In Memorium

Traveling into the silence of God,
how loud the cries of the world become,
till "Come to Me" and "Go to them"
together merge, to be heard as one.
The scholars on the soup kitchen's street
read a living text etched out in crows' feet,
hear the Exile's tale on every tongue.

I?---I am Lilith:
I fly the night winds
I enter on the raw edge
of your deepest dreams
creeping o'er your windowledge
waiting for you by your bed
to snatch you away from the one you wed

fear from night demons!
where moans of delight
sometimes cover your screams
they're sapping your powers,
strangling your newborn,
uncov'ring your feet!
they know your secrets
they feed desires
they are unmoved
by your humane conceits

Lilith brushes the glass panes
beats on your roof like rain
has little patience
for human deceits
She warms at your fires
comes when you require
not quitting until
you have owned your defeat

a someone met
by accident:
tumbling into his eyes,
their depths a door
desiring more,
wond'ring, "is this wise?"

obsession
we may name it
strange possession
we must claim it

hesed is always surprise

is fright a measure for potency?

you'll get no provocation from me:
I moan into you, silently,
and gasp against the closing door.

Without love or lover,
why wager more?

the battleground where I lay my head:
ah, mine ancient enemy---bed.
Most lethal when I must keep still,
where pain, by darkness, scents its kill.

who fights an inner Adversary
of failure has sure guarantee.

Gods of the Book,
a masculine continuum:
Allah to Yahweh,
Yahweh to Jesus...
Not a 'thea' anywhere,
in their lonely splendor,
godkings just dont care...

And
Allah hates his daughters,
Yahweh and his Wisdom
pitch tents on holiday,
and Jesus is Sophia
(are they sure that's okay?)
And what do kingless women
need gods for, anyway?

Claudia says,
it's a metaphor
theology's something we all create

her breda wonders,
is it not more,
something perhaps the text generates?

theologian fleeing an implication
artist unwilling to own her creation

glowing text!
unknowable past!
from such matter, futures are cast

The Kingdom of [.....] is like a woman who cleans her seeds for a second time. Finding another bowl, she smokes it, rejoicing in the middle of the night. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

The Kingdom of [....] is like a woman who wants to read the Torah. So she learns many languages and methodologies, to see if she can do it. Then one day she reads the Torah. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

The Kingdom of [...] is like a man who has a friend he never talks to, so that the friendship is extinguished without him noticing it. Then when he remembers his friend, he finds she is gone. Whoever has the heart for it, let them hear.

The Kingdom of [....] is like a feminist, who finding a methodological point on which she can turn, throws away her other prior assumptions. Whoever has courage, let them hear.

this is what I know:

there is Power, and that is all
It goes No-where, Its end is Itself
we swim in It, being made of It
we are so much a part of It
we must name It "Other"
for It to come to consciousness

It pulses; It weaves
It spins and dreams
and we are the thoughts
of Its winds' silent passing
and "we" is All and everything
for there are no divisions here,
All being woven of Its power

It rises up to greet you, ferocious
with the joy of re-cognition
when you seek to call the Power
and it may seem for a time
that you bend It, so pleased It is
to know and be known knowing,
but It bends you, 'til you are straight
as a rock, a sky
for such shaping is the Way of Power--

this is what I know

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Scribe's Preface:

At present, it is currently impossible, in the view of this scribe, to reconcile the exclusive, androcentric nature of Christian liturgy, due to its historical character, to our theological insights into the nature of the Godhead. One interim option for theologically and emotionally satisfying liturgical experiences for women and women-identified men is to embrace this paradox of the "Both-ness" of God. This may be done through the creation of supplementary liturgies, of mixed "pagan" and Christian origins, to undercut the spiritual impact of dependence of ossified liturgical expressions which perpetuate oppression of God, women and men. Perhaps by worshipping the One both as male and female we will find our faith fragilely poised between those poles of the divine.

The "personal name" used here to address God is that given to Moses in Ex 3; "'Ehyeh", "I am", a form which has no gender marking. The commonly used Hebrew name for God, "Yahweh", is the third masculine singular form of the same root, and a later redactional--and patriarchal-- addition to the passage on the giving of the Name.

# Theapoetics

"tikkun thealogy
expressed through
the medium of
poetry"

Yahweh wears many dresses.
Though most of them are male,
despisers of the Goddesses
will miss the One God's trail.

Only She has traversed
storehouses of the Deep;
called Wisdom, or Messiah,
but One Lord do we seek.

Queen of Heaven and Earth

spindle for a neighbor

Bon voyage! just exiting
the metaphysics of the Greeks,
who hid their knowledge of Her
along seamlines of sterile categories--
male philosophies of "I" that will not see
the suckling Life of the Levantine.

There is One who judges the dog and the pig,
and male dominion over growth has no place with Her
who is the source of untamed harmonies.
Chaos She is not; for the deeps are male, damp
underground seekings to lick Her clods fertile.
But sometimes She is the Deep Herself,
womb-waters gathered to launch into being
myriad forms, and the male rises out of Her,
softmound swirled up from Her primal sea.
Though fingering gods claim primacy,
the Chthonic transforms but partially.

Clawed and winged, graceful Lady of the Tree
seeks Herself, descending, for rulership
of what men fear is Her ancient portion.
Where Earth spells death to History,
She becomes for men the yammering Pit,
Her topside brightness soothing grasping royalty.
How the kings love Her, who marches before them,
on the campaign strengthening, enemies scattering!
She makes warring men as women with spindles!
She gives to Her daughters the warriors' bow---
She is confusion to every set role that scorns Her.
Women know Her shieldmaiden's men's mask
of the Raging Mother, and adore Her,
the Queen of Heaven and Earth,
their Only, their Last, their First.
Taste Her, and see how good!

on mounds of ashes
at dangerous passes
wherever rivers demand to be crossed
eternal struggle ensues

who is this, who comes to me by night, commanding?
who is this, who claims to be my god, demanding?

dark prince, or pseudo-villain,
o, why should I trust You?
I have lived this story before;
I know what You do.

