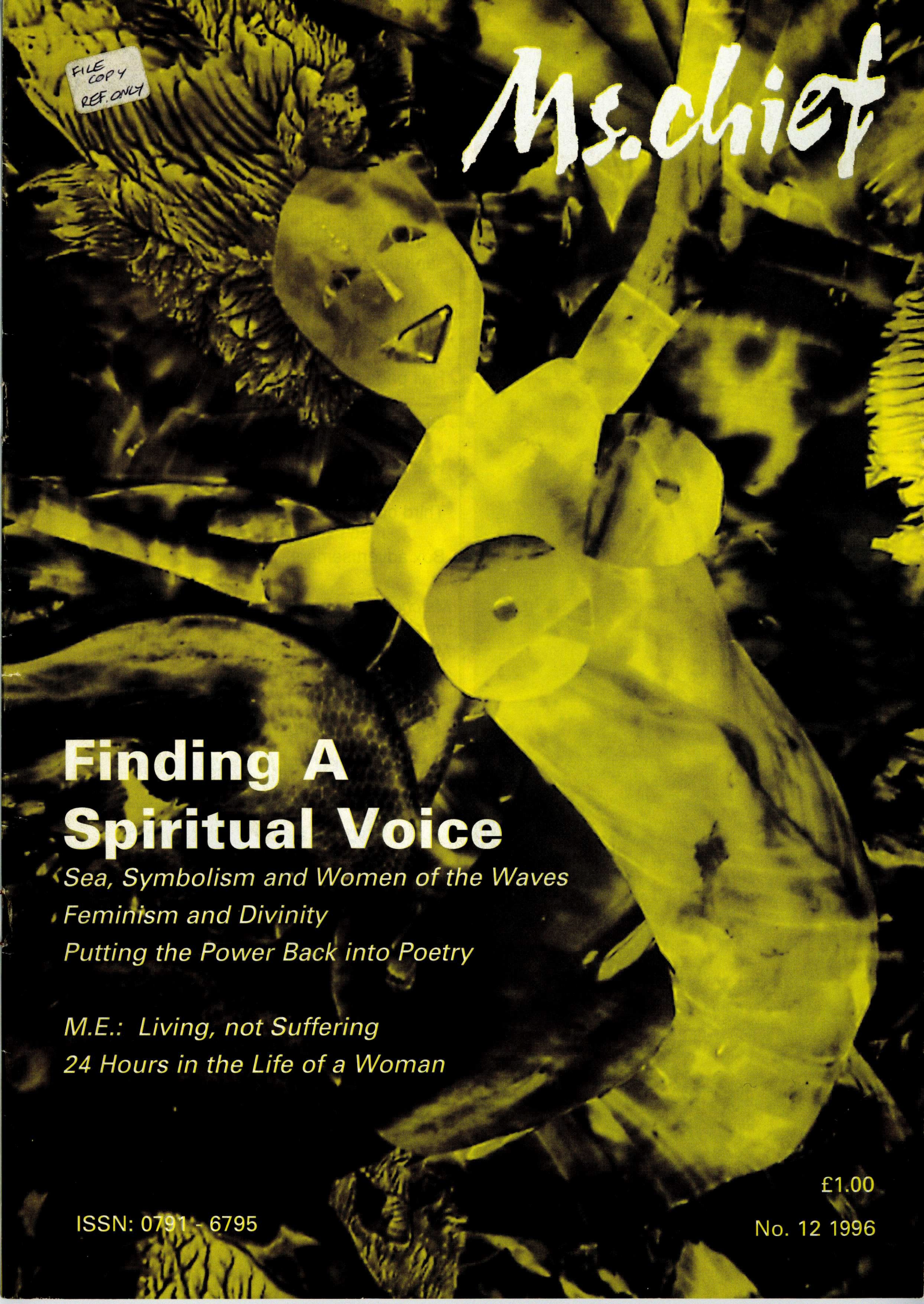
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Ms. chief



Finding A Spiritual Voice

Sea, Symbolism and Women of the Waves

Feminism and Divinity

Putting the Power Back into Poetry

M.E.: Living, not Suffering

24 Hours in the Life of a Woman

£1.00

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No. 12 1996

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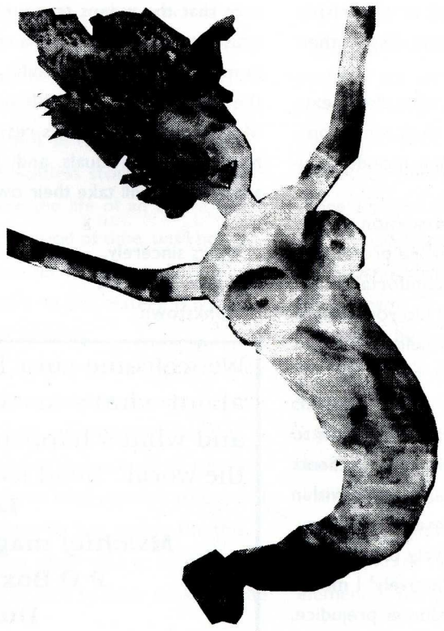
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letters

Dear Ms.chief,

I enjoyed the article about Siwkaa Hammer [issue 11]. It's important to recognise the art of what's often ignored because it's craftwork. It was interesting to see how Siwkaa Hammer and a very different artist who you also featured, Marina Abrramovic, both express concerns about harmony and participation.

Thank you for expanding your arts section.

Siobhán Healy,
Rathmines.

Dear *Ms.chief*,

I was disappointed that your last issue mentioned only one of the submissions to the Department of Health on lesbian health. I would like to share that there were four submissions altogether, from Cork, Galway, Dublin Lesbian Line and the lesbian health group in Dublin. The issue has been included in both regional and national women's health reports.

The Dublin health group has been invited to meet with the Well Woman Centre to discuss the submissions, so having our own clinic or service may be a possibility in the future.

Keep up the good work.

Eileen Wetherall,
Co. Wicklow.

Dear Editor,

I was interested to read your article, "Bringing Lesbian Health Out of the Closet." It's important for those of us who work within the counselling and psychotherapy profession to take note of, and respond positively to, such documents.

Hopefully, the theory that homosexuality is 'deviant' would no longer be viewed seriously within the profession (or am I being naive?) However, I am sure that more covert prejudices still abound. Whether a client's homosexuality is invisible or pathologised, in each case their sexuality is not being respected.

So what is the answer for a lesbian or bisexual woman seeking counselling? A lesbian counsellor?

For dealing with issues such as 'coming out' or heterosexist prejudice, maybe. But what if the counsellor is not yet 'out' or is not entirely comfortable with her own sexuality? And where does this leave heterosexual counsellors if they can safely aliot gay sexuality to gay counsellors alone? All of us in this profession need to address our own sexuality and attitudes about sexuality. Not only do counsellors owe it to the gay community, but it must be tackled in the belief that breaking out of the confines of heterosexism enables all people to live their lives more freely and fully.

If a lesbian or bisexual woman is considering counselling, she could consider the following steps:

1. Check if the counsellor or therapist is properly qualified, e.g., are they accredited members of the Irish Association for Counselling and Therapy or the Irish Association of Humanistic Psychotherapists?

2. Ask the counsellor what their sexual orientation is and/or their views on sexuality. Did their training include sexuality?

3. Consider your first session as an exploratory meeting. Beyond professional considerations, how comfortable do you feel with this person? Do you need to go away and think it over before making a decision?

These are questions for individuals looking for a counsellor. I don't wish to imply that it is the responsibility of clients to safeguard against heterosexism within my profession. As counsellors we can ensure that we are actively promoting anti-heterosexism. By 'actively' I mean not just taking steps to counter prejudice, but steps to ensure that gay, lesbian and bisexual clients experience counselling as welcoming and inclusive. Such steps could include:

1. If there is literature in the waiting area that it include gay literature and journals, e.g., Gay Community News.

2. If there is art on the walls that it is neutral and doesn't portray obviously heterosexual subjects.

3. That the counsellor be aware of support and referral networks, e.g., lesbian mothers' groups, GPs happy to treat HIV positive clients.

