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Issue 44, Autumn, 10,008th year of the Goddess (2008)

The Beltane Papers exists to provide women with a safe place within which to explore and express the sacred in their lives, to educate, empower, encourage and entertain, to inspire, support and reinforce their perception of reality. Published 3 times annually. All rights revert. ISSN # 1074-3634.

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Guiding Goddess: Baubo, Goddess of the belly laugh, how we all need you when times are hard. We need your reminder that we can find humor when we most need it. Your gifts of wisecrack and absurdity help us to hold our heads above despair. Blessed be, Baubo, your gift is the smile on our face and the lightness in our hearts.

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The Beltane Papers

A Journal of Women's Mysteries

Autumn 10,008th (2008) year of the Goddess Issue 44 - \$2.50



Bette, Whoopi, Lucy and Rosanne, Mistresses of Mirth

Being Orange

I think I shall become a painter,
And luxuriate in the world of
textures and shapes,
perspectives and hues

If I were a painter, I could say,
"Today feels like an orange day!"
And then spread broad bands of
tangerine, persimmon,
and burnt sienna
across a crisp, white sheet
One color melting into the next

And I would float and flow along with
them,
Blending, merging...emerging,
Alive and ravenous, out of the depths
of my fruity, bright core --

Orange, just for today,
Just for the sheer pleasure of it

By Lisa Wersal

About this issue...

I have been so busy with my work and family that I was slow to get this issue out, sorry for the delay. This issue is our third in this format, it's been one year. These issues have been paid for entirely out of TBP funds. Part of this money was from the last payments of distributors and so the continued estimate of income is lower now. We have only the subscription and back issue sales to sustain TBP. We have not asked for or accepted paid advertisements over the year because I was concerned with using as many pages as I could for content. Not surprisingly, we receive more great material than we have space for and I want to add another 4 pages.

To help cover the cost for this, I would like to invite six paid advertisements at \$10.00 per ad, per issue. This is a cost of about \$ 00.03 to reach each one of our 300 subscribers, and our subscribers share their issues with one or more people. Alternatively, you can look at it as sponsoring the addition of a half of a page of TBP content. The rest of the costs will have to be covered through cover price and subscription prices. Beginning with issue 45, provided we get the paid ads, we will go to 20 pages per issue with two to two and a half pages of advertising and 3 pages set aside for addressing, T.o.C., Cover and the About page. This will give TBP about 15 pages of content. TBP's cover price will go to \$3.00 per issue and \$9.00 per subscription for one year if we move to a 20 page format.

Back issue sales would really help. I need the space the magazine is taking up in my house and TBP needs the money! I am offering a price break on purchases of bundles of 3 earlier issues (what we have of 1 through 41, earliest issues are very few). Buy three issues for \$18.00, 6 issues for \$30.00, 9 issues for \$40.00 and 12 for \$50.00 (plus shipping and tax where applicable). Issue 42, 43, and 44 can

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About the Poet Lisa Wersal

A former academic, passionately participates in life in ways that are meaningful to her: writing, performing music, quilting, gardening, and environmental activism. She has published in areas of religious studies, faculty issues in higher education, and song lyric analysis, and she also publishes essays, opinion pieces, and poetry. She grew up on the plains of southwestern Minnesota, and now lives at the edge of a wetland in east central Minnesota.

About the Poet Becca Tzigany

Becca Tzigany has written poetry and prose all her life, for 8 years published an avant-garde literary magazine, The Writer's Cramp, and spent a decade writing articles on environmentalism. She has been commissioned to write the biography of physicist Nassim Hamein (entitled Crossing the Event Horizon), which she is currently doing.

As a teenager living in a Greek village, she would wonder about the mythological characters in the nighttime sky. Her lifelong spiritual quest has led her to apprentice under Christian ministers, a Hindu Brahmin, Native American shaman, Buddhist nun, and Indian yogi. In turn, she has taught meditation and led workshops in the healing arts. Through her world travels and first-hand experience with several spiritual traditions, Tzigany gained insight into the psychological impetus behind mythology and the cultural expressions of relationship. She lives in Taos, New Mexico, with her partner, artist James Bertrand, and is happy to have raised a teenage boy. More of her writing can be found on <http://venusandherlover.com>.

DANCE OF BAUBO

Come gather 'round, Sisters
I've something to say
No more biting my tongue
No more cause for delay.

For eons and eons
We've been stirring the stew
And cleaning up messes
When everyone was through

Are we dumb as a dishrag?
Is that what they thought?
Well, who changed their diapers
And scrubbed off their snot?

Now these overgrown children
In their contest of pissing
Hoard all their marbles
While we're just subsisting.

Throwing lines on a round world
Dividing it to the last nth
Spreading rods, sticks, and missiles
And sharpening their plints

They've used up their sandbox
It is time to come home
We can unripple them
And soothe their cockscomb

Give them a chance to recall
That they came through the Mother
So together we can straighten out
Their warmongering clutter

We have a secret weapon
For the planetary agenda:
Let's lift up our skirts
And celebrate our pudenda!

Let the heart beat the rhythm
To swivel our hips
And hear the womb wisdom
That comes through our lips

Shimmy like an earthquake
Squat like a toad
Croon the inner ardor
'Till we're oo'ed, ah'ed, and oh'ed!

From the juice of our yonis
And the sweat off our tits
Flows a salve of creation
That can heal the Earth's splits

Since the music is rising
- This is our chance -
Our bodies are channeling
Baubo's (ul)hoary dance.

by Becca Tzigany

BAWDY BAUBO

Excerpted from "Goddesses in Older Women" by Jean Shinoda Bolen

Baubo, a minor crone figure in a major Greek myth, has a counterpart in Uzume (Ama-No Uzume), a Japanese goddess with a prominent role in the most important myth of ancient Japan. Each brought healing laughter to a dire situation. While humorous remarks were made in one myth, and there was dance and drumming in the other, the specific act that was responsible for the laughter in both was the same: Baubo and Uzume lifted their skirts and exposed their vulvas. This gesture and the laughter it provoked restored a mother goddess's ability to nurture and brought sunlight back to the world; it could not have been the hostile laughter of ridicule nor the snickering laughter at an obscenity. Something deeper and more significant was revealed.

