A photograph of a man and a woman standing close together in a lush, green forest. The woman is on the left, looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The man is on the right, also smiling and looking towards the camera. They are surrounded by dense foliage, including large green leaves and ferns. The overall tone is natural and serene.

International Journal of Gender, Nature & Transformation

Healing gender: Engaging the sacred feminine
through nature & myth

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Creator: Sharon G. Mijares

IJGNT Editor: Sharon G. Mijares

IJGNT.journal@gmail.com

Contributing Editor: Jenny Eda Schipper

Cover Design: Sharon G. Mijares & Cass Dalglish

Layout Design: Sharon G. Mijares

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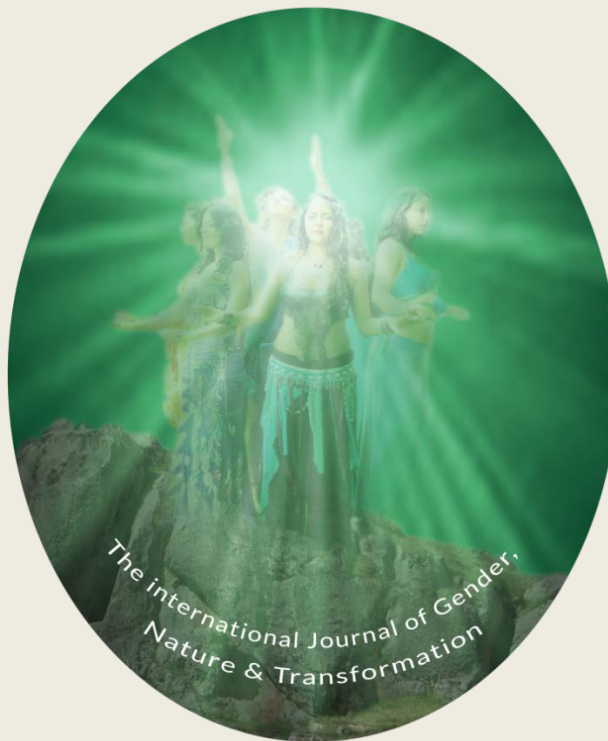


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Photo of woman with Sword (page 8): Courtesy of Sensei Coryl Crane, [North County Aikikai](#)



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Editor's Message,



It is with great delight that we present the first edition “Healing gender: Engaging the sacred feminine through nature myth” of the *International Journal of Gender, Nature and Transformation* (IJGNT).

Our hope and intention are to add our voices to the growing awareness that gender healing, the recognition of the sacred feminine, and care of our natural environment are extremely relevant factors in creating a healthier, sustainable world. In fact, unless these elements are put at the top of our lists, humanity could be nearing its demise.

But, if we all focus our attention on what is truly sustainable—providing health and respect for all life forms—we will make it through the climate, economic, psychological, cultural, relational and ultimately spiritual challenges facing us at this time. All of life is endowed with the power of creativity so there is reason to have hope. Certainly, the messages and quality of the articles in this first edition add to the possibility of transformation!

To begin with I would like to share a bit of history on the process of creating this journal. The idea came to me on the morning of February 6th as I sat on the veranda of my Costa Rican residence sipping my usual morning coffee. My mind wandered to a recent article. I recognized it was time to find the right publisher for “Changing myths, fairy tales, and facts: The social construction of gender.” Like lightening flashing through the sky (something one sees often in Costa Rica), I was inspired by the idea of creating this on-line journal. Authors were invited to contribute, the journal website was created along with related social media—and then the editing began. The cover design of the first edition was a collaborative work between contributing author Cass Dalglish and myself.

Next, the powerful logos for IJGNT was designed. Now, I don’t know if journals generally have a logos, but this one is very important as it makes manifest a vision this Editor had at the Temple of the Moon in Cusco, Peru. In this vision, women were taking a circular form of radiating crystal rays of light. There was a woman in the center, and the intuited message was that “she was only possible because of them.” This is very different than the patriarchal paradigm of dominance. Instead, it reflects unity in manifestation.

Each of our authors has likewise manifested a unique message. Their words of wisdom and caring have made this edition possible. We have contributors from Costa Rica, Egypt, Japan, United States and Uganda in this first edition. A glance at IJGNT’s Table of Contents should whet your appetite for more.

Please enjoy this initial edition and spread the word...

Peace, Sharon
Costa Rica , July 26, 2014



Contributing Editor's Message,



It is a pleasure to be a contributing editor on the first edition of the International Journal of Gender, Nature and Transformation (IJGNT). The critical times in which we live challenge us as never before. The old ways of thinking, acting, and living simply cannot sustain humanity into the future. This Journal brings forward powerful, passionate and articulate women from around the world, writing on a breadth of topics. What stands out about each contribution is an urgency to awaken ourselves past the momentum of habituated perceptions and behaviors promulgated by patriarchal cultures worldwide for thousands of years.

Each author and contributor presents a vivid aspect of Her/Gaia/Woman. Sharon Mijares has once again used her special gift of gathering diverse individual voices to generate a cohesive impact. I am honored to take part in creating this journal that brings together such distinct women's voices, each presenting a compelling perspective on the awakening of feminine energy around the world. Through the pages of this journal it becomes apparent that the sacred feminine is much more than a religious or spiritual ideal. It is, in fact, the sustenance of all that lives. 'She' holds together the fabric of life as we know it.

Every piece in this first edition of the International Journal of Gender, Nature and Transformation appeals to us to hear with our minds and listen from our hearts.

Please do enjoy and share.. .

In Gratitude, Jenny
Encinitas, California
July 26, 2014



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Changing Myths, Fairy Tales & Facts: the Social Construction of Gender

Sharon G. Mijares, Costa Rica

Abstract: The social construction of gender is rapidly changing. This is obvious in changing myths and the re-versioning of old fairy tales. Snow White, Cinderella and other fantasy feminine images have transformed. The delicate endangered princess is no longer being rescued by a prince. Instead, the new stories show women stepping forth with deep inner strength, rescuing princes and whole nations. Misbegotten ideas of feminine beauty and fear of its loss along with the willingness to destroy others for the sake of superiority has entrapped women. It perpetuates the hierarchical behaviors generally associated with patriarchy. This erroneous behavior has separated many mothers and daughters, and weakened the inherent capacity for engaging in meaningful relationship. Generations of women have been suppressed by fear of aging and losing an outer sense of worth. This has pitted women against women, caused differing agendas from one generation of feminists to the next and is a predominant theme in older myths, fairy tales, and personal narratives. The new stories have women uniting for the greater good of all. In the popular series, *The Hunger Games*, the heroine, Katniss, is not a princess, but rather a young woman of the village who has the power to be present with her depressed mother, sacrifice for her younger sister and the strength and caring to save the community in which she lives. She is at home with nature and with her own beliefs. She is free from envy and destructiveness. Such stories are indicators of a significant social reconstruction of the feminine as these conceptual images move from the archetypal into ordinary reality--creating sustainable relationships and a sustainable world.

Myths are important! They reflect past, present and future influences in human beliefs and behaviors. Emergent modern myths indicate that significant changes in gender images are taking place--an evolving interaction between the collective unconscious and conscious. This article discusses some of the ways that older gendered myths and fairy tales are changing while providing some examples regarding their influence in social behaviors.

There was a time when many ancient myths addressed "the forcing apart of sky and earth". All of life, the cosmos and the natural world, had previously been regarded as being "united in sexual union"¹. For example, this idea was beautifully depicted in the Egyptian image of the sky goddess Nut embracing the earth god, Gib. Egyptian professor and author, Dr. Aliaa Rafea, explains that "Nut embraced, rather than dominated as Egyptian mythologies focused on integration rather than separation." According to Dr. Rafea, the ancient Egyptians were not dichotomizing humans by gender or even the world itself into spirit and matter. In the mythological image of Nut and Gib, "the sky meets with earth on the horizon and completes it as one whole."²

With the onset of patriarchal ideology, mythological narratives reflected coming changes that would soon dominate ideologies, practices and human relationships especially views and treatment of gender and nature. Emergent myths addressed what seemed like opposing forces in nature, defining them in feminine and masculine terms, although which gender was related to spirit (sky, heaven, sun) or earth (matter and form) has tended to differ throughout cultural history. One example is seen in stories related to the Japanese Shinto goddess, Ama-tarasu Omikami (around 680 A.D.). Whereas Nut represented the sky, Ama-tarasu was known as the great mother sun. In one narrative, her brother, Susanoo, associated with moon and night, created much destruction in the heavenly realm as a result of his jealousy of Ama-tarasu. She fled into a heavenly cave and thus the world was deprived of the life-giving energy of the sun. Eventually, Ama-terasu Omikami



was called forth by all of the creatures needing her energy and light. Life was then re-energized by the emergence of what was considered to be a feminine force emanating from the heavens.³ Other stories have earth and moon as feminine, i.e. mother earth, and sun and spirit as masculine (i.e. father sky).

The masculine was emphasized as logic, reason, mind, and thus, sun and sky. Terms such as the “light of reasoning”, the “glory of god” became depictions of the masculine gender as these ideals became the guiding principles for human life.

We are at the dawning of another paradigmatic shift—one that sponsors the role of women in leadership, healing and change. The earlier narratives of the life-energizing force of the feminine is expressing itself in changing myths and related realities. Considering that each new era brings something previously unknown, it is important to be receptive as new ideas of the feminine and new ideas of gender balance emerge, and old ones dissipate. Certainly, as the Jungian analyst Maria-Louise Von Franz⁴ pointed out, governing mythologies evidenced in fairy tales had not portrayed the feminine as a whole person.

Religious Mythologies

This was also evidenced in the founding of world religious traditions. Numerous, influential religious scriptures spread stories demeaning the feminine. The early Vedic teachings presented in the Rig Veda proclaimed that “Lord Indra himself has said that woman has very little intelligence” and that “She cannot be taught” (Rig Veda 8.33.17). The Judeo-Christian Bible rendered the feminine in less than favorable ways, especially when choosing the favored creation story to be the one that relegated Eve as inferior to the male. There were other creation stories than that of Eve being created out of Adam’s rib. Many people are unaware of another early Jewish creation story, included in the Haggadah, which reveals a slightly different narrative than the one chosen for inclusion in the Bible.

It relates that Adam’s birth and life were only possible because her soul, the breath of life, was breathed into him. This Hebrew story explains, “that as the ideal human, Adam, was being created, the soul was prepared. It was with the soul’s entrance into the physical that life was awakened”⁵. Thus a decision was made to use the narrative the demeaned rather than elevated the feminine.

Think of the untold numbers of women, who have been influenced and disempowered by scriptural narrative such as the following,

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach or to usurp authority over the man; but to be in silence...for Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived as in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith, and charity and holiness with sobriety. (1 Timothy 2:11-15)

Much of humanity is now blindly (or openly) running toward environmental and nuclear disasters. This has a relationship to an obvious deprivation of meaningful narratives honoring both genders as equal (and nature as consciousness).

In her chapter, ‘Night to his day: The social construction of gender,’ Sociologist Judith Lorber (1994) discusses the fact that babies are born with a specific sex, but this has nothing to do with the social construction of gender itself. Gender behaviors are socially and intrapsychically instituted. This keeps everyone in line with the hierarchical ordering established with the patriarchal paradigm. It has been very difficult for women to move outside of this socially constructed system fueled by myths and irrational beliefs fueled by the mythologies of the last 4000+ years.

Lacking Direction

The late psychologist Rollo May (1909-1994) explained that myths were “narrative patterns that give significant to our existence.” He believed that humanity was in great need of new myths as we lacked clarity and direction in what appears to be an increasingly confusing world. May believed that unless meaningful myths emerged there would be increasing depression and suicidal behaviors.⁶

In such directionless states as we find ourselves near the end of the twentieth century, it is not surprising that frantic people flock to the new cults, or resurrect the old ones, seeking answers to their anxiety and longing for relief from their guilt or depressions, longing for something to fill the vacuum of their lives.

In short, the myths that we have lived by for the last four thousand years are no longer working. Many people tenuously hold onto the old ones, even though it is obvious that religious, economic and political mythologies are not evoking the best in human potential. If we continue to follow

narratives leading us toward war, destruction and the neglect of our environment, most likely, it is possible that we will not survive the results. Therefore, we need to re-create our understanding of the world, and the power of the feminine.

According to Social Construction Theory (SCT), our reality results from a variety of interactions between persons and groups forming concepts about meaning and relationship within the social structure. The two interact with one another and over time they become habituated and/or institutionalized.

Externalization and objectification are moments in a continuing dialectical process. Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. [Human experience] is a social product. It may already be evident that an analysis of the social world that leaves out any of these three components will be distortive.

Postmodernist constructionism values the voices and mores of others, and a significant other includes our relationship with our natural environment. The tragedy of the patriarchal paradigm was the denigration of both the feminine and nature.

If we study the emerging paradigms of the feminine we see new relationships about gender and the world taking shape. They replace the idea of a dominant gender, race, and so forth. A very timely re-versioning of old fairy tales is taking place. They portray women as strong, brave and caring. Often, women are protected and empowered (learning sword art, archery, etc.) when in the forest or a place in nature. As the narrative renditions of Snow White, Cinderella and other fantasy feminine images transform, the delicate endangered princess is no longer being rescued by a prince. Instead, these revised stories show women stepping forth with deep inner strength--rescuing princes and whole nations.

The Myths Are Changing

Any feminist recognizes serious messages are presented to young females in the original story of Ariel in *"The little mermaid."* The pretty mermaid has seen and fallen in love with a human prince. In order to become human herself and to marry him, Ariel must give up her "voice." One's voice denotes authority to speak and express oneself. Ariel is rescued from the envy of the Sea Witch (female) by her father and the prince. The continuation of the story provides a new image of the feminine through Ariel and the prince's daughter Melody. One significant change is that the name of their daughter is associated with having a voice. Melody

fights the evil Sea Witch herself without forfeiting her power to express.

The film, *"Ever After"* was released in 1998. In the newly constructed version, Cinderella has learned the art of the sword. She sets out on horseback and saves the prince as opposed to being saved by him. When the wicked stepmother and her daughters are brought before the royalty for lying about Cinderella, they are sentenced to working in the palace laundry-room. In the same year, the film story of compassionate and brave *"Mulan"* (1998) was released. In the story, Mulan learns that her aging father has received the command to return to military service. She takes his place pretending to be a male. Her bravery and command result in saving the entire kingdom. The more recent Tim Burton rendition of *"Alice of Wonderland"* (2010) places Alice in a more empowering role. Alice has returned to *Underland*, which, according to the narrative, had been mistakenly called Wonderland. Her return is a threat to the reign of the evil Red Queen. Alice obtains the Vorpall Sword, which has magical powers to kill the jabberwocky. Alice takes the sword to the White Queen, but learns that it is her own task to take on the destructive jabberwocky. Although she is invited to stay in Underland, Alice makes the decision to return home. She is then able to live her life in a way that is true to her—as opposed to one intended by family or society.



The 2012 Pixar movie *"Brave"* presents a girl who is equally courageous, caring and spirited. The relationship with the mother is a positive and supportive one. Princess Merida is gifted with a bow by her father king and taught the art of archery. Merida later refused to enter into a chosen marriage. She fights for the right of the young to choose who to marry for the cause of love itself. In the end she breaks an evil spell by standing up for herself—and also by reconciling with her mother.

Most importantly, mother and daughter work together to break the evil spell. This is a significant paradigmatic change.

Archetypal Symbols Supporting Changes in Gender Image

The Sword.



There are numerous archetypal themes in the above-named films depicting individuation and a woman standing up for what is true. The sword is an often-used symbol in myths and fairy tales. It is traditionally associated with masculine energy and can be seen as a phallic symbol. It is a symbol for truth (cutting through illusions, etc.). It can also be considered a universal representation of power typically associated with the masculine gender. But, now the stories have women demonstrating the ability to defend, protect and stand up for truth through its use.