4. That the counsellor be aware of her use of language, e.g., referring to 'your partner' asking 'does he or she...' allows a client to introduce a same-sex partner into the conversation.

5. That the counsellor continually monitors her own assumptions, e.g., that a married person is heterosexual, that a lesbian is a feminist.

Obviously, psychotherapy and counselling form only one part of mental health care which again is only one part of women's health care. Nonetheless, I am sure that the means to counteract heterosexism and homophobia could overlap in many practices and whilst I hope that the Department of Health will take note of, and action on, LOT's research, I also hope that individuals and professional associations will take their own action.

Yours sincerely,
Gill O' Halloran,
Monkstown.

We welcome your letters about what's in *Ms.chief* and what's happening in the world. Send letters to:
Letters,
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Dublin 8.

Sea, symbolism and women of the waves

The sea is a woman - calm, cyclic, the source of life; powerful, passionate, the stealer of souls. Many have tried to tame her, but none have succeeded.

Seven tenths of the earth's surface is covered in water - the seas which plunge to great depths around our shores in an endless motion. Water is the first form of matter, the primordial chaos which existed before existence itself - the cosmic night, the universal womb, the generative principle.

Symbolically, immersion into water denotes a return to the primordial state of being, a search for the secrets of life. To sink into the waters is to sink into unconsciousness, forgetfulness; to absolve, purify or regenerate ourselves, in much the same way as we wash away the worries and stresses of the day in a hot bath.

The sea, along with many other deep waters, is often associated with the realm of the dead. Many sea stories and the supernatural beings who inhabit them are imbued with an aura of death. Perhaps the most well known of these is the mermaid - the spirit of the sea, who embodies the true power and essence of the ocean; who is both beautiful and terrifying.; who may be held back for a time, but who can never truly be controlled. Her real nature will, in the end, break free. There are countless stories of mermaids forced to live the life of an earthly land woman for a period of time, until her true nature, her inner being, is released and she can return to her watery ways - her natural state of being.

To many, despite her fishy garb, the mermaid is the archetypal woman - one to possess and control, with an irre - deemable beauty that cannot be resisted. However, those who attempt to control her will ultimately pay dearly for this. Mermaids are often said to lure whole populations of men to their deaths at the bottom of the deep, dark sea.

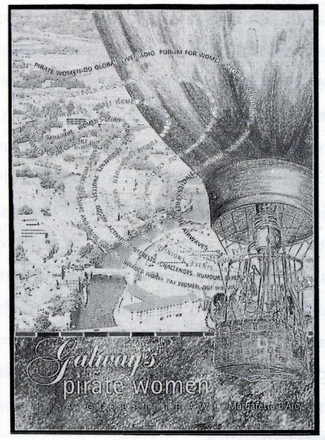
It has been suggested that many of these accounts have their roots in ancient death rites, in which the bodies of the dead were returned to the watery chaos from whence they came, to be reborn from the sea-womb, refreshed and reinvigorated. Offerings were made to the death goddess Ran, who received the souls of the dead, put to sea in funerary boats. However, like the sea herself, Ran deserves and demands respect. She is not adverse to trapping the souls of the living in her fishing net, should the desire come upon her. The waves of the storm are often known as the claws of Ran.

The word mermaid literally means virgin of the sea, an aspect of the fish-tailed Aphrodite Marina. She also represents Mari, the Great Fish, who gave birth to all goddesses and gods. Mari is the Mother of the Sea, (a title borne later by the christian Mary), though she is also known as Mother of the Earth and Heavens. Mari's other titles are: Mare-mynde, Mareminde, Marraminde, Maraeman, Mereminne and finally Mermaid.

It is also from association with Mari that the Romans named the Mediterranean Mare Nostrum, meaning our sea/ our mother. This title stems from the belief that all the seas were Maria, or Mari's. The sea is often symbolised by Mari in her blue robes, sometimes depicted as a mermaid - the Pearl of the Sea. A blue robe and pearl necklace are classic symbols of the sea "edged with pearly foam."

Perhaps because of her unknown and uncontrollable nature, the mermaid has come to be seen as the possessor of magical powers - sayer of the seas, revealer of the truth. This may have something to do with her magical mirror - one of the symbols associated with mermaids. The mermaid's mirror represents an important element of her psyche. Like all mirrors it reveals the truth, symbolising wisdom and self-realisation. The mirror also represents supernatural or divine intelligence, a means by which one may come to really know one's true self.

Ancient and mystic powers have been attributed to mirrors, and to reflective surfaces in general. Symbolically, reflection is seen as a revelation of the soul. Shattering or disturbing the reflected image in any way could mean possible harm to the soul. This belief led to heavy taboos being laid on breaking a mirror - seven years bad luck - or disturbing still waters into which someone was looking. It is also probably the reason why, in so many stories, men take and keep a mermaid's mirror. For in this way they can control her soul - control her. Without her mirror a mermaid is powerless; she will decline and die unless it is returned to her. Once she has regained her mirror/ her soul, the mermaid is free to



... a nutty, flavoursome menu to palates jaded by the often predictable fare of other radio services ... It has given a challenge, instruction, an opportunity for venting opinion, experience, passionate conviction, to many women.
- **Lelia Doolan**, Irish Film Board

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The Celtic goddess Arianrhod is the keeper of the endlessly circling silver wheel of the stars, also known as the "silver wheel that descends into the sea." Arianrhod's wheel, a symbol of time, is also known as the Oar, and is likened to a vast ship carrying dead warriors to the Moon land - Magonia, Emania or Hymany.

A silver haven for the dead can be found on the Fortunate Islands. These nine Mystical isles appear out of the sea off the coast of Galway every seven years. If anyone whose time has not yet come tries to reach them by boat, the islands will disappear. They are ruled over by the nine sisters known as Morgan. The Morgans or sea women also have the power to lure people to their golden, crystal palaces at the bottom of the sea, particularly those who unwisely venture too near the water's edge. They are related the Celtic death goddess Morgan le Fay/ Fata Morgana or Macha, the crone aspect of the Morrigan.

Mater Cara - "beloved mother" - an Italian sea goddess is known to English sailors as Mother Carey. She is often depicted surrounded by storm petrels - her soul birds - which are also known by the ignoble title Mother Carey's chickens.

A more fearsome bird is the siren. Half bird half woman, the siren, like her sister the mermaid, is the seducer of seafarers, luring the unwary and those who have fallen under her charismatic spell to their deaths. Sirens have beautiful alluring voices. They carry lyres and flutes which they play with great dexterity and glamour, ensnaring their victims with the seductive power of the senses - an illusion which they are powerless to resist. The music of the siren is reminiscent of an older, forgotten vibration - a resonance that is captivating, yet at the same time frightening. To look into the sea/ into ourselves is too much, too hard, yet at the same time the desire to know, to remember, to feel, is too strong - it cannot be resisted. Sirens symbolise the beguiling fascination of the sea - the desire to return to the watery abyss. To dive into the waters is to search for the secret of life.

From the Sicilian sea comes the monstrous Scylla. Originally Scylla was a nymph, who was transformed into a long-necked, six-headed monster with three rows of teeth. Symbolically, travelling across water is to change from one state of being into another, to open the door to another world. In this context, an encounter with Scylla represents difficulty of passage - a time of challenge and transition, and possibly separation.

Atargatis, a Philistine goddess with a fish's tail, was known to the Babylonians as Derecto or the Whale of Der. In this guise, she is the prototype of the great fish or whale who swallowed and gave rebirth to the solar god Joannes/ Oannes; (see also Jonah and the whale - a christian myth). In this story, whales symbolise the power of the cosmic waters. The belly of the whale is the darkness, the void - the place of death and rebirth. When the solar god is swallowed by the whale, he is engulfed by the darkness of death and initiation. Three days later, he emerges, reborn and reinvigorated.

Dolphins too signify resurrection. They are said to be guides to souls in the underworld, and savers of the shipwrecked, bringing them back to life from below the water where they would have perished. Dolphins represent the power of the sea, swiftness, safety and wisdom. They are sacred to Atargatis and when associated with Aphrodite are symbolic of lovers.