I am the hero of my own tale, compelled
to answer Your challenge, as You know well.
If you pursue, I must fly;
If you attack, I must die;

but what do You know of tales women tell?

~~mohammed & mountain~~

great power there is:
power that flows
in veins of flesh,
and bowels of stone.
earth from its creature
is not far removed
as such analogies
amply prove

~~5/84~~

so surely do we
choose our fate
that
we become what
we contemplate

~~or~~

boundaries teem
with life "making do":
the margins outcenter
the staid nucleus.
each system, cell, models
the secret for us:
structures flex and dissipate,
restructure design and integrate.

there was a time
when God used to bend low
to earth,
across the
arcing sky
like a rainbow, signing
an affadavit of presence
outside the precincts
where only blood and priests go,
a god not limited to clouds or shadow

that was, of course, some time ago

~~1/84~~

little fly, don't struggle with the net:
it only wraps it tighter yet.
when the way grows strange,
don't thrash about so.
poise is regained
with the pause to let go.

well, the Witch, she says,

archaeologists
misunderstand:
that blood was shed
by the hand of Man.

(Don't bloody up her Goddess
rattling bones
from which She fed!)

we counterfeit
our blinded night,
betraying the Vision
in the instant of sight

looking through a woman's mote,
our eyes see what the rabbis don't:

Yahweh Shapechanger!
'Elcah Rearranger!

in answer unpleasing
to problems most teasing,
when you find your god,
She's likely to say,
"just look at that hippo
I unzipped up today!"

Such is the way
of magic pursuit,
Like creator, so creature--
why not follow suit?

a hero has needs:
who will help fill them?
   befriending beast
   magicked machine
   crone at the fork...

a hero gets nowhere
without diverse helpers--
   a donor, dispatcher,
   an enchanted aid...
heroes who lack these
are destined to fade

the day the first temple
took its first slave,
that day the gods went free:

that day Inanna fled from her gateposts,
that night Enki deserted the Deeps,
that morn Ereshkigal walked out of hell,
that age Yahweh began to grieve

Akkad* is destroyed!
Inanna be praised!

She is the Lever
that topples towers.
She is the Fear
stalking tyrants' sleep.
Insatiable Night,
reclaiming ~~reclaiming~~ the child
who darkens Her form,
desiring Her powers.
She slays Illusion.

Inanna be praised!

*The destruction of the violent Sumerian city-state of Akkad (Agade) is attributed to, among other things, its desertion by the goddess Inanna. The poem relating its fate is dedicated to Inanna.

They lie, who call sweet April cruel,
or they walk blind, rough-shod:
Her earth lies soft beneath the feet,
and falls in adoration back to liberate the pod.
Sagas of ascent from root
narrate that cold can crush or cover:
Winter is a virgin god; April is His lover.

Inanna's got a tree that wont be climbed:
Inanna's got a snake that wont go away
Inanna's got a sister who wont be laid
Inanna's got a bird with a lion's head
all twined in her huluppu-tree
Inanna wants a throne and a shining bed,
but she's got an infested huluppu-tree---
Inanna's got big trouble!

Oh, shining maiden who loves to laugh,
why are you not now laughing
You want your tree, and lumber, too;
You want to stay maiden, you want to be wed;
You are wise to run from the hand of the king
who will make you a daughter, though you are a queen
Poor shining maiden who loves to laugh,
we know why you are not laughing...

The Lady's Reverie:

Do not say, my lover, do not say
set me free, my sister,
my sibling, set me free
you have given me Kingship,
you have given me radiance,
but now, now, I would leave

Dumuzi, don't go to the palace:
kings are made by deposing their queens
Dumuzi, don't go as other men do:
can't you hear your goddess sing?

templates duel:
cosmogonies reel and clash:
myths are at war
for the human heart.

God's bodiless Word,
Goddesself giving birth:
we have watched the former
savage the earth,
so womanmyth marches
on a new human heart

Song for a Queendom

before there was time, a time was...
before the time of gods, there was a time...
before the time of the coming of the gods...

there was a time for chanting waves
and maids who whirled into them,
their backs to the beach, with no fears
that the seas would hurl danger to their safe shore,
no premonition that the mountains would yield
hoards of slaughter, demons of rape.

before their coming, there was another pitch of time
when no Kore cried out betrayed, no mother felt care
for moonlit daughters dancing, fearing less than wild
beasts their own shadowed kind.
                                believe it,
though you hurt too much at each new evidence
of one more male betrayer: once, there was a time.

And the One who said, over his shoulder,
that the dead prefer to bury their dead
rather than face the chances of choosing,
surely had such betrayals in mind
as he gestured to the plow and the furrows
begging form and seed, saying,

put your hand to my plow, and don't look back,
come! plant and make this time your time,
like the time when they counted
by moons and blood and births,
the time before history became men's time.

Demeter grieves, but fitly so,
wondering where her child might go,
leaving behind no trace.
But what if Kore sought to spare
a mother's grief, covering
the wounds she alone must bear
with determined, ~~and~~ cheery face?

"Hi, Mom! No time to say goodbye:
Just took a break from garland-weaving--
I didn't know I would be leaving
to travel a sere and leaden sky.
Everyone's here! Please, ~~worry~~ no more!
Sunning ~~on~~ Lethe's lightless shore,
I lose all track of time. No grieving!
See you soon--just six months more,
then I may go. I miss you, though.
(Oh, Uncle says "Hello, Ceres".)
The bearer brings a kiss from me.
Love from Hell,

your daughter Kore

the god of the text
stalks through its lines
spitting out Canaanites,
ripping up vines,
turning prophetess reaper,
patriarch, near divine.

but the surface shivers
when its metaphors shift
a Rock gives birth,
dancing wisdom preexists,
a woman's hand delivers
as patriarchies twist.