The Evil Queen/Stepmother.



Another major theme in fairy tales is that of the wicked queen, stepmother or missing mother who died when giving birth. The wicked queen and/or stepmother are often envious of a younger woman with greater beauty. A 2012 film *"Snow White and the Huntsman"* (2012) touches on this issue in a very revealing way. The wicked Queen, Ravenna, employs a Huntsman to go after her to kill her. In order to retain her beauty, Ravenna breathes in the youth from young women. And, similar to the original version, she must destroy Snow White in order to be fairest of them all. Snow White escapes into a dark forest. Ravenna's dying mother, a sorceress, had placed a spell on Ravenna to assure eternal life and beauty as she tells her daughter that "Your beauty is all that can save you."

Balancing Beauty and Power

This version of Snow White clearly depicts the core of a serious problem. Many women have only experienced power (and also protection and safety) through the allurements of seductive beauty; therefore, "...if a woman is not the fairest of them all, or if she is aging, younger and more attractive women can be seen as a threat." Luckily for our modern Snow White, the huntsman teaches her to protect herself with the sword. Metaphorically, she now knows, and can act on, the truth of her own power. This results in the Huntsman

honoring Snow White, who is then seen leading the "well-intended males to free them from the evil control of the Queen." This is a powerful example of a transforming myth, illustrating that a woman can be freed from misguided feminine power. Although the Huntsman teaches her what he knows about the sword, he bows to her ability to wield it. Snow White is the one who "steps forward with pure and empowered motivation."

As the late Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung pointed out, shared mythological themes are found in the study of dreams, cultural mythologies, and world religions⁷. His research, and the research of his female colleagues, in particular, Maria-Louise Von Franz (1975), supported the theory of *Unus Mundus*, a Latin term for a unified reality that undergirded human experience, evidencing itself in symbol, metaphor, dreams and mythologies. This can be aligned with Social Construction theory, while deepening the concept of co-created social consciousness. One has to ask the question if we consciously create a shared collective conscious or if some underlying consciousness motivates the formation of a socially constructed reality or if conscious experience is a mix of all of the above? In that there is a lot of evidence of new gendered stories, ideals, and realities taking place throughout the globe, this suggests that these changes from old mythological paradigms into healthier gendered ones are being propelled from the collective unconscious—motivating changes that have yet to fully take place. It appears that this may not be as linear, and that all communication (conscious and unconscious, social and archetypal) impacts one another. It is best not to fall prey to one description of how consciousness and social relationships are influenced. Four-thousand years of gender imbalance along with the current threats to the environment and related life-forms would initiate and draw forth new images and related values. We change the inner as it changes us. Certainly it is timely to interact with new narratives and related meaning-making.

Misbegotten ideas of feminine beauty and fear of its loss, along with the willingness to destroy others for the sake of superiority, has entrapped many women. It perpetuates the hierarchical behaviors generally associated with patriarchy. Obviously the new stories are indicating that change is occurring.

Women Respecting Women: The Formation of an Authentic Sisterhood

Many women have integrated the modeled patriarchal paradigm. Hence, they are willing to sacrifice relationship for

the goal of superiority. Such behaviors have separated many mothers and daughters, and weakened the inherent capacity for engaging in meaningful relationship. Generations of women have been suppressed by fear of aging and losing an externalized, social sense of worth. The fact that women's capacity to contribute to many areas of life, for example, business; economic; environmental; religious; and political decisions, has fostered envy and power struggles. In my introduction to *A Force such as the World has Never Known: Women Creating Change*, I wrote the following:

Where men have projected evil upon other ideologies, nations, religions and races, women have tended to project it on close others. For example, while men have developed and used physical and military strength in order to have power over others, women have enacted more subtle, often unconscious, negative behaviors on family members, social or workplace relationships. As Carl Jung, and also Sigmund Freud, so rightly point out, what remains in the unconscious acts out in hidden ways. Thousands of years of repression encouraged anger, with the tendency to displace it on other women, sisters, friends, co-workers. Because women in general have been suppressed, many are eager to have the power to achieve more influence in the world. If they are insecure at some level, they will find a way to eliminate other women from their work, social and home environments as they project the "bad" mother/woman archetype upon them.

These qualities fostering a paradigm of woman against woman, also initiate differing agendas from one generation of feminists to the next, thereby separating generations of efforts rather than connecting influential threads.

Thus, the predominant theme of envy and destructiveness evidenced in older myths, fairy tales, and personal narratives, along with the powerlessness that means one has to be rescued by a prince or some masculine figure, had to change. The new stories have women uniting for the greater good of all. The images of mother and daughter working together in *Pride* (2011) certainly differ from older stories with themes depicting a deceased mother with a wicked stepmother taking her place.

In the recent, compelling re-versioning of the Sleeping Beauty story, *Maleficent*, the heroines are both the sorcerous Maleficent and young Aurora. This story relates the history that influenced Maleficent to curse the infant Princess Aurora—a story that had never been told. In the curse, Maleficent proclaimed before the kingdom that when Aurora reached her sixteenth birthday she would be pricked by the

spindle of a spinning wheel and enter a death-like slumber. Only true love's kiss would have the power to awaken her.

Stefan, Aurora's father, had once betrayed Maleficent's love and trust, when his desire to be king overshadowed any love they had shared. The current king was dying and had proclaimed that his successor would be the one who destroyed Maleficent. In one symbolic scene Stefan cuts off Maleficent's wings—a metaphor for rape and patriarchal domination of the female. Maleficent retreats from happiness and enters darkness, as Stefan becomes king.

The princess was sent away to a cottage in the woods so that she could be protected from the curse, but Maleficent is always nearby watching Aurora grow. Eventually, Maleficent cannot help but love Aurora's genuine innocence and goodness. As the princess approaches her 16th birthday, Maleficent is grief-stricken when she finds that she cannot revoke the curse. All she can do is to guard Aurora in life and in death. As Aurora lies in her death-like state, the prince doesn't really have the "true love" needed to awaken her. Instead, it is Maleficent, who steps out from the shadows in grief and pure caring. Together they fight the symbolic patriarchy and it is Aurora who finds the case imprisoning Maleficent wings—freeing them to return to their owner. Whole once again, Maleficent defeats the king. The beauty and peace of the land is restored. In this story the weapon is a woman's wholeness, the restoration of her power.

Changing the World: Gender and Story

In considering the interaction of myth, meaning and action, I would like to share the story of a Japanese woman, Yumiko Otani, who was influenced by the story of the Shinto goddess Ama-terasu Omikami. In the following example one directly sees how a myth has the potential and influence to change what we do in the ordinary world. Several decades ago, Yumiko was considering the Shinto myth of Ama-terasu Omikami who had been mourning the violent acts of men and hiding in a cave. Yumiko recognized that Ama-terasu Omikami had not fully come out of that cave as patriarchally-driven violence and destruction continue into the present era. She thought of the solar energy of Ama-terasu, the Great Mother Sun, nourishing all of life. This led Yumiko to focus upon what we eat. She considered the amount of energy and grains being fed to cattle in order to eat meat. She decided that human beings would be healthier if they ate plant, rather than animal, food. Almost thirty-years later Yumiko has restaurants, a magazine, and in her workshops models the art of creating sustainable business while teaching healthy

cooking and eating. She includes men in this work, with the ideal of promoting harmony between genders. This is just one small example, and no doubt there are many more.

In conclusion, the mythological forms appearing in fairy tales, novels and movies are reflecting an emergent shift of consciousness. As described above, there are numerous stories indicating a change in the way that feminine identity has been perceived is taking place. Women are awakening to their innate capacities of both the beauty of kindness and the power to manifest ideals and protect life. When this occurs, there is no reason for one woman to envy another. The idea of woman as the weaker gender has been disproved. Perhaps this is why the novel trilogy, related game, and the 2012 film, *"The Hunger Games"* has received worldwide acclaim. It supports the theme of changing gender myths.

The heroine, Katniss Everdeen is not a vulnerable princess. Instead, she is a young sixteen-year-old woman of a village living in poverty. Katniss has the caring and power to be present with her depressed mother, sacrifice for her younger sister, to work alongside men, and to save the community in which she lives. She is at home with nature and with her own beliefs, and she is free from envy and destructiveness

Katniss is skilled with the bow and arrow (power originally attributed to the masculine gender) and she has the maternal expression of caring for others. It has also been said that the story touches on themes of poverty, starvation, and the impact of war. *"The Hunger Games"* series has been timely. The changes in myths concerning the feminine are preparing women for greater involvement in our rapidly changing world. Women have the innate potential to provide what is needed at this time. The ongoing destruction caused by war defined by cultural, racial, religious and economic differences necessitates the emergence of new myths empowering caring women. These myths promote hope as they allude to a process of a social reconstruction of gender. It appears to be occurring on multiple levels as these conceptual images move from the archetypal into our ordinary reality--creating healthier relationships and a sustainable world. Such myths are signs of an emergent paradigm. They provide both hope and vision!

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About the Author: Sharon Mijares, Ph.D. is Creator and Editor for this journal. She is a licensed Psychologist, international workshop leader (women's empowerment), transformational/intuitive Coach and author/editor of six books. See www.psychospiritual.org



Gaia Awareness

Rosa Elena Blanco

The name Gaia originates in Greek Mythology. Gea or Gaia was the goddess who personified the earth. In the late 1960's James Lovelock, a scientist, proposed that the Earth itself is a living, intelligent being, able to self-regulate and re-balance as needed. Gaia theory states that we, the human population, are a small part of the weave of relationships that the Earth manifests and continues to create.

Being personally aware of Gaia means taking responsibility for everything we do, both to ourselves, and to our natural surroundings, (flora, fauna, water sources, air, soil, other living beings, etc.). It means we recognize that every action has an effect of benefit or harm. Applying Gaia awareness, we would choose low impact technologies for example: car-pooling, riding bicycles, utilizing bio-building methods such as dry toilets, solar systems, organic farming, gray and black water management, permaculture, non-violent communication and so on just to mention a few options.



I live with my family in an intentional community on the Pacific side of Costa Rica, called Tacotal. Whenever possible we use local materials such as fallen trees, stones, mud, bamboo, etc to build our homes. We are raising our children in this natural environment. This kind of building allows reforestation to occur – a giving back to the living Earth what we take from her. We also grow our own food. What we are unable to grow because of specific soil characteristics, we obtain from other organic farmers with whom we form connections.

In this first column of Gaia Awareness, I will focus on healthy, sustainable ways of purchasing and eating food. Buying local, organic produce is a big step toward enhancing Gaia awareness. It is important to recognize that buying from big, transnational supermarkets contributes to impoverishing farmers. Consumer's money goes to the large corporations instead of to those who grow the food. Actually, the price we pay is not even enough to cover local farmers' cost of planting, harvesting and transporting their products to the chain supermarkets. These big stores are able to buy huge quantities of food at extremely reduced price per unit ratios. Because of this, the chain stores are able to sell at a reduced cost yet still make sizable profits while the farmers struggle to make ends meet. When we buy from local/organic farmers markets, we promote the empowerment of those doing the planting, caring for and harvesting of the food we eat. Also, the nutritional quality of such food is superior to that sold in chain markets. If we, as a collective, make the decision to buy only organic, local food, it could result in lower prices and more affordable healthy food for us all.

My message is: eat local, think global, act with awareness! Taking care of what we eat means that we love and respect our bodies. It means we are grateful to the many efforts that enable us to have beneficial, healthy food. Furthermore, it means we are supporting the livelihood of our neighbors, the farmers. Thus it is a Win/Win deal! People around the globe are beginning to understand that Gaia vibrates healing frequencies that are necessary for healthy living. Rather than continuing to blindly act out old patterns, many of us recognize, with our inner wisdom, that Mother Earth has the ability to restore and re-balance all of life if we but give her and ourselves the chance. Gaia Awareness means and initiates a healing process for ourselves, Mother Earth and all life on this beautiful and sacred planet.

Rosa Elena Nurjamila Blanco, Costa Rica, is a developer of a simple life in harmony with nature. Currently she lives with her family in *Tacotal Intentional Community* in the pacific side of Costa Rica. She is a mother, dentist, teacher, permaculture and ecovillages designer, and is also a Lover/Practitioner of Hatha Yoga for the last 13 years as well as a certified teacher. Rosa supports and honors the diversity of the world's spiritual traditions through the *Dances of Universal Peace*, which she has shared/led since 2009 in Costa Rica.

She conducts women's gatherings (www.ramatcuraj.blogspot.com), promoting the creation of circles between nearby women with a focus on reconnecting with our ancestral feminine wisdom. Organizer of "Tacotal Journeys", certified courses based in learning by doing experiences, community building and soul print sharings. (saviafloracr.wix.com/tacotaljourneys)



Tacotal Intentional Community

We invite you to join us in the Tacotal Journeys... Neighbor of the pristine Machuca River in the pacific side of Costa Rica. We are building community, designing our homes with natural materials, growing our soil and food and welcoming our new generations. We want to invite you to be part of the experience!!!

Community building, ecovillage design, permaculture, biobuilding, agroforestry, medicinal and sacred plants, medicine wheel, yoga, art of living and many more...

Hands on the soil, soul in nature, heart on community

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Sacred Feminine

Embracing Life

She is Within All!



The Need for the Resurrection of the Egyptian Feminine Spirit

Aliaa Rafea, Egypt

Abstract: Women who collectively use violence to terrify the public is a new phenomenon in Egypt. This kind of behavior is against known feminine nature in general, and the Egyptian character in particular. Egyptians led one of the most peaceful Revolutions in 2011. Two years later, they gathered peacefully in unprecedented numbers (estimated to be from 17 to 30 million), asking for the ouster of then president Mohammad Morsi. In the wake of this event, violence broke out, and women played a significant role in its continued aggravation. This paper investigates this phenomenon in the light of Jungian psychology, assuming that there is a dangerous collective disassociation of personality for women manifesting such violence. Their behavior and values fly against the mythologies' patterns in the Egyptian heritage; whether we are talking about Ancient Egyptians stories, or Coptic and Islamic beliefs. This paper is concerned particularly by the changing behavior of women where their animus and shadow have merged. This spirit can be contagious, influencing other women as well. Egypt, and the world are in urgent need of collective healing. An examination of the myth of Isis in her journey to restore wholeness and bring forth new life provides an ancient metaphor for a new time.



Introduction

Egyptians consider their land the 'mother of earth', and a place that welcomed messengers of God. In this land, they took refuge, and felt secure. The archetype of motherhood played a great role in the Egyptian collective unconscious, and shaped its character. Their relationship to the feminine spirit manifested in many different ways; for example, they personified the land of Egypt as a young beautiful woman in their drawings, sculptures and poems. Oftentimes ancient Egyptians called her Mother Egypt or the Beauty.

In the Ancient Egyptian mythology, Isis is a feminine symbol and an archetype for motherhood. This echoed strongly in the psyche of the Egyptians. She became a source of the collective psychological energy, which nourished the Egyptians and influenced their worldview. They saw feminine and masculine principles as being integrated, similar to the Chinese philosophy of yin and yang. It was the reason why Egyptians were known as a peaceful nation, and rarely, if ever invaded neighbor countries.

Isis, Mary and Sayyeda Zaynab Stories

The old tale narrated that Isis and her brothers Set, Osiris and her sister Nephtis were the children of Nut, the sky mother, and Geb, the earth father. Isis married Osiris, who was appointed as a ruler of Egypt. His brother Set's heart was full of jealousy; hence, he decided to find a way to remove Osiris from the governing authority and take his place. Therefore, he made a plot to end Osiris' life, persuading his brother to get into a casket to check if it was the right size. In so doing, Set captured and killed him. To make sure that Osiris would never come to life again, Set cut his brother's body to pieces and threw them in different places all over the country.

Isis played a miraculous role; she collected the scattered pieces of Osiris' body and reassembled them in one whole.

