

**OUR HOLY BOOK
HAS ALWAYS
BEEN OUR
FEMALE FLESH
AND BLOOD**

**Embodied Feminist Spirituality:
Women's Mysteries versus Gender-ism**

**by
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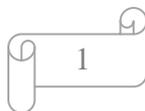
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With heartfelt thanks to Asha Oshun and Medea Wolfe, for your comments and contributing words, and with special appreciation to Falcon and Edna Myers for your insights, contributions, and hours of editing my original tome into something manageable. This keynote is dedicated to my Sisters, and to our daughters—present and future. May you know the power of female-sovereign spaces.

All proceeds from the sale of this booklet will be used to fund religious education of young women interested in studying our tradition.



INVOCATION TO FREE WOMEN

It wasn't very long ago in the early morning
I dreamt of women wild and free, of slavery unknowing
I awoke, I awoke to distant voices fading
The vision of what might have been
Dissolved in slumber's waning

Hecate, Hecate, Wise One of the Crossroads
Guide our path through darkest night
To the truth within us

It wasn't very long ago, my senses can remember
They tore the baby from the breast, and then refused to feed her
Crying, crying, through countless wars and plunder
They took our Goddess, and our lives, our bodies torn asunder

Kali, Kali, Queen of Storms and Rages
Pierce through lies of mind and heart
As we bring the changes

We have come and we were born to do our own myth making
To turn the tide and end the tears, long centuries of waiting
Turn again, turn again, turn again the stories
That rendered us invisible in history's pale glories

Gaia, Gaia, Mother of the Living
Heal our bodies, and our souls
Grant us new beginnings

Women come together to move in one direction
To stop the raping of the world and give the Earth protection
Rising, rising, the sacred woman soul
In us the present and the past, the future we unfold¹

*Against all odds we heard Her voice.
Against all odds we created in Her image.
Against all odds we began to love ourselves in spite of the dominant culture.
Like the blade of grass, the stubborn weed that finds its way through the concrete,
seeking the sun and rain, against all odds, it finds a way.
And so it was with so many of us, sisters, daughters of the Goddess, somehow,
against all odds, we found Her, and found ourselves.*

BEGINNINGS OF OUR WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY MOVEMENT

There was no Goddess movement to welcome us in the late 1960s. At that time, I was blessed to live in Los Angeles when a number of intersecting movements—second-wave feminism, folk and women's music, the civil rights movement, gay and lesbian liberation, goddess archaeology and research, ecology, and anti-war movements—combined in the cauldron for social change. The Women's Spirituality Movement was born from this fertile time, a social/spiritual movement where women began to search for and discover the Goddesses hidden within their own traditions. Los Angeles residents archaeologist Marija Gimbutas, poet Deena Metzger, witch writers Starhawk, Shekhinah Mountainwater, Z Budapest, Lhyv Oakwoman, and many others brewed that Mother's elixir of wisdom. These pioneering women, inspired by ancient Goddess heritages, began to speak and publish, to create art, music, dance, and song. By the mid-1970s, women were fleeing God the Father,² finding and falling in love with themselves and one another. New worlds were revealed, experienced, and claimed. These new worlds were based on a new paradigm: Earth as Mother, the female of the species as our primary reference for life; Goddess as the embodiment and symbolic metaphor for Life Herself.

From all points of origin, women began to recognize each other. We began to gather in groups. Some of our scholars, artists, and musicians began to explore the pre-Christian pagan roots of Western Europe, and became part of the pagan revival; some of us decided to reclaim the word 'witch' as a word of power. Some of us began to study what that actually means.

We became radical outlaws from patriarchal religions and social systems. Discovering that patriarchy had not always been the way of the world was profound. Our feminist scholars brought forward the truth that God the Father was a relatively new idea in human history compared to the millennia when religion and civilizations centered on female Creators. With eyes now open, we could no longer be lulled back to sleep ever again. To consider that God was a Woman was a life-changing paradigm shift.

These revelations inspired us to create miracles, 'miracle' meaning that against the odds a desire comes into being. They were contagious miracles, where one awakening seemed to spark another and another, until we found that we could recognize each another on the street, at work (even in disguise), at a women's consciousness raising group, or at a women's music festival.

We tore off our muzzles and found our voices. We shouted, screamed, sang, cried, and spoke hidden and unexpected wisdom together. We removed our blinders and saw beauty in all our wondrous diversity of color, shape, and size. We blessed our bodies. We gave offerings to the trees in gratitude that we were born female, and we showed one another our own reflection in the mirror of Venus. We dared to love Goddess, and in our circles we stood in our power as holy women, Her daughters. We began to envision how the world could heal and change.

We were called 'Satan's Daughters' by bible-thumping preachers as we leafleted on campuses against rape and violence against women and children. We were called 'man-haters' by men *and* women whenever we met in female-only circles, attending to our *own* needs. We marched and spearheaded societal changes that benefited the next generations of women. The women's consciousness raising groups of the 1970s gave rise to what younger generations now take for granted: Title IX (equal access to math, science, and physical education programs), domestic violence shelters for women, rape crisis centers, legal birth control. We explored our sexuality. Every day we challenged the narrow confines of gender, and demanded the freedom to live our lives on our own terms. We wanted a different world, and we still do.

Dianic witches and spiritual feminists began reclaiming, re-inventing, and recovering a lost herstory of goddess traditions. We learned that female life cycle rituals have been celebrated for tens of thousands of years. In the beginning, we did not consciously understand the power that was being released in us, and back into the world: a power to heal our very souls. We were reviving and creating a once and future goddess-centered³ culture, and we could not hide from our birthright as sacred beings, once we knew who we were. Nor could we hide from our responsibility to Mother Earth. We felt that we were coming home, returning to Goddess as the center of the universe and our lives. We created sacred spaces of female sovereignty for our gatherings and rituals: to experience and affirm ourselves as sacred; to discover who we are if we challenge our socialization; to imagine who we could become.

We never claimed to be practicing goddess religion in exactly the same ways that earlier peoples did. Still, the scarlet thread linking us to our ancient goddess past grew, pulsating with energy, into a sacred lifeline, inspiring, weaving our intuitive knowings forward, into our creativity and activism.