# Invocations and Liturgies

"something old,
something new..."

All the Powers of Air and Sea,
come near to work my will for me!
All the Powers of Earth and Flame,
come serve the one who calls your name:

Michael! (facing east)
Ariel! (facing south)
Raphael! (facing west)
Gabriel! (facing north)

The circle is set,
the circle is drawn
about me, till I say
"Begone!"

## Invocation to Wisdom

Many-formed,
     many-faced
          Wisdom!

Goddesses shift
in the shadows You cast,
     there from the First,
     known at the Last,
Lady!
     Wisdom! we unchain You!
Let Your daughters' voice sustain You!
Wisdom! Sister,
          BE HERE NOW!

Craftswoman,
     kingmaker,
intimate friend
     of the slavewoman baker,
     Sister, You are light!
     Wisdom, be Thou bright!

Woman on walls,
     elder in gates
in silent salute
     Your counsel awaits

     and we, too,
     who now call You
     with life to banish our night,
Cry,
  Wisdom!
     Our sister!
          BE HERE NOW!

Invocation to the Waxing God/dess

glowing crescent
growing nightly,
wax, Thou, Lady,
in my heart

all these long years
calling You here
mouthing only
manly names

idols ~~now~~ broken
soul has spoken,
put aside ~~ela~~ and
~~biggers~~ thou shalt be

You are Brightness
True-found light's depths
Hail, Thou, God/dess
deep in me

shine to fullness!
pine to darkness!
Rebirth Lady,
newly be!

in my day skies,
in my night cries,
in my twilights---
be with me!

full moon, fair moon
fat moon blessing
white moon, bright moon
mad moon questing
cat ~~howls~~ prowls, man howls
skyclad burning
~~mystic~~ wise fowls, witch's cowls
deosil turning:
  this is the night
  the goddess hath made
  let us rejoice
  and be glad in it

Song for Unfavorable Plantings

dark moon, dead moon,
new moon, gone:
sleek moon, slunk moon,
dumb moon, drawn:
spells of hiding,
hindering, holding,
spells of binding
deep down dark,
spells of ending
~~the~~ fallow moon's woe,
spells for finishing
off the spark

day moon, stray moon,
what do you say, Moon?
why dancing in the Blue?
is night too much for you, too?

AN ALTERNATIVE LITURGY

L(eader): Blessed be God, Mother, Daughter and Spirit
P(eople): As She was in the Beginning, Is in our hearts, and will be Again.

L: God be with You!
P: And also with you! Blessed be!
L: Let us celebrate Her Presence in our lives.
P: It is right to acknowledge our life in Her.
L: It is right and good, always and everywhere, to remember Her Whom we have obscured, calling Her into our lives, through remembrance and praise. Let us pray:

O Lord our God, strengthen us, we pray, in our desire to know You in Your fullness, recognizing You within our tradition and without, as God and Goddess, as the One who says to us "I am: I will be with you." Amen.
P: So mote it be!

L: Let us confess our sins against Her.

All:
'Ehyeh, we confess that we have worshipped idols and images of our own making; we have not seen You as You are, but as we persuaded ourselves You must be; because we could not see You, we have not truly seen each other, or the Earth, our home. We are heartily sorry, and we come to You for heart-soothing and courage-making.

All, to each other:
She knows your pain.
She shares your sorrow.
She takes your hand in Hers.

(The People give their hands to one another, and exchange greetings).

L: Goddess rejoice you and yours!
P: May Her fullness fill the earth!

L: If we are Her people, where is our past?
P: We are Her people, so we have no Book.
L: If we are Her people, what is our tradition?
P: We died in the flames, keeping Her secrets.
L: If we are Her people, what shall we say?

ALL: WE ARE TRADITION! WE MAKE THE WORDS!

(Here the People share suitable word-offerings, light incense, paint, dance, and offer to each other whatever they have created to honor Her.)

Heirodule:

O 'Ehyeh, through the aeons You have manifested Your selves, and our ancestors called You many names: Ereshkigal and Isis, Tiamat and Nut, Kore and Demeter, Inanna and Asherah, Brigid and Cerridwen, Erzeulie and Kwan-Yin, Hokmah and Shekinah, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth. We likened Your earth to our mothers, and Your skies to our wombs; we heard Your voices on the winds and Your call in our hearts. When the gods came with their patriarchies, we called You by new names and sought to tear You from the dark, but You would not forsake us in our ignorance. In the fullness of time, You sent a Messiah, who raised us up by descending like Inanna to the Great Below, casting down man-made idols and incarnating Your love by emptying out His male self. And when we could not understand Your miracle, You sent us Your spirit to be with us, teaching us to know You as You are.

Let us share the faith in Her mysteries:

ALL:
She changes everything she touches.
Everything she touches, changes.

L: As we share the gifts of Your earth and our heritage, we remember the sacrifice of the Messiah Jesus whom You sent to redeem us with his body and blood.

(The people share butter-cake and beer, asking as they serve one another, "Do you remember?")

L: Let us pray.
ALL:
We are the Circle. We are the Dance. We are Children of the Goddess. We are Children of the Earth. We are the Struggle. We are the Whole. We are the Goddess' "Yes" to the World. Sisters and Brothers, be Thou Blessed. Amen.

L: In you let all the peoples of the World be blessed. The Circle is open. Go now, taking her Peace and Wholeness into a shattered world. So mote it be!
P: So mote it be!

