

***Spiritual Heritage:
Understanding and Embodying Female Spirituality
Through Creative Practice***

(1998-2004)



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By
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The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed.....

Date.....

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BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Journey: 1984

This inquiry really began in Melbourne in 1984. I was writing a thesis. The day I was meant to present the paper I had a motorcycle accident. I sustained a serious fracture to my left lower leg. After the accident, I don't remember how long, some weeks I suppose, I took up the paper to read it. Nothing, absolutely nothing made any sense! All the notes were there but no connections. I was dumbfounded. From a Scientific point of view, the neural sheeting in my brain had been shuffled like a pack of cards, because the nerves in my leg had been severed. Any major break in the nervous system has this impact. It gave me first hand experiential knowledge of disruption to the mind-body-spirit dynamic.



Figure 1. 'Energy Drawing' by Elise Goodrich 1984

There are many factors which stimulated this journey of the Masters. The project began under the title “Inner Space in Public Space”, knowing only at the outset that the personal was significant and that there was an uncertainty about which domain in public space I was to locate my life’s work. Was it to be in contemporary arts, public arts or something else all together?

The diary extract which opened this chapter ‘contextualizes’ the key philosophical focus of this inquiry; the relationship between the body and the self and how to maintain this wholeness in our contemporary life. Many people have out-of-body experiences during car accidents. Music composer, and my dear friend, Sarah Hopkins had such an experience. It was the moment in her life which confirmed her spiritual pathway via music. My accident held a message of a different kind. Instead of consciousness leaving my body I was catapulted into a kind of hyper-consciousness whilst still in the body. I lay there on the road holding my leg together just below the knee where both bones had been snapped, fully awake, fully in my body. One part of the message seemed to have something to do with “in-the-body experiences”. When I lose trust in the process of life and in myself, my left ankle becomes very painful. As it is the left side of the body which relates to the feminine in the self, the intuition, my leg reminds me when I am not listening to the deep self.

I realised in my earlier pursuits in contemporary arts as well my earnestness in working in public arts that I had in fact lost contact with my “woman” self. I began the process of rediscovering her, through trips to the “bath house” with other women on similar journeys of honouring the feminine in a “yang” culture and also through a

series of “women’s circles”. I explored various forms of bodywork and body awareness classes (see appendix 1). I spent more time in nature. I made the connection that nature begins with our own bodies. One of my encounters was with the Sufi work. It really gave me a way forward.

The Journey: 1997

The Sufi workshop went for hours, and it went on again the next day. The following day was the Winter Solstice Festival... I danced for 10 hours. I felt like I was in some river... a river of life’s ecstasy. I was shifted... overwhelmed with its beauty. Here once again in the Sufi, were the wonderful sounds of Middle Eastern music, which I had first heard in Morocco in 1988. This work was so flowing, unlike the static asanas of Yoga practices. Sufi integrates breathwork with movement, it involves dancing, drumming and chanting as well as the curious practice of turning on the spot.

The Sufi delivered me into a different space indeed. It gave me direction in my life, strongly affirming that I was to work with energy in the body via the healing modalities, spiritual growth and movement in space. I had the sense that I had been reconnected with something very ancient in terms of spirit. The fact that it was a body centred spiritual practice suggested that the origins of the work were pre-Islamic and pre-Christian. It also seemed like such a relevant and helpful process for the disembodiment, disconnected, rational impulses within Western Culture. Central to Sufi awareness is the idea that “tasuwwuf” (the practice or condition of being a Sufi) “is both a teaching and a part of an organic evolution”.¹ The Sufi way is experiential, truths of life are carved out via a “language of the world”², making use too of the power of myth and fable. That is to say, the Sufis use a non-rational means of communication with the intention to shift and expand consciousness. It is a kind of lyricism, grounded in experience, similar in some regards to a feminist-spirit-centred

¹ Shah, I. (1964) *The Sufis*, New York: Anchor Books Double Day Publishing, p45

² Coelho, P. (1988) *The Alchemist*, London: Harper Collins, p10

and earth-connected approach to life. This approach is present and developing in the fibres of various sub cultures in contemporary Australia.

I was also being beckoned by the healing field, to heal myself and help other people. In the past I had always thought I was healing myself, through making artwork. I began to notice that in healing myself I had conveniently avoided the hardest parts! The process stimulated a period of deep personal healing. The human trait of compassion was emerging out of years of narcissistic pursuit. During the Masters I acquired a qualification in massage therapy, began to work professionally and currently operate a part time practice. I began to channel energy during these sessions. An awareness of energetics and how it affects the passage of life has always been a central concern to me. And so, “energetics” became a critical cornerstone in this work also. “Energetics” is in common use in the natural therapies. There are many methods for example Reiki, Auric Healing, Brennan Healing Science.³ It refers to the conscious awareness, receptivity and directing of universal energy through the human body. It is available to anyone in varying degrees and can be developed.

Having engaged in the African hand drumming phenomenon just prior to the commencement of the Masters, I continued to participate with great glee in this connective rhythmic experience. The African Djembe is also a healing drum. Drumming is another modality of directness which channels energy through the body.

³ refer bibliography, Brennan, B. *Hands of Light & Light Emerging*

At the outset of the Masters I was concurrently engaged in the heavy materials of ceramic and stone pavement inlay works in public arts, as well as installation and temporal sculpture for festivals and events. A shift was occurring away from object-centred, low vibrational (heavy material) artworks and towards a body-centred, process based practice. Creatively, I was being attracted to working with higher/lighter vibrational media such as movement, dance, music, sound and video. This development is synonymous in spiritual development terms with the individual opening into a state beyond ego bound definition. The individual integrates and detaches from the lower three chakras (subtle energetic bodies) and begins opening to the higher three transpersonal chakras in the body, via the “crucible” of the heart chakra. This process based work became central to my creative practice as research and to the “ethos” of my work.

I became increasingly curious about the ancient past. I wanted to understand more about embodied spiritual practice prior to the dominant patriarchal religions of Christianity-Islam-Judaism. This reflects a recurrent process and inclination for me towards etymology - the seeking out of source and origin. I was interested in specific women who possessed and practised spiritual and secular power simultaneously. I was also interested in the accumulative holistic insight into the nature of the human experience, for some hope of a pathway to freedom and integration. I felt as though something had been lost. It seemed as though a thread of inner connection in the feminine psyche had been severed, just like the nerves in my leg had been severed in the accident.

Out of these beginnings, three core concerns were identified at the outset of the study. They were to work with energy in the body, to claim an aspect of female spiritual heritage and practice and to reflect and articulate my own particular work “ethos” in the context of the new light based media, including digital imagery and video. This study occurred through the body, imagery and the word.

This is an investigation into ancient visual symbols and the perennial “wisdom of the tribe”; archetypal imagery from matriarchal and indigenous mythology. Both the Sufi and the shamanic seem to form the core of many spiritual practices across cultural differences. Central to the Sufi is the practice of unconditional LOVE and the attainment of ecstasy via physical atonements such as dancing. Central to shamanism is living in an honourable relationship to the earth and treating ill health in through the whole family/ group or community not just the individual.

I have steered clear of making any claims of reference to Australian Aboriginal spirituality in particular out of respect for the sensitivities that exist here. Other than through my own personal, energetic and symbolic connection to this part of the earth, I do not know how to interact with Aboriginal spirituality, especially in an urban context, without bumping into protocols and my own fears of causing grief. But perhaps more intrinsically, my soul connections are more with Europe, North Africa and Anatolia.

A note on the process of writing the thesis itself, on which one could write an entire thesis! The process has been characterised by immense struggle! This is an

“objectification” of a set of “truths”, a distilling of them into an object. Inevitably the object becomes separated from its context and network of meaning for a variety of reasons be it custom, circumstance, chance or whatever. The act of writing and separating from the body-energetic perspective and context felt like it was potentially fraught with danger. I resisted writing for a long time. In the same way that my paper made no sense to me after the accident, the break in my nervous system severed the connective consciousness. Documents are often severed from their nexus of sense and context. There is a long and very bloody human story containing deliberate misuse, gross misinterpretation and fear based responses to words and their authors.

In the course of my research investigating embodied female spirituality and women of the ancient past who possessed both spiritual and secular power, I came across a woman named Hypatia. Hypatia was Head of the School of Philosophy in Alexandria in the 5th century AD. The great library there at the time was reputedly the world’s accumulation of ancient knowledge. The library was purposefully destroyed and Hypatia was stripped naked, dragged to St. Cyril’s church and was fed piece by piece into the fire!⁴

What, I asked myself, did this library with a woman at the helm contain? And what knowledge was *so* threatening to our forefathers that they felt the need to destroy it all and assassinate the Head of the School?

⁴ Sjo, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper p454
their ref: Bertrand Russell *A History of Western Philosophy*

Focus of Inquiry *Spiritual Heritage*

I occupy the body and life of a woman of predominantly Anglo-Saxon origin, a mostly working class/entrepreneurial background, and no specific religious denomination. I live in the contemporary Western culture of Australia. Where is the Goddess? Where is spirit in this life?

The study focuses on reconnecting pathways back to ancient wisdom via spiritual practices, healing modalities and creative practices. These pathways are body-centred and earth-centred as distinct from the patriarchal religions (Christianity-Judaism-Islam) that depend more heavily on doctrine and a sky dwelling, head-centred male God. This is an investigation into a thread through the matriarchal body-earth-centred cultures, the body-based spiritual practice of Sufi, energetic healing work, and archetypal imagery and symbol that honours the earth, woman, the feminine, and spirit. Patriarchal history is based on the tradition of rational-logic doctrine.

Matriarchal 'herstory', as Marina Warner says in *From the Beast to the Blonde*, is based on embodied mythology, archetypal imagery and story. We can look to archaeological data and images embodied in oral stories and aural musical traditions. These stories and symbols are carried in the belly of the great mythological serpent. The serpent is potentially spontaneously present in the neo-cortex of every person and especially available to woman through the psychic lunar rhythm of her own body. I am referring to a person's capacity to access the collective unconscious via their own intuitive personal self.

Therefore the autobiographical material emerges as a critical component in the research methodology of this study, in terms of contextualising my own personal connection to the great mythological serpent through time and humanity. Of particular significance were my own body experiences, as well as my developing awareness of energetics within the body, in healing work and in space. But of equal importance was grasping the relevance and value of my own use of imagery in relation to perennial world symbolism, the “wisdom of the tribe” and visual imagery inherent also in the Sufi. This visual language has grown out of my past, (probably past lives), my present (life experiences) and the future (images I have accessed via intuition). I had set a focus of developing and articulating my connection to a ‘language of the world’.

This ‘language of the world’ is made up of that which is common to human depth and experience. What is significant and common are the following; similarities of experience based on being in a human body, sensory reception of the elements (air, earth, water, fire), experiences of being in proximity to other humans. Out of this arises the values of respect and honour of the earth, physical atonement to maintain balance in ones self, treating ill health (spiritual, psycho-emotional) via the whole group/ family / community (holistic approach) not the separated individual (which is an illusion).

Which female heroines were to become like keyholes to mysterious or just forgotten realms in the articulation of the ‘language of the world’? What was important to ‘re-member’ about shamanic contexts of healing, spirituality and performance?⁵

⁵ ‘re-member’ refers to the reassembly of the whole body-mind, putting the body back together

METHODOLOGY

This investigation into embodied female spirituality clearly required an approach which was able to holistically engage all human faculties - different aspects of mind, body, spirit, intuition and memory. Consequently it was essential to use my creative practice as an integrative aspect of the research. I have used my creative practice across health & healing, Sufi processes and light based media to investigate, develop and practice 'embodied female spirituality'. A shamanic-performance paradigm and feminism have been central, philosophically, to the study. In addition I have chosen to explicate the connections between these discourses of the body, the text and the imagery through my own story, my autobiography.

The methodology involves two research strategies; the use of creative practice as research and the use of autobiography as a research tool. The creative practice can be seen as a continuum of modalities, extending from the private to the public. Three dimensions of the practice will be discussed. The following is a description of the dimension of a typical session in (1) a body-based natural therapy treatment I deliver (2) a group-body-based Sufi session I deliver and (3) a brief outline of the approach I have taken to the research within light based media and a list of the works.

The Use of Creative Practice as Research

Dimension (1) - Natural Therapies: Massage & Energy Work

The one-on-one treatment work with patients takes place preferably in a private and enclosed space with the use of a standard massage therapy table. There is a conscious awareness and use of space and energetics within that space. This includes the location and orientation of furniture, consideration of proximity to other objects, doors and windows, air flow & visual clarity. It also involves lighting, the use of essential oils in the atmosphere and colours in the room. Prior to giving a treatment I need to ensure that I am clean, clear (energetically), sufficiently hydrated and receptive. This *intuitive bodywork* blend modalities of the following; Swedish massage therapy (a lot of effleurage - smooth full palms of hands and arms over the body, some pummelling and joint release work), lymphatic drainage (major eliminatory and immunity enhancement function in the body, involves pumping the major lymph nodes and very slow massage work), hands on energy work (based on Reiki and other energywork), body awareness and breathwork (participatory) the use of sound in healing (the use of “tingshaws”- Tibetan silver metal bells used especially for opening and closing sessions, clearing energy that has been released, and for use on 5b the throat chakra), as well as recorded toning, chanting, trance and atmospheric music and visualisations (creative visualisation work to assist the removal of energy blockages, especially emotional blockage, white light, grey cloud dissolving, auto suggestion warm colours to increase circulation and green meditation for the heart, colour systems that correspond to the chakras - the energetic doorways). At the end of the session I perform several physical separations and cleansing processes to return

my energy field to itself. I need to regularly bathe in the sea or take Epsom & sea salt baths, as well as cold showers to de-contaminate my energetic field.