Once she breathed into his chest, he returned to life. After Osiris' resurrection, he acquired a spiritual nature, so the union of Isis and Osiris became mystical in nature. Soon after, she gave birth to their son Horus who became the heir of his father. Osiris became the judge of the underworld and would remain there forever. Horus, the son, made a plea to the divine court to remove his uncle Set from the throne, and became the ruler of Egypt. Every Pharaoh from then on ruled by the name of Horus, a symbol of power and justice.



When we study this archetypal myth, it appears that the feminine Isis seems to reincarnate in the Virgin Mary. Christians and Muslims believe that

God sent the Holy Spirit to the Virgin Mary, telling her that she would bring a blessed child into the world. She was surprised that she would get pregnant without being touched by a man. The Holy Spirit (The Angel) assured her that God's will would prevail and Jesus would be created miraculously. In both the Qur'an and Bible, Jesus is mentioned as the Word of God emanated from The Divine.

Isis as a motherhood archetype was also personified in Sayyeda¹ Zaynab. We have to differentiate here between the formal religion, which preached through traditional institutions that Sayyeda Zaynab was a grandchild of Prophet Muhammad and respected as such, and the strong folkloric perception of her. For example, people who have problems or illnesses go to her shrine, talk to her, and ask her for help. They offer food for the poor or do a sacrificial rite either as a plea to Sayyeda Zaynab to respond to their requests, or as an expression of gratitude because of positive responses. They would reject the idea that they consider her a goddess, but they have the feeling that her spirit is present, that she takes care of Egypt and of its people. They seek her protection, mercy and love.

While we have no historical documents for Virgin Mary, Zaynab was a person who is known to have historically existed. She was the daughter of Ali Bin Abi Talb, and Sayyeda Fatima Al Zahraa (the daughter of Prophet Muhammad). She did not get pregnant in any miraculous way, but Muslims consider it to be a miracle that she provided protection to her nephew, and thus affirmed the lineage of Prophet Muhammad. As it is well known, the Prophet Muhammad did not have sons, and his lineage came from his daughter Fatima who had two sons and Zaynab, a daughter. In the battle of Karbla, the household members of Prophet Muhammad were brutally killed, except for Sayyeda Zaynab's nephew Ali Zin El Abedeen. He was ill and could not fight with his brothers and cousins in the battlefield, and therefore remained under the care of his aunt Zaynab in the women's space. The battle's

survivors were held captive, including Zaynab and her nephew, and were driven to Damascus. Zaynab would not let her nephew out of her sight. He was the only remaining male descendent from Prophet Muhammad's genealogical line. The boy was sentenced to death, but Zaynab threw herself over him in a protective embrace, screaming, "By God, I won't let go of him. If you're going to kill him, you'll have to kill me with him". Moved by her action, the captors spared her nephew's life.

There are several stories about where Zaynab spent the rest of her life. Modern Egyptians believe that she took refuge in Egypt, and remained there till the end of her days. There is a mosque and shrine carrying Sayyeda Zaynab's name in Cairo. There appears to be a relationship between this and stories of the Virgin Mary coming to Egypt for protection—entering the Mother Land. Egyptians call Zaynab the Purified One, like the Virgin Mary, whose virginity implies purity, and who like Isis, became pregnant through a spiritual connection. They give her the title Sayyeda to uphold her as a model of feminine sanity and divinity, like Mary and Isis.

The Three Stories and the Motherhood Archetype

Revealing the connection between the unconscious and conscious is one of the main contributions of Jungian psychology. Jung coined the term collective unconscious to denote this deep level of the unconscious, which stores the psychic experiences of the human species. In our universal cultural heritage, there are symbols appearing collectively in the forms of myths, dreams, drawings, or other artistic expressions as both rational and irrational representations of a shared psychic energy. Through metaphoric expressions, humans relate to life's mystery. In harmony, they support a person to reach what Jung called individuation, meaning self-realization. From a Jungian perspective, the relationship between mother and son is a repetitious motif rooted deeply in the collective unconscious. The son is the hero, the savior, the one who will fill the world with justice. The mother is the blessed female; her womb embraces this new creation, she gives it life, and nourishes it with her milk full of love and affection. She struggles heroically to defend her male partners, often sacrificing her own life to give life. The father in these myths is a mystical entity, or a passing away soul. He is present by his spiritual grace. The mother archetype represents the integration of male/female aspects of the personality. As a result, a new birth of the soul is materialized through 'the son'. It is also true, as Dr. Mijares points out in her article, "Changing Myths, Fairy Tales and Facts: The Social Construction of Gender", this archetypal pattern is changing and the new saviors of the community and the world are

female. Once true balance is known, sex will not make a difference as both male and female aspects of the self will integrate within the psyche. In our recent publication, *A Force Such As the World Has Never Known: Women Creating Change*³, we noted leaders who have balanced both masculine and feminine aspects of the self, and in so doing, created positive impacts on their societies. Gandhi and Martin Luther King are two such examples. Meanwhile, we have women leaders who have adopted a more aggressive masculine style because of their lack of confidence in their own feminine potential. Golda Meier and Margaret Thatcher are two examples of this imbalance.⁴

The dream of realization is so impressive it made these female figures go through a long ordeal of suffering to unite with their male partner. For example, Isis collected her husband's scattered body in a symbolic expression of integrating the animus within the self, and becoming whole. Horus is the new birth of both Isis and Osiris. He materializes their unity and collectivity. In the Christian version, The Holy Spirit blessed the Virgin Mary. Again through her open heart, she became whole, giving birth to Jesus. According to biblical stories, Mary had to bear insults and curses, coming from people who would not believe in her miraculous pregnancy. She then took him to Egypt to protect him from Herod, the emperor of the time who had sent an edict to kill all boy babies. This is the ancient story of power and control, ready to kill to dominate.

Horus and Jesus have divine aspects that manifest themselves in human life. This integration between heaven and earth, human and holy aspects of the self allow the opposites to work together without contradiction. In Islam, Ali Zein al Abedeen became a symbol of the continuation of the Prophet's life. The unseen life of a prophet who passed away, and the seen life of his grandson united, and the message of unity with the One continued. Love of the Prophet's Family (alalbait) fills the Egyptians' heart. Their attachment to this family as a symbol of the beloved Prophet is strong. Here again heaven (symbolized by Prophet Muhammad for Muslims who is in heaven), and earth (as symbolized by the stories, shrine and spiritual presence of Prophet Muhammad's family) unite in the Egyptian heart. The 'family of the prophet' is a cultural mirror through which the unconscious expresses its totality.

It has been great mistake to discuss the holiness of these figures ideologically, philosophically or theologically. They acquire their meaning through an inner energy that triggers the primordial needs for individuation. Individuation is a

process that happens on personal, national, and global levels. The motherhood archetype denotes this union between feminine and masculine.



Isis, Virgin Mary and Sayyeda Zaynab are feminine figures who represent the motherhood archetype in the Egyptian psyche. On reflecting upon their stories, similar patterns prevail. It seems that each one of these figures reincarnates psychologically in the others. By the presence of

their stories, they trigger the same emotional power related to the original motherhood archetype—and the power of the feminine to heal and make whole.

The Collective Shadow

Repressed emotions and feelings reside deep in the personal unconscious and manifest in modes that can attack the person unexpectedly. Because they are hidden powers that the conscious mind is unaware of, they reside in the dark as an unlive and repressed side of the psyche (the unconscious). Shadows are forms taking shape through the ideals of the culture, which are imposed outwardly on the individual human beings. The Shadow is linked to other archetypes, such as the anima/animus, ego and persona. For example, when the upbringing of boys encourages them to repress feminine qualities, in their adulthood they hide their emotions in order to appear tough and heartless. This can result in suffering and deep inner conflicts, which can in turn make them more aggressive and violent. The opposite is true, when young girls are treated as weak creatures, who need protection and care; they become dependent, and lack confidence. This can make them unhappy, even depressed, and they may suffer illness out of fear and insecurity. In both cases, the repressed qualities may manifest in harmful behaviors. These are all elements of the personal unconscious.

Because the personal unconscious is connected to the collective unconscious, a healthy society has an impact on its individuals, and vice versa. Personal shadow characteristics influence the collective shadow, just as the collective shadow influences the personal shadow. From this perspective, we may be able to explain what happened in Egyptian society in the wake of the June 30, 2013, upheavals that deposed president Morsi.

Women Possessed by Undeveloped Animus

After president Morsi's ouster, Egyptian society witnessed waves of violence in which women were active participants.⁵ In order to understand the story of these small segments of young women, I am inclined to analyze their situation from a

psychological point of view, rather than an ideological standpoint. In reflecting on their actions, it seems that their collective and underdeveloped animus was in charge, suppressing their feminine spirit.

Within this context we ask: why and how did this aggressive power come to the surface, manifesting in destructive violence? What had been nourishing these flames? Their behavior and values fly against the mythological patterns in the Egyptian heritage; whether we are talking about Ancient Egyptian, Coptic or Islamic stories. In only one year, President Morsi and his followers succeeded in planting the seed of sectarianism. They followed the principle of 'divide and rule'. The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, incited its followers to use violence to punish and intimidate their opponents, including torture and even killings, whether at the gates of the presidential palace, in front of the main MB headquarters in Muqattam, or in squares in other governorates. The situation culminated in the incitement of violence against Shiites. In the wake of Morsi's ouster, they used women, bringing them into the forefront of demonstrations to make the situation complicated for police to disperse the assembly. Women demonstrators used bad words to provoke police officers' anger. Despite careful treatment of the demonstrators, a number of women were injured and killed. Much propaganda from these incidents was used to defame the new regime, and to call for civil strife. From my perspective, the combination of politics and fundamentalism not only misrepresented the peaceful intention of Islam, but also caused these young women to disconnect from their inner feminine selves.

Violence was then brought from the streets into the colleges. An example of this was personally experienced on April 24, 2014, when I arrived at the Women's College to meet with my students. To my surprise, I found that the Higher Council of the Egyptian Universities had sent an invoice to colleges, asking them to end the spring semester a month earlier than had been planned. I noticed from the beginning of the semester that there had been increasing troubles within the college campus. On certain days, demonstrations were so loud that it was difficult to complete lectures, even though we use microphones in the classrooms. There had also been reports of violence on other campuses. Apparently, this violence had become contagious and was now affecting young women in my own college.

The chair of the department told me with great sorrow that the day before, she had been attacked by face-veiled students who came to the lecture room, demanding that she leave. She stood firmly against their will, and asked them to leave her in peace so she could complete the lecture. She felt she was under great threat, and felt apprehensive for the rest of the day. She explained that the students had next gone to the dean's office, cursing her as they threw stones at her office door. Their violence continued to escalate.

These are but a few incidents among many. In Al- Azhar University Women's College, students attacked a professor in an attempt to prevent her from lecturing.⁶ Apparently, a group of students had stood in her way, attacked her, scratched her face, and removed her hair cover. When one of her colleagues came to her rescue, they bit that woman and pushed her away. Even more aggressively, in the pharmacology college, students not only hit a teacher on her head but also undressed her, taking photos of her body in order to humiliate her.⁷ Similar stories have been repeated with other professors in different campuses. This seems to be a very unusual behavior of young women supposedly in respected educational institutions.

In a previous work, my co-authors and I considered fundamentalism, prejudice and gender imbalance to be the root of all evil.⁸ In our analysis, we explained the interrelation and interdependence of politics, religion and the suffrage of human beings as related to the dominance of patriarchal ideologies. We concluded by affirming that the feminine spirit was needed to heal the accumulated and complicated malaise that has prevailed throughout human patriarchal history, when hierarchy became a leading principle in shaping human relations. We called for women's involvement in leadership positions to bring this needed balance. As the authors expressed their perspective, they were also aware that women can adopt masculine leadership styles. Bringing women's leadership to the forefront is essential, but there is much more to consider.

Thinkers, politicians, and experts in religious studies have been speculating about the Egyptian situation. Pro and con debates on Morsi's ouster have been carried on in both local and international media. People differ in their methodology for handling the situation. Some suggest reconciliation with Islamists and settlement of a middle way to avoid further violence. This solution seems unrealistic and is also not acceptable the majority of Egyptians who consider them terrorists. Others take an extreme stand against the Muslim Brotherhood, condemning the entire group as terrorists.

The wounded and lost souls of young women and men who believed in, and dreamed of an Islamic state may remain, causing further troubles. This is because it is hard to change the unintegrated psyche of people divorced from the factual world and surrendered to their shadows. Because the behavior of these groups is out of rational control, dialoguing with them will not make much difference. They are not aware they are projecting their own shadow on others. These women are filled with self-hatred. They have internalized the beliefs that women are inferior to men and that as women they pollute both social and religious environments. Deep inside they would like to be men; therefore, they assaulted other women. Within this context, young women found an avenue for expressing their hidden anger as they adopted masculine archetypal energy, unconsciously fueled by their

shadows. They wanted to prove to themselves that they were capable of being steadfast against what they believed to be corrupt people, and that they could be as strong as men. They directed their anger in an exaggerated manner toward women who were not in agreement with their ideas and political stand. Collectively, they became convinced that they had to struggle in order to break this non-Islamic state. That is why their violence accelerated, and nothing could stop them from expressing their wrath.

Conclusion

Among other contributions, Jungian psychology shows the relationship between, religion, political behavior and psychological imbalance. Collectively, the articulation of myths creates a mood that activate archetypes as psychological energy which can interfere in the perception of what is actually happening.. The Nazis activated the shadow of the Aryan race, which projected all their unwanted, unconscious attributes onto Non-Aryans. They lived an erroneous 'myth', ignoring the relationship between reality and their fantasies. Because of Hitler's fantasy of ruling the whole world, he ignited World War 2, killing millions of people, and taking his own country into abyss. This archetypal shadow influence of domination was likewise seen in Egypt when a minority challenged the historically established Egyptian character and dreamed of resurrecting the system of Caliphs because they despised the historically and culturally built nature of the Egyptian society. Through this irrational and irresponsible movement, they suppressed the motherhood archetype.



The motherhood archetype is prevalent in the Egyptian heritage, and its resurrection is possible, if we embrace lost souls with love, not enmity, inclusion, not exclusion. Isis

is needed to resurrect the Egyptian psyche. As this archetypal influence collects diverse and segregated groups, the Mother land will know balance, making it ready for a new birth, a new era.

ENDNOTES

1. Sayyeda is a title which people usually add to women whose lineage go to Prophet Muhammad. When people use the title Sayyeda with no mention to the name of Zaynab, they project the archetype of femininity on her. Sayyeda means literally 'lady' or 'respected woman'.

2. I am not going in detailed discussion to explain the function of each of those archetypes; I advise the reader to go to Jung's collective work, his autobiography (Memories, Dreams and Reflections), or other books that introduce Jungian psychology, such as Anthony Stevens, Jung: A very Short Introduction, Oxford University Press, New York, 1994

3. Mijares, Sharon G., Aliaa Rafea & Nahid Angha. *A Force Such as the World Has Never Known: Women Creating Change*. Toronto, Canada, 2013

4. Mijares, Sharon G., Aliaa Rafea, Rachel Falik & Jenny Eda Schipper, *The Root of all Evil: An Exposition of Prejudice, Fundamentalism and Gender Imbalance*, Imprint Academic, UK, 2007

5. In the wake of the Morsi's disposition, over 30 churches, 122 shops, and 51 houses belonging to Christians destroyed in Upper Egypt according to a report published by the Egyptian Center for Public Policy Studies. <http://ecpps.org/index.php/en/news/99-in-media/301-ahram-online-cover-ecpps-report-oppressed-under-different-regimes-%E2%80%93-egypt-s-christians-between-sectarian-violence-and-state-negligence> Seen on May 14/2014: Muslim Brotherhood targeted police stations all over the country, burning the buildings, killing officers, and terrorizing the civil citizens. The western media described Morsi's disposition as a coup d'état. Whatever it is called, it was obvious that the majority of people were asking Morsi to leave/ or make an referendum to assure his legitimacy. The army sided with the people as it did before. Breaking of violence in the wake of Morsi's disposition revealed a hostile spirit. Women were encouraged to come in front in the demonstration to form human shields in order to ease the way for men in the back to attack soldiers and opponents.