Women who are comfortable being themselves laugh a lot together, especially crone-aged women. In *The Metamorphosis of Baubo*, Winfred Milius Lubell observed that "references to Baubo usually carry a special quality of laughter. It is a chuckling, wry sort of humor, compounded of irony, compassion, and shared experience between women ... it is Baubo's sacred belly laugh." Baubo (also called Iambe) was only a maidservant with a bit role in the myth of Demeter and Persephone and yet she captured a crone spirit in women that is earthy, funny, compassionate and, ultimately, wise. She was described by Marija Gimbutas, the noted archaeologist, as an embodiment of an "important but little-known deity, who has touched the human psyche for millennia."¹

BAWDY BAUBO

Once the goddess Demeter learned that her daughter Persephone had been abducted by Hades with Zeus's permission, the pain of her loss was even sharper. She left Olympus and withdrew from the company of the gods, and wandered on earth, hiding her divine beauty disguised as a woman beyond childbearing. One day she appeared in Eleusis and sat by the well where the daughters of Celeus, the ruler of Eleusis, came to draw water. Curious about the stranger in their midst, they talked with her and found that she sought employment as a nursemaid. They led her home to meet their mother Metanira who had given birth to a baby boy. When the goddess put her foot on the threshold and touched her head on the ceiling, momentarily the doorway filled with divine light. Awed, Metanira, who had been seated with her infant son in her lap, immediately offered Demeter her own splendid couch and finest wine, which the goddess declined. The sight of a mother and child must have stirred memories and longing for her missing daughter because Demeter became mute and stood with her eyes downcast, until the servant Baubo brought her a simple chair. She then sat in grief-stricken silence from which no one could draw her out, until Baubo cheered the goddess with her bawdy humor. Her jests brought a smile, and then, when she lifted her skirt and exposed herself, Demeter laughed and was restored. Then she accepted a simple drink of barley water and mint, and agreed to become the baby's nursemaid (a temporary solace in the mid-portion of the myth).²

Baubo's jokes have not been retained through the ages, but what she represents even now is something women intuitively understand: the notion that in the midst of loss and betrayal, a woman might cry, sob, swear, even throw up, or feel benumbed in her grief and outrage, but if "Baubo" is present, someone can say something that can bring tears of laughter to the situation. It is often in laughter that we share our courage and know that we are survivors. In being able to laugh together, we affirm each other's strength. Baubo's jokes and gestures are a bawdy and belly-laughter humor that can arise among women in the midst of a disaster. A good friend can say something that evokes laughter at a very bad time, and healing begins.

When Baubo lifted her skirt in jest, as recounted in the classical Greek myth, it was an exposure of her vulva, an act called *anamai* (literally meaning to lift one's skirt) in Greek religious writing. The gesture was bawdy and evoked laughter but it was much more. Lubell traces this gesture from its prepatriarchal roots as a faint reminder of an earlier matriarchal time when the pubic area of the goddess was the holy gate through which all life came, and the inverted triangle was a sacred symbol. Baubo's skirt-raising, vulva-exposing gesture can be found in artifacts and art from the Paleolithic through the middle ages, and from old Europe and Egypt through Siberia to the Americas.

Some of the small clay “Baubo” figurines that have been found by archaeologists invite us to smile. They are women who have their clothes raised above a full belly and are mostly legs and abdomen. Sometimes a smiling face was actually represented on the belly. The cleft in the v-shaped smooth chin is the vertical vulvar slit between her legs. While Baubo and these statuettes are minor images amidst the Olympian divinities and marble statues of ancient Greece, when her origins are traced back to pre-patriarchal times, we understand that she is a faint and depreciated reminder that images of women’s sexuality and fertility were sacred, not prurient. Once the vulva was the entrance to the body of the goddess, and cleft-like cave entrances were painted earth-red in reverence.

Rufus C. Camphausen in *The Yoni: Sacred Symbol of Female Creative Power* also focused on artifactual evidence, widening the geographic range from which these images originated and widening the time span from Paleolithic to contemporary time. Yoni is a Sanskrit word for female genitals that translates as “vulva,” “womb,” “origin,” and “source.” Camphausen chose to use this term because it had neither a clinical nor a pornographic connotation and derived from a culture and religious tradition in which female genitals are seen as the sacred symbol of the Great Goddess.

Representations of female genitals, breasts, and pregnant women from carvings, cave paintings, and other artifacts provide circumstantial archaeological evidence that Paleolithic and Neolithic peoples worshiped goddesses. With the rise of patriarchy, the vulva went from being a place of reverence to a puritanical, unmentionable, and “dirty” part of a woman. It went from a symbol of the goddess to one of the most demeaning and hostile words (“cunt”) a woman can be called.

In seeking the meaning of Baubo, Lubell made connections between women’s laughter, sexuality, and restoration of balance. “The spontaneity of Baubo’s laughter flashes out like graffiti across the ruins of the past. Her jests have vanished, but her wry and startling gesture and the record of her comic wit remain. Many have suggested that laughter among women is the hidden side of women’s sexuality. That kind of laughter—often associated with the trickster figure and with fertility—was often used in sacred and joyful rituals to ease a stressful situation, to set painful matters in perspective, to restore balance ... She is irreverent and she is sacred.”³

Baubo apparently played a part in the Mysteries that were celebrated in Eleusis, northwest of Athens, for two thousand years until the shrine was destroyed in 395 C.E. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter says that after Persephone’s return from the underworld, Demeter gave the Mysteries to humankind. There were public portions, which we know

about, and the Mysteries known only to initiates who were forbidden to reveal the secrets. Men and women participated in the Eleusinian Mysteries. The little we know about them is through the writings of Christian bishops who were hostile to these rites. According to Clement of Alexandria (150-215 C.E.), sometime during the Eleusinian Mysteries, Baubo “hoisted up her robes and displayed all of her body in a most unseemly manner.”⁴

Instead of being present in these solemn rites in Eleusis, it is more likely that Baubo was a presence at the Mysteries of Thesmophoria, a women-only, three-day festival held at Eleusis in October at the time of the autumn sowing of the grain. Women gathered together to mourn with the goddess and to console her for the loss of her daughter (reenacting the original abduction, which would be cathartic for them in the shared grief). After the solemn rites and communal mourning, there was hilarity, with jokes, gestures, foul language, and song.⁵

HEALING LAUGHTER

Healing laughter is a relief from tension and an expression of joy and hilarity. Bawdy humor is juicy humor that is also an earthy and sexual commentary about human nature, appetites, and foibles. At its most nurturing—which humor can be—there is an afterglow of good feeling. In the shared laughter, there is a sense of commonality about vulnerabilities and strengths. In making ribald comments or responding to them with laughter, women are acknowledging their sexuality and sexual experience and also revealing the sexual vanities or habits or proclivities of men, which is what men fear most.