DIANA, DIANIC TRADITION, AND WOMEN'S MYSTERIES

The feminist Dianic tradition of witchcraft is named after Diana, Roman goddess of hunting, wild nature, and the moon. Her Greek predecessor was Artemis, the soul of wild nature, Lady of the Beasts, midwife to birthing females, and goddess of the Amazons. Diana, *Dia Anna*, meaning 'Nurturer Who Does Not Bear Young,' is the central mythic theme of Dianic cosmology. She is guardian and protector of women, girls, and the untamed spirit of nature. She is the Holy Archer, the one who can focus Her passion and will to direct and release energy toward her goals. While Diana does have a triple aspect, it is as Virgin Huntress that She guides Her daughters to wholeness. She is virgin in the ancient meaning of 'She Who Is Whole Unto Herself.'⁴ Being a virgin was not attached to a sexual act with a man. 'Virgin' described a young unmarried woman who, like Diana, was autonomous, and who belonged solely to herself. Self-possessed. From the dawn of the feminist spirituality movement, as protector of women and nature, Diana became a role model and symbol for female sovereignty, feminist activism, and a woman's right to live freely, walking in the world whole and complete.

Dianic witches recognize that it is within our own power to restore meaning to our lives by honoring the rites of passage we call Women's Mysteries. 'Mystery,' in this context, is truth that can be known only through embodied experience. We recognize that our daily experience is filtered through our female bodies, our specific female physiology, and how our attitudes about the female body are affected by gender socialization. Dianic tradition is a Women's Mysteries ritual tradition practiced in female-only circles. Female body knowing cannot be bought, captured or compartmentalized. Women's Mysteries are experiences from which deep wisdom emerges from personal revelatory experience.

In our rituals we celebrate these specifically female rites of passage. We seek to reclaim and restore meaning to what is naturally our own: our bodies, our wisdom, our intuition, and our power. We honor our uterine blood, and honor women's potential and ability to create, sustain, and protect life. We return to the Goddess in death. The circle of womanhood is the very circle of life itself, for it is upon our sacred womb blood, the generative gift that is passed from mother to daughter, that human life depends. Only females bring forth life.

Within the last ten years, the Red Tent Movement has emerged. Red Tent Temples and Moon Lodges⁵ provide physical locations, sacred spaces, for women and girls to celebrate womanhood and specifically female rites of passage. Without these spaces and others to counter our cultural inheritance, unexamined female body hatred and self-hatred continue as *the invisible obvious*.⁶

Dianic rites center on the ritualizing of female body; healing and revelatory experiences are made possible through the unification of our entire system of body,

mind, and spirit. Rituals that include intuitive movement, dancing, chanting, drumming, and sounding can integrate meaning and facilitate healing at a deep level, especially when they are utilized with a clear understanding of the ritual's purpose. Meaning is created and internalized from the interaction between the women participating and what is revealed within the experience itself.

Dianic seasonal rituals celebrate the mythic cycle of the Goddess exclusively in the earth's seasonal cycles of birth, death and regeneration, and how Her cycle corresponds with the human female life-cycle. Each phase of women's lives, from childhood to becoming an elder, is equally honored in its season. Other rituals focus on personal healing, global healing, and environmental concerns, with a deep commitment to end patriarchal oppression of women and their children.

Wiccan cosmology and rituals are usually based on a dualism of the Goddess and her male consort. But for Dianics, our primary reference for life is symbolically, metaphorically, and literally female. When Dianics say 'Goddess,' we are saying that life is interdependent and whole. The Goddess is all the seen and unseen forces, and like gravity, She holds us to Her in an eternal embrace. All things are birthed from Her and must return to Her. The Goddess doesn't *think* things into being, She *births* into being. Known by many names throughout time and places, She is a 'hands on' Creator that is Creation Herself. For many Dianics, the Goddess is not a specific entity but the web of life Herself. We use female imagery and pronouns as metaphors to speak of this. When we address Goddess, we are addressing the whole web of life and acknowledging our part within the web at the same time.

FEMALE-SOVEREIGN SPACE

We created what I like to call female-sovereign spaces, sovereign meaning “having independent authority, the right to govern itself, unlimited power or authority, possessed of supreme power, enjoying autonomy.”⁷ Why? As feminist writer Kay Leigh Hagan puts it,

“...relief from constant exposure to men and male needs is necessary for a woman to perceive the depth of her innate female power, which she is conditioned to ignore, deny, destroy, or sacrifice. Time spent alone and in consciously constructed women-only space allows a woman to explore aspects of herself that cannot surface in the company of men.”⁸

Patricia McFadden, a radical African feminist/scholar, writes,

“...we have learnt along the long road of our struggle for freedom, that

compromising only takes us back even further than where we started. So we must hold on to our spaces because they are the only living spaces that we have and can own as women in these deeply woman-hating, patriarchal societies we continue to live in at the present time.”⁹

In ancient times, women’s exclusive gatherings were recognized as vital for the good of the greater community. We still gather to share stories of survival and courage, and to celebrate our lives. Prioritizing female-sovereign space, whether in ritual or daily life, confirms female identity and gives us tangible experiences of creating female-centered non-patriarchal reality. It is from these experiences we know that it is possible to create a different world. We have tasted it.

SEX AND GENDER

Forty-five years ago, no one recognized that the social movements of that time were converging in sacred synergy. At that time, few of us clearly understood the difference in meaning between the words *sex* and *gender*, but we knew that what we *could* do was not the same as what we were told we *should* do. Newspaper ads told us which jobs were for men and which were for women. Television promoted doting and disempowered housewives as our role models. Many of us felt that 'if this is what I’m supposed to want, there must be something wrong with me,' or 'if that is what it is to be a woman, I want no part of being a woman!' Then second-wave feminists in great numbers started challenging gender stereotypes, playing sports and taking advanced degrees. Tenacious women, beginning to enter trades occupied exclusively by men, were regular recipients of hostility and violence.

The words *sex* and *gender* are not equivalent words, and not at all interchangeable. *Sex* is the word that refers to the body, a set of biological attributes in humans and animals; our physicality internally and externally. Sexual anatomical and physiological features come from DNA—the chromosomes and genes that are present in every cell of an organism. In terms of biology, a woman is an adult human female and a girl is a pre-pubescent human female.

In contrast, *gender* is a socially-agreed-upon mental concept which puts human characteristics into gender categories called masculine or feminine, and decides which characteristics are assigned to each sex, attributes like strength, gentleness, and so on. These characteristics are then culturally and socially enforced *as natural*. Deviations are condemned as unnatural and indeed dangerous to the culture. Gender socialization influences how people perceive themselves and each other, how they act and interact, and how power and resources are distributed in society. It becomes obvious that gender socialization is a tool of patriarchy when

these supposed natural qualities have to be enforced. So when a woman breaks a boundary (or sets one), she must be punished, lest patriarchy fall.

