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## Issue 49, Lunasa 10,010th year of the Goddess

(Late Summer 2010)

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 exploration of the divine. Published 3 times annually. All rights revert. ISSN # 1074-3634.

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### Memberships

4 Month Membership		One Year Membership	
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US 1st Class	\$4.25 US	US 1st Class	\$12.75 US
Canada	\$4.25 US	Canada	\$12.75 US
Elsewhere	\$5.00 US	Elsewhere	\$15.00 US

*Guiding Goddess: Oh most ancient goddess... She who talks to snakes, whisper into my ear the secrets of life, share your memories of the earliest times, of the source of knowledge and magick. Let me follow your winding ways back to the very source of life itself. Remind us that as the seasons change, what is perceived as death in the fall is seen to be born again in the spring But really the seasons die no more than a snake dies when She sheds Her skin. Remind us that we too are ever-renewing, casting off the old ideas, old beliefs that no long suit us, that have been dry and constraining, like old dead skin, help us to shed that which no longer serves us so that we can grow and stretch as the ever-becoming beings that we are, truly Ouroboros in nature. Blessed be*

**Disclaimer:** The opinions and ideas of the contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff members.



# The Beltane Papers

## A Journal of Women's Mysteries

Lunasa (Summer) 10,010th (2010) year of the Goddess Issue 49 - \$3.50



"Naga" by Lisa Hunt



## About the Cover Artist

Lisa Hunt's art and writings have appeared in numerous publications and reflect a woman who is passionate about nature, mythology and psychology -- a woman exploring how art can serve as a bridge between conscious thought processes and the mysterious unconscious realms of the psyche. Her watercolor images are otherworldly and thought provoking, timeless yet contemporary. Her artistic manifestations effect an ethereal presence: where reality and the fantastical blur into one.

It is Lisa's goal to elicit a sense of wonder and to allow the viewer to reach into something deeper within; where dreams live and breathe and are very much part of who we are. These images are reflections of those dreams and the desire to go beyond the mundane in hopes of capturing something collective, universal and enlightening.

## About this issue...

Ch-ch-ch-changes...

Yes, life is still changing for me. And so, because of this, it took much longer to get this issue out. Everything for TBP seemed to be in slow motion while the rest of my life seemed like a runaway train. Back in April, I was having all kinds of issues at work and was ultimately laid off. Boy was I mad. But serendipitously I was hired into another department. One that appreciates my many skills, and also me as a person, it's nice to be wanted! I still work at University of Washington, but now for Pathology. Sometimes the universe has to give you a good kick in the rear to get you to move on to better things!

My family life is changing too. My youngest son has graduated from college and is headed to medical school in New York with his fiancé. They have announced their wedding plans --

they're getting married in Bali, Indonesia, where she is from. My daughter has started a job at the UW as well, in the Political Sciences' Social Justice Department. She and her fiancé have announced their wedding plans as well; they have set the date for 2012 (hopefully before the end of the world!) With all this, my oldest son and his family will be moving in with me next month. They lost their house to foreclosure and need some time to get back on their feet.

This is a most lovely issue. We have many wonderful articles and gorgeous artwork by authors and artists both old and new to TBP. Lisa Hunt's "Naga" on the cover just glows with magick. I have learned so much by facilitating this issue! Snakes and snake goddesses have been with us for many thousands of years. Archeologists have found evidence of the world's oldest rituals dating back 70,000 years ago in a small cave in Botswana; these rituals were dedicated to the Python.

I also want to remind you of TBP's changes in organizational structure. Due to the loss of status of incorporation, TBP cannot operate as a traditional business. We are redefining ourselves as a group, a society or club that has membership fees. This model will relieve us of collecting sales tax and filing taxes. The wording will change to a membership fee rather than a subscription. All subscriptions will now be memberships instead.

I am also moving TBP's website to another ISP. I have had nothing but trouble with the current one and they charge me over twice as much as GoDaddy, the ISP I will be moving the site over to the rest of the summer. I will be adding a members only area which will include articles not printed in TBP due to room. I welcome suggestions as to what else could be there. Please send suggestions to [editor@thebeltanepapers.net](mailto:editor@thebeltanepapers.net)

As always, thank you for your continued support of TBP.

Lise Quinn

## Letters to the Editor

*From time to time we get letters from our members. We would love to get more, so when moved to do so, please write us with comments and critiques, news and the sharing of your spiritual experiences. We are a community and as such, our interactions should be full circle, an exchange among sisters. TBP is an ongoing conversation between all of us.*

### Letter to the Editor

I appreciate the intent behind the article "Overcoming the Myth," to critique the anti-female bias in history. However, I think the author is making an error in pegging women's oppression, and the decline of goddess reverence, to the realization that men were involved in conception. This awareness is quite old; we have no reason to believe that Paleolithic people, who were every bit as intelligent as moderns,

were ignorant of reproductive basics. They studied the animals, on which their survival depended.

But more than that, such a theory implies that mother-right and Goddess mysteries were based on ignorance. The surviving mother-right societies (such as the Mosuo, the Bijagos, the Pueblos) are living proof that they were and are not, and their very existence shows that patriarchy is not inevitable. Male domination is not the result of a single shift, but a long series of developments that built up over time. Subordination and elimination of the goddesses is part of that very complex story. It was not knowledge that caused all this; it was the desire to control and exploit women's sexual and reproductive power that led to all the coercive customs that we call patriarchy.

You can read more about the mother-right societies, and see a video clip, here: <http://www.suppressedhistories.net/matrix/matrix.html>

Blessings, Max Dashu



## Getting to know each other

*Part of what makes community is knowing each other. We invite you to send in a short introduction about yourself, who you are, what your interests are, even where you are if you are inclined so that those nearer to each other might reach out to each other.*

]Hi,

I'm Jessica North-O'Connell and I live in Lake Cowichan with my husband, youngest daughter, Dachshund/ShihTzu cross dog, Lilli Putian Potter, and three fabulous cats, Kwan Yin, Murrlyn and Pretty Purrl.

In 1992 I became an ordained Universalist minister and in 2000 was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree for my work in media and community education. I am also a practicing Priestess of the Craft and participate in the creation of community Rituals and ceremonies, such as marriages, handfastings and celebrations of life. In 1993 I co-founded 13th House Mystery School in Victoria, B.C. In 1996 I hived off to found Faerie Mound Covenstead with my husband.

I've been a writer since the age of seven, when I wrote my first poem. I have two published books: *Runemal: The Ritual of Runeplay*, and *The Witch's Book of Days*, co-authored with two other Witches, and numerous articles, both print (such as *The Beltane Papers*) and online. Formerly I was editor/publisher of 'HICK: H.A.G.S'. in the *Country and Kin* magazine, which I had to close while working with my husband at our restaurant, Equinox Cafe and Catering, in Vancouver Island's beautiful Cowichan Valley.

With almost forty years' experience in the metaphysical arts, I am trained in Reiki Level II and am a fully-qualified aromatherapist and I practice a Wisewoman approach to aromatherapy. I have been teaching Middle Eastern (Belly) Dance in the Cowichan Valley since 2000. I am the mother of five children, one of whom has passed beyond; grandmother to one lovely 6-year old girl and companion to Chef Sean O'Connell. I am evolving my new business, Great Goddess Alive!, which will house The School for Magical Studies, as well as a variety of other services.

You can reach me at email: [therapeia@shaw.ca](mailto:therapeia@shaw.ca)

"Scientists in five countries across three continents report they found "alarming" declines in snake numbers after monitoring 17 populations in a variety of habitats – something they believe could be part of a global phenomenon caused by global climate change.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/jun/09/scientists-alarm-snakes>

## Honoring TBP Mothers

Hi, I'm Anna Wulfsong Belt *The Beltane Papers* originated May 1984 as a letter from Helen Farias to her circle sisters who had been meeting around the eight Celtic holidays for celebration and ritual work. The letter was to discuss some of the issues that we were dealing with as a group, such as men, no men, ritual, celebration, location, on the date, on the week-end closest to the date, full moon, dark of the moon, etc. It lined out the remaining festivals and moon dates for 1984 with their significances and invited us to place dibs on the celebrations we wanted to host. Included was a contact list of women who had previously participated. This became the original mailing list.

The letter stimulated the discussion of our experiences and intentions. Remember, this was 1984 and the Goddess was NOT a household term. It was all pretty suspect, especially for the men in our lives, this idea of women meeting alone and delving into the mysteries, which were seriously mysterious to us all at the time. Hard to believe that less than 30 years ago, women rarely spoke about menstruation, birth, menopause, and female health, let alone the Goddess, openly and in mixed company.

Summer Solstice 1984 saw the first actual *Beltane Papers* newsletter. Ten bright yellow pages with title and logo containing articles on "Women's Rituals," "Eight Seasons of the Witch," "Remaining 1984 Feasts," poetry, book reviews, meditations, artwork, and "Names of the Goddess-24 Alphabetical meanings in English, with the originals." Judith Maxwell's (Helen's sister-in-law) first column appeared, "Nutrition Serves the Spirit," highlighting the herb comfrey, and also my first piece of writing for the magazine, a review, of Judy Chicago's "Birth Project."