6. Part of this story was published and can be found in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0JELTpZJ8s>, seen on May 20, 2014. <http://www.albawabhnews.com/261814>, seen in April 30/ 2014

7. <http://www.albawabhnews.com/261814>, seen in April 30/ 2014

8. Mijares, Sharon G., Aliaa Rafea, Rachel Falik & Jenny Eda Schipper, *The Root of all Evil: An Exposition of Prejudice, Fundamentalism and Gender Imbalance*, Imprint Academic, UK, 2007

About the Author: Aliaa Rafea, Ph.D., is Professor of Anthropology at Ain Shams University, Women's College, and a Founder and Chair of The Human Foundation (an Egyptian NGO). She makes use of anthropological perspectives in understanding issues related to religion, politics and culture. Professor Rafea wrote book chapters that were published in India, Japan, Morocco and USA, and numerous academic articles in international journals. She authored and co-authored several books. For example she authored *The Egyptian Identity* (in Arabic), co-authored *Islam from Adam to Muhammad and Beyond*, *The Root of All Evil: An Exposition to Prejudice, Fundamentalism and Gender Imbalance*, *A Force as the World Had Never Known : Women Creating Change*. She worked as an expert for the Arab League Project on empowering Arab Youth. She is active in several Egyptian NGOs. Prof. Rafea has written many opinion pieces in Egyptian newspapers. In 2002 Prof. Rafea was a visiting professor at Randolph-Macon Women's College. Professor Rafea is a member at various academic associations, a member in Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW), shared in the *Spirit of Humanity* forum held in Iceland, April 2014.

Cindy's Garden

Cindy Romney Payne

Do you find yourself fascinated by growing a beautiful garden, especially herbs for home use? Cultivating herbs for health benefits can be as simple as a pot on your front porch or a kettle in your kitchen window to as elaborate as a two acre Elizabethan Herb Garden. However you choose to cultivate herbs, know that you can grow them to suit your specific needs. From a medicinal standpoint herbs have been propagated for thousands of years. There is great history behind their healing benefits. When pondering the properties of herbs and their uses, one herb in particular has my stamp of approval for its many purposes and the ease in which most gardeners, no matter what their experience has been, can propagate this successfully.

In Spring and Summer, roadside lawn herbs are profuse. One in particular is the dandelion. Over the last century it has received the distinction of being a weed, but is actually medicinal and nutritious. This unpretentious herb, which has rooted itself firmly in North America, was noted to have humble beginnings in fossils dating back thirty thousand years ago. Not surprisingly, dandelions are natural to and scattered throughout many temperate zones of the world. In fact, the Europeans knew the dandelion was a gem, and therefore brought it to the Colonies in the 17th century. It was known as the common man's remedy and widely used for everything from liver problems and skin irritations to gastrointestinal upsets and eye ailments.



We now know this wonderful herb can be supportive against lethargy and reducing congestion in the body. As an excellent spring tonic, dandelion is a useful diuretic for menopause and premenstrual pressure, and can possibly help reduce fluid held in the body. This herb can also aid in support to the gallbladder and digestive tract. Not only is dandelion valuable medicinally, it is also highly nutritious. It contains more vitamin A than carrots and higher levels of potassium than bananas. Likewise, it possesses a wide range of plant carotenoids and chemical compounds such as linoleic and oleic acids, as well as, iron, magnesium, zinc, silicon, and sodium, and vitamins A, B, C and D. Benefiting from this amazing array of compounds is easily achievable when adding dandelion to most diets.

Uses/Culinary Methods

Adding dandelion to your diet can be as easy as enjoying it raw in salads, blending it into your daily smoothie or juicing it with other greens and veggies. If cooking is your niche, dandelion can be used in place of spinach in dishes. The sweet/slightly bitter roots can add interest, flavor and nutrition to soups and when cooked in recipes. Furthermore, sautéing this bittersweet herb with garlic and sundried tomatoes, then deglazing with red wine or stock, will cut bitterness and make a delicious dish. Its flowers are also pretty and add color to any dish, including fresh salads.

Harvesting/Helpful hints

Every part of this plant is edible from its flowers to its roots. The tender young leaves can be picked for use throughout the growing season. The flowers can be gathered when they are young and placed in cool water to keep them from closing up. When ready to use, cut stems completely off. Roots are best harvested after the 2nd year of growth. Roots are commonly used as coffee substitute when dried, roasted, and shredded.

Helpful Hints: The bitterness from this fantastic herb can be cut in both juice and smoothies by the addition of fresh lime. If bitterness bothers you, be sure when growing this herb to blanch the leaves by either covering them with an opaque material to block sunlight or wrapping them up into a cone a week or two before harvest. This will insure the leaves are much sweeter and very pale in color. Remember, greener and older leaves tend to be bitter.

Cultivation

Dandelion is easy to grow and can survive in most all zones and soil conditions in the United States, and elsewhere, in many nations throughout the globe. This hardy potherb, which is generally drought tolerant, thrives best in rich soil where plenty of water is available, and prefers to grow in full sun, although it will endure part shade.

When planting seed directly in the soil, sow beds 4-6 weeks before the last frost, in single rows, 6-8 inches apart, ¼ inch deep. It will readily reseed itself, so if you don't want it spread throughout the garden, make sure to pick flowers young before they go to seed or gather seed heads for future

plantings. Dandelions are perennial plants meaning they will grow two or more years without replanting. Depending on the cultivar you choose, plants mature anywhere from 30-50 to 85-95 days.

Caution

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding refrain from using this herb.

Do not eat dandelion that has been grown in a fertilized lawn, or where herbicides and pesticides were used.

Drug interactions

There are possible interaction with quinolone antibiotics, and some anti-diabetic drugs, diuretics, and antihypertensive class of drugs. Ask your doctor before using any herb for medicinal purposes.

Whether enjoying your efforts cultivating herbs from your porch, kitchen window, or back yard, tailoring them to your specific needs can be highly satisfying and healthful. Our conscience efforts to improve daily living and health and to move in rhythm with our mind body connection, can be enhanced by the addition of a pot or two of these holistic historic herbs. While tending my own garden I no longer pull the dandelions up. Instead, I revere them as my partners in health, harvesting their leaves and flowers to enjoy in my salads and smoothies. Until we meet again may your new found friend, in the dandelion, no longer be considered a weed in your garden.

From weeds to fence flowers, everything is coming up sweet! Join me in cultivation, exploring the amazing healing properties of honeysuckle, the common climber, next time in Cindy's Garden.



About the Author: Cindy Romney-Payne, Master Gardener in both Washington and California, created Heirloom Gardens in 2002. Her grandfather encouraged her love of gardening in childhood. He taught her the importance of all things green and growing, from feeding the soil with compost to harvesting the sweet ripe jewels of the fruit trees. It can be said she is firmly planted. Heirloom Gardens has been host to the Garden Conservancy's National Tour where in 2004 hundreds of people roamed her 2 ½ acre gardens and farm. Everyone took part in an amazing display of many different gardens including a French intensive vegetable garden, rose garden, roaming paths along the Mediterranean garden, and Bella's magical garden, a child's discovery oasis. Cindy and Heirloom Gardens have been featured in both Sunset and San Diego Home and Garden magazines as well as other newsworthy spreads. She is currently working on her degree in Nutrition with future goals in Acupuncture/Chinese medicine.

*Organic Dandelion
seed sources*

www.amazon.com

*Johnny's Select Seeds
www.johnnyseeds.com
1-877-564-6697*

*Rareseeds
Baker Creek Heirloom
seeds
www.rareseeds.com*

Loneliness dripped from the sky: Loss of desire in a world without Inanna

Cass Dalglish, United States

Abstract: The Sumerian story of the deity Inanna's journey to the Land of No Return offers contemporary society a view of what might happen if Mother Earth continues to be ignored. Inanna's adventure offers two significant words for the contemplation of her wisdom – the verbs to desire and to notice. These words offer us driving metaphors for the actions heroes of this millennium will need to pursue to keep the earth from becoming a land of no return. This paper uses the Sumerian cuneiform text *nin-me-sar-ra*, written by Enheduanna in 2350 BCE, as a guide to Inanna's heroic adventure and offers a poetic approach to the problems of disintegration caused by the lack of attention to Inanna/Mother Earth.



The word *adventure* is one that finds its way into our thoughts as we tell the stories of heroes –

ancient and contemporary alike. And in the United States, where we tell our stories in a culture of mythology so profoundly influenced by the work of Joseph Campbell, our heroic tales have a backstory – the notion that there really is only one adventure that is told again and again. The same story. A different hero. A different face. And, it seems, the face is always masculine. But there is no need to preserve our mythology in such an unbalanced brine when we can go back to the earliest stories, back to the first Gilgamesh tale and then back even earlier, to the story of a remarkable female hero, to the god Inanna, who noticed her own desire for adventure, traveled into the netherworld, and then came back again.

Inanna's adventure offers two more significant words to those of us contemplating her wisdom – the verbs to desire and to notice. These words offer us driving metaphors for the actions the heroes of this millennium need to pursue to keep the earth from becoming a Land of No Return.

Sumerologist Samuel Noah Kramer and Poet Diane Wolkstein begin the Inanna story this way...

*From the Great Above... Inanna turned her ear
to the Great Below.
She abandoned heaven and earth
to descend to the underworld.
Inanna abandoned heaven and earth
to descend to the underworld¹*

This is a fascinating story, the kind that gets told around campfires in the evening, changed a bit here and there depending on the storyteller. It was preserved in the memories of ancient narrators and passed from generation to generation, in what we would now refer to as Ancient Iraq. It is an Ur Story, one of humanity's earliest stories, and it actually does come from Ur.

A beautiful, powerful deity, a god named Inanna, who already reigns in heaven and on earth, notices that she has never looked closely at a place that's called the land of no return. She does this entirely on her own. She's not required to go. Unlike the female heroes in later stories, she's not kidnapped, not abducted. She's not even invited. In fact, it's against the rules to go the land of no return.

No one is supposed to go there, not if you want to return, not even if you're a god. But Inanna has noticed her own intellectual desire to learn more.

She has a comfortable life in heaven and on earth, but as she rides the boat of heaven across the shallows, she finds herself pausing, wondering what she might be able to hear in the silence, what she might be able to notice.

And so Inanna turns her ear to the great unknown. Inanna's curiosity is the curiosity that sparks intellectual inquiry, and it is intellectual inquiry that drives Inanna to the land of no return.

Inanna's story is a compelling one that has driven me to wonder what I have left unnoticed as I live my comfortable life. Floods and hurricanes in New Orleans, New York, and Vermont. Supertornadoes in the midlands. California's fires. And close to my home in the north, the winter's record cold, the Mississippi's high waters, fish and snapping turtles washed onto bicycle paths along Minnehaha Creek. I have come to see that Inanna's story is about the heroism of noticing what the earth is experiencing, minor as well as catastrophic, and the sad realities that occur when a civilization loses the desire to turn its ear.

Just over four thousand years ago a woman named Enheduanna reached into the oral tradition and used the story of Inanna's journey – a great god stripped of her clothing and her powers, hung on a wooden peg and left to die – as the core of a poem that she was writing about tragedy she and her own people were experiencing. Pressing pictographs into clay with a reed stylus, she conflated her story with that of Inanna. At a high point in her career as a priest, a poet and a prince in Ur and its neighboring city of Uruk, Enheduanna was exiled from her temples. Her people were forced out of their homes. She was beaten, raped and left to wander in the hills, and the sacred spaces where she had performed her rites were plundered. It was approximately 2350 BCE when she wrote her song to Inanna, nin-me-sar-ra, and in that song she noticed that the devastation that she and her people were experiencing resembled the disintegration that Inanna had experienced when she adventured into the land of no return.

Because Enheduanna wrote this story in a non-gendered language, in pictographs that made no attempt to cast the female as diminutive in comparison to the male, I talk about her now as a priest, a prince, and a poet and I talk about

Inanna as a god rather than a goddess. And when Enheduanna wrote what amounts to an ancient persona poem, she did something remarkable. In effect, she signed her name to the clay tablets she was writing on. She said, "It's me, Enheduanna, I'm writing this text." and in doing so, she became the first writer – female or male – in the history of the world to claim her text.

I've done an interpretation of Enheduanna's song to Inanna and here is how I have heard her telling about the powers and the desires of the hero...

Sister

*sometimes I think I ought to call you the Queen of the May – the way you toss light, like yellow dandelions out of a basket, here and there; or maybe I should call you god, the way you've wrapped the laws of heaven and earth around your waist like a belt, the way you skim over chaos like a quicksilver river. But I call you Sister because you're like the rest of us, opening like a pale morning, swelling like a storm, clutching the torch of longing to your breast until you feel life at your throat, until you're all dressed up in flames. Sweet Sister, you know it all. A woman's desire is deep, and you're the measure of it.*²

Throughout her poem, it is apparent that Enheduanna sees Inanna as a metaphor for the earth. As she begins to tell us about Inanna's dangerous adventure to the land of no return, the ancient poet connects Inanna to nature, comparing Inanna's desires to the whims of the storm and the strength of the wind...

Now you ride

over the land like a wild, impetuous creature until the light at the center of the storm gives you wings. And then you fly to the left, and then you fly to the right of longing. You fan desire until the god of winds blows you a braid of roses for the grassy cloisters of the night. I see you now, flying, small and shining, over the moon, wings flapping, drums beating, wind to this side, wind to that side. Your boat of heaven moves across the sky over and over again. Thirty times. You're the law. But the

*flight is ending now. Sister, it's time to measure your path to the deep. The earth bows and curves its grasses so that you can enter, so that you can take the other way around. You whisper your name, write it in the ashes. You do not sleep.*³

If we set Enheduanna's pictographic story aside and go back into the tale from the oral tradition, we see that Inanna did not embark on her adventure without making preparations.

- She colored her eyes and lips
- Clashed lapis stones to ears
- Clipped her carnelian beads around her neck
- Stepped into a long silk gown
- Wrapped her princely cloak over her shoulders
- Put on her royal crown
- And she tied the rules of the universe, the *Me*, around her wrist

The Sumerian *Me* are complicated. They are a combination of regulations like the Laws of Physics, the Supreme Court decisions, Machiavelli's advice to the Prince, and the Beatitudes – all rolled into one.

After her preparations, Inanna went ahead, toward the gates of the unknown, willing to let go of old certainties, to lose old comforts. And at each gate, at each trial, she lost something she thought she could be sure of. Inanna lost her crown, her cloak, her lapis, her carnelian, her silk, the color on her eyes and lips, the light of the universe, and finally her life. She was stripped of all her pre-suppositions; naked, she was hung on a wooden peg and abandoned.

Back on earth, in the garden where her lover-partner-spouse the shepherd Dumuzi held court, Inanna was the furthest thing from his mind. It was a lovely day. He was enjoying himself. He hadn't noticed that Inanna was gone. And he wasn't alone. The people on earth went on their way. They hadn't noticed Inanna's absence either, not in a big way, not before one day, two days, three days passed, and finally the loss of the deity of desire began to become apparent in unexpectedly human ways.

There is a passage in Enheduanna's poem that clearly tells us what happened to the earth and its people when Inanna was left for dead. This is what Enheduanna's pictographs tell us about what happened on earth when no one noticed that Inanna – our connection to nature – was gone.

