THE FEMALE METAPHOR
- VIRGIN, MOTHER, CRONE -
OF THE DYNAMIC COSMOLOGICAL
UNFOLDING:
Her Embodiment in Seasonal Ritual
as a Catalyst for
Personal and Cultural Change

by

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PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. Neither this research nor this thesis have been submitted to any other University or Institution for the award of a higher degree.

Glenys Livingstone

11 February 2002
ABSTRACT

This research is a study of the Female Metaphor in her three aspects of Virgin, Mother and Crone. It is an interpretation of these three faces as representing the Dynamic by which the Cosmos unfolds, that is, the extant Creativity that is in continual transformation and has always been so. Accordingly, as this thesis takes the Cosmos to be a seamless whole, the conscious alignment of one’s being with this Creativity would be a more complete alignment with the continual process of transformation innate to Being.

This research re-stories the Female Metaphor in her three aspects, as an image and dynamic of Ultimacy, and this re-storying is enhanced by an identification of Her three faces with Thomas Berry’s three faces of Cosmogenesis – differentiation, communion, and autopoiesis – which he and Brian Swimme say compose “the fundamental ordering of the universe” (1990: video 4). They call the composition of these three, “cosmic grammar” (ibid).

The ritual celebration of seasonal points are then developed as a method of embodying and sensualizing, and “speaking” this deep Dynamic of Creativity – as a method of aligning one’s being with the continual cosmological unfolding. These ritual celebrations are based in ancient Western spiritual practice that relates with Earth’s cyclical transitions. Presented here is a convergence of such Earth-based spiritual practice with a Western scientific cosmology.

The research project then inquires into the effects of celebrating Earth’s seasons in rituals based on female imagery and into the effects of the use of female imagery for spiritual expression, that is, to speak of Divinity, the Universe, Earth and the deepest parts of the personal self as Female. My inquiry is into the effects of such imagery and seasonal celebration on personal feelings, thoughts, imagination and behaviour; and also into any effects on the participants’ relationships with others, with the culture at large, and with Earth and Cosmos. While I focus on the effects on
participants, this thesis is equally an inquiry into such effects on myself, as
convenor and facilitator of seasonal ritual and deep identification with the
Female Metaphor as a path of spiritual unfolding.

Through methods of ritual, meditation, imagination, dance and storytelling,
over the period of the annual seasonal cycle, I created a context. It was a
context that sought to enable more harmonious relationship with self, other
and Cosmos through identification of the self with an organic and primordial
process innate to the unfolding Cosmos.

I found it to be a process that catalyzed personal transformation of the
participants over time - a transformation that has clear and inevitable
cultural implications. While it is not the focus of this thesis to track these
cultural changes, such change is implicit in the personal and relational
changes experienced and noted, since the personal and the cultural are
mutually embedded in a shamanic process like this is.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge those whom I perceive as directly influential in the development of this work. They are each specifically referred to within the work as well.

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ritual celebration that enabled the “real presence” of the participants. It was thought then that he was training priests and “lay ministers” – none of us knew he was training priestesses.

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PREFACE

I reflect on this thesis process - how it has been an alive process, a living process, “a butterfly flitting around the garden”. It is a study of this nature – dynamic - therefore bound to miss so much. Within the time frame, and within my capacity for observation and experience, I have received as much of the subtleties of the dynamics as I could. A butterfly pinned in a box used to be accepted once as a basis for knowledge of the butterfly ... it is not any longer.

It is not possible for this work to be a logical, complete package; it can only ever be partial. I am aware that this kind of thinking can be an excuse for a lack of diligence and careful commitment, but I believe that this is not the case. On the contrary, I believe that it is because of my careful attention to the nature of the work, that I have realized its depths and my novice status. As Denzin notes, in the context of interviews though it is relevant in a broader way here in this context,

"The subject is more than can be contained in a text, and a text is only a reproduction of what the subject has told us. What the subject tells us is itself something that has been shaped by prior cultural understandings. Most important, language ... displaces the very thing it is supposed to represent, so that what is always given is a trace of other things, not the thing – lived experience – itself" (quoted by Miller and Glassner 1997:101).

Much of this thesis can only be like the painting of a picture. Even if it could be a photograph, it would never be the complete experience. When one photographs a magnificent vista, even with the best of equipment, it can never be adequate to the experience; and it can never fully expose the depths of what is actually there. In the case of my presenting of this work and the “equipment” that is being used: I am attempting to describe with text/words, experiences and multivalent understandings. It is being perceived and written from within the perspective of my own being with all its present limitations and inhibitions. So, a “photograph” is not possible, nor adequate. It will be a “painting”, an impression, of the Female Metaphor, of the Seasonal Moments, and the complex web of the evolution of their expression in ritual celebration; and so too will be the describing of the experience – the data. It cannot be complete. As will become clear in the
unfolding of the research and its results, it can only ever be a work “in progress”, as I attempt to articulate and plumb the depths of a wisdom tradition that is both ancient and “not-yet”, both forgotten and yet to be conceived. There are subtle layers, and more subtle layers – some of which this research has been able to apprehend/perceive, and some of which at this stage is unspoken/unperceived. It is my perception that the nature of the Seasonal Moments is, that once the “feeling” for each of them is received by the reader/participant, then it grows in its own way … within the context of their being. It is then up to the receiver to take it further if they wish, translating their experience into it, letting it become a point of relationship with Gaia – which is and must be, particular/personal. Thus the “telling” of the significance of the Sabbats/Seasonal Moments is only ever a small piece – partial. There are layers and layers of story associated with each one, and this research is part of the adding of new layers in our time. Each time it is received by another person, there is a new layer of story – their stories.

This thesis is the presentation of a Cosmology and an Art Form that expresses and celebrates it, and researches its effects on the hearts and minds of participants – primarily and including myself. The research processes became for me, a practice of deepening into this Cosmology. I realize now at the end of the official research process, how much this Cosmology represents for me a template of wholeness … which the Universe must be. I have been prepared to trust myself to this template. At the end of the research process I have come to represent/summarize this template in a three-layered altar arrangement. At the edges (the first layer) are the four elements in four directions – Water, Fire, Earth, Air – these are things that I can identify as “real” – foundational. The next layer is formed by eight objects in a circle, representing the eight seasonal points that I and the participants celebrated in recognition of the phases of our planet’s - and therefore our - relationship with our source of energy and our being, the Sun. The inner layer, or centre of the arrangement, is formed by three candles and objects associated with the three; this represents the three faces of the Metaphor for the Creative Dynamic that spins it all – a mystery that I came to perceive as manifest, that I can touch, that I am, that I can become, that I may perceive in other beings.
The research process became a continuing practice of drawing on all these dynamic layers – perceived as a sentience that fills the universe.

The structure of this thesis is also layered – pieces that are at first introduced are later deepened as the thesis progresses. In the Introduction, I lay out most of the pieces that will form the “quilt” that this thesis becomes: – some of the cosmic and cultural context, some of my personal context, discussion of a functional cosmology and of metaphor. The Female Metaphor is introduced, and so is the Western Earth-based religious tradition that forms the basis of the seasonal ritual celebrations. I present an introduction to Gaia as a Name for our sacred context, and to Cosmogenesis – the creative dynamic unfolding of the universe1. I introduce the seasonal Wheel of the Year and how I approach it in this research, and I introduce the place/region which has been the site of the work. I state the thesis proposal. In Chapter 1 I describe the Methodology of the research, including the layers of action involved and something of the participants. In Chapter 2 I dive deeper into some of the main “pieces” that had been introduced at the beginning - either directly or indirectly, the primary one being the Female Metaphor. I further discuss language in this context, feminist theology, and issues of embodiment and gender, and religion. Chapter 3 develops the re-storying of the Female Metaphor – the necessity for such and how that may be possible. This “re-storying” that I present is based on evidence of past understandings combined with present experience and understandings. It is not a “proof”, it is a “re-storying”. I present how some of this re-storying/restoration was done by participants in this research including and primarily myself. In Chapter 4, pointing out the need for and use of ritual and metaphorical reconnection with the Female Metaphor, I deepen the “piece” of Cosmogenesis and its association with the Female Metaphor. This is presented as an omnipresent Gaian threefold creative dynamic. I deepen the “piece” of Gaia as a Name and a Subject, and the continuity of Universe-

1 Sometimes referred to as an “evolutionary” cosmic dynamic by Swimme and Berry and in this thesis. When I use the term “evolution” or “evolutionary” I do not mean to imply “progress” or any kind of teleology necessarily. It is simply meant in the sense of perceiving “a time-developmental process” (Swimme and Berry 1992:223). There is a story of the universe - that is, a sequence of events - that Western science has perceived as having taken place, and it is an “irreversible sequence of transformations” (ibid). There does appear to be greater complexity, greater variety and intensity as can be observed on planet Earth (ibid), but this does not mean to imply an “ascent” as has been common to think in Western culture. I do not mean “evolution” to imply a hierarchy of development,
Earth-Self. I present how some of the participants in this research entered into a process of reconnection and identification with the threefold creative dynamic. In Chapter 5 I develop a deeper layer to the “piece” of the seasonal points of the Wheel of the Year, associating it with Gaia’s story – the story/evolution of the Universe – and the Female Metaphor. I develop an account of how ritual is a method of celebrating and thus embodying the Creative metaphor, and how specific seasonal ritual processes enable this. In Chapter 6 I describe the actual ritual events as they were facilitated for the purposes of the research, and present the full ritual scripts. In Chapter 7 I describe something of the evolution of the ritual scripts – how I came to write them as I did. This involves the disclosure of much of my personal process of growing into this Cosmology. In Chapter 8 I describe deeper layers to my context and personal process. In Chapter 9 I describe the participants, and the process and method of interviewing some of them as it was done for the research. In Chapter 10 I present the responses of those interviewed and analysis of that data. In Chapter 11 I draw and describe my own conclusions to the research process, including how these experiences of this created process may meet what Thomas Berry calls the “meta-religious” challenge of our time (1996:8). This challenge, which goes beyond the human order to the entire geo-biological order of the planet, is the context in which “all human affairs need to establish their reality and their value – and their sense of the sacred” (ibid).

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simply perhaps a holarchy- which is an expansive nested reality that depends on what went before. See page 106-107 for further discussion of this term “holarchy”.
INTRODUCTION

The triple-aspected Female Metaphor that has long captured my attention and imagination and lured me into the Search\(^2\) has in other times been known as "The Moon Goddess". The phases of the Moon have described for and since the first eyes, a pattern, that at some point was noticed to resonate with the human female cyclical pattern, and indeed, that of all human body cycles. Moreover, the Moon’s cyclical pattern – of waxing and waning through lightness and darkness - was noticed to be reiterated in flora and fauna everywhere. The three phases have been known by the ancients of many cultures, and others since throughout the ages, as Virgin/Maiden, Mother/Creator, Old One/Crone, mirrored as they are in the three chronological phases of the female:- pre-menarchal young one, menstrual mother, and post-menopausal elder. A Scots Gaelic prayer describes the Moon\(^3\) as "lovely leader of the way" (Matthews 2000:302), and so She has been for many humans, who have noticed Her cyclical pattern imbued in all, including in the seasons created by the annual Earth-Sun relational transitions or "movements".

The Moon Herself is a Presence often taken as secondary, extraneous, romantic. Yet without Her gravitational pull on Earth, creating the tides – the ebb and flow - the biosphere may have never evolved\(^4\). The Moon’s central role in our manifestation, in Earth’s Creativity\(^5\) as we know it, largely goes without recognition. The same is true of the role that the female human cycle must have played in the early development of human consciousness, as it is never mentioned as a possible factor in mainstream texts. Rarely is it

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\(^2\) I capitalize this as I use it in the sense of a sacred journey as the Sufi poet Fakhruddin Iraqi did in his *Divine Flashes* where he describes how the lover sets forth “upon the path of the Search” (Chittick and Wilson trans. 1982:76).

\(^3\) I will be capitalizing Moon, Sun, Earth, Universe, and Cosmos throughout this thesis to re-invest these places with sentience, to name them as sacred places – not mere objects. It is central to this thesis that the world we live in is sacred space, and sentient. For this reason also I will at times not use the article “the”, when speaking of these places. And just as it is common to capitalize “Western” when referring to Western culture for instance, so will I capitalize “Cosmic” when referring to the Cosmos’ characteristics or patterns. It is important to this thesis that “Cosmos” is understood to have at least as much credibility and dignity as “West”, as a place, as a habitat. I will speak further to this capitalizing of words in “Language” in Ch.1.

\(^4\) See Lyn Margulis’ research into the beginnings of the biosphere, as referenced in Barlow (1992:186-188, and Barlow 1990:48-66).

\(^5\) I will capitalize “Creativity” throughout this thesis as I mean it in the sense of the Absolute activity – as indeed another name for the Divine, the Absolute; I refer to this name again in Chapter 1. In this case of “Earth’s Creativity”, it is Earth’s part of the totality.
thought, as for example researcher Alexander Marshack thought, that the lunar notations found on bone, stone, antler and goddess figures may “have laid the foundations for the discovery of agriculture, the calendar, astronomy, mathematics and writing” (Baring and Cashford 1993:20 referring to Marshack 1972).

As Judy Grahn points out

“Disciplined separation is clearly a major factor of human culture, and the most complex and fundamental separation practice is that of the first menstruation, or... menarche” (1993:11).

Yet, even in a recently produced documentary about the earliest of humans\(^6\), where all kinds of detailed descriptions of their lifestyles and even projections about their emotions and why they did certain things, was put forth, the text never flickered toward the possibility that this female cycle and its replication of the Moon cycle exactly in timing, may have impacted on the human psyche in a primordial, foundational way. Perhaps, as Grahn suggests, it was the “menstrual mind” that first connected to an external frame of reference – the Moon – and began to acquire external measurement and noninstinctual knowledge (op. cit.:12-14). When humans first performed ritual burials, 100,000 years ago, what was their referent for thinking about death? What did they observe around them everyday about death and renewal? Could it have possibly been that “the Female Metaphor\(^7\), in its lunar cycle and its human female cycle, may have played a central role in the earliest developments of the human mind – our sense of time, and existential wonderings and celebrations of life and death – just as its resonant Cosmic Moon Cycle\(^7\) played/plays a central role in the evolution of life on Earth? Could contemplation of the pattern that the Female Metaphor suggests, in its mandala-like rhythm have been the source of earliest human insight? Shuttle and Redgrove (1986:263) define a mandala as

“a pattern which is effective in connecting one part of experience with another, and the contemplation of which leads to insight. A mandala has a centre, a boundary or circumference, and cardinal points. It often depicts a rhythm, which one can see at a glance in a single image”.

They describe the Moon cycle as forming a mandala, and that the menstrual cycle can take a similar shape. Could the cosmic ubiquity of this metaphorical pattern been the basis for knowledge/wisdom, that served humans and their growing conscious relationship to Cosmos? Could the

\(^6\) Neanderthal’s World shown on SBS in mid 2001.
experience of witnessing this trustworthy rhythm been the beginnings of "the inexhaustible creativity of humanity" (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:19)?

My thesis is that for the culture to have abstained from asking these questions, to have, for millennia been unable to form these questions in the mind, reveals an alienated mind – a mind that is out of touch with the Earth and Cosmic cycles, as well as that of the human female. An alienated mind is one that does not know participation, that "unconsciously participates" as Barfield describes (Kremer 1992:172-173) – a mind that has severed its connections, wherein phenomena exist separately, a mind that has dissociated. Most humans today live in cultures that are alienated in this way, though it is expressed diversely. I will speak mainly from within my own white Western Christianized culture, but it is by no means unique in regard to alienation from the Context/Matrix/Earth/Universe – in which the human finds themself⁷. If humans regard themselves as alive and sentient, then so is our Context/Matrix. We and our consciousness are "not some tiny bit of the world stuck onto the rest of it" (Barfield 1979:18 quoted by Kremer 1992:169). We are inside Her⁸. Our Context appears to be alive and sentient, as Creativity spills up from within Her at local and universal levels; but it appears from the ecological crisis that we find ourselves in, that we humans have on a large scale shut ourselves off from this knowledge. Speaking for my own Western cultural context, we humans of this context today find ourselves living "on" a planet. For a long time, we have not participated "in" it. We have understood ourselves as apart from it, as an addendum or superior; and now, we often understand ourselves as inferior. Some humans who are still closely linked to their indigenous heritage have not lost the knowledge that She and they are alive in each other. These humans have remained intimate with our⁹ Context, and the understanding of the local not

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⁷ I capitalize this term as I mean it as another name for "the Female Metaphor".
⁸ While "itself" may be "correct", I feel this usage further affirms human belief in self-alienation from Context – that we are "its". There are other problems associated with the use of "her" or "him" or both, so I'm choosing this "problem" – the one of "them".
⁹ I will be using the female pronoun to speak of our Context – the Matrix.
¹⁰ It is "our" Context, not "theirs" as some might describe it: all of us do live in Earth and in the Universe. Although it can be argued that in most cases, the indigenous person's mountain for instance, is not the mountain of the Westernized mind – "their world is not ours!" (Kremer 1992:173), it can also be argued that at a deeper place, we may find "among the silent spaces, realities where cultures and their peoples touch in ways that are yet to be fully explored" (Ibid:174 referring to Forman 1990). Also I think it is time to move into the assumption that some previously Westernised minds have made steps towards their own indigenous mind; there is a growing "we" of "future participation" – a term Kremer uses to speak of regained, intentional participation in our habitat (Ibid:173).
being separate from the Cosmic, and that this Context is the Matrix of all humans and beings.