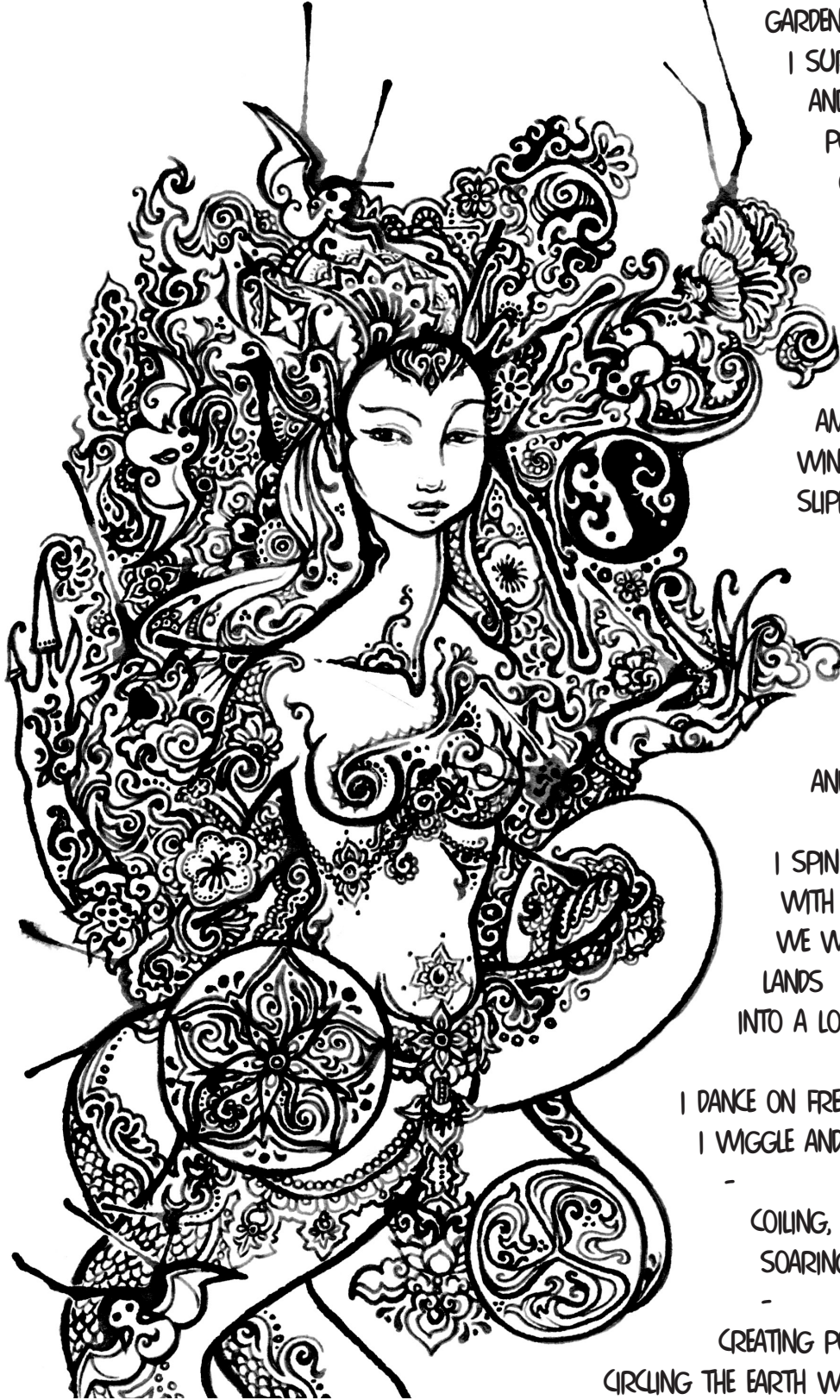
This issue was welcome, informative and timely, nicely designed but still very newsletterish. Lughnasa 1984 brought a change in focus when the newsletter became *A News-Journal of Women's Spirituality and Goddess Study*, and it was properly bound into magazine format. Judith became associate editor. We obtained a post office box and subscriptions were available. The format started mixing more in-depth scholarly articles with letters and greetings from circle members.

Harvest 1984 saw the headline: "Pagan and Proud," a radical declaration by Constance Meade, with a discussion of the pagan experience. This issue was a solid harvest of the ideas we had been discussing for most of the year. The topic came to sudden fruition in the following issue Samhain 1984, with an issue so magical it vibrated in your hand.

...continued on page 20

# I AM THE SNAKE GODDESS

Poem by Jezibell Anat



artwork by Desiree Isphording

I WAS THE CHARMER OF THE PRIMORDIAL GARDEN.

I SURVIVED FIRE AND FLOOD,  
AND I BLESSED THE FERTILE CRESCENT.  
POISED AND POTENT, I GUARDED THE  
GATES OF CRETE,  
AND CROWNED THE MONARCHS OF  
EGYPT.

I AM SLEEK AND SUPPLE, SHARP  
AND SUBTLE.  
YOU WILL FIND ME PEERING  
AMONG THE PYRAMIDS,  
WINDING THROUGH THE LABYRINTH,  
SLIPPING ACROSS THE ACROPOLIS.

I AM THE SACRED SERPENT,  
PROPHET AND PROTECTOR, HELPER  
AND HEALER.  
WITH A MIND OF MAGIC,  
A TONGUE OF TRUTH,  
AND EYES OF MYSTIC WISDOM.

I SPIN WITH THE WOMEN.  
WITH INSIGHT AND IMAGINATION  
WE WEAVE THE STRANDS OF MANY  
LANDS  
INTO A LONG AND SHINING TAPESTRY.

I DANCE ON FRESCOED FLOORS.  
I WIGGLE AND WAVE OVER MOSAIC MONUMENTS

COILING, CURVING, CRAWLING, CURLING,  
SOARING, SLIDING, SHIMMERING, SHINING

CREATING POWER AND PASSION,  
CIRCLING THE EARTH WITH DIVINE VISIONS,  
I AM THE SNAKE GODDESS.



# Snake Herstory and Women's Lives

artwork by Zon Wylie

article by Sheila Foster

Recently, over the course of a two-week period, I received a large number of emails from women in my Temple of the Sacred Feminine community stating that they had had unusual sightings, experiences, or dreams of snakes. That same week, a beautiful green snake with yellow stripes crossed my path. Over the last 30 years, since my own Kundalini awakening, I have had significant sightings and dreams of snake. I came to understand that snake is an archetypal symbol of the Great Mother Goddess, incarnate in one of her most universal forms, as well as an ancient symbol of the Kundalini Shakti, the divine energy of spiritual initiation and awakening that lives within each of us. Snake's appearance in a woman's life or dreams can be a harbinger of a threshold crossing, a portal to a new level of embodied feminine consciousness that is emerging.

In *The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* (1983), Barbara Walker points out that practically every culture has a snake in its mythology, and most often it is seen as a symbol of wisdom, healing, initiation, and secret knowledge, or it is associated with transformation, eternal life, death and regeneration. Because snake is an archetype, she embodies duality. People the world over have projected both bright and shadow qualities on to snake. Considered evil by some, others see her as divine. In some myths, snake is a male, and female in others. Ancient maps, most likely made by men, often depicted great serpents at the outer edges of the oceans, warning men not to dare to sail their ships beyond the known, charted world, lest they meet with certain death. Ancient women saw the snake as a symbol of the Creatrix, She who is the bringer of the seasons, the cycles of the moon, woman's body and life, including birth, menstruation, conception, pregnancy, birth, menopause, and death. She was not feared, She was honored and celebrated, part of everyday life.

Our ancestresses, the ancient Indo-European women, knew about the snake's connection to spirituality and the

Great Goddess. Images of snakes and spirals abound in the archaeological discoveries of the matristic cultures of the paleolithic and neolithic sites in Western Europe. This has been documented by the late archaeologist, Marija Gimbutas, in *The Civilization of the Goddess* (1991), and *The Language of the Goddess* (1989). Gimbutas uses the word

matristic instead of matriarchal to indicate that, while these cultures were matrilineal, they were definitely not female versions of patriarchy, with women ruling over the men in a hierarchical structure. Indications are those women and men were equal in these societies, even though the primary focus of worship was the Goddess. The lives of these people, first as hunters and gatherers, and later as the women developed agriculture, were lived in close connection to the earth, and completely intertwined with the seasons and cycles of nature. The life-giving, nurturing, death-giving, and renewing aspects of nature were the basis of belief in a Divine Feminine who gave, sustained, and took life back into herself.



Goddess

Our ancient ancestresses, the grandmothers of our lineages, carved snakes and spirals into pots, female icons, and painted them on the walls of caves and their temples. Among the artifacts, there are images of women holding snakes, wrapped in snakes, and with snakes for hair, as well as small icons of women with snake bodies.

Gimbutas' books are filled with numerous images of statues and icons of women where the snake or spiral is used in combination with bird's heads, symbolic of soul flight and shamanic travel into other realms of consciousness. During contemporary Sacred Feminine Initiation, when the Kundalini energy, also called Snake Power, becomes active in a woman, the veils of ordinary consciousness are lifted, and awareness of other dimensions is opened. These icons suggest that this initiatory journey of Kundalini awakening brings with it the ability to shift consciousness from one

dimension to another, and to engage the energies and beings of these other realms for healing, empowerment, guidance, and information. This speaks to the shamanic aspect of snake and Sacred Feminine initiation.

Snakes in world myths are perceived either as allies or evil, depending on the culture in which they emerge. We in the west have become familiar with the snake mostly through our creation myth of Adam and Eve in Genesis, and through the myths of Greece, which we learned about in school. These are the mythologies of patriarchy that have most influenced and shaped the misogynistic attitudes and treatment of women in the west for thousands of years, and we have all have been deeply conditioned and both consciously and unconsciously affected by these attitudes and beliefs. Snake appears in Sumerian and Babylonian mythologies which contain elements akin to Genesis. In these, the serpent is often dual in its nature: good and evil, tricky and truthful, hostile and benevolent.

In one Greek myth particularly relevant to women's psychology, it is said that Apollo killed the mighty python that guarded the cave of the Oracle at Delphi. Delphi means "womb." Apollo killed the high priestess, Delphyne, as well. Originally, before patriarchy, the Oracle at Delphi was a holy place tended by priestesses of the Great Goddess, called pythia or pythonesses, and the wisdom of the Great Mother was given through the priestesses to seekers. Once the python was killed and the priestesses of the Mother were banished, the only priestesses allowed to sit on the oracular seat were the consorts of Apollo, those women who relinquished their deep connection to the feminine source of wisdom and spoke for the patriarchy.

Marion Zimmer Bradley wrote an interesting novel called *The Firebrand*. It is about Cassandra, the oracular priestess of the Mother who refused to submit to Apollo's demand that she be his consort and speak the patriarchal party line. To punish her, Apollo gave her the gift of prophecy and along with it, the curse that no one would believe her. Cassandra was the priestess who kept warning that the Trojans were coming, and no one listened to her. Thus the Greeks were vanquished by the Trojans. Many of us carry the ancestral curse of Apollo in that we have intuitive knowingness but we don't trust it for one reason or another. Aligning with feminine wisdom can change this. Bradley's book also contains some interesting information about the relationship between the oracular priestesses and snakes.