Given access to reproductive choices, being female becomes less about biological destiny (must get pregnant, have kids, and so on), STILL, being a female person matters socially, and is the filter for every experience we have as a living being. Femaleness matters because it pervades the reality we live in. Being a girl or woman in this society, in this body, sculpts our experience. In a dualistic patriarchal gender model, women and girls are ranked as inferior to men and boys. This model affirms as natural the innate superiority of the male sex, and the inferiority of the female sex, upholding their desired categories as real and unchangeable.

As a girl child, born myself in the mid 1950s, I experienced gender roles for women and girls as very, very, narrow. At that time, being a girl meant after a certain age not climbing trees or playing hard any more like my two brothers did, and being encouraged to play with dolls that I hated. Like many of you here, I didn't fit into the box. My childhood friends were boys. I loved playing capture the flag, and investigating the neighborhood as a private eye who wrote down the license plates of 'suspicious looking cars' just in case a policeman asked me to help out on a case.

'Acting like a girl' was boring and stifling, and I would have none of it. It concerned my wonderful progressive-thinking mother when I said that I didn't want to be a girl; she was advised by a child psychologist to take me to a beauty parlor and later to charm school. Needless to say, I was a charm school drop-out, but I did learn some very important skills, like how to get into a car without opening my legs and how to light a cigarette against the wind.

Had I been able to just simply be myself, without feminine gender stereotypes enforced from every direction, I would have been a free person. Gender oppression tried to kill my wildness and limit my personal freedom. Little did I know that the goddess Artemis was waiting for me in the forest of myth to help me get back to myself. I was a perfect girl child all along. Being a girl was not the problem. What was wrong was this thing called gender. What was wrong were the strictures of culture and its unrelenting institutions of enforcement.

To be female meant being dominated, paid less, valued less, and continually vulnerable to sexual and physical violence. I was not born hating myself. Hatred of our female bodies is learned starting in girlhood, driven by the constant messages that we are either too much or not enough (fill in the blank). All too often, the overt and covert messages are that we are unlovable, wrong, and need improvement are financed by those who offer to fix us, the cut-and-paste cosmetic surgeons and the pharmaceutical companies. How can we even begin to separate female self-hatred

from cultural contempt for you, your mother, grandmother, your daughters and granddaughters? How can we think for one second that there is no connection?

I challenge all of us to explore further this feeling that being female is wrong, side by side with the pandemic of female self-hatred, body hatred, and violence against women. I wonder why so many women line up to support this outdated gender dichotomy, the inheritance of 5000 years of misogyny. Healing from this pervasive all-must-fit-one-size paradigm is an important aspect of goddess spirituality. We celebrate our diverse beauty, no matter what age, size, or color we are. We don't cut off our toes or heels so we can fit into Cinderella's glass slipper. Had I been raised by Scythian Amazons in a matrifocal culture, I would have been raised thinking that becoming a woman meant to know how to be a capable warrior, hunter, and horsewoman, a weaver of cloth, a gatherer of herbs, a strong, brave nurturer and protector of the young.

I share these personal stories to illustrate why I am not a gender-ist. A gender-ist is someone who is convinced that socially constructed gender roles should be tied to one's physical sex. As I got older, becoming a feminist meant joining with other women who also wanted to kick the concept of gender and gender stereotypes to the curb. We became a movement to free ourselves from sexist institutionalized shackles, whether imposed from within ourselves or without, to become free and express our femaleness anyway that we choose.

THE POWER OF NAMING

I've been baffled why progressives, especially young women, compliantly deny the sacredness of their own female bodies and deny the importance of female sovereignty and female-defined identity. Why are many women so quick to accept males into female-sovereign spaces that their mother's generation struggled to achieve? How it is that for many women being contemptuously re-named and re-defined by males has been so easily accepted? My wife Falcon responded, "We have been colonized for so long. We must re-gain our sovereignty." Yes. As women who have lived with threats of physical and sexual violence over generations, we don't even know that we're colonized, and don't know who we would be without it. Without a sense of ourselves, there's no one to defend, no sense of worth, no consciousness of a self apart from how the dominant culture defines us. We are distanced from our experience of sovereignty. Why else would so many of us apathetically agree when we are told that the lived reality of our own bodies is less important than the concept of gender? How can the lived experience of girlhood and becoming a woman possibly be reduced to a thought or idea?

In male-centered religions, this colonization begins with their creation myths. Cultures influenced by religions based on the second story of Genesis

inherit the foundational teaching of how “in the beginning” the Hebrew God Yahweh gives Adam the power to NAME all the creatures of the earth, including the first woman. Adam names the female Eve, which in Hebrew is Chava, meaning Mother of the Living. Her name in Hebrew still contains her true identity and essence—She is the Goddess, the Mother of Life. Still, Adam, as the first man, is given the power by God to name her, and thus given power over the woman, and given the power to define the very nature of woman. From this myth we can source the patriarchal hierarchy of the nuclear family that continues to the present time. The male's naming of the female is intentional and significant. The woman does not name, and thus define, herself. Her nature is literally man-made.

In Alice Walker's essay, *Becoming What We're Called*,¹⁰ Walker discusses her objections to the words 'you guys,' the supposed all-inclusive term for addressing males and females, and considered gender-free, though the word 'guy' is not. She comments about how she feels “when the word is used by men referring to women, and by women referring to themselves.” She sees in its use “some women's obsequious need to be accepted at any cost, even at the cost of erasing their own femaleness, and that of other women. Isn't it at least ironic that after so many years of struggle for women's liberation, women should end up calling themselves such?...The magical power of naming is that people often become what they are called.”¹¹

In 1998, feminist theologian Mary Daly wrote about words and naming what she called *The Taming of Feminist Genius by Academientia*,

“The toning down/turning out of Female Creative Genius in academia/academientia, particularly in the 1990's, is an atrocity that requires attention. Nothing less than the spiritual/intellectual life of women is at stake.

“Specifically, the taming of women's thinking by much that parades as “feminist theory” undermines Female Elemental integrity and power. One manifestation of this is the intrusive and con-fusing imposition of “gender” jargon by “postmodern feminists.” For example, some insist that the word women is “essentialist” and should be replaced by constructs such as “persons gendered as feminine.” ...