I am re-linking with my own indigenous heritage, one that lives in my very bodymind. It has an actual tradition - of female-based metaphor - that has been nearly obliterated in relatively recent human history, that is, the last few millennia. It would be simplistic and short-sighted to single out the Inquisition of the last millennia of this Common Era as the only gynocidal event of the West, though it was certainly a horrific one. Though my indigenous heritage has its most recent roots in Old Western Europe - in the Earth-based tradition that goes back to pre-Celtic times - its even earlier roots are in the bodyminds of the most ancient of my line, who observed and knew a resonance of being, with Earth and Cosmos. This heritage ran into difficulties long before the Inquisition, as Starhawk outlines in her overview of culture, politics and mythic cycles (1987:37-40), and as many others including Merlin Stone (1976) and Gerda Lerner (1993) document. Lerner says, “in the period when written History was being created, women already lived under conditions of patriarchy” (1993:249); our roles, public behavior and sexual and reproductive lives were already so defined - our bodyminds had already been locked up, the Goddess temples had long been emptied, the integrity of the priestesses had long been trivialized. It had long been anathema to receive and speak Her Wisdom11 - a Wisdom I call “Gaian”, and of which in our time, we may come to know in a new way.

I am researching my experience of the Divine, my female sacral experience. “Patriarchal religion is built on many millennia of repressed fear of the power of female bodily processes” (Reuther 1990:18). These processes are at the centre of life, and innate to the Creativity of Earth, and as I will illustrate in this thesis, may be identified with the Cosmic dynamics of evolution; yet the metanarrative of patriarchal religion and its history and study, excludes these phenomena as even a consideration.

“Women have not been, and by and large are still not, the subjects of their own religious experience. Patriarchal Western religion has owned women’s bodies but disowned the sacrality of those bodies” (Raphael 1996:20).

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11 I mean “Wisdom” here to be understood as a name for a religious tradition - that has had no name - much as “Buddhism” or “Taoism” are understood to be names.
Female sacrality is "unnamed non-data in secular culture; peripheral sub-data in the phenomenology of religions", and considered essentially pagan or unclean in Western religious culture (ibid:21). As Luce Irigaray puts it; "If traditionally, and as a mother, woman represents place for man, such a limit means that she becomes a thing..." (1993:10); and serving as a thing, she has remained "the place separated from 'its' own place, deprived of 'its' place" (ibid). I am "laying claim to the power of Naming" (Caputi 1992:438) the sacred sites of my female land – my bodymind ... re-inhabiting my Place.

Irigaray continues that: "Woman must be nude because she is not situated, does not situate herself in her place" (op. cit.:11). I have written of my experience of this in this thesis (see Chapter 8, particularly pp.234-242); and throughout the thesis I write of my understanding of the "Mother" aspect of the Female Metaphor as "Place to Be" (see particularly Chapter 3, p.80). In Chapter 6 I mention my uncertainty about having a "place", how the seasonal rituals themselves did not seem to have a place/site (pp.153 -154). I come back to an experience of being "in Place" in the concluding chapter (pp.337 and 343).

I have been terribly frightened to put this on paper - to attempt to define the awesome; and then there are the voices both malicious and benevolent that tell me I shouldn't/can't. However, there are many who have told me I should and can. This research is for my mother and my mother's mother, who have had their bodyminds muted, their experience unspoken, weighed with the burden of always being second, object - never subject and central in their own minds. It is for my sister, who was not given a Ph.D. for the journey she has made. It is for the women who have told me they are waiting for it. It is for my children, and it is for the women and men who are "entranced" by the Mother, as She reveals Herself in Earth/Cosmos.

The Role of Metaphor
Metaphor is not merely a matter of language, it is pervasive in everyday thought and action; "the way we think, what we experience, and what we do everyday is very much a matter of metaphor" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:3). Lakoff and Johnson say that conventional ways of talking about anything
“pre-suppose a metaphor that we are hardly ever conscious of” (ibid:5). They make the point that “the metaphor is not merely in the words we use”, that it is in our very concept of the thing (ibid). They say that “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (ibid); so (for my purpose here), "the Divine" or however one names what is Deepest in existence, is not female and is not male, though the metaphor used may suggest a likeness. The Webster's Dictionary defines “metaphor” as “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase denoting one kind of object or action is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them” (1986:1420), and further that metaphor is an implied comparison, as opposed to an explicit comparison. As Starhawk notes, “an overt metaphor is a map, a description we may find useful or not, may accept or reject” (1990:21), whereas if the metaphor is covert it is free “to restructure our reality by leading us to accept the map as the territory without questioning where we are going or whose interests are being served” (ibid). The fact that the Divine, the Essence of existence, is so ubiquitously called upon as "God", systematically influences the shape "the Divine" takes, and the way it is talked about (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:7)\textsuperscript{12}. It suggests a likeness and it is usually a covert metaphor that restructures our reality without question.

“The Divine” may be metaphorised many other ways - "vibratory flux", "creativity", "relatedness" (Spretnak 1993:25). Thus throughout this thesis, the Divine will be implied in many terms – “Deep”, “Change”, “Dark” – and the terms capitalized to signify this. I feel this is a necessary process for the changing and diversifying of minds. Mary Daly points out that “the word metaphor is derived from the Greek meta plus pherein, meaning to bear, carry” and that “metapherein means to transfer, change” (1984:26). Metaphors may thus “transform/transfer our perceptions of reality, enabling us to ‘break set’ and thus to break out of linguistic prisons” (ibid).

Joseph Campbell describes a functioning mythology as “an organization of metaphorical figures connotative of states of mind that are not finally of this

\textsuperscript{12} Lakoff and Johnson are speaking of metaphor in general using the example of the word "argument". They are not addressing "the Divine" specifically here, though they do address metaphor and the
or that place and time ..." (1995:21), and such are made known in visual art and verbal narrative (written and oral). It is applied to communal life by way of a calendar of symbolic rites, festivals and ceremonies, that enable the community to participate "with its universe in eternity" (ibid:20). Campbell notes how, in the popular mind, "such metaphors of transcendence" get locked into chiefly functions of control and socializing, but that "the way of the mystic and of proper art (and we might add, religion) is of recognizing through the metaphors an epiphany beyond words" (ibid:21). Campbell was convinced of the necessity - "a social as well as spiritual necessity" (ibid) - of a "new mythology" (ibid:19), that he felt was "already implicit among us as knowledge a priori, native to the mind" (ibid).

At the heart of the metaphorical change that this thesis proposes, is a change of the felt need in the cultural psyche to "slay the dragon" – to be free of the matter, out of which we and all, arises. This thesis is about "embracing the dragon" – restoring the Dragon. The Dragon – the serpent - represents a cosmology that asents to change, IS about change. Our culture and its metaphors has craved permanence, and is unable to deal with loss - which is essentially Change. The "Moon Goddess", the Female Metaphor in Her three aspects, passes through waning into the Darkness, from which there is renewal. Mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme whose articulation of the Cosmic dynamics of evolution is significant to this thesis, says that to enter into the terror of loss, offers the opportunity to accept what is real, and it is the way to unite with what is eternal (1990:video 5, 35.25). I am not suggesting that human hunger for the eternal is aberrant; it may be met, in and through the Matter in which we are.

I am seeking the essential nature of all things. This was also the aim of the early Greek philosophers and they called this essential nature "physis". As Capra notes, "The term 'physics' is derived from this Greek word and meant therefore, originally, the endeavour of seeing the essential nature of all things" (1978:6). My quest is therefore very related to physics poetically –

"ineffable God" (sic) in Philosophy in the Flesh (1999:567-568), saying that "passionate spirituality" requires metaphor.
both are a kind of Poetry\textsuperscript{13}. My understanding of the Goddess is as a creative metaphor for the essential nature of all things. In Her three aspects, She is the “Triskele” of energy, the dynamics of Cosmogenesis, “the innate triplicity of the Cosmos ... that runs through every part of the universe” (Matthews 2000:366) and is available to all. The “triskele” is a sacred symbol of the Celtic peoples, which consists of three legs radiating from a centre, understood to be in perpetual motion. To draw upon this triple-limbed wheel, was to “grace our lives with an ever-living energy that encompasses the beginning, middle and end of everything we undertake” (ibid). The term “triskele” itself, and its symbolic representation, could be said to be metaphors for the triple-action biospheric reality described by Russian scientist Vladimir Vernadsky:

“At each moment there are a hundred million million tons of living matter in the biosphere, always in a state of movement. The mass is decomposed, forms itself anew mainly by multiplication. Generations are thus born ... unceasingly” (1986:34).

A Functional Cosmology and Metaphor

Brian Swimme has said that

“to become fully mature as human persons, we must bring to life within ourselves the dynamics that fashioned the cosmos ... That is our task: to create the human form of the central powers of the cosmos” (Swimme 1984:87). To do this, many women, and perhaps men too, need the Female Metaphor ... to become fully human, to embody these dynamics that created the galaxies, the stars. As Carol Christ noted, women "have not actively shaped their experiences of self and world nor named the great powers from their own perspectives" (1980:4). Men too may find the Female Metaphor helpful in this matter of embodying the cosmic dynamics, since She is a participatory metaphor – relational – and She may re-store him to the context, partnership, as opposed to centre-stage, dominance and alienation. Adam McLean makes a case for “the Triple Goddess figure” being “for men, a safe inner guide ...” (1989:120), free of the dangers of the “hero” / “saviour” identification (ibid:119). Heron has critiqued “gender-laden perennialism” (1998:3-4) wherein the traditional, typically male, practitioner “claims to have become spirit as spirit” (ibid:4), whose spiritual practice involves sustained

\textsuperscript{13} I capitalize this term, as I use it in the sense of a language – a language of the Universe - much as one would capitalize “English” or “French”. “English” or “French” are not generally thought of consciously as “sacred” media, although the terms are frequently treated as such. In this thesis, “Poetry” is definitely being used to refer to a sacred medium.
dissociation from the autonomous dynamic impulses of immanent spiritual life” (ibid). Heron describes this as "supremely alienated and inflated agency, a man wanting only to be the whole of reality, and in no sense whatsoever a part of it or participant in it" (ibid).

Part of the human memory that I have been attempting to plumb in this research is expressed by Swimme and Berry, in their telling of the Universe Story:

"Some 2.6 million years ago, at the close of the Pliocene period, the earliest expression of the human appears in its species identity, a form of human designated as Homo habilis. ... With Homo habilis an event of singular importance takes place: the beginning of the Stone Ages in the cultural development of the human. ... Exactly here in these transition years the more significant foundations for the human mode of being were established. The sense of time and space was developing; imagination was receiving the impress of its powerful images; the stock of primordial memories that would influence all future generations was being developed; ... (and) ... The ever-recurring sequence of seasonal decline and renewal was making its impress on the human psyche as one of the most basic patterns that would later find expression in ritual celebration” (1992: 146-148).

In these times, to re-invent ourselves (Berry in Matousek1990:31), we need to remember as much wisdom as we can gather. The process of seasonal celebration that this thesis project has re-created and researched, has been and is, an intuitive archaeological dig into an early layer of human awareness, a meditation focussed on letting deep and ancient knowings arise, in the context of present understandings – the universe as our minds understand it today, and then to marry them14. I am not suggesting there is any one way to do this. I assume there are infinite ways to do this. This particular documented process as I have been part of, is simply an illustration of a possibility. It is in accord with Campbell’s perception that the images of any new mythology, must be radiant with the “greatness which is below, above, to the west, to the east, to the south and to the north of this whole new universe and of all things …” (1995:19).

Swimme and Berry say that “Cosmology aims at articulating the story of the universe so that humans can enter fruitfully into the web of relationships within the universe” (1992:23). The scope of their work is a synthesis of “the

14 Referring to the work of Jean Gebser, Georg Feuerstein describes an “archaeology of consciousness” - structures of consciousness - that “are not merely a matter of the past” (1988:24), but do constitute our present “cognitive field” (ibid:25) and may help us understand “how our present responses and reactions are shaped by collective patterns of consciousness” (ibid:26).
questions common in traditional cosmology ... with the factual investigations of scientific cosmology” (ibid). Their articulation of the Universe Story15, is a new myth, a way of orienting the human anew in the universe, to enable a re-invention of the human. They say that to do this requires a reinvention of language to some degree:

“for each extant language harbors its own attitudes, its own assumptions, its own cosmology. Thus to articulate anew the story of our relationships in the world means to use the words of one of the modern languages that implicitly, and to varying degrees obscures or even denies the reality of these emerging relationships. Any cosmology whose language can be completely understood by using one of the standard dictionaries belongs to a former era” (1992:24).

Thus, they say, to understand the new cosmology in any significant way, “is a demanding task, requiring a creative response over a significant period of time” (ibid)16. This thesis is subject to such a requirement, thus so far, the extensive use of footnotes to establish new relationship with certain terms and names. Also, the Metaphor – the Female Metaphor - had to be spoken, enacted, lived – and so She has been, until we (myself and the participants) have begun to know this Language in our cells. Although this research is officially only of three years duration, it is based in decades of my investigation, reflection and creative interaction – my lived experience - and that of others with whom I have conferred. I also realize it is still only scratching the surface.

Two of the research participants (Lyn and Gareth) commented in the interviews about how important the language used in the ritual celebrations was for each of them. They did this without the prompt of a specific question. This will be detailed later, but one articulated how the old Western Christian cosmological language was no longer an adequate method of expressing his deep understandings of the cosmos (Gareth, as referred to in Chapter 9 & 10). It has been my passion to find other pathways to express those depths ... and certainly a pathway that not only admits the Female, but celebrates Her. It has been my passion to articulate a Pathway into the depths that celebrates the Female, as an integral part of the Cosmos – in a way that patriarchal paradigms never have. It has been my passion to allow

15 This term is capitalized as it is understood to refer to sacred text, much as the “Koran” or “Bible” are capitalized.
16 Mary Daly also speaks of “the very arduousness of the task of Naming and calling forth Elemental be-ing” (1984:25).
an experience of this for myself, for others – WITH others … and that is where it really becomes meaningful, when it is not just my lonely little journey. It becomes something that other people can find resonance with, and I find resonance with them – and I extend my expression as I feel for their expression.

Gareth said,

“You’re following universal themes, so it must penetrate more deeply than the person knows at the time … There was a beautiful language to it, there were symbols I could relate to … The language is important. At the Summer Solstice, when people take the bread and say the words … it’s clearly a communion – you can feel that. There is an emotional connection with that.”

Lyn expressed that

“symbols and words in a lot of your rituals have really … they’ve really assisted me into entering the space to explore my meaning with it … they’re really key opening things for me – your words – beautiful, because they’re such strong symbols and very rich in images, the words …”.

The Female Metaphor

When I speak of the Female Metaphor, I am not then referring to a "feminine" part of the Divine, nor to some complementary partner to the Great Mystery, nor to some "half" of the Creative Principle of the Universe. I am not then valourizing or naturalizing any notion of a “traditional feminine” when I seek to unfold the Female Metaphor. When I speak of Her, She is a name for the whole Creative Principle – She is whole in Herself. In accord with this metaphorical understanding, Rainer Maria Rilke wrote:

“Some day there will be girls and women whose name will no longer signify merely an opposite of the masculine, but something in itself, something that makes one think not of any complement or limit, but only of life and existence …” (Whitmont 1983:214 quoting Rilke 1954:59).

This thesis will be an illustration of how the Female Metaphor can be a name for the whole Creative Principle, of how this cosmology can be celebrated; and what difference it may make in the hearts and minds of women and men, and to the human response to Earth - our home.