They closed the gates

*around you deep inside the earth; they tied your life to the wall and lay your treasure out like rich red wool. And as your life ebbed, the leafy trees outside lost their perfume, the fish in the river lost their scent. When the women leaned out of their windows hoping for a sip of fresh air, loneliness was all that dripped from the sky. And they lost their desire to taste sweet fruit, to drink cool milk, to walk with their men in the fields of roses, to lie down with their men in the tall grasses. And even in the pure black darkness of night, even in private room where sweet perfumes insisted that life would go on, even there, flowers folded shut on themselves as lovers forgot the riches they had locked inside their hearts. They could not reveal their passions, whether sacred or profane. They could not awaken one another. And instead of offering tenderness, they whispered, "What's it to me? What's it to you? What do we care?"*⁴

This is the part of the Inanna adventure story that clearly reflects the earliest of Inanna stories from the oral tradition, and it is a passage that carries contemporary meaning for me. It offers a lesson about indifference. Inanna had turned her ear to the great unknown, she had risked everything to follow the adventure of her desire, and as she lay abandoned in the land of no return, neither her lover nor her people had noticed. And soon that human indifference to the loss of an ancient god who clearly resembled Mother Earth evolved into a sweeping indifference that made it impossible for any of the universe's creatures – plant, animal or human – to thrive or even continue to exist.

But this is where we need to turn an ear to Inanna's story one more time. Before she left on her adventure, Inanna called her administrative assistant, Ninshubur, to her side and told her what to do if the beautiful god was not back in three days and three nights. Inanna told Ninshubur to go to the other gods, to get their help, to bring Inanna home. And she told Ninshubur to dress in old clothes, to wear sack cloth, to rub ashes on her face, and to scratch at her thighs. Most of all, she told her, be sure to weep and to moan.

Her administrative assistant went from god to god, until she found one willing to help bring Inanna home. It was Enki, god of wisdom, the very one from whom Inanna had stolen the

Me, the Sumerian secrets of the universe, years before. The god Enki fashioned a community for her from the dirt under his finger nails, and they were neither male nor female. They were small as flies and they were able to slip through the gates of the netherworld.

Enki handed them the food of life and the water of life and sent them off to find Inanna. When they slipped under the gates of that hell, Enki's creatures sprinkled Inanna's body with the waters of life and they nourished her with the food of life and they walked with Inanna back up through the gates. But there were a few more trials Inanna would have to face.

As she opened the fourth gate, the demons from below come after her. They wanted someone to be left in the netherworld in exchange for Inanna, and they saw Ninshubur. She was covered in ashes, weeping, moaning, scratching at herself and Inanna said, "You can't take her."

At the fifth gate they came back again and Inanna's daughter was there weeping, moaning, scratching at herself and Inanna said, "You can't have her." At the sixth gate, Inanna's son was there and Inanna said, "He's weeping, moaning, scratching at himself. You can't have him."

At the seventh gate the demons came back again and they saw Inanna's husband Dumuzi just outside the last gate in the garden, sitting on his throne, eating fruit and drinking milk. Dumuzi wasn't paying attention. He hadn't even noticed that Inanna was gone, and when the demons said, "We'll take him," Inanna said, "Be my guest." This is another metaphor for the attentive life. Dumuzi, like most of the humans on earth, was careless and distracted.

Luckily for Dumuzi, the cycle of ancient stories doesn't end here, nor need it end for those of us who hear this story thousands of years later. In Enheduanna's text, there is a warning about the dangerous state in which we find Inanna attempting to come back from the land of no return. It is also a message from the ancient poet offering us hope that there is still time to notice Inanna...

Your mother earth is moaning

Your mother earth is moaning covered in sweat, struggling to give life to you again. Her tears are the water of life. Her cries are the words of life. Sweet Sister, listen. It's the hour of mystery. It's time. Push your way through to us again. You know everything. You see everything.

You're the one who needs to breathe, but you're waiting for us to sing the perfect song, to share the prophet's wisdom, to use the power of speech. You're dancing on the line between life and death, but Sister-Mother-Father, this is not suicide, it's re-birth. Let your breasts lift and fall. Life is braided into your hair, let it hang heavy on your shoulders like music falling from the strings of a harp. It's time for you to leave the other world. This the hour of your brilliance, Sister. No one has ever come back from the land of the dead, and yours will be no ordinary resurrection⁵

Endnotes

Story lines of Inanna's journey and Enheduanna's nin-me-sar-ra have been gleaned from my translations of Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform texts, study with Daniel Reisman and Deb Dale Jones (She Spoke to Them with a Stormy Heart: The Politics of Reading Ancient (or Other) Narrative, dissertation, University of Minnesota), and work with Diane Wolkstein (Inanna Queen of Heaven and Earth).

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About the Author: Cass Dalglish is a fiction writer and prose poet who has written television news and documentaries as a broadcast journalist. Her published books include the novels Nin (Spinsters Ink) and Sweetgrass (finalist for a Minnesota Book Award), and a book-length prose poem Humming the Blues (Calyx Books), a jazz interpretation of the Sumerian cuneiform signs in Enheduanna's Song to Inanna (Ancient Iraq, 2350 BCE). Enheduanna is the first poet in history to claim authorship of a text. Cass was an invited speaker during the post museum session of the Diane Wolkstein Conference: Inanna – Live at the British Museum, London 2007. A recipient of The Loft Literary Center Minnesota Writers' Career Initiative Grant, she received the 2011 Distinguished Teaching and Learning Award for

Excellence in Mentoring and Advising from Augsburg College. She holds an MFA in creative writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts and a PhD in writing with a concentration in ancient and archetypal women's writing from The Union Institute.

Cass is Director of the Augsburg College MFA in Creative Writing Program. She is a student and level two practitioner of Reiki Energy Work. For more, visit: www.cassdalglish.com

Song to Inanna, from Enheduanna's nin-me-sar-ra

(Animation of Enheduanna's work)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0ue-kx_wD4



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The Mythology of the Goddess Ama-terasu: Women's Awakening in Japan

Yumiko Otani, Japan

Abstract: In ancient times, Japan was called a country of “wa” which means “harmony” and “unity” in Japanese. The ancient Japanese adored the Goddess Ama-terasu-ohomikami (Ama-terasu) and respected women who created and nursed new life as the incarnation of the great power of creation. There was a long era of peace without wars at that time. As the civilization of power led by men dominated, the country changed to a society of destruction and chaos—the female energy of love, or light of life, which Ama-terasu symbolized, was totally suppressed. This is what the mythology of Iwato-biraki, Opening the Gate of the Celestial Rock, refers to. This historical myth also reveals a coded message offering a solution to what has been out of balance. Today, the sealed gate of the cave has opened and women’s awakening is becoming an immense wave spreading through Japan.



The Sun Goddess Ama-Terasu is still sleeping in the cave

The ancient Japanese believed in the existence of gods throughout nature and lived with faith in these gods. They adored the Sun Goddess Ama-terasu-ohomikami. In ancient Japanese, “Ama” refers to the universe, the source of all creation. “Terasu” means to shine or glow, “oho” means great, and “mikami” refers to respectful (“mi”) god (“kami”). Thus as a whole, it refers to a brilliant great god. The ancient Japanese considered the sun god to be female. They didn’t distinguish the term goddess (“megami”) from god (“kami”). “Kami” referred to only goddess, a female god. There are similar myths in India and China, and the sun gods in those myths are also female.

When I was a young girl, every house in Japan had a small Shinto altar and an alcove. These are rarely seen in westernized modern houses today. In the alcove, people put a large scroll on the wall with the name of the goddess, “Ama-terasu-ohomikami”, written in Chinese characters. At that time, it was common for people to wake up as the sun was rising and offer freshly cooked rice and water. This was placed on an altar and prayers were offered. Then they shared the offerings withdrawn from the altar because they believed them to be good for their health. All the family members sat and joyously ate meals together. They also worked hard for the good of all. Today there is no alcove or altar in most Japanese houses. In many households, each family member eats meals alone and at different times. Currently, an idea has spread throughout Japan that cooked rice, a gift from god, is an enemy of a weight-reducing diet and that it is not healthy. This is not the spirit of Ama-terasu, the Great Mother Sun.

“Iwato-biraki” is one of the most popular mythologies which everyone in Japan knows. “Iwato” refers to a gate of great rock which covers an entrance to a cave. The gate and the cave together are called “Ama-no-iwato”.

The myth goes as follows:

The Sun Goddess Ama-terasu had a younger brother God “Susanowo-no-mikoto.” He governed people’s world on the earth. One day, however, Susanowo came up to the celestial world and started destructive acts. Because Ama-terasu was so tolerant and benevolent she thought Susanowo might have some reasons for his destructive behaviors and in the beginning pled with him. However, his violent acts never ceased and even escalated, killing some people. Then Ama-terasu mourned and hid herself in a cave. As a result, Japan was covered with complete darkness and various calamities happened.

It is commonly interpreted that this mythology implies a solar eclipse and a rebirth of the sun at the winter solstice. One day, however, an idea that this myth foretold today's escalating destruction of nature, flashed across my mind. It started at the point in civilization when female power was suppressed and dominated by masculine power. The stark fact of massive nuclear destruction, epitomized by both Hiroshima and Fukushima, has become a reality that corresponds to this myth.

The myth continues:

Other gods were afraid that if the darkness continued, the world would be destroyed. They got together and discussed how to solve this problem. They prepared a mirror, a pike, Sakaki (species of evergreen sacred to Shinto) and bamboo grass decorated with jewels, sacred hemp rope, and cotton. Then they performed a cheerful dance and chanted beautiful words to celebrate the goddess in front of the gate. Ama-terasu said, "Although I have listened to many prayers and wishes until now, I've never heard such beautiful words before," and she slightly opened the gate to see outside. Without missing a chance, the other strong god staying outside immediately opened the gate widely and light came back to the world.

Although, this is a story written in an older text of Nihon-shoki, an ancient book of mythology, there is more to consider. Even though Ama-terasu came out of the cave in the myth, I feel that in reality she is still in the cave. Otherwise, wars would not be continuing in the world. People would not build more nuclear power plants, which have terrible destructive power despite the fact that Fukushima, three years after the accident, still continues to contaminate air and ocean by its radiation. People would not be unconcerned about "setting bombs" or putting harmful chemicals that could destroy their lives, into their daily food. They also would not continue to sell and ingest medicines that have harmful side effects. If Ama-terasu were really out of the cave, a culture which respects life would flourish.

A cry of Mother Earth speaking through Athena

I was born in 1952, which was 7 years after the atomic bombs had been forcibly dropped on Japan at the end of World War II. I grew up in a rural town which was two hours away from Tokyo by car, and witnessed all the dramatic changes taking place in the midst of the modernization of Japan. I believed the information given by the mass media, such as "Japanese culture is out of date," "Our parents are ignorant," and "The future is in Western scientific civilization, schools, and cities." Following such information, I didn't respect my parents. I rejected a traditional life-style. I thought a traditional diet

lacked nutrient balance and that cooked rice lacked nutrition. I even thought that cooked rice was an enemy of popular weight-reducing diets, and that it would make me fat if I ate too much of it. Due to this manipulative information from TV and magazines, I fell into an unhealthy life-style.

As I entered adulthood I began to sympathize with the women's liberation movement claiming equal rights for both men and women. I thought the daily household chores such as cooking, washing and cleaning

were annoyances. I aimed to keep up with fashion and to also achieve economic success. At the same time, I had a growing number of questions. "Who am I?" "Why was I born here?" "Why do wars continue although everyone hopes for peace?" "What is the meaning of being a woman?" I couldn't keep my mind from pursuing answers to the many questions that I had pursued since childhood. In addition, I began to wonder if our society was heading in a wrong direction. I saw people's mental and physical health continue to worsen as an excessive emphasis on materialism and economic growth escalated.

So I decided to get rid of all the earlier influences and started a journey to search for the real me. I began an active challenge to explore a joyful and life-affirming way of living. I took my first step by traveling in India for a month when I was nineteen years old. I decided to become an explorer of an alternative life in order to freely investigate my mind. I struggled to release old indoctrinated values and thought patterns, which seemed to be an endless endeavor due to familial, religious, educational and other cultural influences. However, I gradually came across what felt like the authentic information I had been seeking. I resigned from my job at the stationary company when I was twenty-six, despite my successful position as a chief designer. Then I left for Athens, Greece.



When I visited the Parthenon, Mother Earth sent me her sad spiritual message through the Goddess Athena who told me; “I am so sad to see you (humanity) get sick because you don’t eat my ‘milk’—traditional grains! You should rebuild your body with a diet based on my grains!” At that time, I didn’t know I had received her message. I realized years later, however, that my feelings and life-style had started to change dramatically after that day. When I visited the Parthenon 25 years later, I remembered and understood what had happened earlier.

The Birth of Tubu-Tubu Future Food New Cuisine from Japan

Three years after I received this unconscious message from our Mother Earth, I had my first taste of traditional grains. As I felt the power of traditional Japanese food culture and the energy of these grains, I knew intuitively that I had found my real passion. I pursued a history of food both in Japan and the world, while focusing on eating Japanese vegetarian food based on traditional grains. I discovered that by changing my diet to traditional grains, my body became healthier, and my mind got clearer, as previously indoctrinated values vanished. My intuition increased in clarity, and needed guidance occurred naturally. By changing my diet, I found answers to my earlier questions. Daily life became bright with a new-found joy for living.

This led to the creation of Tubu-Tubu Future Food, a new cuisine from Japan. I revived the knowledge and skills of traditional Japanese food by re-designing these foods to fit a modern life-style. Although earlier I hadn’t realized the voice of Mother Earth speaking through the Greek goddess Athena, I now took actions to manifest this guidance. It has become my life’s work to let people know about Tubu-Tubu Future Food and to re-awaken the “wisdom and inspiration embedded in our cells since the mythical era began.”



This is a picture I drew when I remembered that the earth was the mother of all living things including humanity, and that grains were “milk” which Mother Earth was producing from her body for us to eat. I drew it in one breath with my

The Celestial Rock Gate Will Open by the Unity of Healthy food and Words

In addition to food culture and history, I also explored ancient Japanese words and letters as they conveyed messages for solving what has been out of balance. Both the historical origins of the Japanese language and letters, as well as traditional Japanese foods and grains have been forgotten. Japan used to be called a country of “wa”. In Japanese, “wa”

children’s crayon. I felt as if the picture naturally came through me rather than that I created it by intention. Taking the entire year of 1995, I finished writing “Future Food – Survive with Delicious Food in the Time of Environmental Pollution” and published it the following year¹. At the same time, I started seminars to spread the idea and skills of Tubu-Tubu Future Food. The book has sold well over the years and continues to be read by many people today.

Food and Energy were Equal in the Ancient Japanese Language

The continuing mythology of Ama-terasu later explains that even though Susaono-no-mikoto had done various violent acts in the celestial world, he was granted life in the human world, and given grain seeds by the goddess. According to the story, this was the beginning of agriculture. There is also another mythological version explaining that Ama-terasu gave her descendants grain seeds from her field when they came down to the earth.

Food, especially grains, obviously played an important role in both Japanese history and mythology. This is evidenced in a ritual which still remains today. There is a famous large shrine called Ise-jingu, built to worship Ama-terasu. Next to this Ise Shrine is an associated one for Toyouke-no-ohokami, the Food God. It is as large as the main shrine, which implies the importance of the Food God. At the Ise Shrine, a twice a day ritual is still performed to dedicate “mike” or food from the associated shrine to Ama-terasu at the main shrine. In ancient Japanese, food is called “ke,” or more politely “mike.” “Ke” is a synonym of “ki” which refers to life energy or prana. Therefore, ancient words conveyed food as a basic energy for human beings.