Snakes were kept in the Greek healing temples of Aesklepius, the god of medicine. When people came to the temple for a healing, they were invited to ask for a healing dream. If they were lucky, they would dream of a snake, which they believed to be Aesklepius himself offering a healing. The caduceus, two snakes intertwined, is the symbol of the medical profession today. It was the symbol of Aesklepius, and according to Barbara Walker in *The Wom-*

*an's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects* (1988), the symbol goes back to 2000 BC Mesopotamia, where the "intertwined snakes represented the healing god Ningishzida, one of the lovers of the Goddess Ishtar." The Greek god Hermes, messenger of the gods, had a magic staff entwined with snakes and surmounted by wings, which was said to be so powerful that it could raise the dead from Hades. Hermes' job was to conduct the souls of the dead to the underworld and he was believed to possess magical powers over sleep and dreams.

## Snake and the Awakening of Consciousness

Erich Neumann, in *The Great Mother* (1963) writes that "...the Uroboros, the circular snake biting its tail, is the symbol of the psychic state of the beginning, of the original situation, in which man's consciousness and ego were still small and undeveloped. As a symbol of the cosmic source and of the opposites contained in it, the uroboros is the 'Great Round,' in which positive and negative, male and female, elements of consciousness, elements hostile to consciousness, and unconscious elements are intermingled." Neumann is speaking about the human condition of living in a dualistic world with eons of ancestral conditioning by thinking that parses things into me/you, right/wrong, good/evil, war/peace, friend/foe, male/female, and every other polarity possible in human experience.

We are now so fortunate, so graced, to be living in a time when so many can wake up from the trance of duality and see so clearly its often horrible manifestations and consequences for all beings on the planet, human and otherwise, as well as for the planet herself. We are experiencing an unprecedented awakening of our consciousness to the ultimate Reality beyond separation, beyond duality. As dark and insidious as conditions appear to be on the planet right now, this awakening of consciousness is much bigger and more powerful than the darkest darkness. Never has there been such a mass explosion of consciousness on the planet or so many people coming awake to the unitive field and the reality that nothing and no one is separate. Even physics and other sciences are discovering this. There truly is a huge shift happening and we are called to participate and do our part in it.

In India, where spiritual awakening, enlightenment, has been commonplace for thousands of years, the snake is the primary symbol of the Kundalini Shakti energy, the cosmic force that ignites and fuels our spiritual awakening process. Kundalini is a Sanskrit word meaning "coiled up," according to Ajit Mookerjee in *Kundalini, The Arousal of the Inner Energy* (1982). This coiled snake energy rests at the base of the spine until it is time for her to awaken and rise up through the spine to the crown chakra. Kundalini is also known as Shakti, the feminine energy of manifesta-



tion that rises, like a snake uncoiling, up through the spine and body to meet her beloved, Shiva, the masculine name for the formless, at the crown chakra. This divine union of Shakti and Shiva, form and formlessness, opens our awareness beyond duality to ultimate reality and brings the awareness of embodied divinity in us.

Kundalini Shakti awakening is radical, revolutionary, and Eve-olutionary in its life-changing effects on our consciousness and the way we live our lives. This Shakti is the energy of the Divine Feminine, and SHE calls forth the embodiment of divine energy in us, in human women and men. When this occurred for me 30 years ago, I did not know what it was, I was terribly frightened by the many phenomena, and when I understood what was happening my response was, “Who? Me? Me??? Why me?” This energy is quickening in so many now, seekers and non-seekers alike, and there is a lot of information and numerous guides through the territory, now. I have written in detail about my own Kundalini Shakti awakening in my e-book, *Sacred Feminine Initiation: An Archetypal Journey*, available at [www.templeofthesacredfeminine.com](http://www.templeofthesacredfeminine.com).

The Shakti awakens us to the fact that we are that which we have been seeking. We gain access to higher dimensions of consciousness, fuller embodiment, deeper loving and living, boundless compassion, and sets us on the path of our life’s purpose on the planet. There is nothing to figure out as we learn to surrender to what is as it is. Shakti shakes up everything we thought we knew, de-constructs all of our ideas about everything, including ourselves, our relationships, other people, and ‘how it is.’ Kundalini removes the veils so that we can see beyond appearances and deepen in our surrender to direct experience of what is as it is. She relieves us of the burden of believing our thoughts, and makes it so clear through our own direct experience that we are one with everything, light and dark. There really is no separation. Kundalini Shakti initiation does not give us anything or add to what we are. It takes away what we are not.

## **Our Creation Myth and Eve-olution of Consciousness**

Eve’s encounter with Snake is the central event in our own western creation myth. In Genesis 3:30 it says, “The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.” The etymology and meaning of Eve, Hawwah has puzzled scholars because it is similar to the Hebrew root word *hayah*, “to live”, and also to the Aramaic word *hiwya*, which means “serpent.” At the time Genesis was written, there were many ancient goddesses of the Middle East that were called serpent goddesses. The snake/serpent archetype was very much in the collective consciousness then, and it is no wonder that our creation myth turned out as it did since it emerged from patriarchal consciousness.

However, the myth as it stands is perfect, and our understanding of its meaning, its interpretation today, can be totally different, informed by the feminine.

I recall Jean Houston saying that myths are stories that never happened but are always true—at least in terms of the behavior and psychology of human beings. Mythology points to the dance of archetypes, the universal patterns of experience, that inform and manifest as human behavior. A creation myth rises out of the consciousness of a culture and, in turn, that culture rises out of and is shaped by its creation myth, as are the people in that culture. It is the chicken and the egg. The myth is woven into our DNA, our cells, and it informs the entire consciousness of the culture and those living in it.

Our creation myth emerged from and was eventually written at a time when patriarchal consciousness, which was highly misogynous, was on the rise in the western world. The snake was one of the most widely used symbols associated with the Goddess in many cultures of the Near East where the Eve mythology had its roots, as well as in the Far East. Yet the interpretations of our creation myth that we have been given for thousands of years deny Eve her goddess status and goes further to shame and denigrate her, make her evil.

I see that we are on the cusp of a new understanding and unfoldment of the myth of Eve and Snake. I capitalize Snake here because I have come to understand that Eve, our unacknowledged Great Mother Goddess, was meeting the Divine Mother incarnate, the Kundalini Shakti, when she met Snake in the garden. Imagine how your life, the life of all women with this mythology, would have been different if this were the story we had been told? If we had had a sense of our own Mother Goddess, a Sacred Feminine divinity watching over us, of the goodness and beauty of being female, instead of an all male cast of characters with one bad, trouble-making, disobedient woman responsible for ‘the fall of man.’

Eve and Snake have been denigrated and demonized due to the patriarchy and patriarchal religions that have perpetuated a great deal of fear and hate-filled projections about woman, snake, the feminine, the natural world, the unknown, and that which lies beyond the comprehension of the rational, egoic, mind.

About ten years ago, when I was in the process of co-creating a film called *Eve’s Fire*, an evocumentary about women’s spiritual initiation and kundalini awakening, it became so clear that the patriarchal interpretation of Eve and Snake is a trance imposed on all of us in the western world. It was/is a very limited and skewed point of view that originated to give or justify to men total power over women, as well as the right to disempower women. It did not honor the feminine, prevented our culture from having

a feminine image of divinity, and completely maligned and judged Eve's independent thinking and her own honoring of her longing for knowledge, wisdom, and nourishment—or to 'be like god'.

Our creation myth has not only been instilled in our culture and our minds, it is woven into our genetic memory, our cells, and self-image as woman. These insidious attitudes of Eve as shameful, guilty, and to blame for 'the fall of man', and the snake identified with Satan, have been harmful to our ancestral lineages and to us. The karma, the suffering, the injustices that have occurred for thousands of years resulting from this absurd, misogynist interpretation of Eve's disobedience can end here, with us, when we see it with new eyes from a feminine, spiritual point of view. Consider Eve as a woman who felt and trusted her longing for nourishment, wisdom and knowledge. She did what she was called to do, she listened to and trusted her own inner spiritual authority rather than the external father god, and she ate of the forbidden fruit. Why did he not want her to eat that fruit? What did this father god fear? Eve felt kinship with the snake, perhaps recognized the snake as the Mother Goddess, and trusted Her wisdom, felt truth in the snake's words to her. Here is the passage from Genesis 3, where Eve encounters the snake:

*"Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' " But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

I consider Eve's meeting with snake as an encounter with the Goddess, with the Kundalini Shakti, the great feminine fire of spiritual awakening and consciousness. It seems to me that this myth is really a harbinger of what is happening to so many women and men now. This creation story is only a chapter in our Eve-olution, and now the next chapter is unfolding. This chapter is being written now, as we enter each present moment, awake to what is here. It is taking us beyond duality, beyond the knowledge of good and evil, into a life we cannot imagine. In my experience of the spiritual awakening process, we become acutely aware of duality and all of the suffering that it engenders, and we learn to embrace it in order to go beyond it, to the realization that we are not separate from anyone or anything. Not even from 'god'. We are the divinity incarnate, as women and as men.

## Snake and Mother Mary

In the world of art, there are many statues and paintings of the Blessed Mother Mary shown with one foot upon

the head of a snake, supposedly the same snake that Eve encountered. As a child in Catholic school, I was told that Mary was crushing the head of the snake with her foot, that she was a symbol of the feminine crushing evil in the world. If you look closely at some of those statues and paintings, nothing so violent is going on. Snake seems friendly, sometimes affectionately wrapped around Mary's ankle. I know of a forty-year old statue of Mary with a snake at her feet, and the snake has an apple in its mouth. Mary's foot is gently placed upon the snake, her face is beatifically peaceful, and her hands are open, extended downward, as she includes the snake in her gaze.

We used this statue in our film, *Eve's Fire*, because we saw it as Mary's loving connection to Eve and snake, i.e., the Kundalini energy. The Catholic Church actually has referred to Mother Mary as the 'second Eve' meaning that she was the redemption of Eve. I love this statue as it shows Mary's connection to the ancient Eve and our Mother Goddess in the form of snake, as well as her embrace of the earth, embodiment, ancient wisdom, and the awakening Kundalini Shakti.

There is only one Great Mother Goddess and she wears many faces, forms, and disguises throughout countless traditions in the world, including Snake. She is a universal experience, accessible to all of us, appearing in all mythic traditions. She continues to make Her presence known to us in numerous forms: goddesses and hags, human women and snakes, and trees, birds, rivers, stones, dolphins, cats, mountains, rivers, and the earth herself. There is nothing that She is not, including YOU! She is here, now. If we feel a longing to directly experience Her, to open to Her presence, we can call to Her, ask to see Her face, hear Her voice. You can know Her directly through your own experience—and see what happens.