To be Baubo/Uzume, a postmenopausal woman has to live in her aging body comfortably and unself-consciously. Her sexual energy is a component of her zest and vitality. With Baubo as an inspiration, she refuses to stop being herself just because she is older: she is a sensual, sexy woman who laughs and dances. Good humor and experience become enhancements to earthy sex. It would be in the tradition of Baubo to take up belly dancing after fifty. In fact, many celebrated belly dancers are postmenopausal women.

It may seem a stretch to appreciate Baubo as an archetype of wisdom, but she is. Hers may be a wisdom that only women can appreciate because she grows out of the numerous inelegant though profoundly important body experiences we have had from the onset of menstruation through pregnancy and menopause. In laughing or joking about what women go through biologically, we can be bawdy Baubos. This sharing often leads to more sensitive and serious talk about sexual experiences, miscarriages, abortions, infertile-

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Life In The Crone Zone

excerpted from "Life, Death, and Other Trivia" by Ruth Dickson

Bette Davis, that quintessential Old Broad, once remarked, "Old age is not for sissies" and, speaking as another old broad, I totally agree. Aging is a rigorous daily battle against all manner of crap we could never have imagined in our more youthful days.

As time progresses, various parts of the body begin to sag and droop, lose function, fade away, and finally, are surgically removed. Over the last decade, I have personally lost my senses of taste and smell, a gall bladder, a uterus, part of a heart and some visual acuity. And I recently made the interesting discovery that, when you reach a certain age, you apparently start to leak.

As for physical depredations, the runway saunter of my flaming youth has become a slipper-shod shuffle, mostly to the bathroom. The nipples with which I used to make eye contact now point directly at the bunions adorning feet that were once the toast of New Orleans; portraits of my formerly elegant tootsies had, for years, attracted fetishists from the world over to pre-Katrina Jackson Square, along with paintings of various other parts of my anatomy.

In short, the luscious body I used to inhabit, the very one that had men all over the world weeping with desire, now strongly resembles a freeway map, complete with off ramps. In fact, following my most recent surgery, I took a good look at what is now my body, and decided to plot a route to the Hidden Grotto, ala Mapquest. It read like this:

"Go due south on Bypass Boulevard, through Long-tit Valley; follow the Cholecystectomy roundabout, exiting on Appendix Avenue. Continue southwest to the twin tunnels of the bifemoral bypass, then merge with the saphenous vein tracks. When you come to the fork in the road, take it.

This will lead directly to the entrance of the Love Cavern, once covered by lush bush, now fallen into balding disrepair. Although long deserted, this roadside attraction became the central theme of several books, and is now an historical landmark, having been explored by many notable spelunkers in former years. Visitors are now rare, but still welcome."

In addition to the wrecking process going on below the neck, I'm also losing my sight. I do not mention this to complain (although it is most assuredly a pain in the ass), but as a fact leading to this interesting conundrum:

My 75-year-old sister recently came bursting through my door, in full-blown hysterics. She had just been bowling and suddenly, in the midst of a game, forgot how to do

it. Just couldn't remember how to move her arms and legs, and roll the ball down the lane. This, combined with a prior incident, during which she had inexplicably found herself holding a pair of sunglasses at the Walgreen checkout counter, with no memory of having taken them from the rack, has her convinced she's coming down with Alzheimer's.

We are, for better or worse, almost completely co-dependent, which brings us to the aforementioned conundrum. In the worst case scenario, I'll go blind and she'll lose her mind. Were this to happen, my solution of choice would be a suicide pact. Unfortunately, there is a fatal flaw in this plan: I won't be able to find her, and she'll forget who I am.

Hopefully, it won't come to that, but in the meantime, the mental image of two old ladies stumbling around, trying to off each other, is at least as entertaining as a "Mad TV" skit. Laughter truly does have curative powers, and I find that if you tilt your brain in the right direction, you can find a funny angle to any situation, regardless of how dire it might appear at first glance. .

Personally, I have reached the stage when I can say exactly what I think, about anything, to anybody with no fear of either hurt feelings or recriminations. I don't give a crap anymore if people like me, and I have absolutely no patience with the pious, the fatuous, or the ignorant. I do not suffer fools gladly, and I *love* being caustic and irascible whenever opportunity presents itself. There something deeply satisfying in slamming the door or hanging up on those who irritate me, and nobody wants to fight an old lady; I win every round.

The older I get, the more I relish administering tongue-lashings to deserving fools. Before I was mature enough to be sure of my own identity, I was easily intimidated by people who appeared self-assured and confident. Not any more. Now I'm the intimidator, and if I act as though I know it all, it's because I do. After eight decades of questions, answers, trials, adventures and misadventures, I am truly filled with the wisdom of the ages. I have an opinion on everything, and a solution to every problem, and if "they" would only listen, I could fix the world!

Other things I don't care about anymore are wearing makeup, high heels, or breast elevators. As far as I'm concerned, Victoria can keep her secret. (I'm in total agreement with "Maxine" when she declares that sweatshirts are the

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Laughter for the Goddess

by Wendy Hawksley

When asked if our coven performs ritual skyclad, the women of my circle respond, “We like two things – clothes and food. It’s because we love food that we tend to stay clothed.” At festive times, an impromptu “Isis, Isis, Ra, Ra, Ra!” will often be shouted, usually followed by the inside jokes that only a tight-knit group of individuals can enjoy together.

If there is a defining trait of our coven, I would say it is humor. The more irreverent, the better.

The “Charge of the Goddess” makes prominent mention of freedom, joy and love, while the “Charge of the Star Goddess” portion specifically states, “And therefore let there be...mirth and reverence within you.”

Author Doreen Valiente is credited with the prose version with which we are all familiar. There is much speculation as to the origins of the “Charge” and I will not analyze it here; however, it is very interesting to note that both humor and worship are included in a single thought. This is a more ancient concept than one might think.

