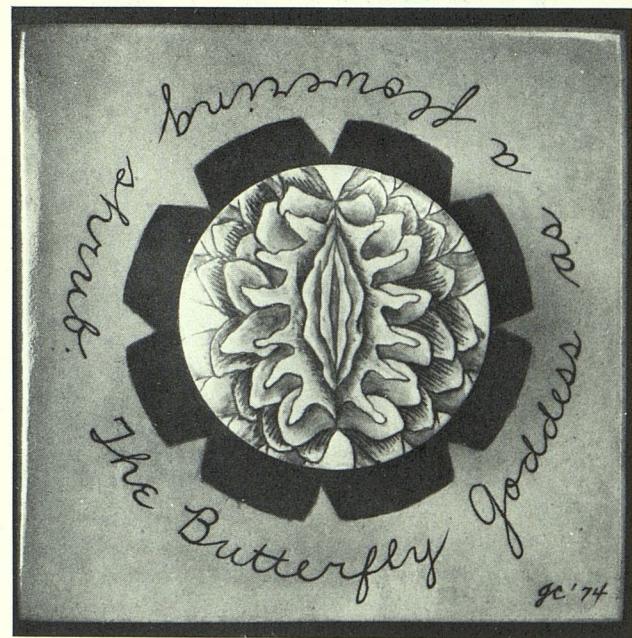
spiritual transformation. For Chicago, the butterfly symbolizes both liberty and metamorphosis. The new specimens in *The Butterfly Goddess* series represent a new breed of women: these are women yet to be born to a world in which the Goddess is recognized as the original deity; women whose sexual energy is accepted as a

legitimate form of creative power.

Her *WomanTree* series suggests the principle of a female Tree of Life out of which these "Ancient New Beings" will emerge, possessing all the secrets of the matriarchal past transmitted over time through the sacred matri-lineage women now reclaim. Chicago's flower forms, seed shapes and pod forms relate to the principles of feminist alchemy and suggest the final transmutation into "The Ancient New Being" of which the butterfly is her prime symbol.

Chicago's dream has always been to bring art out of the world and back into the culture so that it will effect the people as it once did in the Middle Ages.

Monica Sjoo's synthesizing of artistic, political and mythological material has served as a catalyst of Goddess-consciousness in England. Her underground pamphlet, *The Ancient Religion of the Great Cosmic Mother of All*, which will be published by *Womanspirit* in the coming year, is a poetic attempt to cull all information that can be obtained through a feminist occult reading of history, symbolism, myth, art and literature, and bring it into a powerful reevaluation of many of the philosophical underpinnings of contemporary thought. Her art works create Goddess emblems which narrate the story of the real crucifixion, that of women who have been sacrificed upon



Judy Chicago. *The Butterfly Goddess as a Flowering Shrub*. 1974. China paint on porcelain.

cross of patriarchal culture. They speak of female rebirth into a new ethos through the revolutionary force of women as workers and visionaries.

Contemporary Goddess-culture art, with its many varied manifestations, is creating a whole new constellation of charged signs, aspirational images, icons for contemplation, talismanic artifacts, and symbolic rites of passage that constitute the source of a new reality for women.

Artists of the Surrealist tradition like Leonora Carrington, Leonor Fini, Meret Oppenheim, Frida Kahlo and Remedios Varo, artists participating in the Sister Chapel exhibition (*Woman-art*, Winter 1977) such as Diana Kurz and Cynthia Mailman, Canadian artists Jovette Marchessault (totemic sculptural figures) and Suzanne Guité (stone sculpture), Thérèse Guité (batik) and other contemporary American artists such as Faith Wilding, Suzanne Benton (welded sculpture and mask ritual theater), Julia Barkley etc. are creating a new feminist myth in which woman becomes the vital connecting link between all forms of life in the cosmos; the great catalyzer and transformer of life energies. By

the repossessing of Goddess power and by a full participation in Her Being, women are bringing into existence a vastly expanded state of ecstatic consciousness.

Through the many ceremonies of rebirth and reclamation, the rituals of mourning and self-transformation, the energizing of new psycho-physical centers of being, the activation of a new Earth-Alchemy, the rewriting of sacred texts, myth and history, and a new scanning of the universal system of hieroglyphics, using trance, meditation and dream, women artists are bringing about a planetary goddess-consciousness revolution, a cycle of female rebirth and a new feminist ethos in our time.

1. June Singer, *Androgeny: Towards a New Theory of Sexuality* (New York: Anchor, 1976), p. 71.
2. Jolande Jacobi, *Complex, Archetype, Symbol in the Psychology of C. G. Jung* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 101.
3. Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 34.

4. Mimi Lobell, "The Goddess Temple," *Humanist Ideas in Architecture* (Vol. XXIX, No. 1), p. 20.
5. Lobell, p. 21.
6. Miriam Sharon, personal communication, Dec. 10, 1977.
7. Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), p. 262.
8. Quote by artist from dream narrative.
9. "Mary Beth Edelson's Great Goddess," *Arts Magazine* (Nov. 1975).
10. Sheila Moon, *A Magic Dwells* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1970), p. 152.
11. Donna Henes, "Spider Woman Manifesto," *Lady-Unique-Inclination-of-the-night* (Cycle III 1978).
12. Neumann, p.
13. Betsy Damon, "The 7,000 Year Old Woman," *Heresies* (Fall 1977), pp. 9-13.
14. Quote from unpublished statement by the author.
15. Arlene Raven & Susan Rennie, "Interview with Judy Chicago," *Chrysalis* (No. 4), pp. 89-101.

This article is only part of a larger text on the subject of The Goddess in the work of contemporary women artists, and eventually writers. Will women whose work relates to this subject please send slides and manuscripts to Gloria Orenstein:

711 Amsterdam Ave. NYC 10025.

Liturgy Circa 1976

Janet R. Price

Look, Goddess,
can I call You God for short,
or is that too butch for You?

I don't know what to call You
let alone how to serve You—
I've lost touch with the ritual.

Goddess, Mother, Mistress of the world,
my faith is strong
but my theology is floundering.

I want to love You perfectly.
I want to wear my hair for You
like a Nazarene.

But I don't know how to dress or walk
or where to put my hands
or who to give my body to.

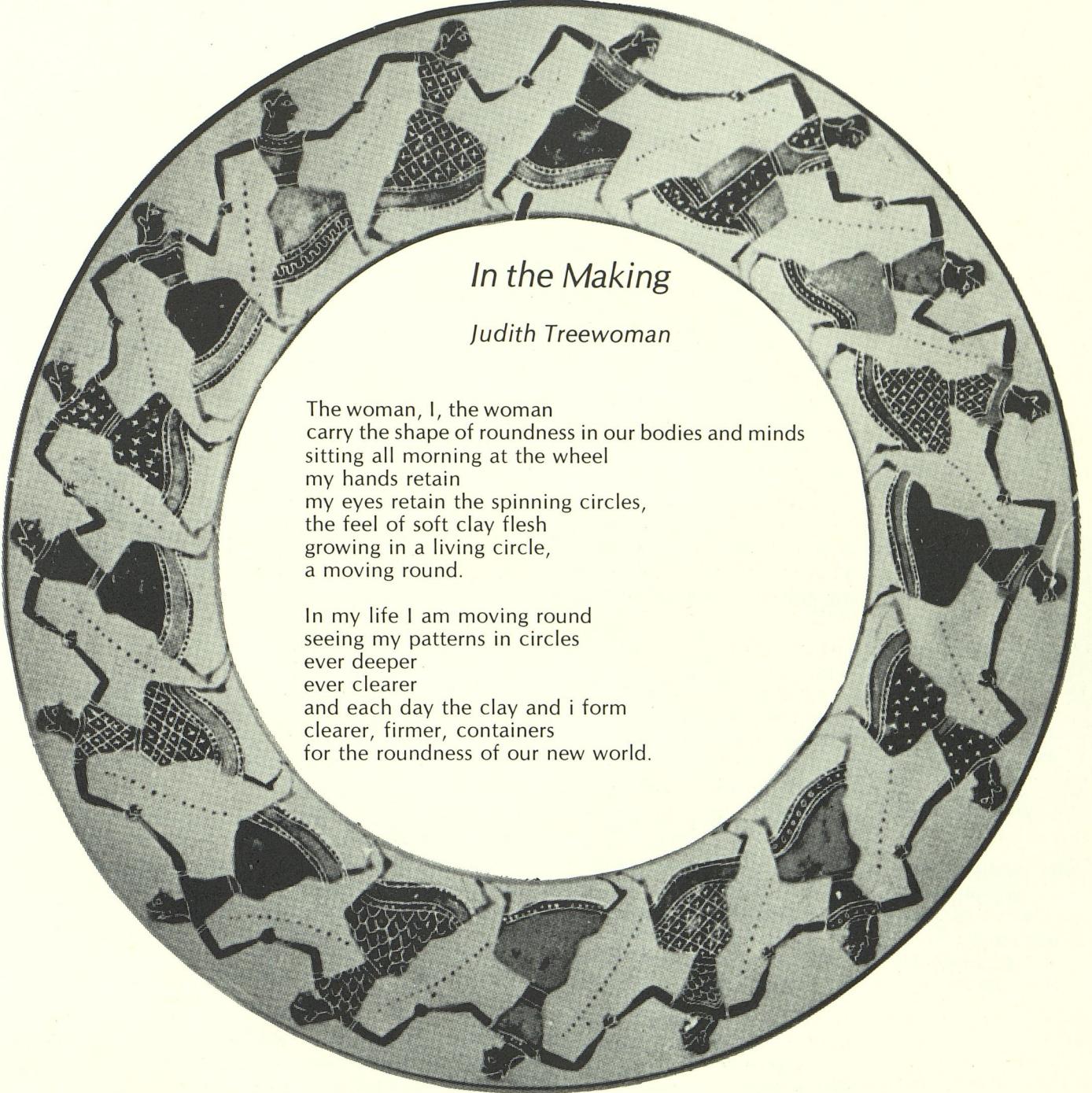
Should I love a woman?
Could I come close to You
by coming close to someone close to You?

Or should I love a man
to flatter You by imitation
of Your boundless Motherhood?

Or should I be chaste for You,
lest I throw myself at idols
because they make me come?

I mention this last
just to show the lengths I'd go
if I knew what lengths to go

to get to You.



In the Making

Judith Treewoman

The woman, I, the woman
carry the shape of roundness in our bodies and minds
sitting all morning at the wheel
my hands retain
my eyes retain the spinning circles,
the feel of soft clay flesh
growing in a living circle,
a moving round.

In my life I am moving round
seeing my patterns in circles
ever deeper
ever clearer
and each day the clay and I form
clearer, firmer, containers
for the roundness of our new world.

Heroica, An Archetypal Image Rising An Expurgated Vision

Sidele C. Scot

...have you ever felt the return of memories too old for the written history of human glory? I feel pulsating rhythms too primitive for my sophisticated generation ...it is as though some primeval instinct has opened its doors within a sacred place inside me...I hear strange languages of visual forms and yet I know it is not madness...my feet dance the rhythms of simplicity, my hands accompany the rhythm...

TIME FOR A DREAM: I was two people, one a child watching the other me modeling objects, cloudlike forms. I knew I was modeling forms with the shadows attached as though I were God. I needed no light for the shadows. I also knew I was asleep but I really was a live vital being creating the forms and the child was looking on in amazement. The child appeared remote. I never had a dream where I knew that I had left my body sleeping on the bed and had gone into the "land of dreams."

...good morning me! I wish to extend to myself a very happy birthday...walking on this birthday down second avenue to meet Jack and kept repeating to myself 33...33...33...and what have you done and what have you learned I said to myself as a smile rose in my heart...I have lived well and have learned joy of living and at 33 years I feel no regrets...the gods have been kind and have deprived me of nothing and this is the greatest of all gifts I feel today...

When was the last time you looked
into the face of unspoken screams

...sitting on the subway, Monday morning...the malla beads in my hand...each bead becoming the maniacal face of a human head...each face contorted, pressed in lines of the terrible tragedy of the human story on earth...dear heart where is the comedy to break the cruel energy...another day...the comedy is the other side of the coin Sidele...just look harder!...

...the struggle continues...the struggle for my own soul is still a real reality and I cannot underestimate any longer the primal self of this creature, Sidele...nothing wants to die and yet for me to shed the skin of a self whose needs feed on self-pity, morality of right and wrong, etc. I must continue to exorcise this devil without anger with love but with firmness...I wish to enter the land of the immortals!...

"Rain falling on the Brooklyn streets
the mind of Sidele searching for poetic visions"

...today as I sit in our front room reflecting on the movement and changes in my life I see that from this being called Sidele C. Scot I am molding a recognizable form ...I was given all the primary ingredients and now I must do what is necessary... maybe this is the reason why painting doesn't seem so very important to me...I am really so busy creating the living being of myself that the canvas feels so secondary so far removed from the primary source!...there are different images I have within me for each stage that is set...STAGE: being, levels of conscious awareness...the child in me could only die when I (whatever that is because I was the child for over 30 years) became conscious of its pattern and no longer needed it...

Strange...we spend our life in learning how to live

...another day...if I wasn't experiencing it I would never believe it possible...such terrible pain...pain and fear...are they inseparable...dear sweet gentle heart, a deep breath here is needed...I can hear the echoes of my madness floating in and out around and around like a ghostly apparition...how absurd, how foolish to waste myself away on platitudes whose only meaning equals 34 years equals Sidele C. Scot...I am born 34 years old 3 months a few days a few hours untold seconds and I can never record the true or real moment of the birth...it is always a little before or a little after me...I don't seem to be able to ever experience a present. AH, WHAT THEN IS THE PRESENT! listen Sidele, there is no present, past, future, etc., all there is is change...all else a fabrication of the human mind!

...and yet another day...when I ask mercy from the unknowable fear and ecstasy that I call God I must understand the difference between the mercy God does show and the action I must take...ah, dear creature, don't you see that God has nothing at all to do with mercy...it is Sidele that must extend the mercy...

...and yet another day...I want to reach the limits of my potential...I want to explore the abyss within me...I want the known to move over and make way for the unknown... (1977, VOILA!)

It is interesting to note that in order to be a painter all I have to do is paint

TRAGEDY: *the human animal if it is lucky will spend more than half a lifetime in finding out that it is no better (or worse) than anyone or anything else...others are not that lucky.*

TRAGEDY: *the overwhelming feelings of pain and disillusionment etc. that plague people are nothing more than terrible misunderstanding...wrong information.*

TRAGEDY: *and few listen to the sounds of experience.*

...am I really the composite of days past...is my destiny knowledge of knowing and yet not knowing...an unquenchable trust for what I know is not the end but always a beginning...

...our lives are so silly sometimes...I remember times of looking for motivation to rid myself of the heaviness, the nausea within...not until now do I realize the true motivation for my own movement...it is simply a matter of survival...

...have you ever found in your living that you reached a point or place and you wanted to run away...that it became too painful to grow anymore...

BEHOLD, A REAL REALITY...as a young girl I took the spoken word so seriously and molded it into its absolute form forgetting that I, Sidele, was far more important than any word...I, Sidele, this form transcends the limitations that human minds conceive...I, Sidele, am beyond these narrow judgments of right and wrong, lesbian, thief...I, Sidele, am no label...it is like being a Jew, a Christian, a Moslem, a Buddhist...I, Sidele, am all these things and none touch my innermost secrets...I, Sidele, am like a shadow in the path of shining light!

I do not want to live in fear.

...again and again the return of the old malady of such a strong need for self-destruction...I cannot understand why I provoke the demons as though taking a stick to poke the fires of hell and the stick being my life...how come it is so hard to accept and feel my own existence...maybe destruction or rather the appearances of destruction is something that people do to cover up a supreme love of self...something like excessive good manners...

NOTES ON PROGRESS: the deaths within myself have given me a new dignity... death seems to make life more precious... not as a hoarder but intensity... I have lived so many lifetimes it seems and how painful it is for me to keep finding myself a stranger... I know I am a form... fully functioning and yet I find it hard to remember what I look like... the quest for the golden form... a search to find my real nature... to find what I was before I assumed a disguise... to consolidate the many facets of my being!...

Enigma... why did Ophelia drown?

Enigma... once I knew I had to create each day I knew I knew nothing.

Enigma... the sadness... the pain of the human life!

... as the years pass the dream becomes so vague... must see clearly once again this vision... what is it for me to be Sidele, Sidele, Sidele, I call you from the echoes of a dream... awake creature...

... in my personal life it was not the fear of God or the fear of unspoken words that caused sickness... it was fear of life filled with responsibility... commitments... a life filled with love of Sidele functioning as a unique being...

A MOMENT OF THE TIME:

a moment of the time... sitting in my studio on a cloudy day alone with the silences of familiar sounds, alone with this creature whose appearance takes the form Sidele C. Scot, female of the species homo sapiens... the days have been hard... nightmares of truth have shaken the very core of my existence and now it is the time to gather the remains of years of dissipation and negation, of an inner hatred and despair whose depths I have just seen and whose truth gives rise to Dantean screams whose echoes resound in the walls of hell... earth. I have reached the bottom of the abyss which each form carries within its existence... sadness is not the word, nor is despair... reality in this dimension is like the quiet of a gray day. No tears! for this I am grateful... how strange it is that I should not care about understanding and I should not care about keeping my word and I should not really care about any of those things I concerned half a lifetime with... I suppose when the self is confronted with the self it no longer is concerned with what others think... it is only the self that the self is really concerned with and yet was it all a lie... a terrible ghostly deception the unconscious self played upon the acting form... has half a lifetime been spent just to learn the meaning of tragedy. Maybe the mind echoes in its innermost chambers, maybe there is nothing more to life than learning the proper way to die!...

... and another gray rainy day once again sitting in my studio listening to the sounds of traveling cars, scratching pens, echoing voices somewhere, somehow communicating... so many days of sickness... so many days of sadness... my heart cries and the face sits on top of the neck immobile... the mind reflects on the shadows of memories long forgotten... long remembered and the Sidele who does the walking who carries these unreflected images around says stoically what next. Will the remainder of my days be spent in studios alone with only myself to say hello to... to speak to... another gray day followed by another gray day... this time in the laundry sitting waiting for clothes to wash... to dry... to fold. My mind wandering reflecting on the stupidity... the ignorance of my days... always awakening too late. Too late to see the simplicity of our lives... awakening and yet, how great the desire to be lost in illusion... if only I had known it was my life I was living and the destruction I was inflicting upon this mortal body was upon Sidele I would not be sitting here now in the pain and hopelessness of my sterility and yet, Sidele C. Scot, woman, is what she is because of what she was... another Sunday in May and the gray skies overhead... silence in my studio... the sound of the gas stove... the reflective self waits for the mind to clear and see what it is hearing...

MIRACLE: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEALTH AND SICKNESS IS CONSCIOUSNESS.

MIRACLE: I AM NOTHING DIFFERENT THAN I EVER WAS EXCEPT NOW I LIKE WHAT I SEE.

MIRACLE: YES, TO WITNESS THE NOBILITY OF THE THUMB.

EPILOGUE...January 1977...no more diaries...no more words written down on numberless blank pages trying to catch a glimpse of that illusive creature known to some as Heroica (Goddess of the eternal moment...now)...known to others as Sidele C. Scot (wife, lover, friend, daughter, etc.)...known to herself as woman...sitting on this train this night in january trying to formulate words that will bring this living experience to conclusion...the train rocks the mind reflects and sees and feels nothing except gratitude and thanks....



Gilah Yelin Hirsch. *Reconciliation*. Oil on canvas. 2½' diameter.

Opposing the Rape of Mother Earth

Judith Todd

Some feminists see themselves as exclusively "political feminists" or as "spiritual feminists," and many find it difficult to understand the other's point of view. The spiritualists feel that the politicalists are too narrow or insensitive to what they regard as "a more encompassing feminist consciousness," whereas the politicalists consider the spiritualists impractical and believe that they avoid "the reality of the real political issues." I think that it is extremely important for us to realize that this division between the spiritual and the political is arbitrary and unnecessarily divisive. I hope to illustrate the positive relationship between spirituality and politics by discussing the ancient Anasazi spiritual beliefs and the present day struggle of their descendants, the Hopi, to preserve their land from strip-mining.¹

The Anasazi world view is difficult for us to talk about because our sentence structure and words, which inevitably reflect our own world view, imply distinctions that they did not make. This is a matter of metaphysics, whether we like that term or not, and it is necessary to consider yet another distinction that derives from our European western metaphysics—one that is alien to Anasazi belief. We assume a distinction between "living" things, such as animals and plants, and "non-living" ones, such as rocks and water. The distinction did not exist for the early Anasazi people and still does not exist for many of their present-day descendants. For the Anasazi/Hopi trees, insects, rocks, people, water—are all living, virtually interconnected parts of a living Whole. Earth is not just a huge chunk of inanimate matter with animate beings scurrying around on top. Mother Earth is a living being. Earth's creations cannot be reduced to inanimate atomic particles, subject only to physio-chemical laws, because no such things exist. Atoms are alive, energized by the same vitality that we experience.

Once we can view the world without separating the animate from the inanimate, we can better understand the interconnectedness of all things and the consequent possibility for what we call psychic phenomena. For the Anasazi, thought was not a mere epiphenomenon of a few pounds of cerebral cortex but was in itself a vital, viable, powerful force that could and did affect things in the world, such as the weather and other natural forces. Our own orientation confuses us when we try to understand this because as soon as we say "affect things," we assume a linear version of cause and effect. The Anasazi held a more complex concept of reality. Since they regarded all things as related to each other, cause and effect were not a simple matter of a one-two chain reaction, but rather a complex interrelationship, a network, a pattern in which they perceived cycles as well as lines, and subtle as well as gross power.

The Anasazi expressed the metaphysical truth of the interrelatedness of all things as parts in a great dynamic Whole in their ceremonial dances. These multi-sensorial, dynamic dramas were attuned to the cycles of nature and the positions of certain stars. Within the ceremony, the movements of the dancers were synchronized with each other and with repetitive, one-two drum beats, the heartbeat of Mother Earth. Each ceremony in the cycle of ceremonies was simultaneously a complete, orchestrated unit as well as an integral part of the Whole cycle. Analogously, each individual participant was an integral part of the great dynamic Whole of the dance, the cycle, and all of nature.

Anasazi architecture played an important part in the ceremonial expressions of this primary truth. The photographs accompanying this essay are of Anasazi pueblo ruins in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico that were built between 1000 and 1200 A.D. Some of the more extensive pueblos span about three acres. In some cases pueblos are built on top of even older ruins, which had been abandoned by earlier generations of Anasazi. The ceremonial temples, called *kivas*, were dug out of the earth, so that they are wholly or partially subterranean. The *kiva* illustrated here is a subterranean Great *Kiva* and was probably used by a group of about 1000 people. Smaller *kivas* were also at least partially underground and usually circular. Each *kiva* contained a *sipapu*, a circular hole dug out of the floor. The *sipapu* symbolized the place of emergence from the last world.

Kivas were a part of the daily life of the Anasazi, as were their spiritual practices. They were used constantly for ceremonial preparations and rituals.² For the architects of these buildings, there was no distinction between the spiritual and the political, i.e., between their religious and secular lives—or for that matter between art and non-art. Religion and art were an integral part of daily life. The Anasazi's ritual ceremonies celebrated life and their daily lives celebrated the beauty of a total reality, naturally including what we call the spiritual.

The Anasazi ceremonies were held either inside the circular, partially underground *kivas* or in the plaza, framed by these concentric, step-like buildings. As Vincent Scully says, "Most of the dances of ritual . . . are held, now as in the recorded past, tight up against the buildings . . . And the beat of those dances is built into the architecture, which thus dances too."³

The architecture's very structure expressed the metaphysical belief in the interdependence and interconnectedness of all things in a dynamic Whole. The pueblo was composed of interconnected cells, so that it was quite typical for one unit's south wall to be the next unit's north wall. The living units were all about the same size, reflect-



A portion of Pueblo Bonito, showing cellular articulation of rectangular and circular units. Pueblo Bonito, Chaco Canyon. © 1977 by J. Todd.

ing the egalitarian social belief of the Anasazi. Each of these cellular units was owned by a woman. The Anasazi were matrilineal and matrilocal. When a daughter married, a unit was built adjacent to that of her mother and she and her husband moved in. (In case of divorce, the man moved out, leaving the woman in a relatively more secure position, since she had the house and the support of her own clan.) The layout of the Anasazi pueblo was a direct result of this matrilocal arrangement: Construction occurred only where daughters were born. A family that had many daughters could be evidenced by a cluster of pueblo units. In an area of the pueblo where only sons were born, new construction did not take place; in fact, because the clans were matrilineal, a clan that failed to have daughters became extinct.

Laura Thompson points out the value in this kind of growth pattern: "Reproduction in this organically conceived society is ideally by means of budding. As the Hopi matrilineal clan grows by adding daughter households to the mother unit, so the pueblo expands by the budding of daughter colonies from the original nucleus. Thus ideally the society is able to augment and completely reconstitute itself."⁴

This budding type of growth pattern is different from that of our architecture. For us, the basic structural unit is the building to which new rooms, patios, etc., can be added. Pueblo architecture's basic structural unit is the room itself, and growth consists of indefinite repetition of this basic unit. Although J.B. Jackson seems to consider this growth pattern inferior to our more "complex" way of building, he points out that it seems to imply "the belief in the cumulative power of infinite repetition."⁵ This belief is also reflected in the Chaco Canyon masonry, which prefers small stones to large ones. Jackson says, "It is as if the builders were saying that a wall is sturdy when it is made out of a multitude of identical small fragments."⁶ I think it is likely that these builders, who were members of a matrilineal, egalitarian society and who expressed their spiritual beliefs via repetitive, cyclic ceremonies, did believe in the "cumulative power of infinite repetition." That idea seems difficult for Jackson to honor, but then he is a member of a patriarchal, hierarchical society whose

architecture, social ideals, and religious institutions radically differ from those of Anasazi society.

Probably the most dramatic difference between Anasazi architecture and ours is the relationship of its forms to the earth. This difference is most marked in the structure of the kivas. European influenced churches are capped with phallic steeples, straining to leave the earth to reach the male God in the sky; arches cleave walls well above human height, pointing to the same exalted being. By total contrast, Anasazi architecture hugs Mother Earth, and the most sacred is the lowest and most enveloped. Kivas are dug out of the earth and are usually circular, reflecting earth's form.⁷ The most sacred part of the entire pueblo, the sipapu, the place of emergence from the last world, is dug deep into the already subterranean kiva. This sacred orifice is protected by the circular kiva, whose walls may be of many thicknesses. The kiva is in turn surrounded by the pueblo, which may also have a concentric layout.