# PSALM-DRAMA:
## a one-act drama of the Voices of the Psalms

### THE PLAYERS

Book: all voices
Hymns: at least four voices
Laments: at least four voices
Leader: may be one of the above
Women's Voices: drawn from the company of Hymns and Laments

The Voices enter, and stand in a semi-circle, allowing individuals to step forward into groups or center as they speak, and back again. As they come in, they play cymbals, timbrels, pipes and harps (dulcimer or autoharps), and other appropriate instruments.

A Leader thumps the ground smartly three times with a staff.

Book: We are the Psalms.
We are the voices of Israel's Joy,
Home of Yahweh, who dwells in our praises,
Haven of humankind, who weeps our complaints.

Hymns: We are the songs of Israel's Praise:
We are the hymns. Of history, creation
we sing what we know:
Yahweh has made us. Yahweh has saved us.
Yahweh is coming. Yahweh will act.

Hymn Voice 1: We are Songs of Zion,
mountain and king!

Hymn Voice 2: We are Meditations
of Torah and Wisdom!

Hymn Voice 3: We are Enthronement!
we are Thanksgiving!

Hymn Voice 1: We say,
I will lift up mine eyes
unto the hills,
from whence cometh my strength!

Hymn Voice 2: We say,
Happy are those who walk in my Way!
Happy are those who sing my praise,
Praise of the Torah, Way of the Most High!

Hymn Voice 3: We say,
YHWH yimlok! The Lord ever reigns!
Let oppressors beware!
Let nature tremble!

Hymns: We are the voices of harp and timbrel,
sacrifice of sweet smells, grain,

first fruits, and oil,
blood of the innocents spilled on the ground.
We are the songs of Israel's Praise:
We are the hymns. Of history, creation
we sing what we know:
Yahweh has made us. Yahweh has saved us.
Yahweh is coming. Yahweh will act.

Hymn voice 1 & 4: We sing of creation; we sing every day.
We tell of God's essence, God's everyday acts.
We say,
God made the earth, and the fullness thereof!
Springs gush forth, and all life is watered.
How great are Thy works, O Maker of Life!

Hymn voice 2 & 3: We sing for the gathered!
We praise special days
in Salvation's history:
the times of the covenant,
the community's life, the glory of kings--
we tell how God made them!
let God ever reign!

Laments: We are laments, the soul's lamentations.
We are the ones who look on the Pit,
and come forth rejoicing.

Lament Voice 1: The cries of the lone one,

Laments: The calls of the gathered,
speak in our outcry: Let Yahweh act!
Invoking Redeemer, describing our plight,
we petition the Holy,
by piteous outcry.
We say,

Lament #1: The waters surround me,
they cover my neck!
In death no one praises--
Let Yahweh act!

Lament #2: We say,
life is too brief
to languish this way,
weeping by night,
gasping by day.
Let Yahweh act!

Lament #3: We say,
This is none of my doing,
but cruel enemy!
Let all evil loosened
be lifted from me,
turned back to the sorcerer!

God, deliver me!

Laments: We cry for the gathered,
the communal complaint,
to smoothe Yahweh's faces,...

Leader (an aside to the audience):
(Yahweh has many faces!)

Laments (continuing):
to soothe, motivate,
we say.

Laments #3 & 4: We are your people!
This is your king!
Did you not swear to David
by covenant of old?
Why don't you support us?
Evildoers be cursed!
Have we forgotten? Have we betrayed?
If we sinned, forgive us!
What else can we say?
What You did for our forebears
Do once more today!

Hymns (to the Laments):
You are nothing without us!
We soothe your cries,
encircling with praise.
From us you come, returning again
an endless spiral,
singing of change.

Laments (to the Hymns):
We are the greater. We do not deny
that praise shapes the outcry,
but we see the farther into the dark.
You play the poet; we wield the knife
as soul's physician. We speak of <u>all</u> life,
and not just the bright.
We know reversal from grieving to joy;
We end by thanksgiving: our God is so great!

Lament #1: I don't. I'm Psalm 88.

Laments (to Lament #1):
You are the exception
that tests the great rule
of God's people suffering:
Both ways are true.

Book: We are the Psalms.
We are the voices of Israel's Joy,
Home of Yahweh, who dwells in our praises,
Haven of humankind, who weeps ...

Women's Voices (breaking in and interrupting the Book chorus):
No, wait--there's more: Not everyone speaks!
Not everyone speaks!

We are the Psalter that isn't there:
Praise of the God/dess
whose body is Earth,
grief for the stillborn,
joy for the live birth,
curse for the rapist,
cure for the abused.
We are the Psalms that men never used,
our community silenced,
our singers made mute.
Until we have voices,
Psalms are not complete.
The unheard lament,
the unformed praise--
the Psalter must bear this all of its days.

Laments (to the Women):
Our Saving Reversal says,
"Sing a new song!"
What men said God accepted
cannot linger long,
if singers repent
and sound a full Psalter,
round, formed, filled and strong!

Book:
Hallelu-Yah! Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise her in her mighty firmament!
Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise her according to her exceeding greatness!
Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise her with lute and harp!
Praise him with timbrel and dance;
praise her with strings and pipe!
Praise him with sounding cymbals;
praise her with loud clashing cymbals!
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord! Hallelu-Yah!

## SALT WATER PURIFICATION

Equipment: pitcher, cup, salt

Background:

Salt is an important ritual item in the ancient world because it is uncreated, hence, a sign of God's presence; a preservative, and necessary for human health, and a purifier, used in oaths, hospitality blessings, and ritual cleansings. Jesus' statement that 'you are the salt of the earth' calls up some of these ideas.

A Mesopotamian ritual blessing shows the power of salt for cleansing and healing:

O Salt, created in a clean place,
for food of gods did Enlil* destine thee.
Without thee, no meal is set out in Ekur.
Without thee, god, king, lord and prince do not smell incense.
I am ....., the son of .....,
held captive by enchantment,
held in fever by bewitchment.
O Salt, break my enchantment! Loose my spell!
Take from me the bewitchment---
And as my Creator, I will extol thee!