Dimension (2) - Sacred Arts: Sufi, Drumming, Chanting, Dancing

In its essence the Sufi is the embodiment of LOVE as an active principle, both the mechanism and the goal simultaneously. This version of Sufi is a body-based spiritual practice sometimes referred to as “Shattari” or “the rapid method”. Actually a lot of the work is very slow in terms of pace of movement but it puts the participant into a deep, connected state with spirit very *quickly*. I came into contact with a form of Sufi work via two students of the Sufi Master, Adnan Sarhan. Adnan is the Head and founder of the Sufi Foundation of America in New Mexico. Adnan’s roots are in Iraq. Sufi can involve any combination of the following body-based physical atonements: meditative movement, fast Middle Eastern Dance, the Whirling, drumming, breathwork, chanting and veil dancing. I have both attended and taught this work. I am not a Sufi Master, but I honour the connection I feel to this work. I see that it has many pathways and that it has pre-Islamic, pre-Christian roots.

The Sufi sessions I have been conducting are usually between two to three hours in duration. All the work begins with the breath and the breath is the central component of the process.



Figure 2. Myself practicing Sufi

Music is used in all the sessions. Generally a mix of traditional Sufi Music and World Music is used. The sessions are both structured and intuitive. Once the session begins there is generally no talking aside from minimal guidance in words. There are both active and passive components to the sessions. Between the Meditative Movement and the whirling we may, for example, lie on our rugs on the floor with closed eyes, breath long slow breaths and listen without moving to improvised drumming music. The active components to the Sufi work consist of:

The ***meditative movement*** is very slow work with the upper body involving the arms, chest and head whilst sitting on the floor. The focus is on opening the heart, increasing breath capacity and freeing the neck. This often progresses into rolling more of the body onto the floor and gentle, but deep, opening of the back and torso area. It can also often progress into a standing version, with sweeping movements, still quite slow. The idea is to start the coil deep inside oneself gradually turning. This can, and often does; progress further into ***Middle Eastern*** and other forms of ***Dance*** but ONLY after this preparatory work is done first to initiate the inner coil. Otherwise the inner connection to spirit is not found.

The Mevlevi ***Whirling*** begins very slowly in a standing position, travelling in either an anti clockwise or clockwise direction, with the arms outstretched; the left arm low with the palm facing the earth, and the right up high and the palm facing the sky. There is very particular music used for this process using the Deff drum and the Ney flute.

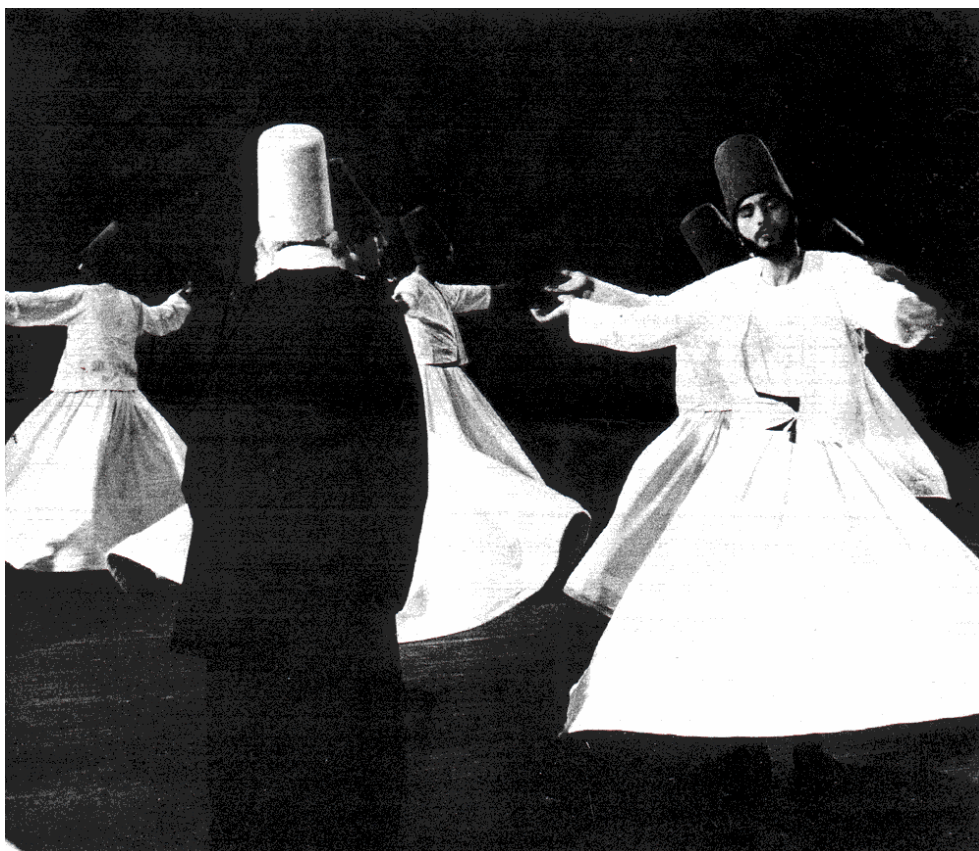


Figure 3. The Mevlevi Whirling

To avoid dizziness it is best to de-focus the eyes, and only increasing the speed of the movement according to a readiness from within your self, and to gradually decrease speed at the end. When I work with ***drumming*** in the session it is to encourage access to the intuition and the inherent rhythmic capabilities within people. I do not teach technique and set rhythms. Usually I will bring in the drumming after significant amounts of the other breathwork and meditative parts to the session.

The ***breathwork*** is core to all these body-based Sufi practices. Often a session will begin with the focus on just breathing for some time. The Sufi teacher will guide people in their breathing through the postures. eg “inhaling up” (which means as you raise your arms up breathing in), and “exhaling down”. Often to do the ***chanting*** we gather in a smaller more intimate circle and join hands. Once everyone has the chant in them we close our eyes and run the words through our bodies. The chanting can be accompanied by movement either large or small. Perhaps the most beautiful of all is the ***veil dancing***. This is done ideally with silk scarves. An all-women group is effective, so too a basically balanced number of women to men in a group.

Dimension (3) - Light Based Media: Digital Video & Stills

This dimension of the practice involves the conscious examination of my intuitive use of symbols and their relationship to the hierophant or perennial wisdom of the tribe, the use of those symbols cross-culturally. Through investigating the use of symbol within Sufi, theosophy, the ancient world, matriarchal culture, philosophy, and dream analysis I gained a greater sense of the use of these images at large.

I took a performance based approach to the making of the first two videos, *Castle of the Connectress* and *Lunar Hierophanies*. They were recorded on video first, then story-boarded and edited these works. The third video, *Sex, Drugs & String Quartets* was created in collaboration with a standard hierarchical film crew, in which my roles were Art Direction and Co-Direction on set. In this instance, the video was scripted first, and then came the storyboarding, shooting and editing process. *Sex, Drugs and String Quartets* was recorded on Video Pro 50. *Castle* 'and *Lunar*' were recorded on standard Mini- DV.

These are the four pieces of creative work being submitted for examination:

- (a) *Castle of the Connectress*** - website www.geocities.com/lupaliss (2000)
 - (b) *Castle of the Connectress*** – 5min. video (2001)
 - (c) *Lunar Hierophanies*** - 9 min. video (2001-2003)
 - (d) *Sex, Drugs & String Quartets – Leon's Story*** 7 min. (1 of 4 stories (27 min total)
- Art Director and Co-Director, fictionalised documentary for TV. Producer/Director
Carla Thackrah, (Sep 2002-Mar 2003)

Autobiography as a Research Tool

The other research strategy I have engaged is the use of autobiography. I have documented my personal experiences in terms of milestones of psycho-emotional-spiritual integration and consciousness development. I have recorded my personal experience in the form of visual images and the written word. These images and memoirs form the iconographic 'language of the world' outlined in detail in the next chapter - the Conceptual Framework. Some of this material is presented in the form of diary extracts, as well as being embedded in the imagery in the Light Based Media component to the study.

Autobiographical data has been critical in terms of the 'Energetics' component of this study. My knowledge and awareness of 'Energetics' has grown out of my experience in healing work and through studying text based material. I have documentation of over 100 treatments of massage & energy work performed as part of this study. This has been an important part of the 'Energetics' section of 'Embodied Female Spirituality', and in terms of understanding how 'energetics' operates through my particular auric and energetic field. There is a sample client form included in the Appendices. Also in my own healing process, I have made notations about the behaviour of particular energetic chakras as well as responses to the processes of Sufi. This has been valuable in my evolving knowledge of the behaviour of energetics and the understanding and embodying of female spirituality. As my creative practice progressed and personal discoveries were made, a number of key concepts were established. These create the conceptual framework for the study and are detailed in the next chapter.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There are two key factors to the conceptual framework of this study '*Understanding and Embodying Female Spirituality through Creative Practice*'. They are 'Energetics' that I refer to as 'the great serpent' and *experienced* archetypal image/symbol which I refer to as the 'language of the world'. I use these terms interchangeably for the 'serpent' also contains within its belly all archetypal imagery and certainly energetics is also the 'language of the world'. This is how the world of symbolism and mythology operates, one cannot grasp a 'shape changer' too tightly or it dies or loses all power!

'Energetics' (love) is the means and force which turns the wheel of the cosmos, and what connects all of its parts. It can best be understood as a wave vibration field. At any particular moment the wave vibration field is in a certain state. By tuning in to the energetic flow of the universe and connecting to this way of being we are able to affect the outcome, the organic evolution, the turning of the cosmos, the wheel. In the same way as this the 'tassuwwuf' of the Sufi is both a teaching and an organic evolution. 'Energetics' could be spirit itself, the great serpent that travels all dimension and cosmic terrains. For our human purposes we experience it in a personal and universal dimension. The healer and the patient, once connected, enter a relaxed alpha state, recorded (by magnetic field detector and EEG) world-wide as being 7.8 to 8Hz.⁶ This magnetic pulse rate measured through the healers hands and brain waves is equivalent to the magnetic vibration of the earth. The healer harmonises with the earth and then harmonises the patient with the earth's rhythm also. The 'language of the

⁶ Brennan, B. (1993) *Light Emerging*, New York: Bantam Books, p5

world’⁷ is the “clothing which the spiritual borrows from the material plane”.⁸ The potential danger with symbolism is literal interpretation. A bloody and catastrophic example cited by Sjojo and Mor in *The Great Cosmic Mother* is the misinterpretation of the yoga of Quetzalcoatl in Mexico. The meaning of the phrase “the opening of the heart to the light of the Sun” was not the literal mass heart ripping sacrifices that the Aztec Priests conducted, but the opening of the heart chakra of the subtle energetic body.⁹

Embodying spirit, living with an awareness of energetics, is about knowing how to read the world of experience, to understand and connect with life where we see the images in the world as omens (or sign posts). It opens us to an ancient, perennial, shamanic perspective. The shamanic perspective is a place where many cultures share some truths of the nature of life. This is reflected in cross cultural commonalities in archetypal imagery and symbolism. There are numerous interpretative variations of how the ‘Moon’ or the ‘Serpent’ or ‘Birds’ functions in the worldview of particular cultures. But are there common threads of these approaches to life which still hold valuable and useful in a pragmatic sense in our contemporary world? The central concept of a shamanic perspective is a state of interdependency between humans and the cosmos; between humanity and the earth.

Neither we, as humans, nor our surroundings have full identity or meaning without the other. This picture of mutual dependency could characterize an avant-garde ecological position, but it is also integral to the shamanic view of the world in which everything - not only animals, but also plants and rocks, wind and rain - may be imbued with spirit.¹⁰

⁷ Coelho, P ref: p6 Background to the Study

⁸ Underhill, E. in Shah, I. *The Sufis*, pp46-47

⁹ Sjojo, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, p225

¹⁰ Vitebsky, P. (1995) *The Shaman -Voyages of the Soul, Trance, Ecstasy and Healing From Siberia to the Amazon*, London: Duncan Baird Publishers, p12

The condition of the earth is reflected in the condition of the human psyche. The contemporary Western world is preoccupied with the violence of analysis and separating and compartmentalising. This is an ego-based vision of life and the world. The convention of each person needing to own and radically alter their portion violates cosmic law. Humans, it seems, are consistently violating cosmic law.

An example of the tendency towards separation and individualisation is the approach taken to treating depression and clinical depression. Typically it is the individual alone who is the “problem”. It is recognised that only certain individuals with particular character traits, often the more sensitive ones will manifest the condition of depression. A holistic view of the whole family or community recognises that the symptom however relates to the psychology of the whole family. In Australia a common approach to treating depression is treat the individual only. Often the person suffering from depression is encouraged to take anti-depressant drugs. Is this the best way to heal? Is this healing at all? Or is it more suppression?