The concentric arrangement of the kivas may reflect the matrifocused spiritual beliefs of the Anasazi. The walls of some kivas are nearly two feet thick.⁸ They are made up of stones, mortar, layers of plaster and (sometimes) paint. Frank C. Hibben reports that "In some kivas having many painted coats of plaster, the layers themselves made up perhaps a third of the thickness of the walls."⁹ These concentric layers symbolically protect the sipapu and the people inside the kiva. For the Anasazi/Hopi, two types of labyrinth symbolize Mother Earth as she enfolds each soul, gives it birth and receives the spirit back at the end of the person's path through life.¹⁰



Figure 1

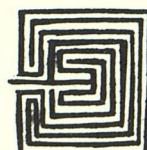


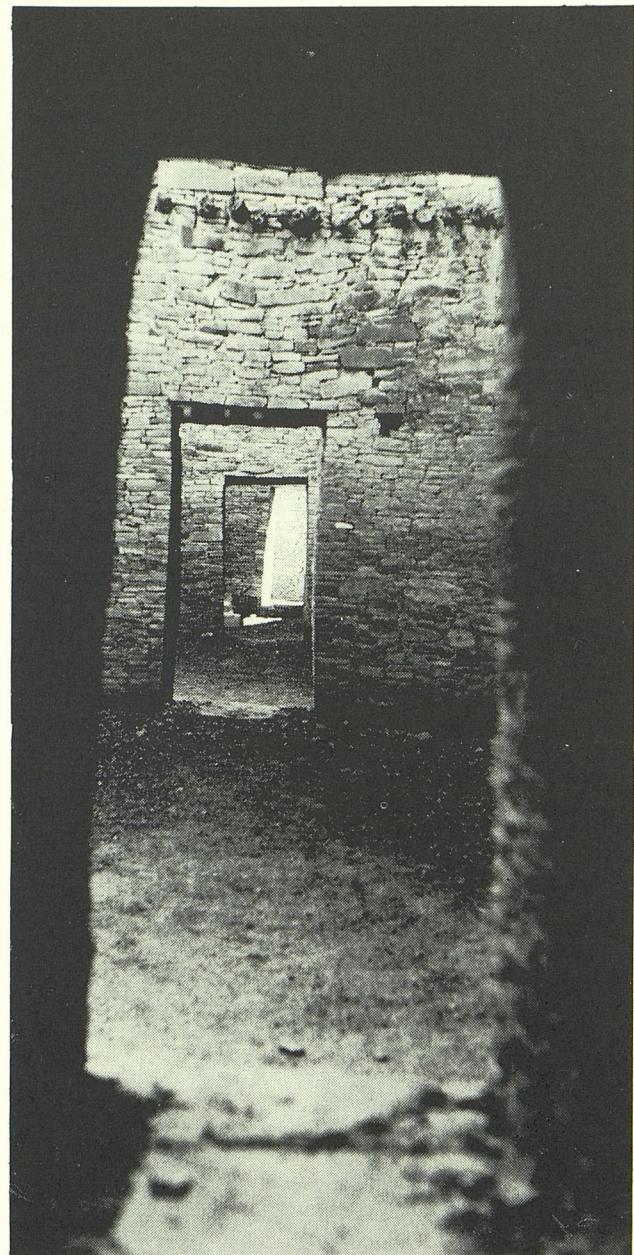
Figure 2

The kiva is this same multilayered, centrally focused symbol in three dimensional form.

The same symbolism seems to be the underlying motive of the layout of the pueblo itself. There are two basic kinds of ground plan apparent in the pueblos throughout the Southwest that echo the two maze shapes. One is a sort of semicircular or capital letter D shape (analogous to Figure 1); the other is a more rectangular, roughly E shape —sometimes with the center bar missing (analogous to Figure 2). All of the rooms on any one level of a pueblo are connected by doorways, so that it is possible to enter a room at one end and wind one's way through the rooms to the other end. The multiple rows of rooms arranged around a central plaza create a concentric, centripetal design. That this labyrinthine structure was intended to symbolize Mother Earth is at least plausible; if it does, this is another way in which the Anasazi expressed their spiritual beliefs.

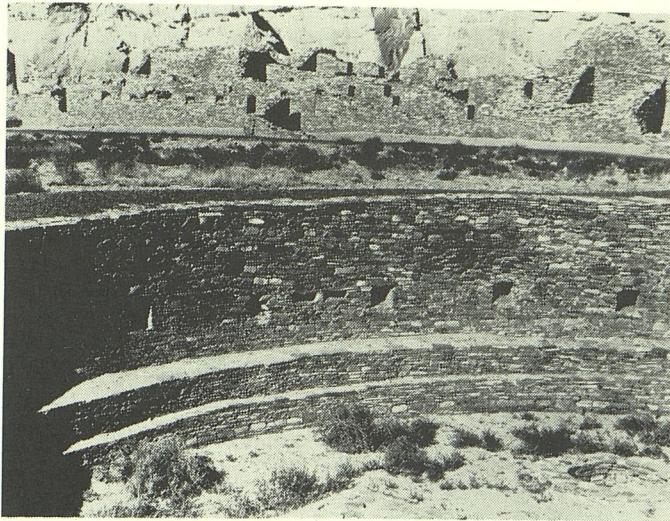
We have already discussed the intimate connection between the Anasazi's matrifocused society and the growth pattern of their architecture, and between the matrifocused spiritual beliefs and the structure of their kivas, if not the entire pueblo complex. But it is even more interesting to realize that this architecture was to a great extent built by women. Apparently the division of labor was that the men cut and laid the timber (which made the ceilings and partially framed the doors) and the women built the walls. It is not common knowledge among anthropologists that women were the major participants in building some of the most spectacular architecture in North America.¹¹ Not surprisingly, I came across this bit of information in male literature, which mentioned it in the process of denigrating women. The following passage, written by George Kubler, was based on the records of the seventeenth century Franciscan missionary Benavides. The passage blames certain "negative aspects" in missionary architecture on women's role in its construction, and in the process indicates that women built pueblo walls in ancient times. I quote this passage at length because its ethnocentrism and phallocentrism are so appallingly blatant as to be humorous (in an adrenalin-producing kind of way):

"The evidence of the buildings constitutes proof that two commonplace devices of European building found no use in New Mexico during the missionary era. The arch is almost nonexistent, and the dome is completely lacking, but both forms may readily be built with the local materials. Why were they excluded from the architectural repertory of the mission buildings? It is to be recalled that, to this day, the Indians themselves never use either the arch or the dome. In dealing with these negative aspects of the structure, reference must be made to the passage... from Benavides, pertaining to the participation of women in construction. Since Benavides, the roles have been reversed: the women now spin and weave, and the men build walls. But the women own the houses in the pueblos, and the ownership itself is perhaps a remnant from the time when building was the women's prerogative. Does this indifference to alien forms, so unlike the ready acceptance found in Mexico, stem from the women?... It is likely that resistance was encountered in New Mexico... and it seems reasonable to localize this resistance in the participation of women. The point cannot be proved by asserting that women are temperamentally more conservative, or indifferent to structural considerations: the evidence of the monuments and the known control of their construction by Indian women induce a correlation between the two, without reference to *a priori* considerations." Perhaps this correlation is to be expressed in terms of a traditional division of labor among men and women, the men executing the carpentry and woodwork, as indicated by Benavides, and the women opposing any increase in their own share.¹²



Repeated doorways. Pueblo Bonito, Chaco Canyon.
© 1977 by J. Todd.

I certainly doubt that the absence of domes and arches is due to the women's laziness, as Kubler suggests. Nor were the women likely to have been "indifferent to structural considerations," since prior to the white man's encroachment they were capable of building Pueblo Bonito, Chetro Ketl, and dozens of other multiroomed, multi-storied earthen monuments. The constructions of a mission would have been a snap by comparison. I do, however, agree with Kubler's hint that the women were more "conservative," for it is much that they had to conserve: their matrilineal, egalitarian society and their ancient earth-reverencing spiritual beliefs. Kubler doesn't bother mentioning that the women weren't building these mis-



Part of the circular Great Kiva wall, showing wall niches and seating bench; a portion of the rest of the pueblo is in the background. Chetro Ketl, Chaco Canyon. © 1977 by J. Todd.

sions out of devotion to the white man's god, but because they were forced to build them. I prefer to believe that the women's refusal to cap the buildings with domes or the doorways with arches was a subtle way of protesting against the white man's phallocentric religion.

Forcing the people to build missions and to attend church was only part of the oppression the Anasazi/Hopi experienced.¹³ During the missionary era people were whipped, imprisoned and burned to death. But in the long run, the most destructive form of oppression was a form of indoctrination that is extremely difficult to combat. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, Hopi children were literally stolen from their parents and forced to go to white man's schools—far from their homes—where they had to learn to speak in the English language and to think in patriarchal concepts.¹⁴ This insidious form of oppression has had repercussions that are simultaneously political and spiritual.

Generations of indoctrination into the white man's world view made other kinds of government influence possible. Nearly 100 years ago, U.S. government agencies began insidious efforts aimed at gaining control over Hopi land for mining purposes.¹⁵ However, the traditional Hopi way of making decisions—by clan consensus, in which every individual's view counts equally and all must reach agreement—was a constant impediment to deal-making and sellouts. So the government instituted a Hopi Tribal Council, consisting of "elected representatives." Those sufficiently schooled in the white man's ways agreed to vote for and support the Council. But traditional Hopi would not go along with this manipulation of tribal government. They boycotted the elections and refused to recognize the "elected" officials as their representatives. The traditional Hopi still do not recognize the Tribal Council, but the U.S. government does. It was with this Tribal Council that the Department of Interior made its contract to lease Hopi land to the Peabody Coal Company for strip-mining. The Hopi Tribal Council stands to gain more than \$14 million over a 35-year period.¹⁶ In Hopi-land jobs are scarce, but they are available for those who support the Tribal Council.

In spite of generations of attempted indoctrination, heavy economic pressures, and the demoralizing effects of watching their own tribe members accept the white man's values, a small group of Hopi, along with a few other Pueblo groups, remain traditional and will not consent to their land being strip-mined.¹⁷ Their metaphysic—their spiritual beliefs, their world view—gives them this strength. They know Mother Earth is a living being and will not agree to have her raped.

This same world view, which treasures Mother Earth, allows for other phenomena that cannot be explained by our prevailing metaphysic. One such phenomenon crucially important to the traditional Hopi is prophetic visions. The Hopi have been guided by visions for countless centuries. In fact, visions guided the people to Chaco Canyon after many hundreds of years of migration throughout North and South America.¹⁸ It is here that the Anasazi built their earthen architecture and here that their descendants still choose to live.

The white man's appearance in Pueblo country was prophesied long before he came. The prophesies predicted that if the white man came bearing the sign of the circle, he would live in beneficial harmony with the Hopi. But if he came bearing the sign of the cross, he had lost his true belief and would bring sickness and death with him. The Anasazi women understood all too well the real meaning of the cross crowning the missions that they were forced to build.

The prophetic visions revealed that this new race of people would be able to fly through the air and would speak to each other through what appeared in the visions to be "cobwebs in the sky." The visions also foretold of a road "like a ribbon" that would run through the Hopi villages. Hopi men were later forced to build such a road while working on chain gangs as punishment for resisting government attempts to educate their children.

Many of the prophesies have become realities, but there are still more that pertain to the future. A crucial prophecy, still unfolding, is that men will come to try to take what lies under Hopi land. All of Mother Earth is sacred to the Hopi. They believe that they live at the very heart of this continent, the geomagnetic center—and that tampering with Mother Earth at this sacred center will create a serious imbalance. The prophecy warns that the people should not let the men take what is under their land. For the Hopi who have been indoctrinated into the white man's world view, a view in which prophetic visions are not valued, such a warning has little meaning. Yet those who have managed to cling to their ancient world view and spiritual knowledge take the warning very seriously. These people will try to protect Mother Earth from strip-mining.

Ecology-minded feminists may oppose strip-mining and see the struggle of the Hopi with the U.S. government as a political situation. The Hopi know it is a political and a spiritual struggle. For them, the concepts of "political" and "spiritual" are so tightly woven that in the cloth of reality, they cannot be separated.

Both spiritual awareness and political action are urgently needed to protect the Hopi land from strip-mining and from other attempts to exploit Mother Earth. To find out what you can do to help, write to

TECHQUA IKACHI
Box 174
Hotevilla, Arizona 86030

Right now, bills are pending before Congress that attack the sovereignty of the Hopi and all Indian nations on this land. The most comprehensive of these is HR9054. If you already know about this anti-Indian legislation, write your Congresspeople to protest. If you want more information, write to the

NATIVE AMERICAN SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE
P.O. Box 3426
St. Paul, Minnesota 55165

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1. The name *Anasazi* is not a Pueblo Indian name. It's a Navaho word meaning *ancient ones*, although the Navaho are not descended from the Anasazi. Somewhere along the line, anthropologists started using this name for the people who inhabited the Four Corners region (where Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico meet) from about 1 A.D. through 1300. The Hopi and other Pueblo tribes are descended from the Anasazi. My discussion of Anasazi world view and social structure is based largely on what I know of the Hopi, believed by many to be the most traditional and therefore the most similar to their ancestors.
2. It is sometimes said that these kivas were men's club rooms, or that women were excluded from them. That's purely a presumptive fantasy of male anthropologists. The women took part in ceremonies both inside and outside the kivas. (Hewett, p. 68)
3. Scully, p. 61.
4. Thompson, p. 543.
5. Jackson, p. 24.
6. Ibid. p. 24. To illustrate the extent of this multiplication of pieces, it has been estimated that one of the pueblos in Chaco Canyon was constructed of 50 million pieces of stone. (Hewett, p. 299)
7. Considering all that the Anasazi knew about the nature of the Cosmos and our place in it, I'm sure they knew Mother Earth is round, but I have not yet found printed support of that claim.
8. Hibben, p. 22.
9. Ibid. p. 22.
10. Waters, p. 29. These same symbols are found all over the world. One is identical with the Labyrinth of Ariadne, as depicted on a Cretan coin.
11. None of the anthropologists I spoke with (three women and two men) knew that women built the walls of the Anasazi pueblos. Not surprisingly, the men were the most skeptical. One was overtly hostile to the very idea and the other suggested that if I wanted to study the Anasazi art from a *female* point of view, I should study the pottery—it would be "safer." Since finding the

Kubler quote, I've discovered a number of other sources that corroborate the tradition of women building the pueblo walls. Some of these also state the fact in derogatory ways. Hewett (p. 75) mentions it parenthetically; Scully (p. 48) says the women built the walls, then calls the walls "man-made" just two sentences later. See also Silverberg, p. 40; Thompson and Joseph, p. 54.

12. Kubler, p. 38.
13. For various accounts, see Katchongva, Nequatewa, Silverberg, or Waters.
14. Nequatewa, p. 61 and elsewhere.
15. Budnik, p. 101. See his article for an excellent account of the nature and extent of the ecological and cultural effects of this strip-mining effort.
16. Ibid. p. 101.
17. U.S. Bureau of Competition, pp. 38-39.
18. Waters, p. 50.

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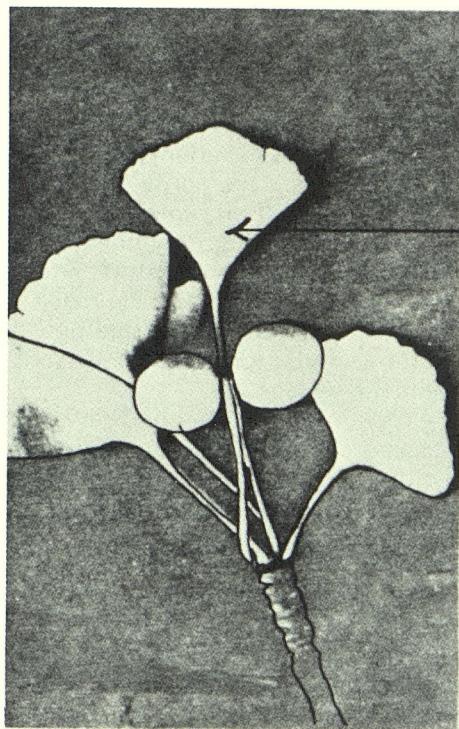
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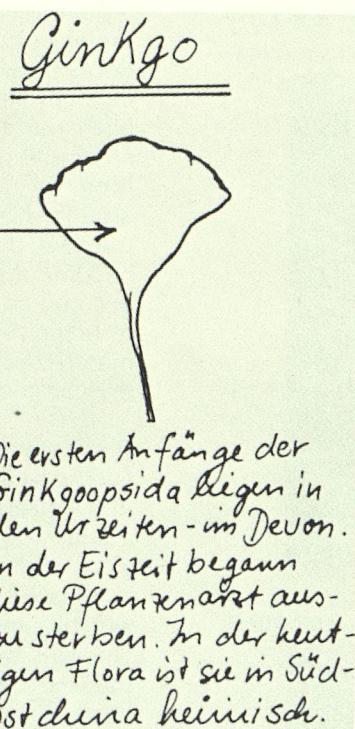
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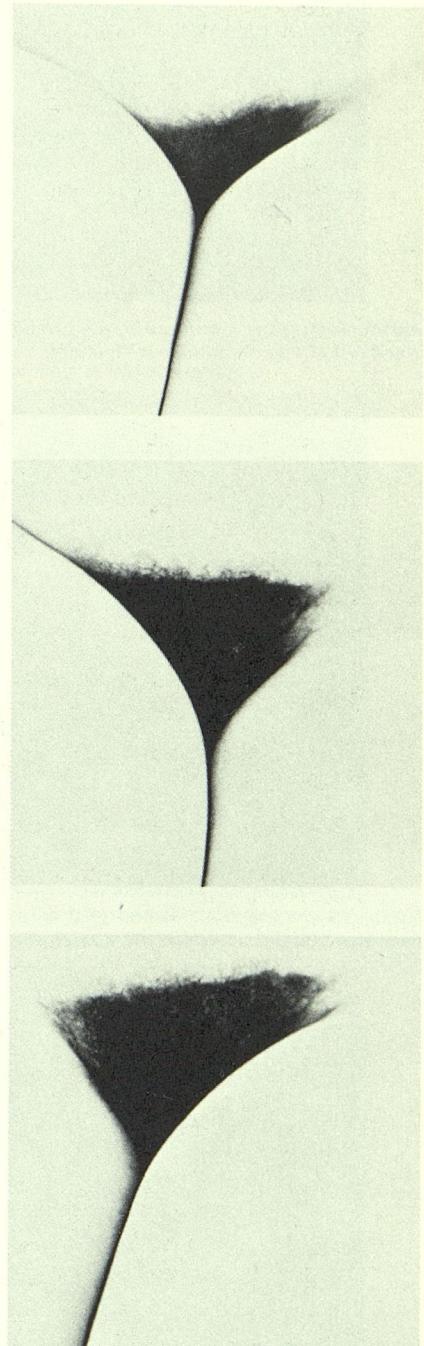
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Friederike Pezold. *Ginko*. Drawing. 1977.



Ginkgo
Die ersten Anfänge der
Ginkgoopsida liegen in
den Urzeiten - im Devon.
In der Eiszeit begann
diese Pflanzenart aus-
zu sterben. In der heut-
igen Flora ist sie in Süd-
ostchina heimisch.



Friederike Pezold. *Triangles*. Photographs. 1977.



The journey up the mountain to the pre-historic cave began thru a series of pine groves laden with cones.



What was once a path turned into acres of mountain rock—clearly, if you did not know the way you would be lost in no time.



Suddenly the blue Adriatic stretched before us—What an incredible location, the sea as your vista, a shelf of flat rock extended straight from the front of the cave with fruit trees and berry bushes on either side.

Pilgrimage/See for Yourself:

A Journey to a Neolithic Goddess Cave, 1977.
Grapceva, Hvar Island, Yugoslavia.

Mary Beth Edelson

Island of Hvar—Sunny Adriatic island of vineyards, olive groves, aromatic plants and ancient culture.
From a tourist brochure.

For some years I had been attempting to make a pilgrimage to a Goddess site. I had been doing private rituals in my art for some time, both outdoors in nature and in the studio. I could feed off of them and hold them in my mind like totems, but I was still hungry. I needed to do my rituals in an actual prehistoric cave; to experience a Neolithic site where I could smell the earth, poke around in the soil, breathe the air, and know that the cave air had circulated through my body and become a part of me. To go to a prehistoric site became an obsession, and represented the place to begin a new cycle. Numerous grants had not materialized and the trip was long overdue. I sold my car and bought the voyage.

Before leaving New York, I researched seven sites in hopes of being able to locate and gain access to at least one of them. (I had been there in my head many times.) My attraction to Yugoslavia, referred to as "Old Europe" by archaeologists, came from my wanting to start with a civilization linked to both the earliest Goddess worship and its art forms as well as to the later Goddess worshipping cultures. My fantasy and my plans are to continue my pilgrimage in the coming years throughout the Mediterranean, to trace our archaeological herstory, to photograph and document, perform rituals, gather natural objects from the sites, and record my responses while translating these perceptions into my work.

After arriving on the island of Hvar in the Adriatic off the coast of Yugoslavia, I set out to locate the Neolithic cave called Grapceva, knowing only that it was near Jelsa, which turned out to be a small harbor town on the north side of the island. My information was gleaned from Marija Gimbutas' book, *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe*,* useful both for its wealth of Goddess information and its archaeological maps. Though not adequate for actually locating sites, the maps did get us to outlying villages. Once in the general

*Marija Gimbutas, *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe* 7000-3500/Myths, Legends and Cult Images (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 27.

area, the best method for finding exact locations proved to be word-of-mouth. In Jelsa, we (Anne Healy and I were traveling together) tried to find someone who spoke English and knew the whereabouts of the Grapceva spilja, chosen because it appeared that I could be alone there. Little attention had been paid to the site after its initial excavation in 1955 by Professor Grya Novak. I thought, from reading and intuition, that this cave was probably used as a sanctuary by Neolithic people.

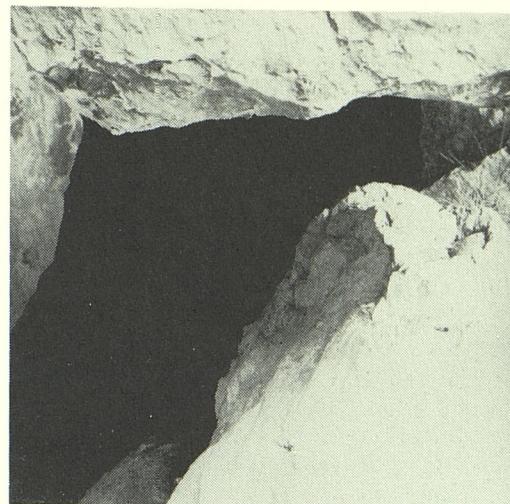
The travel agent in Jelsa said flatly that no one could tell us where the cave was, assuring us that he had lived in the area all his life and had never seen it. Obviously it was not worth bothering with. Finally, we wrangled out of him that a villager, now retired, had led excursions by donkey up the steep mountain to the cave. The agent had trouble remembering the guide's name, but at last it came out: "Vicko."

Vicko lived on a street behind a cafe in Jelsa. A second inquiry in town directed us there. "Yell his name and someone will point to his doorstep." This done, we were on the threshold of a house where we were offered old world hospitality and an abundance of homemade wine. Yes, he was too old to go up the mountain, but his fourteen-year-old son knew the way.

At daybreak the next morning we began the trip, climbing on and on while we and the heavy camera gear baked in the intense sun. At the top of the mountain, beyond the deserted village of Humac, we began our descent to the barely accessible cave. The climb down was a series of straight drops. What had once been a path was now acres of mountain stone, obscuring the way to those unfamiliar with it. Suddenly the blue Adriatic stretched before us, and in the next moment, we realized that we had reached the area around the cave. What an incredible location: the sea vista, a shelf of flat rock extending from the front of the cave, fruit and nut trees and berry bushes on either side. We could easily visualize the daily activities of the Neolithic inhabitants gathered there, talking, cooking, sunning.

Vicko's son unlocked the gate placed over the mouth of the cave. I can think of our entrance only in personal terms. It is very difficult to convey how thrilling this experience was to me. The cave was dazzling. It was magnificent. The main room, the great hall, sparkled and glistened with coral quartz. Stalagmites and stalactites, suggesting great temple pillars, divided the rooms into chambers. The atmosphere created a feeling of reverence and awe. For me, it was a holy place.

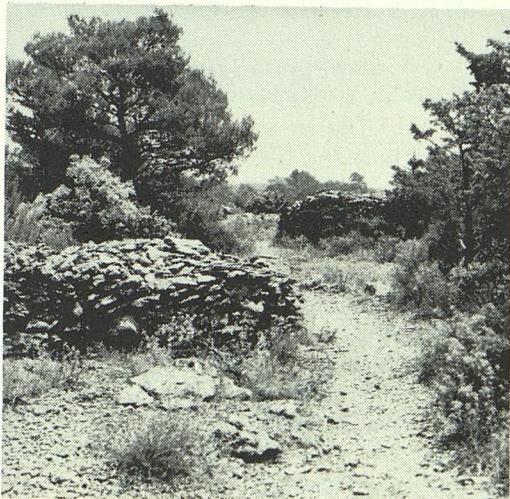
Vicko's son began to dig in the floor of the cave and shortly produced some bones. As it turned out, there were bones, shards and shells everywhere. But the cave completely lacked light and the few candles we had did not begin to



Our entrance to the cave I can only think of in personal terms. It is difficult for me to convey to you how thrilling the experience was. The cave was dazzling, it was magnificent.



Going back down we spent time in the village, and here again was magic. The houses, made of field stone, piled one upon another without mortar grow up out of the ground as if molded from the earth—everything was in harmony.



We continued to come down with our physical bodies, but our spirits are still up there, high.

penetrate the surrounding darkness. Although our eyes could pick up a faint glimmer, a camera could not record more than the light of the candle itself. After resting, we headed down the mountain to ask Vicko whether Anne and I could have the key to the gate to go back by ourselves the next day.

The following morning we set out with two dozen candles and three Yugoslav flashlights. First, I wanted to explore the cave for myself. The low contracted entrance to the cave opened into an anteroom or anterior hall with a side chapel of the darkest and richest coral quartz imaginable. Leading into the great hall, a vaulted ceiling with two massive stalagmites, which had become pillars, added to the majesty of the grotto. A dip in the middle of the hall—no doubt formed from centuries of use—was a natural center. To the left side, chambers formed by smaller stalagmites turned into narrow passages melting one into another, curving downwards or upwards. Nature had produced a complex labyrinth of sanctuaries.

Five "lofts," which circled the back of the great hall and extended into the chamber rooms about five feet above the floor of the cave, were large enough to sleep three or four people. The largest caught my attention in particular because, unlike the others, its floor and ceiling were jet black with specks of mother-of-pearl imbedded in the surface. Many of the pots recovered from the cave were made from this black clay; others were made from more traditional red clays.