Some of My Context

I write as a daughter born into the patriarchy. I know fairly well "my" story through these past few millennia. From my journal a few years ago:

They said I destroyed the world with my sin - it was my fault. My wickedness was to blame - and Jesus, a man, had to suffer a terrible death to make it right. I, a woman, and all the other women like me, carried the burden for everything that was not right with the world.

And I believed them. I did not disagree. At the trials, when they accused me, said what I did was evil - I could not remember, was it? I became confused.
When I was a "qadishtu"\(^{17}\) and the conquerors came, they said I was unclean, that their god regarded us as filth, that our kind had brought pain to the world. I was guilty. After a while, I couldn't remember - perhaps I was. I now remember, my confusion clears, the veils are lifting. I remember my innocence. I lift the burden from my shoulders, and from other women's shoulders. I again walk proud and free\(^{18}\).

I write as a daughter hungry for the Mother, and I understand what Monique Wittig means when she says: "the language you speak is made up of words that are killing you" (1973:114). Personally, I have been so hungry for the Female Metaphor, for the Mother - for words for Her, for knowledge of Her, that I could perform terrible and radical acts to find Her. I left my young children for this almost twenty years ago.

Queen Elizabeth I is known to have said, "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king"\(^{19}\). Even a woman as great as this, of such astounding achievement and wisdom, felt driven to compare herself, to measure herself with male metaphor. Deep in the psyche even of great women, there has not been a female metaphor for greatness, for strength, for the wisdom which they themselves embodied. The female Deities had been so slandered, so stripped of essential integrity. Yahweh is after all God, Medusa is after all merely a goddess. We can forgive Yahweh his crimes ... this is not myopia. The millennia of patriarchal narrative has left our minds locked up, unable to grasp the Female Metaphor ... that she may stand sovereign, not as greater than, but in and of herself: so that, when a woman or a man desires to express greatness, nobility, strength they are able to easily reach for a female image.

I have been told that to look at history, theology, philosophy from the female perspective is myopic - one-eyed. It is commonly assumed that these disciplines have been regarded from the "human" perspective, that the male has incorporated both female and male perspectives, that he has been fair in all these matters, and indeed, capable. I have been expected to disregard it if

\(^{17}\) Merlin Stone describes "qadishtu" as "the sacred women of the temples" (1976:156-157).

\(^{18}\) With this story I am not telling women of races and ethnicities other than my own that they should be able to identify with my story. I am expressing my own resonance with this story, as one who has inherited elements from that culture via my religious heritage. I personally feel that I can identify with such stories of women; that is not to say that the reverse is true. See p.48 also for more on this issue.

\(^{19}\) It is quoted, though not exactly as written here, in the film Elizabeth (Universal 1998).
the female is rarely mentioned as a factor in the first two million years of human existence, or if she is, that it is in a secondary placement or in a slanderous context. A casual perusal of most history, and "pre-history", from a "fair" perspective would leave one wondering how the human species reproduced itself, let alone that the female had any further creative input to the human enterprise. As an example, one such weighty tome called The Last Two Million Years (Reader’s Digest 1974), has in all its 488 pages of text and plates, remarkably little evidence of female presence to the human enterprise. She rates a mention every now and then in relation to “problems of reproduction” (ibid:22), greater sexual receptivity than female apes (ibid:17), and men insisting that “their sisters married outside the family” (ibid:19). The very occasional Goddess or woman of note is most often, a mistress, consort or wife. Queen Elizabeth I stands alone as a woman of power in the last 2 million years, and even then the caption under her portrait reads “Defeat of the Armada” (ibid:235).

Even a recent text on the world’s religions, which could be regarded as more “fair-minded”, fails significantly in its balance (Smart 1998). Smart has five references to the women’s movement, including note of Mary Daly (ibid:387), and to the fact that women are having an increasing role “in religions where in the past a patriarchal perspective has prevailed” (ibid:586). Smart is aware of the gender issues in the language and organization of religions. Yet in his own text, while he gives extensive treatment to the Holocaust, Marxism, various Chinese cults, and Malcolm X gets referenced twice, nowhere does he reference Mariology, nor is there any reference to the Inquisition. Witchcraft is mentioned once in the context of Polynesian religions, as "using ritual means to bring about bad results for others” (ibid:169). The Great Isis is referred to as "Osiris' wife" (ibid: 203), the main subject of the story being Osiris. Isis Herself is referred to twice in the context of a "cult" (ibid). The Great Inanna is described as "associated with showers and thunderstorms", "goddess of war", "a harlot", and "supposed even to have become queen of heaven, as consort of An" (ibid:200). The "Enuma Elish", which is generally accepted as the Babylonian creation epic, but which is actually the creation of patriarchy in that culture describing as it does the murder of Goddess Tiamat, is here told by Smart completely unsympathetically to the
indigenous tradition (ibid:200-201). The epic is praised as "celebrating (the incoming god's) victory"; and the god, Marduk, is praised nonchalantly by Smart as "great". There is an apparent acceptance of the slaughter of the female at the base of creation. Paul Ricoeur writes, in regard to this epic:

"Thus the creative act which distinguishes, separates, measures and puts in order, is inseparable from the criminal act that puts an end to the life of the oldest gods, inseparable from a decide inherent in the divine" (Keller 1986:76 quoting Ricoeur 1969:180).

Ricoeur describes creation then as "a victory over an Enemy older than the creator" (ibid quoting Ricoeur 1969:182) – thus tracing the historical outcome of a "theology of war" and the enemy behind all enemies; but it is Keller who notes that Tiamat's sex is a salient fact (ibid:77). Tiamat's slaughter, is described graphically in the epic, as it is by Smart in his text: her corpse is used "to create the present universe, slitting her in two like a fish, one part being heaven and the other earth"(op. cit.:201)20. As Joseph Campbell points out, this

"great creative deed of Marduk was a supererogatory act. There was no need for him to cut her up and make the universe out of her, because she was already the universe" (1988:170).

I suggest that this kind of unconsciousness, as exhibited by Smart, on the part of the writers of "humanity's" texts is analogous to the writing of Australian history wherein the Aboriginals are either ignored or labeled as "savages".

Most people naively assume that the history as told to them is the history of women as well - we are so used to our absence. Perhaps one only really notices it when reading a history that does include women in a conscious way, such as Margaret Wertheim's Pythagoras' Trousers (1995). Such an inclusive history as she presents, in regard the education of women particularly, informs me further of my context, my heritage, and what it means to be doing this work of unfolding the Female Metaphor - how chancy the whole thing is, that it is even happening; and then the courage that it takes to be with it.

20 The use of the metaphor of "fish" in the tale is perhaps a conscious reference to the Goddess' yoni (Walker 1983:313) - this is where She was cut, and interestingly, women in cultures of this creation myth, continue to be genitally mutilated today.
Being "Other"

It has been common for millennia that women have not been able to name themselves or their experience as sacred, because the metaphor of the Divine did not extend to their experience, their presence in the world. As a woman then who claims a female-centred spirituality, a female Metaphor, as her indigenous heritage, my experience is that I fall into the category of "Other". When Denzin and Lincoln (1994:581) speak of scholars contributing "to an increase in the number of historical and scientific works that recognize and reconstruct the perspectives of those whose perspectives have been missing for so long", I understand that "those whose perspectives have been missing for so long" would have to include those of a female-centred cosmology ... philosopher, shaman, witch, priestess, spiritual authority, wise woman, healer, and also mother 21. As such, she is so hidden as to barely be identified, let alone her perspective taken seriously. The dominant culture has presumed to speak for us, even as they burnt us, silenced us, kept us out of institutions, politics and texts. Denzin and Lincoln say that it was "the Enlightenment legacy that led us to believe we could, indeed, prepare texts that purported to be whole and truthful accounts, objective accounts, of those 'natives'/Others" (ibid:582 - emphasis mine, because I am not sure in this case who "we" and "us" are). If the story had been told from within our perspective, that is, the perspective of the female-centred cosmos ... as wise woman, healer, priestess, mother, would she speak of herself as "just a mother" - if her mind was imbued with the integrity of Life happening in her? Would she allow a church to tell her she could not speak for the Divine?

The female body has not been included in most of humanity's thinking for some time. Merleau-Ponty speaks about the body and its importance in human experience. For him, "The body is first of all a way of viewing the world; it is at one and the same time the way a subjective attitude both comes to know itself and express itself. The lived phenomenal body must therefore not be thought of as an object in itself, but as a bodily presence in the world, a bodily awareness of the world" (Madison 1981:23).

The denial of the body in general has certainly influenced Western thought (See Lakoff and Johnson 1999); so then, how has the denial of the female body in particular affected thinking - by women themselves as well as by the

21 Catherine Keller makes the point that if, as Ricoeur says, every enemy of the hero embodies the first Enemy, who is (saliently) the first Mother, then it is a Mother who is primary Other (Keller 1986:77).
men who wrote the texts? It is a fact that half the human race has rarely been allowed, or found access to, "presence" to the development of philosophies and sciences. Her body was not supposed to do what it did; then it would have been better - normal. The body - her body, was not supposed to menstruate; what did that signify? What kind of worldview was being denied? Even her fertility was a source of shame, and certainly in the cultural context, it was at the base of her loss of power. It is the worldview of the female body - this subjective presence in the world, that has been absent from our minds. She must now be written into the histories, the philosophies, the sciences, the Poetry (which is how I name "theology"/"thea-logy")

This thesis participates in "gynergetic symbolization", wherein the female may move out of being Other.

The Western Way

Caitlin and John Matthews define two paths that form the "prima materia" of the Western Way – the body of teaching and knowledge dating from the "Foretime" in which the ancestors of Western Europe "first began to explore the inner realms of existence" (1994:2). Those two paths are the "Native Tradition" and the "Hermetic Tradition". The "Native Tradition", also known as the "Old Religion" (ibid:22 and Starhawk 1989:16) because it is the earliest religion/spirituality in the West, is defined by Matthews as "more intuitive, earth conscious, Goddess-oriented", and they define the "Hermetic Tradition" as more focussed on "the pursuit of knowledge, oneness with the godhead, superconsciousness" (1994:3). They say that Native Traditionalists see Deity "in terms of elemental forces", while Hermetic Schools shift focus "from 'God out there' to God within the self" (1994:3-4). I have learnt initially, about the Western Way from Starhawk's teaching of it. She is truly grounded in the Native Tradition, but there is no sense in which I have ever understood from her, that Deity in the elemental forces is separate from Deity in the self. Caitlin and John Matthews don't say so, but it appears to me that Starhawk is part of the regeneration of the Western Mysteries that they also see their work as evoking. They encourage, as Starhawk does, a time

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22 Carol Christ notes her experience in seminary where she was patronizingly informed of the distinction between poetry and theology (1980:xi). I discuss these terms further in Chapter 2.

for the symbols and systems to be regenerated by an influx of new yet ancient material, arising from within the group-soul and hereditary memory of ordinary people” (Matthews 1994:15).

Peter Reason (1994:16) quotes Mumford as saying that:

“Every transformation of [the human species] ... has rested on a new metaphysical and ideological base; or rather, upon deeper stirrings and intuitions whose rationalized expression takes the form of a new picture of the cosmos and the nature of [humanity]” (1957:179).

I contend that women of Goddess-centred spiritual tradition, have known these deep stirrings and intuitions, and now the time has come to move to speak of them, so that they may participate in the forming of a new picture of the cosmos and the nature of humanity. This thesis is part of making that perspective understandable to others, to the culture, for it appears the climate is now right for us to be heard.

Gaia as a Name

I consider this spirituality to be Gaian (Spretnak 1991:10). It is an Earth-based spirituality, which requires only birth, not baptism, for belonging. We are all native to Gaia; all humans are indigenous to Her. All humans can lay claim to relationship with Air, Fire, Water and Earth, and to the Mystery at the Centre of it all. We do all issue forth from the same Origin - this is not just poetic flourish, this is biologically and cosmologically true. Gaia, as I understand Her, is not only Earth; She is Cosmos. Earth is that particular manifestation of Her with whom we are most intimate, and with whom all humans participate, whether conscious or not. The same Creative Dynamic that flourishes in Earth is assumed to be the same Creative Dynamic present throughout the Universe. Earth-Gaia is Seed and Jewel of a larger living Organism. Earth-Gaia is our Mother, but She is Daughter too, of an essential Sentience that seethes through the Universe. Inasmuch as I am sentient, and I arise out of Her, out of Earth and Earth arises out of Universe, then Universe-Gaia is alive and sentient. She is the eternal pulse, in which each one of us flows. Gaia is Earth, is Universe, is Ultimate Mystery, is you, is me - She is multivalent. The only faith required in this spirituality is in the Teeming

\[24\] I will be capitalizing the Elements throughout this thesis to re-invest them with sentience, to enable the naming of them as sacred dynamics, ancient forebears out of whom we arise.

\[25\] I capitalize this term here because I am implying or offering another name for the Divine, as described in fn5 p.5.

\[26\] This is not meant to be an axiom of logic. It is stated thus because its metaphoric base here is “family” or “nested realities”.
Abundant Creativity that has been manifesting now for some fifteen billion years, and which has survived on this planet in a particular way for millions of years. This is not a flimsy track record! Perhaps, as James Lovelock has said, this is "as near immortal as we ever need to know" (Barlow 1991:42); or as Susan Griffin said more poetically, "at no instant does She fail me in Her presence” (Griffin 1980:219).

Essential then, to this Gaian spirituality, is the development of relationship with Earth, entering into Her consciousness, expanding awareness beyond the human-centred perspective. It requires a remembering of the "real" - the situation of "all human thought, social or individual ... in the processes of body, nature and place” (Spretnak 1999:4). This seems resonant with Thomas Berry’s understanding that "we are returning to our native place after a long absence” (1990:1). Berry goes on to describe this return to "native place" as the recovery of a feeling of intimacy with “the earth community”, as the recovery of

"a sense of presence, a realization that the earth community is a wilderness community that will not be bargained with; nor will it simply be studied or examined or made an object of any kind; nor will it be domesticated or trivialized as a setting for vacation indulgence ... " (Berry 1990:2).

It requires remembering

"our sense of courtesy toward the earth and its inhabitants, our sense of gratitude, our willingness to recognize the sacred character of habitat, our capacity for the awesome, for the numinosous quality of every earthly reality” (ibid).

This kind of presence is enabled by an identification of ourselves (the human) with the entire cosmic process (Berry 1990:17) - Gaia’s story, which is also ours; and by an identification with the cosmic powers that sustain us - such as Air, Sun, Water and Earth. David Abram calls attention to our forgetting of the air (1997:225ff)\(^27\), but Western civilization has put aside the entire material reality for nigh 2000 years, at the very base of its worldview\(^28\); remembering Air will be a good start. Gaian spirituality involves remembering the integrity of all elemental phenomena; that we are this, we depend on this, we come from this and we return to this. Recovered awareness of our communion with the rest of the natural world, “patient and precise, is the taproot of Gaian spirituality” (Spretnak 1991:17).

\(^27\) Luce Irigarany published a book by this name in French in 1983. Abram (1996) seems to be unaware of it. It was not translated into English until 1999. See Bibliography.

\(^28\) See Lakoff and Johnson (1999) for a development of this. They also develop how this disembodied worldview has become outmoded in our time due to findings of cognitive science.
Cosmogenesis – an Introduction

Central to this thesis is Swimme and Berry’s articulation of Cosmogenesis and its three "governing themes" (1992:66-79). Connie Barlow, science writer, has described Brian Swimme as scientist turned storyteller (1997:32). She describes his science as “impeccable” (ibid:31-32), and that

“he can comfortably present a talk at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, share a platform with religious leaders, or present the story of the universe to general audiences” (ibid:31).

In this context Barlow quotes E.O. Wilson as saying that “the evolutionary epic is probably the best myth we will ever have” (ibid:31 referring to Wilson 1978:201) and describes Wilson’s vision of the story of the universe as a grand narrative that may utilize archetypes, use poetic form, charge people’s souls to the critical task of participation and “inspirit” the material explanation of the world (ibid:24-28). Barlow selects Swimme as one such storyteller who renders science in this fashion (ibid:31-37). Thomas Berry, academically trained contemplative priest, has been described by Barlow as “the eighty-something co-author (and mentor) of Brian Swimme” (ibid:52) who “manages to forge a partnership between the sciences and humanities … without a trace of Western or intellectual chauvinism” (ibid:53), acknowledging “the truths of the other ‘wisdom traditions’, … (and) the wisdom of indigenous peoples, … (and) the wisdom of women” (ibid:53-54 brackets mine). Barlow points out that scientists such as Stephen Jay Gould or Steven Weinberg declare ‘the universe or the evolutionary story to be pointless’ (ibid:225), and writers such as Bryan Appleyard present Gould as “an elegant defender of the hard truth of science” (ibid:227 referring to Appleyard 1992:107). However, she says that the hard truth of science tells an awesome creation story that may provide meaning as it declares a “relationship with, Earth and the cosmos” (ibid:227).