The Shamanic approach to healing the self and the earth is to treat the whole community. The role of body-based Shamanic Performance practices is to assist in balancing the world and therefore in the balance of the humans who belong to it. For millennia male and female shamans from Siberia to New Zealand have used the body-based spiritual practices of drumming, chanting, movement, dance, mythology, the embodiment of animal imagery, trance, and ‘flying’ to ‘work’ the language of the world in order to balance the cosmos. This study is an investigation into these resonances at large through my own healing work; body based spiritual practices and visual imagery. Inherent within shamanic practice is the use of ‘psychic maps’ and

‘cosmic maps’ to navigate the self and the dimensions beyond or through the self.¹¹

The Tree-Serpent-Bird is one such map and a metaphor for the development of higher consciousness.

The *Tree-Serpent-Bird* image is triplicate in nature, it is inherently related to the iconographies of matriarchal culture and the central worship of the moon and the great Goddess, triple in nature also. Remember the bird species actually evolved out of the reptilian species, scales became feathers. This symbolism also relates to the “oroboros” - the female zero: zero. The snake swallowing its tail is symbolic of the eternal and cyclical nature of the Goddess, the divine water bird with the long neck.

Tree-Serpent-Bird

There was a point in time when my attention was being drawn consistently to largish birds perched in trees. I puzzled over this. When I first moved into this valley in Paddington in 1998, I came into contact with the infamous scrub turkey which, I was to find out, roosted high in the eucalypts in the late afternoon.

I was being shown via the “language of the world” something about my journey and the spiritual pathway I was taking.

Oh backbone of the world, show kindness to the seekers of beauty (Rumi).¹²

The world tree is a universal symbol. When the shaman embarks on her journey into trance, she is climbing the world tree, the human spine. The cosmic tree expresses the three sacred dimensions; heaven (the branches), earth (the trunk) and the underworld (the roots).

¹¹ Vitebsky, P. (1995) *The Shaman -Voyages of the Soul, Trance, Ecstasy and Healing From Siberia to the Amazon*, London: Duncan Baird Publishers, pp5-17

¹² Reinhertz, S. (2001) *Women Called to the Path of Rumi*, Prescott, Arizona: Hohm Press, p207

The *Tree-Serpent-Bird* imagery also relates to the three aspects of the human brain; the reptilian brain stem (the snake), embraced by the mammalian cerebrum, (the tree) and the human neocortex represents the (luminous flying bird). The flying bird sits high in the world tree (the spine), the kundalini is aroused through the chakras and maintains connection through them also.¹³

¹³ Sjo, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, p101



**Figure 4. *'Neck'* photograph by Elise Goodrich 1984
(note the similarity of the image to the trunk of a tree)**

The soaring bird is spirit/spirituality. It is all that is light and positive and synonymous with the “winged” state of illumination. In order to marry these two aspects one dives into or becomes the collective unconscious; the great serpent.

The world tree incorporates serpentine and lunar symbolism, shedding bark and leaves like skin or light, being reborn in the spring, growing rhythmically with the monthly moon phases. At least two thousand years before the Hebrew patriarchs wrote of the Garden of Eden, the Neolithic Great Goddess had her magic Garden of Immortality.¹⁴

The Serpent

The first year I began drumming was in 1997. During that year I went on a drumming retreat to Kondalilla Falls. We drummed all weekend. At the end, I literally could not drum any more. I did not stay to do the “performance”. I somehow managed the drive home, dropped off the friend who was travelling with me, got home and promptly fell into a semi sleep in the bath tub. Then, I had a vision, of a huge snake rising up out of my throat. The earth stretched out in front of me, parched and dry. The snake slithered across the cracked reddish earth and then quickly turned and writhed back towards me. I awoke in a shock with the sense of this huge snake going back down my throat!!! Perhaps, I was having a kundalini rising experience...?

A huge mythological serpent extends back and forth through time, and certainly crosses culturally. The serpent contains all archetypal imagery and symbolism; including the heart, the eye, the spiral, the moon, the sun, the birds, snakes, entries and exits, and the tower. This perennial imagery is deeply embedded in the human psyche.

¹⁴ Sjo, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, p101

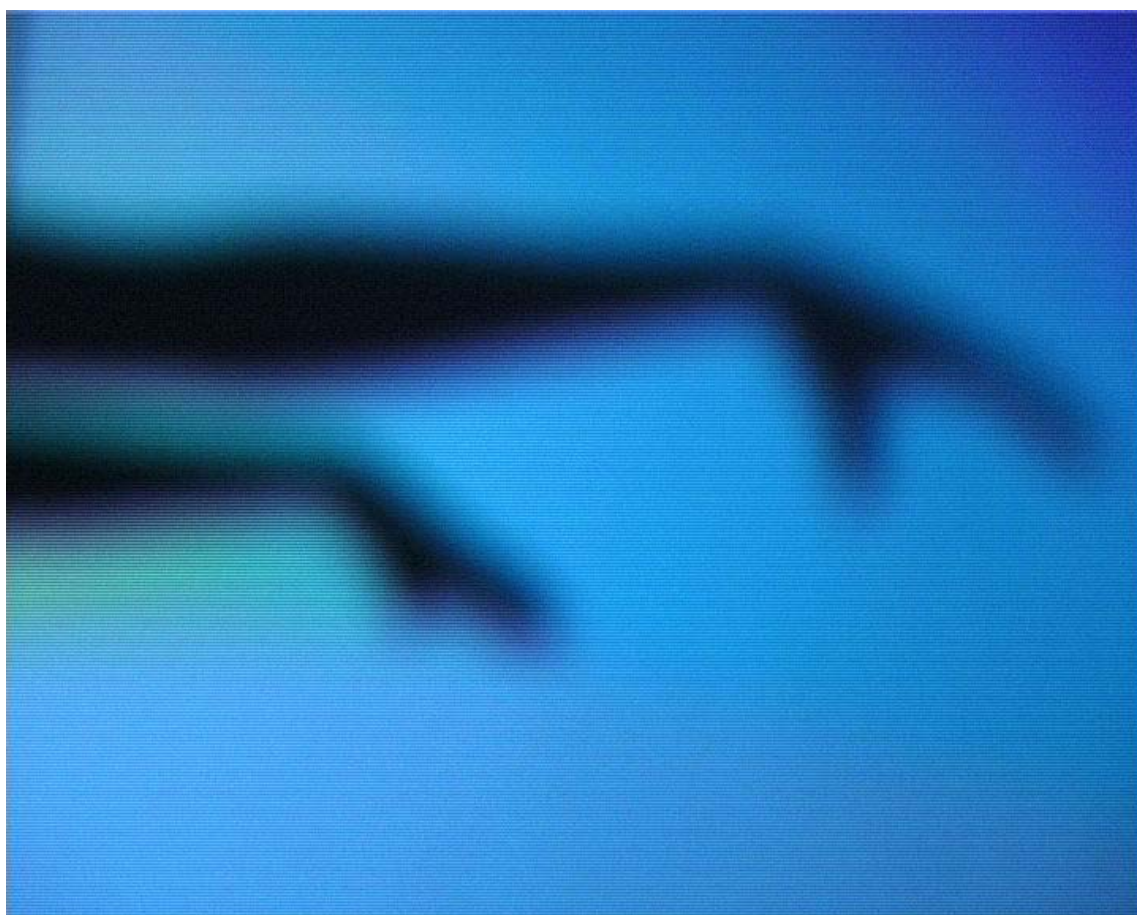


Figure 5. 'Snakey Arms' video still from *Lunar Hierophanies* 2003

The snake has a variety of meanings, and I think we must hold its “regeneration” to be one of the most important. The snake is an animal that “changes”. Gressman tried to see in Eve a primitive Phoenician goddess of the underworld, personified by a snake.³ The Mediterranean deities are represented with snakes in their hands (the Arcadian Artemis, Hecate, Peresphone and so on), or with snakes for hair (the Gorgon, Erinyes, and others).¹⁵

Feminine archetypal energy, earth energy – the Great Goddess is represented cross-culturally as a serpent, frequently being killed. Within this framework, the legends of knights in shining armour slaying the dragon are interpreted as being about the demise of matriarchy; the destruction of the earth-mother-goddess; and the erection of a sky-dwelling male godhead. The physical manifestation of this is demonstrated by the fact that many Christian churches in the U.K. were erected over the top of sacred sites of the old Goddess religions.¹⁶

In fact, an abnormal number of Christian churches dedicated to St. Michael and St. George, the other British dragon-slayer, are built on high places along the ley-line (or dragon path) that runs from Land’s End in Cornwall through the Goddess monuments at Glastonbury and Avebury in southwest England.¹⁷

St Michael wrestles with and kills off the connection to the deep consciousness. From this point on, rational-logic-deductive thought establishes its foundation and begins to erect its hierarchical authority and separation from the earth. It severs the thick nerve of the feminine energy. This lost connection is re-engaged by the Yogic-shamanic-ecstatic dancing practices, like the Sufi, in which the personal human skeleton takes upon itself to embody the universal world tree and awaken the serpent-kundalini energy coiled at the base of the spine. The spirit bird is set flying.

¹⁵ Eliade, M. (1958) *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, New York : Sheed & Ward, p168

¹⁶ Sjo, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, p108

¹⁷ *ibid*, p108



Figure 6. *'Castle of the Connectress'* website homepage detail 2000

Serpent - and the 'Turuq' (4 ways)

The Serpent is at once the life force energy (kundalini) of the individual but also the deep subterranean Serpent energy of the universe (one song), expressed, utilised and identified as geomancy (earth), pyromancy (fire), hydromancy (water), and aeromancy (air) as in the symbolism of the magician's card in the Tarot.¹⁸

According to Idries Shah in *the Sufis* (1964:449), the Tarot cards have their origins with the Sufis. The word "Tarot" is derived from the Arabic *turuq*, (four ways).

Initially the tarot cards were devised as an allegory of Sufi teachings. They embodied the knowledge of cosmic influences upon human behaviour. Although the contemporary version of the Tarot has been affected by Judaism and Cabalism and no longer retains all original meaning. Some of the derivation has been caused by poor translations from Arabic.¹⁹

Pyromancy - the Fire Snake



From an internal viewpoint, within one's own body this energy serpent is depicted as a spiral which can travel in either direction. From a cosmic viewpoint this spiral/spinning is synonymous with the spinning of the planets and the movement of the universe. Within body-based spiritual practice the serpent annotates the choreography of the Mevlevi Dervish "Whirling". The kundalini rising is also the mystic fire and

¹⁸ Sharman-Burke, J. & Greene, L. (1992) *The Mythic Tarot Book*, East Roseville NSW: Simon & Schuster Publishers, p21

¹⁹ Shah, I. (1964) *The Sufis*, New York: Anchor Books, Double Day, p449

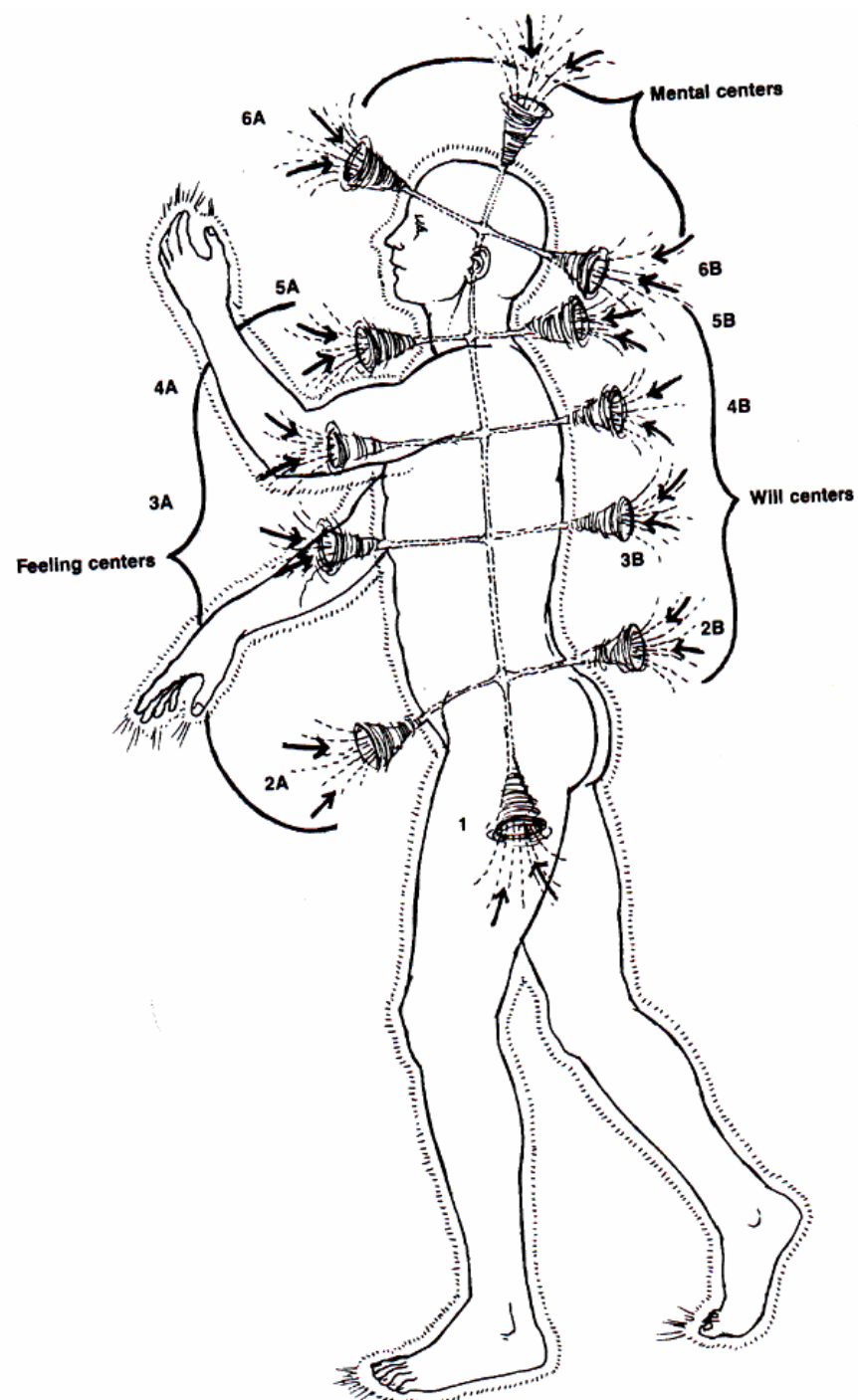


Figure 7. Brennan Energetics chakra diagram

“burning” spoken about and experienced in association with spiritual development.²⁰

The potential serpent power is equivalent to dormant cosmic fire.