Dolphins were the original motif used for the astrological sign of Pisces. The symbol of the fish only appeared around 300BC, at a time when the worship of the sea goddess and all her symbols was being repressed. In ancient mythology, Dolphins were sacred animals, companions of the sea goddess. Later, once patriarchy had taken hold, warriors often emblazoned the symbol of the Dolphin on their shields, as if they hoped to gain the power and protection of these amazing animals.

This symbolic misuse seems ironic, as Dolphins are peace-loving creatures. As the Mediterranean became more warlike with the onset of patriarchy, Dolphins left her waters, to seek out more peaceful haunts - to lose themselves in the quiet knowingness of the great oceans. Today, Dolphins are rarely seen in the Mediterranean.

Like the sea itself, Dolphins have a dual nature - they are capable of leaping from one element to another - of travelling through the dimensions of thought and intuition. They are credited with great knowledge and empathy and are privy to the secrets of the deep - which are many!

The sea, as it rushes against the shore, represents the essence of renewal - the washing clean of all that has gone before. It is the ebb and flow; the cycle of destruction and regeneration. The end, and the beginning!

Moira Quinn

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Feminism and Divinity: Toward a Synthesis of the Two

I am a feminist who believes in the divine. I read scripture, not just the Bible, but sacred texts of other religions. Sometimes people's eyes glaze over when, in answer to the question of what my graduate research topic was, I tell them it was an attempt to contribute to a female-inclusive concept of the deity. This is understandable. Because of the negative effects of religion in Ireland - and everywhere else - it is easy to assume the religion per se is a bad thing. There is Catholicism's exclusion of women from decision-making. There is Goldenbridge. But to discount the possibility of a divine because people in power have used this power to commit cruelty seems to me to be playing into such people's hands. Why allow them to take away something which has the potential to be inordinately precious?

When I saw Ronit Lentin's documentary on Goldenbridge, I caught a glimpse of the divine. It was there, written on Christine Buckley's face, emanating from her mouth in the words she spoke, in her naming of abuse and her challenge to such abuse, in her quest for justice, in her passionate search for her parents. It is a quest for power rather than a quest for God which motivates atrocities committed in the name of religion. Admittedly, religion by its very nature is open to such distortion. Patriarchy has used the claim to transcendental, universal truth to justify just about every act of oppression possible.

But there is a different way to approach one's spiritual quest than the dogmatic, self-referential one employed by oppressors. It involves humility and an acknowledgement that a search for truth is a lifelong experience involving prayer, study, meditation and engagement in the world. It also involves being able to admit that once-held truth-claims might have to be changed. It is anti-exclusive, and doesn't make assertions about who is saved and who is not.

I have a love for the figure of Jesus which I keep in the closet a lot. I keep it in the closet because his name is often invoked by enthusiastic Christians in a manner which I find distasteful. He is reduced to ideology most of the time, and his name is used to frighten and coerce, to oppress and to kill. It is also used to promote a suppressionist approach to Judaism, which I find particularly ironic, given that he himself was a Rabbi, and given that I cannot see much difference between what the Hebrew scriptures say about God and what the Gospels say. As far as I can see, all Jesus wanted was for people to treat each other with decency and integrity. Unfortunately, the churches have reduced this to ground-rules about who you should sleep with and when, whether or not you can use contraception, and how many times you can commit yourself to somebody in marriage. Jesus didn't seem that bothered about such matters when he made an apostle out of a woman who had five husbands and a live-in lover. But the compassionate mentality of the Rabbi is notoriously absent from the rhetoric of war-mongers and self-appointed moralists who use his name to commit acts of oppression. If blasphemy exists, killing and abusing and legislating for people's private lives in the name of a loving divinity has to be the ultimate expression of that sin.

Most sacred scriptures have, in my experience, a lot that is liberating to say to women enmeshed within patriarchy. Patriarchy, however, has done all of the interpreting of scripture on our behalf, so that we don't understand the complexities of our own religious traditions and often dismiss them as a useless tool in the struggle for liberation. In the Bible alone there are plenty of images of God as mother and there is a female personification of God in the guide of Sophia, or Divine Wisdom. Feminist theologians - most notably Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza - are not reclaiming Sophia as a positive, elemental force in the quest for a new lan-

Religious poem.

This poem

is the colour of new-blossomed furze

climbing up Croagh Patrick.

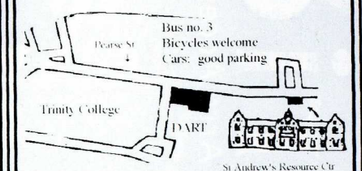
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guage with which to speak of women's spiritual becoming. Our very own Eva Gore-Booth was writing about the potential of the concept of Sophia in the early years of this century. It says in *Proverbs* that Sophia played a pivotal role in the creation of the earth. The symbol of Sophia has as much potential for a feminist spirituality as that of Gaia has shown in the development of an ecological consciousness.

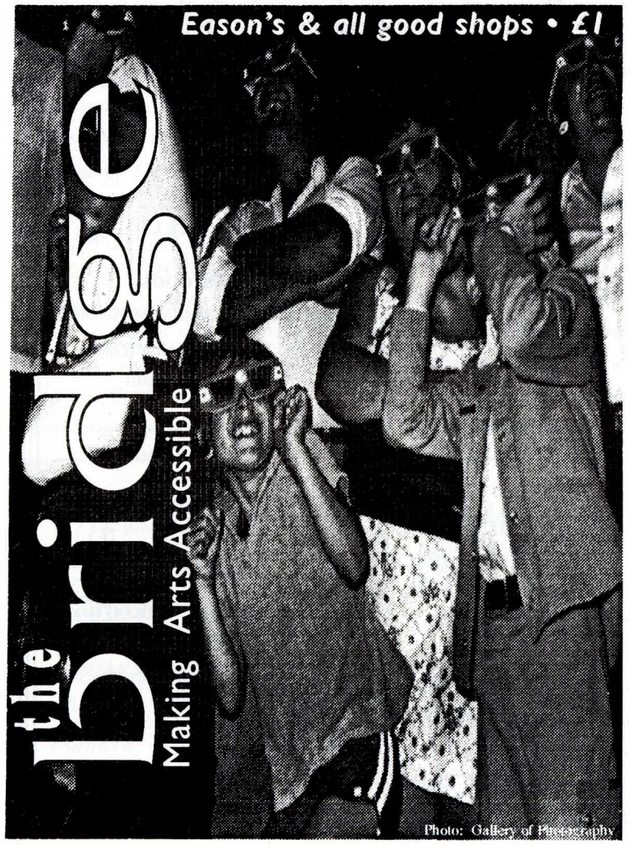
I am well aware that such ruminations leave anyone working within feminist discourse open to the charge of essentialism, and do not deny that the Bible needs to be approached using a hermeneutic of suspicion. But the work of spiritual reclamation involves an appreciation of ambiguity and paradox, and thus of the fact that liberation can be found within the pages of a text which indeed is charged with androcentrism on several levels.

The Bible, however, is just one example of a rich world literature of religious writings that can be utilised to inject some soul into the feminist struggle. Some might prefer to study The Tibetan Book of the Dead, others Greek mythology, or others still an amalgam of spiritual wisdom from different ages and cultures. If we as feminists ignore religion, mythology and ritual, we are liable either to buy into the modernist notion of linear progress which disregards the environment and the spirit, or to develop into nihilists devoid of hope in a non-patriarchal future. If such views leave me open to the charge of essentialism, then so be it.

It seems to me that some tools of analysis current in academic feminism/ theory describe any expression of hope or concern for the needs of the human spirit as "essentialism" or as a carry-over from what is often regarded as the naive utopianism of the feminism of the 1960s. I would rather, however, have Alice Walker as a feminist role-model than Camille Paglia. If the latter icon is all that the media can highlight in relation to 'nineties discourse on women, then the media is indeed hostile to the spiritual needs of feminism. While the soul-searching of Gloria Steinem is scorned as navel-gazing, Paglia is given positive exposure for dubious academic work and theories about the importance of Lady Diana. Give me a book on Divine Wisdom by Schussler Fiorenza or an Alice Walker love-poem any day, thank you very much.