Swimme and Berry’s cosmology is recognized as in keeping with the latest discoveries in astronomy, physics, complexity studies, and evolutionary theory. For Barlow and many others in the scientific community as she describes in Green Space, Green Time (1997), Swimme and Berry’s work catalyzes meaning-making that may actually make a social, political and

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29 Barlow notes that meaning ought not to be confused with purpose, in that “the evolutionary epic need not be on track toward some preset goal, some greater good, in order to be meaningful to you and me” (ibid:226).
cultural difference. She notes other scientists in the past such as Julian Huxley or Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, whom she feels were unable to accomplish this (ibid:57).

Amongst the broad range of influences upon Swimme and Berry’s cosmological interpretations is Alfred North Whitehead’s “process philosophy” which was an extrapolation from the quantum physics of the 1920’s. Whitehead included in his philosophy a “Threefold Creative Composition” which I note in this thesis as resonant with the three faces of the Female Metaphor and hence with Swimme and Berry’s three faces of Cosmogenesis (See p.105-106). Swimme and Berry’s articulation of the three is a development of Thomas Berry’s fourth principle of a functional cosmology (See Appendix K). Peter Reason has referred to their three “characteristics of the creative cosmos” as suitable “criteria of quality” for valid forms of participation (1994:27). Their description of the three “governing themes” of Cosmogenesis is not “scientific” in the sense that it is knowledge that is testable as E.O. Wilson defines science (1998). It is not offered as scientifically-testable hypothesis, but as an interpretation of three fundamental principles of reality inductively drawn from empirical scientific knowledge. Hence, the three “themes” are not equations, nor are they laws like unto the laws of thermodynamics. They are however fundamental principles of reality consistent with the empirical knowledge of scientists and able to be compared with and checked against that body of knowledge by others. Swimme notes specifically some of the scientists whose work he and Berry draw on for the development and understanding of their three aspects of Cosmogenesis.32

30 I acknowledge Charlene Spretnak’s advice on this, in a personal communication (email 21/10/02).
31 I acknowledge the advice of scientist Dr. Larry Edwards in this matter in a personal communication (email 22/10/02).
Cosmogenesis, in brief, is the ongoing creative activity of the Universe, "the unfolding of every phase of the Universe based on what came before" (Spretnak: personal communication 2001). Generally it refers to large-scale structures such as galaxies and stars, but a more inclusive understanding is justified:

"What we observe is that forms and structures in the universe arise, evolve in interactions, achieve stable if nonequilibrium processes, and then decay and disintegrate. The Cosmogenetic Principle simply states that the evolutionary dynamics involved in building the structures that appear in our own region of space-time permeate the universe as well" (Simmons and Berry op. cit.:67).

Certainly in their discussion of the three dynamics, Simmons and Berry cover the full gamut of creative manifestation - from particles to biological life to stars. They later describe how the three biological shaping powers of mutation, natural selection and niche creation "are further illustrations of the root creativity of the universe" that they have identified with the Cosmogenetic Principle (ibid:132)\(^\text{30}\). They consider their articulations of the meanings associated with these dynamics as a beginning, "a prologue for later treatments as our direct experience of the universe's development extends throughout space and time" (ibid:71).

In the background to this Cosmogenetic Principle, is a principle called the Cosmological Principle defined by Einstein, and it has been essential for the entire Western scientific research enterprise on the planet today. That principle states that every point in the Universe is the same as every other point (ibid:66) - basically that hydrogen in this part of the cosmos can be assumed to be the same as hydrogen in some other part of the cosmos. This is not something that can be proved but it is assumed as a reasonable principle. Simmons and Berry note that this foundational principle of cosmology came out of a context early this century, that believed we lived in a static cosmos - a context that was ignorant of the evolution of the Universe as a whole. Now that science recognizes that we live in a cosmogenesis, a developing evolutionary reality, which appears to have had a fifteen billion year story, that principle of Einstein's is being extended to the Cosmogenetic Principle:

\(^{30}\) I provide a description of these three biological shaping powers and my association of them with the Female Metaphor in Chapter 4.
"Even though our knowledge of morphogenesis and cosmogenesis is in its infancy, we are assuming that the heightened scientific investigation of these dynamics will make the cosmogenetic perspective entirely ordinary in the next centuries" (ibid:129).

This Cosmogenetic Principle states not only that every point in the universe is the same as every other point, but in addition, that the dynamics of evolution are the same at every point in the Universe. What that means, amongst many other things, is that the same Creative principle that gives birth to the Universe, pervades every drop of it with the same creative potency - that the Centre of the Universe is everywhere. Thus it is here as much as anywhere.

Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry have stated that this omnipresent Creativity will be characterized by three features "throughout time and space and at every level of reality" - differentiation, communion and autopoiesis (ibid:71). These three have been summarized as follows: differentiation - to be is to be unique; communion - to be is to be related; autopoiesis - to be is to be a centre of creativity (Original Blessing newsletter editorial page34). Swimme and Berry call these three features, "cosmological orderings of the creative display of energy everywhere and at any time throughout the history of the universe" (ibid:72). They say these three refer to the "basal intentionality of all existence" (ibid:71) and importantly, they are "beyond any simple one-line univocal definition" (ibid). They are highly complex, interconnected and ongoing processes. The three features themselves are features of each other, for example:- a "multiform relatedness" - communion, is demanded by a differentiated universe, and that rests upon the fact of each individual thing's infinite creative depths – autopoiesis (ibid:74). This thesis itself will be ordered, structured and organized by these features, and I hope to be able to illustrate how this has characterized its process, as it comes into focus35.

The Wheel of the Year – the Seasonal Ritual Celebrations

My own particular cultural heritage that gives body to the expression of this spirituality is the Old Western European Goddess tradition. My celebrations

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34 This summary definition of the three aspects of Cosmogenesis is on the editorial page of every issue of Original Blessing, a newsletter published by Friends of Creation Spirituality Inc., at 2141 Broadway, Oakland, CA.
35 I come back to addressing this in the concluding chapter on p.347.
of Gaia are based in that religious practice, wherein there are eight annual Earth holy days or "moments of grace" as Thomas Berry has termed them (1994). These eight “holy days” are traditionally known as “Sabbats”, and they were originally taught to me by Starhawk, both directly and in her text The Spiral Dance (1989). Since I first began to celebrate them in the Southern Hemisphere (1988), I have always done so at the correct dates for this location. I have adapted the celebrations significantly, re-languaging them for myself and for different groups of people, and as my understanding deepens and changes. I propose that the ritual celebration of these Seasonal Moments/Sabbats, couched in the participatory metaphor described in this thesis, enables women and men to actually experience participation in Gaia, identification and relationship with Her. The Wheel of the Year is a yearlong celebration of the Mystery - the light and the dark, which weave through our lives, and through all of existence. The annual Wheel is an expression of the dance of form and dissolution, that eternal dance in which we participate. It is an embodiment of the Creative Principle, the Triple Goddess, like a yearlong breath. The seasonal Wheel manifests how Gaia breathes in my part of the world, and the purpose of joining in that breath is in the hope of enhancing one’s journey into the awesome Creativity that She manifests, to unfold this deepest identity.

The Yoga Mudra as In-Corporation of Gaia’s Breath

There is a yoga pose that demonstrates this breath very well - the Yoga Mudra. The first position at the beginning of the breath is a statement of love of Self (the Virgin aspect); the second position as the breath expands and the arms spread up and out, is a statement of love of Other (the Mother aspect); the third position as the breath releases and the torso folds over, is a statement of love of All-That-Is (the Crone aspect). So the seasonal cycle - the play of light and dark, the relationship of Earth and Sun, may speak this breath, enabling a person to open more fully to it. I therefore included the practice of this pose in my methodology as noted on page 42.

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36 I therefore frequently refer to these Earth holy days as “Seasonal Moments”.

26
The Place

The site of this project has been significant. It has taken place in the Southern Hemisphere of Earth. The fact of my context being thus – the Southern Hemisphere – has contributed to my internalized deep sense of being “Other”, and I speak of this further in Chapter 8. “The Place” itself was “Other”. Most of the texts and graphics explaining the Cosmos to a Western and Australian child were (and still often are) drawn from the Northern Hemisphere perspective. The Moon in her phases were thus “backwards”, Sun’s daily movement from East to West was described as being “clockwise”, the seasons in the stories were always at odds with real experience. So somewhere deep in me from the beginning there was confusion about the sensed Cosmos – as a Place - and adding to it was the fact that none of this was ever explained; it was assumed that the world was the same for all on the planet, and if it wasn’t then at least, you needed to think like it was, and disregard all your senses. Even today, many in the Northern Hemisphere particularly, have no idea that the Southern Hemisphere has a “different” lunar, diurnal, seasonal perspective – and indeed over the years of industrialized culture it has appeared to matter less to many including then the “author-ities”, the writers of culture and cosmos.

It has also been significant that this project has been birthed in this ancient continent of Australia. It is the age of the exposed rock in this land, present to her inhabitants in an unvarnished, primal mode that is significant. The land herself has for millennia been largely untouched by human war, conquest and concentrated human agriculture and disturbance. The inhabitants of this land dwelt here in a manner that was largely peaceful and harmonious, for tens of thousands of years. Therefore the land Herself may speak more clearly; one may be the recipient of direct transmission of Earth in one of her most primordial modes. Her knowledge may be felt more clearly – one may be taught by Her. I think that the purity of this transmission from my beginnings as a country girl, to the more conscious times of entering into the process that this research describes, is a significant factor in the development of the research – in my chosen methodology and in what I perceived in the process, and wrote into the thesis.
It took me until the later stages of this research to realize the need to state the importance of this particular place – both the land of Australia, and the specific region of the Blue Mountains - and the community that dwells here, for the advent of the research. The lateness of this perception on my part, perhaps has to do with the extent of my previous alienation; but the fact that it did occur, is perhaps at least in part attributable to the unfolding awakening to my habitat that is part of the project.

The specific region of the “Blue Mountains” - as Europeans have named them – is significant in that I don’t think that this project could have happened as it did in just any region. David Abram says,

“The singular magic of a place is evident from what happens there, from what befalls oneself or others when in its vicinity. To tell of such events is implicitly to tell of the particular power of that site, and indeed to participate in its expressive potency” (1997:182).

The Blue Mountains are impressive ancient rock formations, an uplifted ancient seabed, whose “range of rock types and topographical situations has given rise to distinct plant communities” (Stockton 1996:43); and the presence of this great variation of plant communities, “especially the swamps, offer an abundance and variety of food sources, as well as habitats for varied fauna” (ibid). I feel that this is the case for this region’s capacity to nurture this project – it received the particularities of my passion. Even though I have been bringing a Western European heritage to this site, singing songs and dancing dances that come from other sites and times, it has been done in accord with the Seasons of this place and increasingly in accord with the particular features of this place. This research has been a journey of coming more deeply into relationship with my place, expressing and using the tools of my ancestral heritage – knowing this heritage in myself first so that I may come into relationship. I have for some time felt “familiar” with this place, related/family with this place, and in the course of this research, this place has received and enabled, and indeed invoked the seed within me. I am aware that the Poetry of this research has been enacted and enabled within the specific context, and it would not have been the same elsewhere and in a different community, which is itself a creation of the place. I will speak more about place in Chapter 8 where I relate more of my context; and also in Chapter 6 in regard to the specific site for the rituals; and at the
beginning of Chapter 9 as a preface to describing the participants; and place will again be addressed in the concluding chapter.

"Sacred Science" and the Thesis Proposal

The research includes responses of women and men to processes using imagination, presented in the form of teaching, meditations, dance, ritual, and storytelling, wherein female imagery is primary. It is a form of inquiry, characterized by John Heron’s commendations for sacred science, in that it:

- Departs from appeals both to the authority of spiritual traditions and teachers, and to the authority of academic researchers specializing in the field.
- Vests authority in the critical subjectivity and inner discrimination of group of inquirers who use the full range of their sensibilities to explore their relationship with being.
- Practices a form of democratic experiential and applied theology and parapsychology.
- Affirms the primacy of personhood, grounded in immanent spiritual life, as the foundation of religious knowing” (1998:1-2).

I contend that “She” – the Female Metaphor - in her three aspects may be understood as a dynamic of Creativity – a dynamic innate to being, that may enable both women and men to participate more fully in the life of their own organism, and thus in the life of the Larger Organism.

I propose that to participate in this year long process of ritual and celebration of Cosmic Metaphor for Creativity, with contemplation and consciousness, may enhance: (i) love of self, in a willingness to abide with the beauty and integrity of the particular differentiated self, and recognizing that this self is not separate from the Large Self which is Gaia (this is the work of the Virgin). (ii) love of other, in a deep sense of relationship and communion with other people, the planet and the Cosmos - knowing both one's "support for" and how one is "supported by" (this is the work of the Mother). (iii) love of All-That-Is, in the understanding of transformation as not only possible, but indeed, as intrinsic to the plot - enabling one's more joyful participation in this intrinsic creativity (the work of the Crone).

I propose that to participate in this Metaphor changes how one relates to loss; there is more willingness to let go. As one comes to identify with the Larger Self, and recognize one's place in the scheme of things, it turns around egoic hubris that would indulge in holding on, usually manifesting in
behaviour destructive to self, other and planet. Apart from obvious personal and interpersonal conflict that such hubris may generate, there is wanton "therapeutic" consumerism on a large scale, which is symptomatic of disregard for Earth. I do not mean to imply that when egoic hubris is let go of then there is no conflict, I mean simply that the source of conflict may then more likely be the creative tension of being alive, rather than a desperate unwillingness to accept change.

I propose that participation in this Metaphor also changes how one relates to life, especially if one has had uncertainties about the value of it. Spiritualities of the modern cultural context frequently stress the impermanence of this life, but in the cosmology presented in this thesis, life - manifest reality - is celebrated equally, and its perdurance becomes more obvious. When one gets a grip on the dynamic of Cosmogenesis from the earliest stages of the Cosmic Story as we currently understand it, Life's perdurance seems as insistent as the Void. It is true that one does not personally perdure, but one comes to know participation in a Process that does. For some people that is not sufficient, to be mere specks upon the road of a greater Journey, but that seems to be the situation; and the "specks" do create the Journey. The ritual celebration of the seasons may be an embodied reiteration of this truth, and enhance a willingness to participate creatively in this life.
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METHODOLOGY

My methodology is informed by an understanding of deep participation in the topic, which comes from a philosophy of deep participation in the world. The Matter of the world, the Matrix – which Merleau-Ponty names as "the Flesh" (Abram 1997:66 citing Merleau-Ponty 1968), is in Abram’s words, “an elemental power that has had no name in the entire history of Western philosophy” (op. cit.:66). Abram describes it as “the mysterious tissue ... that underlies and gives rise to both the perceiver and the perceived as interdependent aspects of its own spontaneous activity” (ibid). He names it as “the reciprocal presence of the sentient in the sensible and of the sensible in the sentient” (ibid). Abram points out that while conventional scientific discourse has privileged an objectivity, and New Age spiritualism has privileged pure subjectivity, that both of these views therefore perpetuate the “conception of sensible nature as a purely passive dimension suitable for human manipulation and use” (ibid:67). Neither viewpoint challenges the notion that Earth is “just a big dead ball of dirt” (Swimme 1984:133), the notion that it is possible to separate the perceiver and the perceived, the sensible and the sentient (Abram op. cit.:67). Neither viewpoint supports a sense of our context being essentially relational or a sacred whole – a mutual presence. Kremer suggests the term “con-course”, instead of “dis-course” (1992b), as a way of expressing this relationship even as we speak; and this is what this research is.

Braud and Anderson (1998) have outlined an expanded approach to science, research and disciplined inquiry, which may be used to explore the numinous/deeper dimensions of ordinary experience (ibid:ix). These “transpersonal” research methods are named such because they allow identification with an expanded sense of self, a reciprocity, a participative relationship with the perceived. They “incorporate intuition, direct knowing, creative expression, alternative states of consciousness, dreamwork, storytelling, meditation, imagery, emotional and bodily cues and other internal events as possible strategies and procedures in all phases of research inquiry” (ibid:xxx).
Of the five methods that they present, it is the Organic and Intuitive approaches that suit the nature of my research best; and since Organic inquiry has grown from heuristic and feminist approaches (ibid:259), I will outline first how I use these.