Body Notes 1998: The night before I whirled for the first time, my hair caught on fire. I was in the bath and I had a small candle burning on the corner of the bath, I must have leaned towards it as I got into the tub. I slid my body down into the warm bath, the rose petals and essential oils... uhhhh! I could see FIRE reflected in the white tiles straight ahead of me! I looked behind me and then realised it was ME that was burning! I put my hands to my head to put out the flames, and dived into the bath water. I lay there quite shocked with black ash floating around me and the smell of burnt hair in my nostrils.



The serpent within the domain of the natural therapies could be equated with knowledge of the use of energetics to heal. In the Brennan Healing work, which describes the individual's energy as the HEF - the human energy field, and the UEF - the universal energy field, healing occurs via the balancing of the chakras, which spin in a clockwise direction when functioning well and in the reverse direction when not. The Brennan work also involves the release of blocked energy trapped in various parts of the body. The healer channels energy through their own bodies into the patient. The intention is to shift energetic blockages and allow the chakras to resume their positive motion again. This allows the patient to once again “take in” and integrate via their own energy doorways/keyholes - the energetic chakras, vortices. There is the convention in the East of depicting these vortices as lotus flowers.

²⁰ Sjoon, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, p75

Within archetypal imagery, the serpent represents the ability of the individual through their own unconscious (dreams) to connect to the collective unconscious of humanity. Contained within this great serpent reaching from the personal to the collective are common images which Western psychology regards as being related to Jungian dream analysis. “Depth psychology” has called this “a priori” image that we carry within our souls as “imago”. However as Idries Shah points out in *The Sufis*, Western psychology is limited in its grasp of the complexities of the human spirit, and did not originate with Freud and Jung.

The Jungian archetypal theory did not originate with Professor Jung, but was stated by the Sufi master Ibn El-Arabi as Professor Rom Landau notes in *The Philosophy of Ibn Arabi*. (New York, Macmillan, 1959. p.40 et seq) Modern psychology has done some good, where, for instance, it has pointed out that the urge to make money may be a symptom of insecurity. But it has not yet integrated itself; ...Psychology learns as it goes along, Sufism has already learned ...Freud’s sexual arguments are noted by the Sufi Sheikh Ghazali in *his Alchemy of Happiness* (written over nine hundred years ago) as being standard among Moslem theologians.²¹

²¹ Shah, I. (1964) *The Sufis*, New York: Anchor Books, Double Day, pp58-59



Figure 8. *'Moon Egg'* video still from *Lunar Hierophanies* 2003

The Moon

Queen of the Night she was called, the moon is the Goddess presence on earth and refers to the first woman. The time keeper: synonymous with woman and her menstrual cycle. The Moon was of central importance to the Matriarchal Goddess cultures. For many thousands of years women have been keeping time and rhythm with the universe via their own menstrual cycle and the moon. They were unequivocally the first time keepers. There are quite extraordinary commonalities and recurrences between lunar worship world-wide from ancient Greece (Hecate and Medea) to ancient China (#2 of the 12 emblems of the Empress) through Egypt (Min), Europe (Oestia or Easter, goddess of spring). The White Rabbit, often depicted in the arms of the crescent moon is sacred to the moon goddess also. In some parts of the Christian world the Easter Rabbit lays or brings the Egg.

The Mayan Queen is also called “Lady Rabbit”.²²

The Moon & the Labrys

The Moon was the “Queen of the Night”, always in process, transforming. The moon changes from dark moon to crescent moon to full moon, crescent moon and back to a new moon. It has a relationship the human experience of the past present future in time. This triple aspect has been symbolised by the “double-headed axe” or “labrys”. The labrys is a double headed crescent shaped axe. For at least 4,000 years and probably much longer, women used a practical version of the labrys in the field, the Amazon warrior women of North West Africa and around the Black Sea (1700BC - 350BC) used a version of



Labrys – double axe

²² Goodrich, N.L. (1989) *Priestesses*, New York: F Watts, pp89-90

it in battle against the Greek invasions, and the ceremonial labrys was often depicted

in Crete. The Neolithic matriarchal cultures in the Near East used it in the Jordan Valley. The double-axe, or labrys symbolised among other things the changing phases of the moon and the cyclical transforming nature of life. It was the symbol of the Great Goddess.

This image is not available online. Please consult the hardcopy thesis available from the QUT Library

. Labrys - detail drawing by Monica Sjöo²³

Sufi and Labrys

The Sufis, through the body-based spiritual practice of the Mevlevi whirling embody the two directions of the universe. The right turn direction was used to build, and maintain momentum/ energy, or forward in time. The left turn direction or widdershins was used to destruct or transform and has to do with the past. Sjöo & Mor claim that the Sufi double crescent ceremonial axe is a “direct descendent of the double axes used by the priestesses on Matriarchal Crete”.²⁴

I had this sense of remembering something very ancient in the embodying of Sufi movement. I was experiencing the language and rhythm of the cosmos through my own body. Even just watching the movements I felt transported as if I was whirling myself. It was like there was no separation between people whirling in front of me and me. Sometimes too I begin to get this burning feeling.... I feel compelled to whirl, then I start and it is as though I am being whirled not that I am whirling...

The Shamanic performance context is also characterised by an interdependence of audience-performer and health of the whole community. The shaman has a job to do. She has to balance the tribe, release suppressed blocked energies, create harmony and travel in any of the three realms the underworld, topside world and sky world.

²³ Sjöo, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, p214

²⁴ *ibid*, p119



Figure 9. 'Goat Horns' video still from *Lunar Hierophanies* 2003

The Moon and the Sacred Goat

All manifestations of the crescent moon on earth were regarded as sacred, and meant the presence of the triple Goddess. The curving horns of the goats who wandered wild on the Anatolian plateau (which forms part of present day Turkey) before the domestication of animals. Bulls, oxen, and other herd animals were deemed sacred.

Horn shaped crowns were donned in battle by warrior women and men. It belonged to the tradition of the Goddess and the moon. So too the horned “Pan”, the pagan god of Nature; and therefore also the “devil”, all that had been sacred within the matriarchal Goddess cultures was within the patriarchal brethren religious traditions to become “evil”. Any mention of the moon or the astrological meant “taboo”.²⁵

Shamanic Turning in Anatolia

The Anatolian plateau is also where the Mevlevi Whirling was formalised into a body-based spiritual practice that was to continue for 700 years up to the present. Until very recently, Women had been excluded from the practice of Whirling for the last 200 years. Before the arrival of Islam into Anatolia Nomadic tribal life and shamanic culture was alive and well. The famous Sufi poet Jelaluddin Rumi is credited with the inception of this practice.

This image is not available online. Please consult the hardcopy thesis available from the QUT Library

Woman about to “turn”²⁶

²⁵ Sjo, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, p99

²⁶ Reinhertz, S. (2001) *Women Called to the Path of Rumi*, Prescott, Arizona: Hohm Press, p42



Figure 10. 'El Sueno Retorno' digital image 2000



Figure 11. Myself & two friends at Salvador Dalí's funeral, Spain 1989

But mention must be made of his son, Sultan Veled and as well as the many women around him, within his circle of family and friends who helped to establish the order. For in the days of Rumi in Turkey, women and men whirled together, both formally and informally.²⁷ Within the traditions of the shamanic nomads there existed a form of ecstatic turning. The Sufis of the Qalander tradition were dervishes who wandered from place to place embodying both the great earth wisdom and the mystic transmissions of Islam. Shams-i-Tabriz, Rumi's teacher, came from this tradition. Some scholars suggest that it was Shams who introduced Rumi to the whirling as a form of body-based prayer which possibly is rooted in shamanic practices.²⁸

Heart-Centre

The experience and concept of heart perspective is of central significance within the imagery of Sufi. The expansive heart perspective is associated with the image of the rose. At the still centre is the heart analogous to the practice of Sema in the Sufi, which has to do with listening to the heart centre.

'*El Sueno Eterno*' is a key image I produced for an Installation at Picaron Gallery in Amsterdam in 1991. It means the eternal dream/sleep. The term was used in the newspaper caption which accompanied a photograph of myself and two friends at the funeral of Salvador Dali in Spain in 1989. It read "*La atraccion por el sueno eterno*", which means 'the attraction for the eternal dream/ sleep'. At his request Dali's body was embalmed upon his death.

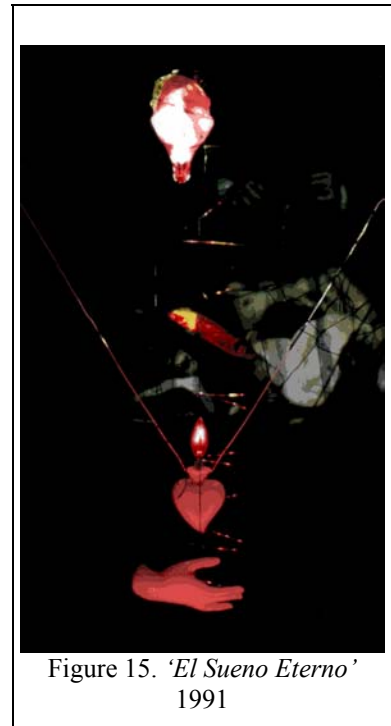


Figure 15. '*El Sueno Eterno*'
1991

²⁷ Reinhertz, S. (2001) *Women Called to the Path of Rumi*, Prescott, Arizona: Hohm Press, p13

²⁸ *ibid.*, p9

I have utilized this same heart-centre imagery on my website, the '*Castle of the Connectress*'. The core image has been re-grafted onto a background image of an architectural interior. Note that the image of *El Sueno Eterno* contains a spiralling helix encircling the other objects in the image of the heart and a skinned resin-coated goats head. The little head is staring straight at the heart below it. This emerged in 1991 as a kind of structure of the self. What is of central importance is its embodiment of the dynamic dualism between the mind and the heart represented by the head and the wax heart.

This stage of the journey could be described as the integration of these two facets. This section of the spiral refers to the personal process of integration of the opposites of thought and feeling. At the universal dimension, Robert Graves, according to Juliette Wood in *The Concept of the Goddess*, went so far as to describe this age old antagonism between thought and feeling as being reflected in the demise between History and Mythology in general.

Heart-Cross-Centre

At the personal embodied dimension this dynamic integration takes place in the heart centre, depicted often as the organ of the heart in many spiritual systems and within the Sufi in association with the image of the rose. As it occurred in my life, this part

of the journey manifested as a situation of dual occupancy. I was living both in the city and in nature, between Brisbane and the hills behind Byron

This image is not available online. Please consult the hardcopy thesis available from the QUT Library

“Bird Cross”
Goddess from Vinca culture
circa 4000 B.C.²⁹

Bay. I understood after a while what was happening and attempted to allow the process to occur. I did experience periods of homelessness at the time, and was financially destitute. In standard Western psychology, the answer to this scenario would be to ‘straighten the wheel’ to what looks right, it would

be suggested probably that I just make a decision to be in one or the other. From a Sufi perspective, the approach would be to allow the wheel to find its own momentum, and that will allow the organism to propel itself forward.

What only recently became apparent was seeing this process embodied in a body dynamic dimension in the image of the cross. The cross itself, at least initially, seems to represent the integration of dynamic dualism at the psychic dimension. Integral to this map, is the diagrammatic representation of the subtle energy bodies and their energetic doorways or energy centres/chakras in the human body. This is the energetic highway between the personal and universal (refer chakra diagram, p 34).