I crawled into the space where, deep in one corner, crouching to examine a broken area in the black floor, I found pure dark red clay, which was the right consistency, moisture content and texture to begin making a pot without further preparation. I wondered whether this blackened room could have been a kiln room. The clay, ready to use, could have been dried near the kiln and fired in the same place, a perfect set-up. An indoor kiln might have also driven out the dampness, the only aspect of the cave I found uncomfortable. Considering the surroundings, I began to revise my notions of the hardships of primitive life—at least in this location. The temperature and quality of the air, in spite of the heat outdoors, were far superior to our air-conditioning. In one corner of the cave, a constant trickle of water provided a natural water supply. Fruits, nuts and herbs were at the doorstep, and the scent of lavender filled the air. The black crust of clay on the surface of the "kiln" loft wall was thin; scratching through it I came to a bright white, and began to make the impresso patterns common to the area in Neolithic times. In a few strokes I felt one long hand extending across time, sending a jolt of energy into my body. I began my rituals. —

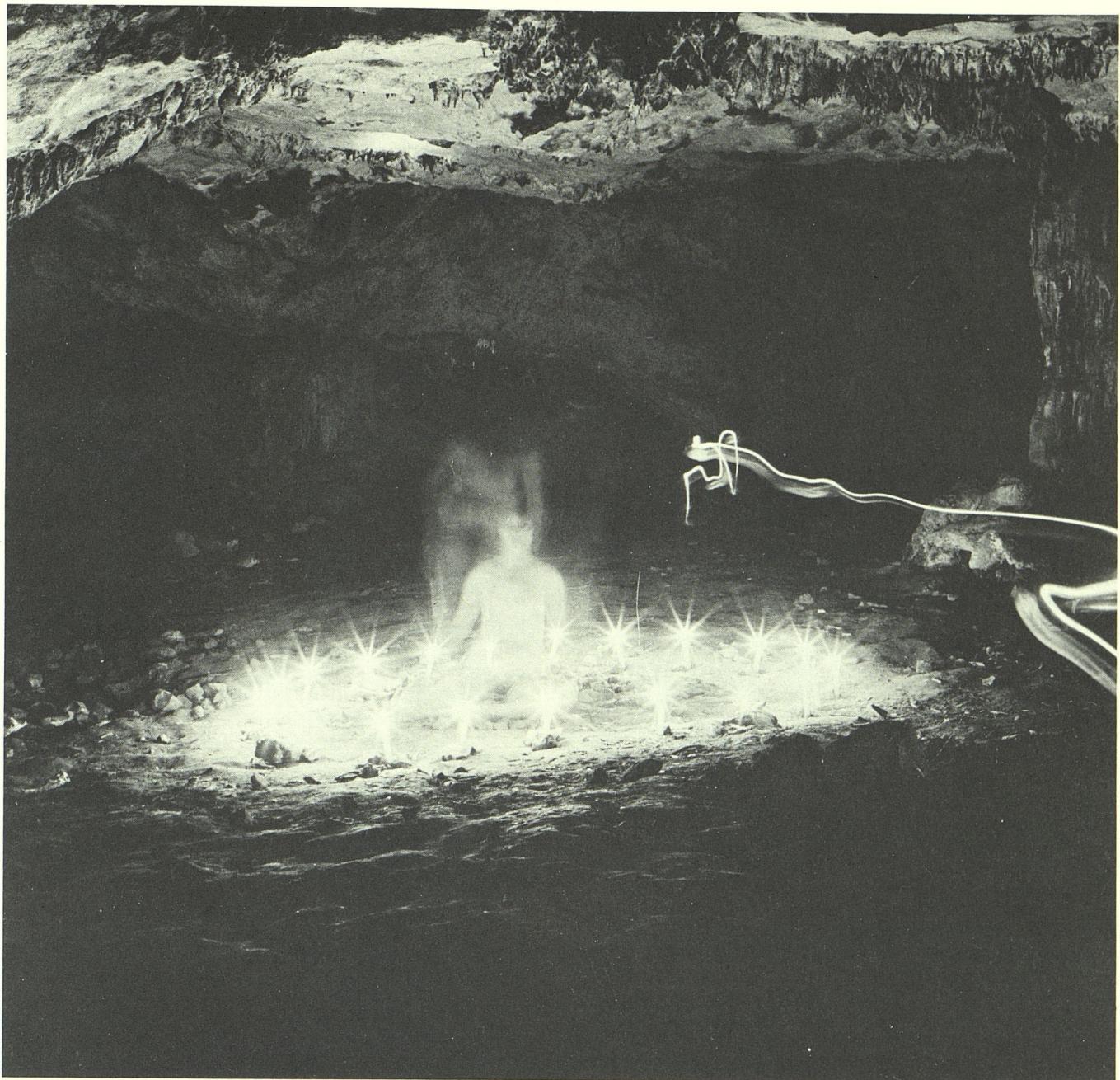
The energy from the rituals seemed to pulsate from the vaulted ceiling to me and back again.

Aware of the privilege of having the cave to myself, I felt like the center of the universe. My mouth was actually inhaling the cave, all of it, and breathing it out again. The cave contracted and expanded with my rhythms, and shimmered on its way back and forth. I made a pact with the cave: it would tell me some of its secrets in exchange for my rituals, rituals that it had not seen for millennia. I in turn would learn some secrets now and some later—I had only to listen, to keep in touch.

The first stalagmite chamber to the front and left of the great hall provided a natural altar, as it was elevated a few feet above the floor and in clear view from any point in the hall. In the center of the altar stood a stalagmite the size of a large Mother Goddess. Full-figured, she endured, frozen through the ages but still in charge. In front of Her and facing the great hall was a sloping stalagmite the height of a table; behind Her, concealed from sight, a small chamber divided into threes: a hidden sacristy.

We poked around in the ground outside the cave, the sun warm on our backs. Anne said, "I was in touch with myself today in a way that I have not been for a long time." On the way back down, we spent time in the deserted village, abandoned, we guessed, for lack of water. But here again was magic; on a back path we found a pomegranate tree in full bloom. The vineyards originally cultivated by Humac villagers are still harvested for their grapes and the fields for their lavender, which was in bloom. The houses, made from fieldstones piled one on top of the other without mortar, grew as if molded from the earth. Everything was in harmony. We continued to come down with our physical bodies, but our spirits were still high up there.

Note: After this day, and with encouragement from the natives of Hvar Island, we located Professor Novak. Again by word of mouth, we found his house in the town of Hvar. He graciously allowed us to visit his observatory, which he showed us with pride, and the visit ended with gifts of shards and shells from the cave. Among scores of artifacts, mostly bowls, removed from the cave or reconstructed from shards, there were two chalices in Professor Novak's observatory that were of particular interest to me. Identically shaped, their form was so non-functional that they must have been used for ritual purposes. They appeared to be very special; seeing them was like seeing tangible proof of an ancient secret. I struggled to get a photograph through the glass case. Chalices of this type are referred to by Gimbutas as wine cups with phallus stem bases, used when the Goddess of Vegetation was born... [when] "caves were used as sanctuaries, particularly those with stalagmites and stalactites." (Gimbutas notes that quartz caves were particularly selected to be sanctuaries).



The atmosphere of the cave created a feeling of reverence and awe... for me it was a holy place. Grapceva Neolithic Cave Series: See for Yourself, 1977. Hvar Island, Yugoslavia. Ritual Performance.

I document my rituals with a camera set on time release; the technical procedures, now second nature, do not interfere with the process... The flow depends on preparation, research, drawings, staring into space and allowing the ritual to spring from within. I start from a body position that leads to a mind/spirit position, peeling back

through layers, trying to avoid the obvious, touching primordial places which take up from the present and move me forward. Once the involved preparation is complete, I put everything out of my mind and begin the ritual, letting it flow where it will. Often the essence of the particular environment takes over.

Finding the Goddess: Finding Myself

Martha Alsup

I have reason to believe the Goddess has been messing around with my life. For me, She has firmly proved Her existence: spinning out choices of madness or Her. I'm not sure of Her design, or quite how to follow, but She's been leading me around and I strongly suspect She has more up Her sleeve.

I try to trace back to the beginning of Her interference, and it lands me inside my first memory. We'd gone to play behind my Grandmother's barn one evening, after a rain. A memory of sky in the puddles as a new-made rainbow ribboned the earth. Stand still with wonder, trees in the wind, shaking wet. That's the feeling the Goddess still tempts me with to get me to trust Her, and I usually do. I really have no other choice. She fashions things before me, waiting to be found.

At this point, I'd like to report Her to the Patriarchy, but they wouldn't believe me. Besides, they'd probably try to get at Her through me. Burn me or something equally obscene. So I'll try to warn you, my sisters. The reason I'm ratting is that She hurts. She's left bloody tracks in my mind. They make me want Her for comfort, and just lead me deeper. Deeper and clearer, in a soft light. But She stamps out the pattern with feet of cut glass. She makes Her tracks bloody with my own pain.

The Accident. That's what holds this whole thing together, and makes me know it's Her. The accident. For me, that word is painted red. She did it, and I think I can prove it was premeditated. There are several strong pieces of evidence that point toward prior knowledge of a kind that could only be Hers. I'll begin with the one most easily questioned, and lead you out in the way She led me.

Carolyn died one summer evening. Another like me, I'd thought, a woman grown to heal. I had just begun to think of death, and now this spun me 'round. I watched the dance her dying made, but couldn't find her there. To humor me, my collective said they'd bury me in the yard. How to come to terms with it? It crept into my conversation. I tend to think in themes and my friends saw this as the latest. When my mother's sister died I wasn't too surprised. Everyone I knew would die. The ending had begun. A rather inauspicious beginning. You can see further looking back.

I went to a cabin in the country with my lover, trying to solve a problem among the autumn leaves. Susan had drawn away, so we dropped acid to see what we'd find. Down by the river we watched the leaves fall. Saw the sun setting from the top of a hill. Then home through the woods, admiring a dandelion dried in the sun. Turning to look up at Susan—I saw Death's face. Hold me, she said. And I did. Terror that laced us up in a web. She'd heard a car crash, and some woman scream. She was shaking and I never said how she'd scared me. We had to be one to

survive. But Susan got hungry and I didn't feed her. When she left for the icebox we both felt the rip.

A lover was down, leaving me with the wanting. School would be through at the end of the year. Time to stop letting others define me, bits and pieces all scattered around. Say who I was and see what would happen. I didn't have words, I told my collective, trying to explain the hunger I felt. We must share process and not just our answers. Let each other in and find our grounding here. The Waterpeople—that's what we call our collective—freaked out, didn't know what I meant. All but Susan, who knew the bond of our hunger. As we talked on she brought out the book.

The Comforter, the story of what I really wanted. A horrible man murders his lover. Tries to escape in a car—and crashes. After the wreck he wakes up in a strange country—an island where the people are real. They all feed each other—and live by their dreams. They take him in and he learns how to heal.

Out to the airport to see my mentor. The book beside me in the car. A butterfly net to see what would happen, a test that I gave her, to pass if she could. It felt safe to be with her—she made the land real. Once school was over, we'd work it together. But she sought to explore the depths of my mind and I saw her approaching with games that I knew. I gave her the book over dinner—and then left the airport. Never a word about what was at stake. I knew in the giving that she wouldn't be there. I must make rules of my own.

Center is slower so I eased to that lane. Cars would go past me on the left side. The semi crossed over from the right. No. No, it didn't—but my memory's that way. At the top of the hill, he must have seen her lights coming. Pulled to the right and she hit me head-on.

The driver in the car beside me died with his prophesy that I'd never live. Tangle of death spilled out on the highway. Her web filled with cuttings—blown in the wind. The rope that She threw me held many hands—all come to find our way home.

Waterpeople gathered together—for themselves and for each other, people gathered around. The Goddess went public—Kay Gardner dedicated her concert to my getting well. Strangers were asked for prayers. I wandered for weeks in time unremembered: I traveled through words and came to my friends. The day the doctors said I would die was the day I woke up.

Not the same. I had changed. She blotted all from view but what She chose to show me, slowly so I'd learn. One face. No peripheral vision—so if the person moved in

closer, all I could see was an eye. The world slipped under a microscope. In for close study, life at the root. I'd forgotten how to choose between sounds. Everything carried a life of its own. My left side blew in the wind, like a leaf close to dying. All I remember is its being born. The pain was so constant, it lost all its words. By the time I remember, the first hurting was over, moving its way to outside my skin. But someone must hold me or I would fall. The path that I saw lay straight ahead. My neck didn't turn—I couldn't see 'round. No matter. Everyone loved me. Persephone, once home, to go out no more.

The fact that I didn't feel winter was just a reflection of life's harmony. The world turned to crystal. To stay alive I must move in the direction I saw by tracing out patterns made by the feel. The Waterpeople took me home and one by one all burned out. Susan was first. She had held the flame of their loving. They gave me a home that was free for the living and she felt its foundation rest on her back. Felt she couldn't touch me or the rest of her would all drain away. Pain, shattered crystal, let me know I was broken. I must look for the light in fragments I found.

Alone in that big house—a child's distance from my five parents as I watched them go to work. Staying home—misbehaving—not going off to school. The hospital's physical therapy—I should go to try. But trying meant to hurt on purpose, with pain I could stop. I wouldn't do it, distressed my friends and made them pull away. Every time they looked for progress, they saw me looking back.

The hospital held such pain; I knew it to be the mouth of the trap. Packed with illusions and spewing out damage, housing the doctor who worked on my head. I believed him when he said he knew nothing to heal me. Like a leaf in the wind, my touching was fragile. Live by death's door and I mustn't scream. Half of my brain lay crushed on the highway. Now was the time to attend a new birth. Going toward good feeling moved me out in new spaces, leaving my mother, joining my friends. Brand new child, filled with wonder, turning from death's invitation because something else called. If survival didn't feel good, that meant I would die. My left arm answered and swept through the air. I watched with the others as the energy made my arm dance. Everyone had an opinion—as if down in the cellar i'd found a strange bird. It danced to the left, just where I wasn't watching. There was a crack to the left where things would fall out. A place of surprises, a hole in the world. My arm moved through space only others could see. Enough to feel its lovely motion weaving round the crack. Left arm sews the world together when I let it dance.

To be able to feel it, there was one cardinal rule. Lying was out. It made two things out of one. I could only see, hear, think one thing at a time. Lies confused me, they tasted of death. But not to lie meant I must say it out loud. Any idea that started to harden, I would set free for the sake of space in my mind. Each moment carried its own comfort—all I had to do was attend. Throw out the rocks I found in my bedding and trust to the softness my dancing arm made—light forming spirals just off to the left.

Out of time, yesterday had left me here. Constant inner tremble so I couldn't walk. Learn the speed of an infant's run when life's an endless day. So trusting connections, I danced with my friends. A moon to the orbits I saw their lives make. They talked to me from some other planet. They'd come play for a while and then they would leave—to worlds more important than passing the

moments. Cursed now to live on the edge of their lives. Strangers I met seemed cut loose from fairy tales—come to show me the space I was in.

Events seemed to happen in some kind of order, laying a trail to find my way home. First New York to visit a friend in the making. I met Diana before I was hurt and we'd talked much of death. This visit to her was a part of the pattern. A point on the Continuum, next thread in the weaving. Almost a stranger—she took on that dimension the moment she suggested I color my hair. Henna. It was a strange bottle I found on her shelf. Egyptian mud, good for the head. We both got excited at the thought of it red. But back in St. Louis, it was just another sign of my strangeness.

With my red hair I went off to a conference on Radical Therapy. Friends were driving, but I flew ahead. Exhilarating to be on my own, to have no one meet me to act as a shield. Strangers there would not know about damage. Thoughts of finding someone like me.

At the Grand Hotel in Iowa City, I followed the instructions of the brochure. It said we'd be picked up at eight o'clock. Color and balance came in with the roses. They made three hours waiting seem one long rich moment. Just before eight, hunger sent me to the dining room for a "sandwich to go." A woman in the room stood up and waved. After checking out she meant me, I walked over and she asked me to sit down. A mysterious stranger—the feel of the Goddess, come in disguise. I felt a magical pull and then thought—mistake. She was such a drag and kept calling me "kid." Just another pigeon with the message—go home. She asked my direction and found I didn't know it. Said that those radicals would eat off my head. Don't go, please to stay with her for the night. Go back in the morning to all those who loved me—and learn to have caution before the next flight.

I really regretted my impulse to join her. I left her at table and went to the lobby to find the right ride. But the lady came up and pulled on my sleeve. Don't do it, kid. Her mouth was tight. Something will happen, I just feel like I know. This was the time to pull my trump card, wanting to take the words from her mouth. A few months ago, I almost died, I said. I want to keep living until there's no choice. I know about death, she said, holding up a two fingered hand. I have a strange disease you've never heard of. My whole body is turning to stone. The air in the room hushed for a moment. Still as a window to some other world. Contact with Stonelady had shown me the stakes of my choices. Went off to the conference with no need for roots. Passing up drama, I went to the kitchen and found chopping onions a most profound act. Life is so easy among your own kind.

So many ways to heal. Into the season of acts of faith, I started my own practice again. Thought to take up where I had left off. Annie was shocked when she saw my red hair—she remembered a dream full of fear. While I lay in a coma, she dreamed of a visit. Down to the hospital, a big, empty room—a screen with a picture of me. I had bright red hair.

Helping to heal, we talked on new levels. She made me be honest with all that I knew. Annie spoke of her friend who was dying of cancer—same side of the brain. Annie carried our stories until he asked that we meet. It felt like a summons, contrary to choice. I feel like I've known you for all of my life, Tom said softly, just after we'd come. I

could only stand and nod but we both felt the pull. Another who knows the left side dying. Said that some day I'd come back for a visit. That night, I knew it was time.

But I had no last name or room number and Annie's line was still busy. When I reached her she told me, he was leaving the next day. His parents were taking him home to die. We went back to the hospital next morning at dawn, pulled by a power, a trust beyond reason. Where were you, asked Tom. Last night was so awful. They're all crazy animals. I wanted you to come and you didn't. I couldn't get here by myself but I heard you call. We shared his breakfast for feelings that gave us. All knowing the pleasure of taking what's good. It's so important to see all the leaving. Don't let them hide the knowing from you. To see clearly you'll have to look through your pain. It gets so beautiful when you admit what is real. To die is no sadder than anything else. When I stood to leave, I knew we had met. Instead of goodbye he gave me his hat.

A bright orange knit hat had covered his shaven head. The feel of a helmet, protection—like in henna's jar. As long as I wore it, my head would be safe. Events kept stringing together. Someone had thought my hair should be red. A current of thought, a force that was larger. Who do you think was messing around with my head? Witches are known for their red hair all over the world. It tied in with legends of strangers who came from distant lands, strangers with red hair and blue eyes. There, you see. She's at it again. It's no wonder I thought my life had been blessed.

Tom sent me a painting. That was important. The painting was framed in the way of my looking. It hung on the wall for when I could see. Taking a glance I first felt afraid. Somehow, word of my magic hadn't moved to the Waterhouse. Susan, at center, was spinning me 'round. All I really wanted was for Susan to love me. The fact that she didn't became a new koan. I couldn't help wanting her and knew that the wanting was what kept me out. But wanting was feeling, an energy flow. I had to want Susan to make my arm dance. New breakthroughs: breaking so much I walked on cut glass. I wanted to leave, according to schedule. Afraid, if I didn't, I never would. Easy enough to go back to school; a crippled whiz-kid who's excused half her brain. Clear, to stay here, there's no happy ending. Go in the direction of my dancing arm.

On the agenda of dreams made to order, a plan was still held by my mentor. Beautiful lady in worlds full of color. I loved how she sailed such sights from my soul. Knowing she loved me, showed I was good. If I could join her, then I wasn't broken. Healers together, keeping alive. She'd been the Waterpeople's credentials. She'd battled my mother and she had won. Guiding me always through a war of decisions, she seemed to know the rules of the game. But our lives had gotten twisted around the event.

Summer and Mentor packed me off to Milwaukee. Lived by the lake in a castle-like house; her lover lived with us and she was the star. I was to build my world onto hers. Take up her practice where she left off. They'd fly away and return for reflection, the heat of their living made my only light. With summer's passing, my mind turned to crystal. I thought I must freeze not to loose what I knew. No ground for my being kept me an object on foreign soil. Left arm hanging down like a clipped wing. I left the damn city, the first day of Fall. Take what I knew and trust it to heal me. No way to make the next

moment safe. I soared with the feeling of flinging off rules.

Get up, out of the middle I heard a voice call. Stuck in the middle, since I could remember. A family, this state, this century. Get by with no boundaries. That's how to survive. Feelings. Magnets to sources whose endings were dead. Be a Good Catholic Girl, or politico or shrink. Change the answers to questions and follow the flow. The only room I felt led out on the highway, drive to New York, no need for a map. Stay in the present or the crack would come open. Things falling out where I couldn't see. New York appeared a platform of safety—fly towards outside and land on my feet. New York was the world I left, inside out. Here to begin, I'd come to the landing. It seemed everyone here had just left the boat.

But back to St. Louis, prodigal child. A trial was scheduled—on the subject of brain damage. No question of fault—the woman had been on the wrong side of the road. All that was left was to determine the extent of the damage. Damage or magic? That was my question. The roads of this journey, the truth would unfold. The Past would provide the vision so that I could see who I was. Mythmaker, living a part of the tale. Go back to the trial—then travel the country—follow a spiral knotted with dreams. Travel the distance to an old point of view, back to Grandmother who lay in bed dying. Join all the women—over my mother's head. Whisper to the old women, her mother's name. Make me a name to roll off the tongue. Mary Martha McGuire, say who I am.

Riding in Goldie, I'd skim the earth, picking up pointers from friends where they lay. Connections I'd made I'd paint on a mural. One rose in the sun, glitter paint for the water, moon on the left. Maybe a bird on the back of the van, to show that a nest could fly. Filled with junk from all the unmoving, Goldie began this like a good scout. She carried an old chair of my mother's, dancing with clutter. I said hold me and show me the vision I need.

Return to St. Louis but instead of answers—all questions. All looking at me. Leaders of living had all gone away. No one to judge the stand that I took, no one to help me decide. My arm danced for the lawyer when I told him the truth. My trial was over, with my questions for answers. Come to find out the planet is me.

In Goldie there was Pat in Florida, Pat in Mexico, Pat who was the lover of the woman who had given *The Comforter* to Susan. Pat with me in Texas, where I went to see my sister. The threads of the pattern still weaving.

A member of family at Christmas, work the way back in. This was to be the introduction of magic, the next logical step towards going home. My sister was kind and then angry at damage. When my parents wouldn't talk to me on Christmas, I saw what she meant. I couldn't move backward and so I leaned forward. Out to find Pat to spend The New Year.

A woman was with her, when I arrived at the house. Mary, someone I'd already met. Then, she had told me I gave her the creeps. She thought I could see through her. As for me, that was fine. Sore from the cutting I felt from my family, trying to tie my egg to a knot. They wanted to trip and I decided to do it. Have someone with me, feeling of home. Went to a house in the country, where Pat knew two women. Down by the river better to follow the light of the day. Mary moved among trees, me trailing after. With me, she felt a pain of her own. Each time I got settled, she told me to move. She seemed to enjoy the role that I gave her. Asking for safety and then I was hounded. Heard her footsteps and took to the woods.

One step at a time, the rhythm was walking. Feet stroking earth's breast in a dream. Follow the path of my dancing arm. Tripping my brains out, brain-damaged pervert, loose in the woods. Lost in west Texas, I walked foreign country. Night started falling and the monster was me. Too strange for Christmas, good Catholic girl, matted to Mother's nightmare. She slept while she dreamed that I walked it alone. House on the hill had just turned its lights on, thought when I saw it I'd found the way back. Stuck in fairy tales, I'd lost direction. From this point, home could be anywhere.

Night had crept in, all the way to the fence. Go to the house, they'll find out you're crazy. Strap a machine on you and then you'll survive. Approaching the door like a penitent sinner. Beaten down cur, held at bay by a dog. A boy turned to woman came out with her friend. She asked me again where I wanted to go. But my mouth couldn't hold the sounds it should make. Pat's name for a handle, out with a stammer. I breathed when she grabbed it, she knew I belonged. Other house in the country—for women out flying. Come into the kitchen and wait for your friends. Pat laughed when she saw me curled up in a chair. Argument ended, the world could be trusted, starting with self. But I remembered trees cutting blackness—showing me depths waiting below.

Before leaving Texas, I made a last visit. Passed mother's chair onto my sister; seat that had told me all that it could. Grandmother lay dying, surrounded by guards. I left Texas crying deep in my soul. Driving into New York I was doubly careful. Try not to fall off either side. Tired standing on the brim, but I mustn't wander. Night's edges are sharp. No one to blame but yourself if you fall. Learn how to be here, out, up, on the ledge.

One semester of grad school and I'd have credentials. Keep rhythm going through system of brakes. Prove I could do it—this ledge is by choice. People began to look at me strangely, always, it seemed, I'd dropped from the sky. I asked their location and they thought I was lost. Bag ladies were comrades in this fading light. So mother was right after all—being alive is too much to ask.

On a trip to the ocean, I saw it all clearly. When the sun lay gray on the water, I knew for a fact. The world hadn't changed and the pain was in me. A case of terminal blindness—unless help arrived. Pity. Feel for the first time this body's sorrow. Hurting so long, not making a sound. Take it for granted—left has more feeling. Right clenching teeth, old broken jaw. Each cell in my body held in a scream. Make another world for me out of what's left. I got something I could touch and see and carry home, covered in brown paper.

You can only see bubbles looking down.
BURSTING—take a drink.

Buy a machine. At first, the left side of my body had felt like a balloon. Feeling came back like a mouth out of novocaine. Like hair that's electric, after the brush.

My vibrator's bright orange, same as the hat. Before, orgasms had only happened by accident. First lady lover had brought them to me. I squirted with laughter, to find such release. Liquid feeling, I could hardly stand. Frozen rod-like again, afraid of shattered glass. Seduce battered body, down to the feet.

Inside had to see what outside was doing. Strange to be meeting now. Before the accident I'd found comfort looking—gazing into the mirror till I liked myself. A method of greeting, across foreign lands. To go further, I

needed some outside validation. Odds were just fair, being broken, this would bring me to heal. Diana mentioned an article she'd read. The true myth of Narcissus, I knew that was me. Ovid wrote the myth in *Metamorphosis*—an old story, since distorted by the insurgents. But the real myth has a different feel to it—about self-knowledge, not self-love. Tiresias prophesied that Narcissus would live to a ripe old age provided he never "knew" himself, not if he never "loved" himself. Narcissus went to the pool to quench a deep thirst. He looked into the water and heard something melt with the knowing. The image is I.