“For one who takes such a construct as “persons gendered as feminine” seriously enough to examine it, important questions surely would include, “What does ‘feminine’ mean?” and especially ‘Gendered’ by whom? But the theorist who use such constructs have shown clearly no interest in Naming agents. In fact, they hide agents, especially when these are male oppressors.... We did not foresee the invasion of Feminist theory by minions of post-modern masters.”¹²

I am a witch. Speaking as a witch, the ability to name something or someone is the power to define its very nature. To know, name, and speak the true name of something is to possess the spiritual 'handle' with which the speaker can control or influence that thing. To the magical practitioner, the name we call something is both a symbol and energetic container for the *essence* of that thing. I want to make the connection between the power of naming in magick, and what has been done when the power to name ourselves has been stolen from us. What happens when socially constructed language is applied to the lived, embodied female experience?

Critical thinking is essential to know when and how you are being manipulated so that *you* can choose how your reality is being framed. Otherwise, what you believe is your reality will be created for you, without your knowledge or consent, through language carefully constructed to shape your perceptions. Suddenly (or gradually) you may find yourself being influenced and using specific words to describe a reality or values that you may not actually agree with.

There is a science to using language to shape perceptions. George Lakoff, a cognitive scientist and linguist, explains, “Framing is about getting language that fits your worldview. It is not just language. The ideas are primary—and the language carries those ideas, evokes those ideas.”¹³ The selection of metaphors used to describe ideas draws the listener into the speaker’s worldview. The language used picks out a frame, and words are defined relative to that frame. If you oppose a worldview yet use its language to discuss your view, you are actually evoking the frame that you are opposing. Lakoff’s example: former president Richard Nixon “stood before the nation and said, ‘I am not a crook.’ And everybody thought about him as a crook. This gives us a basic principle of framing, for when you are arguing against the other side: Do not use their language. Their language picks out a frame—and it may not be the frame you want.”¹⁴ When you have a frame, you can only accept facts that fit that frame.

In the 1970s and 1980s when spiritual feminists began to re-name ourselves and re-define ourselves outside of the gender oppression of patriarchal culture and religions, we re-framed ourselves. We experienced this heresy as 'giving birth to ourselves and each other.' We took ourselves BACK, entering the mystery of self-discovery—if we could eradicate our generational inheritance of internalized oppression, who might we be? What would the possibilities for authentic expression be with our invisible cages removed?

Unfortunately today there are new words being used to name us without our permission and against our will. In her blog, a woman who goes by 'uppitybiscuit' wrote indignantly about this. Here are some excerpts:

“Do not call me cisgender. You have no right or authority to name me without my consent. Cisgender is not a name or identity that females, women

as a class, have chosen for ourselves.

Women have not agreed to be named by others, as has been done to us through history, being named, identified and defined by others.

You do not get to name me without my permission.

I name myself. The names and words I use include female, woman, her, she, wimmin, womyn. You have permission to use those words when addressing or referring to me.

You do not have the permission to call me names you have created for me against my will and demand that I own them as mine.

I get to name me. You do not get to name me. You are not allowed to re-classify me according to what language suits your needs.

I am not less than or owned by you as property for you to name as you see fit.

Through your privileged position over me, you presume to re-name me.

I am a full human, a female, a woman; I am refusing to be renamed.

I am what I name myself.

I name me female, woman and myself. ^{»15}

The term 'cisgender' to redefine female is a frame, designed to derail and diminish women. It is a misogynist term. As a radical feminist I *name* 'patriarchy' wherever and whenever I recognize it operating. WE CAN'T FIGHT WHAT WE CAN'T NAME.

Throughout this keynote I have and will continue to use language that frames my values. I value girls and women. I value the awesome ability of the female body to bleed monthly without dying, to create and bring forth life (we make people!), nourish and sustain our infants from our breast milk, and all the other life cycle passages that accompany the female body. I value female creative intelligence. I value freedom for all women and girls to live in a world safe from male violence. I value full equality and access to resources for all people on this Earth, mothers and their children. I value our home planet, and all Her creatures. I value the time spent sharing stories with my sisters who share similar experiences, and I claim my right to name myself, my reality, sourced from my body and my lived female experiences, as *female sovereignty*. This is my birthright. And yours.

SEX AND SEX DIFFERENCES

The sex of our bodies is a reality. We live in a world where male, female, and intersex human beings exist. While sex categories are part of any human society, patriarchal culture took sex differences and ascribed rigid gender norms

that suited their cultural and religious agenda for the domination and subordination of women. In patriarchy, sex differences, like everything else, are ranked. The female sex is ranked 'less than' males, enforcing inequality.

The suffragists accepted the idea of ranking, advancing women's superior moral standards as a justification for including women in political life. But since the 1970s, feminism in general has promoted and defended minimizing sex differences, as the platform upon which to give women equal rights and to demand equal pay for equal work. If these feminists had attempted to assert that they were different from men, the patriarchal system of ranking differences would have ensured that any differences women claimed would have been used to 'prove' women's inferiority. So eventually, though starting from different places, the dominant culture and feminism joined together to *frame* the view that other than breasts, genitalia, and hormones, women and men are basically the same.

Just because dominator cultures for centuries have used sex differences and gender stereotypes to oppress us, must we also continue to oppress ourselves by perpetuating unexamined misogyny and deny our differences that may actually be sacred gifts? Different but equal is not possible in the dominant patriarchal culture we live in. Honoring our biological differences doesn't inherently mean we must uphold patriarchal gender stereotypes. We need to create something different.

How important are sex differences really? How *do* sex differences affect male and female reality? And why do I think this information is important to share with you? Like yourselves and everyone else until two decades ago, I assumed that the only differences between males and females were our hormones and reproductive organs. However, in a 2001 publication by the Committee on Understanding the Biology of Sex and Gender Differences of the Institute of Medicine, the researchers noted that for the past 2,000 years the female human body has not been studied, except for the female reproductive organs—medical studies and research had assumed that women are simply smaller men. “We now have the beginning studies on just how different we actually are, and how these differences make life and death impact on how diseases are diagnosed and treated.”¹⁶ The study focused its work on sex differences in non-reproductive areas of biology, finding that sex differences occur at the molecular level, in all individual cells, in organs, in every organ system, and in the brain. The committee concluded, “Sex does matter. It matters in ways in which we did not expect. Undoubtedly, it also matters in ways that we have not begun to imagine.”¹⁷

Research confirms there are numerous differences between female and male physiology. There are differences in immune function; in symptoms, type, and onset of cardiovascular disease (not solely related to hormones);¹⁸ in response to toxins, brain organization, and sensitivity to pain.¹⁹