(*the god of the sky)

This ritual is designed to conclude a personal lament (use as a salvation oracle, between the petition and doxology), to heal pain: present physical pains, past pain (memories), and future pain (fear and anxiety).

The people stand in a circle.

The Leader (or Helper) takes a cup to each person who adds salt from their own home (or other salt special to them) to the cup. The Leader says (and people repeat):

L: You are the salt of the earth.
P: I am the salt of the earth.

L: God has been with you from birth.
P: God has been with me from birth.

L: This is the salt of your life.
P: This is the salt of my life.

L: Your saltiness purifies strife.
P: My saltiness purifies strife.

The Leader adds water from a pitcher to the cup, saying: (The people or helpers may repeat the blessings).

The Lord who made the waters bless you!

(If more than one cup, use the following blessings):

(The Lord who treads the waters bless you!)
(The Lord who calms the waters bless you!)

Set the cup down in the midst of the folk, or pass from person to person if numbers are small. The leader says:

The salt is your experience, and the God who meets you in the midst of it. See all your pain flowing into the salt-water as a black stream of troubles. Picture it. As it hits the surface, see it dissolve as the God of the Salt and Water purifies your pain and loosens it.

The leader passes the salt water to each person, and they taste it, feeling their trouble dissolved by the saltiness. If more than one cup, return all water to the pitcher, and the people take hands. The leader says:

Jesus said, You are the salt of the earth. As you have tasted, the salt has not lost its saltiness. Go your way rejoicing, for your faith has made you whole!

The leader and people conclude with a suitable hymn or blessing. Dispose of the salt water in a living body of water (river, or drain with running water).

Adapted from Mother Wit, by Diane Mariechild, and Hittite Magical Practices, and the Bible.

## THANKSGIVING RITUALS

Equipment: incense, wine & cup, cereal, or earth in a bowl, Bible (musical instruments, first fruits, candles optional; for healing rituals, hyssop may be added to the cereal, or burnt)

Purpose: Thanksgiving rituals took place in ancient Israel to reintegrate the healed sufferer into the community (cf. Lev 14), or to give thanks for special blessings. As such, they constitute the "payment" of the vows made during Lament rituals. The following rituals may be done separately or together. (Tree of Life or Salt Water Rituals are appropriate before or after these thanksgivings.)

## THANKSGIVING FOR HEALING

Arrange a candle, cup, and bowl of cereal or earth on a table.

Light incense (and candles), and wave it around. (Musicians play).

Leader tells the purpose of the ritual.

The people read Psalm 107 responsively.

The Healed One ( or corporate representative) comes forward, pours wine in a cup, and reads Psalm 30 before the family, friends and poor.

The Healed One calls upon God by name, says what heorshe is thankful for, and pours some of the wine into the bowl of cereal, or upon the earth (this may also take place outside). Then the Healed One and people finish drinking the rest of the wine. (Others may wish to come forward and perform the same libation as the Healed One). If First fruits (i.e., apples, other edible munchies) have been brought, they are offered first to God, and then shared by the people.

The people conclude by reading Psalm 66 together.

The bowl of cereal or earth is spread upon the ground outside.

## THANKSGIVING FOR SPECIAL BLESSINGS

Arrange a candle, cup, and bowl of cereal or earth on a table.

Light incense (and candles), and wave it around. (Musicians play).

Leader tells the purpose of the ritual.

The people read Psalm 30 responsively, while the persons for whom the ritual is being done bring first fruits forward to the table.

The "thankers" call upon God by name, say what they are thankful for, and pour wine into the bowl of cereal or on the earth. The thankers then read Dt 26: 5b-10a ("A wandering Aramean was my father/mother....which Thou, O Lord, hast given me").

The people share the wine and fruit.

The people conclude by reading Psalm 65 together.

The bowl of cereal or earth is spread upon the ground outside.

## RITUAL EXECRATION OF INJUSTICE

Equipment: a clay pot, or breakable piece of crockery; a wall; Psalm 94

This ritual is an enactment of the way psalms of vengeance were used to break the psychic hold of enemies. Such psalms were based on the theological belief that God is always just, upholding the innocent and thwarting the wicked, and the folk idea that whatever psychic evil a person or group sent out could (and would) be turned back against them. Only God knows who the enemies really are, and who is really at fault, so the Psalmist protects himorherself by leaving the identity of the individual oppressor vague. Personal enemies were always anonymous, conceived of as having started the conflict unjustly, releasing demonic powers against the righteous, and behaving arrogantly before the God who is the Redeemer of the oppressed. The pattern of action is this: the Redeemer God is invoked, the plight of the innocent and the actions of the enemies are described, a ritual pot, inscribed with the enemy country, region, (or leader's name, in Egypt), was broken, and hymn of thanksgiving for God's deliverance from this evil was sung in conclusion.

## RITUAL EXECRETION

Explain the ritual.

Take a pot, and scratch on it "apartheid" and the names of the places where this injustice exists (South Africa, the West Bank, United States, etc.). Pass the pot among the people and let each person hold it, placing hisorher anger at the injustice inside the pot.

(Light incense, play musical instruments, and process with people out of doors, if appropriate).

Chant or read Psalm 94:1-11 responsively. (Feel free to give instructions for change to inclusive language).

A ritual helper (preferably a member of the oppressed group) throws the pot against the wall as hard as heorshe can, while everyone else stands back.

Leader: The power of Apartheid (or other injustice) is broken by your own hand!

Chant or read Psalm 94:12-23.