The story's about the process of change. All transformations first feel like death. Death of who you once were is included in the price. Becoming more than you now are, knowing more than you now know, follows like a flower, just as Narcissus bloomed at the edge of the pool. To get this in motion, you need only look.

Enough to send me out on a brazen new experiment. Down in the dark to face the poor monster I'd left in the woods. Orgasm felt like energy rattling pieces of me in the night. Brain-damaged cripple, I needed a watcher. Some one to tell me if I haven't come up. I went back into therapy and rented her eyes.

The material world is holy—I had to plug it up. My mantra was moldy from three years hard using. Time to replace it with many mirrors. Looking in mirrors, left found the right, long awaited reunion. Hands crossing over to match up the feelings. Each hand was holding what the other side knew. Tom's painting cleared to an EYE. I couldn't remember what had frightened me.

My therapist said at meeting that she was surprised at my chronological age. Color and light had gone out of my world. It showed on my face—I had tasted defeat. Pain turned to anger and on its way out let me know I'd been screwed. All of the pieces were flying together. Coming so fast, they made my eyes spin. I went in from the ledge:

down, up, dn 'umop
towards compassion for self.

Being my body made me replaceable. Just cells interacting. There must be common channels, if I could only find where to tune. Moon of the Mother, look for fine sources; find the reflection and see your own face.

Now, think over what I'm saying. There may be a way to help us get back. The medicine is dangerous, in which lies its power. Stand before a mirror. Just keep eye contact until you've said hello. Rest on the stream of feeling flowing through your eyes. Know the safety of that place where you ARE all change. Cry in your face—hurting sorrow. Cross your hands and begin to touch—life starts to flow. Masturbate to water roses, feel the color come. Cross your eyes a new dimension. Vision of the Eye. Twinkling lights dance over the surface. Through the mirror to the other side. The Goddess is you, in your image.

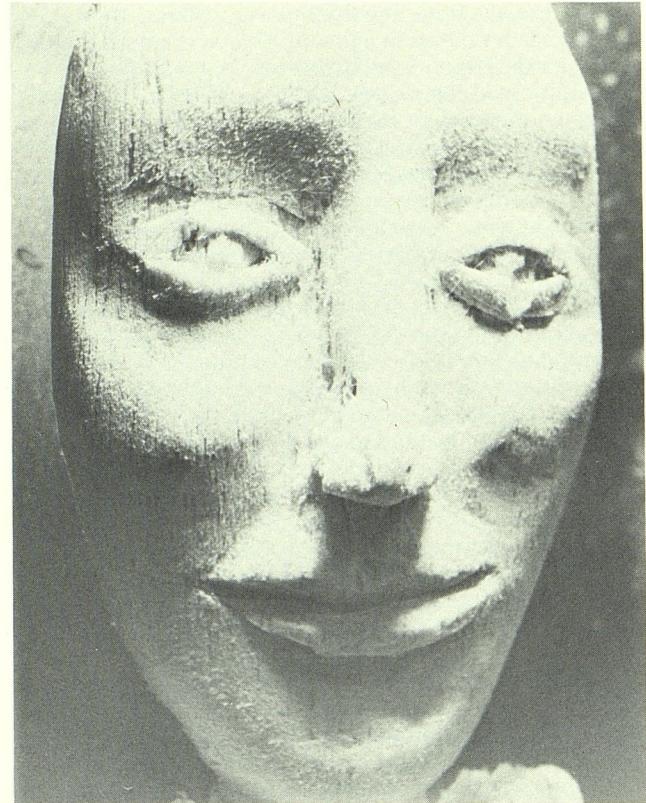
The gift of the Goddess is body to soul, soul to body. Imagine the energy if we all looked at once. The Patriarchy could not stand such a blow. They took our bodies away by forbidding the looking. They said we were objects and they had the eyes. But they can never kill Her, only try to get us to knock ourselves off. And we'll never do it. Her reflections are scattered through their dark halls.

Remember the past. The Goddess grows restless. All alone I can't stand the heat of Her energy. Help me, sisters. Look in the mirror.

Incantation to the Moon

Hilda Morley

A whiteness behind me, stronger
than light can be, rises & makes me
unable to shift on the bed, half-waking,
half-dreaming, unable to
think or to stop my thinking, unable
fully to dream, I lie in a fever
of tossing & the moon bathes me,
my bones consumed by that fierceness,
my flesh parted by her hunger
Sow-goddess, mother
of my own whiteness
who shudders
into strength around me,
how long is it since I called on you
in my longing, ancient mother of shells,
how long since I turned to you,
knowing
you mistress of my tides in this solstice,
this shortest
of all nights in the year,
watcher
of paths & fountains,
whose eyes bear witness
to the currents of my abeyance,
in the skein of
your powers
hold me

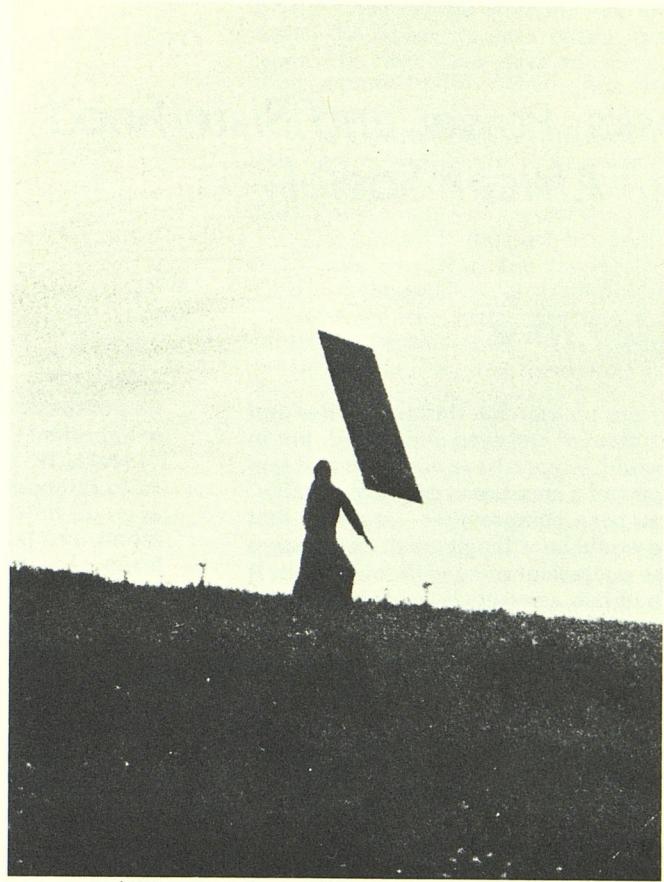


Mei Mei Sanford. *She Was Carved on the Night of a Hurricane and a Full Moon*. Wood. 1976. 1" High.

the moon dropped down
and lived in me one night
my eyes were silver
i sang without fear

morning
baking carrot cookies
i am sure
i have been blessed

— Holly Cara



Joan Jonas. *Hills*. Outdoor performance. 1971. Photo credit: Richard Serra.



Muriel Castanis. *Early Impressions*. Muslin and Resins. 6' x 4' each.

Masks, Power and Sisterhood in an African Society

Carolee Thea

European and eastern matriarchal traditions, rites and art forms have been obscured and even obliterated, but in certain areas of the world, women have managed to retain much of their heritage and a measure of political equality. The means have often been compromises—at a cost that few of us can believe would be willingly paid. Yet western women have paid the equivalent price without benefit. It is important for us to obtain a perspective concerning the matriarchal traditions of this unique and spiritual society at a time when we are struggling to discover and create our own.

The tribal societies of rainy West Africa still maintain traditions developed over years of experience in a harsh environment. The secret societies of these cultures are responsible for teaching social values and celebrating the rites of passage. In effect, they are the perpetuators of traditional codes. Among the Mende, Vai, Temne and Sherbro tribes of Sierra Leone and Liberia, there are two important secret societies: the Poro for men and the Bundu for women.

It was through their art that I first learned about the secret order of the Bundu women. Their masks intrigued me. What does a masking tradition mean in terms of the lives of the women in this tribal society? How do they establish sexual identities and define the status of women, in short, how do they perpetuate a stable social order?

The Bundu is the only masked secret society of women in all of Africa. It functions within what appears to be a male-oriented culture concurrent with the Poro to maintain a balanced social order. Through the mask, Bundu women obtain power beyond that granted for merely domestic functions. They may hold public office, even that of Paramount Chief, and they are influential in government and business decisions. Their presence and their political acumen permeate most tribal activity, including rituals, land distribution and marriage.¹

The Bundu, like other female secret societies, prepares its young women for wifehood and motherhood and trains them for various vocational activities reserved by tradition for women. It is their access to a storehouse of secret knowledge that places them on the same level as mem-

bers of the Poro. This knowledge enables them to function in important political and decision-making capacities.

Not to be a member of a secret society is to be excluded from important political and social decisions, as well as group functions, knowledge and powers. Moreover, it is only as a Bundu member that a woman may become a leader. A succession of leaders are held sacred within the Chapters. That the Bundu have their own founding ancestors is vital. They are the intermediaries between the people and Ngewo, the apex of the spirit world. He is regarded as the ultimate creator from whom everything is derived.²

Initiation to the first level of the Bundu normally occurs at fourteen or fifteen. Kenneth Little adds that among the Bundu, an older woman may also be initiated if she chooses. However, initiation rites of female adolescents usually occur at the beginning of menstruation or pregnancy, at which time the initiates are taught by those who are informed or experienced.³ Moreover, the extended Bundu training engenders both independence and a strong sense of sisterhood by permitting girls to loosen ties with their mothers at the same time that they make new ties with other adult women of the community.

The initiatory sessions are announced by means of a circular sent around in the form of a small piece of *sokolo*, tobacco. Fees, money, cloth or other commodities are due at this time. The number of initiates depends on both local support and available teachers. Usually the enrollment is not more than thirty.⁴

The first event of the initiation tests the girl's commitment and will mark her for life. It will also deny her the full knowledge of her sexual nature, for it is at this time that she must submit to the partial removal of her clitoris.* The denial of women's sexuality is a patriarchal practice the world over, but in this case, the sexual mutilation of women was probably introduced and enforced by Arab conquerors.⁵ By systematically ritualizing the practice, the Bundu women have brought it under their control. Yet custom prevents the cessation of the practice and has further distorted its original meaning. It should be noted that with much less power and perspicacity, western women have submitted to mutilation by "modern" medical men.†

*As late as the 1930s, clitoridectomies and female circumcision were medically prescribed in various parts of the United States and Europe as a cure for masturbation, psychological disorders and even kleptomania.

†G. J. Barker-Benfield: "A Historical Perspective on Women's Health Care—Female Circumcision," *Women & Health*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January/February 1976, p. 14.



Mask of the Bundu. Sierra Leone, Sherbro Island, the University Museum, Philadelphia, PA.

During the first stage of initiation, the girls are kept secluded, out of the sight of men and other uninitiated persons. They are now admitted to the "sacred bush," the Bundu school, and taught the lore, the songs and the dances that mark important social and religious ceremonies of the tribe.

When the initiation wounds are healed, the second stage begins. On a certain day, the initiates are taken to a stream and washed. A cowrie shell, hung on cotton thread, is then tied around their necks. This shell (a simulacrum of the clitoris) is an indication of their sanctity henceforth and must be respected by every Mende person. The initiates then enter the town in the evening and dance, showing something of what they learned in the bush. In accord with the evident puberty rites, the highlight of the occasion is a feast featuring a communal bowl with a phallus made of rice.⁶

After the public ceremonies, there is a private convocation at which the girls are sworn to secrecy concerning Bundu ritual and knowledge. As part of the oath taking, their heads are plastered in mud, and the washing off of this mud signifies the attainment of womanly status. Led

by the chief Bundu woman, who invokes her ancestral spirit, the proud initiates return in a procession to the town. The next three days are spent on the verandas of their parents' houses, where they receive the admiration of friends and relatives.⁷

With the attainment of this level of initiation, a woman may commission a mask to be made. She chooses a carver familiar with the rituals and symbols of the society and tells him the name of the ancestor for her mask; he then secludes himself in the bush to visualize the spirit that will eventually inhabit it. The carvers are always men, in accord with the tradition of strict division of labor.

However, the mask provides a perspective on the initiated woman's power. It is during the masked ritual, private and public, that the Bundu appear so formidable. They surround themselves with the exotic, the mysterious, and the grotesque. This aura is confirmed by the visible and invisible accoutrements of masks, costumes, dances and sounds—or silence and secrecy. With all of these means, the Bundu invokes the Goddess of the Mask, who is called Sowei.⁸ Sowei is the personification of all those aspects of the ideal and powerful associated with Earth Mother and Queen. She is clearly a cult object to be worshipped and revered by men and women. The iconography of the mask is material and sensual, which further reflects this ideal.

The mask illustrated here is from the Sherbro Islands, off the coast of Sierra Leone in West Africa. The basic form of the mask, and others of its kind, is a bell shape or helmet. The most prominent feature is the bulging ringed neck, which suggests wealth, fertility and beauty.⁹ This aspect expresses the Mende equation of corpulence with fertility and is reminiscent of Goddesses and female icons. The forehead and cheeks are protruding and round, also implying corpulence. Erich Neumann, in his book *The Great Mother*, writes: "One means by which early man could represent the numinous magnificence and archetypal uniqueness of the Feminine consisted in an expressive 'exaggeration' of form and an accentuation of her elementary character"¹⁰ (suggesting her fertility).

The slit eyes and closed mouth symbolize the fact that the Bundu spirit never speaks. Her silence is equated with power and judgment. When she wishes to communicate, she does so through one of the lower members of the Bundu, a Ligba.

The elaborate braided pattern of the hair indicates the importance placed on this feature. Emblemsatically, hair is power. The braid may be interpreted in the same manner as the entwined snakes found on the waist of the principal Goddess figure at Knossos or perhaps in the same way as the snake hair of the Gorgons. The snake, a lower earth symbol of fertility, represents the Terrible Mother.¹¹ Embedded in the hair of this mask are small phylacteries, serving as both ornamental and totemic references to Islam.¹²

The horns on the helmet are considered to have special energy. The Mende and other African tribes believe that horns are the repository of an animal's power or life force. Horns are also tied around the neck or waist of children to protect them from evil spirits.¹³ Tribal members believe that they can psychically identify with a particular animal and have access to its powers to protect themselves from known and unknown spirits. The adopted object or animal is called a "bush soul."

On top of the mask is a bird perched on a cup. One interpretation is that the bird symbolizes spiritual transcendence. Another, specific to the Mende, is that this is a Bofio, a bird that is said by some to receive messages

from the spirits and, by others, to travel with the spirits.¹⁴

The woman who commissions a mask decides whether it is satisfactory and then performs a ritual inviting the spirit to enter the mask. Before the spirit can enter, however, the Bundu costume must be complete. Raffia, dyed black, is attached to the mask, and a cloth suit with the sleeve ends sewn closed is worn over long black stockings and shoes. By completely covering her body, the dancer prevents the spirit from entering her rather than entering the mask.¹⁵

The masked dancer may carry a bunch of twigs or a sword in her covered hands, and she points or gesticulates with it. She never speaks, but may dance to the accompaniment of the *Seligura*, a calabash rattle. Her movements include a rhythmic swaying and various arm gestures. If the dancer becomes hot and perspires, she may remove her helmet and costume only if her face remains concealed by one of her attendants, who carries a mat specifically to hide the dancer's countenance from view.¹⁶ When the masked Bundu woman appears in public with her musicians, it generally means that somebody (usually a male) is going to be accused of an offense against Bundu laws.¹⁷ The violator will be brought before the masked woman to confront her ancestral spirit. Concealed by her mask, the Bundu woman listens without reply, but she conveys her spirit's judgment through the *Ligbas*, the first-level members of the Bundu society.¹⁸

To move beyond a description of the aesthetic and exotic is to consider the Bundu woman as a force in a patriarchal society. Historically, African societies have recognized female power. The Bantu had queens without prince consorts. Independent queens ruled the Fanti on the Gold Coast, which was the center of a matriarchy. There were female rulers throughout the entire Zambesi area in the northern Congo basin. In Togoland, the queens had chieftains to help rule, but the latter could make decisions only with the consent of a female council. The West African matriarchy extended to the Atlantic Islands.

Helen Diner, in *Mothers and Amazons*, writes: "In the oldest times, there were no reigning princes in Africa, but the Negroes had great Kingdoms, ruled by Goddesses. These Goddesses had Priests and Priestesses who took care of all government business in the name of their sacred Mistresses."¹⁹

Mystically, African societies recognize female powers as directly related to the fecundity and magic associated with the earth. Further, woman experienced herself as the subject and object of mysterious processes and as a vessel of transformation and a mana figure.²⁰ "Man marvels at these mysterious powers in woman's body," Simone de Beauvoir writes.

Like cattle and crops he wanted his clan to engender other men who could perpetuate it while perpetuating the fertility

of the fields; all nature seemed to him like a mother; the land is woman and in women abide the same dark powers as in the earth. It was for this reason in part that agricultural labor was entrusted to woman able to summon ancestral spirits into her body; she would also have power to cause fruits and grain to spring up from the planted fields. In both cases there was no question of a creative act, but of magic conjuration. Yet children and crops seemed nonetheless to be gifts of the gods, and the mysterious emanations from the female body were believed to bring into this world the riches latent in the mysterious sources of life.²¹

That women were recognized to have this magical creative ability constituted a formidable power base, particularly in a society that was dependent on the continuation of traditions and lineage. Such unassailable power surely inspired in men a respect twinged with fear, a factor which ultimately must have contributed to the domination of women. Consequently, male masking may have developed as a redress to what was perceived as a social and spiritual imbalance. For the same reason, female masking (among the Bundu), may have developed after the conquest of patriarchal Moslems and the installation of male power figures. Female circumcision and phallus worship must also be outgrowths of this patriarchal takeover.

Clitoridectomy is an operation performed to rid women of their "maleness," (the clitoris being likened to the penis). As Aristotle said, "If the clitoris is the seat of woman's pleasure, then away with it! Women are meant to bear children; that she should draw pleasure from the sexual act is unthinkable."²²

Men disliked the idea that women enjoy sex because it suggested that man was made for woman's pleasure and not woman for man's convenience. Thus, in removing the possibility of sexual pleasure, patriarchs could be more confident that women would remain sexually faithful.^{23 *}

Phallus worship may have been a feature of late matriarchy, while the male generative powers were celebrated as a complement to the enduringly dominant female role. The recently excavated Goddess shrines in the Near East reveal phalluses of all shapes and sizes (but these fetishes may as well have been offerings of male devotees to the Goddess in real or pretended rites of castration). During the patriarchal takeover, this tentative sacrament was appropriated and eventually made into a compulsory act of homage.²⁴

Among the West African Mende, a similar transition can be noted, although through compromise its impact has been systematically muted. Although the Bundu may represent a vestige of the matriarchy, the Poro presence and the rigidity of sex-defined tasks for women (primarily domestic) suggest a negotiated arrangement. Even though chieftancies can be attained by women, property remains in the control of the male head of the family. Men may be

*Fran Hosken, editor of the WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL NETWORK NEWS, recently returned from a six-week visit to 15 countries and 25 cities of sub-Saharan Africa, where she investigated the issue of genital mutilation of women. She talked to gynecologists, midwives and pediatricians who confirmed that these practices continue everywhere because no one speaks against them. Furthermore, men often refuse to marry girls not operated upon; in some areas, it is believed the operation is required by religion and by the ancestors, and that women who do not have it are prostitutes. It is said that the operation is needed to preserve the family, and that excised women are more

fertile. However, polygamy and excision have often been correlated. In 1960, at a seminar on the "Participation of Women in Public Life," the World Health Organization was asked by the African participants to undertake a study of the medical aspects of "operations based on customs to which many women were still being subjected." Subsequently, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations confirmed this request. To date, no such Africa-wide study has been made.

Fran Hosken: WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL NETWORK NEWS, Press Release (February 1978).

polygamous, whereas women may have only one husband. Furthermore, some women, selected from the highest order of the Bundu, are instructed in the rituals of *juju*, or potent magic. However, female powers in *juju* are so feared that women may use these rituals on few occasions. The secret societies of the Bundu women may be a vestige of priestly sisterhoods, but the present division of power, with the greater allocation accorded to the Poro, is clearly the result of a desperate compromise.

Obvious questions arise not only about the terms of the bargain struck between the Bundu and the Poro, but also about the terms we ourselves will accept in establishing a complementary relationship necessary for our personal, economic and political stability. One cannot think of the sexual repression of women in the Victorian Age or of the use of "pom-pom girls" at male sporting events in the present day without realizing that western women have been forced into unnegotiated compromises. The Bundu women have retained the right to define themselves in their secret and elite society. They act as instruments of divine revelation and have a command of potent images, which are the repositories of sacred traditions. All this they teach their daughters, along with self-respect and sisterhood. But clearly, they have lost the power to experience the fullness of their sexual pleasure, and this has been accompanied by the adulation of male sexual energy.

If you had to bargain for not simply your life, and not simply the lives of your children, but the way of life for your daughters and granddaughters and all of their daughters to come, what would you bargain—your political equality, your economic equity, your sexual freedom or your spiritual sisterhood?

1. K. L. Little, *The Mende of Sierra Leone* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., Broadway House, 1951), p. 111.
2. W. T. Harris and Harry Sawyer, *The Springs of Mende Belief and Conduct* (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press, 1968), p. 35.
3. Franco Monti, *African Masks* (New York: Paul Hamlyn, 1969), p. 24.
4. Harris, p. 127.
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6. Harris, p. 127.
7. Jacqueline Delange, *The Art and Peoples of Black Africa* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1974), p. 41.
8. W. L. Hummel, *Art of the Mende*, catalogue (College Park, Md.: University of Maryland Art Gallery, 1974).
9. *Ibid.*
10. Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).
11. *Ibid.*
12. Hummel, p. 19.
13. J. V. Olufemi Richards, "The Sande Mask," *African Arts* (Winter 1974, Vol. 7, No. 2), p. 51.
14. Harris, p. 15.
15. Hummel, p. 20.
16. H. U. Hall, *The Sherbro of Sierra Leone* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1938), p. 8.
17. *Traditional Carvings and Craftwork from Sierra Leone*, catalogue (London: Commonwealth Institute, August 1961), p. 4-27.
18. Hummel, p. 21.
19. Helen Diner, *Mothers and Amazons* (New York: Anchor Press, 1973), p. 76.
20. Neumann, p. 150.
21. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: A. Knopf Inc. 1953), p. 63.
22. Davis, p. 154.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, 98.

Poems by Barbara Starrett

Vanishing Point

I look down
The long and unlit
Avenue
Adjusting my
Eyes to the black
And bony
Shadows
Sinisterly reaching
Arching
Whispering;
And I smile.

I am now the
Thing
That once I feared

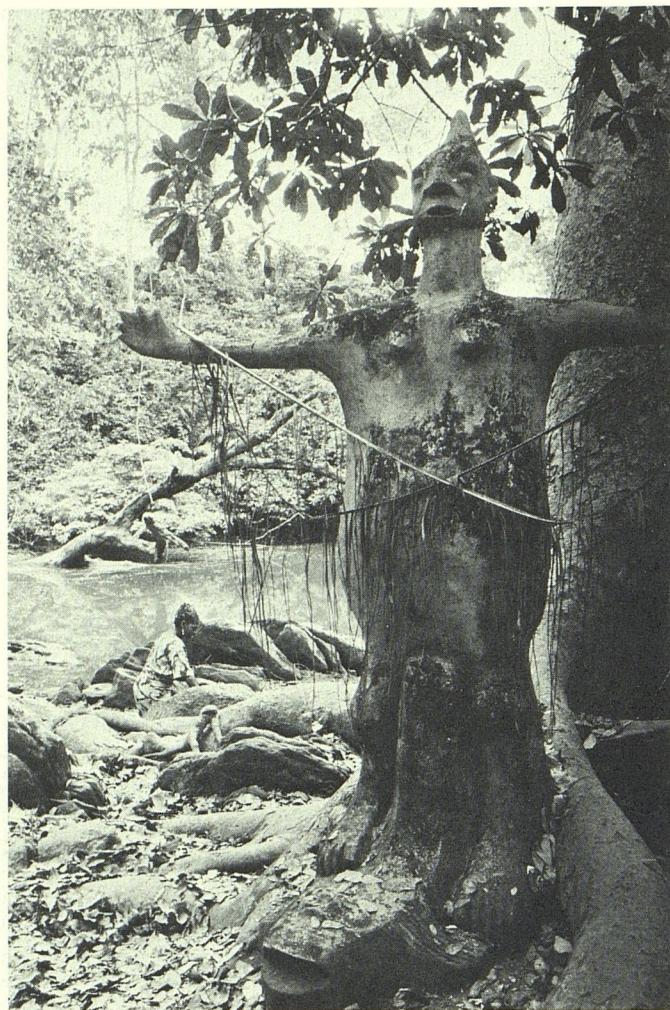
Tactical Advice

Cherish your madness
My sister, but
Discretely o discretely.

Walk warily in the
World; keep one
Eye on the moon
For safety.

And if discretion fails
My sister, put
your madness in
A bag and

Run like hell.



Susanne Wenger. *The Goddess Oshun on the Riverbank*. Cement. N.D.
10' High. Photo credit: Su Friedrich.