It took me a long time to convince myself that it was okay to be a feminist and pray to the divine, meditate, have a penchant for bonding to trees when drunk, praise the cosmos for the dawn chorus, etc. Now, rather than regarding such impulses as somehow woolly and foreign to the feminist cause, I see them as a driving force which keeps my feminism alive (and keeps me alive into the bargain). Feminism and spirituality can feed off of one another, renewing one another's energy. It is only an oppressive splitting-off of knowing from intuition which would dictate otherwise.

Deirdre Clancy



Lesbians Organising Together (LOT)

July Event Guide

Pub Quiz & Disco
Sunday, 28th July
Mother Redcap's, 7pm
mixed event

Library and Drop-in Centre
open every Tuesday & Thursday, 10am-5pm

'First Out' meeting
Wednesday, July 3rd and Saturday July 20th

Youth Group meeting
Sunday, 7th July, 4-6pm (self-defence class)
Sunday 14th July, 3.30-6.30pm
Sunday 28th July, 3.30-6.30pm

The above events are at the LOT office, 5,Capel St, Dublin 1.

For information on all events and services in Dublin, phone the information line at 1550 122 345 (58p per minute). The LOT office can be contacted on (01) 8727770

M.E. : Living, not Suffering

health

Looking back, I sometimes think that searching for a diagnosis was harder than living with the disease. I was told that I had M.E. just over 3 years ago.

Mylagic Encephalomyelitis, besides being a mouthful, is a disorder of the brain. It is characterised by extreme fatigue, muscle pain and weakness, sleep disturbance, cognitive dysfunction and sensitivity to light, noise and temperature. It is notoriously difficult to diagnose or to get a diagnosis for, depending on your point of view. M.E. has only recently been recognised as a disease by the orthodox medical profession.

By the time I found out what was wrong with my body, I was falling over regularly - I'd get dizzy and my legs would give way - sleeping for up to 20 hours a day and dragging myself to and from college when I could get up out of bed. I was lucky enough to eventually find a wonderful doctor who knew and understood what was happening to me and could give me a name for it.

Getting a diagnosis was a weight off our minds - mine and my parents, who never doubted me. I wasn't mad. I wasn't crazy. I wasn't a little "touched", as one neurologist had told my mother two years before: "looking for attention, like any teenage girl, you'd be better off giving your money to the St. Vincent de Paul than spending it on tests." (!) I saw another neurologist some months later and had the tests: a lumber puncture, CAT scans, EEG, ECGS, just to rule out brain tumours and multiple sclerosis. At least now knowing what was wrong meant we could work towards getting me well.

Initially, I had to take two months off college to give my body a chance to rest. I gave up dairy products, wheat, gluten and eggs as we discovered through kinesiology that I was intolerant to these foods. I was also put on a vast quantity of vitamin supplements as my body doesn't absorb them from food properly.

A year later, I had to give up college altogether. I was completely exhausted, barely making it in two days a week and sleeping for the rest of the time. I couldn't walk properly, each step was like having a spear shot through my leg from sole to hip and my skin was a very becoming shade of grey, an attractive colour that's not uncommon to M.E. patients.

Taking that year out was the best and the hardest thing I've ever done. The best in that it allowed my body to rest and start recovering from the disease process and it made me face up to and accept how my life had changed. It was the hardest because it made me very aware of my symptoms and how physically weak I was.

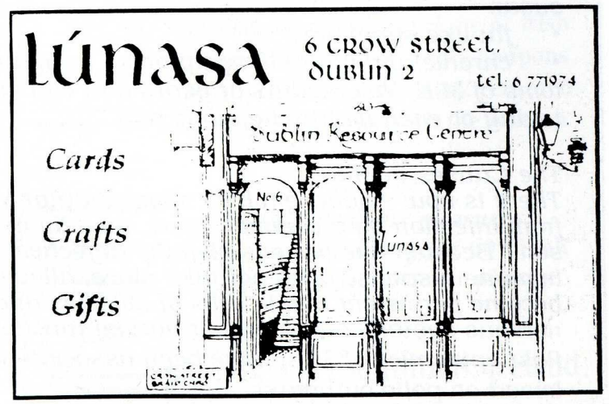
I had gone from being an outgoing, active, busy, articulate young woman to being a virtually housebound, sleeping, giant bruise who couldn't string a sentence together. At least that's how I saw myself on the bad days. I had to learn that "doing nothing" (resting) was an activity in itself - the one activity which would do most towards helping me to get well.

I resented the interruption in my education and the fact that I could no longer earn. I'd worked at the weekends since I'd started college and missed the financial independence. I felt like a burden on my parents and family.

I found the cognitive dysfunction particularly hard to deal with. My brain appeared to have a mind of its own, if that makes any sense. I'd get my words mixed up, say whole sentences backwards, not remember things that my family and friends had told me and had trouble participating in conversations for all these reasons and because my concentration span was so short. I tired easily. My confidence took a real knock because I'd never had a problem expressing myself before, and now I hadn't even got the vocabulary.

The exact reasons why I got M.E. are unknown. It's possible that I was predisposed to it. I had a lot of antibiotics as a toddler and they can weaken the system. The food intolerances may have some thing to do with it. One school of thought is that M..E. is the disease of our time - that humans have poisoned their own environment and bodies over the past century with chemicals, nuclear power, additives, etc., and that M.E. is the result.

I've been working part-time for a year now doing what I love and physically I'm doing well. Food-wise, dairy products are still pretty much out, although I can have wheat and eggs now. I avoid caffeine and sugar - too much of these gives me an almighty headache. I still take vitamins, although I don't take any 'drug' medication, which is good. I react quite badly to most drugs. My energy levels are high. It's a balancing act: I can do just about anything I want to now as long as I remember to rest. It goes without saying, therefore, that I still sleep a lot. If I get a bug



or a cold that's going around a small part of me does still panic and think 'oh no, not again!' But that fear of getting a bad relapse is subsiding as time goes on and I gain more confidence in my body. Yoga, which I started almost a year ago for gentle exercise, has helped me realise how strong my body is now.

Kinesiology is the treatment that I found most beneficial. It removes energy blocks and balances energy within the body, and through muscle testing it pinpointed my food intolerances. Giving up those foods did a lot towards getting me to where I am now.

Where I am now is well for me. I'm not where I was before I became ill nor do I want to be. Having M.E. does mean that I've missed out on some things, but I've also gained. I've learnt about myself, and to be myself, and that I know my body best. The ongoing love and support of my family and friends and some strangers - for which I am eternally grateful - has taught me that I am not my disease and also that I am not what I do: a great many people in this world do not realise that about themselves. M.E. has not taken out of me anything like the amount that it has taught me.

Joanne Quigley

Joanne's article has also appeared in apic info, *the web site of The APIC Centre arts and disability organisation. Visit the web site at http://www.connect.ie/apic. Contact the centre in the morning on (01) 8727930.*

For further information about M.E., contact the Irish M.E. Support Group,P O box, 3075,Dublin 2. The group also operates a helpline on (01) 6600885.

What is M.E.?

Also called Post (or Persistent) viral Fatigue Syndrome (PVFS), and Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS), M.E. is a severe disabling disease with a physical basis.
The most recent research increasingly suggests two models: that M.E. is a persistent viral infection or that its symptoms are caused by an overactive immune system. These two are, of course, not mutually incompatible.

Some features typical of M.E.
- *severe and abnormal fatigue following minor exertion.*
- *neurological symptoms (i.e., involving brain function) such as poor concentration, sleep disorders, unstable blood sugar.*
- *flu-like symptoms.*
- *chronic and variable symptoms: for many, the symptoms of M.E. last months or years and can vary from day to day or even within the same day.*

The Causes of M.E.
There is now evidence which suggests that M.E. may result from infection by a common virus, usually in an active person. Because the virus is slightly 'defective', the proper immune response does not take place, allowing the virus to become persistent inside cells of muscles and the central nervous system, altering their normal function.
Past epidemics of M.E. have been associated with and followed on polio outbreaks.

Ask your dentist

According to figures compiled by the British National Pure Water Association, fluoridated water is both dangerous and no deterrent to tooth decay. Ireland began putting fluoride in its water supply 33 years ago. However, when rates of decayed, missing and filled teeth in 12 year old children are compared to those in other European nations, Ireland ranks behind four countries with no fluoridation and one with only 10% fluoridation. According to the association, the results of this survey demonstrate that decline in tooth decay is not related to fluoridation.