Some examples: According to a Swedish study, for men crossword puzzles helps prevent dementia and for women, relationships do. Also, all adrenal glands under stress secrete cortisol and adrenalin, but in males the chemicals trigger a 'fight or flight' response to stress. Females react differently. Female bodies secrete oxytocin, a hormone that counters the damaging effects of the cortisol. The oxytocin prompts a response that some researchers have called the 'tend and befriend' impulse. Females tend to connect with others in stressful situations. It is actually unhealthy for women not to have close female friends, or not to spend time exclusively with other women. Oxytocin is also the chemical that induces labor contractions and helps release breast milk; "its evolutionary role may be to bond parents to children and to a mate long enough for the child to survive."²⁰ These are some of the biological reasons that females tend to be, as women's spirituality foremother Charlene Spretnak has described, profoundly relational.²¹ Also, brain organization researchers have discovered is that it's "possible for males and females to go about doing a task by different routes, but coming to the same result."²²

The sexes have differences well beyond penises or vaginas. I am proposing that *all* of our sex differences as females contribute to our Mysteries, with influences well beyond reproductive function. Science is just catching up to what we already know.

XX

Natalie Angier's research in her book, *Woman: An Intimate Geography*, confirms that, "In the basic biological sense, the female is the physical prototype for an effective living being. Fetuses are pretty much primed to become female unless the female program is disrupted by gestational exposure to androgens."²³ The Institute of Medicine study describes how our sex begins in the womb, and how the female is the primal matrix:

"All human individuals—whether they have an XX, an XY, or an atypical sex chromosome combination—begin development from the same starting point. During early development the gonads of the fetus remain undifferentiated; that is, all fetal genitalia are the same and are phenotypically female. After approximately 6 to 7 weeks of gestation, if the fetus is male, the expression of a gene on the Y chromosome induces changes that result in the development of the testes. In contrast, fetal ovarian secretions are not required for female sex differentiation."²⁴

David Crews, of the University of Texas, describes the female as “the ancestral sex, while the male is the derived sex.”²⁵

Angier writes, “...eggs are inherently female. So in thinking about mirrors into infinity, the link between mother and daughter, the nesting of eggs within woman within eggs, we can go a step further and see the continuity of the chromosomes. No maleness tints any part of us gals, no, not a molar drop or quantum.”²⁶ There is no maleness in us, literally, and the culturally ascribed gender categories of *masculine* and *feminine* are clearly invented. Thus, females have no 'masculine' side, as Freud or Jung would have us believe. This is just patriarchal gender jargon within a patriarchal frame.

If you are female, you have XX chromosomes in every cell. This is reality, a fact, not an opinion, not a theory, not a feeling.

VAGINA

Naomi Wolf, author of the cultural classic *The Beauty Myth*, started exploring the science behind the vastly misunderstood body-mind connection between brain and genitalia, consciousness and sexuality, the poetic and the scientific. In her book *Vagina: A New Biography*, Wolf points out, “The medical meaning of vagina is just the vaginal opening, one of many inadequate words related to this subject. We have no single word for the entire female sex organ, from labia to clitoris, to cervix.”²⁷ Here, we'll use *vagina* for *all* of the parts.

What emerges is a revelation of how profoundly a woman's bodily experience influences nearly every aspect of her life, from stress to creativity, through the intricate weavings that link biology and being. Wolf writes,

“Female sexual pleasure, rightly understood, is not just about sexuality, or just about pleasure. It serves, also, as a medium of female self-knowledge and hopefulness; female creativity and courage; female focus and initiative; female bliss and transcendence; and as medium of a sensibility that feels very much like freedom. To understand the vagina properly is to realize that it is not only coextensive with the female brain, but is also, essentially, part of the female soul.”

“Once one understands what scientists at the most advanced laboratories and clinics around the world are confirming—that the vagina and the brain are essentially one network, or “one whole system,” as they tend to put it, and that the vagina mediates female confidence, creativity, and sense of transcendence—the answers to many of these seeming mysteries fall into place—nature constructed a profound difference between the sexes, which

places women, potentially, a position of greater biochemical empowerment than men, through the medium of satisfying sexual activity.”²⁸

A pivotal player in this mediation is the female pelvic nerve—a sort of information superhighway that branches out from the base of the spinal cord to the cervix, connecting the latter to the brain and thus controlling much of sexual response. But this information superhighway is really more like a superlabyrinth, the architecture of which differs enormously from one woman to another, and is completely unique for each woman. No two women are alike! This sexual neural complexity in women is because we have both reproductive and sexual parts, such as the cervix and uterus, that men don’t have.²⁹ Some women’s nerves branch more in the vagina; “some branch a great deal in the perineum, or at the mouth of the cervix.”³⁰ other women’s nerves branch more in the clitoris. The clitoris itself is a bundle of 8,000 nerve fibers.³¹ Nowhere else on the body is there a higher concentration of nerve fibers. This includes the fingertips, lips, and tongue, and twice the number than in the penis. The clitoris is designed exclusively for a woman’s pleasure. Angier writes of the clitoris, “Its fetal growth is complete by the twenty-seventh week of gestation, at which point it looks like what it will look like on the girl once she’s born.”³² “It will not atrophy after menopause, the way the vagina can. It will always be there for you.”³³ This diversity of wiring in the highly complex female pelvic neural network helps explain why women have wildly different triggers for orgasm. These differences are physical.

As new studies on female biology show, the well-treated vagina and sexual pleasure can be gateways to female creativity, boost confidence levels and self-love, lead women to see more clearly the connections between things, and make women hard to push around easily.³⁴ New studies by researcher Janniko Georgiadis and his team, using MRIs to study female orgasm and the brain, showed that as a woman approaches closer and closer to orgasm, her brain centers for behavior regulation become deactivated. She can enter a deep trance state, more deeply than at any other time, becoming biochemically like a wild woman or maenad. This same science reveals that due to more female production of dopamine during the sexual experience, women can be more like mystics than men are.³⁵ It is through this sexually-induced trance state that women awake and engage with “profoundly important dimensions of her own soul.”³⁶

Recent neuroscience is confirming what Tantra has always maintained—and what the loss-of-self scenes in women’s greatest fictions hint at: climaxing women go into a trance state that is different from men’s experience of orgasm. In studies looking at “MRI images of women’s brains exploding in rainbow spots of color at the moment of orgasm...in different places in the brain than the researchers had expected...was an image of breakthrough science...the first account of brain

regions involved in experience of clitoral stimulation.”³⁷ It turns out that female orgasm is experienced in the ventral midbrain—which is exactly where the Tantric 'third eye' is supposed to extend into, and also where the dopaminic cell group is located.³⁸ This same cell group in the female ventral midbrain “plays a wide range of rewarding behaviors, including euphoric states induced by drugs, pleasurable music, and eating chocolate.”³⁹

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

While female-sovereign spaces are being bullied out of existence, 'boy'cotted, made illegal, or are otherwise under attack here in the United States, around the world the statistics of violence, sexual and otherwise, against women and girls is rising. I can't help wondering, could there be a connection?