Legend has it that when Demeter was mourning the loss of her daughter, Persephone, humor is the one thing that lifted her out of her sorrow. Iambe, later honored as a goddess of verse and wit, amused Demeter with her quips and jokes (in some retellings, it was Baubo; in some versions, Iambe/Baubo exposed herself). The humor worked; this was a turning point for the Goddess. Demeter smiled and the earth grew fertile once more.

Iambe’s name survived in the form of the rhythmic, often satirical, meter described as iambic pentameter favored by Shakespeare, but little else is known about her. This passage from the Homeric “Hymn to Demeter” is one of the few references to Iambe from the ancient world:

“But Demeter, bringer of seasons and giver of perfect gifts, would not sit upon the bright couch, but stayed silent with lovely eyes cast down until careful Iambe placed a jointed seat for her and threw over it a silvery fleece. Then she sat down and held her veil in her hands before her face.

A long time she sat upon the stool without speaking because of her sorrow, and greeted no one by word or by sign, but rested, never smiling, and tasting neither food nor drinks because she pined with longing for her deep-bosomed daughter; until careful Iambe -- who pleased her moods in aftertime also -- moved the holy lady with many a quip and jest to smile and laugh and

cheer her heart.”

In a hymn to Demeter composed by the poet Philikos (3rd century B.C.E.), Iambe says to the Goddess, “If you are willing to loosen the bonds of your mourning, I can set you free.”

Anita Revel describes Iambe this way: “Through creativity and humour, liberty and joy, playful Iambe soars free from judgement... She relishes laughter and merriment to connect with her source of feminine energy. It’s in the release of sadness or fear that female sexuality and joy is restored.”

This seems like a very apropos description, as by releasing her own sadness at the loss of her daughter, Demeter’s joy was restored; hence, the feminine energy of the Goddess could be channeled back into the land, so that the people could partake of a bountiful harvest.

Iambe also played a role in the ancient Greek festival of Thesmophoria, or Thanksgiving, which celebrated the harvest. The night of preparation before Thesmophoria was called Stenia, a celebration of the return of Demeter from her mourning. During Stenia, the women engaged in ribald jesting. The intent was to amuse one another, commemorating the night when Iambe amused Demeter, thus lifting the Goddess out of her grief, and making the earth fertile again.

While this is just one example, I feel that this strongly illustrates why humor could be revered as sacred. Without the harvest, the people would not eat. Without the crops, there could be no harvest. Without the favor of Demeter, there would be no crops. As long as Demeter mourned, the earth would not sustain the people. If laughter is what it took to recall Demeter to the needs of the people, despite her own sorrows, then it seems to me that we should not take the gift of humor for granted!

Humorous moments can also create lasting memories. I shall never forget the night of one of our coveners’ initiations. That was the night I asked a legally blind Second-Degree student to lead the blindfolded candidate around the altar in the dimly lit space. Laughter overcame any objections and it is now one of the most memorable nights in our coven’s history. Naturally, we often reference that as the night of the “blind leading the blind”.

Humor is a potent thing. The power of laughter can

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A talk with Sam Hain

“Will you stop calling me “Sow” all right? That’s a female pig. The name is Sam. Sam, as in Sam”.

He whispers that lowly to the woman who has just announced his talk. He clears his throat, and steps forward to address the students, leaving the well-meaning facilitator behind. Someone always ends up slaughtering his name, he ruefully reminds himself.

He’s honored to be here, on Religious Freedoms day. This is the day each school brings in representative theologians from all the different religions in the district. Each gets their hour in the sun. It also happens to be October, so there is only one thing on people’s minds.

“My name is Sam Hain. Rhymes with ‘a-thame’. That’s the gizmo Witches use to slice open apples to show that there are very few really regular pentagons inside. Oh, the pentagon. People are always confusing that with that building down there in Washington -- what is it? Yes, the Pentagon. You know, where they’ve got that demon trapped.

Oh, yes. Before I get too carried away with all that arcane lingo, let’s touch upon some basics. The religion is Wicca. The root of ‘Wicca’ is ‘Wic’ and is derived from the word ‘Witch’ and, in order to emphasize that letter ‘C’, the religion is often called ‘WitchCraft’. Now, breaking this final word down, etymologically, we have the words ‘Itch’ and ‘Craft’ beginning with the letter ‘W’. ‘W’ stands for Woman, Wit, Wisdom and Woozy. Woozy, you know, like if you drink too much. So, anyhow: Witchcraft is an itchy craft or skill for women, wits, half-wits, the inebriated, and the wise. Of course, we are all in the last category - at the very least.

Okay. The roots of Witchcraft. The roots are to be found in your grandmother’s root cellar. Which is to figure. They let some gardener loose, and he either tripped over some practitioners in the woods, or he made it up out of figs and mints, or somewhere in between -- your choice. It’s appropriate, though -- the phenomenal growth of a contemporary earth religion had to be instigated by a gardener.”

He acknowledges a hand.

“You don’t ride brooms, do you?” asks a youth with a face like a pimple.

He chuckles. “No, no. That myth was invented by the Inquisition. No brooms. Most of us don’t keep clean homes, anyway. Too many grimoires, oils and incenses. And the stuff like eye of baby and wing of newt -- that went out

about the time of Shakespeare. Besides, winged newts went extinct. Nowadays, we’re pretty environmental.

Speaking of the Inquisition (and we all know nobody expects it), the Inquisitors wiped out the entire population of women in Europe. Men had to come up with a kind of a temporary reverse-parthenogenesis for the race to survive. Either that, or it was space aliens. We’ve got some revisionists out there now who don’t believe more than a handful of people were deep-fat-fried by the Inquisition, but they’re crackpots. A scarce few others claim that maybe only a relative few were killed for Witchcraft -- perhaps in the tens of thousands to maybe a couple hundred thousand. But those numbers seem reasonable, so these figures probably aren’t right. The one thing the human race isn’t is reasonable, so feel free to pick an extreme in either direction.

Anyhow, we Witches gather together in covens, or else in herds of solitaires -- otherwise known as festivals or networks. Sometimes we meet in gaggles, prides, pods or clutches. We meet once in a while, or whenever the moon is blue.

A lot of us follow the reincarnation thing. And the truths of ancient lands which rise from the sea. As proof, consider the tales of Atlanta. It’s risen from the seas, and even from the land, into a mass of skyscrapers. It’s no accident that one of the nation’s largest airline hubs is in Atlanta. Gotta provide transportation for all the souls to home in on. And, if you don’t think lands can rise from the seas, check out the Midwest.