²⁹ Sjo, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, p92

Within ancient esoteric disciplines across the world from India to Mexico, through to contemporary articulations of the practice of energetics, the heart chakra is of central significance. The energetic heart chakra, located in the centre of the chest, mediates the left and right sides of the body through the arms.

The right arm embodies the masculine, intellectual, time-bound, rational principle and the left arm embodies the feminine, unboundedness, emotional, divine principle. This delineates the horizontal axis of the cross. There is also the dynamic transformation from the personal to the universal; (or what parapsychologist Ken Wilber calls, the ‘transpersonal’), the progression from the lower three chakras via the heart to the opening of the top three energetic chakras. This delineates the vertical axis of the cross as expressed in the human being and possibly represented in the “bird cross”.
(refer illus. p44)

Heart-Intelligence

The Sufis talk about a kind of ‘heart intelligence’ which is far more expansive than the limited faculty of the intellect, although that too has its uses. It has just become dominant to the point of detriment. There are extensive heart-eye image references within theosophical texts, which is interesting to note although the theosophists were not interested in worldly application of spiritual knowledge. Rudolf Steiner, a well known writer on spirit, philosophy and energetics, broke with the theosophists over this central issue, he went on to bring his grasp of philosophy and energetics into worldly application through devising and implementing the Steiner Education system. The heart is a keyhole/ entry to divine intervention. As Paulo Coelho weaves into his story, ‘*The Alchemist*’, a fable about following your dream.

“My heart is afraid that it will have to suffer.” the boy told the alchemist one night as they looked at the moonless sky. “Tell your heart that the fear of suffering is worse than suffering itself. And that no heart has ever suffered when it goes in search of its dreams, because every second is a second’s encounter with God and eternity”.³⁰



Figure 12. 'Heart Chamber(de Fortuito)' (of Chance) 2000

For the Sufi, the sound of the Ney flute, (the musical instrument used in the body-based Sufi practices of the Sema and the Whirling), represents the sound of the heart. It is the sound made as the transformed breath passes through the holes of the flute. The holes of the flute are the holes of the heart, the injuries which become doorways. One hundred holes in the heart are the one hundred wounds, are the one hundred holes in the beak of the phoenix bird.

³⁰ Coelho, P. *The Alchemist*, London: Harper Collins p137

Bird of Fire

The Phoenix is a beautiful bird with a long beak that has almost one hundred holes. Each hole produces a different note and each sound contains a particular secret. It lives for almost a hundred years and knows the exact moment of its death. When the yearning to return to its true home begins to fill its heart, it gathers a pile of date palm leaves and upon entering the mound, utters a plaintive cry sent out from the depths of its soul as its body trembles like a leaf shaken helplessly by the wind. At the sound of this cry, all the birds and the wild beasts gather to witness its passing. While the Phoenix still has breath, it beats its wings and ruffles its feathers causing the date palm leaves to catch fire. The bird and the fire become one. Finally there remains only one spark from which a new Phoenix arises.³¹



Figure 13. 'Sacred Wedding' video still from *Lunar Hierophanies* 2003

³¹ Reinhertz, S. (2001) *Women Called to the Path of Rumi*, Prescott, Arizona: Hohm Press. intro, (xx)



Figure 14. *'Real Time'* installation image (frozen bulls head), Brisbane 1993

Queen Pasiphae and the Minotaur

Another notion of the centre other than the heart is the Minotaur and the labyrinth. What is relevant here from mythology is the story of Queen Pasiphae, the great mother incarnate who reigned as Queen of Minoan Crete, and was the wife of King Minos II. Queen Pasiphae, as the story goes, was meant to have had sexual relations with a bull thus producing the Minotaur, a monster - half man and half bull. She was also the mother of Zeus Amon, whose Oracle was in Egypt.³² As she was the “Lady of the Underworld” she wore snakes on her head. Sir James Frazer thought that the legend of the sacred wedding reflected a union of sun and moon, and that it was enacted as a solemn rite by the King and Queen of Knossus. They wore the mask of bull and cow respectively.³³

The Bull Fight

Whilst living in Spain between 1988-1991 I had attended the bullfight... I just went to see what it was like. The event was well underway by the time I arrived at the ring. Before finally getting to a seat, I was suddenly rendered “frozen” by the sound coming forth from the first bull dying in the ring. The matador’s sword was piercing the heart of this huge beast, and it bellowed like nothing I had ever heard before or since! This unbelievable sound that rang out around the ring was so deep and painful; it stopped me in my tracks and penetrated my being. This was my induction into participation with the “heart-eye-bull” archetype relating to the centre of the labyrinth. On returning to Australia, I carried in my “centre” a frozen bull’s head - it was to become the focal point of my first installation work here in Brisbane.

³² Goodrich, N.L. (1989) *Priestesses*, New York: F Watts, p98

³³ *ibid.*, p101

Snake-Bird Goddesses

The symbolisms of snake, egg, horns, fish, and doe along with the female images of vulvas, triangles, and spiralling circles - all related to water - originate in Stone Age times. The horned rams and bulls of Neolithic ritual were sacrificed to the ancient Bird-and-Snake Goddess. The snake-spiral was *the* basis of ornamental composition in ancient Europe, its peak expression being 5000B.C.³⁴

Moon and Snake

Pregnancy itself was thought to be caused by the moon. The ancient moon cults were



in fact menstrual cults, menstrual blood being both sacred and biological because it is like liquid flesh and therefore magical and powerful.³⁵ In some ways pregnancy does come from the moon. Along with woman's normal once a month ovulation time, a woman can also conceive during her lunar cycle

fertile times. That means when the moon is in the same phase as it was at the time of her birth. That is, if a woman was born on the full moon, she will be potentially fertile at the full moon each month as well as at her mid-cycle ovulation time. Women and men and their cycles are affected by the moon via light emissions, ionization, electro-magnetism and gravity. These factors impact on their fertility, emotions and psychic abilities.³⁶ One connection between moon and snake has to do with the shedding of the womb material at menstruation mirrored by the shedding of skin by snakes.

³⁴ Sjoon, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, p60

³⁵ *ibid.*, pp151 & 189

³⁶ Naish, F. (1991) *Natural Fertility*, Birchgrove NSW Australia, Sally Milner, pp98-99



Figure 15. *'Moon & Snakey Arms'* video still from *Lunar Hierophanies* 2003

Women who were in particularly strong resonance with the moon-mind became shamans, oracular priestesses, witches.³⁷

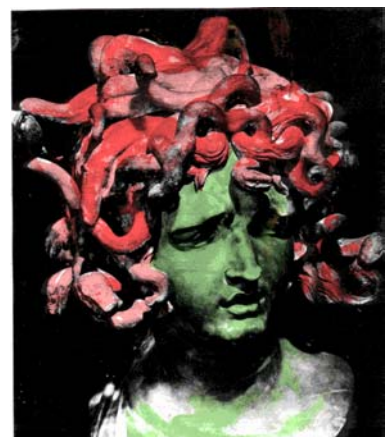
The Queen of Sheba & Medusa

Further there is the relationship between the snake-bird goddess imagery so dominant in Goddess cultures throughout the world; and particular iconic women such as Medusa who is synonymous with snakes and the Queen of Sheba who is inextricably bound up with bird imagery. Both female icons in the past possessing both spiritual and secular power. The body-based spiritual practices are integral to the process of female embodiment of spirituality and re-connective threads with ancient spiritual pathways.

This is what the Snake-and-Bird Goddess meant, symbolised; and the Thracian Maenads and all other legendary schools of priestesses in service to the Goddess were guardians of these original yogic-shamanic techniques. ...they “flew” into other realities... the consistency and ancientness of these images, of ecstatic dancing and the pulling of the serpentine bio-mystical energies up the human spine to achieve “wings”, or illuminated consciousness, argues for an intuitive knowledge of shamanic-yogic techniques amongst our earliest ancestors.³⁸

Medusa: the Snake-Goddess

Medusa was a High Priestess in a long line of African Amazon Warrior women. She wore snakes entwined in her hair; “high crowned with rows of cobras’ heads, adorned over the third eye”³⁹ as the Egyptian Queens and High



³⁷ Sjo, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, p189

³⁸ *ibid*, p 225

³⁹ Goodrich, N.L. (1989) *Priestesses*, New York: F Watts, p176

Priestesses had done. The domain of Medusa - North-West Africa was celebrated and feared for its huge snakes. In Africa, snake imagery is associated with the powers of the third eye and the pineal gland located behind the nose. The snake-hair of Medusa had the same reference. It was well known in the ancient world that injecting already immunised people with the same snake venom opened doors in the self to clairvoyance, illumination, creativity, prophetic visions and extraordinary mental abilities. The Egyptian Cobra Goddess is thus explained. It is likely that the “sacred snakes” kept at the Goddess’s oracular shrines were not only symbolic but the actual means through which divine revelation was attained. Some forms of snake venom have similar chemical properties to mescaline (peyote) or psilocibin in mushrooms.⁴⁰

The connection between snakes and transcendent power is not restricted to the African continent:

To the Chinese, for instance, snakes are at the bottom of all magic power, while the Hebrew and Arabic words for magic come from words that mean “snakes”.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Sjo, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, pp 60-61

⁴¹ Eliade, M.(1958) *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, New York: Sheed & Ward, p168

Medusa: High Priestess & Amazon Warrior Queen

This image is not available online. Please consult the hardcopy thesis available from the QUT Library

Achilles killing the Amazon Queen Penthesilea, painted by Exekias, 530B.C.⁴²

Medusa was the Queen of Libya (Nth West Africa, including what is now Morocco). She was the High Priestess of Africa, but perhaps also of Italy and Spain. These Amazon Warrior-Priestesses fought the Greek invasions, which is recorded in Greek art and literature. The Greek heroes such as Heracles (Hercules)⁴³ refused to condone the

practice of women ruling over men and so destroyed their “race” in North Africa. Heracles was the worst of their enemies; but all the Greek heroes; Bellerophon, Dionysus, Pelops and Achilles, were foes to the Amazons. They salted the earth of Asia and destroyed the Asian social system - a Matriarchy, which they despised. They were “combatants of mother-right”. These people were called “emetchi” which meant descended through women. (i.e. the children took the name of the mother, not the father). The Greeks misunderstood and called them “Amazon” thinking it meant “without one breast”. The Libyan (African) tribes worshipped the mother Goddess - her white naval stone was the Omphalos. It is said that the word “OM” “recalls the grief of the two immortal Gorgons, Stheno and Euryale after the death of their mortal sister, a priestess, named Medusa”. The moon was revered as was their goddess Neith - “great one of the bow”.⁴⁴

⁴² Sjojo, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, p246

⁴³ Goodrich, N. L. (1989) *Priestesses*, New York: F Watts, p32 mentions Heracles with Hercules in brackets indicating they are one and the same.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, pp33, 86, 175 her ref: J.J. Bachofen, Robert Briffault, Siculus



Figure 16. 'Archer' video still from '*Lunar Hierophanies*' 2003

I visited Morocco in 1989 for 10 days whilst I was living in Spain. I had never heard of Sufi, or knew anything about the Amazon warrior women or the Gorgon race. We entered old Fez through the keyhole of the city... What a device I thought to myself. I loved everything around me, the bath house, the vats of dye, the rug making, the donkeys, the courtyards with ceramic tiles, and the orange orchard... the medina..... but mostly the music... Berber music - Najat Atabu from the Atlas Mountains and Egypt's Oum Kaltoum - I had no inkling of a possibility that Medusa may have been a real person, let alone a Queen and that she had ruled over that very region. But I felt immense connections with that place when I visited. Never in my life have I had the sense of loss as I did when I left the shores of Nth West Africa. It feels like something is waiting for me there...

Snake-Hair

According to Eliade, there is the central European superstition which claims that taking the hair of a woman who is being influenced by the moon (that is menstruating), and burying it, will transform the hair into a snake.⁴⁵ This symbolism is connected to the “oroboros” - the female zero: zero and the snake swallowing its tail. Snakes, because they live underground, are thought to embody dead souls, secret wisdom and the aspect of clairvoyance.



Anyone, therefore, who eats a snake becomes conversant with the language of animals, and particularly of birds (a symbol which can also have a metaphysical meaning: access to the transcendent reality): this is a belief held by a tremendous amount of races.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Eliade, M. (1958) *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, New York: Sheed & Ward, p168

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p168

The Language of Birds

It is believed that the bird species evolved out of the reptilian species, scales became feathers. The eternity symbol of the “oroboros”, the snake swallowing its tail and the Goddess as the divine water bird with the serpentine neck, reside here together. Cormorants travel all three elemental territories, earth, air, water which can be equated with the three cosmic territories of earth, heaven and underworld. The curlew makes the call of death. The peacock - with its “all-seeing” tail of a thousand eyes is a symbol of immortality reputedly with a flesh that does not rot. The Leda and the Swan belongs here also, along with all the long-necked birds: the ibis: the flamingo: the swan: the goose: and “Mother Goose” which relates to the female oracle tradition of the middle ages and the wise Sibyls. So too, the story of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, along with Attar’s *The Conference of the Birds*, the famous Sufi story. King Solomon understood the language of birds, and the Queen of Sheba was oft portrayed in stories and depicted in prints in the Middle Ages as possessing a “bird -footed” or “gryphon-like” limb visible as she raised her skirt from what she thought was water on the floor of Solomon’s palace but in fact was “glass paving”.⁴⁷ The Hoopoo bird that brings the message of Bilqis (Sheba) is a much revered bird in Middle East; it is able to find water in the desert.