Just as a woman's well-treated vagina and sexual pleasure seem to be connected to female creativity and confidence through the physical vagina/brain connection, studies also show that sexually abusing a woman's vagina also injures her brain. Natalie Wolf writes, “...if your goal is to break a woman psychologically, *it is efficient to do violence to her vagina*. You will break her faster and more thoroughly than if you simply beat her—because of the vulnerability of the vagina as a mediator of consciousness. Trauma to a woman's vagina imprints deeply on the female brain, conditioning and influencing the rest of her body and mind...Rape as part of the standard toolkit in the deployment of genocidal army tactics is a strategy of *actual physical and psychological control of women*, traumatizing via the vagina as a way to imprint the consequences of trauma on the female brain.”⁴⁰

Research also shows that the metaphors we use to describe ourselves, our experiences, our worldview, and the language we use to describe others actually becomes hardwired in our brains. Research shows that “the modern connection between *cunt* and *disgusting, stupid, or hateful*—or when women are reduced to just *cunts*”⁴¹ is not just a cultural take on our vaginas, but also rewires women's brains. When a woman hears about her vagina as a 'gash' or a 'slit' all her life, or if she experiences hostile environments at work or school where verbal abuse in the form of jokes, images, or implied threats related to vaginas are socially acceptable, these tactics can actually undermine her intellectual creativity and ability to be productive. Whereas if she hears vaginas described, for example, as 'the jade gate,' her brain shapes itself and her perceptions around that sensibility.⁴² A list of other terms for the vagina from other cultures include Golden Lotus, Scented Flower, Gates of Paradise, Precious Pearl, Mysterious Valley, Grotto of the White Tiger, Treasure, and Lotus of Her Wisdom. Not surprising to goddess scholars and practitioners, ancient origins of the word, *cunt*, have positive, sacred meanings, or

a term of great respect, including linguistically the convergence of *mother* and *knowledge*.⁴³ This ancient holy word is far cry from what is arguably Western tradition's most offensive and censored swearword in the English language.⁴⁴ The power of naming and the metaphors we use to describe ourselves create profound realities. How different would *your* self-perception be if these words honored your female sexuality?

Metaphors matter. In his book *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff writes,

“You don't have a choice as to whether to think metaphorically. Because metaphorical maps are part of our brains, we will think and speak metaphorically whether we want to or not. Since the mechanism of metaphor is largely unconscious, we think and speak metaphorically, whether we know it or not. Further, since our brains are embodied, our metaphors will reflect our commonplace experiences in the world. ...the metaphors we use are shaped and constrained by our bodily experiences in the world.

“Since conceptual metaphor is a natural part of human thought, and linguistic metaphor is a natural part of human language, which metaphors we have and what they mean depend on the nature of our bodies, our interactions in the physical environment, and our social and cultural practices.”⁴⁵

Given all the differences between female and male bodies, a female-affirming reality and the metaphors of our lived reality must be different as well.

HOME

I've been thinking about the implications of what it means when women say, 'I want to live in my body' or 'I want to get back in touch with my body' or 'I need to get out of my head'. They seem to think their consciousness exists independent of their brain. However, a brain is an organ just like a heart, a lung, or a uterus. Some believe that it is more evolved or spiritual to 'transcend' the body. To me, this is residue from patriarchal religions that rank our female bodies as less holy than God or Spirit. Even brilliant Christiane Northrup, author of *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*, exemplifies this disconnect as she writes, “In order to 're-enter' your body you have to experience it.”⁴⁶ What does it mean to 're-enter' your body, when it is impossible to leave it except in death? We don't live as independent heads bobbing suspended in the air. The language we use is dissociative and perpetuates this disconnect. The truth is that there is no separation. *The language we use, and how we use it, actually gives form to the perception of disconnection.*

So when did this disconnection of body/mind begin? Before the onslaught of patriarchy, the female body was revered as the very image of the Goddess.

Coming from the values and cosmology of She Who Is Whole Unto Herself, my body is my home, sovereign and holy. I have lived here since the moment of my conception inside my mother's body, my mother's 'home'. Why is it that so many women do not choose to consciously experience their own physicality, their own 'home'? If you are not living inside your body, where are you living? And who has taken up residence inside you in your absence? Whose stories do you believe? And whose agenda does that serve? If you are divided from your body, you are divided against yourself. You are homeless in the most dire sense of the word.

I want to ask every woman:

When did you leave home? Why did you leave?

Do you ever come home to visit? How long do you stay?

What would happen if you returned to stay?

What would it take for you to come home for good?

DANCING

My favorite quote these days is “Those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.”⁴⁷ I hear the music of my cells, my skin and bones, and the bones of my mother and grandmothers. My sisters and I heard this music and have been dancing to it for over 40 years. I danced alone under the moon until I was joined by others. I danced my pleasure of being alive. I danced to honor my Creator, the great Mother. I danced because words could not express my ecstasy. I danced to heal my self and my sisters. I danced to heal the generations of women who lived under greater restrictions than I, growing from girl to woman. I continue to dance to free myself and my sisters, through my activism, love, and will. I dance to heal Mother Gaia, sending the energy of my life force that She gave me back to Her, the source of my life.

If you are a woman who doesn't hear the music I hear, are you even a little curious about why you can't hear it? As inheritors of generations of misogyny and female self-hatred, how can we think that this inheritance has not influenced us to the point of not being able to hear our own music?

EMBODIMENT

While Women's Mysteries have always been the source for our rites, a deep underground stream that arises from the past, and where we drink to know ourselves, I now know that our Mysteries are embodied throughout the entirety of our being; that our very cells reveal our birthright to our sacred past and our future.

By including *and* expanding beyond the uterine blood mysteries to include discoveries at the cellular level, I'm proposing that our Women's Mysteries are just beginning to reveal themselves through all the relational and sensory ways females experience life—truths that are as close as our own skin.