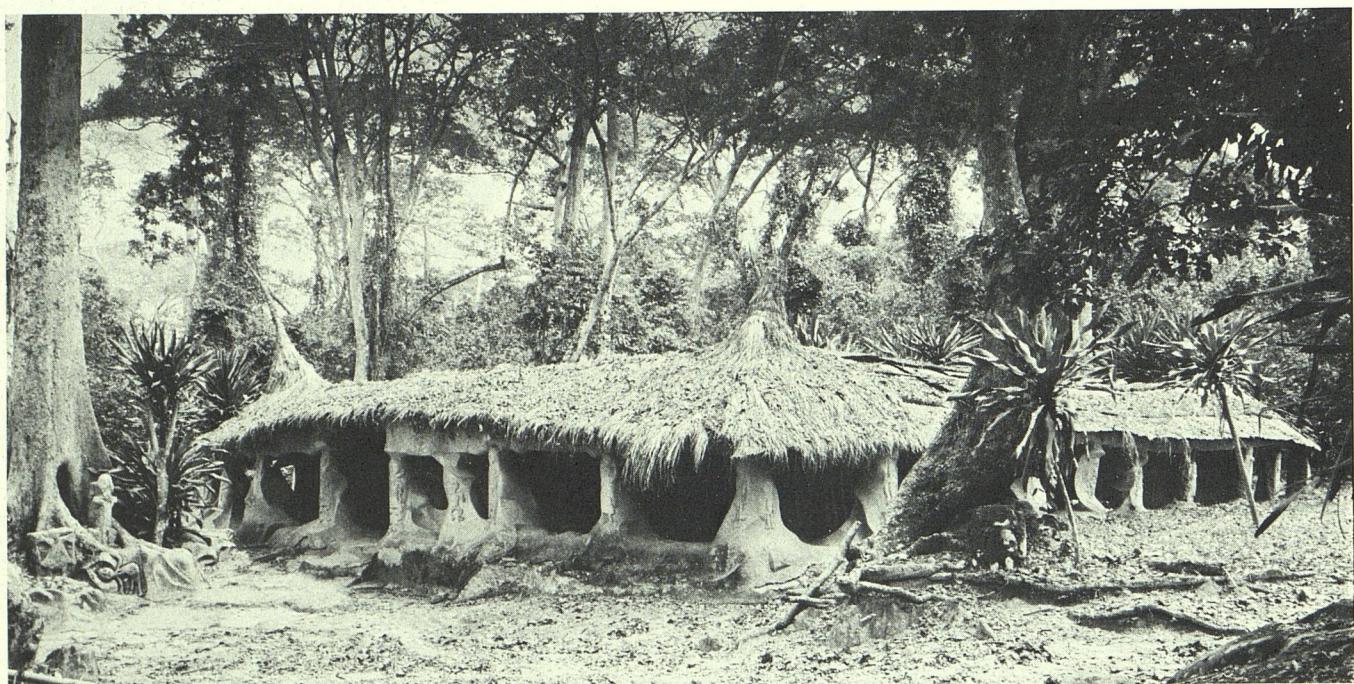
Oshun, Yoruba Fertility Goddess

This is the shrine of Oshun, the fertility goddess of the Yoruba people. Her namesake is the Oshun River (which runs below the main building) in the town of Oshogbo in southwestern Nigeria. "Barren" women who bathe in her waters and pray to her are said to become fertile. A nine-day festival is held once a year to celebrate Oshun. The chief priestess dances in the massive (50-75 lbs.) "helmet" mask, which is kept in the main compound.

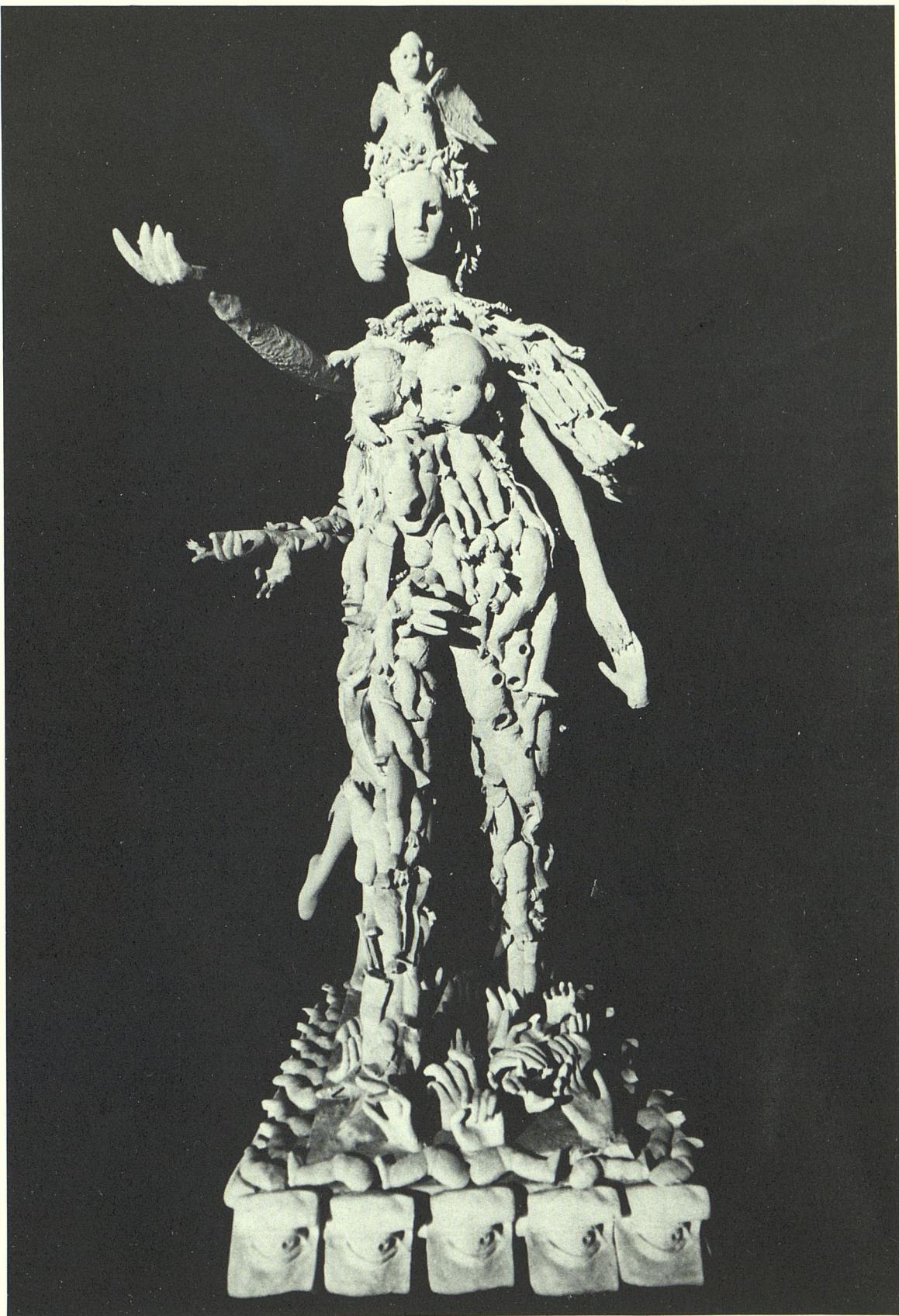
The shrine was designed and built by Susanne Wenger, assisted by local masons and sculptors. Wenger, an Austrian, who has lived in Nigeria since 1951, is an Obatala priestess.* (Obatala is the Yoruba creator god.) Wenger has built two other shrines (to Obatala) and fully incorporates traditional Yoruba images and mythology in her work. The entire shrine, which includes several buildings and large sculptures, is done in a soft rose/terra cotta cement.

—Su Friedrich

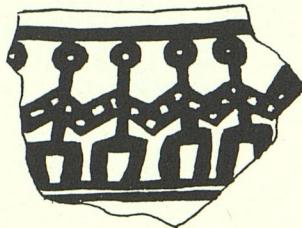
Ulli Beier, *Art in Nigeria*, London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1960.



Susanne Wenger. *Shrine of the Goddess Oshun*. Oshogbo, Nigeria. Terracotta cement. N.D.



Alida Walsh. *Earth Mother Goddess*. Polyester resin and fiberglass. 12' x 9'. 1973.



She Who Bleeds, Yet Does Not Die

Rosemary J. Dudley

India is the only country where the Goddess is widely worshipped today in a tradition that dates to the Bronze Age (c. 3,000 B.C.) or earlier. Dressed and re-dressed, clothed in space, skulls or sari, the Great Mother lives in both the Great and the Little Traditions, changing, yet changeless. The respect She commands at any moment provides a mirror for the honor and status accorded to women in the society which worships Her. Woman, as earthly manifestation of Goddess, became in fact the symbol of veneration par excellence because of her ability to provide the two prime requisites for life from her own body—food and offspring.¹ That:

...earthly women could barely be distinguished from heavenly ones is shown in the following form of address used in the epics: "Are you a Goddess? or a Danavi? a gandharva woman? an apsara, a yaksha woman, a snake fairy, or do you belong to the human race?"²

History indicates that "mother-right organisation in other civilizations may not have been so highly advanced and so strong as was the case in India."³ This strength made it necessary for the Vedic conquerors (1,500 B.C.) to apply extraordinarily cruel means to subdue Goddess worship.⁴ From the Indus Valley period, the Goddess went underground, not to emerge until the Gupta era (A.D. 320-650). One must suspect that the level to which women were debased undoubtedly corresponds to the level to which they had once been exalted.

How then did the Indian Great Goddess survive these ruthless attempts of Her Vedic conquerors to rob Her of Her power? The answer, as with many of the problems that women faced, lay in the control and management of earth as a sacred extension of Her own body. Fertility and, by extension, agriculture have always been the special province of women, both human and divine. Many scholars hold that agriculture was the invention of women as they became familiar with seed growth during gathering forays.⁵ Agricultural communities are most likely to be concerned with the twin processes of production and reproduction. Through mimesis (imitation), fertility of the land was attributed to fertility of the woman:

...the female's economic contributions were of first importance. She participated—perhaps even predominated—in the planting and reaping of the crops and, as the mother of life and nourisher of life, was thought to assist the earth symbolically in its productivity.⁶

The Indus Valley Civilization (3,000-1,500 B.C.) at its two largest centers, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, had as its source of wealth, huge granaries. The archeological record shows that "no granary in the preclassical world [was] comparable in specialization of design and in monumental dignity to the examples from the two Indus cities."⁷ Here, the

majority of statues uncovered are of the Mother Goddess or of women.⁸ [see illustration on pg. 113] Today in India, as 5,000 years ago, agriculture predominates. Eighty percent of India's populace still live in farming villages, isolated from modernity. Every village has its *Sapta Matrikas* (Seven Mothers) and the majority of *Gramadevata* (village deities) are female. Thus, due to strong patriarchal and pastoral pressures, the Goddess changed, but did not die.

If woman and the Goddess were associated with the fertility of the earth and its seasons of cyclical growth, then the first rites should have sprung up around these physiological cycles of women. The word "rite" itself may have developed from the Sanskrit word "ritu," meaning both "any settled point of time, fixed time, time appointed for any action (especially for sacrifices and other regular worship)" and "the menstrual discharge . . . , the time after the courses (favorable for procreation); . . . sexual union at the above time."⁹ In Vedic days a woman, ten days after the onset of her period, was thought to be "cleansed ceremonially and physiologically, by the menstrual blood [and had taken a] . . . purificatory bath following the stoppage of the flow."¹⁰ Water, as a symbol of the amniotic fluid, would naturally enhance a woman's fertility. Originally, *ritu* was probably the fixed time of sacred cohabitation with the priestesses—or *apsaras*—of the Mother Goddess, which presumably occurred in the rooms adjoining the Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro.¹¹ That the *ritu* was once a sacred time for cohabitation and that we must have coined our word "rite" from here seems conclusive.

In theorizing about the origin of rites and their connection with women's bodies, the question of "taboo" must first be resolved. "Taboo" is defined as: "Set apart or consecrated for a special use or purpose; . . . inviolable, sacred, forbidden, unlawful."¹² Bleeding women were certainly not considered impure, nor were they the only persons under the edict of ceremonial rules. Frazer cites "divine kings, chiefs . . . homocides, mourners, women in childbed, girls at puberty . . . and so on"¹³ as examples of those held sacred. Clearly, what is attributed to these individuals and what connects them is awe for their condition—power, not morality. Again, Frazer says: "As the garments which have been touched by a sacred chief kill those who handle them, so do the things which have been touched by a menstrual woman."¹⁴

Power—the power over life and death—is synonymous with blood. A wounded person, suffering loss of blood, inevitably weakened or died. The potency of blood for energy, healing, purification, and sacred power is well documented from prehistory onward. But if ordinary blood was deemed powerful, menstrual and lochial (postbirth) blood must have seemed twice so because of its association with birth as

well as death. In fact, the ancient belief that menstruation was a part of the same process as childbirth,¹⁵ was held as late as the first century A.D.: "Aristotle, Pliny and other naturalists...believed that the embryo is formed from the blood retained in the uterus after the stoppage of menstruation."¹⁶ Some scholars feel that the practice of marking tabooed people with blood formed its original pattern from the principle of menstrual and lochial blood being considered the blood of life.¹⁷ Menstruating women wore ochre to warn men of their tabooed state. Today, in India, this is the mark of the spiritual adept.

Women's sacred ceremonies of taboo may be viewed as blood rites, based on real, physiological changes like birth, consummation or menstruation. Unlike male rites, they are not a symbolic reenactment of birth, nor do they entail a sudden and often violent break from the maternal or natural world. Having inside oneself the potential for birth and rebirth, one doesn't need an imitation of it: *Tat Tvam asi* or "That Thou art."

Group female rites of passage are based on changes in internal body rhythms, such as the incipience of menstruation. Yet today most initiations must be conferred individually. Louise Lacey, author of *Lunaception*, however, concludes that at one time all women menstruated together—at the new or full moon. It is now known that light controls the pituitary gland, which regulates ovulation. Lacey's theory is based on the fact that artificial light is responsible for establishing varying menstrual cycles¹⁸—thus necessitating individual initiations. Nevertheless, a significant number of women today still bleed at either the full or new moon, and women living in close proximity soon experience synchronous menses. The group character of early female initiations is described as being:

...under the direction of their older female relatives (as in India) or of old women (Africa). These tutoresses instruct them in the secrets of sexuality and fertility, and teach them the customs of the tribe and at least some of its religious tradition...The education thus given is general, but its essence is religious; it consists in a revelation of the sacrality [divinity] of women.¹⁹

The fertility festivals still celebrated in India that often culminate in ritual dances by women date back to the Bronze Age, as is shown on one pot-sherd from Navda-Toli (Mahesvar) c. 1,600 B.C. Girls today still dance this *hataga* in a circle, holding hands.²⁰ [see illustration on title page] Women dance together in Bengal in their worship of Gauri, the Corn Goddess.²¹ Holi, celebrated to this day by bonfires, is thought by some to commemorate the death by fire of a wicked witch, known as the aunt of the boy Prahlada in the story of Vishnu incarnate as Man-Lion (*Narasimha*).²² Once this holy day (holiday) was celebrated in honor of Vasantasena, Goddess of Love and Spring—when the festival takes place. During the festivities lascivious songs and dances are performed, and red dye, symbolic of menstrual blood,²³ is thrown on all who venture out-of-doors. The newborn, carried by their mothers once 'round the fire, are not considered pure until this ceremony. Perhaps women originally celebrated their own purification and personal transformations on these

occasions in the name of the Goddess.

One of the most beautiful epithets of the Goddess reflects Her sanguineous wonder: "She who bleeds, yet does not die." In accordance with this belief, the blood rites and body changes of both birth and menstruation were held sacred or taboo. These auspicious occasions called for retreat to a sanctuary, or sacred space, often triangular and symbolic of the womb.²⁴ A man might be warned "to avoid thereafter the footpaths used by women or any other place where he might encounter them."²⁵

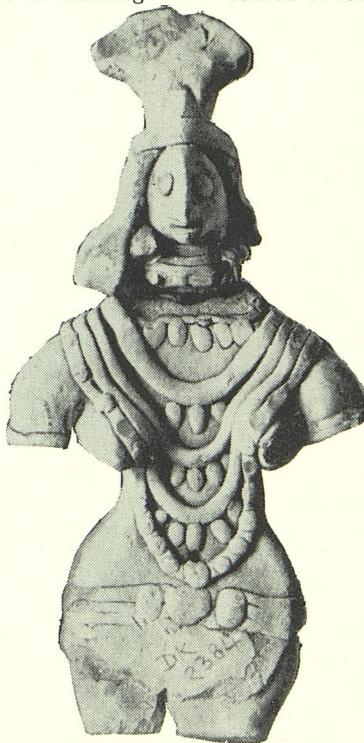
How awesome these bloody phenomena must have seemed! Birth, with its ever attendant risk of death, must have seemed especially dangerous. Despite some yearning after the life-creating power of women, men probably felt fortunate to be excluded from the mostly agonizing birth process. Women, too, benefited from the seclusion in terms of rest, recuperation, and immunity from infectious disease. The Sanskrit word for ceremonial "impurity" after childbirth or miscarriage, "sutaka," is closely related to "sutika-gada," meaning "puperal sickness, fever or sickness of any kind supervening of childbirth."²⁶ Here is a clear connection between isolation and preventive medicine.

Birth, at one time, was entirely under the province of women. Midwives, Indian and otherwise, knew the herbal secrets both for easy delivery and easy abortion.²⁷ These were women from the lower classes, married to barbers—the surgeons of their times. These women additionally supervised the diet of the mother-to-be.²⁸ [see illustration on p. 114]

An Indian woman traditionally secludes herself for thirty-seven to forty-five days after her child's birth, at which time she rejoins her husband. During this period she devotes herself solely to her infant and her own recuperation. Often she returns to her own mother's home to give birth and remains there for some six months. After this time she and the baby are given presents and then return to the mother's married home.²⁹

Two events occur on the sixth day after birth when the danger to the health of the mother and child is over. The first is the placing of an auspicious red mark on the foreheads of mother and child by a woman believed to have the power to bestow good fortune. The second event involves the worship of Shasti, Goddess of Childbirth, and Her five sisters. The paternal aunt performs this rite by throwing a mixture of lime, red tumeric water, and grains of wheat onto a stool covered with red and arranged with seven sacred *Pipal* (fig) leaves. By doing so, she takes the luck or *karma* of the baby upon her own head³⁰—a feat only a woman can attempt. This entire night the females of the household keep vigil, for this is the time when the Goddess enters to write the child's destiny on its forehead.³¹

The color red has always been associated with sex and fertility and, obviously, blood. Some say the vermillion forehead mark, which is placed at the location of the regulating pituitary, is reminiscent of blood originally shed in human sacrifice.³² Probably it is blood more directly associated with fertility since only the married Indian woman properly wears it. Indian women, in fact, are traditionally married in red! The Tamil word for Siva, consort of the Mother God-



Great Goddess with pannier headdress. Harappa (Indus Valley Civilization).



Woman giving birth. South India. 18th century.

dess, means "red" as well. Another of his names, Rudra, is also synonymous with the word red.³³ A red slip or wash has been used from prehistoric times to enhance the life-giving properties of terracotta figurines, a practice still current in India today. Indian village deities are "coated with red pigment, red lead in oil, ochre, or cheaper scarlet colouring matter. The colour is a substitute for blood."³⁴

In an agricultural setting, a large family is highly desirable. In addition, many offspring were needed in ancient times to compensate for the many who died young. What first was woman's crowning glory, however, became her nemesis if she conceived too often, if she could not conceive, or if she brought forth solely daughters. Indian sons were prized more highly than daughters after the time came when only they could save their father's souls from hell by proper execution of the funeral ceremonies, and only the birth of a son could save his mother from the fear of a second wife.³⁵

Consummation was another body change haunted by the awesome power of blood and was celebrated by ritual. Many Indian accounts tell of a virgin who offers herself in a temple to a stranger, or to a person especially appointed to that task. Because the shedding of a woman's blood was no small matter, husbands or lovers who did not wish to assume this responsibility could, through a surrogate, avoid hymenal blood. No sense of shame was attached to the temple fertility rituals, as temple "prostitution" was a respectable Goddess custom which dated back to the culture of the Indus Valley. Of the sacred rites taking place in the Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro, it has been said that "it was part of the ritual for men... to cohabit with the female representatives of the Mother-Goddess to whom the citadel complex belonged."³⁶ Another source tells us that "there were nigh twelve thousand such priestesses in Madras in quite recent times."³⁷ Other accounts supporting male dread and awe of hymenal blood include the Santal decree which states that a girl "must once in her life cohabit with a stranger in the temple of Talkupi Ghat."³⁷ The Nagas, a hill tribe, have a ceremony where a marriage badge (*tali*) is tied around the neck of a young girl after her first menstruation. Originally, this "tali-tier" was obligated to perform ritual defloration as well.³⁸

Menstruation, in many ways, is the most important of all blood rites of passage, and marks the threshold of

womanhood, makes possible conception and birth, and establishes a cyclic inner rhythm. The word menstruation still retains its connection between Mena and the moon;³⁹ Mena being the mother of the Goddess Uma and the daughter of Mt. Meru. In India, the lunar calendar, possibly one of the first of its type, is still in use today. The month is divided into two fourteen day periods: the dark half and the bright half. The total of twenty-eight days is both a menstrual and lunar cycle, with the full moon as a cosmic representation of pregnancy, and the new moon standing for the promise of rebirth. These beliefs are apparently universal, for the lunar markings found on prehistoric bone fragments are thought by many to represent women's cycles.⁴⁰

At Mohenjo-daro many statues of the Mother Goddess were found covered with a red slip, for Goddesses are subject to the same physiological rhythms as their earthly counterparts. In Bengal, a four-day ceremony called *ambuvaci* is held after the first burst of rain. During this time the Goddess is considered to be menstruating in preparation for Her fertilizing work to come. All farm labor comes to a halt during this period.⁴¹ In the Travancore ceremony called *trippukharattu* (purification), it is believed the Goddess menstruates eight or ten times a year. At these periods "a cloth wrapped around the metal image of the Goddess is found to be discoloured with red spots and is subsequently in demand as a holy relic."⁴² In Assam, the Goddess Kamakhya is worshipped by only a "yoni-shaped"⁴³ stone smeared with vermillion... During the new-moon week Her shrine is closed to all⁴⁴ because this is the time when the Goddess is believed to menstruate.⁴⁵ In addition to Bengal, Travancore and Assam, purification ceremonies are popularly celebrated in Changanur, Kerala, the Punjab and the Deccan.⁴⁶ In all of India the times when the Goddess rests and refreshes Herself may vary, but usually these are associated with the new or full moon.

It is in the Tantric worship of the Mother Goddess that the veneration of Her earthly double is most obvious. This applies to Tantric beliefs concerning menstruation as well. In one rite "a menstruating virgin is worshipped as Sodashi."⁴⁷ The Sanskrit word *sodha* means "purification, cleansing...; correction, setting right."⁴⁸ How different this is from the later *Dharma Shastra* scriptural rule which states that the sin of a monthly abortion accrues to a father who delays in the marriage of his daughter after the onset of her menses.⁴⁹ A wasted *ritu*, or opportunity for conception, had by then become the equivalent of a missed opportunity for life. Tantra prescribes menstruation as the best time for ritual intercourse from the woman's point of view because, at this time, her "'red' sexual energy is at its peak."⁵⁰ This sect considers "that menstrual blood is not only invigorating but also sedative."⁵¹ A woman's body is recognized to be allied to the phases of the moon. One Tantric diagram shows:

a female figure illustrating positions of *Amritakala*, which have to be energized on respective dates of the white and dark halves of the month for successful tantric *asanas* [yogic postures]. The eighteen focal centres in the female body mentioned in *Ratirahasya*⁵² can be excited by the adept when harmonized with the exact location of the *chandrakala* (digits of the moon) on [these] respective dates...⁵³ [see illustration]

The antiquity of customs and rites may often be traced through the history of tribal peoples in India who were indigenous or who retained historical cultural purity through their isolation due to the caste system. This is evidenced by many noncaste peoples who continue to

celebrate the onset of the menses as a joyous and festive occasion. The main characteristics of these rites are: "Seclusion in huts, *pandals* especially constructed for this purpose, ritual baths, and a final coming-of-age ceremony."⁵⁴ Among the Pulayan or Cheruman, for example:

A girl's first menstruation is celebrated with a certain amount of luxury. The girl remains secluded in a menstrual hut for seven days. A feast is arranged by the mother on the first and last day. Seven girls accompany the initiated one, bathe her in oil and water, and afterwards paint their faces yellow.⁵⁵

Some high caste Hindus, especially in the South, also celebrate female puberty rites. The Dikshitar Brahmins enjoy processional and caste festivities⁵⁶ while the Dehast Brahmins seat the girl on a little throne, accompanied by a maid-servant. Female relatives pay visits, bring gifts, and wash the young woman in perfumed oil.⁵⁷

The Tantrics say that the menstrual discharge "is not only composed chiefly of blood potent with ova-energy, but also contains other properties, together with a large amount of estrogenic substances (arsenic, lecithin and cholesterol)."⁵⁸ Scientifically, the existence of estrogen in the discharge has been verified, along with the observation that the blood itself is non-coagulatory.⁵⁹ While in its idle state in the womb, this blood is the purest in the body.

The monthly occurrence of menstruation is once more being seen in a more positive light. Certainly it is a fine way of aligning oneself with the cosmic rhythms of the lunar cycle. A new consciousness will be born when women begin to note and record the date and time of their very first lunar cycle. The concept of menstruation as purification and cosmic attunement, rather than "curse," might possibly engender a whole new response to the discomfort some women now experience during their cycles.

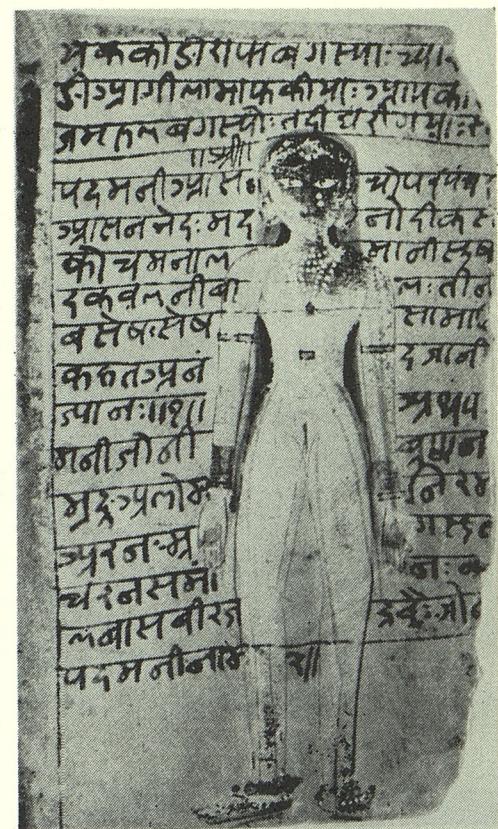
It was some time after the first century B.C. that the high regard given to a woman during her menses changed to its opposite—denigration. Then and even now "women are considered ceremonially impure during this period. Even a Brahmin woman... degenerates into a Chandali (out-caste)."⁶⁰ Once considered a Goddess herself, today an Indian woman during her period cannot even enter a temple!

Currently, when rural women menstruate, they move into huts set aside for the purpose of rest and seclusion. Often they sit on broken earthenware pots. City women, however, remove themselves to a specific area of a room or part of a house and their look and their touch is regarded with fear.

If women's physiological functions were once the very models and methods through which the Goddess was venerated, how do we explain the fact that both were divested so thoroughly of their power and influence? Some of the theories for this loss of prestige have been postulated as follows: Discovery of the true facts of conception (that males have a role in it), scriptural and mythological suppression and interpolation, a worldwide cataclysm at the end of the Bronze Age, the pacific nature of agrarian societies, the preliterate nature of these societies or the fact that their languages remain undeciphered even today, and male control of women, their bodies, and all institutions.