Witches give honor to the elements. That’s why we can be seen standing out in the rain so often. Our rituals take so long because we usually honor each and every of the 106 elements in the periodic chart, although we often leave out the man-made ones. The anti-nuke crowd leaves out all the radioactive ones as well.

The religious part is, of course, that we have a plethora of Gods and Goddesses. It’s like an herb garden -- they’re many, they’re hardy, some of them are no better than weeds, and most of them come back the next year. Yes, we have our dying and rising Goddesses and Gods. Most important in the Goddess department is the Maid, Mother and Crone. The Crone is the old warty one you got to watch out for, but that’s all right -- she’s got arthritis and might not catch you. The Mother -- well, she gives birth to everything, so she hasn’t time for much else. And the Maid, hey, she’s the one who does the dishes and picks up after everyone.”

"What about Halloween?" asks someone else.

"Samhain. Named after me." He pronounces it like his name. "Or maybe it was the other way around. I wasn't around, then. 'Halloween' means 'little hollow'. Hollows were those holes in tree trunks that were such a big deal in fairy tales. Where the Keebler cookie elves live, at least by ill-repute.

It's one of the Sabbats. There are eight of them. There are the Quarter Sabbats and the Crossed Quarters, and Samhain is a particularly cross Quarter. Almost a Susan B. Anthony Dollar of the occult world, it's that big and feisty. It's the night when the shawls between the world are thin, which is why it's usually pretty chilly. But we try to go outside anyway.

It's the night Witches talk to their Dead. There's a reason we collect those little decals with roses and skeletons at music stores. Ever wonder why there are so many of those things? It's us, man. Anyhow, it is permissible to discuss anything you desire with the Dead. Remember, the Dead tell no tales.

The purpose of Samhain is to prepare for winter. Those of you who are not Witches fill the same task by writing Christmas cards as well as by hiding from the Season of Advertising, which begins about then. Well, since we do Yule instead of Christmas, we have other preparations. In the old days, the final crops were taken in. It's the Wiccan end-of-year, our New Year's Eve without streamers and overpriced restaurants. At Samhain, the last crop would be taken in, and that's what folks would eat until spring; mold, rodent droppings, and all.

The Celtic kids used to knock on doors, just like kids do today. Only then, it was 'Trick and Treat'. You were supposed to give the kid something tasty like pudding wrapped in boar's stomach lining, and you were supposed to pull some kind of nasty trick on the kid as well. Think of a drop floor under your welcome mat -- the Celts played tricks for keeps. Hardy and lusty sons of guns, they were. If you failed to do a trick of your own, the kid was perfectly justified in thinking something up on his or her own. Note that toilet paper, shaving cream, and rotten eggs are for pikers. Fortunately, we've come a long way since then. However, remember that there is a precedent for that razor in your candied apple. It's a gift from a reincarnated Celt. Witches are too busy partying to do anything like that.

In fact, we'll party all night long at the slightest provocation. On Samhain our excuse is that midnight is the most magical of the hours. And once one is up that late, one may as well continue. There's a certain somberness about this particular occasion, but we take it in stride. We'll even bob for apples -- the game's symbolic meaning is Futility, except for those bobbars with big mouths. We'll wear costumes, so long as they are black. Black's just a Witchy thing: you

wouldn't understand. Its meaning is absence, since black is technically the absence of all colors. People who always wear a lot of black wish to bring this sense of the Void into themselves. At Samhain, black is highly appropriate: we often seek to void out the past year like a bad check."

He takes a long pause for air. Attention still seems to be with him, he notes gratefully.

"Okay, so what are we Witches doing today? Well, there's a certain type of politics. You know the old Craft saying, 'If that which you seek, you cannot find it within, you'll never find it without -- unless you push.' So we have lots of fun boycotting movies people wouldn't have gone to see in the first place if we hadn't made a stink about them. Darn shame cigars are out of fashion, even if Broomhilda still smokes one..." He fades into a reverie of musing.

"Oh, yes, as I was saying. Witchcraft today. It isn't as picturesque as in the old days. The succubuses, incubuses and abacuses are all down in Club Med, where the rest of us can't afford to go. Glad they can afford it. If they head far enough south, maybe they'll transform the rainforests -- 'Make Love, Not Cattle'. Yeah, Witchcraft can be pretty transformative. Not many religions let you bang on raw-hide all night and plunk a computer keyboard by day."

He concludes his talk, and leaves to applause, feeling good about having clarified the Craft like drawn butter. Students follow him outside, as he straddles his ElectroLux. They laugh, as he makes verbal vroom-vroom- vroom noises. Nothing happens.

"Drat", he says. "Anyone got a car? And jumper cables?"

Ten minutes later, Mr. Hain and his vacuum cleaner are skybound, circling up and into the clouds.

Originally published in the Samhain 1993 issue of Surrender Dorothy, the Fairfield County (CT) Wiccan (Facowi) Newsletter. (The Facowi are now the CWPB -- Connecticut Wiccan and Pagan Network.) Also uploaded to the Religion Forum and to the New Age B Forum of CompuServe, and to the Pagan Message Board on America Online.

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What do ya' call 13 Witches in a hot tub?
Self-Cleaning Coven

What's the best thing about Pagan friends?
They worship the ground you walk on...

What do you say to an angry witch?
Ribbit

Archaic Knowing

by Lisa Sarasohn

Ancient myths, images, and words of women's spiritual power encode the archaic knowing that dwells within us. Such knowing is implicit within—and emerges from—our body's center, our bellies.

In the realm of myth: Our ancestors' stories celebrate the spiritual power concentrated in a woman's belly. They personify the source energy that is centered within us as a mythic being—as a goddess, an aspect of the Sacred Feminine.

A Greek myth recorded in the seventh century BCE, for example, presents the belly goddess as Baubo. Baubo is the belly-baring woman who plays the central role in Demeter's search for her daughter.

In this myth, Demeter's separation from her daughter, Persephone, begins when Persephone's father Zeus helps his brother Hades to abduct the maiden. Hades steals Persephone into the underworld and rapes her.

Having lost her daughter, Demeter is devastated. She doesn't know where to look for Persephone, nor does she have the will to search. She loses hope. In her grief, she stops the crops from growing. The supply of food dwindles; starvation nears. The world is barren and drab.