The heart of Women's Mysteries is *embodiment*. Embodiment is experiencing the totality of being/knowing through the revelatory experiences of our female senses. To be embodied is to move slowly or at the speed of light as our sensory being collects information from our inner and outer sight, sounds, and 'feelages' (which are taste, touch, vibration, temperature, weight, texture, and so on), and brings this sensory information to conscious awareness. Our bodies are conduits to accessing wisdom, information, and inspiration from Life Herself. This ability can be further developed into a magical skill that allows us to come into deep resonance with, join with, gather information from, or shapeshift into another person, creature, or other sentient being. Insights and revelations from Her flow through us like a stream flows through a landscape—allowing vegetation to grow along the banks, and eco-systems to flourish with life-sustaining waters. We live *here*. Touch above your breast and feel your heart beating. We live in *this* body, in *this* world. Until we die and release our life force to the universe, we live *here*. Is it possible that we not only are a part of the Mystery, but are Mystery itself?

We don't have an ancient holy book that, so we are told, reveals the truth of the cosmos and the wisdom of the Divine. Our holy book has always been our female flesh and blood. Pleasure, connection, and creativity have been some of our most inspiring teachers. Our truths and embodied wisdom are revealed when we can open enough to perceive all of the Elemental and sensory information that flows through us in every moment from within and without. Then we must learn how to discern the boundaries between ourselves and the toxic environments we live in, how to wisely filter extraneous debris from essence, pan for gold in the swift currents of a river. With discernment, we must learn to sense where the boundaries of our energetic edges are, and where they overlap with another sentient being. We can learn to recognize the differences between past abuse and emotional wounds, welcoming the present moment that offers new opportunity for a different experience upon which to build a different life and world.

When we only use filters and frames created while surviving in a woman-hating culture, we limit our ability to access our female wisdom. As we explore and practice using different sets of filters to sort through all the sensory information available to us in each moment, we enable ourselves to perceive something beyond a stereotype or previously formed scheme of classification. From this kind of perception, "details and scattered particulars are gathered into an experienced whole that result in a unity of meaning."⁴⁸ These new meanings can be brought forward as aesthetic elemental creations of our female reality.

Women discover these new perceptual filters by creating experiences that take place in safe female-sovereign spaces, where internal safety filters can relax. Claiming ourselves proudly as relational beings, our new filters can be used consciously in becoming the future we strive to create—transforming ourselves and society into a future that takes into consideration all our relations.

HOW TO BECOME MORE EMBODIED

So how do we learn to become more embodied?

- Learn about who you really are. Become curious about your personal journey from birth to present, and how your legacy of enculturation, religion, and family history influenced your self-concept of womanhood. Explore how you continue to internalize and collude with the values of the dominant culture, and your personal cost of internalized oppression. Take that curiosity into the world, and learn about ancient goddess heritages, ways that the dominator model of power took over and still reproduces itself in overt and covert ways. Become aware of when your own enculturation comes up. Stop. Examine your motives and actions. Have the courage to engage in honest and compassionate self reflection. No berating or blame. No shame. Just stop, pause, and make another choice that is female-affirming, and make amends as best you can.
- Begin to explore ways to really love yourself, heal yourself from own misogyny, and notice how your healthier choices begin to affect your environment and personal relationships. Tell your stories.
- Practice more ways in which you can embrace the fullness of your female self and celebrate your female magick through the transformative potential of ritual. Remember that, “magick requires a great amount of practice and very little effort.”⁴⁹ Celebrate yourself as sacred and made in Her image, just as the trees, rocks, creatures, and stars are made in Her image, just as our daughters and sons are made of Her.
- Practice relational thinking. My goddess wants me to suck the juice out of the peach until I can feel the sweetness running through my veins like blood. My goddess wants my sisters, daughters, and grand daughters to know the pulsing power of their monthly bloods as they let themselves pour into the fertile earth in their backyards. My goddess wants me to be awake to what I am feeling in this moment, and this moment, and this moment, and this moment. So don't miss out on what She is showing you, telling you, or inviting you to feel. We

cannot co-create a different future if we are disconnected from ourselves and each other in the present. Practice creativity from your connection to life.

- Choose your words with awareness and notice how they shape your perceptions. Be impeccable with your language. Practice using words that *frame* your values. Notice if you slip into another person's frame by adopting their language, and if you agree with that frame or not. If you don't agree, don't use their terms. Use yours.
- Practice flexibility. Learn how to get out of your own way or Her way. Become open to the moment that you step into. Practice noticing what each unique moment invites. Listen to what is sounding here and now, feel and see all that is actually happening in this moment, in addition to what you've planned. There are so many times when the present moment demands something else. Your plans, however beautiful, powerful, and perfect, still benefit from breathing, feeling, opening to the shifting energies of the now. Learn and practice how to meet a moment and authentically respond to it.
- Practice noticing all the sensual and Elemental information that is available around and within you. Your greatest and most authentically powerful tool is you, *all* of you. Develop your mind. Hone your senses.
- Make a conscious choice to live, to be here, and stand for Her/you/your sisters, and our children in this time of Earth changes. It's about courage, and choosing to stand for yourself and what you hold precious every day. Choose courage.

Women's Mysteries are the doors through which we know ourselves as Divine. These doors swing open only through revelatory experience and the ability to create a connection to Goddess through that experience. The door is your vulva and the language of skin, taste, sight, and sound are Her messengers. *You* do embody Her, sourced from ancient roots, from the beginning of the beginning to this moment and beyond. Let *your* body knowing become *your* Holy Book.

In the Diktian cave on the island of Crete where Zeus was said to have been born and died, there are thousands of vulva shapes on the cave walls, dripping with moisture. There, the Goddess of the land spoke to me:

*"I am the one who is beyond speaking.
No word can touch my form.
No eye can sing the fullness of my greatness.*

*No hand can reach the fountain of my waters.
No tear can taste the redness of my blood.
Know me in your birthing pains as you create something from nothing.
Know me in the dryness of your bones when you glimpse eternity.
Caves and vulvas, endings and beginnings, millennia to form My cathedral of stone.
You have all the time in the world, and none to spare.
I will survive you and do not wish to be alone.
I am the primary form, the matrix from which all the other variations of me emerge.
Everything is form and a reflection of me.
You are my creations and my mirror. Truly see me. See yourself.
You have all the time in the world, and none to spare.
Return to my arms and find your rest here.
You cannot leave me. You cannot really leave yourself.”*

We can *experience* the Mystery, because we *are* the mystery.