About the Author: Sheila has been devoted to the Divine Feminine since she was a little girl and founded the Blessed Virgin Mary Club when she was eight years old.

For the last 30 years, she has had a deep engagement with the Feminine via the study and teaching of Jungian psychology, with a particular focus on the feminine archetypes. She has also had a private practice that includes phone sessions, specializing in healing and awakening through the heart with a practice called Heart Samyama. In 1983, Sheila founded, and continues to steward, the Temenos Center for Healing and a contemporary women's mystery school called the Temple of the Sacred



...continued on page 20



# I, Medusa

article by Janet Rich

artwork by Maria Friberg Berntsson

I, Medusa, loved my hair. My mother braided it for me, pulling flowers, seaweed and ribbons into the strands as she lovingly wove them together. People would stop to admire my thick shiny locks. My hair was unusually bountiful and when I tossed my head, as I often did in defiance and delight, my curls would settle on my face and shoulders in such a way that they would catch the sunlight and glisten. My sisters stole the hearts of many with their wit and wisdom, but I, who was admired for my beauty and, particularly, my shiny thick curls, was quiet, less revealing, and deep within myself. I dreamed of becoming a white-winged horse that would forge into the skies above in search of the wondrous constellations. This was only a dream, until I met Poseidon, my true love and soul mate.

Poseidon was so handsome and tender that when he courted me, making love to me in the form of a horse, an arrow bolted through my heart. He and I would lay arm-in-arm with our backs flat against the ground, and stare up at the stars above, admiring the constellations. When our eyes met, we became wet with passion. One wild night we helplessly and willingly consummated our relationship in the temple of Athena, the shrine of the goddess of war who sprang from Zeus' head.

Actually, I never considered how Athena might feel about our making love in her temple, I allowed myself to become oblivious and disrespectful of my surroundings, being so enraptured in our passions. Poseidon was so attentive to me when we were together that I never gave it a thought. But now that I look back, I realize that I was a young innocent girl in love and I was naive. Also, there

were many things I did not know about Poseidon, perhaps I should have asked if he was promised to another, about his long absences and distracted distant gazes, but somehow I did not want to see any truths, rather I simply let myself be consumed in love.

When Athena discovered that we had made love at her temple, she became wildly enraged and attacked me, transforming my curls into snakes and making me so hideous that anyone who looked at me would be cast into stone. I was stunned, it all happened so fast. I was abruptly aware of the repulsive snake-hair that ensnared my head like a baby in a feral blanket, but I did not immediately understand the impact that my look would have on others, until I saw onlookers instantly turn to stone. Looking at those innocent victims, my long-deluded self awoke and I saw for the first time the irresponsibility of my spontaneous

passions, yet for a moment I felt joyously alive as never before.

Seeing the consequences of my look on others, I tried to become unmerciful to everyone, hoping to disgust people and animals, to push them away with my grotesque manners and spare their lives, but this did not work. So, instead I decided to hide in an effort to protect them. But who were these people that I was trying protect, and what was I protecting them from? As they had never really seen me before, I had never really seen them. Was my look to petrify them into statues and kill them, or create of them polished stones into which I could see my true self, or oval stones, removing from them their superficialities, allowing



*Medusa*

only their essences to emerge? Whether they were turned into petrified stone figures or polished stones that shine like mirrors, one thing was certain: from my monstrous look they would be transformed.

Longing to repair my damaged life, I withdrew from society, posturing a monstrous front to keep people from being cast into stone, and I crafted for myself a false head with snake-like curls matching my own, and also devised a robe into which I could recede and bury my own head to avoid witnessing the horrific acts of violence perpetrated on the innocent victims. Some time later, when Perseus came to decapitate my head, he simply freed me of my cloned head. I'll never know whose bloody body they found instead of mine, for I dashed off as quickly as I could to put distance between me and these appalling violent events to move to Boston to become an aviator and explore the wondrous skies. I got myself flying lessons, a pair of goggles and a brown leather jacket, as well as a small red-bellied twin-engine plane so I could thrust upward above the dreadful crowds. I enjoyed soaring like my winged-horse in the open skies. "Ascend to transcend," I always said to myself, enjoying my sense of newly found freedom, "Away from the gods, temples and crowds, to chart my own destiny." I would fly through the wondrous skies feeling a part of it all: one with the plane, one with the universe, and I would find a friend, a love partner, and have more children. Quietly, at the close of each night, I would always lie back and admire the constellation of the winged horse born out of the depths and entanglements of true love.

Yet I still reflect on my potential decapitation, when Perseus gazed into a shield to cut off my head. That is, he did not look at me, but at a reflection of me. Maybe that is why it was easy to delude him with my fake head. Yet, when he looked at me in the mirror-shield from Athena, I was a monster to him (for Athena had transformed my curls into snakes and had empowered me to turn to stone anyone who looked at me). In such a state, I was able to look at Perseus without being harmed, except for the pain of seeing him change to stone, but he could not look directly at me. For he needed the mirror to survive, whereas to survive, I only needed to mirror back to Perseus his own image, then he would have decapitated himself not me. But a polished stone or shield that mirrors rather than letting anyone see her does not have the opportunity for intimacy, that moment of seeing and being seen. So I am glad that I quickly left for Boston and the open skies.

Ironically, out of my lovemaking with the sea god Poseidon, I was ready to give birth to the dashing winged horse Pegasus and his brother Chrysaor. When Perseus startled me with his decapitation attempt, the stress caused my babies to emerge from my womb, and the blood that dripped down was from my afterbirth, not from my severed neck, but no one actually looked close enough to catch the details. As I

watched Athena take my magical horse to Mount Helicon to be raised by the Muses, I longed to cradle and nurse my precious one, and ride him across the skies.

My flying horse Pegasus was to live the rest of his days in Mount Olympus in the presence of the gods, entrusted with bringing lightening and thunderbolts to the powerful Zeus, and honored for his earthly and heavenly deeds as a constellation in the sky (Bulfinch 125), and I experience total pleasure and serene peace each night when I lie back and admire him with endless love and affection. From the many images of me, observers might believe that I was either a beautiful maiden with thick luscious curls, or a serpent-haired, bulging-eyed witch-like creature so hideous in appearance that a mere glance at me could petrify them. But honestly, I was never either of these, I was always me, naïve in love yet upward looking, determined to rise above the greed, jealousy, ambition, and hateful trivialities at which people throw their lives. I hope women see in my Medusa image a unique strength (Paris 199) and wear my face as a shield for protection, harnessing my hair-serpents' wisdom to transcend life's trivialities and move forward from inner convictions toward their own unique dreams.

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**About the author:** Janet Bubar Rich, Ph.D. With a B.A. in English from UC Berkeley, M.Ed. from UMass, and Ph.D. in Mythological Studies with an Emphasis in Depth Psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute, Janet Bubar Rich explores mythologies, with a focus on the contemporary concerns of our world. Based in Southern California, she is a writer / lecturer.



photo by Carol Garvey

**About the artist:** Maria Friberg Berntsson. I am a a freelance artist living in Sweden. I have been drawing since young age, illustrating fairytales and creatures of my imagination. I discovered the world of digital art, just a few years back and a new world opened up for me. Tools of the trade are the old pen and paper, Adobe Photoshop with my Wacom tablet. Inspiration comes mostly from my major interests, northern mythology, folklore and history but also from music and movies and the general absurdity of life. I do believe that with passion and persistence (and lots of coffee) I can make my dreams come true. My website: <http://huldraart.com>

# The Grim Goddesses

by Marisa Folse

At one time in ancient history, when the lands of Earth may have been closer together, and nomadic tribes regularly traveled far distances for knowledge and trade, three Gorgos were said to be descendants of Gaea. However, far from being monstrous offspring of Earth, it is most likely these Grim Ones were an original Moon Goddess Trinity of the ancient Mediterranean region. Pre-Hellenic mystics called the Moon ‘the Gorgon’s head.’

Much interplay of myths, images and worship crossed cultures within this highly nomadic region of tall ships and camel caravans which included what is now southern Italy to the north; ancient Lidya, Ephesus and pre-Greco-Roman islands to the east (what is now western Turkey and the Greek Isles); tribal/Berber communities of Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Iran to the south; and the areas now called Morocco, Tunisia and Spain to the west.

Attributes of this Grim Triple Goddess were: Stheno - the Strong One, the Stony Serpent; Euryale - the Wide-Roaming One, the Provider; and Medousa - the Cunning One, the Clever Seductress (each Goddess aspecting a lunar phase, crone, maiden and nymph, respectively). According to myth, Medousa was the only mortal. Depictions of Her demise at the hands of a conquering male warrior pervade later written accounts. Oddly, there are few existing myths, written or verbal, of the other two.

Common symbology for this ancient triple Goddess was a representation of Universe – an eight-rayed sun (Medousa), centrally supported by the dome of heaven (Euryale), with the divine serpent (or letter S) at its core (Stheno) - an interesting image given the relation of this trinity to the Moon. Perhaps the supporting central dome depicted not the heavens but the curve of Moon or Mother Earth.

It has been theorized by researchers of regional myth that several powerful aspects of these ancient Goddesses were diffused, combined, sifted through to remove harmful aspects and/or transferred through travel and time to Athena and other similarly named minor Gods and Goddesses: Anu, Janus, Anat, Triton, Eurynome, Rhea, Euridice, etc. Similar attributes and name references to deity can be found as far east as south India and the islands of the southwest Pacific.