**Heuristic**

Although "heuristic" need not connote an introspective method, it may, and it is so in large part for my approach. According to Moustakas and Douglass, heuristics "in its purist form ... is a passionate and discerning involvement" in the "problem" (1985:39), which is the case with my research - I am the primary Subject of my research. There is "an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life through the internal pathways of the self" (ibid) – indeed it is in the self, that I desire to know the essence of life, having been offered a world that told me it was not there – I am re-membering myself. Heuristic research "affirms imagination, intuition, self-reflection and the tacit dimensions as valid ways in the search for knowledge and understanding" (ibid:40), and my search for knowledge has included participation in ritual, visual re-education (images of female form with integrity, wisdom, courage, power ... all the noble attributes that are said to constitute a healthy human), listening to my depths - the inner world of sensation and insight, allowing the "not-knowing" - the crumbling of epistemologies/worldviews. In these ways I have developed an understanding, a body of knowledge, about the faces of the ancient yet present Female Metaphor. As Moustakas and Douglass say,

"Through exhaustive self-search, dialogues with others, and creative depictions of experience, a comprehensive knowledge is generated, beginning as a series of subjective musings and developing into a systematic and definitive exposition" (ibid).

The classes I have facilitated over the years, wherein women have told their stories within the context of nobler images of the female, from within the perspective of a cosmology that values their experience, has built a body of knowledge. The rituals that I developed and used centrally in this research, enabled me to draw out the insights of the participants, as well as to "consult" with them. This current research is about taking the search to a new level of scientific credibility "through rigor and disciplined commitment" (ibid) – it is about following
“the subjective past ordinary levels of awareness, living the question internally in sources of being and nonbeing, recording hunches, ideas, and essences as they emerge, and, ultimately, consulting with others regarding the phenomenon or experience” (ibid).

Feminist

My inquiry is about connecting everyday human experiences with essential meanings, with the macrocosm, naming them as sacred, finding Ultimate Reality and meaning right there - and as Moustakas and Douglass point out, it is heuristic inquiry that “offers a disciplined pursuit” of connecting everyday experiences with “essential meanings” (ibid:39). Yet the nature of my inquiry is also feminist insofar as it asserts that women especially have been deprived of this in most current cultural contexts - the sacred has been named as external to their everyday experience, which has largely been named as mundane, if not outright distracting from essential meaning. This method may also be described as "sacred psychology" (Houston 1987), which "calls for the recovery and deepening of our personal story” (ibid:91). Houston says that

“a deeper story sustains and shapes our emotional attitudes, provides us with life purposes, and energizes our everyday acts. It offers us both meaning and momentum. Everything coheres when a deeper story is present” (ibid).

This research is feminist insofar as it participates in social action, and “the integration of research into these processes” (Mies & Shiva 1993:40), that is, I understand the seasonal rituals as “social action” that are integrated into the research. Mies and Shiva assert that to know a thing, you must change it – thus the “change of the status quo becomes the starting point for a scientific quest” (ibid). They quote Mao Zedong (1968) saying that “If you want to taste a pear, you must change it, that is, you must chew it in your mouth” (ibid). The seasonal rituals, as I create them for the purpose of this inquiry, do not just talk about changing the female existential situation; they participate in the change. This research then is not simply at the level of theory or discourse; it is re-creating, it is “doing”. The methods of ritual and story used in this research are experiential in nature, creating a “con-course” – a “Gaian con-course”, and the thesis is a documentation of that process of actually “tasting the pear”, of the communion.
ORGANIC METHOD

My method then is Organic, growing out of the above discussed approaches (Braud and Anderson 1998:259), and in the sense that it relies heavily on my creativity as the researcher (ibid:259-260) - in the ritual celebrations that I create, the meditations and the processes I put together in the layers of action. It is organic in the sense that it relies for its development/evolution on my responsiveness to internal influences and external events (ibid:260).

As Braud and Anderson define it, participation in organic inquiry requires “a reverence for the sacred in all aspects of the work” (ibid), which they liken to the preparation of earth for the planting of a seed. All the participants in this inquiry came to it with a reverence. Braud and Anderson say that the seed for the organic study “comes from the researcher’s deeply held personal experience” (ibid); and that the organic approach honors the “chthonic” or “uncontrollable aspects of the methodological process” (ibid) absorbing nourishment and growing at first beneath visibility just as a seed does in soil. Throughout its process this intensely personal research has specifically depended on the integrity of the deep non-visible realities – that can only be sensed at first. Braud and Anderson continue with the sprouting seed analogy, saying that as the plant appears – enters visible space – it depends on sun and rain for its growth. So the organic method then is “relational” (ibid), depending on the stories of others for its development. The fruit and goal of Organic inquiry is “transformative” (ibid) in nature – healing change is offered in the process to all involved in it, including the readers. This organic metaphor suits the nature of this research very well.

I favour the organic approach because it was important to me that participants had the freedom to fit into it where it suited them, to mesh it with their lives as their lives are, not constructing an artificial situation. That is, I felt that the participant's organic desire for the experience and knowledge must be present to make the research valid. "If we want to know about people, we have to encourage them to be who they are, and to resist all attempts to make them - or ourselves - into something we are not" (Reason and Rowan 1981:xxiii). So there was no requirement of attendance at any specific number of events, the organic needs of the individual were
paramount to the validity of the research. It was acknowledged that the participant may gain more from a hiatus than from an attendance, the "seed" planted may have all the external factors it needs, and the nurturance that comes from the chthonic is essential to the real exploration of affects. Organic research can be "guided by the exigencies that develop during the study" (Braud and Anderson op. cit.:260), and I feel there has to be an acceptance of the stream of people's lives. Thus the research is open to a level below "conscious purpose" (Barlow 1997:77 citing Thomas Berry), respecting "the process moving around us" (Barlow op. cit.). The research itself recognizes its participation in a larger picture and process, which is as organic as Earth and her creative evolution and is part of it. This approach is also kin to the approach named as "radical perspectivism" by Alexander Makedon, wherein the researcher "identifies not only with this or that culture, reform effort, or epoch, but with the whole universe" (1992).

INTUITIVE METHOD

Characteristic of Intuitive Inquiry is reliance on "transpersonal skills such as intuition and alternative states of consciousness, as core methods of inquiry" (Braud and Anderson 1998:258). Dr. Jean Houston notes that there is no such thing as

"a state of ordinary consciousness versus an altered state of consciousness. Consciousness is always altering, and that it is its very nature -- to expand, contract, exalt, depress, go inward, go outward, and even ride a flatline into nothingness" (email to COSMOGEN listserv 22/6/99).

The relevant point here is the recognition of searching for knowledge by many methods of consciousness. An essential feature of Intuitive Inquiry is compassion, that is, "leaning gently into the experiences of others for deeper understanding" (Braud and Anderson 1998:72). Anderson also describes "sympathetic resonance" as a validation procedure for the researcher's particular insights and synthesis. Both of these features characterize my approach, both in setting up the workshops and rituals, and in the analysis of the data. Is there a resonance in the participants with my experience? How does it feel for them? Intuitive Inquiry is described as "uniquely suited to exploring experiences considered complex and subtle" (ibid: 258). This research is both of these - drawing in as it does, dimensions of the cosmic, ecological, cultural, and personal - and exploring the subtlety of deeper connection and significance in everyday experiences.
The process of collecting the data for this research, requires “setting the stage for the experience under investigation to show up”, as Braud and Anderson describe this characteristic of Intuitive Inquiry (ibid:90); that is, the ritual spaces of all the Seasonal celebrations, necessary for this inquiry, were/are complex folded layers of enactment, play, narrative, meditation and storytelling. Built into the research frame is the year long “incubation” period of the Seasonal cycle, which therefore included much activity “unrelated to research” – simply living, as well as scheduled “empty space and time” for “non-linear brain activity” (ibid:91). Meditation in various forms, as a daily practice on my part, was considered essential to my inquiry. As well as being a practice of receptivity, it helped provide “incubating downtime for the new information to settle and shift” (ibid) in my awareness.

To aid my process of analyzing and synthesizing the data, I sat on my study floor, in the middle of a circle of eight stones that represented the eight Seasonal Moments/Sabbats, with all the material relevant to each, placed next to each stone. I would light a candle and remain there in meditation for a period of time. I began each day’s work this way for about a month, before moving the stones to a smaller arrangement to the side, keeping them visibly present. I also found it helpful to have my ritual headpiece in view from time to time, as its changing and continuous Seasonal decoration had given it the significance of the Female Metaphor and Her expression; it was a central representation of the year long ritual art process of creation and erasure. The cycle of the year celebrations is a year long art process, kin to the construction of the Kalachakra Mandala, or any other art work that is created and destroyed. The headpiece, the wreath, the altar, participate in the expression of the Seasonal Moment; then the decorations are removed, changed, for re-creation. Suzi Gablik describes this as so for the artist Janz, who painted flowers in all stages of the life cycle, and just as the flower transforms through time, so must the drawing “also transform, through a continual process of erasure and redrawing” (Gablik 1991:89).
Throughout the research process, and particularly in the final writing stage, I went for walks often, and I sat outside for my meditations. These are all Intuitive processes (Braud and Anderson 1998:91-93), keeping awake my participation in “the Flesh”, the shamanic process of “con-course”, in what might otherwise lapse into a “heady” experience and lose much of the insight essential to the project. Towards the end of the writing of the research, I realized how much the research methods had taught me in terms of noticing subtleties of consciousness and experience, and also how I was relying less on writing such down, feeling more able to trust remembering the pathways to the subtleties or my presence to them.

Ritual as Method

In describing Intuitive Inquiry, Rosemarie Anderson says that “it seems appropriate to think of research procedures and protocols as a ritual, that is, a carefully designed form intended to reveal many layers of meaning” (Braud and Anderson op.cit.:79). Thus she says, “the sheer intent and concentration converge to create a single momentum” (ibid:80), a process into which the researcher can relax – trusting the revelatory nature of “the ritual of the protocols” (ibid). This could both describe the basic nature of the process of this research, and the power of using ritual as a research method. In terms of the former, I was always intentional and focussed in my approach to the research, spoke these intentions in the rituals that were part of the seasonal cycle, and I always trusted the innate momentum of the research process. In terms of the latter, ritual is intentional focus by participants, by which a story/metaphor may be given form and known ... such as is the desired outcome of this particular research process. Starhawk says that “to do ritual, you must be willing to be transformed in some way” (1990:100), because that is its very nature, that is, it is “trans-forming”.

Ritual can be as simple as having a cup of tea or reading a poem, or high drama like classical theatre or a rave concert; in either case it is “time out” - entering another realm, to a greater or lesser degree. As with having a cup of tea, it is done with the expectation of rejuvenation/renewal. Humans actually do ritual all the time. Starhawk notes that “ritual is the way culture enacts and affirms its values” (op. cit.:98). But this enactment and affirmation
is usually unconscious, and thus the participants remain unaware of what is actually being activated; for example, going to the pub is a popular sanctioned ritual - time out, imbibing "spirit". And whereas once, the ancestors used to sit around the fireplace and tell the cosmic stories; now most often humans sit around the TV in the modern cave, and the story that is told is that the world is a collection of objects to be consumed (Swimme 1996:8-20). As ritual is done consciously more often, we become aware of the symbols and myths that we live and can choose more consciously the tools with which we shape our lives – "ritual is a way of marking and intensifying value" (Starhawk op. cit.). As mythologist Joseph Campbell said, "The first and most important effect of a living mythological symbol is to awaken and give guidance to the energies of life" (1973: 89). Ritual at its best is the art form of a living cosmology. It may mark the cycles of life that "sustain us" (Starhawk op. cit.:99), thus it may enable a movement out of mechanistic ideology into the "divine web of relationships", through celebration (Hallowell 1995:40).

According to Swimme, the Universe is one huge celebration - expanding, exuberantly rushing away from a centre with news of that centre ... an urgent unfolding of being (1984:144 -145). Thus, he says, "Self-expression is the primary sacrament. Whatever you feel deeply demands to be given form and released" (ibid:147), insisting upon "song and dance" (ibid). Ritual must be a space where something deep in the self is free to be expressed - a space free of judgement and coercion - allowing individual uniqueness, while affirming community (Hallowell 1995:42).

Since ritual is an opportunity to give voice to deeper places in ourselves, forms of communication are used that the dreamer, the emotional, the body, can comprehend, such as music, drama, simulation, dance, chanting, singing (Starhawk 1989:36). These forms enable the entering of a level of consciousness that is there all the time, but that is not usually expressed or acknowledged. We enter a realm that is out of time, which is commonly said to be not the "real" world, but it is perhaps more organic/indigenous, and at least as real as the tick-tock world. It is a place "between the worlds" (Starhawk op. cit.:98), wherein we may put our hands on the very core of our
lives, touch whatever it is that we feel our existence is about, and thus touch the possibility of re-creating and renewing ourselves.

LAYERS OF ACTION FOR THE RESEARCH

(i) the creation of a cycle of seasonal ritual celebrations, which were actually evolving before the research, and still are continuing after the research. In other words, the cycle of seasonal celebrations was not artificially created for the research; it is an organic series of events, which the research has focussed on in a particular way for an official period of time. For this reason, I will use the present tense to speak of the nature of these celebrations. The participants in these events are a varying group, some regular attendees, some only coming occasionally. For the period of the research, there was a core group of four women, who attended pre and post-ritual meetings, receiving teaching and background information on each Seasonal Moment and its celebration, and giving suggestions and feedback and assisting in the processes of the rituals. These women are continuing to participate in the ritual celebrations, but without the added informative and feedback sessions of the formal research period.

Central to this year-long process is an understanding of coming home to a cosmology wherein we sense ourselves as creating the cosmos - wherein we understand *ourselves* as sacred, along with all of Manifestation. We name our lives as the process of Life itself, and thus make them sacred. The participants enact a cosmology wherein we are the agents of the Creativity of the Universe. For example, at Lammas, where the Celts celebrate the harvest of the Grain God Lugh, we celebrate *ourselves* as the Harvest, the Grain Goddess - *we* are the grain. These rituals develop, share and express our intimate involvement with Gaia on the levels of self, Earth and Cosmos; for "the very telling of these stories actively participates in a creative process that is felt to be happening right now .." (Abram 1997:186).

(ii) the presentation of a class series called "Re-Storying and Celebrating Goddess in You". The four core participants in the seasonal celebrations for the research, had been in these classes, and quite a few of the other women who participated in the seasonal celebrations had been also. This class series
gave background information on Goddess metaphor, and was designed to enable the re-storying of the Female Metaphor within, enhance a centredness in the self; and through my presentation of the seasonal Wheel of the Year, and facilitating of ritual/"circle" experience, to enhance relationship with Earth and with each other.

(iii) the presentation of further information and processes, based on this first layer, in the form of a class series called “En-Trancing Goddess”. The four core participants attended this series, and indeed one of them had initiated my creation of it, by asking for “more”. The processes of this series were designed to enable a deepening of awareness of the Female Metaphor in self, Earth and Cosmos, enhancing the participants' sense of embeddness in the web of life. Methods were presented whereby participants could develop their own understandings of, and embody, this Metaphor further. The series included the facilitation of processes whereby participants could develop their own sense of the seasonal Wheel of the Year, and enhance their participation in it.

(iv) The disciplined noting of my own perceptions, imagination and intuitions of the Female Metaphor, and of my own experience of the yearlong seasonal process and rituals. Since I am passionately involved, and the whole inquiry relies heavily on my creativity, my thoughts will not be "merely a reflection on reality, but also a movement of that reality itself" (Harman and Sahtouris 1998:16). As the mapmaker, the thinking and knowing subject, I am a product and a performance of that which I seek to know and represent (ibid:16).

I delineated my process into seasonal divisions, so that for example, there was a "Summer Solstice 99 Process" and a "Lammas 2000 Process" and so on. There was no pre-determined beginning for the process of any season; I felt it intuitively - sometimes the beginning was felt soon after the previous ritual, sometimes not for a while. Sometimes I would have two “processes” going at the same time. The important thing really is that I was daily noting perceptions, events, ideas, thoughts and feelings. These things were noted whether or not I thought they had some imagined relevance to the seasonal
Sabbat. I did not presume to know all that would emerge from this noting, but I have a record of my experience, which serves to assess my proposal and provided a base for questions for participant interviews.