Demeter arrives at Eleusis, utterly dispirited. Baubo steps up to her; she dances in front of Demeter and tells her bawdy jokes. Most accounts call her jokes "obscene." I suspect that they were the kind of rowdy jokes we tell each other with glee.

Now comes the pivotal moment: Baubo lifts her skirt. She bares her belly and flashes her vulva to Demeter.

And Demeter laughs. Mirth breaks through Demeter's despair; she soon resolves to resume her search for Persephone. Demeter's laughter gives her the guts to seek and ultimately reclaim her daughter. As she does so, abundant life returns to earth.

Lifting her skirt, baring her belly and revealing her vulva, Baubo is cunctipotent—the old word for demonstrating womanly, generative power. Baubo demonstrates to Demeter the center they share, returning the goddess to her own center of being. Demeter sees Baubo's belly, and she remembers who she is.

The belly-baring woman occurs not only in Greek legend but also in the Egyptian story of Isis and her lover Osiris. As Isis is mourning her lover's death, Baubo lifts her skirt to dispel the goddess's incapacitating grief. Like

Baubo, women of ancient Egypt lifted their skirts and displayed their vulvas as a ritual gesture invoking the Sacred Feminine.

In Japanese myth, Uzume plays a role similar to Baubo's in relation to the sun goddess Amaterasu. Frightened and angered by her brother's violent vandalism, Amaterasu retreats into a cave. In the goddess's absence, the rice does not grow; famine approaches. Uzume gathers a crowd and dances a bawdy, skirt-lifting jig at the opening of Amaterasu's cave. The goddess hears the crowd's drumming and laughter and, curious, she steps out of her cave to investigate. Drawn back into the world by Uzume's joking and dancing, Amaterasu's presence regenerates the fields and the world.

In the realm of image: The vulva, the portal to the belly's power, is one of humankind's most ancient images. The first marks humans made to represent the Sacred Feminine are outlines of vulvas etched into the walls of caves in southern France, dating to 30,000 BCE.

The decorative arts of Eastern Europe witness that women have continued to image the vulva as gateway to the belly's energy of regeneration, literally embroidering on the designs that our earliest ancestors engraved in stone. Through the 19th century, one tradition of Eastern European embroidery depicted a female figure with legs spread, her vulva displayed as a diamond or triangle descending between her legs. The designs made by women of Eastern Europe illustrate motifs which have appeared as well for thousands of years in parts of Africa, Asia, the Pacific islands, and North and South America.

In England, Ireland, and Wales in the late Middle Ages, artisans carved Sheila-Na-Gigs—figures of squatting women holding their vulvas open wide—into the stone arches framing church windows and entryways. Similar figures occur both in the temples of India and in cathedrals throughout Europe. They define the entrance to and protect sacred space; by analogy, their vulvas are the doorway, their bellies are the sanctuary within.

The Sheila-Na-Gigs bear traces of Baubo, the belly goddess, and tell what's become of her.

Most of the Sheila-Na-Gigs have been chiseled off, defaced, buried or destroyed. Likewise, Baubo and woman's belly have been desecrated.

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HILARIA

Hilaria, undoubtedly one of the most widely acknowledged and revered of the the Found Goddesses, is always good for a laugh. With Her rib-tickling companions, CHUCKLES, CHORTLES, GIGGLES and GUFFAWS, She is invoked in diverse circumstances with varying degrees of success, for much depends upon the intentions of those Who seek Her. She abhors the nervous TWITTERS, associated with GAMEY (see UMPIRA and VISCERA), but is easily summoned by the lusty laughter often heard at CHANCY's potlucks or COLLATEA's (see LABOREA) rituals. Especially dear to Her are those known for their Wicked Laughs, and She listens lovingly to the cackles that rise like suddenly freed birds from the throats of encircled Crones.

One of Hilaria's best-known rituals is Humor Control, used to bring the participants closer together, by emphasizing their shared experiences, or to lighten tense or hostile situations. Because Her Presence enables us to get through so many intolerable situations and painful confrontations, She is especially dear to Lesbians, who frequently engage in the ritual of Humor Control. Hilaria may be invoked informally by saying, "If I don't laugh, I'll cry," or by using one of Her formal invocations for making light *, such as:

*Hail Hilaria, Mother Wit,
We can't stand all this shit.
Haggle, gaggle, wiggle, and wag,
Bless us with a joke or a gag.*

She is much given to the Rite of Tongue in Cheek, and, in Her medicinal aspect, will leave Her devotees in stitches. If the situation calls for uproarious hilarity, she may be invoked by chanting:

*Hail Hilaria, do your bit,
Bring us laughter, soul of Wit!
or,
Wholly Hilaria, silly and daft,
Truly you know we need a good laugh!*

Humor Control must be a consensual activity, for much depends upon the appropriateness of the aspect of Hilaria invoked and how well the participants know each other. Her priestesses teach that timing and sensitivity are all when Her Presence is sought, for there are many touchy subjects among us. Caution must be urged when invoking Hilaria, for an aura of mutual trust among the devotees is essential to the ritual of Humor Control. Where it does not exist, Hilaria cannot be summoned, and the only result will be increased tensions and hostility.

To call upon Her as a diversion from serious struggle or out of a desire for attention isn't laughable, for Hilaria doesn't fool around. The demon of false laughter, TEE .. HEE, smirking and leering, thrives in an atmosphere of mistrust.

Some re-researchers claim that Hilaria has an ecstatic aspect they call HYSTERIA, or She-of-the-Rumbling Womb, and they attribute to Her the womb-laughter that rises up, wave upon wave, so powerful that its thunderous bursts cause every part of our bodies to shake and quiver with its release. They support this claim by reminding us that Hysteria is a State of Awareness only wimmin can attain, and theorize that patriarchal attempts to suppress Her outbursts by calling them "irrational" (origins unknown), reveals how dangerous and empowering Her influence is. Much remains to be dis-covered about the healing power of womb-laughter.

Hilaria's sacred covens are called Glee Clubs, where Her initiates gather to laugh up sleeves and split seams, making offerings to Her of Funny Money, borrowed without interest. Her color is yellow, and, where Her symbol the Happy Face is found, there is said to be much Gaiety, an observance rooted in ancient practices sacred to the lost goddess, GAIA.