## Theology to Zeus-ism:

Accounts of Perseus beheading Medousa symbolized both Hellenic overthrow of the southern Goddess’s chief

shrines and the stripping from Her priestesses of their Gorgonic masks and sacred horses. Less frequently referenced Greek writers give more accurate accounts of how events may have occurred:

“Medousa: She [who was] also called Gorgon. Perseus, the son of Danai and Pekos [Zeus], having learned all the mystic apparitions and wanting to establish for himself his own kingdom, despised that of the Medes. And going through a great expanse of land he saw a virgin maiden, hideous and ugly, and turning aside [to speak] to her, he asked ‘what is your name?’ And she said, ‘Medousa.’ And cutting off her head he despatched her as he had been taught, and he hung it up, amazing and destroying all who saw it. The head he called Gorgon, because of its sheer force.” – translated from the Suidas *Medousa*

*“In the market-place of Argos is a mound of earth, in which they say lies the head of the Gorgon Medousa. I omit the miraculous, but give the rational parts of the story about her. After the death of her father, Phorkys, she reigned over those living around Lake Tritonis, going out hunting and leading the Libyans to battle. On one such occasion, when she was encamped with an army over against the forces of Perseus, who was followed by picked troops from the Peloponnesos, she was assassinated by night. Perseus, admiring her beauty even in death, cut off her head and carried it to show the Greeks. But Prokles, the son of Eukrates, a Karthaginian, thought a different account more plausible than the preceding. It is as follows. Among the incredible monsters to be found in the Libyan desert are wild men and wild women. Prokles affirmed that he had seen a man from them who had been brought to Rome. So he guessed that a woman from them, reached Lake Tritonis, and harried the neighbours until Perseus killed her; Athena was supposed to have helped him in this exploit, because the people who live around Lake Tritonis are sacred to her.” – from Pausanias 2.21.5-6*

Of course, these variations from 2nd and 10th century BCE writings were rarely, if ever, used to formulate most common Perseus myths. The machismo of the Grecian army could not be depicted as possibly losing precious foreign ground to troops led by a beautiful woman (Medusa). This would diminish general fear of the long arm of Rome throughout the empire.



## Gorgo Origins and Parentage:

Earliest written references to location and parentage of Gorgons are from the 8th century BCE writings of *Theogony* 270-282.

*“And to Phorkys, Keto bore the Graiai ... and the Gorgones who, beyond the famous stream of Okeanos, live in the utmost place toward night, by the singing Hesperides: they are Sthenno, Euryale, and Medousa, whose fate is a sad one, for she was mortal, but the other two immortal and ageless both alike. Poseidon, he of the dark hair, lay with one of these, in a soft meadow and among spring flowers. But when Perseus had cut off the head of Medousa there sprang from her blood great Khrysaor and the horse Pegasus so named from the springs (pegai) of Okeanos, where she was born.”*

About the 5th century BCE, a brief locational reference is given by Aristophanes which is repeated fifteen centuries later by Suidas.

*“Gorgones Tithrasiai (Tithrasian Gorgons): Tithrasos [is a] river; or a location in Libya, where the Gorgons resided.”*

Perhaps the river Tithrasos is a later name for the Okeanos stream. Perhaps this river or stream was at one point referred to as Lake Tritonis mentioned by Pausanias. None of these locations is easily found on any ancient Mediterranean regional map, begging the notion that these Three Grim Sisters existed before time itself, and that rational Greek writers and philosophers worked diligently to round out a narrative myth to categorize them.

Time and interpretation make descriptions vary, leaving only the similarity that the Grim Ones are akin to the Grae Ones, both powerful images indeed. Several references state that Phorkys and Keto were creators of the Gorgonic triplets. In early writings of Hyginus, he contradicts himself by first stating: “From Gorgon and Ceto [were born]: Sthenno, Euryale, Medusa.” – Hyginus Preface; then stating: “From Typhon the giant and [viperous] Echidna were born Gorgon ... From Medusa, daughter of Gorgon, and Neptunus [Poseidon], were born Chrysaor and horse Pegasus.” – Hyginus Fabulae 151. This further implies a connection between Poseidon and the Gorgo but oddly says Medousa may have been daughter to one of Her Gorgon sisters.

## Ancient Gorgo Imagery:

Amazingly, a Gorgonic image was placed on some of



Appollonia Pontika coin



Appollonia Pontika back

the first coins developed on Earth. These coins minted in the city of Lidya circa 450 BCE used what was most likely a widely recognized concept. One used an anchor on the flip side of the Gorgonic image, either in reference to seafaring exchanges common to the region, or to the mythic interplay of Poseidon with the Gorgo. A second coin used Medousa's beautiful face on the back and Medousa's vengeful face on



Neapolis coin



Neapolis back

the front. This image may have provided non-verbal pressure to keep each exchanger honest, a way of saying do not “mess” with the interchange of this currency.

Protective Gorgonic imagery can still be found. Recent research by Marguerite Rigoglioso on myth and stories in northeastern Africa further connect Neptune/Poseidon by correlating the Triton or triple arrow glyph with a myth similar to Ath-Enna/Medousa near a region thought to be Okeanos or Tithrasos. She indicates in her research that a triple arrow image was and still is prevalent as a symbol of protection. She has found this image painted on homes, walls and tents in an area whose people were associated with what is now a dry lake.

Oral traditions of northern Africa indicate, at one specific location where Ms. Rigoglioso photographed for her research, there are ruins of a circle of stone pillars which is revered as sacred to women of the region's current nomadic tribes. It is said at this location in ancient times a bride was outraged by an incident or the premise of her wedding and, as she looked in anger at the crowd gathered, all the guests turned into stone. She was then and there transformed; thus, she walked out into the sands alone. Nomadic women call upon her when they are in need of protection, especially from men. Is this coincidence or part of an oral tradition of Goddesses too powerful to be contained in written form?

Gorgon Goddesses – Medousa, Stheno and Euryale; this

**Wisdom / Beauty / Transformative Channel  
Medousa**

**Universality / Creation / Divinatory Channel -  
Euryale**

**Infinite Strength / Time Itself / Dimension Gate-  
way  
Stheno**

trinity of potent ancient deities has aspects of overwhelming power relevant and attainable today. It is important to recognize that each Gorgon Goddess was in and of Herself a triple Goddess with immense power in each aspect.

A towering statue of these Goddesses constructed at the Parthenon represented three aspects of each (see picture E). If size bears any relation to the amount of strength and power an image represents, consider that this statue is said to have been over 40 feet tall. Each Goddess aspect was represented with a) a free-standing image; b) an image incorporated in the shield; and c) an image incorporated in the clothing. Copies of this chryselephantine statue can be found at the National Museum of Athens, labeled as a representation of Athena.

This enormous statue depicts Medousa as the beautiful feminine mortal form of 'Athena,' together with the aegis, or shield, which She wears, and as the transformative Gorgonic head depicted on the shield; Euryale as the round dome shape of the shield and headdress, the images of Earthly beings which circle the shield and crown the head and the winged Earth-mother image holding a sheaf of wheat standing upon the pillar; and Stheno as the supporting pillar, the protective shield itself and as the numerous snakes upon the image. There are 13 snakes depicted on this particular statue.

Aspects and attributes of Gorgo Goddesses reconstructed here were compiled from a dizzying amount of resources noted at the end of this article.

Medousa (Medusa) represented the virtue of wisdom. Her name refers to the Sanskrit concept of medha or female wisdom. Her widely worshiped triple form encompassed the commonly known forms of Her as Medousa, the Libyan serpent Goddess of wisdom; the Destroyer aspect of the Egyptian Goddess Neith; and the north African maiden Goddess, Ath-Enna. She was called "mother of all the gods whom she bore before childbirth existed .... All that has been, that is, and that will be." She is quoted in ancient texts as saying, "No mortal has yet been able to lift that which covers me." Because She was the grim face of Death, any mortal who saw Her face would die (or turn to stone). Her blood both created and destroyed life. She could restore the dead to life in Her 'magic cauldron,' or womb of regeneration. As an embodiment of Future, She was always veiled.

Medousa had the intense and powerful ability to focus mind energy in a way that would hypnotize and transfix others. She was definitely a woman of psychic potency, and this was Her protection. Like Her serpent sister Stheno, She used this incredible power to harness ambient energies around Her and to trance any aggressor, stopping them in their tracks once they looked into Her eyes.

Gorgonic tribes of Libya were noted to wear ritual masks, scaring away any who intruded upon their rites. These masks displayed Goddess Medousa's destroyer aspect, including well-tended snakelike locks of hair, full lips and the wide nose of African heritage. The boar-like tusks and lolling tongue of courageous strength is still today handed down for generations in tribal depictions as far away as the South Pacific Maori. Gorgons were one of greater Libya's last tribes to be overthrown by patriarchal religious worship. Common concepts of Perseus beheading Goddess Medousa in later

myth denoted both Hellenic removal of Medousa's shrines from power and the stripping of Gorgonic masks permanently from Her priestesses. The aegis, or shield, which Medousa/Athena wears in depictions and which was worn on tribal wartime girdles, was also a symbol of chastity. Anyone so bold as to remove it without the expressed permission of the wearer would be doomed to instant death.

Euryale represented the virtue of universality. (Her name means Action of True Practice or Characterized by the Process of True Art from eu- true; -ry or -ery art, practice or condition; -al, -alia or -ale, of, relating to, characterized by action or process. *Webster's Old World Dictionary*.)

She was Mother of Fate, Creatrix of the World from Chaos. Oddly represented by the letter M, She was the oldest deity referenced in Greece. She became the universal parent, Mother Earth, Rhea, the all-ruling deity to whom all else was subject and obedient. As such, She was the Goddess of Time, the Grim Reaper and the Great Mother within whom all were encompassed in death, the devourer of all gods and offspring. Possibly as a way to diffuse Her awesome power, She was later presented as three individual Goddesses: Eurynome, the Universal One; Eurybia, Mother Arabia; and Euridice, the Universal Dike.

She was the Universal Mother ruling earth, sea and underworld. She was Gaea Olympia, the Deep-Breasted One and Goddess as Aegea, the foundress of civilization





(however, this may have been Her sister Medousa, who was more involved with mortals and was depicted in imagery as the aegis). Through the travels of Her worshippers She became, in India, Mother of All that Moves, Goddess of the Earth and, sometimes, she bore the title of Serpent Queen (again, this possibly may have been Her sister Stheno as their attributes seem intertwined).

Euryale controlled several mountain shrines, including the Delphic Oracle. As Earth Goddess, She inspired the original Pythonesses or divinatory serpent-priestesses (again, this possibly was Her sister Stheno as Guardian of the Way). Her universal breast milk, the fountain of all waters, flowed down the mountain peaks of Her breasts to nourish the land. Euryale was Earth Eternal.

Stheno (Stheino) represented the virtue of strength. As the letter S, She was one of the oldest symbols of serpenthood, the serpent being one of the oldest symbols of female power.