My writing or refining of the seasonal ritual script usually took place about two - three weeks into the particular seasonal process, by which time I was ready to seriously contemplate what needed to be articulated and dramatized in the seasonal ritual. The script for each Sabbat remained fairly stable over the last few years, with changes made when my perceptions of the Metaphor deepened or shifted.

Since what I sought to know involves the subtle layers of my experience, the inquiry included a personal daily meditational practice of various modalities, affirming the various aspects of self - sometimes a simple stillness, sometimes focussed attention to my physical being – which included dance and yoga, sometimes just sitting with the emotional self, sometimes focussed attention with Earth-Gaia. The meditation practice, usually in the morning and in the evening, continues at this point, and is an essential affirmation of my depths, and an opening to those depths. It is a practice of listening to my organism.

(v) the tracking of participants' experience. This was done with written feedback forms, interviews with individuals, and pre and post-ritual meetings with the core group.

Some participants accessed all the layers of the classes and all the ritual celebrations. Some only participated in a few seasonal rituals. I do not regard participation in all these layers as a measure of individual understanding of the Metaphor, or as a level of engagement with the process of ritual celebration. Each individual has brought with them prior experience that affected their understanding and engagement, and there is no predicting of individual openness in the moment.

This research project was given clearance by the Ethics Committee of the University. All participation has been completely voluntary, thus engaging
individuals at the level of their own organic interest. This thesis/project could not have happened without there being a responsive group of people who desired to participate, and share with me their experience. The people who have been and are, context for the celebrations, are essential to their creation. I am doing part of it - and I feel so privileged to have the role that I do - but it is their desire, their awareness, which allows it to be. I feel deeply graced and thankful for the receptivity of these participants.

The Three Candles Ritual Meditation

One particular form that was part of my meditation practice, that I need to mention here, is a reflective process that included the lighting of three candles and the invocation of the triple metaphor in varied verbal valencies. I cannot remember when I first developed this, but my first written record of it was during the first year of this research process. Over time, the invocation complexified along with my understandings of the multivalent nature of each of the three faces. I will develop this in Chapter 8 and in the concluding chapter. It is also in APPENDIX C, as it was included in session one of classes that were a layer of action to this research.

The evening meditation also included the Yoga Mudra, already mentioned on page 26, which I understood as an in-corporation of the Triple Metaphor, and of the year long Seasonal Wheel, as outlined above. This was a daily way of both invoking in my being the essence of my Search, and of remembering my actual immersion in it (Moustakas and Douglass 1985:47) - though I, as if sitting in the Dark, was groping in my Search to sense it and know it.
"Goddess", as I understand the term, is the Female Metaphor for the Great Creative Principle of the Universe. As such, She is both the Matrix and an wholistic template of Being; that is, She is whole and complete within Herself, and is a complete illustration of the process of living and dying. She has three aspects, which are based on chronological phases of a woman's life, but are not in any way limited to those phases. These three aspects are phases of the whole process of living and dying, that the ancients in many cultures noticed and celebrated. I contend that She, in Her three aspects may be understood as a dynamic of Creativity, a dynamic innate to Being, that may enable women and men both, to participate more fully in the life of their own organism, and hence in the life of the Larger Organism. I understand "Creativity" as another name for the Mystery of Being, and it is what I understand as the essence of Being. As Loren Eiseley reflects,

“No utilitarian philosophy explains a snow crystal, no doctrine of use or disuse. Water has merely leapt out of vapor and thin nothingness in the night sky to array itself in form. There is no logical reason for the existence of a snowflake any more than there is for evolution” (Eiseley 1957:27).

“Creativity” is also a term used by process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead for “the Category of the Ultimate” (1929:28). This dynamic, triple-faced Metaphor may enable the identification of Life itself, as we witness it, experience it, and inter-act with it, with the manifestation of the ultimate Mystery at the Heart and Origin. I will relate the three Faces of the Female Metaphor to three characteristics of what is scientifically known as the Cosmogenetic Principle, an omnipresent creative dynamic essential to all structure and form in the Universe.

The three chronological phases of a woman’s life, in which these faces are mirrored are, as stated:- pre-menarchal young one, menstrual mother, and post-menopausal elder; and thus they have been known as Virgin/Maiden, Mother/Crator, Old One/Crone. It will be necessary, as part of this thesis, to "re-story" these terms, since women and men in our times, no longer
understand them in their full integrity - diminished, trivialized and even
demonized as they have been by millennia of patriarchal narrative. Whereas,
in the earliest of times of consciousness, and even later, these phases seem to
have been sensed as aspects of the Great Creative Process whereby Life
continued, they had in recent patriarchal times lost their sacred essence.
Indeed the Great Creative Process itself, as sacred, had become background.
The mother became mere vessel, and “useful” in this mode. The young
virgin became a prize to be taken, the older virgin became a harsh deviant to
be avoided. The old one became “used up” and troublesome. Adam McLean
advises that

“To find the Triple Goddess … we must go back to an early stratum of myth.
Long before the ascendency of the Christ myth, the primal myths of the
Goddess had been overlaid with generations of masculine Gods usurping her
place in the scheme of things, taking over her sacred centres and grasping for
themselves some facet of her attributes. If we go back to the earliest myths of
humankind we will find the goddess in her purest, usually triune, form”

The re-storying of women - the Being of the female, is a preface to being able
to speak sensibly of how Virgin-Mother-Crone could be a Metaphor for the
Mystery of Being. I will then be relating these three aspects to the
evolutionary cosmic dynamics as a way of deepening awareness of them in
the present moment - as a way of entering into the Female Metaphor more
fully. The seasonal celebrations then may become a way of accessing the
Metaphor, and developing personal and cultural relationship to the Cosmos.

Language
It seems generally clearer for me to speak of the "Female Metaphor" rather
than "Goddess" since I do not wish to imply a "God in drag". I will however,
use the term "Goddess" sometimes, as I think humans do need to get
acclimatized to Her expressed in this form - She has for too long been
relegated to the fringes. According to the Webster's Dictionary, a metaphor is
a word or phrase used “to suggest a likeness” (1986:1420). "Goddess" is a
figure of speech suggesting a likeness of femaleness in the Divine, or the
Divine in femaleness; few argue with that, though many do argue that "God"
does not suggest a likeness of maleness in the Divine, or the Divine in
maleness. The term "Goddess" does seem to evoke a different visceral
impulse and visualization, which is worth noting. I will also, at times, speak
of many particular Goddesses - Demeter or Persephone for example, all of whom for me partake in the Female Metaphor; they are particular conflagrations of, are holons of, the Female Metaphor. I will continue to use a capital "g" even for these particular Goddesses, partly for political reasons, that is, so Their Divinity is remembered; but also signifying that I am not simply speaking of an archetype of the Olympian pantheon. As evidence suggests, long before the Goddesses were colonized, married off, raped and caught in sordid plots against each other, they were faces of a Matrix and a Cosmic Power.

"Archetype" is a word frequently used to name the Female Metaphor, though it is much less often used to name other Deities. I prefer not to speak of Her as "archetype", as this tends to connote a "mindstruct" - something "merely" cultural - and what I wish to convey is the sense of Her as a "physic" of the Universe. Some who use the term "archetype" do appear to mean just that, that is, "archetype" as a "physic". Adam McLean for example in his book *The Triple Goddess*, says,

"If archetypes are merely the husks of old racial memories writ large in the psyche, then we can only relate to them by trying to free ourselves of the forces bound up in them. This is indeed a valid approach... However, the esotericist sees these archetypes not as the psychic garbage of a previous age, but as the reflection of spiritual being in our souls" (1989:112).

He further clarifies: "In this sense we bear the 'Gods' (sic) within our being" (ibid:113). He departs however from my understandings - that is, the sense I wish to convey - when he goes on to distinguish the 'Gods' within us (humans) from the 'Gods' within Earth (ibid). McLean's language frequently remains dualistic though he praises and illustrates the capacity of the Triple Goddess "archetype" to overcome "the dualistic values imported into our souls through millennia of patriarchal dualism" (ibid:117). Joseph Campbell's view is that "archetypes" arise not so much "from the mental sphere of rational ideation" (1995:11), as from the single psychophysiological source common to all humans - the body (ibid:12). In that sense archetypes arise from "bioenergies that are the essence of life itself" (ibid:13). For Campbell, archetypes

"are biologically grounded and at once the motivating powers and connoted references of the historically conditioned metaphorical figures of mythologies around the world ... (and) ... are, like the laws of space, unchanged by changes of location" (ibid:19).
This would seem to be the sense in which I mean the Female Metaphor, and at home with the Cosmogenetic Principle. However, in general I feel that the word “archetype” confuses the fundamental sense of the Triple Face Dynamic as I wish to convey it for the purposes of this research. The evolutionary cosmic dynamics – Cosmogenesis – are not culturally induced phenomena, nor is the cyclical dynamic of the Triple Goddess Metaphor. The Cosmogenesis in which we find ourselves is at once completely physical and manifest, as well as “intra”-physical and unmanifest – it is not “meta”-physical and separate, it is intrinsic with the physical. Physicist David Bohm speaks in terms of “implicate” and “explicate” orders, wherein the “explicate” (or “manifest”, as I have termed it) is “a special and distinguished form contained within the general totality of all the implicate orders” (1995:xv) (or “unmanifest”, as I have termed it). In this way Bohm develops a way of speaking about a “universe of unbroken wholeness” (ibid) which is how I understand the physics of the Female Metaphor.

Similarly, some common Pagan language that is used today does not communicate the actual physics of the Universe that it aspires to celebrate; for example, to say that “The young Sun is born on the Winter Solstice and takes over from the old Sun who has given its last energy to keep us warm before passing into the underworld” (Nichols 1999), is not conducive of real relationship with the real Universe as we know it. Another example of language in Pagan circles, that I find problematic, is where Light and Dark are spoken of as being in a battle37, that is, where at Winter Solstice, the celebrations are languaged as marking Light’s “victory over the darkness of winter” (Crowley 1998:40). Other Pagan sources say it is Dark’s victory – Starhawk, for example, says that at Winter Solstice, “darkness triumphs” (1989:182). Either way it is being storied as a battle, which in actual fact the Sun is not engaged in. I do not think that these expressions conjure a desirable or insightful story about the Light and Dark phenomena caused by the Sun’s relationship with Earth. This kind of language does not do this ancient Earth-Wisdom tradition justice for our time, and perhaps it never did amongst those who observed, studied and reflected upon, and taught the Earth Wisdom. Our language needs to fit our understanding of the Universe,

37 Which is also the story told in many other religions, in various ways.
needs to fit us (humans and all beings) into – story us into – the Universe, as our minds know it.

Language is important to this thesis. I have already footnoted much of what I have to say about my frequent capitalizing of words that would normally be in small case. I realize that there is argument for not capitalizing at all – any of it, the female metaphor herself: in which case, the base line is that it is all sacred, and nothing further needs to be said. However, the cultural reality is that all is not sacred, and that is the point that this thesis is speaking to. Thus I persist with the re-valuing of certain words by capitalizing as one method that goes in hand with the entire project, and opening those words up to the possibility of expressing a multivalent reality which is at once the Divine at all those valencies. Mary Daly uses this method, and so does Starhawk. Daly says she is using “Metaphors of Metabeing” (1984:24-30), to “Name Realms of active participation in the Powers of Be-ing” (ibid:26), and to convey “multiple meanings” (ibid:27). And so am I exploring the understandings of some words, wishing to invite a play with their dimensions, increase their resonance, to pronounce them as Names, in a cultural context that has deadened them or confined them to a one-dimensional – and “profane” – reality. However, I do not wish to be dogmatic or tiresome about it, as I realize some readers may have no difficulty with the multivalent dimensions of the words – thus I am not consistent in my use of capitals. I hope that the reader will bear with me for these reasons, as I feel the need, word by word, to be explicit (by capitalizing) about a Name for Her characteristics/realities.

In general, I like when possible to avoid "the", in front of "Source" or "Goddess" or "Mystery", since “That/She” is not an object. Just as those who do use "God" understand that "the" God, would seem to refer to a signifier of Divinity rather than referring to Divinity itself. I don't know that it is always possible to abandon "the" - this is an experiment, but the attempt may help us to change our minds.

Sometimes in the writing I may use the term "the Mother" to refer to the "Female Metaphor", since this is my experience of Her. I will try to be clear that I am not referring in that instance to the aspect/face of Mother, but to
the One, the "She-Who-Is-All". I will develop discussion of the complexity of the separation of the Three from the One, towards the end of Chapter 3.

I will frequently use terms like "we" and "ourselves", to speak of "humans", and sometimes to speak of "women". It will be clear as to which category I am referring, and I do understand that the experience of individuals and cultures within these categories are by no means monolithic. There are however some recurrent patterns that will be referred to. In the case of using "we" for "women", I will use it sparingly, and will be referring to the experience of sisters I have known both personally and via written word.

**Feminist Theology – Thealogy - Poetry**

This thesis is not feminist theology, thus at first when I began I thought it may be a "thea-logy". This term is thought to have been coined originally by Naomi Goldenberg in 1979 (Christ 1997:184 fn5). Thea-logy is a study of Goddess. Some prefer to call such a study, Sophialogy (Coralie Ling 2000). As I understand “thea-logy”, it has resonances with terms such as Ecosophy (Morning Glory Zell and Otter G’Zell 1970’s noted in G’Zell 1988), and Gaiasophy (Zoeteman 1991), since “thea-logy” is about relating with our Earth/Universe/Context. It is not simply “theology spelled with an a”, as Walker points out (2000:27). Thomas Berry, whose Earth Wisdom resonates with this project, has been named a “geologist” (Matousek 1990); which could be a kind of “Gaia-logian” (my term), though that title may imply a study of Gaia which is also not what I am able to do here. I would like however to name it "Poetry", since I feel that all "theology" and "thea-logy" was meant to be Poetry - what else could it be in its attempt to describe matters of an ultimate nature. Yet most of what has passed for theology has ended up actually a description of a dead butterfly pinned in a glass case, not one that is alive and flitting about the garden - in the act of being. As Joseph Campbell said, the best things can’t be thought about since they transcend all thought; the second best things are misunderstood, since they are the thoughts that refer to what can’t be talked about; and the third best things are what we talk about (1988:49). Campbell described life as a poem, and that we participate in a poem (ibid:55). He recalled the Gnostic texts, saying that "one problem with Yahweh ... is that he forgot he was a metaphor. He thought he
was a fact” (ibid:62). I do not call Great Mystery - the "She" of whom I speak - "God"; I am thus not doing "theology". In terms of human history, "God" is a recent name for the Mystery, or Source of all. A couple of millennia ago, the Greeks hesitated to use it lest the people became confused, as to whether the term was referring to Zeus (Smith 1983-84:2). Indeed in the minds of most, still today, I think it does precisely that; though today, the Body invoked in the mind by the term is not known as Zeus.

Further to the case for naming what I am doing as "Poetry", is that the Earth tradition for which I speak was in its origins, an oral tradition, which relied on its poets. It may be noted that the first among the attributes praised in the Great Goddess Brigid was Her function of poet – along with physician and smith-artisan. It would appear that Poetry was considered a critical discipline in which to engage – “critical to cultural survival” as Donal O Cathasaigh points out (in Preston 1982:79). O Cathasaigh later equates poetry with “tradition-bearing” (ibid:81). William Irwin Thompson speaks of the poetic imagination as a capacity to sense/intuit and “to be more than you can know” (1987:8), a capacity which is important to scientific endeavour “because we are more than we know” (ibid:9). He speaks of “the mesocosm of the mind” where knowing “becomes the organization of the living that brings forth a world” (ibid:10). I am both bearing a tradition, and also bringing forth a world.

Feminist theology is different from what I am doing here, in that it can speak at great length about female metaphors for Divinity, and not once use or develop the term "Goddess", or even use the female pronoun (Johnson 1994:233-236). Feminist theologians in general, do not perceive "God" as invoking Maleness, yet "Goddess" is perceived as invoking Femaleness, and this for some to whom feminist theology speaks, is by far too dreadful a thought. "God" can quite happily incorporate the maternal – “God” is frequently addressed as “Mother” – but there is nothing radically different about this incorporation; the Gods of recent human history have always done this, though they have left menstrual abilities alone.
On occasion feminist theology advises us to grow out of maternal metaphor altogether, as Johnson advocates (1994: 235) - a move that I feel participates in a postmodern denial of the body (See Spretnak States of Grace). It falls into the hands of the patriarchal mind that would have us deny Earthbody, along with female body, and the sensuous processes of Life. Most feminist theology, as important as it is for women and men within the Christian paradigm, continues to be within that paradigm; it is an "emancipatory discourse" (Johnson ibid:103) and that is simply not what I am doing here. I wish to invoke an earlier human orientation to Mystery, something more primal to being, more organic, more dynamically essential to Life, more ubiquitous - that can be known in our bodyminds, in Earth, in the Cosmos. I no longer wish to speak to the problem, as so many good minds still do; as an example, Grace M. Jantzen’s work Becoming Divine (1998) addresses the issues with the “old guard”, and I suppose it still needs to be done – it does serve to identify and analyze the problem. I am so glad it is not my work. I want to be part of the re-creation – actually “do” something new, in the sense of actually changing the reality, situating us in a new Realm/Place.