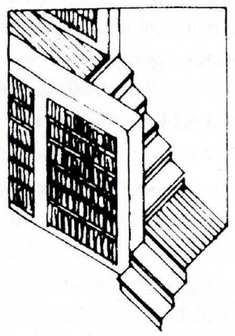
Fluoride is also linked to osteoporosis and decreased fertility in farm animals, and decreases in the hatchability of eggs from breeding poultry have also been linked to fluoridation.

Coming Up!

Studying Women

in the fifth anniversary *Ms.chief*

issue 13, October 1996



Books Upstairs

At Books Upstairs bookshop we stock a comprehensive range of feminist fiction and non-fiction titles, including books for women's studies courses. Free customer order service available.

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tel: (01) 6796687
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World News

Disabled Women Can't Come In

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing certainly highlighted many women's issues. However, not all the reports coming back were positive. For one group of participants, the conference proved to be physically challenging. The wheelchair-bound delegates in the 'Women with Disabilities' tent came up against many obstacles. Their tent was by no means accessible. Temporary ramps were shoddily prepared: the tent's ramp was only provided with loose bricks and wooden planks lying across a rather muddy puddle. This prevented many of the women from getting into their preferred workshops and from having a chance to voice their opinion on the topics on the agenda. However, activist Maria Alicia Contreras reported that, rather than silencing them, the poor facilities only encouraged the women present to take action, and a group of activists postered the entrances with notices such as "We wanted to attend this workshop but it is being held in an inaccessible site."

24 Hour Emergency Contraceptive Hotline Launched

A new free-phone hotline providing information about emergency birth control has been launched in the USA. The advice is given in both English and Spanish. It explains the three types of emergency contraception- the copper-T IUD, the "minipill" and elevated doses of oral contraceptives. It also lists the names and numbers of various supportive services. The line was formed by a consortium of women's health groups and the service has proved to be extremely popular, with 10,000 women phoning in the first five weeks. The line is sponsored by Bridging the Gap Communications and the Reproductive Health Technologies Project. Additional information about the service can be found on the World Wide Web at http://opr.princeton.edu/ec/ec.html

East meets West.

NEWW is the Network of East-West Women. The collective is continually expanding and facilitates networking between individuals and women's groups so they can influence various political processes. The network provides many services such as listings for various conferences, upcoming protests, NEWW activities and access for women to conduct interviews and exchange studies and research material. This service is extremely important for isolated individuals or groups who can not only gain from having this information readily available to them but can also highlight plights within their own communities. Additionally, NEWW has established the first on-line network of women in eastern Europe. The service is attracting more interest as their information becomes more accessible. In January 1995 NEWW began providing internet training to over 150 women involved in forty different groups based in 31 cities in eastern Europe. If you'd like to subscribe, send e-mail to: majordomo@igc.apc.org. Enter <subscribe women-east-west> or <subscribe neww-beijing> to be added to the mailing lists.

compiled by Sonya Mulligan

News Sources: Women's Health Journal of the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network, Women's International News Gathering Services (WINGS), Lola Press.

available pleasures

a space for exploring lesbian/feminist experience through poetry

available to all women identifying as lesbian & feminist & writing/reading in english.

define your pleasures.
fill these spaces.

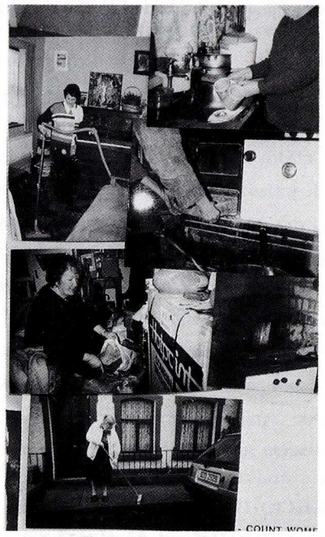
submissions:
enclose addressed envelope & irish stamps/international reply coupons (irc) if you want your work returned. copyright remains with the women writing.

finding *available pleasures*:
send an A4 envelope & 60p irish stamps or an irc to cover postage.

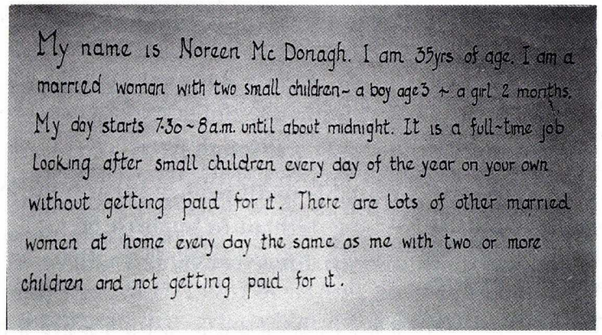
p o box 3327, dublin 8, ireland.

24 Hours in the Life of a Woman

at the Women's Work Gallery, Galway.











Galway experienced an unconventional exhibit from the 2nd - the 23rd june when over 200 women's snapshots of their work, paid and unpaid, went on exhibit at the resi - dence of Margaretta D'Arcy, which was wonderfully trans- formed into the Women's Work Gallery for the month.

Women's Work chronicled the real lives of women and the unpaid caring, cleaning, cooking, chauffeuring work that women do.

The exhibition launch on Sunday, 2nd June was a festive affair, with poetry, music, singing, many thanks and feisty speeches. About forty women attended, along with some children and a few men. Every woman had their own story to tell about unwaged work. Rosemarie Rowley comment- ed, 'my mother didn't encourage me to do housework because she really saw housework as being something that pulled women down and kept them in their place, and I did- n't appreciate this because I wanted to be like her.' The Creative Women's Workshop of the Old Museum Arts Centre in Belfast came to Galway especially for the exhibit, bringing poetry and lovely batik work with them. One of the women commented, 'I'm fascinated by the differences in the photographs, differences in the work. It makes me feel really warm: I know that I'm not the only voice in the whole world saying, why aren't women paid for what we do, I'm not the only person saying as artists we have to value ourselves, as women we have to get funding for our work and I just feel a lot of commonality with the women who are here, just knowing that I'm not alone.

Artist Catherine Harper: some kind of shift in me

Catherine Harper's dedication to art has produced vivid, startling work which stays in the memory. She began exhibit- ing in 1987, and she continued to work and exhibit while studying for a Ph.D in mechanical engineering at the University of Ulster, Belfast.

From Co. Derry, Catherine has been very interested in the myth and history of the bog and bog people. She has incorporated this fascination into her work and was resident artist at the 1990 Bogland Symposium in Wicklow. A col- lector of bones, Catherine has always incorporated them into her work, and her interweaving of them with bogland myth motifs and notions of decay has produced powerful and sometimes frightening work which plays on primeval fears. Many of her early works referred to the Sheila-na-gig form, and she pro - duced one actual Sheila-na-gig entitled Vagina Dentata. This piece visually grabs you, keeps you, draws you into itself by its colour, the ancient skeletal perma - nence of its bony fingers and pelvis, its grotesqueness.

In 1995, Catherine began a residency on the Artists Work Programme at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin. She remembers, 'when I applied, I said to the museum that I suspected that some- thing was about to happen in my work. I mentioned Sheila-na-gigs in the applica - tion form and I talked about sex and I talked about sexuality and issues around that area and that I suspected that being away from Northern Ireland for a longer rather than a shorter period of time would allow some kind of shift. Little did I know what exactly was going to happen but that's been tremendous to have that space, so that's been very suc- cessful.'

Being away from her Presbyterian her- itage has helped Catherine develop more personal work. 'I feel that certainly I have exhausted the historical, archaeological aspect of my work. In my year at IMMA I have moved in terms of being a puritan, hard working, celibate person into someone who's thinking much more about senses, about sex and sexuali- ty, about my position in the world, how me as a Northern Irish person will impact on different positions. I'm amazed at how my butting against Dublin has affected the work.'