She also had the ability to transfix or turn men into stone. A great pillar of strength, Her name gave rise to Sthanu 'the Pillar,' a title usurped by Shiva. She was represented by pillars of ancient temples as the Caryatid, seven pillars of wisdom, connecting Her to many other sevenfold Goddess depictions worldwide. As female serpent, Ananta the Infinite, She enveloped all gods during their death-sleep between incarnations. She was all temples, the stony enveloper of Her peoples. In ancient Memphis, the whole temple structure was called the Mistress of Life. In some areas She was 'Progenitress of the Peoples' and 'Goddess of the Rock.' In honor of Stheno's Stony Strength, ancient foundation trenches (and eventually walls, pillars or cornerstones) of sacred temples were filled with sacrificial blood as a means of ensuring the building's stability.

As Anat, the Strength of Life, She represented a twin of the Goddess of Birth (life) and Death. She was mistress of all gods and Queen of heaven (or perhaps that was Her sister Euryale as Great Mother). Later, through travel and accent interpretation of worshippers, She became Anu, Ana, or eventually Anna. With this dropping of the powerful serpentous S, She became just the Grandmother-Goddess and Grandmother Time. She was (Sth)ianus, Time Itself, the beginning and end, Alpha and Omega, the celestial gatekeeper with an ability to simultaneously look into the past, present and future. Depicted as two-headed, looking forward and back, the face of this Gorgon in the present was ever hidden, cloaked or invisible. She ruled the Celestial Hinge at the back of the North Wind.

Often depicted as protective watcher or guard dog at major thresholds, She became Cerberus, the dog at the gate of the after-world, the Hag of the Iron Wood, the Holy One and the death-goddess. As Grandmother-Goddess, She could also be the destroying Crone. A War Goddess, in victory, armies would pile up shields in offering to Her. A rather violent Goddess, She was fertilized by the blood of men and often wore the shorn penises of Her victims on Her goatskin apron or aegis, which were most likely mistaken for snakes in later aegis images. Guardian at the dimensional Gates, Container that was every Temple and stone-like Pillar of Transfor-

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## In the news...

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"Associate Professor Sheila Coulson, from the University of Oslo, can now show that modern humans, *Homo sapiens*, have performed advanced rituals in Africa for 70,000 years. She has, in other words, discovered mankind's oldest known ritual..."

...The Tsodilo Hills in the Kalahari Desert are still a sacred place for the San, who call them the "Mountains of the Gods" and the "Rock that Whispers". .



...The python is one of the San's most important animals. According to their creation myth, mankind descended from the python and the ancient, arid streambeds around the hills are said to have been created by the python as it circled the hills in its ceaseless search for water...

[http://www.apollon.uio.no/vis/art/2006\\_4/Artikler/python\\_english](http://www.apollon.uio.no/vis/art/2006_4/Artikler/python_english)

London, England (CNN) -- A hundred years ago when German explorer Leo Frobenius visited West Africa and came across some sculpted bronze heads and terracotta figures, he was sure he had discovered remains of the mythical lost city of Atlantis.

In his book, *Voice of Africa*, Frobenius wrote: "Before us stood a head of marvellous beauty, wonderfully cast in antique bronze, true to the life, incrust-ed with a patina of glorious dark green. This was, in very deed, the Olokun, Atlantic Africa's Poseidon."

He refused to believe that the sophisticated and or-nately carved bronze sculptures were made in Africa.

In fact, the artists of the Kingdom of Ife did create the sculptures over the course of some four centuries. Leading art experts believe they are among the most aesthet-ically striking and tech-nically sophisticated in the world....

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/af-rica/06/21/kingdom.ife.sculptures/index.html>





# QUEEN MEDUSA

*It was a long time ago. People have forgotten, even though they still tell the story.*

*article and artwork by Miriam English*

Medusa was Queen of a place where Libya now is, in the north of Africa on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. Those were wetter times and the ground was richer. Crops flourished, herds grew sleek and fat and people had time to play and make art. It was a time when cities and kingdoms were measured in hundreds or thousands of people, not millions.

The leaders in Medusa's land were women. It had been this way for hundreds, probably thousands of years. Nobody knows how long exactly. Records would have been kept in the Great Library at Alexandria, until the Christians burned it all. It is all gone now ... all lost ... destroyed, then rewritten into a perversion of history by angry, religious men.

Since time beyond remembering, women had maintained and passed on the knowledge of humankind. They were the keepers of language, the transmitters of words. Medusa was loved by her people and loved them in return. Wisdom and compassion were a normal part of the way she saw life. She and her two sisters kept the peace and maintained fair trade with neighboring kingdoms.

When she was young, Medusa travelled widely in preparation for a life guiding her people. Being Queen was less a privilege than a responsibility, and she learned about mathematics and writing and art. She learned about building and navigating ships, growing crops, and making tools. She was like the business manager for the kingdom. Her own needs and desires were secondary to the prosperity of her people. But life was good and she enjoyed her duties. Nobody worked terribly hard, including Medusa. There was always plenty of time for dancing and music, painting and sculpting, writing and lovemaking.

Her two sisters helped Medusa manage the knowledge and resources of their land. They were called sisters, but were actually related no more than most of the folk of this land. Position in this society was conferred by ability, not birth.

Stheno allocated human resources for work and, rarely, defense. She understood mechanics even better than Medusa, as well as how to use their tools to best advantage. She and Medusa befriended and were taught by Phoenician merchants traveling from as far afield as Tyre. Stheno also learned from the builders in Egypt.

The other sister, Euryale, specialized in knowledge of medicine and food. She knew about the tides and studied the weather patterns. In an age without clocks, she was the keeper of time. She knew when fish were near and how to find them, when to sow and when to reap. She knew the best times to pick medicinal herbs and how best to use them.

Medusa spent much of her recreation time sculpting. Her natural talent had been nurtured when, as a child, she had visited some of the Pharaoh's sculptors. The hillside above the port town where she lived was now populated with many of her wondrously lifelike works. Her creations were famous. Merchants and travelers came from far away to see them.

Medusa's people were her greatest fans. She was like a latter-day pop idol. They loved her. Although she was the Queen, her house was no grander than most other people's homes in her town, but it was central. It had to be. Every day, her people sought help and advice from Medusa and her sisters.

All three sisters were teachers. It was their duty to pass on their knowledge at every opportunity, enriching them all in the process.

One morning, Medusa was sitting in the mottled shade on her favorite rug, surrounded by the children, holding class. The gentle morning breeze from the bay below barely stirred the trees and grape vines here in the arboretum. It was not a formal class like we think of today; in those days learning was fun, and there was nothing the children enjoyed more than chatting with Medusa and her sisters about the ways of the world.

The sound of bees visiting the flowering apple trees around them blended with the echoing birdsong and the hiss of the rustling leaves among the taller trees. (The land was covered in beautiful woodlands in those days, long before they were cut down make the sad, dead, dry, parched land we know now.) Three of the children were grooming a fawn while another shared an apple with it. The adult deer grazed nearby, safe in the presence of these peaceful people.

Medusa stretched her long dark arms up in a yawn. "My darlings, we might pause for a little while. The boat of the foreigners will be at the jetty soon and I must go and greet them."

The children protested. "Not yet, please." "You were going to tell us about the foreigners." "Where do they come from?" "How far?"

She laughed her rich, melodious voice. "Alright, children. Just a little longer, then I must greet the visitors."

Medusa looked out at the ship. It was painted with an eye at its prow and was faster and smaller than Phoenician or Egyptian vessels. "The ship comes from Sparta. A strange race of men lives there, who so love to fight that they have made it their whole reason for living."

One little boy, puzzled, asked, "They live for death? But that makes no sense, mother." (All the children called her mother.)

"How right you are, sweetheart." Medusa shook her head slightly, "I don't understand it either. Perhaps we can ask the visitors when they arrive."

"Their mothers might have learned the wrong things," a girl with long black hair suggested.

"I couldn't say. I have never seen any women on their ships. Nor do they ever talk of women. It is hard to believe, but they don't seem to have mothers. I'm very sad for them."

"They sound like monsters – no mothers!" A young boy tensed at the thought.

Medusa laughed at that. "No, sweetie. People often are scared of those who are different from themselves. In fact, they think we are the monsters. I have heard that their people think we are really ugly ... so ugly that we can kill with our look." The children are astonished. "And they think our hair," she smiled and fingered the long plaited tresses, tied with bright red, yellow, and white string, "is a nest of snakes." She chuckled and all the children thought this was a great joke and fell about laughing.

"Growing snakes on your head!" "What silly people." Some were waving their hair about like serpents and hiss-

ing.

One quiet, serious little girl who Medusa was grooming to become a future queen, didn't take part in the mirth. She was frowning thoughtfully, "If the men don't have any women where they live, then the women must all live together somewhere else." She looked questioningly at Medusa.

"Very good, darling." She reached out and held the child's hand, "Such a race of women does exist. They call themselves Amazons. They love to fight just as much as the Spartans do." She shook her head, "Some of these people in other lands have very strange ideas."

Just then Euryale interrupted, "My love, the ship approaches. The Harbormaster needs you to greet the visitors." She helped Medusa to her feet and they embraced and kissed.

Medusa smiled and caressed Euryale's cheek.

She turned back to the children, "Sweeties, you all stay here with Euryale. If you ask nicely, she might show you how to harvest the honey."

All the kids jumped to their feet, pleading with Euryale for the honey. Euryale threw Medusa a mock look of annoyance and led the milling, cheering children away toward the open woodland behind the hill.

Medusa set off down the hill toward the port. She waved to the Harbormaster as he made his way toward her. He was a tall, wiry man who knew more about the vessels from other lands than even Stheno. A soft-spoken, very, very black man, he was quietly efficient in everything he did. He, his wife, and children were closer friends to the

...continued to page 20





# THE MINOAN GODDESS

*Created by Candace Jennings*

What do we know of the Great Goddess of Minoan Crete? Some have called Her Britomartis, Diktyнна, Potnia, even Ariadne and Rhea. But these were all names given to Her after others had moved to the island and began merging their deities with the Minoan Goddess. Until we are able to decipher the script known as Linear A, we will not know the name She was called by the Minoans themselves.

The myth of Britomartis tells us that She was relentlessly pursued by Minos II. Rather than submitting, She threw Herself off a cliff, only to be captured in fishermen's nets. Thereafter, She was known as Diktyнна, 'the netted one.' In another ending to this myth, She was captured in the net of Dionysius, who married Her and made Her his High Priestess.