⁴⁷ Warner, M. (1995) *From the Beast to the Blonde*, New York: Straus & Giroux, p112



Figure 17. *'Lupa and the Peacock'* digital image 2001

Patience, Omnipresence and the Peacock

We had had the sessions of Sufi at Cuchimudlo Island... Whirling by the sea, the music of Omar Faruk Tekbelik and the call from the islands resident peacocks, all three elements are bound together now for me personally. So powerful were these sessions with the Sufi.

The peacock - that long-necked, thousand-eyed bird, with the flesh that doesn't rot, named "Pavo-Real" or Royal Turkey in Spain. The Peacock is a bird that loves to travel. You can see it everywhere, especially in the best 'locals' like the royal courts in the Middle East, in the Castle gardens in Portugal. I have often thought how the peacock is like the Sufi itself. It is such an adaptable bird, it seems to acclimatise to differing cultures and terrain like the Sufi, always searching, and eating rosebushes, swallowing thorns as well as rose petals as it goes. This is what makes it such a beautiful bird. Each thorn swallowed turns into an eye on this bird's incredible tail. Each painful experience endured is a doorway to another dimension of freedom in the developing consciousness. That tail - a wizardry symbol of omnipresence with its continuous eyes! Here again is the motion of the Mevlevi whirling. When we get a taste of spirit, how clear, how sweet, how elated we feel. The temptation, the urge, is to reproduce it....

I wanted to somehow instil my experiences with Sufi and the peacock into my artwork. I looked frantically around town for more peacocks to photograph. Of course I didn't find any. I had to be content with book reproductions as my starting point. This was about waiting for them to come to me.



Figure 18. 'Peacock Spin' digital image 2000

Some months later, installed on Mt Nebo... I began teaching the Sufi. Florence was the woman who looked after the key to the local hall. Amazingly, Florence had peacocks! I was greeted by not one, but eight beautiful peacocks!!!! Some months after this, a peacock from the valley below Nebo came to live with us! It was the same day I began receiving the second round of Brennan healing treatments.

I had a similar lesson in a bodily way about having to wait in 1999.

Body notes 1999;

I came to the idea that the next step on my journey was to go directly to the Sufi Foundation of America in New Mexico. The next day my back seized completely and I was bedridden for several weeks. I did not know what to make of this. I lay there unable to affect anything... was this the work of the saboteur? Or was I being shown in no uncertain terms life was going to proceed quite differently from here on? Patience and acceptance are what kept coming to my mind. The old ways were just not going to work any more.

Birds will Travel

In 2002, I lived between Brisbane and Rosebank, behind Byron Bay in the Hills. I journeyed a lot back and forth between the two places and the two cultures.

Sometimes whilst driving, I would start to "wind up". Sometimes worry projection or fear would take over. When this happened some kind of bird would fly at the car! It would come dangerously close, with enough disruption to my path to cause me to slow down substantially...This "message from the birds" had begun some years before, but because I have been on something of an accelerated journey the last few years, and because I was doing a lot of physical travelling on the road, the instances increased dramatically. The "message" seemed to be about remembering the

gentleness of spirit, synonymous with “bird” for me. That if I pushed the state of consciousness I was in any further it would collide with “spirit”. Did I want to kill that gentle little bird? No I did not.... so SLOW DOWN!!!!

On Nomadic Life, Travel and the Sufis

I was what they call “the perpetual traveller” at this stage of the project. Running, probably in fear... I had almost no topside life security at all at this stage. In his book *The Sufis*, Idries Shah says;

Travel both physically and metaphorically, can be an important part of dervish activity. The dervish travels in his own land (internally) and also through the countryside and from land to land (externally). Some Sheikhs spend no more than forty days in one place... On dead skins, by tanning, the effects of purity, of softness, and of delicacy appear; even so, by the tanning of travel, and the departure of natural corruption and innate roughness, appears the purifying softness of devotion and change from obstinacy to faith... Yet dervishes may not travel at all... Those who have no teacher sometimes travel permanently.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Shah, I. (1964) *The Sufis*, New York: Anchor Books, Double Day, p302



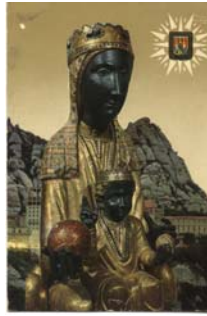
Figure 19. 'Sheba and Raven' video still from *Lunar Hierophanies* 2003

Black Birds

When I lived at the Ashram last year in Rosebank NSW, I learnt from people around there that the Black Cockatoos were a signal of coming rains. I would watch this and sure enough it happened many times, that they came in large numbers before big rains and in small numbers with light rain. They didn't come when there was no rain.

The Black Madonna

In this section I wish to refer to between the earth- centred Black world, the Queen of Sheba, and



Queen of Sheba

stories that suggest relationships monarchies of the ancient the icons of the Black

Madonnas that still physically exist. The Queen of Sheba is associated with the black bird of the 'raven'. The raven is also associated with 'hermeticism'. There are Black Madonnas in different parts of the European continent. The famous and celebrated Shrine of the Black Madonna housed at the Cathedral of Montserrat, located just outside of Barcelona is a wonderful example. Montserrat is a very holy place. The land mass of the site itself is very powerful, consisting of very high solid bald stone. The monastery is located towards the summit. To ascend the mountain involves a cable car journey over a steep ravine. The Cathedral adjacent to the monastery has a courtyard surrounded by archways with impressive views. People come from very far away in order to receive miracle healings from the Black Madonna. They stand in line for hours waiting to have their opportunity to touch the statue of the Black Madonna dressed in gold. When asked about the "blackness" of the Madonna of Montserrat, people would say that her blackness had to do with the Madonna being "burnt" in one of the fires, and how that region was prone to fires.



Figure 20. *'Black Priestess'* video still from *Lunar Hierophanies* 2003

The Queen of Sheba

In different parts of Africa and the Middle East, there are differing versions of the story of the Queen of Sheba. The Ethiopian Church had venerated the Queen of Sheba for centuries. Unnamed in the Koran, but referred to as Bilqis by Middle Eastern Historians; the Queen of Sheba is a fascinating icon. This story is present in all three of the brethren patriarchal religions, signals the shift in power from matriarchy and the nature/female centred cultures to the patriarchal God centred, and urban centred religions. It is a significant story. Sheba stood for pagan wisdom. She is one of our links to earth wisdom.

Marina Warner in *From the Beast to the Blonde*, recounts a version of the story named, ‘*The Glass Paving and the Secret foot of the Queen of Sheba*’ In folk tales in the Middle East, Solomon hears from his messenger the hoopoo, (a bird) that a fabulously rich queen, called Bilqis has come to the throne in the South, she worships the sun, not Allah. She stands in relation to the Muslim Solomon as a pagan, just as she does to the Jewish proto Christian King and just as Sheba in the Old Testament realises the truth of King Solomon’s God so she does in the Koran.

Sheba or Saba is associated with ‘south’. Sheba was the exotic and sensual Queen of the South. This so called “splay-footed queen who tested the Wisdom of Solomon with her questions” was restored, according to patriarchal religious texts, when her recognition of the “true” God occurred. That is to say, whenever she began to honour and worship a patriarchal God as opposed to her earth wisdom.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Warner, M. (1995) *From the Beast to the Blonde*, New York: Straus & Giroux, p115

She is depicted as the raven head, black and black hair, characteristically discernible by her “secret foot”, which over time, cultures altered and transformed considerably. Very often the Queen of Sheba is associated with birds, and depicted as having a bird or reptilian like limb.⁵⁰ The idea of the deformed limb beneath the dress changes in meaning at times suggesting abilities at witchcraft at other times it refers to demonic, monstrous or “hairy” qualities of women. All the superstition, curiosity and fear related to the male apprehension of women and what lurked beneath the dress.



Figure 21. *'Queen of Sheba'* digital image 2002

Warner describes the ubiquitous quality of such stories and the capacities of story and fairytale in general. She says they can be,

anarchically heterogeneous, absorbing high and low elements, tragic and comic tones into often simple structures of narrative that turn up on parchment in Medieval Persia, in an oral form in the Pyrenees, in a ballad sung in the Highlands, in a fairy story in the Caribbean.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p112

⁵¹ *ibid*, p xxi

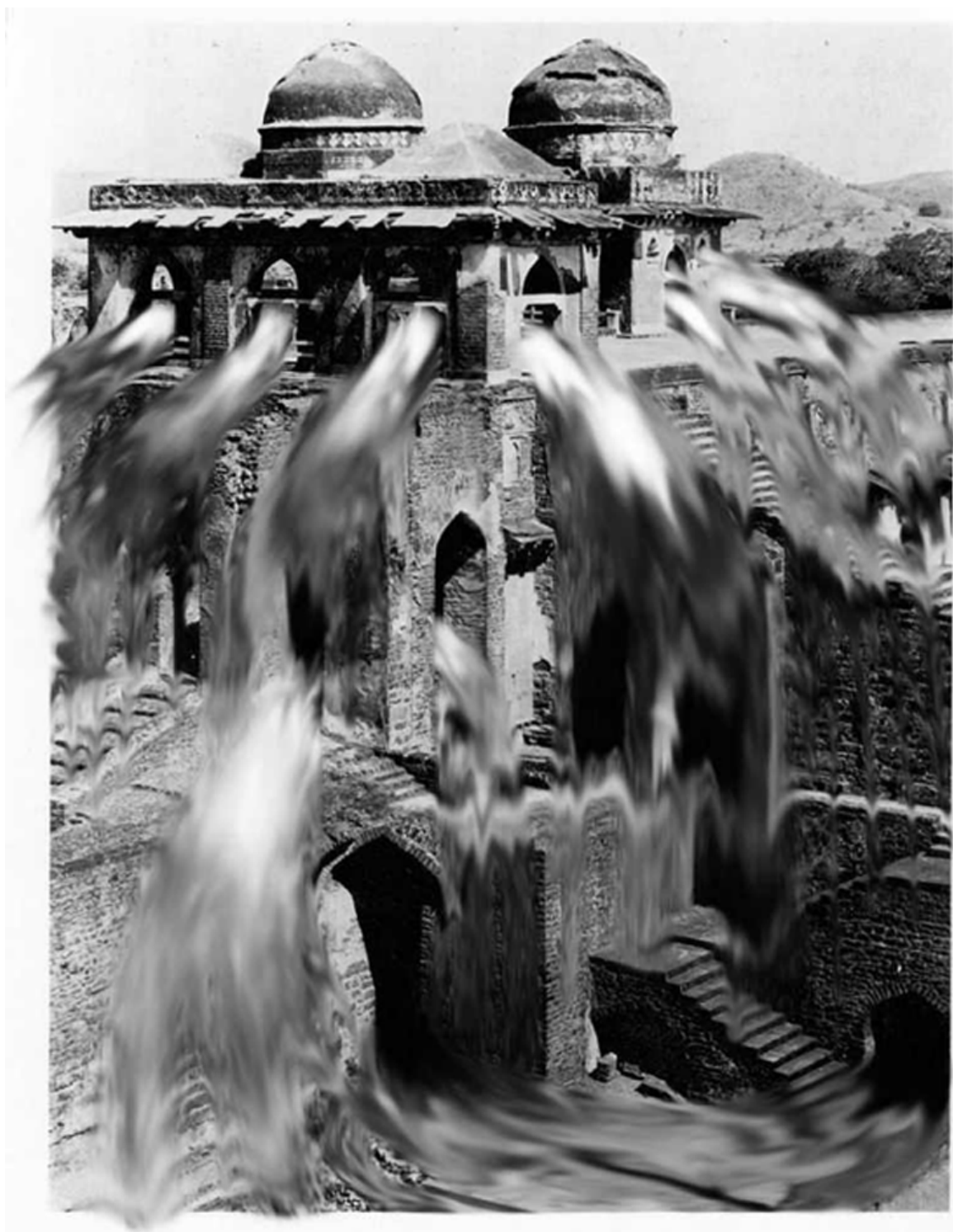


Figure 22. '*Castle of the Connectress*' image from website 2000

CREATIVE PRACTICE

WEBSITE: *Castle of the Connectress* (2000)

The Water Snake under the Earth.

The imagery on the website, *Castle of the Connectress* was created around ideas of sacred spaces, my personal reconnection to my feminine self and the integral and ancient associative symbology with water. We are here in the realm of Hydromancy. It is also a lament (although the home page appears more like an act of defiance rather than resigned lamentation!), at the energetic loss caused by the rectilinear structured layouts of cities in the west which trap the great serpent beneath the ground.