'I'm suddenly aware of the puritanism [of her previous work] because in those bog people, although I was being fairly out there, work like the Sheila-na-gig that I showed you, the vagina there is referred to, it's not actual. So you can get away with it: I have people look at this work and not necessarily get the sexual bits. It's possible to read it on different levels. With some of these pieces I have done kids' workshops and you can read the work at a particular level as witches and ogres and people from the bog. Whereas, when you get into this new work, there's no meaning in there other than what it says.



Catherine working on an early piece at IMMA. Her Sheila-na-Gig, entitled Vagina Dentata, *made of bones, mixed papers, wood, horn and fabric, is in the back- ground.*

Catherine's last work during her IMMA residency was a diptych, a two-part work, portraying actual vagina dentata..

She explains, 'what I'm interested in thinking about in this piece is the notion of animus anima, the idea that, within a single human being, there's the possibility to be 'masculine' and 'feminine' and there are very few people who exhibit charac- teristics absolutely masculine or absolutely feminine. Certainly within my family, and in my life, I have a Ph.D in mechanical engineering, I have been very conscious of my animus, of my maleness, of my possibility to be quite masculine, if you want to list what that list of mascu- line traits might be and you're on to dodgy territory then. What I have done here is given myself a protective vagina and I have also provided myself with a phallus, a penis, so I'm trying to reflect that duality, that it's possible within one woman to have both of those areas cov- ered.'

While she has exhausted history as a source, the change in Catherine's work is a progression or a shift rather than a break. 'I was talking to you about the Sheila-na-Gig, and in this Sheila I actually had skulls around the vagina, so she's got a toothed vagina, which is quite an aggressive statement and we're into cas- tration theory, we're into Freud, we're into major worrisome areas. The toothed vagina, you'll come across it in Danish art, in Colombian art as a motif but in a stylised form. It's not such an unusual a motif, so it's really interesting to me. Going from the Sheila-na-gig with the teeth and the stylised vagina, it's a straight step to making an actual vagina dentata. So I made the teeth, I went to my box of bones, I had all the teeth I could possibly need. Then I started to

think, what do I have in my collection of bones that is a defensive object. I had antlers but that meant you started to use horns and you are into totally different areas because horns are male symbols of virility. I'm moving from fertility to virility and virility is much closer to sex than fertility, I think, it's much more about sexual urge. Fertility is much closer to mothers and babies, everything that I don't want to be, so I'm excited about the idea of using male objects of virility in close proximity to my vagina. That's saying a lot there, I'm leaving that to you to interpret, but I'm saying a lot about femininity and masculinity. I find these forms are exciting since they are almost like starting off points. I take on board all sorts of theories; penis envy, castration theory, Colombian art motifs, and those all inform that notion of the vagina dentata. There's all this Freudian, Jungian theory that I might want to explore. It can be explored simply from those starting off points. So I have years of work mapped out for me in those alone. That's where I'm going ... these are the next steps.'

interview by Elizabeth OShea



Catherine Harper working on her untitled diptych of vagina dentata. Laser copies and acrylic on wood. Photos courtesy IMMA.

Re-Calling the Goddess
Bringing Power Back to Poetry

Where is the power in poetry? Where does rhyme give way to magic, and where are the spells we have lost? The Goddess, the Muse that lived in the hearts and minds of women has been hidden for centuries, and it is time that women's writing regained its rightful place in the move - ment of the world.

Poetry has a past as well as a future. The roots of poetry lie not only in the hands of men, but on the tongues of women, worshipping the Goddess in her various forms, worshipping themselves as they do so. Priestesses of Aphrodite, Diana, Isis, call Her what you will, women praising their lovers, friends and sisters, are all observances to Her; to us.

The priestesses of ancient times, like Sappho (one of the few names remaining to us) had specific intent with their words, personifying the Goddess into forms known to everyone, not only the faithful, and today, as women writers begin to move back into their rightful place at the forefront of powerful, emotive poetry, meanings that have been hidden for centuries start to re-emerge.

Matriarchal societies suffered at the hands of Christianity: It was the political overthrow of the Snake Goddess by the Fish People. Remember the Eve story? St Patrick banishing the snakes? Examples of the metaphoric power stories at their toughest. And this is where the power of words lies: in their ability to change not only humanity's actions, but their emo - tions behind it. How many women do you know who believe the Eve/ snake wrastle?

So following Christianity's rise, power poetry, magic poetry, fell into the hands of the Druids, and while they used it in its true magical form - the Welsh Battle of the Trees in the 10th century was fought not with blood but with words of power; still, by this time women were being silenced: their power was being evicted under the Malleus Malleficarum of demonism and devil worship - women were becoming the gateway to hell.

Since then, fashions, patronships and the gradual lessening of spiritual (as opposed to religious) awareness in the Western world has led to a mixing of 'true poetry' with ballads, limericks and doggerel, the vox pop of poetry rather than the heightened craft of poets. The last relics of Goddess poetry for a long time were the writing of early Christian men and women in Middle English 'love' poems to Mary. "O One that is so fair and bright/Velud maris stella." Soon after, even Mary took a back seat to the currying of favour from the higher (earthly) power.

'True poetry' still survives, often by chance, or unconscious desire. Not all true poets are female, but many of them are. Sylvia Plath, Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill, Mary Dorcey, all have another voice that speaks through them, an extra quality. But what is this extra quality, this 'true poetry'; the special something that separates poetry from poems? It's words that cause an instinctive, honest, unsentimental reaction: a quickening of emotion, gut reaction, thrill, raising the hair on the neck: you know the feeling! Of course there are no rules, we're all responsible for our own reactions, and the power and spirituality comes from our awareness of those resolves.

With reading two translations of Sappho texts: one a direct translation (literal, logical) and one a derivation, a poem from an idea, many women felt the derivation was the 'true poetry', because it relied on sense and imagination as well as well-chosen words. Poets that use metaphor, example and personification give room for our psyches to create instead of being spoon-fed with rhyme and reason.

Who then is this Goddess? The Muse mentioned in Sappho, in Shakespeare, by poets through the centuries? Call her what you will. The White Goddess and Aphrodite are some of the more familiar names. But what about the Moon, the World, your name, your mother's name, your lover's name? She's there too in other forms; in dreams of desire and fear, in fulfilment, contentment, as well as panic, anxiety and longing.

The emotions she's visible in , all honest emotions, belong to Her, because they're feelings of control, and this is where Her/Our power comes alive. This is where we as women come into our strength.

When poetry became a fashion, a class statement (as with court patronage) many of the qualities of women's writing such as simplicity, emotion and adoration were not in demand. Battle epics, tales of (male) heroism and paeans to lords of the land and inaccessible 'ladies' were the toast of the higher classes. And the lower classes were losing their voice - education was less than ever, and vocal traditions overridden by the breaking up of communities of serfdom.

Still, some witches/wise women/healers by word or herb survived, though in danger from a system that required conformity and patriarchal loyalty. Now that the traditions of Paganism, Wicca, Danu and the covens are reviving, those voices are getting louder and louder.

Trust your intuition in reading or writing: this is our culture and strength, hidden for centuries, smothered by logic and commercialism, our right to magic and spellbinding, our power in poetry.

Hayley Fox-Roberts

The Bacchantes ar e a gr oup of women writers who meet to develop their work and increase their creative power.

New members ar e welcome. For details, contact box HB100, c/o Hirschfeld Centre, 10, Fownes Street Upper, Dublin 2.

The Huntress

The hungry heart
will dance around the fire,
and shriek and howl and cry
out loud,
and kiss the moon
in utter frenzy.

This is no picnic,
no restful moment,
no balm to heal the wounds,
or tend to cuts and bruises - all unseen,
from the bloody war of love
or is it lust?

Unbowed,
Unbent,
Unrepentant,
and moving on to the destined one;
born to be a huntress
and catch the lover by the throat,
and cast him then into the ocean.
Decide: to drown in love
or paddle shallow waters.

Wild vixen woman
knows her depths
and knows her wants
and finds them too -
no matter what.

Mary Shine

books

***Higher Purchase*. Rita Ann Higgins. Salmon Poetry. 1996. £5.99. ISBN 1-897-648-987**

Reading *Higher Purchase* was a purely pleasurable experience. I was immediately impressed with the ease with which the words flow from one line of Rita Ann Higgins poems to the next. She is obviously a woman who can adapt her style of language to suit the topic she is discussing. She speaks of the ordinary things with which we are faced everyday and writes about them in a way that is easily understood.