As the Great Goddess was stripped of Her sovereignty, so, too, was the power of woman as Living Goddess, as living ancestor, wrested from her. Split like the Goddess, woman became a power divided against her own self.

Today, though women's rights are guaranteed under the 1949 Indian Constitution, the editorial consensus of a



In Tantric yogic practice the eighteen focal centers shown on the female body ought to be energized at corresponding phases of the moon.

survey taken by that government in 1974 is: "Large masses of women in this country have remained unaffected by the rights guaranteed to them..."⁶¹ Since religion plays such a major role in the vast majority of Indian lives, it is the responsibility of concerned scholars—especially women—to examine these changed myths and to reinvest such sacred texts with the power of the Living Goddess. Hindu law reformers, realizing that their scriptures and beliefs were fluid and at times contradictory, used this broad base as a means to change many restrictive social laws—often involving women—by reference to older or interpolated scriptural authority.

The sacred rites of the Goddess are the sacred rites of women everywhere. With reclamation of this ancient spirituality, women will sense the latent power of their full potential, deriving both from the Goddess without and the Goddess within. We need now to rejoin and reclaim both. *Om. Sa hum.*

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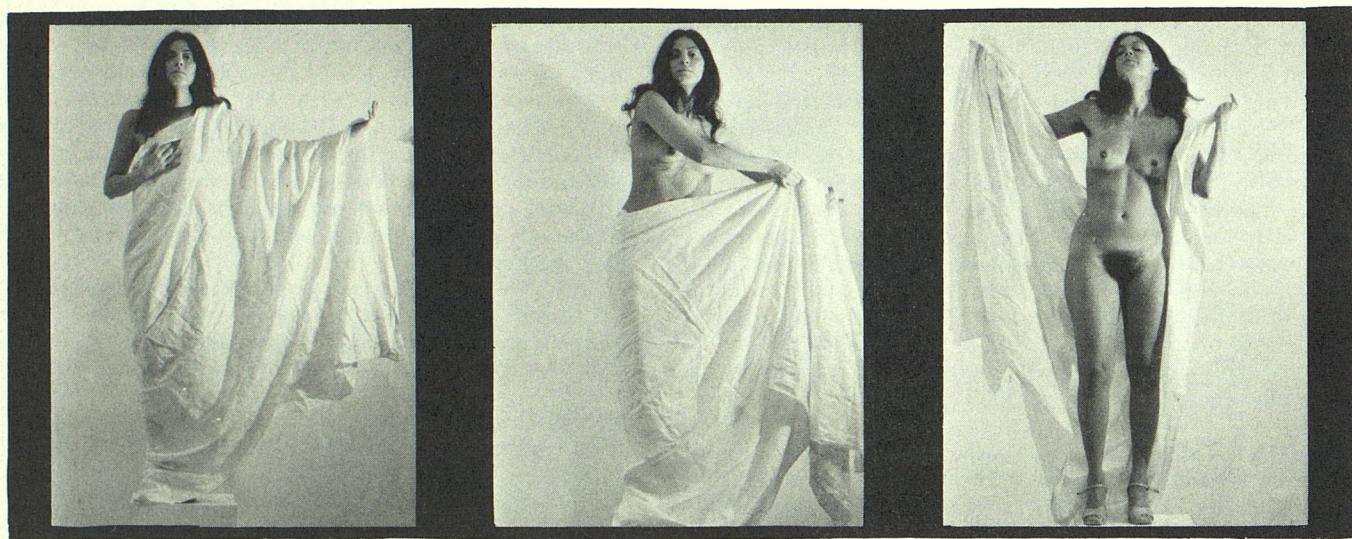
Excerpted from a forthcoming book and dedicated to
N. N. Bhattacharyya

FOOTNOTES

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21. Bhattacharyya, p. 28.
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24. Eliade, p. 49.
25. Paul Radin, *Primitive Religion: Its Nature and Origin* (New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1937), p. 86.
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45. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
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47. Mookerjee, p. 86.
48. A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, p. 1,091.
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51. Mookerjee, p. 39.
52. *Ratirahasya* means "the mysteries of love," and is the name of an erotic work by Kokkoka, according to A Sanskrit-English Dictionary.
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54. Ehrenfels, p. 16.
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Hannah Wilke. Stills from Super T-Art. Performance. 1974.



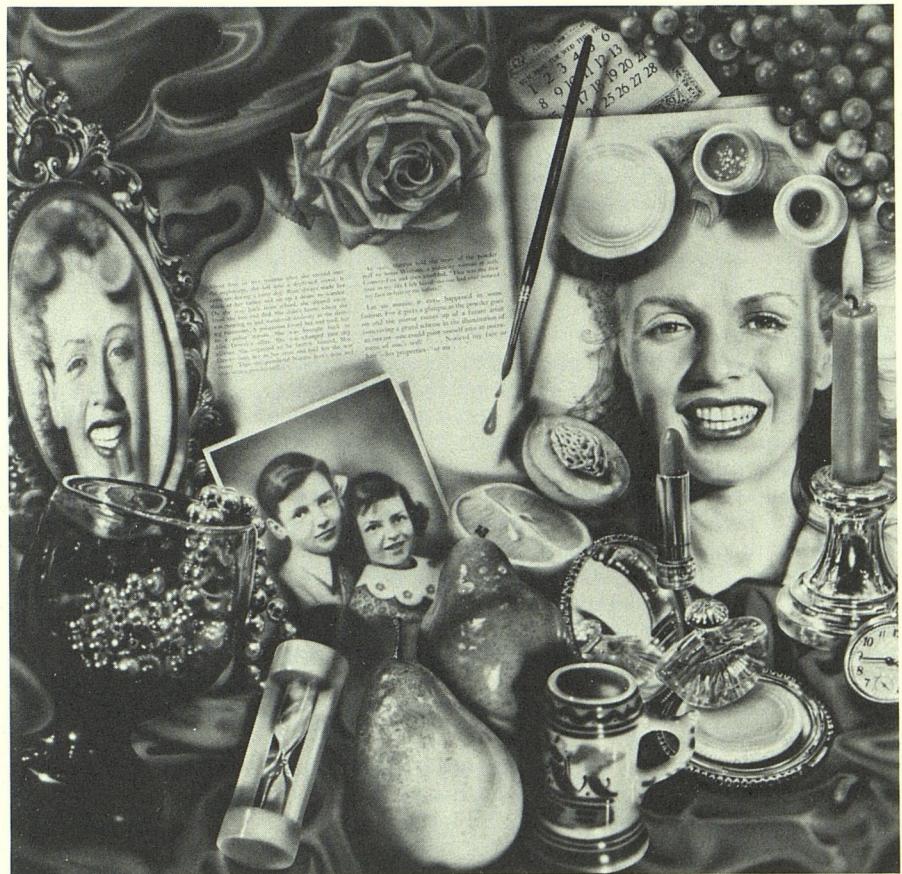
Joan Jonas. *Mirror Piece*. Performance. 1974. Photo credit: Roberta Nieman.

the Snail

Jaci

I stretch and push
inward into my shell
into the spiral space
that encloses the beginning
sealing the entrance
behind me as I go
with the pain of my withdrawal
squeezing inward
upon myself
until I feel
the fragile pinkness
that surrounds me
might shatter
from my efforts

there are no pearls
in this shell of mine
only the soft grayness
of the vulnerability
that is me
and the sticky residue
of my struggle
to curl inward
and be still



Audrey Flack. *Marilyn Monroe*. Acrylic. 1977-78. 8' x 8'. Photo credit: Bruce Jones.

Body Imperatives

Deborah Haynes

One—Prologue

"We do not wish to speak alone. We demand that the listener be a participant. We tell our secrets openly and publicly without erasing them. We say, 'These are our lives.'"¹

Where is the writing by women that extends itself toward the spirit, that expresses the connection between body and spirit, or feminism and spirituality?² Much has been written about the Great Goddess in her mythic forms: Kali, Athene, Virgin Mary or Kwan-yin. Her objective tale has been told. What I desire to tell and to hear is the story of our connection Now. This is my life and this is my vision.

Two—Introduction

We are mulier and homo sapiens; our species has undergone a long process of differentiation in which the male-patriarchal-intellectual consciousness has dominated. But now is the time for the re-emergence of the feminine and feminine values, which include reverence for the physical body, as well as for the planetary body we inhabit. This is an attitude of participation instead of control. For me, moving toward the feminine, toward a spirituality which is grounded in (my) female experience, has been a process of allowing a greater receptivity to the unfolding present.

Three—Invocation

Out of experiences in the body, of the blood mysteries: menstruation, pregnancy and abortion, let fuller connections evolve between my body and sexuality and spirit, a fuller awareness of my being as woman.

Let this writing be a ritual of mourning. To mourn is connected to the Sanskrit and Avestan words meaning to feel sorrow, lament, but also to remember. I am passing through a time of mourning, of purgatory. Purgatory is the midpoint between death and rebirth. It is the place of making atonement. Atonement: reconciliation, completion of what has come before. Change begins in awareness of its necessity, and not in deliberate and willful attempts to change.

Four—The Story

Feminism begins in the self-consciousness of female ness.³ Thus, I begin the story with a description of my earliest perceptions and feelings. I am not aware of any sense of restriction because of my sex before I was five years old. I am the eldest child.

In school, the girls have a play house in the back of the room. I am sent to that space as punishment. Later I am outside, rather than inside the house, preferring vigorous

games like baseball, army, cowboys and indians, bicycling and exploring in the woods, to playing with dolls and learning to cook. I have a few dolls, mostly given by my grandmother. I sew clothes for one or two of them, but mainly the dolls stay on the closet shelf. Rather than cooking and preparing food, I prefer the task of "official taster" of the food my mother prepares. My father makes her a yellow sign; a face with writing that glows: "Take the Meat Out!" She chronically forgets, and we eat in restaurants. I feel very special when I spend time with my father in his basement shop. We fix the car and build a stereo system and tinker and talk. Though I wear dresses to school, they are tailored, contrasting with my younger sister's frills. My parents speak of me as the career girl. I am drawn to the paper boys, often riding routes with them. This continues for a couple of years, until gradually my relationship with one of them changes. I am kissed for the first time, and I turn my lips away.

I begin to bleed; menstruation is an awkward word. My mother buys sanitary napkins from the male clerk, and I stay in the car, embarrassed. Will I ever be courageous enough to buy them myself? I want to wear bras and shave my legs, yet resent the intrusion of pointed bras, hair stubbles and increased self-awareness into my life. My first sexual experiences are with Teri during our sleepovers. But my attention turns rather quickly to boys: Teri's and my surreptitious experimentation is silently, but mutually, ended. I enjoy wearing loose clothes that allow maximum freedom of movement.

At sixteen I begin my first sexual affair with a man. Our sex couples intense fear and paranoia with the thrill of touch. After two years of monthly pregnancy paranoia, I finally experience my undeniable biological vulnerability. I become pregnant at eighteen. I faint twice, and vomit in the mornings. My period hasn't come that month, and my mother's worn health encyclopedia comes to mind with its descriptions of pregnancy symptoms.

In the midst of moving into the dormitory and registering for my first university classes, I find out that I am indeed pregnant. My timid question, "Do you know where I can get an abortion?" is met by the doctor's curt "No." I pick another doctor's name at random from the phone book and make an appointment. My question is again met with a "No," though I ironically discover years later that another doctor in the same office has been performing illegal but safe abortions for years.

I don't cry until my father calls. He says that now my life is over, that it will never amount to anything, that he is so disappointed. I wail and sob, feeling that I have indeed destroyed something. He communicates to me that now I am a total failure in life. I hate the bodily



Illustration by the Author.

changes I am now experiencing: changes in my shape and size, breasts enlarging, thickening in the middle, stretch marks on my breasts and thighs. I pay as little attention to my body as possible.

Externally, the pregnancy goes very smoothly. I move out of the dormitory at five and a half months, when few people know that I am going to have a baby. I move into a rooming house across the street from the hospital, and live there for three months. I eat well and lightly, like to sleep and draw and listen to music. I continue with school. The boy-child is born a month premature, and my labor is long and difficult. I want to die. He goes home with adopted parents. I walk out with a friend's assistance after paying a fifty-cent fee.

The strain and trauma, the sense of failure and helplessness in relation to my body, cannot be captured. The aftermath of the birth is no less emotionally exhausting than the pregnancy. A school psychiatrist advises me to "stick it out," to stay in school for finals. This is the second quarter of my first year in college. I know that I cannot continue as though nothing has happened. My acute sense of loss and emptiness demands retreat and rest. During the pregnancy I'd continued to live fairly "normally," going to classes, taking tests, socializing, but mainly being alone. After the delivery I need comfort and support, and thus seek Alan, who has given much, even though I refused to marry him and have the baby. He is entering the Air Force in less than a month, and our visits after the delivery are strained. The time is painful, and our relationship ends when he goes to Denver.

Now that the pregnancy is over I begin a long process of slowly paying more attention to my body, learning about nutrition, being physically active, getting involved in body therapy and practicing yoga. Living in my body becomes increasingly important. After I stop using birth control pills and two IUDs, I feel consistently afraid of becoming pregnant again. Though I am using a diaphragm, I give tremendous energy each month to this fear, to wondering what I would do if... or how I'd get an abortion, since they have become readily available.

Ten years and two weeks from my first conception, I become pregnant again. I am able to schedule an abortion the day after my positive test. I have just turned twenty-eight. I feel very tired, like I've weathered a long storm.

The night before the abortion I encounter my irrational fear in another form, fear that something will go wrong

during the abortion, but I meet that demon with written affirmation: The abortion will be fine; I will deal with the pain; I won't fight the action of the abortion; I want this abortion; the only way out is through my fear; I will encounter my fear and breathe through it. I wear an American Indian turtle fetish during the abortion, which, though mildly painful, is over quickly. My cramps, which occur for five days, are painful and frightening, and I cry easily, but the days pass and my body heals.

Five — Reflections on the Story

My pregnancy at eighteen was my birth. The labor was very long and difficult and painful. I don't even know when the delivery was over, but my second pregnancy and abortion ten years later tell me that it is. I am ending a cycle of living in other people's houses, both literally and figuratively, of fulfilling other people's expectations. During the ten-year interval I accomplished much, all perhaps to prove that I am not a failure, that I am indeed capable of doing whatever I choose to do. I have proved myself again and again. My abortion put me in touch with my body on a higher level, with my sexuality and my vulnerability, with the necessity of assuming full responsibility for my actions.

Now I must begin to live my own life. Yet, though this cycle is ended, I do not clearly see the next one. To be willing to wait, to see what is emerging, is the essence of the feminine in me, and may also be the meaning of my present purgatory. Perhaps the last ten years have been the childhood of my psyche, my spiritual childhood.

Pregnancy, not as the birth of the Other, but as birth of the Self. Abortion, from the Latin, to die, not as death of the Other, but as death of a part of the Self, or death of the old self.

Six — Beyond the Story: Entry of the Spirit

Lessons taught in the body lead to the spirit. The life of the body is not synonymous with the life of the spirit, but they intersect. Body intersects spirit in the spine, which carries the life history of the individual. Through the discipline of yoga I seek to widen that intersection, to allow a greater dialogue.

The intersection of the body and the spirit is also evident in sex. I express this relationship of feminism-sexuality-spirituality not as an absolute congruence, but as one of significant influences and difficult demarcations. Sex is a force that connects essences. Sexuality is the life force within us manifesting. Sex is a vital connection to the Self, the Other and the Cosmos.

Seven — Prayer

To find a spiritual connection through the body simply means to re-establish an awareness of the principles that govern life, that are responsible for the ineffable ebb and flow. I cannot name the principles; I do not grasp that intangible essence. But life is handing me experiences through which to recognize, with courage and vision, the spirit at work. That recognition begins in the body.

1. Deena Metzger, "In Her Image," *Heresies* (May 1977), p. 9.
2. As I send this article to the magazine, I see that the December issue of *Sojourner* has several articles on women's spirituality. I am glad to see others dealing with Spirit.
3. This is a modification of a statement made by Lucy L. Lippard, *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (New York: Dutton, 1976), p. 6. She said, "Feminism, or at least the self-consciousness of femaleness, has opened...." I believe that feminism begins in that self-consciousness.

Birth Dance or Belly Dance

Daniela Gioseffi

Few would link any positive idea of feminism with the present-day phenomenon of the *café* belly dancer—as associated with that blatant sex object, the burlesque stripper of our Western culture, as she accepts the dollar bills thrust into her beaded bra and dance belt by the male members of her audience. But, difficult as it may seem, there is good reason to do so. Correlating the history of the so-called belly dance with archeological evidences of early matriarchal civilization, research into pagan wicca, worship of the Earth Mother Goddess, and a study of primitive obstetrics, I have come to the logical conclusion that the belly dance, probably the most ancient form of dance known to civilization, was originally performed by women to celebrate, nurture and invoke her magical ability to procreate at a time when giving birth to maintain the species against depopulation caused by natural disaster was the most important thing a human being could do.

Prehistoric peoples, knowing nothing of the science of birth and death, but only that humans are mysteriously born and mysteriously die, probably viewed the muscular contractions that expel the infant from the womb as some awesome hocus-pocus of creation.

Though the instinctive ability to bear down and give with nature's contractions has been quite lost to modern woman, one can imagine how a ritual dance to the first deity, **The Great Mother**, would have imitated those mysterious contractions, resulting in belly rolls, and possibly shimmies, too, of the swelling breasts that fill so magically with the milk that sustains newborn life.

Significantly, the present-day, *café* version of the dance still features a portion known as the "floor work" in which the dancer, to a slower, more improvised rhythm, descends to the floor, and, kneeling, leans back and works her stomach muscles in a series of contractions. I theorize that this section of the dance, really its dramatic climax, and traditionally performed in a serious mood (the dancer refraining from smiling as she does elsewhere in the dance), is probably the residue of an ancient rite which either mimed or actualized the act of giving birth as primitive women did, kneeling or squatting, in full control of the muscles that force the infant from the womb. This climax of the dance, which can also be associated with orgasm, as the climax of *natural* childbirth often is, is followed by a faster, more joyous, upbeat ending, which, in the Turkish style, still retains remnants of a mime indicating the grinding of grain and the kneading of bread, highly respected occupations of early vegetarian matriarchates. The fertility dance, now viewed as a tourist attraction in *cafés* from Cairo to San Francisco, from Johannesburg to New York, is most likely the sexist conversion of a sacred ritual reaching back to a time when

birth was an ecstatic and publicly celebrated event rather than a sterile and private horror locked away in a male obstetrician's "delivery" room.

In less Westernized corners of the Middle East, the "birth dance" was still performed, at least as late as the 1960s, around a woman in labor by her fellow tribeswomen. In this form, it was a ritual which men were not allowed to watch—its purpose being to hypnotize the woman in labor into giving with her contractions, thus avoiding the pain of strained muscles. We don't need to be reminded that ours is one of the few cultures in the world that expects women to go from fairly sedentary lives into the strenuous labor of giving birth (equivalent to running a six mile race) without adequate preparation of the muscles involved. However, among primitive peoples, there are many examples of therapy dances which involve the pelvis and abdomen. Modern Hawaiians have probably forgotten their "ohelo" hula, a dance which was performed in a reclining position for pregnancy therapy.



Two female singers and dancers. Wall painting from a burial chamber in Thebes. XVIII Dynasty (1420-1375 B.C.).

Even the dignified Spanish flamenco dancer, costumed in her red and black peacock-tail dress, is related to the oldest dancer of all, the birth dancer.

Just as the American Blacks have had to rally around elements of their common African heritage in order to free themselves from a psychological sense of inferiority bred into them by Waspish American cultural values, so have feminists, both radical and nonradical, begun to rally around their once suppressed cultural heritage in order to free themselves of a sense of female inferiority. If the so-called belly dance, which I choose to call a "birth dance," is an important element of that matriarchal heritage, and one, moreover, that has been thoroughly turned around as a symbol of sexual bondage, then feminists ought to be dancing it anew on the raised levels of their consciousness, for each other, and not just as a seductive entertainment for the amusement of men.

From the postglacial "Women's Dance" of the Cogne in Africa (c. 10,000 B.C.)—one of the oldest representations of dancing—to the "White Lady of Auanret" (c. 4,000 B.C.) —a rock painting of a female fertility dancer found in a cave in the Sahara—to the ancient Egyptian belly dancers in the wall paintings of the burial chambers of Thebes (c. 1420 B.C.)*, the timeless *birth dance* has been persistent in its migrations down through the centuries.

I have no wish, after all, to deny the wonderfully erotic quality of the dance, but only to show how it relates to the **sublime** eroticism of life in all its visceral glory, and not to a smutty, narrow idea of sex born of a repressive ethic that depends for its existence on the subjugation of the female who, in the beginning, freely celebrated the graciousness of Mother Nature as the giver of the promise of redemption and resurrection, of new life and new birth.

This piece is excerpted from a longer article.



The Egyptians knew a lot
About giving head,
Assigning as they did
The visages of birds
And animals
To their goddesses and gods,
Aligning as they did
The godhead with the bestial.
On the crest of this
Sweet inspiration,
Headlining, as it were,
This cosmic vaudeville,
This variety show
Of heads and tall tales,
Rode Bast,
Kitty queen of the ancient Nile.
Ole cat o' nine tales,
Beating on the tom-tom kitties,
Drumming up a storm,
She was the muse that mews
And such good news
That all of Bubastis
Fell to its knees
For this sweet pussy.

Bast, the early dawning light,
The sun in the morning
But the daughter at night,
Therianthropic oasis dream,
Ole miaow mix, full of sweet cream,
Feline fraulein with the mystic grin,
Patron of musicians and dancers,
She was one cool cat,
Forever getting her licks in.

— Linda Ann Hoag

Two Poems by Martha Courtot

Nightsea Rider

Look at the woman
ready to burn
listen to her sizzle and crack
bacon on the fire
rain on the roof
she is a white noise
waiting for the dark

"i used to be soft and warm
you could touch my skin
without being burnt
i liked the arms of my lovers
our flesh rising
like yeast in the oven"

she is a hot wire
fused and metallic
even her teeth are silver
waiting to flash
even her bones burn

"once i was a woman
who knew how to love
before the brain blew out
before the cells ignited
before the robot days"

she is lightening
across black spaces
all light and energy
before the dark

"i am trying to remember
the first taste
of life on the tongue

and the smell of bread in the oven
and love rising into the sky
rising, like a kite, rising

mama you are so wide
wide as the sea
the bright day quickens
and is gone
sea music as light upon the water
and the darkness under all

mama you are so wide
and i am more tired than anything

the sea darkens
the seaweed tugs

my legs marry it
two white clowns
who want to go down

i no longer visit you and leave
instead my skin wears your name
i am always wet now
from the deep plunge

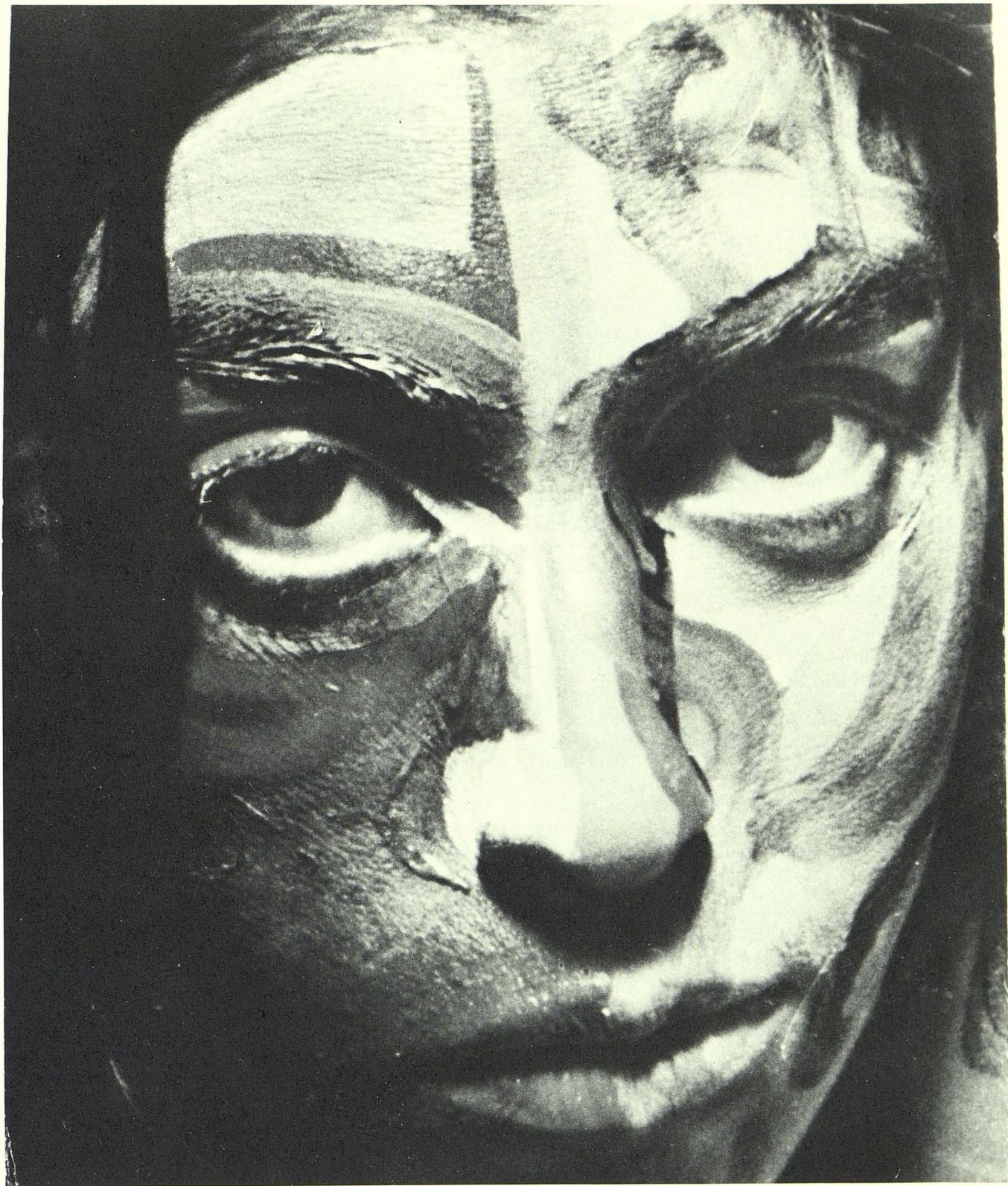
and my sky is a green dream
i hold to
though it speaks in riddles
sharper than a sharks tooth
and sometimes bleeds

everything is water now
everywhere water
the hungry mouth of deep water
opening and closing itself
round me

and i in my wet skin slip deeper
into the dark of the nightsea

down into the skin of the sea
wide as my mother
i lose my flesh to a water form

all my sighs are for the undertow



Deborah Freedman. *Transformation*. Paint. 1969. Photo credit: Peter Kolsky.