Another example is the fact that Ama-terasu is also the goddess of the abundant harvest of grains. Likewise, she has counterparts in the Egyptian goddess Isis, the Roman goddess Ceres, and the Greek goddess Athena—all goddesses of agriculture and fertility. Even the word “cereal” has its origin in the name of the goddess Ceres, who taught people how to cultivate grains. I believe that traditional grains, which are a native staple food, have a hidden mystical power given by the goddess and that they encourage wisdom and health in those who eat them regularly.

means “connection,” “circle” and “harmony.” There was a long era of peace in ancient Japan, and during that period, women who created and nursed new life were respected and considered as the incarnation of the great power of creation.

Various historical literatures² written by the ancient Japanese living in that period include physics which were the origins of all Japanese myths.

Surprisingly, the documents are the equivalent to modern quantum theory and life sciences. When deciphering those documents, unknown meanings of Shintoism and other ancient literatures found in various places in Japan become clearer. The factual world of vortex and energy waves and methods for taking life energy into our bodies are described in those documents as well. According to what is implied in those documents, the origin of Japanese cuisine harmonizes and amplifies wave energy. Such food culture and knowledge were maintained in rural areas until the early Edo period (1603-1868), before the modernization of Japan. This corresponds with The McGovern Report³, published in 1977 in the United States, which suggests that traditional Japanese food is ideal for human health. Unfortunately, modern Japanese cuisine is much different from that tradition.

In addition, according to those historical documents, the ancient Japanese knew that the sound of each letter had a meaning and carried energy. For example, Japanese call ripening grains “*ine*.” “*I*” means “*life energy*” and “*ne*” means “*root*.” As a whole, “*ine*” means “*a source of life energy*.” Likewise, ancient Japanese called each piece of grain “*awa*.” “*A*” shows “*beginning*” and “*wa*” means “*connection*” and “*balance*.” “*Awa*” then means “*Mother Female*”, “*vitality*”, and “*harmony*.” Another document⁴ mentions that ancient Japanese called grains of all species “*awa*”. I was very impressed when I read that they called their staple food “*a source of life*” and ate it as “*harmonious life energy produced by Mother Earth*.” Today, the original meanings of these words are totally forgotten. There is also a song, “*Awa-no-uta* (song of awa).” The song consists of 48 sounds of the Japanese language. It starts with “*a*” and ends with “*wa*”. An oral tradition says that by singing this song of awa and dancing with it, we can heal our body and the environment. The song of awa is being remembered and revived in recent years, as are the traditional grains. In ancient times, people knew that real food and real words had power not only to heal the body but also to bring forth truth and wisdom from the human heart.



I learned ancient wisdom through studying this old language and how it correlated with the most advanced life sciences. Next I became convinced that the power and wisdom of Ama-terasu, which is sealed in women’s bodies, can be released by learning about these two forms of energy: food and words. A great joy came over me when I started to understand this fact. By the unity of food and words, the Celestial Rock Gate will open. This corresponds to the myth that the gate opened when Ama-terasu heard the “beautiful words.”

Tubu-Tubu Ten-nyo’s Network of Transformation: Opening the Gate

Now it’s time to release Ama-terasu from the cave after a very long period of sleep. I think the gate will open when we women start cooking and eating grains, which are a crystal of love from Ama-terasu. This will connect humanity to Mother Earth. It will open even further as we start to talk and pray in authentic words. For the genuine awakening of femininity, real food and true information are necessary. Such information is based on experience and the confidence of those who live with a life-affirming attitude. It is something we can put into practice in our daily life. It is also useful information that opens us to our possibilities. In our work with Tubu-Tubu we learn and practice how to cook such food and how to use true words in a creative way, for example, “Tubu-Tubu Ten-nyo.” “Ten-nyo” means women who live with “tenshin” or a pure mind. I have a beautiful image that these new women wear “hagoromo” or feathered robes, dance beautifully, and move freely between heaven and earth. Women’s awakening is becoming an immense wave spreading through Japan. A network of awareness and transformation is growing, and we are working together to make the Ama-terasu myth manifest in the world. Along these lines I would like to share the seven declarations of Tubu-Tubu Ten-nyo’s way of life. We read and send these declarations heavenward every day.

Seven Declarations of Tubu-Tubu Ten-nyo’s way of living

1. I have Tubu-Tubu cooking skills, which brighten our lives.
2. I remember that I am always connected to tenshin or pure mind and aim to live with it.
3. I appreciate and trust the simple mechanics and rules of the universe within my heart.
4. I know I can create and change current reality by utilizing my conscious awareness and related action.
5. I know that I have unlimited potential in terms of my body, mind, and talent.
6. I aim to integrate my thoughts, words, and actions.
7. I enjoy everything that happens in my daily life from my heart with love, trust, appreciation, and responsibility.

Conclusion

The Japanese government still suppresses news reports on the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. They don't have any clues for solutions at this time. Meanwhile, the government promotes eating agricultural products made in the area of Fukushima and tells the evacuated people lies, such as they may be able to return to highly polluted areas. Moreover, it is madness to resume operating the remaining nuclear power plants in Japan and even export them abroad. There are still many people living in irradiated areas in Fukushima. The government should attend to the care of its people as opposed to hosting the Olympics in Tokyo, but they do not seem to care.



Grains are food endowed with a harmonious wave. These grains, cooked following the rules of the universe, can enhance the function of our body through wave resonance and help it excrete unnecessary substances and toxins including radioactive substances. A diet based on grains tunes all chakras from the first to the seventh, and develops the invisible center of body and mind. Not only residents in Fukushima but all those who live on the earth today need skills to protect themselves by changing their diet. I would like to let as many women in the world as possible know this truth.

Remember that cooking is a basis for life science. I believe we need to develop a true science of life that respects the structure and rules of life and of the natural world from an integrated perspective. It is also a science that is truly and immediately useful in daily life and assures a healthy life-style. Women who bear and nurse life should be life scientists who handle genuine food and true words. It is every woman's task to take Ama-terasu, who is sleeping within each woman, out of the cave.

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About the Author: Yumiko Otani: "Tubu-Tubu Food Designer Yumiko" is the founder of Tubu-Tubu Future Food, new cuisine from Japan. She has been studying women's history, Japanese ancient language and mythology. In 1982, she began studying traditional Japanese foods, and has since become a vegetarian. In 1996, she established an NGO, "Tubu-Tubu, with "Be the New You!" as its theme. She is helping to awaken human potential through seminars focused on healthy food and consciousness, utilizing her original instructional methodology, which appeals to the five human senses. She has developed two restaurants, over three thousand recipes, published more than thirty books and Tubu-Tubu Magazine. In recent years she produced the music and the words for a song. <http://www.tubu-tubu.net/>

Joining our voices

I am convinced that we, women, together can sing our best by sharing our experiences. This space will warmly receive your thoughts, feelings and messages our body sends to us in the path of our life.

Contact: Cecilia Vicentini
(cvicentini.ceciliagmail.com)
Caracas, Venezuela





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Women Creating Change

Interview with Despina Namwembe, Uganda



It is good to know what women are doing to help other human beings and our environment. This knowledge empowers and inspires the gender balancing movement. In this first column honoring women who are creating change, we acknowledge Despina Namwembe of Uganda. As you will see in the following interview, she is adding to transformative efforts.

Sharon: Despina, please share about the work you are doing to support women's development and gender healing in Uganda. By the way, could you also say what part of Uganda you live and work in.

Despina: My hands-on work with women and girls, although sometimes formal, is to a greater degree actually less formal and acted out in many ways. For example, I counsel girls to appreciate education, do career guidance, and offer life skills development. I have a commitment to this because I narrowly escaped an early marriage arrangement myself thanks to one of my brothers who believed strongly in education for girls. I counsel these girls on education and career opportunities and also on life skills (self-esteem, decision making, dealing with peer pressure etc.).

Sharon: How are you able to convey this to the girls and do you find yourself facing any obstacles? Also, are the girls aware of what has been happening with the school girls in Nigeria, and, if so, how have they responded.

Despina: It is so sad to know what happened to the girls in Nigeria. A similar thing happened here also during the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency of rebel leader Joseph Kony when 139 Aboke secondary school girls were abducted in 1996 in northern Uganda. We are talking about innocent girls who are basically enthusiastic about getting good education, enhancing their employment careers, and nothing more. Again forcing them into a religion which is not theirs in the guise of liberating them doesn't take away their inner spiritual conviction. Instead, their faith would be masked by this pretense simply to please whoever is demanding this forced change.

In response to your question about the girls having information concerning the kidnapping of the Nigerian school girls, our urban based girls and many others know much about what is going on in Nigeria, but the rural folk have limited information. This is because various media channels are not available where they live and local radios usually only give reports on local programs.. To the mothers, parents and all people around the world it hurts so deep for anyone to lose a child. The hurt is simply beyond words.

On my mentorship path, some of my challenges are convincing the girls that what I am teaching them is real and important. I know that they are adolescents eager to explore lots of ideas of their own, but also many girls, especially in the rural setting, never get a chance to experience anything beyond what is around their compounds and daily domestic routines. There is also a general need to give the girls a chance to express their voices and concerns from the heart. If we are to have informed girls in any of the sustainable development programs, there is need to devise strategies for the girls to tell their own stories from their own personal

understanding and belief. I try to tell the girls that they can do it if they stay true, strong and committed to their own personal convictions.

Sharon: Please share some of the ways you are working with young and older women in your community.

Despina: As mentioned before, I generally do this kind of work in formal established places because this training requires money and such places are already funded. I also do this on a one on one basis because I love what I do. If I get the opportunity to talk to a larger group or in a formal established environment then I am able to convey the message. For example, when speaking to the older women, I focus on women's developmental programs especially by guiding women on how to earn income and supplement their family needs in a more meaningful and participatory way. In parts of our society, especially in the rural areas, working women are not as appreciated however close to home their work place would be. Many women do not receive any income from their farm produce even though the majority of them are farmers. The income from their sweat and toil is, instead, reaped by the men and not shared with the women.

Additionally women still struggle with land ownership, including the widows. So my talks emphasize the importance of supporting women through educating them about property rights. I do this on radio, seminars and in domestic settings. I also do lobbying especially by involving policy makers like Members of Parliament and religious leaders from the different faiths to support the women's causes in these cases. Religious leaders have a daily audience of both men and women as couples always seek their advice in situations of domestic violence or conflict. I have also trained women on environmental issues and continue to do so in order for them to take responsibility for environmental protection since their energies and proceeds depend on it.

Very important to all these efforts though is my involvement with men as key actors. The majority of women, because of their socialization, still find it hard to make independent decisions even when they are in situations of personal hardship. If the men understand, appreciate and support these efforts, the women end up benefiting more. However, this also needs to be done with caution as most men can end up entirely taking over, disempowering the women and thus complicating the intended integration process.

There is a general call for women to nurture and teach their children to respect all human beings without any gender bias based on social cultural stereotypes. A call for women to follow their passion through transforming society, and a call for women to balance home responsibilities and assuring that they also earn a living. They need employment to supplement family incomes. This promotes practical value for educational

money spent earlier on their attaining formal education. Nonetheless, even for those who have never attended school, there is a sense of ownership and a sense of self-worth in

contributing something to the home table. Enjoying these outcomes may not be easy for many now, but it is a way of helping the future generations yet to come.



Despina Namwembe lives in Kampala town, Uganda. She is married with three children, two girls and one boy. She has a MA in peace and conflict studies and coordinates the work of grassroots organizations in six countries on behalf of the United Religions Initiative, namely Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, Tanzania, South Sudan and Uganda.. She is involved with several local and international organizations, primarily those promoting peace building, interfaith work, gender and environmental concerns. She has a strong passion for promoting women's rights and girl-child education initiatives.

Healing Ourselves, Healing Mother Earth

Ann Smith, United States

Abstract: Before patriarchy ruled women were free to be healers; midwives, pharmacologists, caregivers, storytellers, gatherers, farmers and protectors of seeds and trees. The ancient stories honored the Divine Feminine and Masculine and taught reverence for all creation. The stories were told in circle where women, men and children listened and applied the messages of wisdom to their daily lives. During the thousands of years of patriarchy, such stories and women's roles as healers were forbidden. This is true even today, yet the stories live and are being told again in circle where more and more people are listening and rethinking their relationship to nature as part of nature. Women are reclaiming their roles as healers, story tellers and co-creators.



The word *health* comes from the Old English word *helthe* which means "wholeness." What is wholeness? What is health? I believe it is that state of grace in which the individual (body, mind, spirit) is in balance with nature and society. We are seeking wholeness by recalling ancient stories that affirm who we are as women—whole and changing. We are transforming patriarchy by co-creating healthy communities. We are healing ourselves and in doing so healing Mother Earth.

Ancient Stories

According to *Haudenosaunee* legend, in the beginning was Sky World where the people were similar to people now living on Earth but they were able to make things happen by just thinking about them. In Sky World was the Tree of Life that grew many kinds of fruits, and the blossoms lit up the sky. The people of Sky World were told not to disturb this sacred tree. A woman named *Atsi'tsiaka:ion* meaning Mature Flower was expecting a baby and asked her husband to dig up some roots to make a tea. When he did this he made a hole and she fell to earth clutching seeds in her hands from the tree. The water birds saw her falling and formed a net with their bodies to catch her, and because this place was made up of water and water creatures, they put her on the back of a

giant turtle. Sky Woman asked the creatures to get her earth that when delivered she put on the back of turtle creating Turtle Island now known as North America. Sky Woman after a long life died and her head was flung back into the sky creating Grandmother

Moon. The sacred feminine and goddess were evidenced in these myths as well as numerous creation stories found throughout the globe.¹



Also, according to Greek legend *Gaia* was the personification of Mother Earth, great mother of all. She was the mother goddess, creator and giver of birth to Earth and the Universe. The gods and goddesses were born from her union with Uranus, the sky and the sea-gods were born from her union with Pontus, the sea. They united the creative powers of female and male, but the stories began to change with the onset of patriarchal ideologies. New creation stories affirmed the power of the patriarchal God as male, Father in heaven, Creator of Earth and Universe.

Patriarchy as Disease

Thousands of years of patriarchy have dominated humanity and the natural world based on the belief that God is male. This prevailing belief continues to perpetuate separation from nature as well as from one another, male domination, competition, ignorance, greed, and lack of respect for women and nature. It is a belief that we have all internalized. It prevents wholeness by ranking diversity rather than embracing it and is expressed through many forms of domination such as men over women, white over people of color, straight over gay, rich over poor, people over nature. Women and the environment continue to be exploited through this worldview and are perceived to have less value, as a mere commodity, to be used by those with power over them. The use of hierarchical ranking maintains the power of domination. The disease of patriarchy is destroying the natural world that has nurtured and sustained all life.

During thousands of years of oppression the Divine Feminine was hidden and forbidden in patriarchal religions. The fear of being burned at the stake, stoned or drowned was real and for many women that fear still exists. The very essence of feminine identity, of power, spirituality, sexuality, health, creativity, intuition and divine knowing were all denied. This included indigenous ways of healing and herbal plant medicines.

As a result it has taken until just recently for women and indigenous people to feel safe enough to illuminate the Divine Feminine and reclaim their power as teachers, priests, shamans, healers, midwives, and leaders who honor their culture and share nature-centered health information and practices, bringing back healing rituals and ceremonies.

Patriarchy must be dismantled for the health of both women and Mother Earth. Women's equality is the prescription, the medicine needed to rid us of this disease. Until this happens women and girls will continue to be denied access to women's health, education and advocacy. Prostitution, sex trafficking, rape, female circumcision, all forms of violence against women when seen in relationship to the violence

against nature brings a new awareness of how one effects the other and both need to be stopped for the survival of our planet.

Why Women Healers?



A proliferation of women's sacred circles worldwide is a healing force that brings feminine values of relationship, nurturing and interdependence into a global culture. When a critical number of people embody these values and act accordingly patriarchy will transform. In circle every voice is listened to and respected bringing individual and collective healing of the feminine spirit. Women and girls let go of the messages of not being good enough

and take on positive messages that support each one as a leader and co-creator of a new era based on feminine values. Together we are co-creating a new society that combines ancient myths and indigenous wisdom with the new science that shows we are one, interconnected and united with God, Creator, Mother, Father, Divine Feminine and Masculine.