An example of this is her poem "Mothercare". This piece, if purely taken at face value, deals with the task of buying a new buggy. However, it is also a very poignant piece which deals with teenage pregnancy. Rita Ann is not judgemental. She writes of the workings of a new and modern 'rainbow buggy.' She explains of how with 'a little touch here/ and it collapses/ a little touch there / and it's up like a shot'. However, beneath the simple terms and explana - tions we get a sense of the reality of the young girl's situation. She tells of how the buggy has 'A mind of its own/ a body like a rocket/ it's yours to control.' Rita is highlighting the fact that the young girl in the poem does not have the same control over her own life.

'We saw them take the furniture out,' begins 'Higher Purchase'. This piece deals with repossession. The shame the mother must deal with is painfully obvi - ous. I feel her embarrassment as her dreams of acceptance are shattered. 'You're as good as anyone else on this street,', she had told the children when the Chesterfield Suite arrived. It is a per - fect example of how some people think that by purchasing items of materialistic value they will be accepted by society and thought of as better individuals. Now her furniture is being taken away, 'When it was coming out no one said anything'. I wonder what she will say to her children now.

Rita Ann often chooses some of her personal experiences to write about. In 'One for the Bus,', she deals with her relationship with her father. This was obviously strained as the poem begins, "I went to see him today it wasn't easy, we didn't get on". The poem takes on the form of a conversation between Rita Ann and her father. He talks continuously of what ails him, his "prostate", his need for new socks, and how the horses he has been backing seem to be "running back - wards". Being dutiful, she is agreeable and follows his instructions. 'Sit down I was told./ "I will, thanks".' During their conversation he pauses momentarily to ask her if she wants a mint. This is his way of letting her know that he does care for her. As she goes to leave he says, 'Go on, go on I tell you,/ take one, one for the bus.'

Each of her poems, regardless of its theme, is easily understood by all who read them. Whether you simply want to be entertained or are looking for some - thing more challenging this collection will please you.

Sonya Mulligan

***My Boy*. Philomena Lynott with Jackie Hayden. Hot Press. £7.99**

In some ways, the subtitle of *My Boy*, "The Phillip Lynott Story" is inappropri - ate. It is only partially the story of Phil Lynott. Mainly it is an extraordinary account of a Dublin working-class woman's struggle to maintain dignity and sanity through circumstances of amazing difficulty. Readers of this magazine who are not Thin Lizzy fans should be aware of this, although it is an an added bonus if, like me, you have head-banged at the Grove in Clontarf to Lizzy songs in your teens.

A teenage pregnancy in Ireland is still regarded as something of a calamity. In the 1950's an Irish woman living in England gave birth to a black child, who she eventually had to send to Dublin to live with her parents, such was the racism she encountered and the difficulty she had making ends meet,

Sarah, Philomena's mother, bravely took Phillip in, though understandably saying nothing about the child being her grandson. It seems appropriate then, that this book is ultimately dedicated to Phillip's grandmother, "the ordinary decent Dublin woman who truly knew what it was to give everything." Though a shadowy shadowy figure in this book, it is she I most admired while reading it.

Philomena Lynott, too, however, is admirable. She is extremely honest, even when the stories she relates might not portray herself in a favourable light. She is justifiably proud of her son's achieve - ments, vitally interested in enjoying his legacy, and able to talk about her grief and emotions with a large degree of openness. She seems, therefore, to have escaped the worst ravages of the Irish penchant for regarding excessive self-effacement and denial of the pleasures of life as a virtue. She is prickly and opin - ionated, and I must admit to liking that, and admiring the semi-bohemian life she lived in Manchester. (How she came to own this hotel is in itself a fascinating story). Her barely-concealed dislike for her daughter-in-law Caroline can grate at times, but I suppose we're all human.

Like any narrative relating to the ethos and world of rock, this book also pro - duces grave doubts about this ethos. Despite her pride in her son, Philomena is aware of the havoc which the lifestyle of a rock star can wreak - it has seemed to encourage self-destructive behaviour, a lack of stability, sexism and a survival of the fittest mentality. It is particularly poignant, then, to read a mother's account of her son's demise in this con - text and it begs the question of whether there is any other way that talented musi - cians can live that might be more holistic, This book also provides an insight into why so many musically talented women have shied away from careers in music - the industry is fairly androcentric.

This book is an oral account, and Jackie Hayden has obviously succeeded in encouraging Philomena's honesty and openness through a long interview process. It is, above all, a thoroughly human book, with no attempt made to sanitise or gloss over what is unpleasant in Irish society or what is unpleasant about heroin addiction, racism and aspects of rock culture.

Deirdre Clancy

Other Releases

***Writing Women.vol 11, no.3. vol. 12, no. 1.* guest editor, Ailbhe Smyth. Stg£5.99. Available from Writing Women, Unit 14, Hawthorn House, Forth Banks, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3SG. ISSN 1356-5435**

Writing Women is a journal which pub - lishes contemporary poetry and prose. This volume is a special double issue with an Irish supplement including writing by Emma Donoghue, Cherry Smyth, Mary Dorcey and Lia Mills.

***Encounters with Strangers: Feminism and Disability*. Jenny Morris, ed. The Women's Press, 1996. Stg£8.99. ISBN: 0-7043-4400-9**

A challenge to the women's movement, *Encounters with Strangers* provides a com - prehensive discussion of disabled women's experiences including experience in special schools, of public reactions to themselves, of the medical profession. It also discusses women's marginalisation in the disabled people's movement. While speaking of British women's experience, this book is relevant and challenging to Irish women as well.

***Canadian Woman Studies/ les cahiers de la femme.* c/o Attic Press, 29, Upper Mount Street,Dublin 2.**

CWS/cfs will publish a special issue entitled *Women of Ireland* in the spring of 1997.Through the published papers, the journal intends to explore the lives of the women of Ireland and of the diaspora in Canada. For further information, contact Attic Press at the above address or on (01) 6616176.

Women's Coastal Cruising

Relax aboard a cosy 17 foot 2 berth cruiser, with twin or small double berth, hob cooker and porta loo. Training given in boat handling, navigation and safety. Prices start from £95 for midweek 3-day special, £200 per week

write to: Clarraí Creations, Farranatee, Caherdaniel, Co. Kerry.

music shorts

The Dublin Pride party has proved once again to be an excellent showcase for women's musical talent. In addition to a 20-strong women's drumming group from Scotland, the party in the Furnace on 29th June included the absolutely fabulous comic musical talents of the Nualas, and the ever-popular Zrazy. Making their first Dublin appearance was the Bust band, featuring the powerful, blues-tinged voice of Marie Mulholland and ex-members of the Camp Vamps.

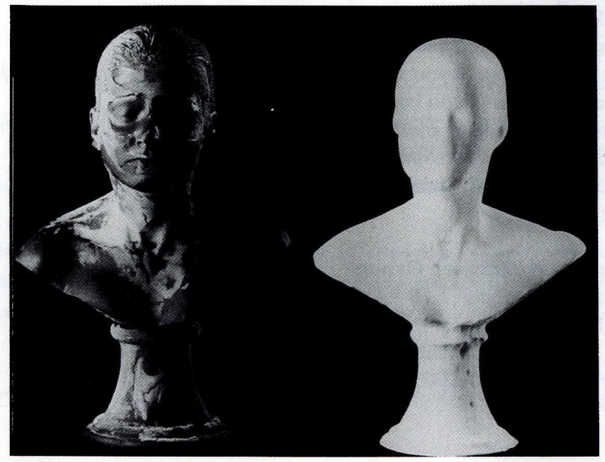
Singer-songwriter Elaine k has headed back to a hot summer in New York after good success here at home. Elaine released her *Short But Sweet* EP in January and competed in the 1996 Bacardi Unplugged competition.