Catal Huyuk was an ancient city in the Near East. Archaeologically, it is one of the most extensive and significant sites in relation to data on the Neolithic Goddess cultures. Twelve layers of civilisation have been excavated dating back to 6500BC. Cities such as Catal Huyuk were built over sacred water wells where blind springs appeared over the earth. These were places of great harmony, imbued with of great healing capacity and therefore held as sacred. These sites were regarded as the centre of the Great Goddess religion. *This is* where she dwelt. Temples, as well as keyhole entries to cities were built over the top of these holy water sites because it protected the entry and exit of the inhabitants.⁵²

⁵² Sjoon, M. & Mor, B. (1987) *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco: Harper, p126

The sentiment of the artwork ensued out of my own visits to the bath house with women friends here in Brisbane. I did indeed hold these trips as sacred. The sensual body practice of resplendent shared bathing in a protected environment is a wonderful experience. These trips to the bath house restored and regenerated my being at many levels. This revitalization of the Goddess of Mythology at such a personal level and experience of inner harmony is what is significant. This is another example of female spirituality embodied in contemporary life, linking back to the Goddess, the source, via the great water serpent through time and space. Recently a friend saw a Russian woman at the bath house using large amounts of honey on her body in between entering the sauna and the spa. We've reintegrated that one! The Melissal Goddess bee connection is lovely.

VIDEO: Castle of the Connectress (2001)

Glass Architecture and Orgasms with God

The *Castle of the Connectress* Video is constructed with excerpts of myself performing Sufi movement immersed in ‘unsolid’ architectural structures. The background images of interiors of sacred buildings are images from the website of the same title.

For a very long time ideas and evocations of glass architecture have been flowing in and out of my focus. The Spanish mystic, St Teresa d’Avila wrote a work called *El Castillo*. I resonated deeply with this idea when I encountered her story in Spain in 1989. I titled my exhibition of blood paintings at the time; ‘*El Castillo Interior - Viajando in el Sistema Nervioso*’. Her experience of divine embodiment is well known – as her “orgasms with God”. She writes on the expansion of the soul,

The soul is a castle made entirely out of a diamond or a very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms.⁵³

One concept at the foundation of this work extends from the use of light symbolically, and in a consciousness sense, to challenge the dominant mechanistic and materialistic paradigm of the time bound intellect. Here is what St. Teresa had to say about the unboundedness of the soul...

⁵³ Bielecki, T. (1996) *Ecstasy and Common Sense*, Boston USA: Shambala Publications, p20



Figure 23. '*Cante Jondo*' image from website 2000

Let us imagine that within ourselves is an extremely rich palace, built entirely of gold and precious stones... The things of the soul must always be considered as plentiful, spacious, and large; to do so is not an exaggeration. The soul is capable of much more than we can imagine.⁵⁴

These elements of reflectivity of building materials, and human interaction with those materials, are a recurring focus in this work. It arises again with the imagery of the Queen of Sheba story, *The Glass Paving and the Secret Foot of the Queen of Sheba* which is detailed in the Conceptual Framework. There is the glass paving, which Sheba thinks is water, and hence lifts her dress.

Eye-Heart

The ‘eye-heart-centre’ imagery in *Heart Chamber de Fortuito* was discussed in detail in the Conceptual Framework. This image is used both in the *Castle of the Connectress* Website and the Video of the same title. This image speaks of the expansiveness, holistic, and quantum perspective of “heart intelligence” and its natural superiority over the limited intellect. This materialistic mono-focused-linear approach to life has improved the quality of life for some people on the planet. It is a partitioned view of life which is unsustainable for the planet. It exists at an enormous cost to the earth.

⁵⁴ Bielecki, T. (1996) *Ecstasy and Common Sense*, Boston USA: Shambala Publications, p20

VIDEO: Lunar Hierophanies (2003)

The Perennial Moon-Egg

This cut of the video is about 75% complete, equivalent to a late rough /early fine cut of the video within industry standards. The major symbols employed in *Lunar Hierophanies* are discussed in the Key Conceptual Framework Chapter beginning with the 'Moon'. The title of the video was borrowed from Mercia Eliade's book *Patterns in Comparative Religions*. As Eliade reminds us, the moon is in constant change, rhythm and periodic recurrence, and so symbolically represents the holistic nature of life. This is in stark contrast to the linear trajectory of the dominant world view that we are on some journey in a rocket ship of no return. The perennial presence of the moon and other elements indicates something other than this. Almost all the music is Sufi music which conveys a similar sentiment. From a Sufi and quantum physics perspective, we are the rocket ship. It is all up to us!

The moon by her nature looms egg-like in the night sky. The whitish-orange moon footage on *Lunar Hierophanies* subdivides and hovers. The image on Video was created by recording the moon through a palm frond waving in the breeze. I discovered this effect by accident. The image shifts and changes resembling an insect head then a lotus flower, and then becoming bouncing planes of light emissions.



Figure 24. 'Egghead' video still from *Lunar Hierophanies* 2003

The Sacred Goat

The goat and other hoofed animals have acquired unfortunate associations in Christian thought. There is an intention to reinscribe original meanings around the image of the goat. As Christian thought has dominated Western Culture for a long time these associations are deeply ingrained. In the Conceptual Framework (refer to pages 40-41), the goat horn and moon connections based on their meanings within the old earth religions are discussed.

The Lost Stone Mountain

The “Egghead” image developed out of a dream I had one morning last year in which I saw a woman standing on the top of a stone mountain, balancing a large egg on her head. I had been reading Goodrich’s *Priestesses* and walking in the mists of the mountains a lot in New South Wales. I am conscious of re-connective threads of meaning forming between the “Egghead” image to Medusa, the Goddess of Mountains and that section of the world (Morocco, North-West Africa), to the Berber women who live in the Atlas Mountains, and the original inhabitants of the Canary Islands. I have read references to the Atlantean myths regarding this region. My mind always draws towards the chilling story I was told by a Sanyasan man who has a spiritual retreat on the Canary Islands. He told me that the indigenous people were harassed for centuries by the Spanish, and finally instead of submitting to Spanish rule, the remaining inhabitants ran to a cliff on the island and jumped to their death as one... I am left wondering what golden threads of knowledge they took with them and were these people Atlantean?



Figure 25. 'Sacred Wedding' video still from *Lunar Hierophanies* 2003

Coming Home to 'Ollin Arageed' - The Sacred Wedding

The scene involving the scrub turkey towards the middle of Lunar Hierophanies has several resonances. The scrub turkey is scratching the ground, this much is clear; the bird is preparing to nest. The scrub turkey creates a huge mound of leaves in which to lay its eggs. The actions of the turkey are nervous, unsettled, and wiry. Is this the place? Will I nest here? My own life situation felt like that of the turkey. Can I settle here? Where is home?

But there is another resonance to this scene. I chose the music of Hamza El Din's, *Ollin Arageed*, which is a lively Nubian Percussion piece. Now we have a dancing scrub turkey as well! *Ollin Arageed* turns out to be a significant piece of music, because it is traditionally played but once in a person's lifetime - at their first wedding celebrations. I registered the connection between the Attar quote (p48) describing the Phoenix creating transformational fire in the date palm leaves preparing to return to its "true home" and the motions of the scrub turkey in the leaves. So there is also another marriage resonance!

Rumi's son, Sultan Veled devised *Shebi Arus* - (the Wedding Night) to honour his father's death, his return to home and union with the Divine. The Moon is said to have glowed red on the day of Rumi's death on the 17th of December, 1273. At about the same time as all these connections became apparent, a good friend's father, who had been a jazz player, died. At his funeral they played at his request, *The Golden Wedding*, but without any conscious references to a union with the divine.

Sun-Moon Energies

The working of the energetic fields, personally and universally; always striving for peace, harmony and personal empowerment is what is significant. Personal empowerment is the embodying of the feminine spirit principle, and that is centred in “blamelessness” and “forgiveness”, being neither made bigger nor smaller by the comments of other people and learning to embody the fullness of our soul without “burning” other people. This does not mean the suppression of anger.



Figure 26. video still from *Lunar Hierophanies* 2003

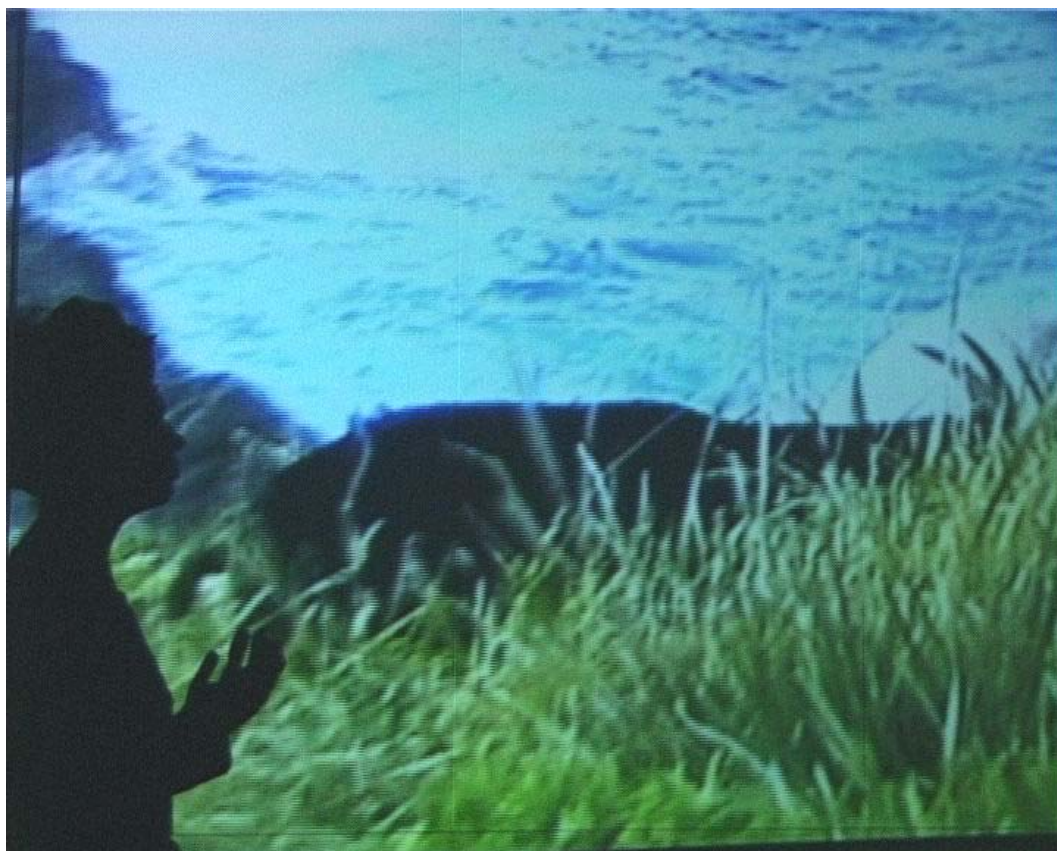


Figure 27. 'Oooooommm' video still from *Lunar Hierophanies* 2003

Om - Quantum Physics and the Education System as a Significant Public Space

In the early part of the video just before the “morphing” moon footage, a silhouette appears of myself in the edge of the frame. I am sounding the word “OM”. As part of my Masters, I participated in workshops with Frankie Armstrong (of *As Far As the Eye Can Sing* notoriety) when she was in Australia last year. Frankie travels the world connecting and collecting aural vocal traditions. One sound process she works is around the creation of goat/herd calls based on her research into these traditions. This sound image came out of this process.

This is just a fragment in the video but the roots of this sound image travel deep. There is a critical link between aural based vocal traditions around the world, Medusa, hooved animals and the element of stone; Stonehenge, stone mountains and the Omphalos. This great ganglion of meaning hangs from this brief sound-image of myself chanting “OM”. There is a hypothesis about the ability and practice of humans of the ancient world to have used sound vibration to “move mountains” or to construct large stone monuments around the world. Quantum physics reminds us that “reality” is just not as concrete and binding as our fearful minds have led us to believe. Our fixation on constructing a material reality to secure ourselves rests “squarely” on “some wobbly waves”. On the subatomic level matter with a certainty of place does not exist but rather shows tendencies to exist. Particles can be created from energy and vanish into energy!⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Brennan, B. *Hands of Light*, p24 Barbara Brennan is a scientist as well as a practising healer and psychotherapist - she worked as a research scientist for NASA at the Goddard Space Centre and has a MS in Atmospheric Physics.

Reality, the quantum physicists tell us now, is a field of possibilities. A field of potential wave vibrations determining what will become real. This field of wave vibrations is responsive to our human wave vibrations in the form of sound waves but also to our thought patterns or waves. Early in this project I was considering what public spaces could be relevant for the application of my study. Education is one such public space. I question the relevance of current dominance of rational-logic approaches to philosophical, creative *and* academic inquiry. The nature of the universe is not separate - it is a whole.