It is in the telling of our own stories that a new story rises replacing the old stories of oppression and domination. We are supporting one another in making positive changes, and in remembering authentic feminine ways of knowing. In particular, my article highlights some changes that occurred when a masculine model of medicine took over the birthing processes previously led by women.

When Women Healers Were Forbidden and Murdered

The world's first medical school was founded in the 9th century in Italy, the Schola Medical Saternitana. Women were teachers and students of medicine, philosophy, theology and law. So what happened to the women teachers, students and healers? When the Black Death ravished Europe from 1346-53, fewer women died than men, and women inherited their

husband's property. Women became powerful healers, leaders and mystics such as Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen. Because the cause of the plague was not known but believed linked to nature, the fear and hatred of nature, women and indigenous people, who lived in harmony with nature, grew resulting in massive genocide and colonization of people and nature. In 1484 the publication of the *Hammer of Witches* by two German Dominican monks, Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger, began the systematic destruction of women's health care by torturing and murdering women healers. Hundreds of thousands of women were murdered for practicing their time honored-skills as healers and as religious leaders. Healers were called witches and condemned to death by the laws of religion. This oppression lasted 500 years and was carried with colonialism to every corner of the earth.

In the 1400s, many cities and governments in Europe formalized university training for the practice of medicine. Because women were excluded from attending universities, they could not gain a license to practice but continued to offer remedies in the home, nursing, midwifery and acting as herbalists.² The medical profession continues to be male dominated but with the demand for modern and traditional medicine and for good, affordable health care, this is now changing worldwide.



According to the United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA, 2014 Report: "Midwives are the unsung heroes of maternal and newborn health. They can prevent about two thirds of deaths among women and newborns. And midwives deliver much more than babies: They are the connective tissue for communities, helping women and girls care for their health, from family planning all the way through the postpartum period."³

As an example I will share the following is a story of my daughter giving birth in a healthy environment followed by an illustration of the birthing of my own daughter in a male dominated profession. The first story represents a return to women's healing ways.

On February 14th, Valentine's Day, 1996, I became a grandmother for the first time. At five o'clock in the morning I woke up from a dream of my grandson being born. In the dream I was going to see him. A woman driving a small transport vehicle like a truck was bringing him into view. Just as I was about to see him, the truck backed up, stopped, and moved forward to meet me. I saw my grandson propped up in a blanket and I woke up.

From this dream I knew to pack my bag even though my daughter was not due for another week. At five in the morning she woke up with her first labor pain. A few short time later, she gave birth to a seven-and-a-half pound boy in a birthing room in a Miami hospital. Her husband assisted her the entire time and two midwives, one from India and one from Ireland, helped in the miracle of birthing. They utilized universal and age-old skills to bring forth Alexander, who was having difficulty passing through the birth canal.

Goushen, the midwife from India, saved my daughter from having a Cesarean delivery by skillfully pushing on Whitney's chest, forcing the stuck baby out of the birth canal. If this had been a scene in medieval Europe, with mother and daughter intuitively in sync at the beginning of birth and Goushen's midwifery skills, we could all have been burned at the stake for practicing witchcraft.

When I arrived two hours after the birth, mother and father were beaming with smiles and a sense of wonder, enchanted by their new-born son and the miracle in which they had been full participants. Goushen was helping my daughter to feel relaxed about breastfeeding, handling Sacha, the Russian nickname for Alexander, like a priest presiding over Holy Communion. I was witnessing that state of wholeness (health) in which wife, husband, infant, and midwife had "co-created" with God a grace-filled birth.

My daughter had received the best health care, representing a combination of modern science with indigenous women's health practices. She was not alone in giving birth; her husband was with her, doing everything in his power to make her feel safe and secure. The male doctor was not threatened by the skills of the midwives, and when the ancient practice of birthing was needed, he moved out of their way.

Everyone who was a part of the birth was respected and shared information, resources and love. It instantly became a team with a common goal that united their efforts in providing a good birth and a healthy mother and child. Jewish, Christian, and Hindu prayers were very much present during the miracle of birth. It was a time of God's grace, a holy space, a holistic event. Such stories give voice to the new story.

In contrast, when I gave birth to my daughter in 1963, my medical experience was very different from that of my daughter. It was dominated by a male doctor and male medical procedures. My experience was very lonely and, as a nurse in the health care

profession, very disappointing. I did not receive the tender loving care that I knew was vital to health care and had personally given to so many others. I was given drugs and left alone to wait out my labor in a darkened room in a hospital. My husband had been banished to wait with other husbands while the doctor took total control over my birthing process.⁴

Women are also being re-introduced to ways of caring for their overall health. For example, several years after I gave birth to my first child, the Boston Women's Health Book Collective sparked a movement that transformed women's health care in the United States. Before the publication of the well-known book, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* in 1969, practically no women's health information was easily available and the field of women's health care was dominated by men. It is time to undo the damage of the past, as we bring forward both ancient and new healing ways.

The Recovery of Sacred Feminine & Indigenous Ways

Women and Indigenous people can now claim their power as post-modern teachers, priests, shamans, healers, doctors, midwives, and leaders, are recognizing the value of nature-centered health information and practices. Increasing numbers of authors are writing health books, bringing back these healing rituals and ceremonies. Genocide and colonization were unable to destroy this knowledge of spiritual practices and religions that sustained many during years of oppression.



The religion of Candomblé is such a story. It came from Africa to Brazil during the Atlantic slave trade that took place from the 16th through the 19th centuries. I have visited the port of exit, Elmina Castle in Ghana, and the

port of entry in Salvador Brazil where the cries of millions of people in agony can still be felt with a bone-chilling horror—a vivid reminder of the evils of patriarchy. Candomblé like all indigenous religions was condemned by the dominant religion – in this case the Catholic Church, and followers of the faith in Brazil were violently persecuted right up through the recent past of government-led public campaigns and police action. The persecution stopped when a law requiring police permission was no longer legal in the 1970s.

Candomblé is a religion of nature; its beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, and medicines deeply connected to the natural world. Candomblé's deities include: Yemanjá, Goddess of the Sea; Oxum, Goddess of fresh water; Yansã of wind and storms; Oxóssi of the forest; Ossain of sacred leaves; and peace-bringing Oxalá. Although Candomblé is practiced primarily in Brazil, it is now also practiced in other countries, including United States, Uruguay, Argentina, Venezuela, Columbia, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain, having as many as two million followers.

Women elders of Candomblé in Salvador, Brazil are held in high esteem as keepers of the faith and teachers of nature-centered wisdom and practices. (5) This is just one example

among many as increasing numbers of people from first-world nations are seeking out ancient knowledge and ways of healing from Native Americans, Amazonian and other traditions. The indigenous knowledge is returning. Imagine the transformation when enough people worship the Divine Feminine in the sea, fresh water, forests, sacred leaves and peace.

Creating Healthy Communities

In 1984, I had the opportunity to witness the power of women in transforming patriarchy when visiting a remote village on Mt. Kenya where the women were earning money from the bakery they built. This was the first time in their collective memory that women had their own money. Instead of turning it over to the men who would have built another beer parlor, they were going to use it to have a community health care center. It has taken many voices of women and male advocates, and the global women's movement for the UN and other funding sources to realize that the best investment to ensure healthy communities is to give money to grassroots women.

In 1985, I visited another remote village in Kenya near the Uganda border where they were discussing the great need for women health care providers. We were served their traditional village drink composed of seven grains. The woman from the World Health Organization said that outside health experts told the village 20 years ago that this drink was not healthy. The people believed the health experts, who preached the need of protein that only came in the form of meat, fish, and cheese. Now the health experts are "drinking their words" as they appreciate the value of this most excellent source of protein. Today the United Nations

encourages beneficial traditional health care and food, especially that practiced and grown by indigenous women.

The need to restore and empower the feminine is also taking place on many other levels. For example, the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women NGO Forum in Huairou, China, 1995, with all of its logistical and weather problems, was a healthy place for women because we created sacred space in which women's perspectives, ideas, talents, issues, programs, art, music, dance, and resources were given center stage. Women's self-esteem was nurtured and enhanced. We listened to one another's stories and shared best practices for improving the status of women. We treated ourselves and one another with respect. We co-created a healthy environment for all people and sheltered those in exile like the Tibetan women who would have been arrested if caught by Chinese officials. Health was seen in the greater context and interconnected to the eleven other issues of the UN Platform for Action Document⁶ signed by all governments. Sexism was recognized as being connected to racism, classism, and all other prejudices. Poverty and violence against women were declared the most basic cause of ill health and early death in all societies. There was a naming of the numerous imbalances and problems caused by almost 6,000 years of patriarchal dominance.

No country fosters a healthier society than what was created and experienced in this brief time at this UN gathering of women in Huairou. Fifty-thousand women carried home this vision for a healthy society. Every year thousands of women representing their organizations, UN NGO's, gather in New York for the UN Commission on the Status of Women meeting where we share stories, best practices, strategies, and unite efforts. We dream of the day when we will have a UN Fifth World Forum on Women where those women who cannot attend in person will be able to connect through modern cyber-technologies

Conclusions

Women are bringing about their own liberation and working together for gender equality, freedom, justice and sustainable development. We are learning to trust our intuition and to connect to nature as part of human nature. We give much gratitude to indigenous peoples who have both preserved and exemplified unity with nature. We are celebrating the Divine Feminine, embracing and creating inclusive rituals and prayers, songs, dances, images, stories. We are sharing resources and information that heals and empowers us to be transformational leaders starting with

those in the greatest need. We are nurturing and connecting to women's sacred circles around the world to heal ourselves and Mother Earth.

We are demanding access to good medical care for all women and girls and supporting integrative medicine that offers the best of both modern and alternative care. We are growing and eating healthy foods and standing behind small farmers and farm workers in the Fair Food campaign. We are saying no to GMOs and agri-business. We are saying yes to buying local when possible and stopping violence against Mother Earth and cruelty to animals. We are planting indigenous trees, plants and grasses, using indigenous seeds and natural fertilizers, and preserving large areas of land. We are reducing, recycling and living lightly on the land. We are freeing animals held in cruel conditions. We are saying no to mining, dams, fracking, and yes to all renewable fuels. We are protectors, defenders, nurturers, lovers of all creation working together locally and globally in co-creating a healthy world.

We are healing ourselves. We are healing Mother Earth.

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Image of hands holding newborn on page 35 is the logos for Midwifery Today. <http://www.midwiferytoday.com/iam/>

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About the Author: Ann Smith served as founder and director of Women's Work, director of Women in Mission and Ministry, Episcopal Church USA, director of Global Education

Associates. She is co-convener of Millionth Circle, co-founder and director of Circle Connections, regional coordinator of Gather The Women; working globally with Anglican Communion and United Nations NGOs for gender justice, women's healing and empowerment. Co-author of Stories from the Circle, Women Prints, Women's Uncommon Prayers and co-producer of Women's Round Calendar and Journal of Women's Ministries. She lives in Naples, Florida, with husband and two cats.



Reviews

Sacred Earth: Places of Peace and Power

Martin Gray with Foreword by Graham Hancock

Sterling Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 2007

ISBN: 9781402747373 9781402780363

Reviewer: Jenny Eda Schipper

Amid the vast desecration to our planet, there continue to exist places around the world that emanate a heightened sense of mystical experience. Ancient civilizations tuned into these sites and built temples to their various gods upon them. *Sacred Earth: Places of Peace and Power* by Martin Gray takes us on a journey across the globe into areas of natural wonder and human artifacts where time seems to stop and the palpable energetic presence of earth speaks for itself.

Gray's stunning photographs bring to the fore the luminous mystery of the ineffable, expressed in exalted architecture and through the body of earth, in places where the supernatural is transparent. From the fascinating Foreword by Graham Hancock to the unusual Acknowledgements page at the end, Gray presents us with more than two hundred and fifty sublime photographs of his travels to places where the veil between realms is thin.

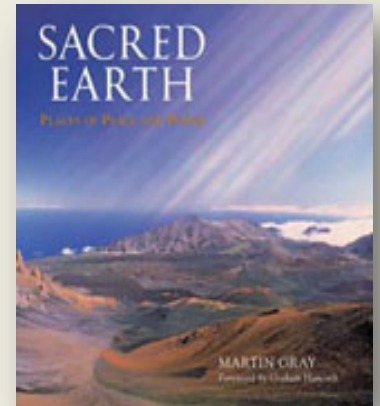
Sacred Earth: Places of Peace and Power is the record of a twenty year pilgrimage to sites known since antiquity and even before. Martin Gray's passionate love for the earth registers in each word and photograph. His caring, coupled with his vast knowledge make this book extraordinary.

In the Preface, the author states a dual method of gathering information -- part scientist, part shaman. Studying extensive sources on mythology, astronomy, earth sciences, sacred geometry, shamanism, and more, Gray mounted a rigorous scholarly investigation alongside an ardent, often arduous, long-term pilgrimage. This unusual combination allowed him to make leaps in conceptual understanding, which he shares in this book.

With the Introduction, Gray sets forth a basis for interpreting ancient structures, people and their level of knowledge—in some ways more sophisticated than our own! Megalithic structures like Stonehenge and the Pyramids are now known to have functioned as star observatories. The ancients were well aware of the heavens' influence on the earth and its people. They possessed great knowledge of the calendar with particular attention paid to solstice and equinox cycles. In the Introduction, Gray explores the questions and motivations prompting ancient peoples to link their mythologies with the stars.

The body of the book consists of five chapters divided according to continents. Each section opens with a highlight or personal note from the author about that region. A geographical map comes next, that enumerates what follows.

Section One, Sacred Sites of Europe: A Year on Bicycle Pilgrimage in Europe, takes us through twelve countries. His reason for using a bicycle is that it allowed for a slower pace in keeping with and understanding the pilgrims of old. The photos start with sacred megalithic relics from the British Isles and move east across Europe all the way to Russia.



In **Section Two, Sacred Sites of the Middle East and North Africa: Mecca: Some Things I Learned Along the Way**, Gray highlights the holy shrines and temples of Islam as well as sites such as the Dogon shrines in central Africa, pre-Roman stones in Baalbek, Lebanon, and the famous pyramids of Giza and other Egyptian temple sites.

The next section, **Sacred Sites of Asia and the Pacific: Photograph of an Epiphany**, takes us to India and the Far East. Almost half the photographs in this section are from holy places in India. Both the Bagan Temple Complex in Bagan, Myanmar and the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar are among the most intricate architecture I have ever seen.

In **Sacred Sites of South America: A Pilgrimage Journey in the Magic Bus**, the author drove a VW bus from the Arizona border into South America. He then flew to Brazil and Venezuela. Gray describes it as one of the most magical and exciting times of his pilgrimage, notwithstanding four robberies that included all his photographic equipment, money, credit cards, etc. The vast salt flats of Salar De Uyuni in Bolivia, along with the Kalasasaya Temple Compound, built possibly fifteen thousand years ago, exerted an unexplainable pull on me.

In the closing chapter: **Sacred Sites of North and Central America: The Beginning of My Love Affair with Power Places**, Gray shares how he fell in love with power spots growing up by the White Sands in New Mexico. He points out that sand dunes, unlike beach sand, emit a singular frequency. The photograph of these pure gypsum sands is mesmerizing. It is not surprising that Native Americans chose this spot for their vision quests.

Running as a leitmotif throughout this book is the question of who are we? Human consciousness is one of the least understood phenomena in science. Hancock's Foreword suggests a perspective of the brain as a receiver (like a radio station), rather than a generator of consciousness. This could explain people's heightened awareness (they become attuned to higher frequencies) when at these sacred earth sites. What becomes most striking in reading this book is that beyond all that separates people, lie two greater truths—that we share a common humanity and that the earth is our home.