Folk-punk singer-songwriter Ani DiFranco finally visits Ireland in support of her eighth album, *Dilate*. DiFranco's fans tend to be fanatic about her music. *Z* magazine in the United States has said, 'Ani DiFranco is one stupendous talent. A charismatic powerhouse performer, innovative guitarist, and personally and politically astute songwriter'. Ani DiFranco plays the Warwick Hotel Acoustic Room in Galway on the 17th July and the Green Glens at the Millstreet Festival on 8th August.

Janine Antoni wins IMMA Glen Dimplex Artists Award



The IMMA Glen Dimplex award marks a significant level of achievement or development in the work and practice of artists who have exhibited in Ireland. Janine Antoni's was nominated for Janine Antoni: Slip of the Tongue, in which she exhibited works created by using her body as a tool. Her work is based on converting everyday bodily rituals, such as eating, bathing and mop - ping and the materials associated with them, such as chocolate, soap and hair dye, into sculptural processes. Born in the Bahamas in 1964, Janine Antoni has attract - ed considerable international attention ever since her first solo exhibition in New York in 1992.



Photos courtesy IMMA

Detail of Lick and Lather (1993), 7 soap & 7 chocolate self-portrait busts.

Ms.chief fifth anniversary!

A volunteer group of women established *Ms.chief* in the autumn of 1991 because they felt there was a need for this type of magazine in Ireland. Five years on, *Ms.chief* is the only feminist magazine still publishing in the Republic of Ireland. And as our sisters at *Women's News* in Belfast can confirm, sometimes the challenge of producing such a magazine is almost too much.

But five years on, *Ms.chief* is still publishing. Our last year has seen a notable increase in the number of submissions to the magazine and a large increase in the number of subscribers. We're particularly lucky with the success of our recent supporting sub - scribers club. Subscriptions help provide what's most difficult to come by: the money that keeps us publishing.

So we think that *Ms.chief* is only getting better - thanks to your help and hard work by the editorial contribu - tors. All in all, we think we have a lot to celebrate. We hope you'll join us at our fifth anniversary celebrations, with lots of music, poetry and whatever surprises we find along the way. Come along and help us celebrate women!

fifth anniversary celebration!
Thursday, 24th October
The DA Club, 3/5 Clarendon Market, Dublin 2.

upcoming events

Women and World Peace
Friday 12th July - Sunday 14th July, UCD, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2. Conference hosted by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) to celebrate the Fifth International Congress of the WILPF, the first international gathering held in the Irish Free State (1926). Conference cost, including dinner on Saturday, is £40. To book, contact Dr. Vivien Hick, 2 Harleth Downs, Goatstown Road, Dublin 14.

World Breastfeeding Week
1st - 7th August
Baby Milk Action will be organising events in Dublin. If you can organise an event in your area, if you would like to volunteer, or if you have photos of Irish breastfeeding mothers, contact Baby Milk Action, c/o 10, Upper Camden Street, Dublin 2. tel/fax: (01) 4962964

Women's Aid Support Group
every Tuesday evening 7.15-9.15pm Central Mission Hall, Abbey Street, Dublin. For more information, ring Linda or Pan at (01) 8600033.

Douglas Hyde Gallery
Trinity College, Dublin
Lili Dujourie: Selected Sculpture and New Works. until 27th July

Old Museum Arts Centre
7, College Square North, Belfast
Sex Tips for Girls, with Louise Rennison. 25-28 September
Dance: *Double Chin and Tonic*, by Anthea McWilliams. 3-5 October
Contact the Old Museum box office on +(01232) 233 332

Lesbians Organising Together (LOT)
5, Capel Street, Dublin 1.
28th July Pub Quiz & Disco. Mother Redcap's, Christchurch, 7pm. Mixed event
For further events information, contact the LOT events line at 1550 122 345

Belfast Lesbian Line
Open House last Sunday of every month, 2-5pm. Ring +(01232) 238 668 Thursday 7.30-10pm for venue information

Cork Monthly Lesbian Social
Last Sunday of the month, The Other Side Cafe, 8, South Main Street, Cork.

GET WET GO WILD
SWIMMIN WIMMIN
Fridays, 8.30pm
Markievicz Pool, Townsend Street, Dublin 2.
£2.50/£2 conc.

Non Directive Pregnancy Counselling

Irish Family Planning Association
36/37 Lr. Ormond Quay,
Dublin 1.
(01) 8725033

Lesbian Lines

Cork Thurs 8-10pm	(021) 271087
Dublin Thurs 7 - 9pm	(01) 8729911
Belfast Thurs 7.30-10pm	(01232) 238668
Galway Wed 8-10pm	(091) 66134
Limerick Thurs 7.30-9.30pm	(061) 310101
Lesbian Line NW (Derry) Thurs 7.30-10pm	(01504) 263120
Lesbian Line SE Mon 7.30-9.30pm	(051) 79907

Rape Crisis Centres

Dublin	(01) 6614911
	1800 77 88 88
Cork	(021) 968086
Belfast	(01232) 249696
Galway	(091) 64983
Limerick	(061) 311511

Women's Aid Help Line
1 800 341 900
Mon-Fri 10am-10pm, Sat 10am-6pm

Amnesty International Women's Network, Seán MacBride House, Fleet Street, Dublin 2. (01) 6776361.

CAFE - Creative Arts for Everyone, The City Arts Centre, 35 Moss Street, Dublin 2. (01) 6615268.

National Women's Council of Ireland, 32 Fitzwilliam Street Lower, Dublin 2. (01) 6615268.

Irish Countrywoman's Association, 58 Merrion Road, Dublin 4. (01) 6680453. freephone: 1800 652652

Irish Women's Environmental Network (IWEN), Carmichael House, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7. (01) 8732660

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
c/o 5 Verschoyle House, Verschoyle Court, Mount Street, Dublin 2

2017.21.Oct.2.4

noticeboard

Send notices for the events and noticeboard pages to:

Ms.chief, P O Box 3327, Dublin 8.

Ms.chief 13 appears October, 1996.

Copy deadline for notices is 1 October.

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by and for women

The Employment Equality Agency provides a free advisory and information service in relation to discrimination in employment and vocation training which is based on sex or marital status. EEA also promotes best practice among employers and trade unions.

Contact the Employment Equality Agency on (01) 6624577, fax: (01) 6625139

June Kelly knows the legal status quo for women in Ireland.

It's good to know where a woman stands with the Law in Ireland. Particularly in the more finely nuanced area related to defamation. Two cases brought before the Dublin courts last February give elucidation here.

Case number one. Mr George Dempsey, a former First Secretary with the United States Embassy in Dublin, brought a successful libel action against the *Phoenix* magazine which had alleged him to have been a CIA station chief during his term of office in Ireland. Mr Dempsey denied this and considered the allegation to have been a slur on his character. The Court agreed and awarded Mr Dempsey damages. *Phoenix* magazine printed a public apology. No problems then with our understanding of this case. Someone says that you are one thing. You say you are not that one thing. You bring a case to the Courts alleging defamation and you are given the benefit of the doubt. Your name is exonerated and you receive monetary recompense for defamation.

Case number two. You have just purchased two items of clothing for your young son from a store in the ILAC Centre in Dublin. Whilst your son had tried on new clothes you had held his jacket for him. This was a jacket you had bought from this same store some twelve months previously. You leave the store. Moments later you are accosted by a security officer charging you with the theft of the jacket he had observed under your arm. You are directed to "step inside please."

Mrs. Catherine Sutton from the Dublin suburb of Rialto, whose case this is, refused to return to the store. Mrs Sutton then brought a case alleging defama - tion to the Dublin courts.

Case dismissed by Judge James Carroll. What had happened in the ILAC Centre had been unfortunate,' said the Judge. One takes his point. Mrs. Sutton is stopped in her tracks by a security man with the imputation that she has committed a crime. She is humiliated before witnesses and in the eyes of her son who in turn experiences considerable distress. Unremarked upon by the good Judge. Mrs Sutton's attitude was all wrong, said Judge James Carroll. She had overreacted and caused a scene. Presumably she should have just gone quietly.

We can conclude from this that women, even though innocent of an offence, should refrain from expressing any emotion or from defending themselves, even if wrongly charged. We must always acquiesce because it is requisite that we do not disturb the deeply entrenched chauvinist status quo.

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bile file