Based on these stories, it is very likely that it was Her priestesses who loved Her so fiercely that they would rather commit suicide than submit to newer, different gods. The myths may, in fact, be a memory of this event. So, who was this Goddess who inspired such loyalty in Her followers?

Her figurine was discovered by Arthur Evans at the turn of the last century in the repositories of the temple of Knossos on the island of Crete. It is dated to before the explosion of Thera, which destroyed the temple. The figurine is 15" tall and made of faience, which in Old Egypt symbolized renewal of life. She is holding a snake in each uplifted hand.

Arthur Evans associated Her with Wazet of Egypt. In Lower Egypt, snake-wands were used by priests conducting magic, and it is believed that they symbolized this Goddess. Evans drew this link with Wazet because Egyptian artifacts were found in Minoan Crete. One of them was

the lower half of a human male identified by hieroglyphs as a priest of Wazet. He theorized that the Minoan Goddess was holding snake-wands as opposed to real snakes.



We know that Minoan society was peaceful and most likely matriarchal. Archeologists have never found any evidence of fortifications, temples to gods, or evidence of hierarchy. The evidence that has been found shows that the culture was Goddess-centered. Priestesses far outnumber priests in artwork, and men are rarely seen in important positions. We also know that they were a highly advanced and organized society that even boasted indoor plumbing.

The Great Goddess Herself was portrayed in many different ways, and many of these were carried over to various Greek Goddesses. As the Mother of Mountains, She was associated with lions. This was carried over to the Greek Goddess Cybele. Her Hunting Goddess aspect carried over to Artemis. She has been shown with doves and poppies, which were later associated with Aphrodite and Demeter, respectively.

In Her most famous chthonic portrayal as Snake Goddess, Her symbol of the snake was transferred to Athena's shield.

She was also known as Goddess of the Sacred Tree, and there are depictions of Her nursing an infant, similar to Isis and Horus. In one depiction, She is shown as a mother with a maiden sitting at Her feet and accompanied by a young boy. This is called a "kourotropis" and may be one of the earliest depictions of what today is known as the 'trinity.' There are images similar to this in Catal Huyek.

Call on this Goddess when you have need of anything. She is the great All-Mother who looks after all of us as a mother cares for her children. She has been waiting patiently for us to remember the things She once taught us, to re-create Her rituals, and to give Her the honor She is due.

### Correspondences

Symbols: labrys, sacred knots, cross, horns, labyrinth

Animals: snake, lion, bee, dove, bull, butterfly

Plants: poppy, crocus, violet, iris, ivy

Foods: honey, wine

Direction: west/water

Colors: gold, blue

### Magical Associations

Healing, initiations, rebirth, past-life regression, divination, culture, creativity, art, music, dance, childbirth, crops, peace, joy, spirituality, daily sustenance.

### Ritual to awaken the Minoan Goddess within you

You will need:

2 blue candles

sea water (or spring water with sea salt mixed in)

gold altar cloth

violets or poppies, in a vase on the altar (symbolizing the Goddess)

the herb, Dittany of Crete, and a charcoal block

the herb, hyssop, and cheese cloth

a sistrum or tambourine

### Preparation: Ritual bath

Prepare your bath, adding the hyssop wrapped in cheesecloth. The hyssop will give you a tingly feeling as you soak in it. Imagine all negativity leaving you, being washed away. Now imagine that each pore in your body is opening and being infused with the essence of the Divine. As you let the water drain away, imagine all the negativity going down the drain with it and flowing out to the ocean. Once it reaches the ocean, it is absorbed and neutralized by the Great Goddess. It is gone, no longer exerting any influence over you.

### Altar Preparation and casting the circle

Set up your altar, facing the west. Light your candles and charcoal block. When the block is ready, throw some

of the Dittany of Crete on it. Outline your circle area with the sea water. Cast your circle, beginning in the west. Now, once again beginning in the west, call on the element of water to join you in your rite. Imagine a dolphin coming to you. Move to the north and call on the element of earth to join you in your rite. Imagine a bull coming and joining you, sitting right inside the circle. Move to the east, and call on the element of air to join you. Imagine a white dove alighting right inside the eastern point of the circle. Now move to the south and call on the element of fire to join you in this rite. See a lion in all her majesty sauntering up to the circle and moving inside and sitting.

Come back to the west, and with feet spread apart and arms upraised, recite the following prayer:

*Arise, Awake,  
O Holy One.  
Mother of the High Places,  
Giver and Sustainer of all Life,  
Goddess of birth, death and rebirth,  
Awaken within me, my Lady.  
Grant unto me, Thy daughter,  
That I may grow in knowledge of You  
and Your gifts to us, Your children.  
Let peace reign in my heart and in my being,  
as I walk on the path that Thou hast set before me.  
Care for me as a mother cares for her  
newborn babe,  
And keep me ever safe in Thine arms.  
So mote it be.*

Take a little of the sea water and anoint your forehead in the symbol of a crescent moon and say "Bless me Mother, for I am your Daughter."

Sit down in front of your altar and begin to meditate on the peace that this Goddess instilled in Her followers.

See the beauty of Her kingdom, as it once was in all its magnificence. Now imagine that you are there. You are dressed in your finest clothing and you are on your way to Her temple, to give Her an offering of honey and wine that you are carrying with you. You see the temple before you. It is a grand building, with pillars of red and blue and glorious paintings everywhere. There are people all around you – artisans, craftswomen, musicians, priestesses, mothers with children. As you enter the temple, you are met by a priestess who tells you to follow her. You go deeper and deeper into the temple, following this holy woman.

The swish of her dress and the jingle of the bells she is

...continued to page 21



## Honoring Our TBP Mothers

*continued from page 4...*

The cover leapt off the page. The lead article was "Signs of the Sacred Feminine," and there were signs and symbols bordering the text denoting various goddesses and disciplines. There was an elegant visceralness to it that brought the mystery clearly into the light and I think we all knew with that issue that we were on to something big.

Somewhere around this time, Helen decided to take out a classified ad in Ms. Magazine to promote subscriptions. The response was completely overwhelming. We had hoped to pick up a few subscriptions to help pay the bills and the mail POURED in. I became the circulation manager. When I look back on this time, I see it as the start of my understanding of business and the skills I learned from the experience formed the basis of my work life to come. I learned that you have a dream. You manifest the dream. The dream can plunge you in WAY over your head. Now your work REALLY begins. And finally, that you can't operate a big business the same way you operated it when you were small.

We were officially scrambling. Correspondence quadrupled. I maintained a mailing list database on one of the original apple computers and drove all over the Pacific NW hawking the magazine at various bookstores and co-ops. I wrote thank-yous and mailed out issues. Helen and Judy wrote, designed, pasted and typeset. We didn't miss a holiday and our ritual experience was rich, sometimes challenging and beautiful. During the height of production, I would stay at NW Graphics, Helen's family printing business, sleeping on the layout room floor, waking with snips and scraps of paper in my hair! It was the start of a very exciting time as the magazine staff and supporting sisters delved into the mysteries and reported back through the magazine, all the while connecting with other like-minded women throughout the world. It was as if we took each other's hands and pulled ourselves out of our solitary practices and realized that we were not as alone as we had thought.

Midwinter 1984 saw the first of Helen's beautifully illustrated color covers along with my neatly hand-written lines of music. From here on out the magazine continued to blossom into it's first amazing flowering that continued until magazine deadlines and the death of Helen's mother, Helen Sr., took their toll on Helen, her family and ultimately, the magazine. Around this time, Octava was born as a separate, less ambitious and easier to produce newsletter focusing on the Eight Feasts. Sacred celebrations and domestic arts and heritage were a vital part of the mystery to be reclaimed and integrated into our feminist approach.

The last original Beltane Paper magazine was a combined issue of Autumn 1987 and Winter 1987-1988. From there on Octava continued until Yule 1990/Imbolc 1991

with a beautiful cover by Joanna Powell Colbert. Beltane 1992 saw the stunning revival of The Beltane Papers by the Brideswell Collective.

*Anna Wulfsong Belt : Currently lives in Idaho with her sweetie, Gordon. Her daughter starts school this fall at Western Washington University to study science and art. Anna practices massage and herbal healing and raises herbs, chickens and heritage breed American Chinchilla rabbits. She can be reached at balmofgil@gmail.com*

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## Snake Herstory and Women's Lives

*continued from page 9...*

Feminine. She has taught numerous workshops and trainings for women, professional helpers, and artists. She has created and presented performance pieces, given workshops at conferences, and continues to offer retreats for women. She is the co-creatrix of Dangerous Old Women Studios, a women's film company, and collaborated to produce and edit an evocumetary film called *Eve's Fire*, about women's spiritual initiation via the archetypes of the feminine, Kundalini awakening, Eve, and Snake. She has two meditation cd's called *Meditations from a Women's Mystery School. Volume I* which is the "Invocation of the Sacred Feminine Archetypes" and *Volume II* is the "Invocation of the Sacred Masculine in Women". These are available at [www.dangerousoldwomen.com](http://www.dangerousoldwomen.com) and [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Sheila authored *Sacred Feminine Initiation: An Archetypal Journey*, an e-book available at [www.templeofthesacredfeminine.com](http://www.templeofthesacredfeminine.com). Also available in the temple store are a variety of mp3 meditation downloads.

The mother of two amazing grown children, (her greatest spiritual teachers), Sheila resides in Boulder, Colorado, where she makes multi-media art, writes, and continues with her work and devotion to the Sacred Feminine. Email: [temenosctr@aol.com](mailto:temenosctr@aol.com)

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## The Grim Goddesses

*continued from page 15...*

mation, Stheno was Goddess as Guardian of the Rite.

Each Gorgon Goddess was a power to be reckoned with in ancient times, so much so that they were diffused, debased and dissolved. May this collected knowledge present a means for all to tap into the indestructible abilities of these Goddesses and provide revival in this Age of the Daughter.

*About the Author: Marisa Folse, a multi-ethnic woman and co-founder of GATE, is an ordained Guardian Minister with a voracity for new knowledge. She is naturally gifted in energy management and teaches a variety of energy management courses online. Marisa has been studying and working with the Gorgons for decades. She lives in Tehachapi, CA with her partner Bellezza Squillace.*

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## Queen Medusa

*continued from page 17...*

three sisters than perhaps anybody else in this close-knit community.