Process back inside. Be sure to explain that (1) participation in such a ritual binds the actors to engagement in ending the injustice named and (2) holds the actors responsible for any personal participation in the injustice named and (3) the broken pot is now "ritually unclean", should not be handled, and either left where it is to decompose, carefully buried, or disposed of in a body of living water. (You may also wish to point out that everyone cheered or shouted spontaneously when the pot was broken--i.e., ritual is situated in "lived" human responses).

# RITUAL BURIAL OF WOMANPAIN

Instructions:

This is designed as a group ritual with a Leader and Pilgrims, but may be modified to meet individual needs, in which case a woman takes both parts.

Each Pilgrim needs a small stone (or other significant item with which she does not mind parting: photos work nicely) charged with her grief or pain.

The Leader should have a set-up which permits the burial of these items (a pan with cat-litter, clay, or soil), a ritual tool for covering up the stones, and four old-style wooden clothespins or pegs (broken bamboo skewers, matches, etc. all work).

The Pilgrims stand in a circle, with the Leader at the North, with the set-up before her. Each Pilgrim stands silently, projecting her pain and grief into the stone/item she has brought for burial.

Leader:

(the Leader begins by explaining the ritual, giving some history of the Goddess' decent to the Underworld and Her triumphant return)

In the earliest recorded mythologies, it was the Goddess Inanna who first descended to the Underworld, died, and was returned to the world of the living. This was done by the

intercession to the gods by Her faithful maidservant Ninshubur who was both vizier and friend. These myths of decent reflect the earliest severing of the Great Goddess. The Mothergoddess of Sumer, called Ninhursag, Lady of the Mountain, became known as Ereshkigal, Queen of the Underworld or Great Below. The chthonic Mother was relegated to the realms of death by male theologians jealous of Her power over life, and Inanna, the Goddess of Love and War, became the female divine principle active in the world, legitimating the rule of invading Kings who became her lovers. This ritual recognizes the female principle at work in both death and life, and activates it for the healing of her daughters today.

Who knocks at the gate of the Great Below?
Who seeks an entrance to the Underworld?
Who knocks at the entrance of the Great Below?

Pilgrims (in unison):

Goddess! Our Mother!
Your daughter comes to bury her grief
In the Place from which no traveler returns.

(Each woman comes forward in turn, says the appropriate Naming, and places her stone in the set-up)

Pilgrim:

For ----- years I loved, til my heart's song was stilled.

(after all the women have buried their grief, the leader covers the stones with a ritual tool, and "nails" down the pain with four pegs, placed at the cardinal points, saying:)

Hear the words of Your Mother,
She who receives every pain and grief:
"O Daughters, bury your sorrow in me!
Commit your grief to the Great Below.
To the Land of the Living, return healed and whole,
The Peace of the Mother upon your brow."

(The Pilgrims and Leader kiss one another on the brow)

Going around the circle, each Pilgrim says:

Pilgrim:

The Mother has healed me! My name is ---------.

Pilgrim and Leader in unison:

We are the Daughters returned from the Death,
Healed of our grief in the cruel Great Below.
Praise to the Goddess, consuming our woe!
Praise to the Mother, Restorer of Health!

(The Leader later disposes of the set-up by burial in earth, living water, or garbage can without touching the contents.)

# INITIATION

(This Initiation for solo practice is designed for those who have none to initiate them into a group. It requires at least two women, a Sister and an Pilgrim, but if more wish to participate, have them take the various parts of the Sister)

Time: An appropriate festival (it need not be Candlemas)
Requirements: a cast circle, various items to correspond roughly to the ritual items carried by Inanna

# The Rite of Descent

(Cast a circle, in which the Sister stands)

**Sister:** (with a sword or knife pointed outwards)
Who comes to this gate?

**Pilgrim:** It is I, ---------- (her new or true name), child of earth and starry heaven.

**Sister:** Who speaks for you?

**Pilgrim:** ---------- (names of teachers, authors, absent friends, the Goddess) vouches for me.

**Sister:** You who stand on the threshold of the dread Mighty Ones, have you the courage to make the essay? For know that it is better to fall on my blade and perish than to make the attempt with fear in your heart!

**Pilgrim:** I enter the circle with perfect love and perfect trust.

(The Sister points her blade to the earth; the Pilgrim enters the Circle; the Sister embraces her; the Pilgrim kneels and the Sister blesses her, saying)

**Sister:** Blessed are your feet, that have brought you in these ways.
Blessed are your knees, that kneel at the sacred altar.
Blessed is your womb, without which we would not be.
Blessed are your breasts, formed in strength and beauty.
Blessed are your lips, which shall speak the sacred names.

Know that where you are going,
the Goddess has gone before;
You who would be her daughter
must go where She has gone.

Are you willing to make the descent?

**Pilgrim:** I am willing.

**Sister:** Are you willing to suffer to learn, perservering in the Craft?

**Pilgrim:** I am willing.

**Sister:** Are you willing to swear the oath?

**Pilgrim:** I am willing.

(The Pilgrim rises and the Sister then begins to read the liturgy below, while the Pilgrim performs the appropriate gestures indicated in the ritual enactment)

## THE DESCENT

From the Great Above she set her ear to the Great Below.
From the Great Above the Goddess set her ear to the Great Below.
From the Great Above Inanna set her ear to the Great Below.
My Lady abandoned heaven and earth to descend to the underworld.
Inanna abandoned heaven and earth to descend to the underworld.
She abandoned her office of holy priestess to descend to the underworld.

She placed the crown of the steppe upon her head.
She tied the lapis beads around her neck;
she let the strand of double-beads fall around her neck.
She wrapped the royal robe around her shining body.
She bound the breastplate called "Come, man! Come!" around her chest.
She slipped the gold ring over her wrist.
She took the lapis measuring rod and line in hand.