The hour is late, the urgent and sacred yearnings of the Earth call for real change, we must get on; we cannot be held up at the gate entertaining the old rules.

This thesis then is not situated as “feminist discourse”, rather as “Gaian concourse”. It may be regarded by some as feminist, and I have regarded myself as feminist, but I do think that this thesis ventures into new territory. The new territory is in the realm of “the spell of the sensuous” (Abram 1997), wherein we humans no longer primarily or simply engage in more “logical elucidation of new philosophical principles” (ibid:69), but we dare to attend sincerely and primarily to the complexity of actual relationship with, and comprehension of, our embodied engagement with the underlying perceptual dimension of our Earth-Universe-Gaian context and an actual rejuvenation of it.

38 See page 9 ("placing" myself) and page 33 (Feminist methodology) and 47 (Language), for particular reference to what I mean by “doing” something. It is an action, not a theory.
The Body - Essential or Not?

"Without this body ... (there is) no possibility of experience” (Abam 1997:45); even knowledge in its abstract form, is experience.

"Without this body ... (could there be) ...anything to speak about, or even to reflect on, or to think, since without any contact, any encounter, without any glimmer of sensory experience, there could be nothing to question or to know" (ibid).

Abam affirms that, "I am this body" (1997:46). I ask - what difference if it menstruates, lactates? The modern woman was held down by this difference, by the fact of her organic processes. The postmodern woman may be expected to deny that it matters, that it affects her experience in any way.

The organic processes of the female body, the "elemental capabilities of woman" are not cultural inventions (Spretnak 1993:122), though I passionately agree that much cultural invention about it has occurred, and continues to occur - across the full spectrum of "thinking". Whilst it is true, as Derrida asserts, "that everything in human experience, including nature and human physicality, ... is already an ... entity shaped into cultural perceptions" (ibid) - indeed, this is partly at the heart of this thesis, that we are in deep relationship with our environment before we enter it (Swimme and Berry 1992:77 on communion); it is an error to deny any foundational experience. We, like our primal forebears, breathe, drink water, excrete, feel. We do have a genetic code within each cell, that is a physical memory of origins ... we are seeded with memory, and this is especially true of the female body, whose ovum transmits the cytoplasm from one generation to the next (Coates 1993:10). The very inability or unwillingness of any philosophical position to deal with a reciprocity between the being and environment - that the being itself has some innate foundational integrity, is a trait of the patriarchal mind in that it does not allow the "materia" any agency, sentience or "autopoiesis". Typical of such a mind is that of Francis Crick, credited with the co-discovery of the double-helical structure of DNA along with James Watson, and also along with - though unaccredited - Rosalind Franklin (Vare & Ptacek 1987:214). Crick claimed that human joys and sorrows, memories and ambitions, sense of personality and free will "are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their
associated molecules”\textsuperscript{39}, as if to assert that this “vast assembly of nerve cells and associated molecules” has no sentience.

I am suspicious of the texts that would "erase the body", since in patriarchal cultures it is the female particularly that is associated with physical reality. Whose body is it then that is primarily being erased, that has been erased since the emergence of the patriarchal mind? (Yet artists have been obsessed with her body??) The early Greeks denied her inclusion in the "kosmos" because of her messy body (see Guthrie 1960:34-40); and in other cultures where her body had been the lap upon which rulers sat and thus gained their right to rule (Neumann 1974:98-100), her body was stylized into furniture - a throne, and then forgotten. It is likely that when humans really remember the body – this relational dynamic in which we are - they will remember the female body, and once again will have to deal with a foundational cyclical experience - life and death. How we story that experience is really very open, but it will be a recognition of the web of life that "both cradles us and calls us to weave it further" (Macy 1995:255).

Life and death does not seem like much of a "foundational cyclical experience " to most people. It seems more like a one way trip - linear, life to death. But that depends on your perspective ... if you take it from within our own small life, our own small perspective, then it appears that way. It's like Euclid’s parallel lines. While his postulate that parallel straight lines will never meet, holds true within a limited space (or in a perfectly flat featureless space - limitless and three dimensional), it does not hold true in the actual world that we inhabit - a spherical Earth (Abram 1997:198). Within the context of Earth, the lines will meet. Over time, Euclid has been proved incorrect from within a larger perspective. So with our lifeline, viewed from a larger perspective, from the perspective of Gaia, there is rebirth (but it is not personal) because we participate in a larger picture. We are a small part of the parallel lines, which actually go around a much larger entity - Earthbody/Gaia.

\textsuperscript{39} Referred to by Cameron Forbes in an article “Thirst for Thought”, page 4 in The Weekend Australian February 3-4 2001.
I am aware that my thesis could be subject to critique by gender-skeptical feminist theory as essentialist. Gender-skeptical feminist theory is intent upon refusing any perceived collapse of “female” into “nature”. (See for example Plumwood 1993 and 1991). But in this thesis I am actually identifying all being (not just female and male, or just human, but flora and fauna and stars and rocks as well, and even human culture) – with nature. I then metaphorize the dynamics of all being as female, which again could be construed as essentialist. It could be understood as invoking “female sacrality” (Raphael 1996:8), which for some indicates an essentializing of sacredness as female.

I acknowledge that it may be so, but assert that it need not be. In the case of this thesis, there is a recognition or naming of “female-referring transformatory powers” (ibid – emphasis mine) that are identified as cosmic dynamics essential to all being – not exclusive to the female. For example, “conception” is a female-referring transformatory power, that is, it happens in a female body (ibid:8-9); yet it is a multivalent cosmic dynamic, that is, it happens in all being in a variety of forms. It is not bound to the female body, yet it occurs there in a particular and obvious way. In past ideologies, philosophies and theologies (and some present still) the occurrence of “conception” in that place has been devalued; “conception” has only been valued in the place of the mind – usually the male mind – as “concept”. Then in some circles of feminist spirituality particularly, there has been reversal of this so that the female body was the only place for significant “conception”. This thesis is not saying that. It affirms “conception” as a female-referring transformatory power which manifests multivalently in all being, thus affirming female sacrality as part of all sacrality. It does thus affirm the female as a place; as well as a place (Irigaray 1993:10), and inquires into the effects of such recognition on the hearts and minds and actions of participants.
The Terms "Feminine" and "Masculine"

It is popular for writers in the area of consciousness to describe different qualities of consciousness as "feminine" and "masculine", (for example, intuition as feminine and intellect as masculine), and to describe humanity's move out of an original participatory mind as "masculine". The image of St. George (masculine) slaying the dragon (feminine) is understood to speak of a necessary move in the evolution of consciousness, both of the collective and of the individual. It is popular to describe the active differentiating force of individuation as masculine. To quote one such writer, Colgrave (1979:71 cited in Reason 1994:21) "The birth and development of the masculine principle in consciousness revolutionizes humanity's experience of itself and of the world". It is implied that "maternal" consciousness is simply amorphous and chaotic, and incapable of an evolutionary move. This is often seen as some justification for the patriarchal mind - that humanity needed to "get away from Mother". Yet the move out of original participation and the move into patriarchal mind may have been two different things. Peter Reason supports this (1994:24-25), citing the work of Eisler, Swimme and Berry as opposed to the thinking of Colgrave and Wilber. These former thinkers speak of evidence of sophisticated, complex, matrestic Neolithic societies. Marija Gimbutas (1974) and Merlin Stone (1978) pioneered these insights into "Goddess" cultures, and many other scholars have developed it since. Reason says,

"It is difficult to believe that these complex societies were based on a pure form of original participation: that there must have been a high degree of purpose, planning and reflexiveness. Yet the social organization was articulated in terms of equality and partnership" (op. cit.:24-25).

Reason (ibid:25) also cites Paula Gunn Allen (1992:2) who describes complex and sophisticated gynocratic Native American tribal cultures. He says that these highly developed, self-reflective participative cultures are "not a description of original participation in the sense of being unconscious and unreflective" (op. cit.:26).

As Barbara Walker points out (1983:680-694), it may well have been the female mind that instigated the radical changes in the way humans did things, that it was her desire for order, storage, abundance, tools, fire, medicine, art etc. that led to many of humanity's inventions, settlement in villages, writing, counting and social complexification. Walker asserts that it
was precisely the female as mother who was the original "civilizing" force, which actually initiated the shift from spatial consciousness into time. The assumption that it must have been a "masculine" quality is perhaps part of the patriarchal mind set, which would rob maternity of its essential active creativity. Judy Grahn develops this notion also with her insights into "menstrual mind" (1993).

I think that part of the reason for confusion on this issue, is that it is true biologically that the male did emerge “out of” the female cell – that is, meiotic sex was an evolutionary event. This is a memory, and it is celebrated in many ways. But it is a confusion to associate the male/masculinity with the advent of patriarchy, or consciousness, or enlightenment. The biological emergence of the male at about 1.5 billion years ago, is quite distinct from the so-called "emergence of consciousness", which is quite distinct from the development of Neolithic matristic cultures, which is again quite distinct from the development of patriarchy. It is perhaps even a mistake to speak of the "emergence of consciousness", since consciousness may now be assumed to have been primordial - according to some scientists, and in accord with many ancient Wisdom traditions, it is matter that emerged from consciousness. (See Harman and Sahtouris 1998).

There is no need to masculinise this force/face that urges the move into individuation and complexification - it is an artificial construct to do so. I will, in the course of this thesis, describe how such a force/energy is an aspect of Cosmogenesis contained within the Female Metaphor. Within the three faces of the One, Creative Principle, is included the aspect of differentiation - the Urge to Be, to manifest; there is nothing innately or necessarily masculine about it. Nor ultimately would it have to be described as feminine/female, but it is a quality of the Female Metaphor, contained within Her. The point being made here is that the consciousness of the Mother is not an amorphous sludge, as the patriarchal mind has storiied it.

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40 See Swimme and Berry (1992:105-109) and Sahtouris (1989:102-106). And as Sahtouris writes: “All our mitochondria are descended from those of the egg cell with which we began, as they do not occur in sperm. Mitochondrial DNA is therefore referred to as maternal DNA” (in Liebes, Sahtouris and Swimme 1998:78-79).

41 Our human phylogenetic history lives within us (Feuerstein 1988:26).
She - "maternal consciousness" - has full creative capacity, has always been quite capable of change; in fact, it is her very nature.

The incessant masculinization of things separative, rational, assertive, is harder than rocks in many imaginations and thinking of all genres - even amongst those who think they are New Age and ushering in some new kind of consciousness. "Wholeness" does not have to be understood in terms of a "feminine" plus "masculine" equation, and nor does it serve us. This dualism is not essential to the Creativity of the Universe. I will illustrate the relativity of this mindstruct by developing the Female Metaphor, a complete and whole unity of Creativity. It is my contention that Creativity required such qualities long before the advent of the male, and even before the advent of the biosphere - the first cell. The so-called masculine attributes didn't suddenly appear in the Creativity of the Cosmos when the male appeared. Differentiation is a quality innate to all being, and is primordial.

Masculinity or maleness is a particular physical expression that can give rise to its own symbolism - but the interpretation of that symbolism is something else. For example, the phallus can be passive, vulnerable and flower-like if the mind-frame is shifted. The story of maleness as innately "active, dominant, inflexible", by association with the phallus, is a patriarchal one that can be changed. "Masculinity" and "femininity" are largely cultural developments - developed over time by story, belief systems, even the foods each sex have been allowed to eat in some cultures, the activities they each have been allowed, so that certain styles, physical and psychic, have been bred into and out of maleness and femaleness to suit the mindframe. Maleness and femaleness obviously do serve us well as a creative evolutionary move, and both are embraced by the same Creative Principle of Life, of all Being, up to that point of evolution and beyond.

In the conclusion to his book on *The Triple Goddess*, Adam Mclean discusses how the triple facet may present itself within the male psyche, or as I would put it - in male "story form". McLean specifically identifies male versions of the Virgin, Mother and Crone (1989:121-122). These male story forms are Knight, Husband and Artist; and he does to some extent qualify these
images, and restore them with a deep sense of Beauty, Integrity and Wisdom. Generally I find that these images, as Mclean stories them, do mirror my own understanding of the triple qualities of the Female Metaphor. McLean still does use such concepts as “masculine side” and “feminine side”, in a way that I think is completely unnecessary, especially when he is able to story the Triple Metaphor in male form and female form as he does.

Starhawk develops the qualities of these aspects in the male form in her chapter on “The God” in The Spiral Dance, though she does not specifically identify them with the three faces of the Goddess; she simply says that “Like the Goddess, the God unifies all opposites” (1989:113). In Starhawk’s tradition, the God moves through an equivalent three faces over the period of the Wheel of the Year along with the Goddess (ibid), and in the Creation story of Starhawk’s Faerie tradition there are three evolving aspects identified as male – “the Blue God, the gentle, laughing God of love”, then “the Green One, vine-covered, rooted in the earth, the spirit of all growing things”, and “the Horned God, the Hunter whose face is the ruddy sun and yet as dark as Death” (ibid:31). These images may be identified as a male form of the triple faced Creative Dynamic, present within all. I think there is a dire need for the re-storying of these male forms; the patriarchal context has not generally provided stories of males that serve and nurture Life, as the Triple Faced Metaphor may do, and in our times the young particularly are starving for such.

In this thesis I am exploring the Whole, for which for millennia Male Metaphor has been assumed to be adequate. This thesis is about showing how the Female Metaphor may be a powerful and fecund way of expressing the Whole. The thesis proceeds from an assumption of wholism and demonstrates this wholism – the dualisms are embraced within the Whole. The research creates a metaphorical context, that both women and men may “taste” in ritual experience – in “con-course” as I have described it. It is not essentially a discursive project, and is thus not able to be “known” completely in discursive language; it is specifically a search for an “experience of con-cordance” in the participants – an experience of being more fully authored by the Universe.
Feminist Discourse

This thesis then is not an exploration of a difference between some concepts of “feminine” and “masculine”, or “female” and “male”. It is an exploration of a metaphor based in female bodily experience that is ubiquitous in natural phenomena such as all bodily cycles, the moon cycle, plant cycles, and the seasons. I will thus not spend time “dismantling a dualism based on difference” as feminist theorist Val Plumwood describes that task (1993:60). My thesis does however conform to Plumwood’s five features required for “the reconstruction of relationship and identity in terms of a non-hierarchical concept of difference” (ibid). I do believe this thesis, in its social action – its experiential concourse as already described - does conform to Plumwood’s features of “appropriate relationship of non-hierarchical difference” (ibid) in the following ways:

1. *Backgrounding* – my work affirms recognition that the female has been “backgrounded” (ibid) and the Universe we live in has been backgrounded, by mainstream culture and texts; and acknowledges the dependency of Being on these backgrounded realities.

2. *Radical exclusion* – it affirms continuity by asserting that the Cosmic Dynamic of Unfolding is innate to all Being beyond gender and the small self, thus breaking “the false choice of hyperseparation” (ibid), reconceiving more integral relationship.

3. *Incorporation (relational definition)* – it aims to rediscover/discover “a language and story for the underside” (ibid) and reclaim positive sources of identity though I cannot describe the sources as independent as Plumwood does since all Being is sourced in Gaia-Universe as this thesis has articulated.

4. *Instrumentalism* - it recognizes “the other as a centre of needs, value and striving on its own account, a being whose ends and needs are independent of the self and to be respected” (ibid).