FEMINISM'S FOURTH WAVE

I am proposing a feminist philosophy that affirms the female body as a central metaphor for the cycle of life and a lived reality. Accepting that the body matters is neither biological determinism nor essentialism!⁵⁰ I am advocating for a fourth feminist wave that honors the female body for her unique and sacred powers—our biology celebrated as a source of female power and knowing, and free of oppressive gender limitations. From a paradigm of wholeness, can we not make a world where every person can experience and celebrate their body as a sacred gift? Where every child is safe to be who they are, and express themselves according to their unique personality?

I want this kind of liberation for my sisters, daughters, mothers and grandmothers. I want this for my brothers too. May we remember who we really are, and ensure that female-sovereign spaces are available for generations of daughters to come.

I'd like to close my talk with a poem written by lesbian poet Elsa Gidlow. Her poems were the first poems frankly celebrating the love of women for women ever published in North America. As I opened this talk with my own song, *Invocation to Free Women*, I close with Elsa Gidlow's poem, *A Creed For Free Women*. For me this poem unapologetically celebrates female sovereignty, something I wish for all my sisters to experience. May we ride this feminist Fourth Wave into freedom for ourselves and all our children.

A CREED FOR FREE WOMEN
by Elsa Gidlow

I am.
I am from and of The Mother.
I am as I am.
Willfully harming none, none may question me.

As no free-growing tree serves another or requires to be served,
As no lion or lamb or mouse is bound or binds,
No plant or blade of grass nor ocean fish,
So I am not here to serve or be served.
I am Child of every Mother,
Mother of each daughter,
Sister of every woman,
And lover of whom I choose or chooses me.

Together or alone we dance Her Dance,
We do the work of The Mother,
She we have called Goddess for human comprehension,
She, the Source, never-to-be-grasped Mystery,
Terrible Cauldron, Womb,
Spinning out of her the unimaginably small
And the immeasurably vast –
Galaxies, worlds, flaming suns—
And our Earth, fertile with her beneficence,
Here, offering tenderest flowers.
(Yet flowers whose roots may split rock.)
I, we, Mothers, Sisters, Lovers,
Infinitely small out of her vastness,
Yet our roots too may split rock,
Rock of the rigid, the oppressive
In human affairs.

Thus is She
And being of Her
Thus am I.
Powered by Her,
As she gives, I may give,
Even of the blood and breath:
But none may require it;
And none may question me.

I am.
I am That I am.⁵¹

Citations

- ¹ Words by Ruth Barrett and Felicity A. Flowers, traditional melody adapted by Ruth Barrett. Recorded on Ruth Barrett's CD, *Parthenogenesis*.
- ² The phrase 'God the Father' refers to Mary Daly's book, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*.
- ³ The phrase 'once and future Goddess' refers to Elinor W. Gadon's book, *The Once and Future Goddess: A Sweeping Visual Chronicle of the Sacred Female and Her Reemergence in the Cultural Mythology of Our Time*.
- ⁴ This phrase is discussed by Naomi Goldenberg in *Changing of the Gods*.
- ⁵ These names' popularity for places to do menstrual retreats can be traced to Anita Diamant's *The Red Tent* (1997) and Kisma Stepanich's *Sister Moon Lodge* (1992).
- ⁶ The phrase 'the invisible obvious' is from Kay Leigh Hagan's book, *Fugitive Information*.
- ⁷ All definitions in this booklet are from the Merriam-Webster dictionary.
- ⁸ Hagan, p. 68.
- ⁹ Patricia McFadden, "Why Women's Spaces are Critical to Feminist Autonomy" http://www.isiswomen.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=630:why-womens-spaces-are-critical-to-feminist-autonomy&catid=127&Itemid=452
- ¹⁰ Included in Alice Walker, *Anything We Love Can Be Saved*, p.188.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 90.
- ¹² Mary Daly, *Quintessence*, p. 134.
- ¹³ George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*, p. 4.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 3.
- ¹⁵ uppitybiscuit, "Do Not Call Me Cisgender. You Do Not Have My Permission To Name Me" at <https://uppitybiscuit.wordpress.com/2007/01/19/do-not-call-me-cisgender-you-do-not-have-my-permission-to-name-me/>
- ¹⁶ Theresa M. Wizemann and Mary-Lou Pardue, editors, *Exploring the Biological Contributions to Human Health: Does Sex Matter?* issued by the Committee on Understanding the Biology of Sex and Gender Differences, Institute of Medicine, Board on Health Sciences Policy, p. x.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. x.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 170.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 23.
- ²⁰ Naomi Wolf, *Vagina: A New Biography*, p. 61.
- ²¹ From Spretnak's keynote address at a Midwest women's spirituality conference. Christiane Northrup also refers to this term in *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*, p. 34.
- ²² Wiseman, p. 23.
- ²³ Natalie Angier, *Woman, An Intimate Geography*, p. 42.
- ²⁴ Wiseman, p. 46.
- ²⁵ Angier, p. 43.
- ²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 20.
- ²⁷ Wiseman, p. 22.
- ²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 14. Also, a personal communication from Wendy Griffin notes "Layne Redmond used to describe how every egg a woman will ever have are in her ovaries when she is a fourth-month fetus in her mother's womb. Then she told people, 'The egg that became you lay in your grandmother's womb, as she lay in her grandmother's womb, as she lay in ...' and she went back and back, getting softer each time. It was really powerful."
- ²⁹ Wolf, p. 14.
- ³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 28.
- ³¹ Angier, p. 63.
- ³² *Ibid*, p. 64.
- ³³ *Ibid*, p. 63.
- ³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 60.
- ³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 76.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 282.
- ³⁷ Wolf, p. 285.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 285.
- ³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 289.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 92.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 200.
- ⁴² *Ibid*, p. 208.
- ⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 198.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 197.
- ⁴⁵ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 257.
- ⁴⁶ Christiane Northrup, *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*, Bantam Books, 1995.
- ⁴⁷ The quote has various attributions. See <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2012/06/05/dance-insane/>
- ⁴⁸ John Dewey (lost the book source for this quote)
- ⁴⁹ Falcon River, personal communication.
- ⁵⁰ The concept of Essentialism states that there are innate, essential differences between men and women. That is, we are born with certain traits. This is often used as an explanation for why there are so few women in science and technology. It is also used as a rationale for pigeonholing, offering limited education, hiring discrimination, and so on and on and on.
- ⁵¹ Elsa Gidlow, "A Creed For Free Women" in *Sapphic Songs*, Druid Heights Books, 1982.