She spoke to her sister-vizier, Ninshubur, saying:

**Pilgrim:** Ninshubur, my constant support,
My sukkal who gives me wise advice,
My warrior who fights by my side,
I am descending to the kur, the underworld.
If I do not return, set up a lament for me by the ruins
Beat the drum for me in the assembly places.
Circle the houses of the gods.
Tear at your eyes, at your mouth, at your thighs;
Dress yourself in a single garment like a beggar.
Surely the Holy Ones will not let me die!

**Sister:** When Inanna arrived at the outer gates of the underworld,
she knocked loudly and fiercely cried:

**Pilgrim:** Open the door, Gatekeeper!
Open the door!
I alone would enter!

**Sister:** The gatekeeper of the Kur asked Inanna, "Who are you?"

**Pilgrim:** I am Inanna, Queen of Heaven, on my way to the East.

**Sister:** If you are truly Inanna, Queen of Heaven,
On your way to the East,

why has your heart led you on the road
from which no traveler returns?

**Pilgrim:** I seek my sister, the underworld's queen;
I have come to witness funeral rites,
I have come to learn why no one returns.

**Sister:** The gatekeeper opened the outer gate, and said to the Maid, "Come, Inanna, enter."
When she entered the first gate,
from her head the crown of the steppe was removed.
Inanna asked,

**Pilgrim:** What is this?

**Sister:** She was told,
Silence, Inanna! the ways of the underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

When she entered the second gate,
from her neck the lapis beads were removed.
Inanna asked,

**Pilgrim:** What is this?

**Sister:** She was told,
Silence, Inanna! the ways of the underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

When she entered the third gate,
from her breast the double strand of beads was removed.
Inanna asked,

**Pilgrim:** What is this?

**Sister:** She was told,
Silence, Inanna! the ways of the underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

When she entered the fourth gate,
from her chest the breastplate was removed.
Inanna asked,

**Pilgrim:** What is this?

**Sister:** She was told,
Silence, Inanna! the ways of the underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

When she entered the fifth gate,
from her wrist the gold ring was removed.
Inanna asked,

**Pilgrim:** What is this?

**Sister:** She was told,
Silence, Inanna! the ways of the underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

When she entered the sixth gate,
from her hand the lapis measuring rod and line was removed. Inanna asked,

**Pilgrim:** What is this?

**Sister:** She was told,
Silence, Inanna! the ways of the underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

When she entered the seventh gate,
from her body the royal robe was removed.
Inanna asked,

**Pilgrim:** What is this?

**Sister:** She was told,
Silence, Inanna! the ways of the underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

Naked and bowed low, Inanna entered the throne room.
She greeted her sister and the judges opf the Kur.
They passed judgment against her, and fastened on the eye of death.
Her body was hung on a hook on the wall.
After three days, Ninshubur cried out,
"Holy Ones, do not let Inanna die!"
After three days, Ninshubur brought her up.

She placed the crown of the steppe upon her head.
She tied the lapis beads around her neck;
she let the strand of double-beads fall around her neck.
She wrapped the royal robe around her shining body.
She bound the breastplate called "Come, man! Come!" around her chest.
She slipped the gold ring over her wrist.
She took the lapis measuring rod and line in hand.

Ninshubur asked,
My Lady, what have you learned
there in the Dark City, from which no one returns?
Inanna said,

**Pilgrim:** No one ascends from the underworld unmarked.
Any who return must leave something in their place.
This is the mark that shows what I have learned;
the blood of the marking I leave in my place.

This I have learned:

There is nothing below that is not found above.
There is nothing above that does not go below.
Life is the ending of Death, Death the beginning of Life;
nothing exists that cannot be transformed by Love.
This is what I learned in the Kur;
this is what I know.

**Sister:** If you would be Daughter of Inanna indeed, repeat after me,

I,----------, do of my own free will most solemnly swear to protect, help and defend all children of the Goddess.

I always will keep secret all that must not be revealed.

This do I swear on my mother's womb and my hopes of future lives, mindful that my measure has been taken in the presence of the Mighty Ones.

(The Pilgrim kneels, placing one hand one her head, and one hand beneath her heel, and says)

**Pilgrim:** All between my two hands belongs to the Goddess.

**Sister:** So mote it be! Blessed be ----------, Daughter of the Goddess! So mote it be!

(The Circle is opened. The women feast; the new Witch makes a gift to her Sister, which binds the initiation in secrecy.)

Adapted from : Starhawk, <u>The Spiral Dance</u>
Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer, <u>Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth</u>

# Psalter

"sing a new song"...

A Saving Wombhold
(sung to the tune of "A Mighty Fortress is Our God")

A saving wombhold is our God,
Encircling with Her self,
A moving Spirit, cleansing flame,
Great Source of every Health!
Some call Her "Father", call Her "Son",
Some call Her "Holy Ghost",
But those who love Her hidden side
Do worship Her the most.

Queen of Heaven, Queen of Earth,
Her ancient lore explains:
Mother, Sister, Spouse, and Child,
By means of Her kings reign.
Tall as Heaven, wide as earth,
To men She is all things;
Beyond all androcentric roles,
To women Self She brings.

Hierarchies tumble down
And patriarchies fall
When, gathered for the bread and wine,
The Faithful heed Her call.
The prophets did not know Her name,
Which Gospels never spoke,
Yet, hearing in this place and time,
Our outcry, She awoke.

She has no chapels, altars fine,
No treasure to divest,
But circling stones, Her simplest shrine,
Like joy, serve Her the best.
A wondrous wombhold is the God
Her messiah offers me:
Lord and Shekinah joined at last
In new epiphany!

women in the house of Wisdom
wonder, what table shall She set for us,
our Sister-Mother, who only seems to go after men?

a worst of enemies,
best of friends!
watch which way
the Bible bends
in the mind of one who believes:

slasher of breasts,
betrayers of wombs!
life of the woman
by man subsumed,
slamming its fist
into a face
already sliced
by class and race.

is this god indeed
god of the oppressed?
most gentle messiah,
protector of wives
from the violence
of limited lives?

which will it be?
are we forced to guess?
don't polish our chains,
pretending to bless!
Test, let the Living One stand free,
Lord of every liberty!