9978: Repairing the Time Warp and other related realities

Merlin Stone

After these many years of digging about in the records of the ancient past, it recently occurred to me that by accepting and continually confirming the idea that we are living in the year 1978 (though we take it so for granted), we might well be inherently limiting our chronological perceptions and thus our emotional and intellectual grasp of an important part of the past. I wondered—if I began to date my letters 9978, rather than 1978, would those who received them laugh at what they might assume was my typographical error, or would they stop to consider that we might well be approaching the year 10,000 as likely as 2000? What a strange idea! What does this have to do with the Great Goddess? Let me explain.

Having grown progressively more aware of the subtle but insidious effects of sexist language and the power of naming (in the sense that Mary Daly speaks of it), can we avoid eventually confronting the hidden power and influence of a calendar system that informs us, daily, that 'our era' began one thousand, nine hundred, seventy-eight years ago? By accepting the idea that this is the year 1978, it seems to me that our overall view of the evolution of human development is being affected in a most basic yet unquestioned manner. In fact, I suggest that this acceptance actually perverts and distorts our perception of the continuity and transitional links of human development in a most profound manner. In the context of this issue, I would like to consider how this annual dating system influences our conceptions—and preconceptions—of Goddess, of the societies in which She was worshipped and of the status and roles of women through the many millennia in which She was revered.

A.D., as in 1978 A.D., stands for Anno Domini—The Year of Our Lord (Jesus Christ). Therefore, at this point in time, we (people of all religions, as well as atheists) date our years from the year believed to be the year of the birth of Jesus. All the years preceding that year are generally referred to as B.C. (Before Christ). A few scholars do use B.C.E. (Before the Common Era), although they still utilize the A.D./B.C. numerical order, and the Jewish calendar, though used primarily in a religious context, records the current year as 5738. But the common usage of the terms A.D. and B.C. is so extremely

widespread, almost universal, that for most of us, this church-imposed division of time acts as a mental partition, separating all the years following the "birth" of Jesus from those that preceded it. Although B.C. periods clearly encompass enormously greater expanses of time, this temporal cleavage seems to leave the events and people of even the (relatively speaking) more recent B.C. periods, somehow wafting away (backwards) into a vast emptiness of the unknown or not quite real.

During the nineteenth century and even in the beginning of the twentieth, many Bibles informed their readers that the beginning of the world—Creation—actually occurred in 4004 B.C. This information was provided by Archbishop James Ussher and may still be found in the Scofield Reference Bible printed by Oxford University Press. Yet, during the last dozen or so decades a great deal of evidence concerning periods labeled as B.C. has been unearthed. This evidence has been brought to our attention by archaeological and paleontological excavations, in conjunction with newly developed chemical and electronic dating methods. To a great extent, these relatively recent explorations were made possible by the underlying permission granted by the hotly contested theory of evolution as presented by Darwin in his *Origin of the Species*. This evidence has helped to date the emergence of *homo sapiens sapiens* (people as we know them today) to about 60,000 B.C. As a result, serious references to 4004 B.C. as the exact date of Creation—and the idea that one man and one woman, Adam and Eve, were the only two people on earth at that time—though once quite literally accepted by many people, even in our own century, have now become untenable, even somewhat humorously absurd.

As the evidence produced by excavations in the Near and Middle East began to accumulate, archaeologists found that the techniques of ceramics, textile making, metallurgy, architecture, the invention of the wheel and of writing could be traced back to what appear to be their earliest experimental beginnings. Most important was the discovery that none of these achievements showed signs of continual development before the initial appearance of agriculture. Discovering the past revealed that it was the understanding and development of conscious



Demeter holding sheaves of grain entwined with serpents.
Hellenic.

agricultural methods, that original acquisition of the ability to provide clans or tribal communities with a relatively controllable, thus more generally available food supply, that explosively triggered off the development of most other aspects of human "civilization."

It is now recognized that at some time between 9000 and 7000 B.C., the period referred to as Proto-Neolithic, this knowledge of agricultural process originated and began to spread. By 7000 B.C. agricultural methods were in use in Jordan, Anatolia (Turkey) and Iran. This earliest period of agricultural development was of such great and underlying importance to cultural developments in other fields that it was dubbed, by those discovering it, as the Neolithic Revolution (though not a shot was fired, nor an arrow loosed to bring it about).

At this same time, as a result of the new agricultural know-how, settled communities, small towns, began to develop. The shrines, murals and statues found in excavations of these earliest agricultural towns reveal the presence of Goddess worship during this period. It is to sites of this period that British archaeologist James Mellaart refers: "Art makes its appearance in the form of animal carvings and statuettes of the *supreme deity, the Mother Goddess*" (my italics).

These two features of the Proto-Neolithic period—the earliest appearance of agriculture and the existence of Goddess worship—are not disconnected, for we later find that in cultures in which methods of writing were first developed and used, it was the Goddess, as Ninlil in Sumer, as Isis in Egypt, later as Demeter in Greece (possibly Crete) and as Ceres in Rome, who was credited with having presented the gift of agriculture to Her people.

Though the sculpted female figures of the Upper Paleolithic period of about 30,000 to 15,000 B.C. are quite likely to have been representations of the deified Mother of the Clan—Goddess—this interpreta-

tion is still somewhat controversial. But from the Proto-Neolithic period, until the closing of the last known remaining Goddess temples in the fifth century A.D., the worship of the Goddess is continually archaeologically and/or historically attested. Despite transformations caused by invading and conquering patrilineal tribes, Goddess worship continued in various forms and under various names for at least 8,500 years. Its probable underground survival during medieval, Christianity-proselytizing periods of Europe may well have been the target of centuries of witch hunts and mass burnings of women.

Thus, if we are willing to accept a middle point in the Proto-Neolithic period, and agree to agree that it was at about 8000 B.C. that the brilliant and life-supporting discovery of agriculture was made—bearing in mind that in the earliest written records this gift was attributed to the Goddess, not a god, which strongly suggests that it was women (as the food gatherers, rather than hunters) who first observed that barley, wheat and emmer began to grow in and around the areas in which their gathered wild grains were stored—and realizing that the oldest attested evidence of Goddess worship (so far discovered) occurs at this same period and that Goddess worship continued over 8,000 years and well into the Christian period—why should we not reclaim at least these 8,000 years of *our* cultural heritage as an integral part of "our era." By simply adding them to the 1,978 years we daily acknowledge, we may consider ourselves to be living in the year "ninety-nine, seventy-eight"—9978. Perhaps this date is not as inclusive as 60,978 or 30,978, but it is far from science fiction and certainly more culturally and chronologically authentic than 1978. With this change we crash through the time barrier of ←B.C./A.D.→, gaining the so much broader chronological perception that allows and encourages a deeper feeling of connection to women's unique role in the Neolithic Revolution, the earliest attested period of the religion of the Goddess, and to *eight thousand* years of Goddess worship. If we adopted this time designation by using it on our letters, papers and publications, we might remind ourselves, and others, that these forgotten or ignored millennia occurred in real time, our time.

Consciousness raising over the past years has made us painfully aware of the myriad and unsuspected ways in which we, as women, have been tricked into agreeing to the destruction of our dignity and self-respect. Isn't it about time that we began to acknowledge and reclaim this important part of our heritage by explaining that, according to our calculations, this is 9978!

Intellectually and emotionally perceiving that we are within 23 years of the year 10,000 (let us, for the moment, call it A.D.A.—After the Development of Agriculture) brings and will bring many other thoughts to mind. One that I would like to mention briefly is the possible importance of this suggested

†James Mellaart, *Earliest Civilizations of the Near East* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965

change for those who have felt some confusion or ambivalence about early religious training or family religious identity and the seemingly new ideas of feminist spirituality and the Goddess. Once we perceive ourselves to be in 9978, thus encompassing the period of One A.D.A. to 8000 A.D.A. as an integral part of our era, those concerned need not negate or refute the religious identity of their most immediate ancestry (including perhaps two, three or even five thousand years of the 9,978). But while accepting these relatively more recent portions of ancestral identity as worthy of consideration and self-esteem, it becomes possible to simultaneously thrust further back to periods peopled, not by strangers or aliens, but by one's own ancestors. Common sense tells all of us that if we are here now, they were there then. Extending our temporal consciousness of our ancestral identity back to One A.D.A. (8000 B.C.), the people who worshipped the Great Goddess, (which includes possibly all people at that time and most people for many thousands of years following it) may then be regarded as another, equally real, source of our ancestral identity.

By reaching back beyond our forefathers, we may rediscover ancestral foremothers who understood the nature of a cosmic female energy font—Goddess energy—foremothers who have bequeathed to each and every one of us the inherent and inherited knowledge of our *direct* connection and access to that energy—a knowledge that is neither contrived, taken nor borrowed—but that has been OURS from the beginning.

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DATE CHART (approximate dating on earlier periods)

B.C. 8000 = One A.D.A.	Proto-Neolithic Period— invention of agriculture (Jericho)
7000 = 1000	Catal Huyuk and Hacilar, shrines and many statues of Goddess, Jarmo
5500 = 2500	Hassuna Culture—hoe, sickle, clay ovens, courtyard houses, statues of Goddess
5000 = 3000	Halaf Culture—paved streets, wheel, Goddess figures
4000 = 4000	Frida Culture—irrigation canals, predynastic groups on Nile
3000 = 5000	Sumerian Culture— invention of writing, First Dynasty in Egypt
1800 = 6200	Old Babylonian period— law code of Hamurabi
1400 = 6600	Moses in Sinai, according to most biblical archaeologists, (see Wm. F. Albright "The Bible and the Ancient Near East" Anchor '65); Mycenaeans in Greece, probable period of Trojan War; about 50 years before Tutankhamen
950 = 7050	Reign of King Solomon of Israel
600 = 7400	Time of prophet Ezekiel
450 = 7550	Early Classical Greece (Herodotus)
330 = 7670	Classical Greece (Alexander)
44 = 7966	Assassination of Julius Caesar

Ishtar: Feast of the Great Goddess (May 24th- 30th)

Her ringlet

Strikes a star

Crab nebulae stubs

Her toe

The Goddess

Turns in Her sleep

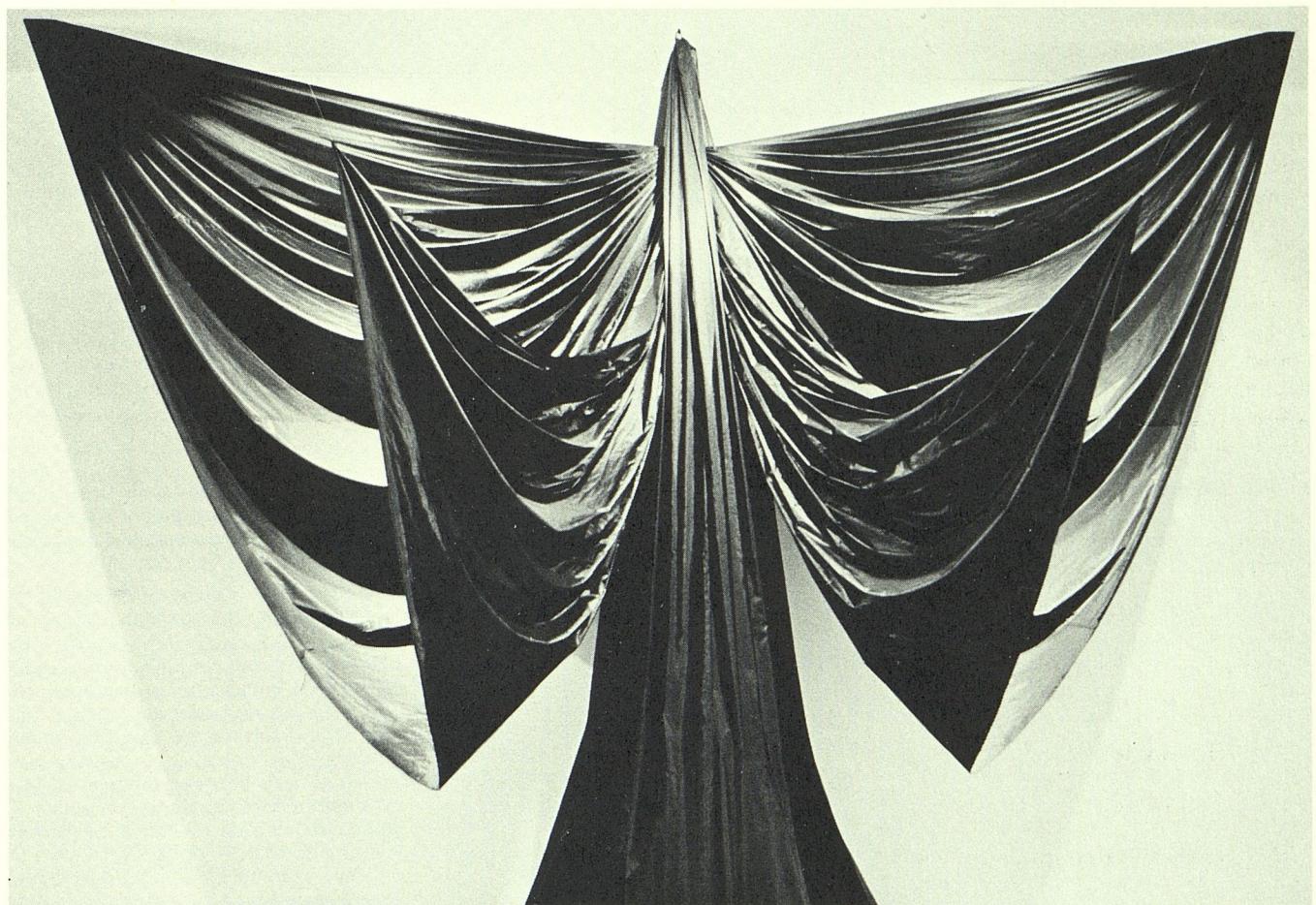
And the universe shifts

Ishtar has awakened

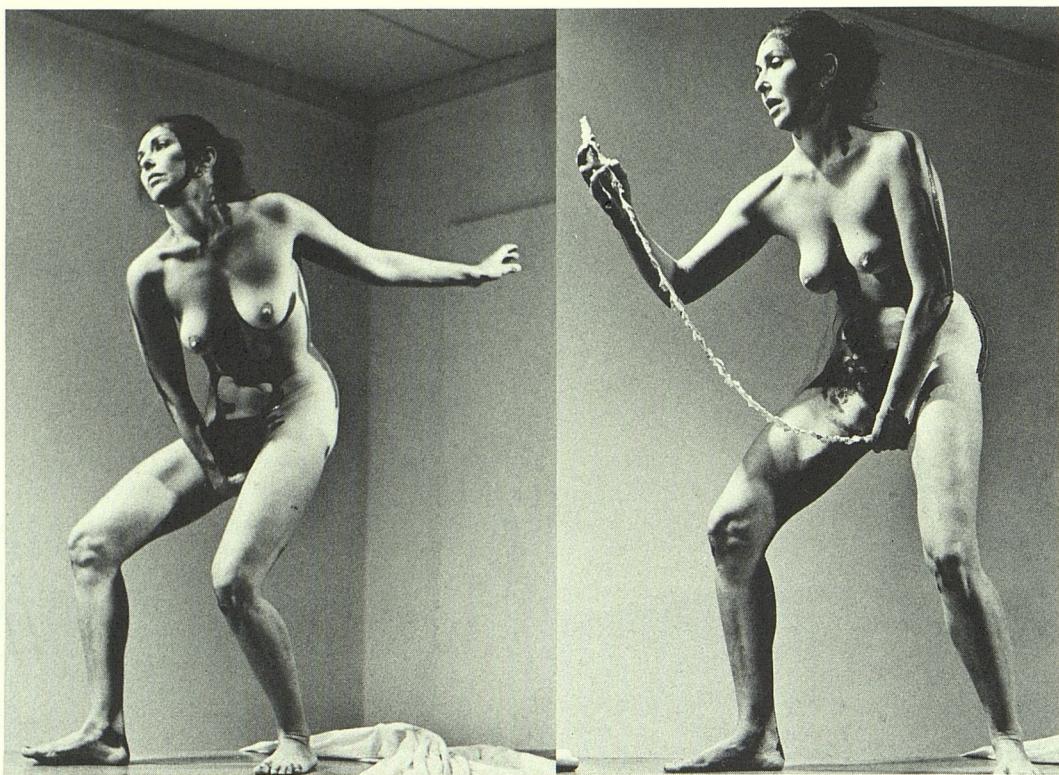
The world is golden

—A.M.

© 1978 King Philip's Institute for Women's Studies.



Anne Healy. *Hecate*. Nylon Fabric and aluminum bars. 1972. 12½' x 15' x 8'. Photo credit: Anne Healy.



Carolee Schneemann. "In the performance *INTERIOR SCROLL* (1975), the serpentine manifestation of vulvic knowledge can be associated at several symbolic levels. Among these: ticker tape, rainbow, torah in the ark, chalice, choir loft, bell tower, umbilicus and tongue."

Some words have been included in this glossary to provide supplementary information but primarily we wanted to demonstrate what has been aptly called "The Power of Naming" with the intention of reclaiming it. We could choose only a small percentage of the words that speak powerfully of our past and of our potential.

Our main sources were: Webster's International Dictionary Unabridged First and Third Editions, the Oxford Unabridged Dictionary and Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, Abridged, Oxford University Press.

aegis (Latin from Greek *aigis*, *aiz* 'goat skin.') Leather pouch worn like an apron by Cretan priestesses, custom probably adopted from Libya, where until recent times women wore leather pouches in which they kept oracular snakes. Hence the archaic 'to come under the shielding apron of' is in modern English 'to come under the patronage, sponsorship, auspices.'

Amazon (Greek Amazon; usually given as a 'without' + *mazos* 'breast.') Legend records that Amazons removed their right breasts to facilitate the use of the bow and arrow. However, *Zonē* (in the Thracian language) meant 'a woman's girdle'; by extension 'marriage or the sexual act, the disrobing of a woman.' Hence, *ama* suggests

Glossary

'something lacking' + *zone* = 'a woman whose girdle remains unloosened.' Greek mythology records that after Heracles killed Hippolyta, a queen of the Amazons, he stole her girdle. *Zonē* also was the name of the capitol city of the Amazons in ancient Thrace, (modern Bulgaria-Romania to the Aegean and Propontus coasts.) One of a race or nation of female warriors usually associated with Scythia or Asia Minor with whom the ancient Greeks of mythology repeatedly warred; a tall strong masculine woman, a virago. Also see: Parthian

Anat, Anath Goddess who gave her name to ancient Anatolia (modern Turkey), later revered in Canaan. Her worship was suppressed and inveighed against in Biblical times. *Ana* is a universal name given to women in all cultures, meaning 'risen, heavenly.' See: anathema

anathema (Greek from *ana*+*thema* = upon + law [god]; usually given as anything set up.) Hence, a thing consecrated to divine use; a votive offering, which in Late Latin became anything devoted to evil, curse. See: Anath

apotropaism The science and art of preventing or overcoming evils, usually by incantation or a ritual act.

cereal (Latin *cerealis* from Ceres, Goddess of Grain, akin to *crescere* 'to grow.') A plant yielding seeds suitable for food, wheat, maize, rice. See: crescent

clitoridectomy Sexual mutilation of the female genitals, the surgical practices of which vary: 1) Excision of the clitoris, labia minora and sometimes all external vaginal genitalia. 2) Infibulation or Pharaonic circumcision — After excision, labia are scraped and sutured to close the female introitus. This operation is usually performed on girls between the ages of four and eight years to guarantee virginity. 3) Sunna circumcision — Removal of the prepuce and tip of the clitoris, which must be done by a skilled surgeon. Clitoridectomies have been performed in hospitals throughout the world. In Moslem countries, women of all classes are subjected to clitoridectomies. The practice is sanctioned by the Islamic religion.

crescent (Latin *crescere*, *creare* 'to create, bring forth'; from Greek *koros* 'boy, puppet'; *kore* 'girl, virgin, pupil of the eye.') A heraldic charge that consists of the figure of the crescent moon with the horns directed upwards; the time between the new and the full moon. See: cereal; also myth of Kore and Demeter

crown (Latin from Greek *korōnē* 'anything curved,' *skairein* 'to dance'; Sanskrit *kridati* 'she dances and plays.') Basic

meaning: turning, bending. Probably related to crescent and Kore.

cunnilingus (Latin *cunnus* 'vulva' + *lin-* 'act of licking' from *lictus*. Possibly related to Old German root *cunnen* 'to know, especially magic art.') Stimulation of the vulva or clitoris with the lips or tongue. See: cunt

cunt Universal term: Middle English *cunte*; akin Old Frisian and Middle Low German *kunte*, Middle Dutch *conte*, Norwegian and Swedish dialects *kunta*, Middle Low German *kutte*, all meaning 'female pudenda,' but in Middle High German *kotze* 'pudenda' became 'prostitute.' Like the English words, cot, cottage, cunt appears to derive from Sanskrit *khatya* 'bedstead, bier' of Dravidian origin. The Dravidians were the indigenous goddess worshippers of India before the Brahmanic conquest.

Dame, dame (Latin *Domina* 'woman in authority, female head of family'; related to *domare* 'to tame or subdue' and to *dominion, domain, dominate*.) A woman of station or authority; colloquially derogatory.

dragon (Greek *drakon* 'serpent,' akin to Old English *torht* 'bright, splendid, noble'; Goth *gatarhjan* 'to mark,' Greek *derkesthai* 'to see clearly,' *Drakos* 'eye'; Sanskrit *dar-sayati* 'she causes to see.' The basic meaning is 'to see.') A woman who watches vigilantly and fiercely over the welfare of her charges.

devil (Greek *diablos*; *dia* Latin and Greek for Goddess + Greek *ballo* 'to throw over, slander, mislead, impose upon.') The temporal and spiritual adversary of god, although subordinate to him and able to act only by his sufferance, frequently represented as the leader of all apostate angels and as the ruler of hell. See: hell

gyn (Greek *gyneh* 'woman'; related to Greek *gen* meaning origin or beginning. Both derived from Sanskrit *Gna*, the name of a Goddess.) A prefix used to mean knowledge as in *gnomon* or *gnostic*; later developed into 'know' from Latin *gnoscere* 'to know.' See: queen

gynocracy (Greek *gyn* + *cracy*) Political and social supremacy of women; petticoat rule—usually disparaging.

gynarchy (Greek *gyn* + *archy*) Government by women; a form of social organization among parthenogenic insects in which only the female parent takes part in establishing the colony.

gynophobia Literally, fear of women; defined as 'hatred of women.'

genesis (Greek 'birth or origin'; closely related to *gyn* 'woman'; derived from Sanskrit *Gna*, name of Goddess; prefix used in generate, generation, gene, genetic, gentle, genial, genre, genuine, genius.) The coming into being of anything; the first book of the Pentateuch.

hag (Old English *haegtesse*, Old High German *hagzissa* 'harpy, witch,' both from a prehistoric Germanic compound whose components are akin respectively to Old English *haga* 'hedge' and to Greek dialect *hagia* 'holy.') Female demon; an ugly repulsive old woman. In the British dialect the word has many meanings: to goad; an enclosed wooden area; the stroke of an ax; also a wild female hawk or falcon who preys for herself and is later caught when in her adult plumage. Hence a wild person (at first a female), one not to be captured. Therefore, a wise woman of independent spirit. See: hedge

Halloween (Old English *hallow* 'holy' + *e'en* 'eve.') Hallowday is the first of November (Christian All Saints' Day.) The last night of October is the Eve of All Hallows. In the Old Celtic calendar the year began on November 1, October 31 being 'Old-Year's Night,' the night of all witches. Hallowmas, the Celtic fire festival of Samhain, marked the zenith between Autumnal Equinox (c. September 23) and Winter Solstice (c. December 21.) It is the Witches' New Year coming at the end of the harvest. See: halo

halo (Greek *alous* 'threshing floor,' the first hallowed place.) From *alous* comes the name of the Greek *Halos* festival, celebrated in honor of Demeter and by women only, featuring a harvest feast. A nimbus of sacrality said to surround a person or object. See: Halloween

harp (Greek *karphos* 'dry stalk, stick'; Russian *korobit* 'to bend, warp,' probably akin to Latin *curvus* 'curved.') A musical instrument of ancient origin with strings set usually in an open frame and plucked with the fingers. See: crown, harpy

harpy (Greek *harpazein* 'to snatch' as in playing a harp, 'plucking with the fingers.') One of a group of foul malign creatures, part woman-part bird, who seized the souls of the wicked and punished evil-doers.

heal (Middle English *helen*, possibly related to *helan* Old English root for 'hell'; from Goth *hailijan* the same root as 'holy, healthy, whole.') Etymology suggests that the concepts and practices of healing derive from and may be named for the pre-Greek culture of the Hellenes. See: helenum, Helladic

heathen (Old Norse *heithinn*; Goth *haithno* specifically 'heathen woman,' probably derivatives from the root of English *heath* 'land' and Old Welsh *coit* 'forest.') Member of a people or nation that does not acknowledge the god of the bible: pagan.

hedge (Old High German *hag* 'hedge.') Hedged in enclosure; to modify a statement or position; to allow for contingencies; to avoid rigid commitment. As 'hag' means 'witch,' these connotations suggest connections with the wiccan religion. See: hag, wicca

helenium (Greek *helenion*, perhaps from *helene*, akin to Greek *helix*, adj. 'twisted, spiral,' *hellein* 'to turn, wind, roll'; *eilyein* 'to enfold.') Wicker basket used in the Eleusinian Mysteries; wicker baskets also used for sacred purposes in Druidical rites. See: heal, witch

helix (Latin from Greek) Anything of spiral shape. See: helenium

Hell (Originally Old English *helan* meant 'to conceal'; possibly related to heal. In Old Norse *hel* was defined as 'heathen.' Both related to Sanskrit *sarana* 'screening.') Place designated as the abode of the dead in various religions. See: heal, heathen

Helladic (Greek *Hellas*) Of or relating to the Bronze Age culture of the Greek mainland, lasting from about 2500 to 1100 B.C., a major gynocentric period.

heresy (Latin *haeresis*) A taking for one's self, a choosing.

hex (German *hexen*; akin Old High German *hagzissa* 'harpy, witch,' same root as *hag*.) To practice witchcraft; colloquially a jinx. See: *hag*, six

holy (Old English *hal* 'whole'; akin Gothic *hailags*, related to heal, whole; Greek *hagia* 'holy,' related to *hag*.) Consecrated, sacred.