**For more examples of making light, hear Kate Clinton's album, Making Light (WhysCrack Records, POB 291989), Los Angeles,*

CA 90029) and read her article, "Making Light: Notes on Feminist Humor" in *Trivia 1* (Fall, 1982, p. 37+). Also relevant to Hilaria is *Be-Laughing, as Pronounced in Mary Daly's The Wickedry, Appendicular Web Two*, 261-72.

continued from "About this issue" page 3

be purchased as a bundle for \$4.50 (plus shipping and tax where applicable). Contact me at editor@thebeltanepapers.net to order so I can calculate shipping for you.

TBP is looking for a few (actually many) new contributors. We are looking for new artists and writers. We need artists who can create art according to the articles chosen. We need original cover art, which is often tied to a particular goddess or concept. We are looking for research essays, personal experience and topical fiction and poetry focused on women's spirituality. We only accept submissions from women.

This issue was great fun to put together. I enjoyed the research of Baubo and humor and bringing these wonderful pieces together for you to enjoy. But now I am off to catch a wave, or a surfer, at the North Shore in Oahu, Hawaii. I'm even going to learn how to surf. That ought to be quite the belly laugh!

Lisé Quinn

continued from "Bawdy Baubo" page 6

ity, and loss. In the telling, we are metaphorically lifting our skirts and revealing our vulnerable underside and our source of strength. Each woman's story becomes a mirror for another woman to see herself and her resiliency. In sharing the pain and laughter, we go through these transitions and experience the healing power of humor, wisely coming to the conclusion that "such is life."

Baubo is all that remained in Greek mythology of this bawdy aspect of the Great Goddess. When Baubo lifted her skirts and revealed her naked body to Demeter, she revealed a body that once had been a nubile maiden, and then was a full-breasted woman, and now, with her thinning pubic hair and sagging breasts, was the body of a crone. Each phase is part of a cycle, an expression of the dance of life. When we remember our divinity and not just our mortality, we know that everything that happens is part of life, and we are part of a divine dance. The danger of being a mortal is forgetting this. Demeter, in her identity as a human woman, was alone with her sorrow until Baubo raised her skirt and made her laugh. Maybe it helped Demeter put her loss in perspective,

or perhaps she was reminded of the creative and sexual power that she had as a woman and a goddess of fertility. Baubo had lost her youth, her looks, and was past her child-bearing years, but she was a juicy, bawdy woman, whose mirthful compassion for Demeter's grief drew laughter out of the goddess. Only when sexuality is natural and pleasurable, can sex and mirth mix.

When I thought about contemporary embodiments of this archetype, Bette Midler - "The Divine Miss M," a "goddess of mirth" came to mind. This juicy and bawdy comedienne first became a star in the gay bathhouse culture of pre-AIDS New York, and continues to be earthy, sexual, and funny. Then there is the ana-suromai gesture of lifting one's skirt, which seems so instinctual that little girls have to be trained out of doing it. Put a little girl of two or three in a skirt, and she will impulsively lift it up and down, "flashing" her underpants; from her delighted expression, she may know she's being naughty and definitely is not ashamed (this has to be taught). It is also not unheard of for a group of grown women to "get away" for a weekend and become bawdy together.

The healing humor that women bring out in each other is spontaneous and natural. It suffers in the retelling because "you had to be there" to appreciate the in-the-moment, unself-conscious provocation for whoops of infectious laughter. In its full-blown splendor, it's uproarious and raucous, emotionally juicy and wet, as in "I laughed so hard, I cried," and "I laughed so hard, I wet my pants,". Especially when the humor is bawdy, but even when it is not, this kind of laughter resembles an orgasm; the laughter is uncontrolled and pleasurable, there is a physiological release, followed by well-being, and a sense of being spent. It's good for the immune system and releases endorphins, which are healing elements physically, but what I see most healing is the instantaneous sharing that dissolves isolation and celebrates life. Green and juicy crones know this archetype well. It is a humor that is wise about the nature of life and has compassion for the foolishness and pain of it.

Jean Shinoda Bolen, M. D. is a psychiatrist, Jungian analyst, clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of California San Francisco, a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and recipient of the Institute for Health and Healing's "Pioneers in Art, Science, and the Soul of Healing Award". She is a former board member of the Ms. Foundation for Women, and the author of The Tao of Psychology, Goddesses in Everywoman, Gods in Everyman, Ring of Power, Crossing to Avalon, Close to the Bone, The Millionth Circle, Goddesses in Older Women, Crones Don't Whine, and Urgent Message From Mother: Gather the Women, Save the World.

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 3. *Ibid.*, 36-40.
 4. A retelling of a portion of "The Hymn to Demeter" (re: Iambe/Baubo) from *The Homeric Hymns*, Charles Boer, translator (Irving, Tex.: Spring Publications, 1979), 105-107, with the inclusion of the ana-suromai gesture from statues of Baubo and the report of Clement of Alexandria.
 5. Lubell, xix.

continued from "Life in the Crone Zone" page 7

best bras). These days, comfort trumps style every time, and if you don't like the way I look, don't look. I go to bed naked and alone, happily sharing nothing with anyone.

I'm no longer waiting for the dude on the white horse to rescue me from whatever. I've long since rescued myself, thank you, and have done a pretty good job of it. My BOB (Battery Operated Boyfriend) is always ready in the bedside drawer when called upon, and never needs either ego-stroking or Viagra. And, if the resulting orgasm takes my breath away, my oxygen is right at hand. For the most part, my timetable is my own, and I answer to no one, except for the occasional hungry cat. And that, Martha, is a good thing.

Don't get me wrong. Although being crotchety and irascible is a definite plus, there is more to Cronedom than snarling at idiots. Realizing that your expiration date is close at hand can be very liberating. Along with everything else, your inhibitions begin to shrivel, and you can let loose and do ballsy stuff you never would have considered earlier. As well as making rude remarks with abandon, you can also ask questions that, if asked by a younger person, would be considered off the PC chart.

Once in awhile, I even get thanked. I sometimes snatch up small, shrieking children at the supermarket and plop them down on the seat next to me on the electric shopping

cart. Mothers invariably stand gaping in wonderment as their little darlings are soundly chastised and quieted down while riding around in circles with an old lady. I don't know if the kids are amused or terrified, but it doesn't matter. They shut up, and both the mothers and I are satisfied with that result.