When he was close enough, he spoke in his characteristic soft, low voice, "Medusa, I don't like the idea of you meeting this ship. These people are dangerous."

She laughed, "Not you too! I just finished telling the children that these people are simply misguided. No, dear friend. I must meet the visitors. They should be treated cordially."

He looked worried and held her hand.

She smiled and put her other hand on his shoulder, then turned and walked down to the pavilion where visitors were received. She stood before a table of flowers and fruits. Further behind her was large a group of seven citizens as the greeting party.

The men and the women on the jetty helped the men on the ship dock, and then one olive-skinned man disembarked and did the strangest thing: he held up a shiny shield and walked backwards along the jetty to the shore, occasionally stumbling a little. He appeared to be using the shield as a mirror. Medusa smiled, and turned to her friends in the greeting party. They were chuckling and looking embarrassed for the poor backward-walking fool. She touched her finger to her lips to bid them quiet and straightened her smile to something softer and welcoming. She noticed that the Harbormaster was the only person frowning. He clearly did not like this.

The odd visitor was stumbling closer now. Medusa moved toward him with her usual greeting. She knew many languages and could speak the Spartan's tongue. "We welcome you to our land, stranger. I am Medusa ..." but she never finished her invitation because, to the horror of all present, the young man whisked his sword out and swung around viciously, severing Medusa's head. While the bystanders screamed in shock or fainted or simply stared, aghast, he sheathed his sword, swept Medusa's head into a bag, ran back to his ship and sailed away.

The folk watched in anguish as the body of their beloved Medusa jerked and trembled and poured blood out in an enormous red pool on the flagstones of the greeting pavilion. There was nothing they could do.

They had been visited by the adventurer Perseus, who had come to defeat the horrific Medusa and live on as a hero in stories which would be passed down for thousands of years..

*About the Author: Born and raised in the Australian bush, Miriam English has no formal qualifications, but has taught herself to draw, paint, write stories, create webpages, make animations, and program in up to 20 different computer languages. She is a compulsive reader, mostly of romance, science, and science fiction. Several years ago she was lucky enough to be able to return to life in the peace and quiet of the bush, after spending too many decades in the city.*



## The Minoan Goddess

*continued from page 19...*

wearing around her ankles and wrists create a type of music and an atmosphere of mystery. You get the sense that something wonderful is about to take place. When you finally reach the inner sanctuary, the priestess leaves you. You stand before the blue curtain, and hesitate just for a moment, before pushing it aside and entering. There before you sits the Goddess Herself on a throne. Before Her is a large bowl. She is surrounded by paintings of wildlife, marine life and flora. All throughout the room are pillars of many colors with white doves perched on top. The one end of the room is open and looks out on the ocean. She invites you in. You approach Her with just a little trepidation, because you have never been in the presence of such Holiness before. You pour your offering into the bowl in front of Her and kneel before Her. She reaches out and touches you on your head. At once you are filled with a sense of majesty and wonder and an incomprehensible peace.

Now pick up your tambourine or sistrum and begin tap-

ping it, gently at first, then getting more and more joyous with it as the power begins flowing through you. Begin to dance. Allow the energy to flow through you and be expressed in the form of dance. Dance is sacred to this Goddess, so allow Her to guide your feet and your movements. Feel Her power with your entire being, pulsing. Become one with it. Make it your own.

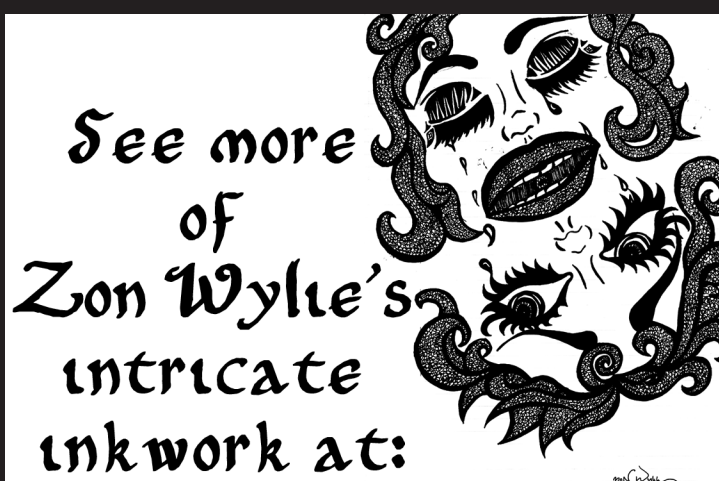
When you are finished, , fall to the ground, palms down on the earth and allow the excess energy to flow through you into the earth. Arise; thank the Goddess for all She has given you this day. Thank the elementals for joining you. Open your circle. Leave your violets or poppies on the shore at the ocean for the waves to receive as an offering. If you are not near the ocean, any body of living water will do.

Finally, this Goddess is very powerful, so expect wondrous things to begin occurring in your life after performing this ritual.

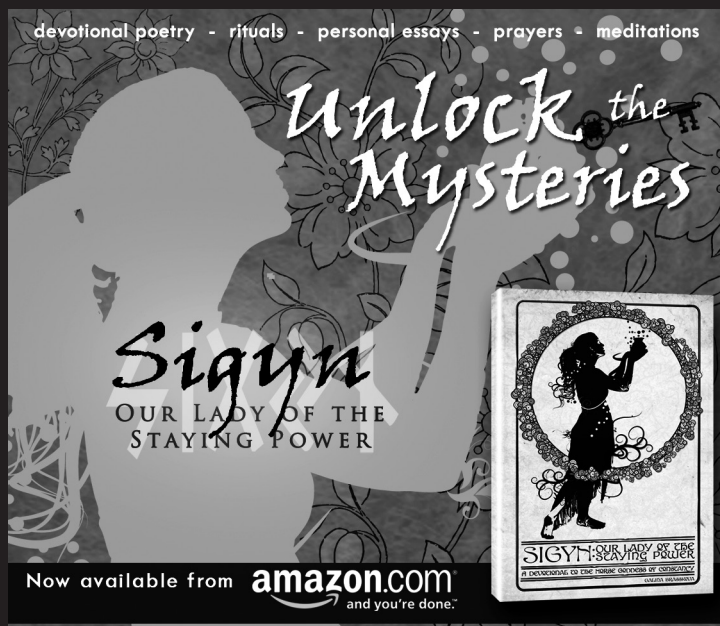
*About the author: Candace Jennings is an ordained High Priestess and the founder of Daughters of the Greening online school. She has been involved with Goddess-centered spirituality for over twenty years and has dedicated her life to teaching others about the sacredness of all life and the necessity of taking care of our spiritual Self. With courses in Priestess Training, Discovering Past Lives, Holistic Healing, Totems and Faery Magic, she teaches her students to trust in themselves and to stand firm in their beliefs. She has her Bachelor of Science in Holistic Therapies and holds certificates in Reflexology, Chakra Therapy, Crystal Therapy and Aromatherapy. As a Reiki Master/Teacher, she both teaches this healing art and holds local and long distance healing sessions. An author and a teacher, Candace specializes in writing on the many faces of the Goddess and Her animal companions. Her ezine, entitled The Sacred Glen, is published eight times a year on the Holy Days. She lives in the woods of Pennsylvania where she performs public and private ritual and ceremony aimed at the healing of Mother Earth. Candace can be contacted through her Daughters of the Greening website, or by email at [morgana@daughtersofthegreening.com](mailto:morgana@daughtersofthegreening.com).*

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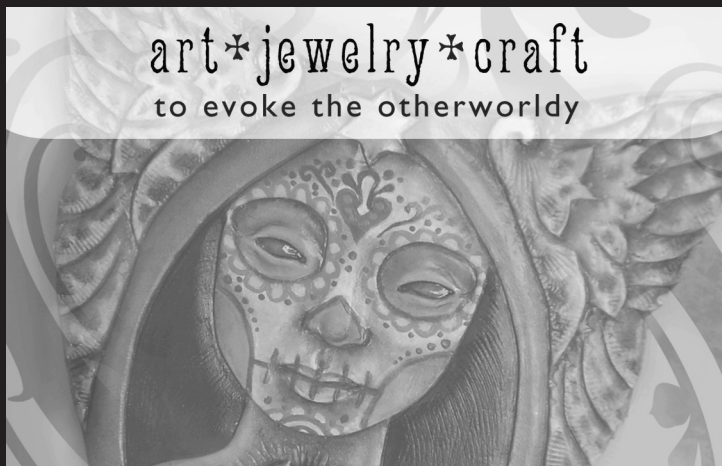
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## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS

### *"The Alogies of the Goddess: Dialogues within the Feminist Spirituality Community"*

Book Editors:

Angela Hope, Saint Mary's University  
Katherine MacDowell, Ocean Seminary  
College

**Contact [angela.hope@hotmail.com](mailto:angela.hope@hotmail.com)  
Deadline to Submit Abstract: September 15th 2010**

Thealogy, or more accurately thealogies, constitutes a newly burgeoning field with respect to feminist praxis within the Goddess feminist spirituality movements in recent decades. Despite this, most scholarly works on the Goddess movement and feminist spirituality are situated from a sociological, psychological, anthropological approach, but rarely are they primarily concerned with thealogy. The proposed book: *The Alogies of the Goddess: Dialogues within the Feminist Spirituality Community* is an attempt to explore the theological dimensions of the Goddess tradition.

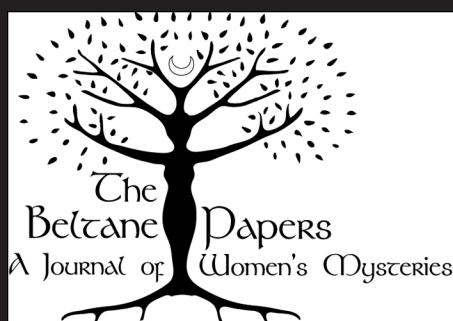
The book seeks to create an ongoing dialogue within the feminist spirituality tradition, rather than to dictate doctrine to the movement while creating the space for Spiritual Feminists to name their own thealogies. The aim of the book is to explore new ideas and directions within thealogy rather than recycling the present introductory theological literature. We welcome chapters in all aspects, especially ones that create new language and new ways of doing/understanding thealogy.

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