I urge everyone to read this book and share it with others. Martin Gray's gift to us is nothing short of a soul retrieval of our earth and the sites themselves stand as witness and repository of our highest human aspirations.

About the reviewer: Jenny Eda Schipper, M. A. Guidance and Counseling, Jenny has spent much of her life exploring art and healing through dance, poetry, writing, music and painting. As a writer, Jenny was a contributor to *The Root Of All Evil: An Exposition of Prejudice, Fundamentalism and Gender Balance* (Mijares, Rafia, Falik. & Schipper). She self-published an inspirational book for women titled *By Her Own* (byherown.com) A certified yoga teacher and body-worker, she derives great pleasure from taking a weekly ballet class.



She lives with her husband John by the ocean in Encinitas, California and is writing a novel about a woman who seemingly "has it all" yet sets in motion a party that exposes her deepest secret to ultimately heal her own heart.





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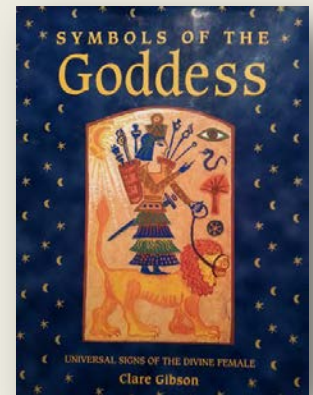
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Symbols of the Goddess: Universal Signs of the Divine Female

Clare Gibson

Saraband (Scotland), Ltd. Publisher, Glasgow, 2004.

ISBN 10: 1887354204 ISBN 13: 9781887354202



Reviewer: Elizabeth Reed, Ph.D.

Nature provides all that humans need to sustain life at its basic levels --- food, water, shelter. Nature also provides humans with another level of nurturance --- symbols to provide meaning to live by. Elaborating on this, Clare Gibson in her book “Symbols of the Goddess: Universal Signs of the Divine Female” explains

Symbolism is, then, a truly international form of communication, for it bypasses the barriers of language, race and culture, speaking directly to each level of the human psyche, but most meaningfully to the collective unconscious. When we view a symbol, say , an image of the moon, we recognize it on a conscious level, equating it to the astral body that shines at night; our personal unconscious may also recall a particular night with which, for whatever reason, we associate the moon strongly. Our collective unconscious however, transcends such superficial connotations: in accordance with a more profound, metaphysical response, it associates the symbol with the tides, water and feminine fertility, but also with coldness, death and the underworld, and thus, since all of these are her attributes, with the Goddess (from the Introduction, p.11).

This book is a journey across the globe through symbols of the Goddess. The author organizes the book by civilizations of the world arranged geographical and culturally. The seven world civilizations are: Mesopotamian, West Semitic, and Phrygian; Mediterranean; Germano-Norse, Celtic and Northern European; Indian Subcontinent and Far East; Indigenous Cultures of Africa and the Pacific; and the Americas.

Since “...the Goddess...is the demiurge of every component of the natural world” (p. 15) it naturally follows that the symbols of the Goddess are overwhelmingly those of or from Nature. These symbols are well-known throughout the ages and include such symbols as the moon, stars, birds, cattle, water (in many forms), serpents, trees, and bees. While the book’s approach is geo-cultural, one can follow multiple and varied symbols of nature as representations of the Goddess not only across cultures but across the ages.

The final chapter, The Goddess Reinterpreted, examines the ways the Goddess has been expressed (though often covertly) in modern times once again, emerging despite pervasive attempts throughout history to eradicate the Feminine. She concludes with a call for the balance of the masculine and feminine along with the necessity to support the re-emergence of the Goddess especially into Western psyche.

Author Clare Gibson (graduate of King’s College, London University) is a free-lance writer who has worked as commissioning editor for a publisher of illustrated books. She has previously authored a number of books on symbolism, mythology, religion and spirituality. This background shows itself as each page, which is carefully constructed with multiple illustrations and side notes explaining the symbology of each illustration. These illustrations and notes are as important as the narrative text.

There are a multitude of books written to give a comprehensive view (from an historical and/or geographical perspective) of the evolution of the goddesses. This particular book will appeal to those who prefer high visual content, who are students of symbology, and/or who seek a well-documented, academically sound, introduction to the history, global perspective, and all-pervasive presence

of the Goddess. While some may see this book in the “intellectual coffee-table genre,” it is a valuable contribution to the global symbology of the Goddess, especially through Nature.



About the Reviewer: Elizabeth Reed, Ph.D. directs the nonprofit Shalem Center in Columbus, OH with its mission for wholistic healing and growth through interdisciplinary and interfaith perspectives. A psycho-therapist, spiritual director, and workshop leader, Elizabeth holds a M.Div. from Emory University and a Ph.D. (focusing women, spirituality, and counseling) from the Union Institute. She is both an ordained United Methodist clergy and a cherag (clergy) in the Sufi Ruhaniat International. For eight years she was on the national Commission on the Status and Role of Women focusing on gender issues within her denomination. Her numerous published articles include issues of inclusive language and issues of clergywomen. Most recent works include two online meditation courses and the publication of an educational manual.

<http://www.shalemcenter.org/>



A Force Such as the World Has Never Known: Women Creating Change

Sharon G. Mijares, Aliaa Rafea, and Nahid Angha (Eds.)

Inanna Publications and Education Inc., Toronto, 2013.

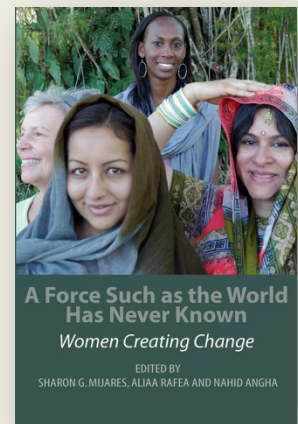
ISBN: 978-1-77133-056-5 (pbk) ISBN: 978-1-77133-057-2 (pdf)

Reviewer: Nobuko Takahashi Ito

We, as a world, now stand at the crossroads that will determine the future of life on this planet. Ongoing wars, economic and environmental devastation, an increasing lack of human rights, including basic human survival needs, and many other challenges around the world are showing us the limitations and destructive power of the patriarchal paradigm.

Sharon Mijares, one of the editors of “A Force Such as the World Has Never Known: Women Creating Change” wrote in the introduction of the book: “It is time for all humanity to make choices and related actions that create peace, economic security and environmental care for all—rather than for a small segment of humanity, a specific race, religion or gender” (p.2). She pointed out that female power was crucial to make necessary changes for the good of all life. The “Female model” as opposed to the patriarchal one puts emphasis on equity, integration, and connection to nature, and is manifested when female voices are heard (p.3).

This book is an anthology, written by twenty-eight women who are actively working on the ground for a gender-balanced, truly peaceful, and ecologically sound world. They are from such diverse countries, as Syria, Japan, Costa Rica, Brazil, Bangladesh, Tibet, India, China, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Liberia, United Kingdom, Iran, Uganda, Venezuela, Sweden, Canada, and the United States. Some of them work transnationally, to create a global network of nurses for better health care for all. As they are from very different social, cultural, historical, and religious backgrounds, their challenges and obstacles, as well as their approaches, vary. Ugandan



women, for example, have coped with environmental degradation that directly impacts their survival. A Russian contributor has worked for conscious and natural birthing, which will create a healthier society. An Iranian author described her work towards women's political participation. One of the most unique experiences was written by a Japanese contributor who promoted a healthy diet as a means of transformation and raising women's awareness. There are many other stories of women's struggles with violence and discrimination in their own countries and on the battlefields of war.

The editors did not attempt to compare the difficulties women had in different places of the world, nor to find a single answer. Instead, they emphasized "the importance of women's struggles around the world as a way of creating global balance by countering gender imbalance," (p. 385) and let women talk from their own perspectives. This, paradoxically, highlighted what those women had in common---the firm vision to create a peaceful, egalitarian and well-balanced world with compassion, wisdom and power despite their very different settings and approaches. It is often painful to read about women being terribly tortured, but in the end, their perseverance, courage, and strength to move on give us hope. Furthermore, sharing their experiences through this book helps to enable us (both women and caring men), to break down barriers between different nationalities, cultures, and religions and to "allow us to work as one human family, respecting our diversity and enriching our experiences" (p. 386).

A reader might also note the significance of "spirituality" in many of the narratives. Although this can have a destructive influence on girls and women, due to patriarchal premises of religious indoctrination, it can also be an empowering source of insight and strength for women to work for all of humanity with divine love. Indigenous traditions around the globe also express a spiritual connection to Mother Earth. In fact, many authors were motivated by their spiritual experiences and inner voices. The editors acknowledged that "spirituality is intrinsically related to creating better living conditions for human beings. That is, it influences changes in every dimension of society" (p.388).

The title of the book came from a quote of the British poet Matthew Arnold (1822-1888):

If ever the world sees a time when women shall come together purely and simply for the benefit of [Hu]mankind, it will be a force such as the world has never known (p. 15).

The powerful, inspiring women's stories in this book bring encouraging messages to those who are willing to make a difference for the good of humanity and they confirm that women are already manifesting their power in the world!

About the Reviewer:

Nobuko Takahashi Ito is an instructor of Tubu-Tubu Future Food, new cuisine from Japan. She offers cooking classes and seminars at her home in Iwate, where she lives with her husband and four children, with a mission for changing the world through a healthy diet. She holds a master's degree from Iwate University, focusing on international development, sustainable agriculture and forestry, and has a passionate interest in creating a peaceful world. She had a hands-on experience of farming and food preparation in a traditional community in Iwate, and then later was in charge of sustainable forest management at a local administration prior to her current career.




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The Book of Jane

Directed by Antero Alli

Reviewer: Celeste Gurevich

Finding Our Way Back to the Sacred Feminine through Cinema

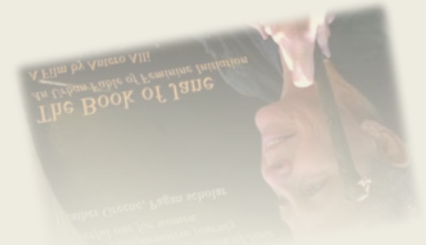
The Book of Jane, the latest film from experimental filmmaker Antero Alli, is a journey into some of the deepest mysteries of human existence: loneliness, death, lost and created mythologies, and how tragedy can become a doorway to the Divine Mysteries if you embrace the opportunity for personal transformation. Shot in the Bay Area with an all-local cast and released in 2013, the director uses a wide range of techniques to play with the viewers' sense of reality, from crisp, handheld footage to dream sequences drenched in magical realism. Although born in Finland, Alli has been centered in Berkeley, California for over 20 years. 'The Book of Jane' is his 11th full-length film. His many years of experience in underground cinema bring a maturity and strengthening of vision to this latest creation. Alli has explored the esoteric space of psychic transition in his other films such as *Under a Shipwrecked Moon* (2003), *The Invisible Forest* (2008) and *The Greater Circulation* (2005), but none of his previous work addresses the chaos, fluidity and power of the sacred feminine in the same spirit as *The Book of Jane*.

The movie opens with an overview of an idyllic Southern California town, on a calm, sunny day. In the stillness, a raven's call echoes. The scene shifts to the local university campus, students here and there on the paths. A lone woman wanders slowly, head shaved, all in black, with a beat-up doll in a red cape hanging from her backpack. She pokes erratically at the ground with a walking stick, and seems to be mentally disturbed, but has an eerie calm and grace to her movements. A voiceover begins, and it is the woman's voice. World-weary, and aptly named 'Jane', she begins to tell her tale, and we quickly realize that there is more to this woman than meets the eye.

During her daily walk around campus, Jane meets Alice, a Comparative Religions professor. Standoffish, she reluctantly speaks with Jane, who asks her highly intelligent questions. This fires Alice's curiosity and challenges her assumptions that Jane is just another "crazy" homeless person. She begins to seek Jane's company and conversation on her way to and from her classes, and tells her lover, Colette, who explores feminine archetypes in her artwork, about Jane and her deep knowledge of Alice's course of study. Colette is as fascinated as Alice, and their decision to further the friendship with Jane takes them on a ride into chaos they never could have predicted, with a shocking secret hidden in Jane's past that forever alters the course of Alice's life.

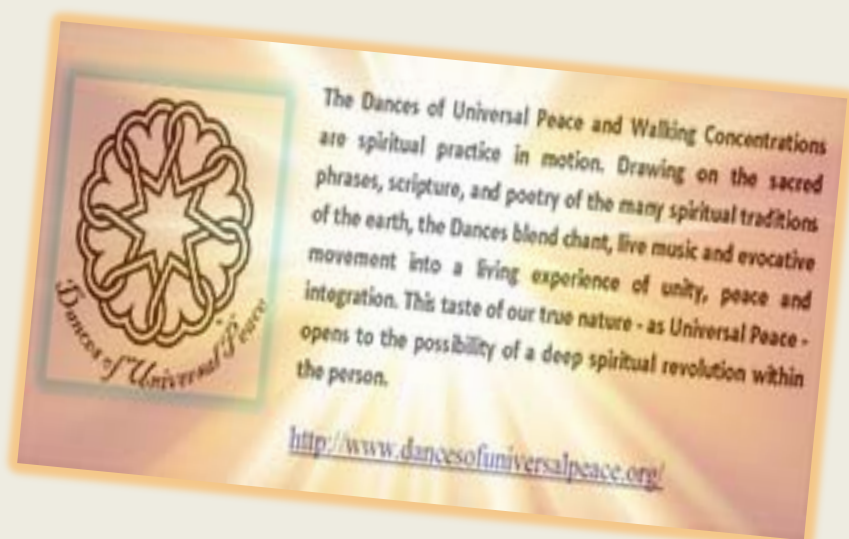
As a director, Alli holds up a magnifying glass to what makes us uncomfortable, to our prejudices and assumptions: to the sad state of our disconnection to Mother Earth. To what is just beneath our thin veneer of reality, before taking us into the depths of our own psyches. Antero Alli is a rare bird in the film world: a male artist who creates fierce, articulate, authentically complex female characters and places them in a story centered around the history and mythology of the Goddess—through them speaking the revolutionary truth that we are a human family. As in the old adage, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger", in Jane, he teaches us how to heal and reshape what is left of ourselves after being burned by Kali's cleansing fire. With Alice, we are reminded about the importance of not just thinking—but doing—in moving intellectual theory into the experiential realm. *The Book of Jane* is a piece of cinema that will resonate on many levels long after the closing credits fade to black. We have much to learn from this master storyteller, if only we are brave enough to embrace and celebrate the chaos and mystery within ourselves.

<http://www.verticalpool.com/beyondthegods.html>





About the Reviewer: Celeste Gurevich was raised at the edge of the Pacific Ocean on the Oregon Coast, an experience that intertwined her soul with all things in Nature. Always a Language Arts nerd, she has recently been reunited with her writing voice, and lives in Portland, OR with her husband, Andrew, studying film and writing at Mt. Hood Community College. She has recently published two creative nonfiction short stories, 'From Submarines to Sitar' in Perceptions: A Magazine for the Arts and 'Becoming My Own Midwife' on The Manifest-Station.net.



Call for Papers

Volume 1, Issue 2, 2016

Uniting Heaven and Earth: Land, legend & gender



The current world crises are the result of gender imbalance initiated with the patriarchal paradigm and the disconnection from Nature. This has led to increasing motivations of corporate greed and the plundering of Mother Earth for Her resources. It is time for the Sacred Feminine to come forward to unify and heal.

Heaven and Earth are united even though humanity has often ignored this. Every single breath, every single molecule and atom manifests from the same creative force that birthed the universe...in a perfect balance of power and beauty.

The 2016 edition honors the Sacred Feminine and discusses ways to restore gender balance and healing the split between heaven and earth. If you are interested in contributing please email the editor.

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Completed draft due by November 1, 2015

Final paper due by February 1, 2016

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