Ishtar (Probably derived in part from the same Asianic word as Isis *ish-ish*, meaning 'she who weeps.') The powerful Babylonian Goddess who, like Isis, mourned the death of her annually slain son-lover. See: Isis

Isis Onomatopoeic Asianic word, possibly the first name of the Goddess, meaning 'she who weeps,' *ish-ish*, said of the Goddess Isis and of the moon that sheds tears of dew. By extension, 'she who issues.' See: Israel, Ishtar

Israel Ish-Rachel. Jacob married Rachel, the Dove Goddess, Iahu, (Ia, 'exalted' + *Hu* 'dove,' Deimel's Akkadian-Sumerian Glossary,) a title of Isis; later Iavhu; much later Jehovah, and became Ish-Rachel or Israel 'Rachel's man.' See: Isis

Kundalini (Sanskrit *kunda* 'coiled' *lini* 'line.') The spiral path of the primal energy through the body.

labyrinth (Latin *labia* 'a lip,' variation of *lab* 'to lick with gusto.' Ariadne was the 'Mistress of the Labyrinth' in Crete. Labrys, from the same root, is the double ax and symbol of the Goddess' womb.

Lady, lady (Of uncertain origin, possibly Old English; may be related to the Greek Goddess Lato, mother of the moon and the sun.) Feminine correlative of lord; wife, now applied to one of recognized social standing.

lochial (Greek *lechos* 'bed.') A discharge from the uterus and vagina following childbirth.

mamma (Greek *mamma* *mammē* 'breast.') Mother.

marry (Middle English *Marie* after *Mari*, the Virgin Mary—‘The Marian One,’ a title of the Virgin Mary and of her predecessor Aphrodite of the sea [mar]. Hence an orgiastic rite sacred to Aphrodite: matrimony).

matrix (Latin *matr-*, ‘mater, mother.’) Archaic: uterus, truth, table. That within which or from which something originates, takes form, or develops. See: matter

matter (Latin *mater* ‘mother.’) Constituent substance or material. See: matrix

mistress (Latin *Magistra*; related to Latin *magnus* ‘great.’) A woman in position of authority, control or ownership; feminine correlative of master. Current usage derogatory.

mystery (Greek *mystes* ‘one initiated into the mysteries,’ from Greek *myein* ‘to shut the eyes.’) Sacred knowledge revealed only to the initiated.

numinous (Latin *numen* ‘divine or presiding power or spirit; holy, sacred,’ from Latin *nuere* ‘to nod.’) Adopted by Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 1923, to describe the power of the sacred.

pagan (Latin *paganus* ‘country dweller,’ akin *pangere* ‘to fix, to agree’; akin Old English and modern English *pact*.) Heathen

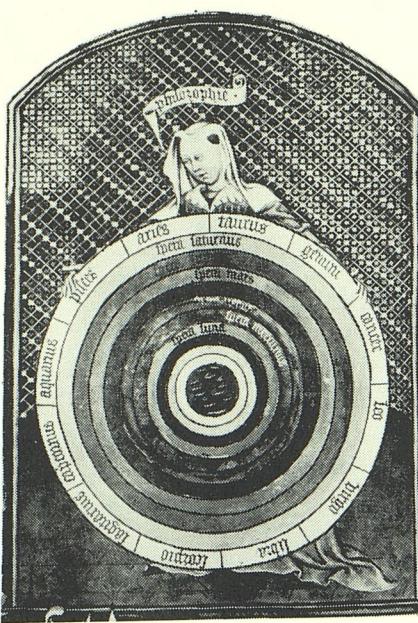
parthenogenesis (New Latin from Greek *parthen* ‘maid, virgin’ + Latin *genesis*.) Reproduction without sexual fertilization that produces a female or rarely a male offspring. See: genesis

Parthenon Name generally given since fourth century B.C. to chief temple of Athene on Acropolis at Athens, built on the site of a much earlier temple. The Parthenon is certainly to be associated with the cult of Athene Parthenos, the Virgin. This cult may be connected to another of Athene’s titles: Pallas, the name of Athene’s childhood girlfriend, whom she accidentally killed. A famous statue of Pallas Athene was stolen from Troy, causing that city’s downfall (1230-1180 B.C.), and secreted in the Penus Sanctuary of the Temple of Vesta at Athens. Only Vestal Virgins were permitted to see it. See: parthenogenesis, virgin

parthenope (New Latin from Latin) Siren worshipped in Naples in ancient times. See: parthenogenesis, siren

Parthia An ancient country to the southeast of the Caspian Sea that included present district of Gorgan in Iran. Among the intriguing place names are Parthaunisa and Hecatompyleos, capitol cities of the last Parthians. See: Amazon, parthenogenesis, Parthian

Parthian, Parthian shot Terms suggesting the mode of fighting on horseback with the bow as the only weapon employed by the Parthian people and characterized chiefly by the discharge of arrows while in retreat or feigned flight. See: Amazons, parthenogenesis



Philosophia holding the astrological world disc. Flemish manuscript. c. 1420.

phallus (Latin from Greek *phallos* ‘penis’ from Greek *phalus* ‘horn’; akin to Sanskrit *hvarate* ‘he bends,’ *hrunāti* ‘he gets lost.’ From roots *phallos*, *hrunati* derive English words blow and fail, respectively.) The male organ of generation.

queen (Old English *quen*, Anglo Saxon *cwen*; related to kin, kind, king; also related to earlier Greek *gyn* and *gen*, both derived from even earlier Sanskrit *Gna*.) Woman or supreme female of royal house. See: *gyn*

sex (Latin *sexus*, probably akin to Latin *secare* ‘to cut’; in this sense possibly connected to *hag*.) The character of being male or female; anything connected with sexual gratification or reproduction. See: *hex*, *six*

sibyl (Latin *sib* ‘kinship,’ related by blood or descent. Possibly related to *sibillant* ‘having a hissing sound,’ Cybele, name of a Goddess, and Greek *spilaion*, Latin *spelaeum* meaning ‘cave’. Caves were temples of sibyls.) An ordained woman respected for her powers of prophecy and divination. A witch.

Sin The Akkadian god of the moon, the counterpart of the earlier Sumerian Nanna. Although the moon is most often assigned to a female deity, by Late Sumerian/Akkadian times it had become personified as male. Mount Sinai was the mountain dedicated to this god upon which Moses received the ten commandments. Sin means a transgression of religious law. See: *sinister*, *sinuous*

sinister (Latin ‘on the left side.’) Ominous, of evil or wrongdoing. Obsolete: conveying misleading or detrimental opin-

ions or advice. The left side is traditionally designated (e.g. in patriarchal religions) as the female side. See: *sin*, *sinuous*, *widder-shins*

sinuous (Latin *sinus* ‘to curve, fold’; probably akin Albanian *giri* ‘bosom, lap.’) Bending in and out of a serpentine or wavy form. See: *sin*, *sinister*

siren (Greek *sirēn* *seirēdon*) One of a group of creatures in Greek mythology having the head and sometimes the breasts and arms of women but otherwise the forms of birds that were believed to lure mariners to their destruction by their singing. Obsolete: mermaid, marmaid. See: *marry*

six (Akin Old Norse *sex*, Latin *sex*, Greek *hex*) The cardinal number between five and seven. See: *hex*

sphinx (Greek *sphingein* ‘to bind fast,’ probably from the spell she cast. From this sense comes ‘sphincter’ as in the *sphincter vaginæ*, the muscle that contracts the vaginal orifice.) An enigmatic monster in Greek mythology having typically a lion’s body, wings, and the head and bust of a woman.

spinster (Old English *spinnan* ‘to spin.’) A woman who spins thread or yarn. From same root comes spider, e.g., one who draws out and twists fibers into thread. Modern usage derogatory. Note: the sense of wife is also ‘weaver.’

temple (Latin *templum* ‘temple, sanctuary, space for observation of birds marked out by an augur, small timber.’) The physiognomy of birds is repeatedly assigned to awe-inspiring women [see: *hag*, *harpy*, *siren*]; moreover temple is derived from the same root as *witch*.) A place of worship; area on each side of head back of eye and forehead; a device through which selvage must pass in a loom for keeping the web stretched transversely. See: *witch*

victim (Latin *victima*; akin to Old English *wig* ‘idol, image,’ descriptive of witches; Old High German *wih wihi* ‘holy’; Goth *weihs* ‘holy,’ and to Old Norse *ve* ‘temple.’) A person or animal killed as a sacrifice in a religious rite. See: *witch*

virago (Latin *viragin* ‘woman’ from *vir* ‘man’ + *Gyn* ‘woman’; Sanskrit *vira* ‘man.’) A loud overbearing woman, shrew, termagant; a woman of great stature, strength and courage; one possessing supposedly masculine qualities of body and mind. See: *virgin*

viper (Latin *vivus* ‘alive, living’ + *parere* ‘to bring forth.’ Probably related to Old English *vivers* ‘wives’ through the Indo-European base *weip* ‘to twist and turn,’ from which wife is derived.) Snake, serpent. Also see: *sinuous*

virgin The Old English *viragin*, used alternatively for virgin clearly relates to *virago*, but *virgin* is generally attributed to Latin *virgo* ‘young woman, maiden,’ and assumed to be from *virga* ‘green branch,’

vir 'green' + *gin* (Greek *gyn*) Connnotes young, pliant woman, but not originally connected with sexual inexperience. In Greek literature *parthenos* 'virgin' indicates sexual autonomy. Note: *Virga*, a rod or staff carried as an emblem of authority. See: *gyn*, *parthenogenesis*, *virago*, *witch*.

vulva (Middle English *vul*, variant *full* and from Latin *vulnus* 'wound' and *volvere* 'to roll, to turn about.') The external genital organs of the female.

whole (Middle English *hool* 'healthy'; akin Goth *hails* 'healthy,' Welsh *coel* 'omen.') Containing all of its elements. Archaic: healed, said of a wound. See: *holy*

whore (Old English *hore*; akin to Goth *hors* 'adulterer' and Latin *carus* 'dear' from Sanskrit *kama* 'love, desire,' same root as charity and in that connection 'the virtue or act of loving god.') One regarded as actuated by corrupt, unworthy or idolatrous motives; specifically a woman who practices unlawful sexual commerce.

wicca (Old English *wicke* 'wizard' of which the feminine is *wicce* 'witch'; related to Old English *wican* 'to bend, give

way.') By Middle English *wicke* had come to mean 'wicked.') In current use as the revered name for the practice of the Craft (of witches). See: *hedge, witch*

widdershins (Middle High German *widersinnes* 'to go back, go against in a left handed or contrary direction.') The sacred left-handed dance performed by witches. See: *sinister*

wife (Old English *wiver* obs. from *vivers* 'wives'; *wiver* North dialect identical with 'waver, wafer,' obs. sense of 'weaver'; Indo-European base *weik* 'a dwelling' and *weip* 'to twist, turn'; possibly related to *viper*.) In the basic sense 'the hidden or veiled person.' See: *spinster*

win (Old English *winna* 'to struggle,' akin old Norse *vinna* 'to work, avail, conquer, win'; Goth *winnan* 'to suffer'; Latin *vener*, *Venus* 'love, sexual desire,' *venerari* 'to venerate'; Sanskrit *venati*, *vanoti* 'she desires, loves'; Hittite *uen uent* 'to copulate.') Basic meaning: to strive from the impulse to procreate

wise (Old Norse *visir* 'stalk or stem of plant'; from Indo-European base *wid* 'to

see, know.') Sagacious, prudent, discreet. See: *witch*

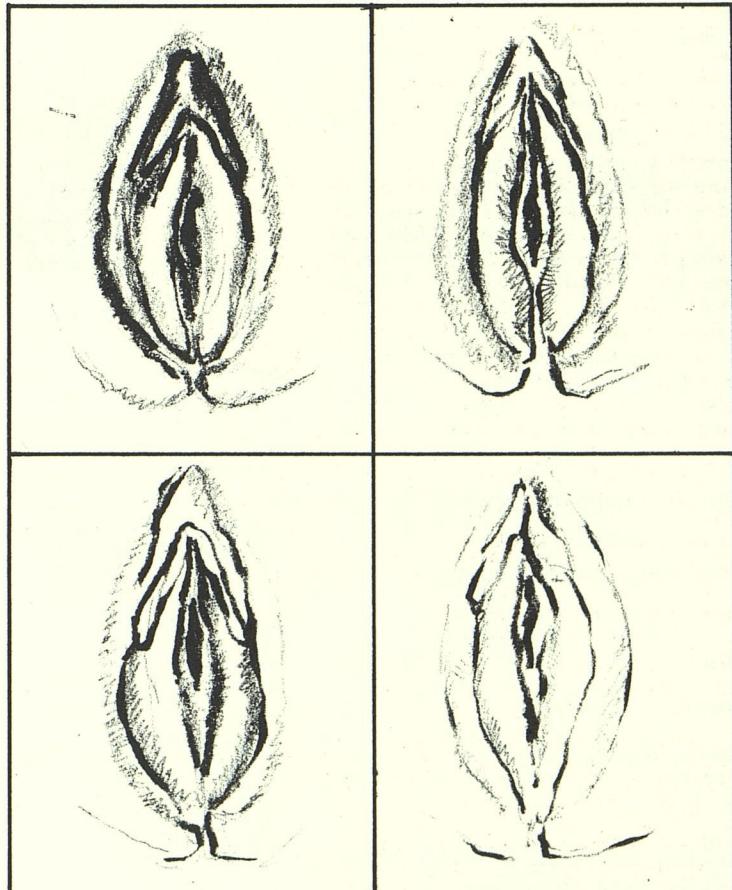
witch (Old English *wiccan* 'to practice witchcraft, *wigle* 'divination,' *viglian* 'to divine,' *wig* 'idol image'; and from Old Norse *ve* 'temple,' same root as victim. Also related to Anglo-Saxon *wis* 'wise' from which comes *wisard* *wischcraft*, *vouchsafe*, *vessel*, *wish*. Also connected by root to *wicker*, from Danish *viger* 'willow'; Swedish *vika* 'to bend'; hence pliant branches capable of being woven as in wicker basketry. All from Indo-European base *weig* 'violent strength.') A female magician, sorceress, sage, soothsayer, wise woman skilled in occult arts and beneficent charms. Only later, a woman in league with evil spirits. See: *hedge, helenium, temple, virgin*

ziggurat (Babylonian verb *zagarrv* 'to be tall, lofty.') A temple of Sumerian origins, also constructed by Babylonians and Assyrians, intended to be a ladder or gateway to heaven; a pyramid with circular exterior stairways. The Tower of Babel was probably a ziggurat.

A Random Thought

Paula Mariedaughter

While wandering through the Feminist Wicce and seeing rows and rows of various colored candles in the shape of female genitals (i.e. yoni) it came to me that the christians (and others) have not been able to eliminate reverence for female sexuality so they renamed yoni and called it "the praying hands." Then they can call it sacred.



New Book Releases

Christ, Carol P. *Woman Spirit Rising*. New York: Harper & Row, January, 1979.

Edelson, Mary Beth. *Their 5000 Years Are Up. Rituals and Works to Celebrate the New Time*. Persephone Press, Box 7222, Watertown, Maine 02172. Autumn, 1978.

Spretnak, Charlene. *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece*. A collection of pre-Hellenic mythology. Moon Books, P.O. 9223, Berkeley, California 94709. Now Available. \$4.95.

Stone, Merlin. *When God Was A Woman*. (Now available in paperback edition. Dial Press. \$3.95. New York: HBJ Harvest Books, 757 Third Avenue, 10017.

Weinstein, Marian. *Positive Magic-Occult Self Help*. New York: Simon and Schuster Pocketbooks. Now Available, \$1.95.

FICTION WORKS

Anthologies:

Big Momma. A poetry anthology. Published by the Big Momma Poetry Troupe. Distributed by League Books, P.O. Box 6055, Cleveland, Ohio 44101.

Spiderwoman's Lesbian Fairy Tales. Prose and fiction. Distributed by New Moon Communications, P.O. Box 3488, Ridgeway Station, Stamford, Connecticut 06905.

General Fiction:

Blue, Shelley and Snow, Deborah, *The Fourteenth Witch*. Watertown, Massachusetts: Persephone Press (P.O. Box 7222, Watertown, Massachusetts 02172).

Budapest, Z. *Selene: The Most Famous Bull-Leaper on Earth*. A matriarchal children's book illustrated by Carol Clement. Berkeley: Diana Press, 1977.

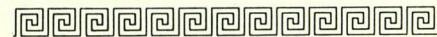
Carrington, Leonora. *The Oval Lady*. Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1975.

Gioseffi, Daniela, *The Great American Belly Dance*. A novel. New York: Doubleday, 1977.

_____. *Eggs in the Lake*. Psalms and poems to the Goddess. The University of Brockport, English Dept.: BOA Editions, 1978.

Hadas, Pamela. *The Passion of Lilith*. Send \$3.25 to Serendipity Books, 1790 Shattuck, Berkeley, California 94709.

Wittig, Monique, *The Oppoponax*. Translated by Helen Weaver. Indicts Catholocism. New York: Daughter's Inc., 1969.



PUBLICATIONS

Magazines, and Special Issues

Companions for the Journey, edited by Juanita Weaver. An anthology of women and spirituality. Send \$4.00 plus 50¢ to: Companions, 1710 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Country Women. See the special Spirituality issue (no. 10). P.O. Box 51, Albion, California, \$7.00 per year. 12 issues.

Chrysalis, Dept. G, c/o The Women's Building, 1727 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, California 90012.

Earth Rites, 43A Cedar Avenue, Highland Park, New Jersey 08904.



Baubo, jester to the Goddess Demeter. Priene, Anatolia. 5th century B.C.

Resources

Foundation for Matriarchy Newsletter, 306 Lafayette, Brooklyn, New York 11236.

Lady - Unique - Inclination - of - the - Night. A magazine on women, religion and the Goddess. Send \$2.00 plus 25¢ for postage to: Nancy Dean, P.O. Box 803, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903.

Lilith, the Jewish Women's Magazine. 250 W. 57th St. 10019. \$6.00 per year.

The Mother Church Bulletin, edited by Toni Head. Box 2188, Satellite Beach, Florida 32937. Published quarterly, \$2.00 per year. (See Toni Head's article in this issue for details.)

The New Sun, edited by Elliot Sobel. Not a feminist publication but covers the fields of

spirituality, health and nutrition and human potential. Published 11 times a year. Subscription price: \$9.00 a year. Send \$1.00 to the following address for a sample copy: 1520 East 10th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11230. (212) 627-0620.

Nozama News (Amazon spelled backwards). A newsletter on matriarchy, healing and psychic awareness. Route 1, Box 191, Oroville, California 95965.

Parabola—Myth and the Quest for Meaning. Published quarterly by the Tamarack Press, Mt. Kisco, New York. \$12 per year, \$3.50 per issue. Write to: Parabola, 166 East 61st Street, New York, New York 10021 or P.O. Box 505, Lenox Hill Station, New York, New York 10021.

Quest Feminist Quarterly. See the special issue on Women and Spirituality, Vol. 1, Issue 4. 1909 Que St., N.W. Washington, D.C. 20009. \$7.00 per year.

Radical Religion, P.O. Box 21263, Seattle, Washington 98111.

Second Wave, Box 344, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139. Published quarterly, \$3.50 per year, \$1.00 per issue.

Signs—A Journal of Women in Culture and Society. Published quarterly. The University of Chicago Press, 11030 Langley Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60628. \$20.00 per year.

Sinister Wisdom, edited by Catherine Nicholson and Harriet Desmoines. 3116 Country Club Drive, Charlotte, North Carolina 28205. Published three times a year.

Women, A Journal of Liberation. Published by A Journal of Liberation, Inc., 3028 Greenmount Ave., Baltimore, MD 21218. (301) 235-5245.

Womenspirit Quarterly. Seeks original, authentic personal experiences by women for publication. Box 263, Wolf Creek, Oregon 97497.



ORGANIZATIONS

Coalition on Women and Religion, 4759 15th Ave. N.E. Seattle, Washington 98105. Publishes books and a newsletter, *Flame*.

Earth Celebrations, P.O. Box 197, Brooklyn, New York 11202. Dedicated to staging poetry, music and dance celebrations for the Goddess.

The Fellowship of Isis, Foundation Centre: Huntington Castle, Emniscorthy, Eire (Ireland). Has a scholarly press dedicated to publishing works on the Goddess.

King Phillip's Institute. Should we establish churches to the Goddess in America. Yes. No. Maybe. Send replies to King Phillip's Institute for Women's Studies, 440 West End Avenue, New York, New York 10025.

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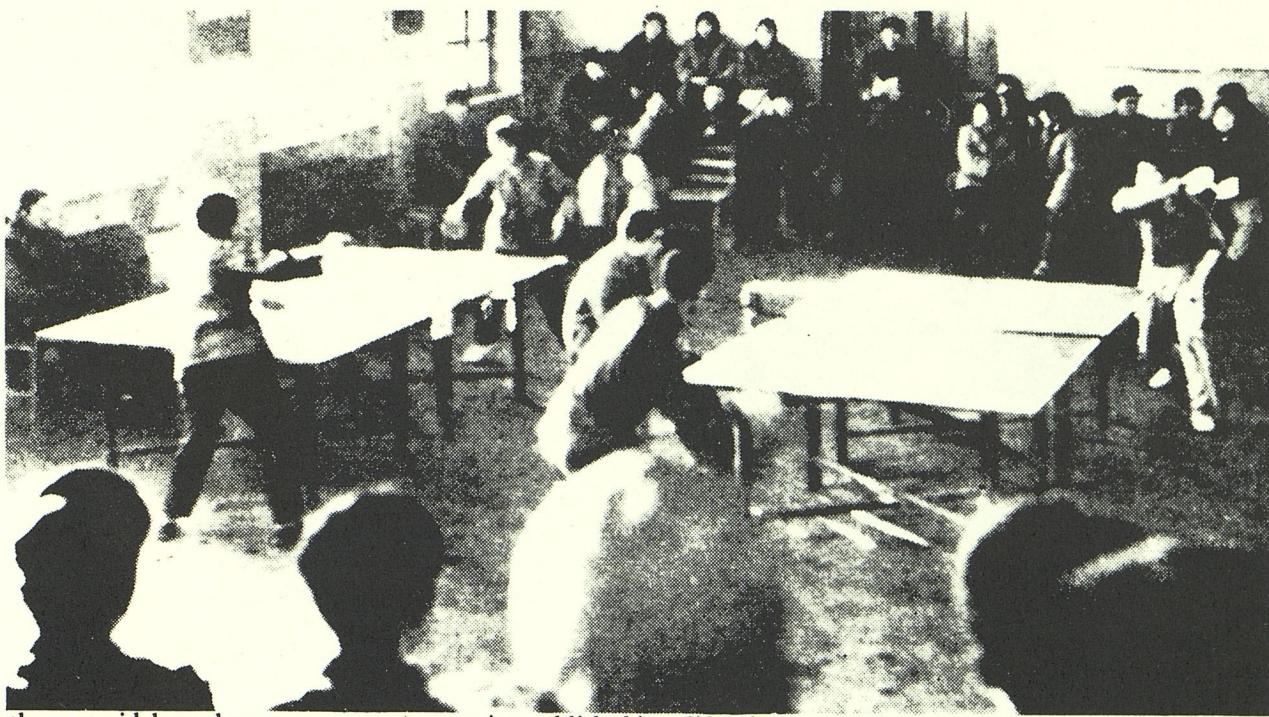
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Ephesian Artemis (Diana). Roman copy, 2nd century B.C. Her temple was said to have been built by Amazons, and was the shrine denounced by Paul in Acts 19.

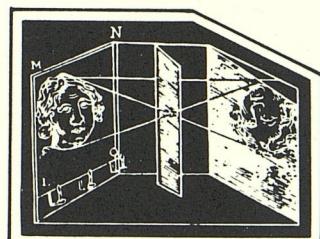


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Errata: Third Issue of HERESIES

"Natalie Barney on Renée Vivien," translated by Margaret Porter, which appeared in the Lesbian Art and Artists issue, was originally published in book form as *Souvenirs Indiscrets* by Flammarion and Company, Paris, France. We thank them for permission to republish this excerpt.

Errata: Fourth Issue of HERESIES

On page 4, *couturières* and *couturières* were accented incorrectly.

On page 123, footnotes 15 through 17 are actually 16 through 18. Footnote 15 was omitted; it reads: See, for example, Nelson Graburn, "The Eskimos and Commercial Art," *Trans-action*, Oct., 1967, pp. 28-33.

On page 124, *The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian* was by Mountain Wolf Woman.

Thanks for help also to Tina Murch.

The following people have made contributions to HERESIES ranging from \$1 to \$200. We thank them very much.

Joy Alfred
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Women and Violence: *Rebellion*: feminism as an act of self-defense; revolutionary struggles; art which explores violence; art-making as an aggressive act... *Institutionalized*: incarceration in prisons and mental hospitals; repression in traditional religions; racism; imperialism and economic deprivation; torture of political prisoners; sterilization abuse; homophobia; rape... *Cultural*: violence against women in mass media, literature and art; women's self-image... *Family*: wife beating; child abuse; sex-violence among lovers and friends... Available August 1978.

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Working Together: An exploration of the way women function in work situations—alone, in groups, in collectives. The problems and rewards of going public with our work. Heresies' work process in the first year and critical response to the first four issues. The impact of work on our lives. How and why women set up support structures. Work and education, work within family and living groups. Women in unions and as organizers. Looking at past and present collectives: feminist, Third World, lesbian, male/female. Work that is product-oriented and work that is experience-oriented. Women in the professions and in positions of privilege. What have we got? Where are we going? Deadline: July 15, 1978.

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Third World Women in the United States: Explorations through researched documentation, literary and visual works: a redefining of "Third World women"; celebration of creativity and self image; isolation of Third World women from each other; forced invisibility within the larger society; Third World women resisting the dominant/maintaining traditional/creating a new culture; Third World women effecting social change; ageism; growing up Third World; validation of our art/who legitimizes our art? a philosophy for criticism; critiques, Third World women as consumers of art; creative modes of expression: fashion, life style, environment and work. The 8th issue collective is accepting manuscripts from women of all ages. Deadline: Mid-September 1978.

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Women Organized/Women Divided: Power, propaganda and backlash—How culture organizes women and how women can use culture to organize themselves; media and fine arts as propaganda; use of media by right-to-lifers, anti-abortion and anti-E.R.A. forces. Is any art apolitical? Power and money in the Women's Movement; backlash, wiretapping, investigation and intimidation of political women. Nihilism in pop music and other art forms. Working-class women and their relation to feminism. Eurocommunism and feminism? Lesbian socialism—what is it? The politics of therapy—psychoanalysis: Can women salvage? Deadline December, 1978.

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