New Psalm 29

Glory and power to the unified Godhead!
    All tremble in joy at the One who Is!
The voice of Orde is upon the subwaves,
    the voice of my God upon many rumbling trains!
The voice of Orde is the sound of strength,
    the voice of Orde is a power for healing.
The voice of Orde breaks the habits of users,
    our God will break down the holds that oppress.
The redeemed shall sleep as ones having beds;
    the ransomed shall live in houses, and eat.
The voice of Orde makes social classes whirl,
    the voice of Orde turns all wealth upside down,
    and from safe shelter, streetpeople shout "Heavy!"
Orde is the power that restrains the cruel flood;
    Orde is the one who opens heart's floodgates!
Orde gives strength and hope to the homeless;
    Orde will bless the marginal with peace!

Personal Lament

Dear One, let me answer your call!
How long, Sweet, must I squander health,
and slay You in the bargain?
I support what I despise;
I've learned to walk straight on past lies,
as though treason to the self
were my solitary crime.
Oh, I smuggle babies into their bath,
find buried treasures in thercrap,
but whore for base survival,
and still my cabinets are bare.
Good fortune scents a traitor's lair,
and races past me every time.
Despair makes me her rival.
O lash me to Your turning Wheel;
let Fate revolve and do Your will,
that I may singly serve You.
Pray, grant me better vows to pay,
truer words to truly say--
then shall You see revival!

answer to a daughter in hell

my goddess says,
"Child, my love, o Child,
girl under patriarchy or woman of pain,
still in all my child remains
beneath the ashen experience.
Child of mine, I hear you;
never doubt that I am near you;
I have not forsaken; I do not forget;
you shall sleep at this bosom yet,
o darling child of mine.
Kore crying, I seek my own;
Korechild, I call you home.
I am bending low to deliver;
between the soul and her Caregiver
Hell shall not stand eternal fence.

## Local Blessings

Blessed are the poor,
   for they have gone into debt acquiring knowledge;
Blessed are the sick and the wounded,
   for they alone know the meaning of health;
Blessed are the women,
   for they have not been schooled for oppressing;
Blessed are the protesters,
   for theirs is the task of kingdom-bringing;
Blessed are the peoples of color,
   for they shall see apartheid fall;
Blessed are the men who repent,
   for their sins were taught them and shall be forgiven;
Blessed are the addicts,
   for Deity feels theirs hurts in person;
Blessed are the ones with AIDS,
   for they shall not see their planet destroyed;
Blessed are those who call God "She",
   for they shall see that it is so;
Blessed are those who love their own kind,
   for they know themselves in the image of God;
Blessed are the streetpeople,
   for on their account, God will execute judgement;
Blessed are those who say "no" to injustice,
   who challenge prejudice,
   and overturn iniquity,
for the world will never have enough of their kind.

O you Sky-Treader,
striding the starry aisles
of exiled goddesses
now preparing to invade,
enlisted by your justice,
in your glory-shine arrayed,
mighty hosts indeed!
against them ranged
all androlatry's theologies,
small and wholly dismayed,
wond'ring what price must be paid
to the awesome Lord of these Hosts

## A Formalist Psalm

Orde* is my Sender:
  I shall not stay,
Shehe transfers me from place to place:
  Shehe advances my Quest;
  Shehe formeth my goals.
And even though I struggle,
  am branded and return unknown,
I will fear no Villains,
For Thy Tale-role, and Thy functions,
  they comfort me!
Thou preparest a feast for me
  and unmasks my False Heroes;
  my marriage is resumed.
Surely Helpers and Donors shall follow me
  through all the functions of this Tale,
and Orde and I will be in it together,
  Forever.

*Where language fails, it must transcend itself. "Orde" (pronounced "Or-DAY") is linguistic encoding naming the Unified Godhead, who is both Lord and Goddess. It is the poetic form of Lordess.

Take your slave-faith,
  liberate it!
Set your songbirds
  singing free!
Let the strange fires
  light within you;
sense what She
  might possibly be...

  Call on Her as Being
  and She will Be called on;
  call on Her as Becoming
  and She will coming Be:

  She is far up and near away,
  All long gone and here to stay.

Let go, let go:
  the past is dead.
Let's go, let's go:
  it's just ahead!

  The simple truth:
  God offers godself

  infinitely
              in infinite
                          variety
   right here! right now!

Lordess,

my old god jostles the new,
  and they are One, yet separate:
I feel strange aching for the space to praise---
  it is a sore upon my soul:
is this another 'fad', short-lived--
  the afghan needles, the too-small loom,
or do I travel a widening path
  that only looks firm when I glance back,
  and is it the Path to You?
My old god is a shattered idol I renounce:
  the new makes a leisured epiphany,
while I lie, raw and bleeding, alone---
  or, perhaps, if one had new eyes to see,
  already divinely accompanied?

A Song For Enheduanna, Priestess of Inanna
and Poetess of Sumer

A Psalm of Inanna, Queen of the Me

O my Lady, sweet in wonder,
When You weep, the harvest fails,
and men know themselves mortal
and women hear Your wails.

You who wander after wisdom,
that You may rightly govern All,
though the godkings have displaced You,
Your daughters hear Your call.

O great Reagent of all Rhythms,
Your life beats in our womb;
Since You have gone before us,
~~Your~~ daughters need not fear the tomb.

You who quicken songs in women,
You are Yourself the Song
that ends silenced enslavement,
re-dressing Woman wronged.