Parts are seen to be in immediate connection, in which their dynamical relationships depend in an irreducible way on the state of the whole system...Thus, one is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analysability of the world into separately and independently existing parts.⁵⁶

An ‘embodied connective’ approach to life is also applicable to the Education system. The study of the universe, with whatever focus, could take place quite differently. It could entail broader contexts of learning and understanding, it could intend to foster “heart intelligence”, it could contain connective aesthetics, it could engender wholeness and maintain awareness of our incredible mechanism (the body organ) simultaneously as we investigate areas of study. It could honour its inception and origins, and it could accommodate more cross-disciplinary study given that the borders imposed around disciplines are artificial. Spiritual practice can be thought about in relation to health and healing - in relation to video making - in relation to ecological principles and practice. All can be embodied in a modality reflective of our current awareness and the knowledge of the nature of our holistic existence as experienced and articulated through quantum physics spiritual practice and personal life.

⁵⁶ Brennan, B. *Hands of Light*, p25 from David Bohm *The Implicate Order*

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APPENDIX 1

Masters Time line: (1998-2003)

Dimension (1) - Natural Therapies: Massage & Energy Work

- 1998 My own healing: counselling sessions w/ Jan Cullis
 Received Kinesiology & massage from Sahaja.
 Received Kahuna massage treatments.
 Jan - May: own self bodywork: Ashtanga Yoga asanas
 Aug-Oct: attended Ashtanga Yoga w/ Ian Clark
 Jan-Dec: attended some classes in Somatic Yoga & Qi Gong w/ Fran Archer
 Aug-Oct: attended Hatha Yoga w/ Peter Bisson
- 1999 Feb; attended weekly Body-Mind-Centering workshops w/ Corola Crusche Paddington
 Feb- May: Certificate in Therapeutic Swedish Massage: Anatomy & Physiology, Massage techniques. Supervised Clinic. Academy of Natural Health, Brisbane
 May - Oct : working from home in Massage
 Oct- Dec: continued from home & began working for The Float Centre Paddington
 Received treatments & knowledge of Kinesiology, clairvoyance, inner energy instruction, psychic protection & clearing w/ Karen Quirey
 Received Remedial Massage w/ Bernard Evens after my back seized completely
- 2000 June: Brennan Healing work received from Nicolien Gravemaker X 3 (1 - 1/12hrs each)
 Oct: Brennan Healing work received from Probat (Haric Healing) (3 sessions)
 Aug; relocated to Mt Nebo to be in the forest, to keep my energetic field clear.
 Reiki Training at Clear Mountain
- 2001 Certificate in Lymphatic Drainage (a Massage technique) ACNM, Brisbane
- 2002 Dec: Received self sabotage release sessions ini Horstman technique Carolyn Somers, Bush flower remedies; Fringed Violet, Grey Spider, Five Corners essences
- 2003 Jan: Received self-sabotage release sessions Horstman technique Carolyn Somers
 Nov-Dec: Working in Port Douglas Day Spa & Sheraton Hotel in Massage & Energy work (one on one treatments) in FNQ
 Dec-Feb: Working in Hastings St Massage Clinic, Noosa Heads and Sea to Sky Massage Centre Peregian Beach in Massage & Energy work

*Dimension (2) - Sacred Arts: Sufi, drumming, chanting,
women's circles*

1997 **SUFI**

July: attended weekend w/shop w/ Tamsin Murray: Sufi teacher from Sufi Foundation America, New Mexico

DRUMMING

African Drumming workshops with Elliot Orr

African Drumming retreat Kondalilla Falls Ne Tete – (had Kundalini experience)

1998 **SUFI**

Aug: Resumed my own practice of Sufi

Oct- November: attending Sufi workshops w/ Salima: a long term student of Sufi Master Adnan Sarhan of the Sufi Foundation of America in New Mexico.(weekly workshops 3 hrs)

Nov-Dec: Resumed own practise Sufi: averaging 4 mornings per week

1999 **SUFI**

March: Salima (student of Sufi Master - Adnan Sarhan) returned: resumed classes

April-Sept: Gathered people to practice Sufi at home, every week for 2hrs

Sept-Dec: Lead Sufi at the Local Hall, free of charge every week for 2hrs

WOMENS CIRCLES: Sat 26th? Full moon gathering round the fire (3hrs)

‘Moonday’⁵⁷ July 5th at Sandys (4hrs)

‘Moonday’ July 26th at home at Paddington(4hrs)

Friday 13th August at hm. (4hrs)

‘Moonday’ 30August at hm. (4hrs)

‘Moonday’ 18th October at hm. (4hrs)

‘Moonday’ 8November at hm. (4hrs)

2000 **SUFI**

July-Aug: Salima returned:resumed classes.

Sept-Oct: Began teaching Sufi workshops at Mt Nebo Hall.

July-Dec: Private practise Sufi at home. (2-6hrs per week)

met Karim Zayanni - Namatullah Sufi Sheikh

⁵⁷ The word Monday originates with Moon so too the other days of the week are linguistically and energetically connected with the other planets.

WOMENS CIRCLES:

March 4/5 “building the Bird Spirit Tower” for International Women’s Day

‘Moonday’ March: at Paddington

Wednesday 21st June Toms Gateway, Mt Nebo

Friday 13th October Gadgara Mt Nebo.

2001 **SUFI**

Jan-Feb: Lead the Sufi work at Neal Macrossan Hall Paddington Brisbane
maintained email connection to Namatallah Sufi Sheikh.

DRUMMING

Nov: Performed at all night Rave Party, RNA Showgrounds Brisbane. Improvisation with 6
other drummers over DJ techno music.

2002 **SUFI**

April-June: Lead the Sufi work at local hall at Rosebank
maintained email connection to Karim

CHANTING /VOICE WORK

Chris James Toning Sessions Monday nights at the Sound Temple Rosebank NSW

Workshops w/ visiting Frankie Armstrong, at Mt Nebo Hall

Performance Workshops w/ Jondi Keane Griffith University Gold Coast

2002 **SUFI**

June: Salima returned: 1 class at Samaya Osho Ashram Rosebank

Feb-June: sporadic drumming at markets in Byron Bay Shire

2004 Feb: attended Sufi workshops with Tamsin Murray at Jagara Arts Hall South Brisbane

2002 **DRUMMING**

Oct-Dec: Brisdjembe; participating in drumming circles at Roma St Parklands each Thursday

2003

Jan-April; Brisdjembe; participating in drumming circles at Roma St. Parklands each
Thursday

Dimension (3) - Light Based Media: Digital Stills & Video

This dimension is an investigation into archetypal imagery & symbolism in static and time-based light media and its analogous relationship to dream imagery and the connection to the great Serpent through time i.e. the collective unconscious. It involves the development of a 'language of the world' through the conscious connection between personal intuitive imagery and the image bank of perennial cross-cultural wisdom.

(a) The static digital stills imagery (2000-2003)

Lupa and the Peacock Series

Cante Jondo

El Sueno Returno

Chamber de Cegar

Divergent Eye

Convergent Eye

(b) The website: www.geocities.com/lupaliss

Castle of the Connectress (2000)

(c) The video: *Castle of the Conectress*(5mins) (2001) Myself performing Sufi movements in a non solid architectural background. The background images were centred around explorations of ideas about sacred space.

(d) The video : *Sex, Drugs and String Quartets- Leon's Story* (7mins) Art Direction & Co Direction on Set for 7min fictionalised documentary for TV. Producer/Director Carla Thackrah (Sept 2002- Mar 2003) purchased by the ABC in 2004. A more mainstream investigation into the use of the energetics and symbolism referred to in the thesis as a 'language of the world'.

(e) The video: *Lunar Hierophanies* (9mins) (2001 -2003)

Performance sketches with back and front projection, bird imagery mostly peacock and raven, moon and goat imagery with focus on the horns and their relationship to the double crescent labrys.

APPENDIX 2

Spiritual Heritage Timeline

This Spiritual Heritage Timeline is neither complete nor totally accurate. It is a beginning. Some of the dates are conjecture. It is helping to build a picture. The dates correspond to the text beginning on the line below it.

7000BC

Anatolia , Jordan, Persia ... Goddess Cultures.. wild goats wandering on the Anatolian plateau the name Rumi derives from “ Rum”; the name for Anatolia. (*The Great Cosmic Mother*, p88)

6500 BC

Catal Huyuk

One of the most complete sites excavated of Neolithic Goddess culture in the Near East: (Sjoo & Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother*, p89)

**5300BC-
4000BC**

Thrace, South Eastern Europe - the Balkan people worshipped Diana, Selene (one of the bow) Vinca culture near present Belgrade in Yugoslavia, “snake-bird imagery”. (2,000 figurines of the Goddess in snake-bird form found. Thrace is thought of as the original home of witchcraft-woman wisdom. (*The Great Cosmic Mother*, p93, their ref: Apuleius)

1000BC?

Queen of Sheba - probably Ethiopia

4000BC

Patriarchal cosmological texts

**1400BC
323BC**

Scythian, Hittite cultures around the Black Sea. Amazon warrior Priestesses, Gorgon culture Nth West Africa. Amazon warrior women fought the Greek invasions. Amazon warrior women defence through the Trojan Wars and the military conquests of Asia by Alexander the Great (Sjoo & Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother*, their ref: p33 Adolphe Reinach: Historian of Religion & master of Asian languages)

**2000BC
1800BC**

Stonehenge II, UK.

Amazon warrior Women (Priestesses) The wars between the Greeks and the Amazons took place on the southern shores of the Black Sea and on the Nth-Eastern Anatolian plateau (modern Afghanistan) (Goodrich *Priestesses* p33 her ref.J.J. Bachofen ,German Scholar)

1450BC

Libyan (African) population migrated to Crete.

1000BC?

Medusa - Queen of Libya, Nth-West Africa (Morocco), Gorgon culture, Amazon warrior High Priestess of Africa and possibly Italy and Spain as well. She is inextricably bound up with snake imagery. (Goodrich, *Priestesses* p 172)

1000BC?

Queen of Sheba - probably Ethiopia

800BC

“The final result of the Greek invasions into Asia minor was the migration of the Amazons to the North Shore of the Black Sea. By 800BC they had joined the Scythian people. (Goodrich *Priestesses* p45 her ref: Reinach)

429BC

347BC

Plato: Greek Philosopher (Ficino, M. *The Book of Life*, glossary)

350BC

Last Amazon wars. Time of Alexander the Great. (Goodrich, *Priestesses*)

384BC

322BC

Aristotle: Greek philosopher

500AD

Hypatia, The female Head of the School of Philosophy in Alexandria assassinated. The Great Library of the world’s ancient knowledge (including a lot of astronomical and astrological knowledge) purposefully destroyed (*The Great Cosmic Mother*, p454)

800AD

Rabi’a of Basra (Sufi woman prior to Rumi) (Reinhertz, *Women Called to the Path of Rumi*, p15)

Shamanic practices of turning still prevalent amongst the nomadic peoples of Anatolia. (Reinhertz, *Women called to the Path of Rumi*, p13)

1273d

Muhammad Jelaluddin Rumi (Turkey) Development of Sufi Mevlevi order - Sultan Veled (Rumi’s son) The whirling becomes formalised. Women and Men whirl together in Turkey both formally and informally (Reinhertz *Women called To the Path of Rumi*, p16)

1320

1391?

Lalla - (speculative facts based on the poetry) Indian Mystic born in Kasmir. Only 2 words have meaning in Kashmir, Allah and Lalla. also known as Lal Ded, Lal Didi, Mai Lal Didi, meant granny, Grandmother Lalla was a great yogini, prophetess and practioner of Yoga. She was known for wandering naked, dancing and singing songs. “Many doctrial streams were merging: Shavism, Sufism. Vedantic non- dualism, Lalla is beyond religious categories. (Coleman Barks trans. *Naked Song*, p9)

1400's

Shattari Sufi - Sheikh Shattar brings the "rapid technique" to India. Its mother order Naqshbandi was most widely distributed in Afghanistan, Turkistan and other parts of Central Asia and Ottoman Turkey. (Idries Shah, *The Sufis*, p415)

Black Death

Wanton tree cutting - possibly attributed to the imbalance on the planet manifesting in the plague.

(Sjoo & Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother*, p 255)

Jean of Arc (France)

1515

1582

St. Teresa d'Avila

"Sharp as a sword as Toledo, bright as a sun-drenched plain, firm as the stone towers of Avila, Teresa harnessed not only her mules but the deep recesses of her warrior energy. Then she travelled the Spanish countryside, using her parlour charm and wit for a mighty purpose." She was born in Avila ... noble city of saints & songs, she reformed the Carmelite order, founded many Carmelite monasteries, mystical marriage with the divine bridegroom. "*El Castillo Interior*" ref: my artwork

(Tessa Bielecki, *Teresa of Avila – Ecstasy and Common Sense*, p xvi, xvii)

1600s

1800s

The Wicker (Britain)

The ideas we have about witches (who were also herbal healers and midwives) are based almost exclusively on the Inquisition trial records from the 16th-18th centuries. The Christian Church of Europe backed by the European medical profession was intent on cleaning out all traces "earth based wisdom", the life of the pagans. The aspiring profession of male doctors wanted no economic competition from the witch/earth wisdom women. Prior to this,

...many of the great early European doctors of medicine and pharmacology, like Paracelsus, claimed openly that they had learned all they knew of healing and drugs directly from women's witchcraft (*The Great Cosmic Mother*, p203)

APPENDIX 3

Sample Healing Treatment Forms.

This appendix is not available online. Please consult the hardcopy thesis available from the QUT Library