

Dea Madre della Sardegna and Other Poems

Mary Saracino

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Dea Madre della Sardegna*

Breasts of earth rise toward the clouds,
granite nipples kiss the sky:

Madre
Madre
Dea
Dea

Sacred saffron sweetens the pasta,
menhirs mark the homeward path:

Madre
Madre
Dea
Dea

Brazen poppies people the ruins,
memories echo in vulva grottos:

Madre
Madre
Dea
Dea

Roses rise from a sea of amnesia,
red tongued priestesses sing sacred songs:

Madre
Madre
Dea
Dea

Dolmens embrace the stony wind
remembering, remembering:

Madre
Madre
Dea
Dea

*English translation: Mother God of Sardinia

Author's Note: Sardinia is an island off the coast of mainland Italy, a bit north and west of Sicily. Part of present-day Italy, Sardinia has ancient roots connecting to the African Dark Mother, having been on the migratory pathways out of Africa, as well as home to Canaanite entreposts during ancient times. Both the indigenous peoples of the island and the Canaanites, who later settled there, revered an ancient Mother God. In Sardinia this Mother God is known as the *Dea Madre*.

Olivastrì Millenari**

In stillness, I look upon the weathered face
of the Ancient Mother, Tree of Life,
Tomb of Death, Womb of all that is sacred.
4,000 years of wrinkled bark stare back at me.

You call me Daughter, whisper lovingly
in my ear and I cry. The ache I swaddle
in my belly eases at your kindness,
the bitter silence sweetened by your succulent shade.

Lay your head upon my lap, you invite.
I will cradle your weariness,
bless your courage, encourage your soul.

Ancient-Being, dark and deep, your roots burrow into the cold clay,
an anchor. Your strong limbs scoop the sky, uniting Earth
and Heaven, sparking a bridge of blue and green;
the air shimmers as your leafy fingers tickle the wind.

Inside the hollowed cave of your trunk, cobwebs
collect the secrets of insects, weaving stories
my ears long to hear. There, into uterine wood
I crawl, bent in supplication.

My heart calls you, *Mama*, knows you as home.
My bones remember: *You are the Mother of Multitudes*.

For thousands of years you escaped the biting blade of dogma,
the harsh axe that sought to silence your heart,
quell your ancient breath.

Guerrilla-tree, you resisted, as defiantly loving
as a Bodhisattva, fierce and untamable,
loyal only to the irrepressible "Yes!"
Crone-tree, you echo, still, the clarion call of the ages:
justice with compassion, mercy, equality, transformation.

Under your delicate sway of grace we pilgrims
come and go, resting beneath your generous bough
in an open field in Sardegna. We are held fast,
witnessed by the all-seeing eyes of sky and soil.

Beside you, we gather, large and small, wounded souls,
welcomed home to wholeness, at long last
reunited with so many things lost along the way.

**English translation: The ancient olive tree

Author's note: I wrote this poem after visiting this ancient tree, the precursor to the olive, while on a Dark Mother study tour in Sardinia led by Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum in 2004. Though the tree was not on the group's itinerary, some of us noticed a photo and an accompanying article about this ancient being, posted on a bulletin board in the hotel lobby where we stayed. The story said that the tree is thought to be between 3000 and 4000 years old and the foremother of the modern olive tree. Knowing that the ancients believed trees to be the body of the Mother/Goddess, we knew instantly we had to make a pilgrimage. The next morning our group detoured from the itinerary schedule to visit the tree, paying homage to her.

The Mother of Us All

God was female for at least the first 200,000 years of human life on earth.

-- Barbara Mor and Monica Sjoo***

For 200,000 years we called you Mother,
honored the blood-red kisses you planted
upon our upturned brows.
How did we come to forget our original womb,
the lap from which we sprang, hearts open,
mouths searching for the nipple?

Hungry now, we cry out, lost between liminal memory
and sacred thought, aching to return home.

You are the primal seed, the gestation that bears
all hope, sustains through drought and famine,
disease and dire sorrow.

We spoke our first words to your wide eyes.
Abundantly our future reflected back into
our open, expectant faces.
Your sturdy hands cradled our fragile bones,
mended our tender muscles, ushered us into the bright,
round world of sky and earth, water and wood.

In your breath, myth and memory merged,
science was born, art echoed its wisdom
on the cool walls of dank caves, language danced
on the tongue-tips of cooing babies.
You suckled our dreams as we tended community fires,
fed us stories to satiate the bellies of our minds,
satisfy our growling need to fathom the unknowable.

Sky lords severed our jubilant tongues, uncoiled your spiral,
fabricated straight lines where once circles spun.
Subjugation overthrew cooperation. Where once peace
rivered through our veins, blood froze,
fearful of the silencing sword's metallic, bitter edge.
The icy marrow of amnesia impeded our way,
though the moon and the stars, the sun and the winds
whispered your name, coaxing us to shake off
our long, fitful slumber.

Though our twenty-first century minds may fail us,
our cells remember: all life swells within the folds
of your milky skirt, spinning and leaping out of darkness
into light, then back again into the primal, original sigh.
All death awaits your embrace, the final kiss of comfort
releasing us into the crook of your welcoming elbow,
nestling us into the soft curve of your breast — home once more,
the terrible exile undone at long, long last.

*** Monica Sjöo and Barbara Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of Earth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 49.

Mary Saracino is a novelist, memoir writer, and poet who lives in Denver, Colorado. She has been an independent scholar of the Divine Feminine for over 30 years. In graduate school in the early 1980s, Mary integrated women's spirituality and comparative religious studies classes into her American Studies coursework. Since that time she has continued to deepen her experiential and intellectual understanding of the Sacred Feminine through ongoing reading and studying as well as traveling to sacred sites. In addition to being a writer, Mary also teaches workshops on the Divine Feminine. Her most recent novel, *The Singing of Swans*, was published by Pearlsong Press (October 2006). The novel tells the story of a contemporary woman's transformative spiritual journey to reclaim her life. For more information about Mary, visit www.marysaracino.com.