As an aside, this particular technique should probably not be used by men, elderly or otherwise. There's something a bit creepy about the idea of an old man, even a clean one, grabbing a toddler away from the candy aisle, even if his intentions are entirely benign. In many ways, being a Crone is far better than being a Geezer. Old fartettes can get away with a helluva lot more than old farts.

Au fond, I find that being an 80 year old woman is very peaceful. I've done everything (and everybody) I've wanted to do, seen everything I wanted to see, gone everywhere I wanted to go, been everything I wanted to be and am past regretting any of it.

I understand the nature of life and death, so I'm totally relaxed about returning to the raw matter from which I sprang. The effects of my actions will continue into infinity and throughout the universe, another comforting thought. I know I have always existed and will always exist, in one form or another, and so will every other living thing. So, from here on out, I'm just going to sit back and enjoy the rest of the ride, cackling all the way.

Ruth Dickson is the author of seven books including the notorious "Married Men Make The Best Lovers". Her nomadic lifestyle has taken her around the world, working in a wide variety of fields, including advertising, radio and television copywriting, teaching and life coaching. After a thirty-year retirement, she resumed writing on her 80th birthday when she discovered blogging.

These days she airs her controversial views at <http://ladyoctogenarian.blogspot.com>. Her witty, acerbic observations on sex, politics, religion, and achieving crone status have made her one of the most popular contributors to the site, where she also writes a weekly advice column.

continued from "Laughter for the Goddess" page 8

be used both to harm and to heal. When we bring merriment to others, we honor Iambe's gift of laughter and her compassion for others. When laughter helps us overcome our frustrations or sorrows so that we can get through the day, we honor Demeter's strength and courage in overcoming her own grief through humor.

May the Goddess bless you with laughter, both when you want it and when you need it, and when She needs it too.

Wendy L. Hawksley is a homeschooling mom, writer, genealogist, and High Priestess living in central Delaware with her husband and son. Her work has appeared in a variety of Pagan periodicals and the independent comic book, *"The Necropolis Chronicles"*.

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continued from "Archaic Knowing" page 11

In the realm of word: The "gig" within "Sheila-Na-Gig" relates to the English gig and jig, and to the French gigue. The evolution of the word and its relations is instructive; the word's evolution parallels the patriarchal process of devaluing women and de-meaning the spiritual power of our sexual energy.

The source of "gig" may be the title of priestesses in ancient Sumeria; women serving within the temple were named nu-gig, meaning "the pure," "the spotless." A more recent root is the Middle English gigg, meaning both something that whirls—a spinning top, a whirligig—and a giddy girl. In its archaic usage, "gig" means a joke or whim, also a person of odd or grotesque appearance.

Related to "gig," the words giglet and giglot name a silly, frivolous girl and also a lascivious, wanton woman. Gigolette means both "a girl who frequents public dances" and "prostitute," equating the two. The French "gigue" refers to the dancing that, before the imposition of Christianity, was sexually expressive, wildly unrestrained. Gigue's somewhat tamer English relation, jig, is a lively dance in triple rhythm, an up-and-down figure marking the vertical axis that remains steady within a spin. A "jig" is also a joking song, and the comic relief that occurs in the middle or at the end of a play.

The echoes embedded in "gig" speak of women attuned to the Divine life force.

They speak of women dancing, spinning in circles, ecstatically, erotically, their sexual energy unleashed, laughing uproariously. Their dancing, their comedy, is akin to Baubo's bawdy dancing and joking before Demeter.

As patriarchy has proceeded to devalue women and de-mean women's erotic life force, "gig" has become a label for a child's toy, an ugly old hag, a whore, a bimbo. And as patriarchy has proceeded to eliminate women's ways

of power—most blatantly by executing thousands or even millions of European wisdom-keepers in the 15th through 17th centuries—many traditions of women's belly-honoring, belly-energizing dance have been lost and forgotten.

In current usage, "gig" has taken on the notion of event, or action in the world—as in "I have a gig tonight." The word also means "purpose"; for example, the minister of the church I attend often asks the congregation "What's your gig?" Now our gig is to look to other continents—to the Middle East, Asia, India, Africa—for the gut-stirring, sensual, earthy dance forms we crave.

When we dance, when we whirl, when we laugh with the energy that upwells from our bellies, we are enacting the impulse that is embedded in our bones, our muscles, our breath—an impulse as ancient as human consciousness. We are spinning in time, out of time, with Baubo, the belly goddess.

Lisa Sarasohn, a seasoned yoga instructor and bodywork therapist, is author of The Woman's Belly Book: Finding Your True Center for More Energy, Confidence, and Pleasure (New World Library, 2006). For additional essays plus information on workshops and the Honoring Your Belly instructional dvd, visit loveyourbelly.com or email lisa@loveyourbelly.com

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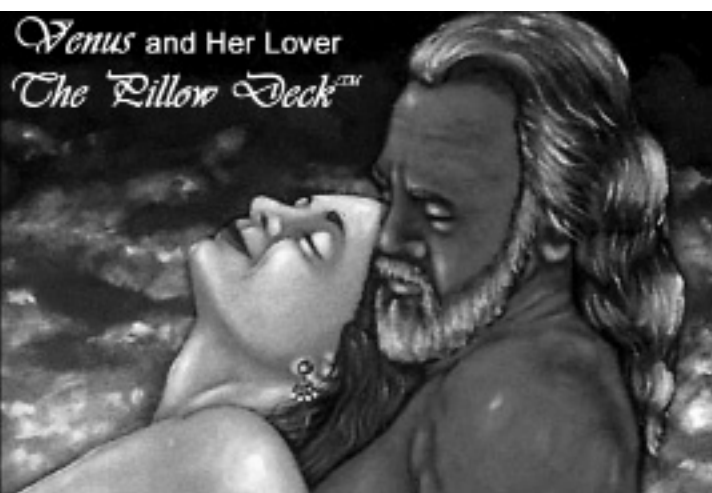
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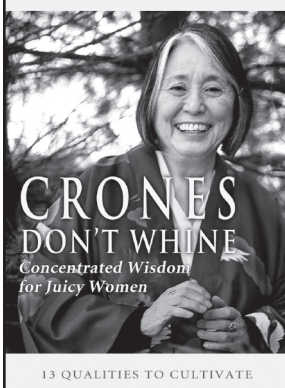


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