5. *Homogenisation* - it recognizes the complexity and diversity of all Being, since this is the very nature of the Cosmic Dynamic of Unfolding. It could be said to be “homogenising” to include all nations as “Gaian” as this thesis does, however this would be an error, since differentiation is expressly essential to the Unfolding, and individual experience and identity expressly respected in its organic nature.
In regard to the “two common problems in the formation of post-colonial identity, (of) the denial of difference and the reversal syndrome” (ibid): the former - denial of difference - is specifically addressed on various occasions, in theory and in regard to the visceral impact of language, especially as people of both genders participate in the processes of the research. And in regard to the latter problem as defined by Plumwood, the Metaphor developed in this thesis does not fall into the “trap” of “reversal syndrome” as “the new identity” is not “specified in reaction to the coloniser ... (or) in relation to him” (ibid:61), and (the new identity) has not accepted “the dualistic construction of identity” (ibid). Definition of the Metaphor is not “in relation to the master” (ibid) – the nature of the Self in the Metaphor of this thesis always has agency and is centred in cosmic source, even while it remains deeply related, connected in the web of life.

I note that in the interviews, the expression used by some participants in their responses seemed to indicate that some may still be caught in problems of “hierarchical difference”, but I perceived this as a remnant or an individual interpretation and difference of understanding that had to be allowed, that was part of a dualistic cultural heritage that cannot be abolished in one swift move. It is true as Plumwood asserts (1991), that Gaian symbolism is not an automatic guarantee of change, but I believe that the way in which this research has been approached – that is in a ‘holarchical’ manner rather than with a concept of hierarchy, that the Gaian symbolism and story presented did have the innate capacity for myself and for the participants, to grow a sensuous identification of the dynamic self with the dynamic Earth and Cosmos, even beyond the female metaphor which served as a gateway for some (see Lyn p.268-269 and p.296).

Someone may well explore a Male Metaphor as Cosmic Dynamic – I am not doing that here or implying that it is not possible. As I have stated it seems like a highly desirable project.

**Goddess as Religion**

This issue needs to be addressed as the Female Metaphor is so often stated as - (given the status of) – “cult”, as opposed to "religion"; that is, as opposed to
having the status of any other "World Religion" as all the patriarchal
religions are known. Goddess "religion" has for the past few millennia been
referred to as "fertility cult", and this has been understood to mean a more
lowly status because matter itself had been reduced to insignificance. The
reproduction of matter has been considered a trivial thing, by most
patriarchal religions themselves, and certainly by Western philosophy. It has
been characteristic of the patriarchal mind to divorce itself from its
embeddness in material reality. "Fertility" itself is a term that needs to be re-
valued. There is no reason to assume that the ancients did not comprehend
the multivalence - the depth dimensions, of "fertility". It is the Creativity of
Earth, of the Cosmos, and it is concerned with the Life in which we are
immersed. The modern mind frequently assumes that "primitive fertility
rituals" came from an insecurity about survival. This may in fact be a massive
projection. Frequently, our ancestors of earliest times partook in the
abundance of nature, so perhaps the "fertility rituals" were as much a
celebration of regenerative cosmic power. Heidi Gottner-Abendroth, scholar
of matriarchal cultures, now uses the term "faith of rebirth" rather than
"fertility cult" (1995: xvi). However I prefer to stick with a re-valuation of
fertility. This eventuates further when I develop the three faces of the Female
Metaphor, particularly in the re-storying of the Old One, that is, the post-
menopausal elder. If the ancients were simply concerned with physical
fertility (which only a dualistic mind can conceive), why celebrate this
"useless" phase? The "fertility cults" seemed to have some understanding of
the integrity of life and death; certainly they seem to hold more than the
"primitive", "unconscious" veneer they have been dealt by researchers of
recent centuries, and by their conquerors of old.

The word "religion" itself is problematic, as it tends to imply a rigid system of
belief. There is argument for the case that Goddess is not another religion,
since She underlies and is threaded through all of them; She is a Metaphor,
but so is "God", as I have discussed. It would seem more accurate to speak of
"Goddess spirituality", since that indicates a fluidity and aliveness. Heidi
Gottner-Abendroth uses "matriarchal spirituality" for this reason (ibid:xiv).
Gottner-Abendroth re-defines "matriarchal" as meaning "in the beginning
was the mothers", contending that 'arche' did not mean 'dominance' until
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metaphor for Deity for so long and so pervasively, and still is revered in
some form by millions of humans.

Most minds on the planet, at this time in the human story, are so used to
reducing the Female Metaphor/Goddess to cult, archetype, consort, wife of,
that it seems necessary to dwell for a while on this issue. Most minds are
non-plussed as to who else She might be, if not in relationship to, or
secondary to, or even a danger to, a male "major player". Was She ever
anything else? This thesis will address who else She might be, both from past
evidence and from present experience of cosmological dynamics. This thesis
will not directly address the "why" question - that is, if She was once
something other than Her present reduced state, why did that change? I wish
to focus on the present - who She is now, and, on what use that might be.
What might be the consequences of changing our minds sufficiently, so that
Medusa for instance, can be comprehended as metaphor for Divine Wisdom?
Many scholars contend She once was understood this way. What might it
mean for our minds to welcome Her back? Would that alter the way we
relate to Earth, to Being?
3

RE-STORYING THE FEMALE METAPHOR
- VIRGIN, MOTHER, CRONE

Almost every ancient culture's creation myth begins with Her (Stone 1984:5-6). In the beginning was the Matrix, and the Matrix was all there was. "Before creation a presence existed ...(which)... pervaded itself with unending motherhood" (Lao Tzu trans. Bynner 1962:40). This Matrix was not "feminine", in any stereotypical way, which would limit Her to a certain mode of being. She was "beyond all pairs of opposites" (Campbell 1988:168). As the beginning and end of all things, She contained it all - she was yin and yang, right and left, light and dark, linear and cyclic, immanent and transcendent. There was not an either/or. She was not carved up into bits, apportioned a certain fragment of being – She was a "totality" (Neumann 1974:225). She bore "within herself all of the polarities" (McLean 1989:12). Ancient Mesopotamian texts praise Ishtar of Babylon for her strong, exalted, perfect decrees as Lawgiver, and for her passionate, lifegiving sexuality, all in the one paragraph (Iglehart Austen 1990:130). As Vajrayaraha, Goddess has been known as Mistress of all Knowledge, which included her physical being (Iglehart Austen op. cit.:124) - quite a deal more expansive than more recent academic understandings of "Master of Arts". One of Ishtar's titles has been translated as "Great Whore" (Walker 1983:450), but this falls far short of the original understanding. As Merlin Stone has pointed out, the use of words like "prostitute" or "harlot" or "whore" as a translation for "qadishtu" negates the sanctity of this priestly role and reveals an ethnocentric subjectivity on the part of the writer (1978:157). The patriarchal bias in the minds of the writers disabled their comprehension of a holy woman who was sexual. The use of the word "Whore" to label One who embodied the Mystery of the Universe, has enabled patriarchal religions to denigrate the Female Metaphor (Baring and Cashford 1993:474) - sometimes out of ignorance, sometimes with conscious intent.

As Isis of Egypt, the Great Goddess was "Mother of the Universe" (Harding 1955:98). This did not mean that there was a Father of whom she was partner,
as most human minds of our time assume. This title meant that she was the 
One from whom all becoming arose. It meant that she was the Creator. Many 
minds get caught up here, with a need to affirm the now-known male role in 
reproduction; however, there has never been the same affirmation in the 
West, of the female role in reproduction when the God has been Creator. To 
comprehend Mother as Creator does not need to negate the integrity of the 
males, it simply re-instates the integrity of the female and her Creative 
capacity. As Mut of Egypt, She possibly preceded Isis. Mut is described as 
existing when there was nothing (Diner 1973:2), the oldest deity. Mut was the 
original trinity; Her title meaning "Mother" was understood to hold within it 
the complete cycle that supported life - virgin, mother and crone (Walker 
1983:701-702) - beginning, fullness, and ending. "Mother" was not a mere 
passive vessel, nor was she limited to the birthing and feeding aspects that 
later cultures allowed her; "Mother" was an wholistic title incorporating the 
beginning and the end. She was "Om", the letter of creation and "Omega", the 
letter of destruction (ibid:546). Long before Jesus was said to have described 
himself as the "Alpha and the Omega", Goddess as Mother was 
comprehended in this complete form.

As Neith, She was the Triple Goddess of Sais, the "World Body, the Primal 
Abyss from which the sun first rose ..... She was the Spirit Behind the Veil, 
whom no mortal could see face to face” (ibid:721). In Libya, this ancient One 
was known as Anatha, with Her triple aspects being Athena, Metis and 
Medusa (ibid:74). In later times, Neith was assigned a "father" (ibid:721), as 
were many Great Goddesses around the globe - Brahma became the "father" 
of Sarasvati (ibid), Chenrezig the "father" of Tara (Iglehart Austen 1990:46).

As Inanna of Sumeria, She was "primary one" for 3500 years (Iglehart Austen 
op. cit.:74). Her story of descent and return, death and resurrection, is the 
oldest story humans have of this heroic journey, and it influences the later 
stories of Persephone, Orpheus, and Jesus (ibid). Inanna was known as 
Queen of Heaven. In one image, Her power was expressed with a crown of 
horns on Her head, Her foot on a lion, wings and thunderbolts sprouting 
from Her shoulders (ibid). First known poet, Inanna's priestess Encheduanna 
of the second millennium B.C.E., and other such priestesses of her era
celebrated and wrote erotically of, the sacred marriage (Chicago 1996:31) – that of Inanna and her lover Dumuzi. It is one of the oldest surviving written records of the Sacred Marriage myth cycle (Starhawk 1990:40); and although Her sexuality is celebrated, Inanna's story never included pregnancy (ibid:44).

In Greece, perhaps as early as the Paleolithic era, the Divine Female was known as Nyx, Black Mother Night (George 1992:115-119), "the primordial foundation of all manifested forms" (ibid:118-119), who laid the Egg of creation (ibid:115). She was the full Emptiness, the empty Fullness. Aristophanes later sang of Her, "Black-winged Night ... laid a wind-born egg, and as the seasons rolled, Forth sprang Love, the longed-for, shining with wings of gold" (ibid quoting Aristophanes, The Birds). Her Darkness was understood as "a depth of love", not a source of evil as later humans named Her (ibid:117).

As Aphrodite, She was said to be older than Time (Walker op.cit.:44). Aphrodite as humans once knew Her, was no mere sex goddess (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:352). Aphrodite was once a Virgin-Mother-Crone trinity (Walker op. cit.:44) and had many "emanations" (ibid:45). The Love that She embodied was a Love deep down in things, an allurement intrinsic to the nature of the Universe (Spretnak 1992:xvi). The Orphics sang of Her:

For all things are from You
Who unites the cosmos.
You will the three-fold fates
You bring forth all things
Whatever is in the heavens
And in the much fruitful earth
And in the deep sea.42

Surely She who represented such a power, could be said to represent a fundamental cosmic dynamic. Scientists in the last few centuries have spoken of a basic dynamism of attraction in the universe that is primal. They use the word "gravity" to point to it, but it remains fundamentally mysterious (Swimme 1984:43). And what difference Hymns of this kind to the Psalms, which have been understood to praise the Divine - surely One who unites the cosmos and brings forth all things deserves the dignity of divine praise.
As Dana, She was Goddess of many peoples - the Danes, the biblical Danites, and the Celtic tribe "Tuatha De Danann", and in Russia she was called Dennitsa (Walker op.cit.:206-207). The Daniel of the Bible was "Dan-El", his name really a title denoting his belonging to and knowledge of Goddess Dana (ibid:207). Goddess was still very present to human consciousness at the time of the writing of the Old Testament, a fact most often not taken into account, or at least not sympathetically explained, in exegetical accounts.

In China, the archaic Great Mother was named Shin-Mu, described as "Mother of Perfect Intelligence" (Walker op.cit.:933). Also she was known as Guanyin, the Bodhisattva of Compassion (Iglehart Austen 1990:44). Buddha reached for maternal imagery in his discourse on Universal Love, holding it as a model for the compassionate mind (Walker op.cit.:694).

As Tara, She was known from India to Ireland as the primal Goddess Earth (ibid:976). Praise and knowledge of Her has survived in Tibetan Buddhism into our times. In Tantric Buddhism She is understood to be at once both transcendent and immanent; that She is metaphor for the energy of the Universe (Neumann 1974:332-335).

As Prajnaparamita in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the Female Metaphor is transcendent Wisdom and has been recognized as "'Mother of all the Buddhas' because Buddha activity arises out of, results from, and is born from Wisdom" (Gross 1984:186). Her space is not a passive place, it is fertile and vibrant.

As Vajravarahi, She has been offered praise in the following way:

"OM! Veneration to you, noble Vajravarahi!  
OM! Veneration to you, noble and unconquered! 
Mother of the three worlds! Mistress of Knowledge! ... 
OM! Veneration to you, Vajravarahi! Great Yogini! 
Mistress of Love! She who moves through the air!"

(Iglehart Austen 1990:124 citing a Tibetan text\textsuperscript{45}).

Vajravarahi is a face of the Fire of the Cosmos, the Dancer, the Unseen Shaper. She represents the everchanging flow of energy (ibid quoting

\textsuperscript{44} This was referred to as "Orphic Hymn" in the 1994 calendar Celebrating Women's Spirituality, Crossing Press, Freedom California, week April 4 – 10. No further reference was given. 
\textsuperscript{45} A poem to Vajravarahi from a Tibetan Art Calendar 1987, Wisdom Publications, Boston (Iglehart Austen 1990:169).
Tsuntrim Allione). She has been imagined as holding a sword of insight and discernment, and a cup of blood - the blood that She holds is symbol of life renewed (ibid). Vajravahra is a sharp, compassionate Intelligence, pervading all.

As Kali Ma, in the Hindu tradition, She is addressed as Supreme and Primordial, alone remaining as "One ineffable and inconceivable ... without beginning, multiform by the power of Maya, ... the Beginning of all, Creatrix, Protectress and Destructress" (Walker 1983:489 citing Woodroffe 1972:47-50). The great mystic Ramakrishna of the 19th century, was overwhelmed by passion to realize Her and said he could not bear the separation any longer (ibid:493). When She did reveal Herself to him, he experienced "a limitless, infinite shining ocean of consciousness or spirit" - he was "panting for breath" (ibid citing Wilson 1956:254).

As Demeter of Greece, She is Mother of the grain (Spretnak 1992:105), of wheat - "corn" as it was known (Durbin-Robertson 1990:166), which was understood to reveal the Mystery of Being and was the core symbol of the Eleusinian Mysteries celebrated annually (ibid:166-167). The 'Vision into the Abyss of the Seed', was a vision of the Vulva - the Mother of all Life (ibid). Demeter was always in relationship with Her Daughter Persephone - "a union of principles" (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:368). Demeter as Mother gives the sheaf of wheat to Persephone as Daughter, passing on the Knowledge (Iglehart Austen 1990:72); representing the continuity (Neumann 1974:142), the unbroken thread of life. Mother Goddess and Daughter, in this way reveal the Mystery of the seed in the fruit, the fruit in the seed (Edwards 1991:179). The grain of wheat is both the beginning and the end of the cycle, and thereby may represent knowledge of life and death - Divine Wisdom (see Baring and Cashford op. cit.:389-390); and it is also food, thus embodying all three aspects of Goddess. The bread that wheat becomes, sustains the human, who also eventually gives itself away becoming food for the Universe. Persephone, like Demeter herself - the Grain, "becomes the Goddess of the three worlds: the earth, the underworld, and the heavens" (Neumann op.cit.:319). They, and their initiates are thus eternal.
In the Christian tradition, Mary of Nazareth came to embody Goddess, as Baring and Cashford recount (op. cit.:547-549). This has been so mythologically and in the hearts and minds of the people regardless of the ambivalent official postures by the Church (See Geoffrey Ashe 1988 and Marina Warner 1976). Mary became known as Moon Goddess, Star of the Sea, Our Lady and many other titles that recall more ancient Goddess roots (Walker 1983:602-603 and Ashe 1988:192-193). Mary has been the one to whom the people turned, certain of Her Love and mercy (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:582-584).

To the Sumerians the Divine was Queen Nana, to the Romans "Anna Perenna". She is Al-Uzza of Mecca, Artemis of Ephesus, Anatis of Egypt, Eurynome of Africa, Coatlique of the Aztecs. She is Rhea, Tellus, Ceres, Hera. The Female Metaphor has been known in innumerable ways and by innumerable names as humans tried to express their perception of the Great Mystery. She encompassed All. She has been present throughout the millennia in the myths, rituals, religions and poetry of humanity (Neumann op.cit.:12). She has been loved and revered.

And even before She appeared in human form, there were stones, trees, pools, fruits and animals that She either lived in or were identified with Her or parts of Her (ibid). For many peoples the stones and rocks were Her bones, the vegetation Her hair (Eliade 1975:155). Poppies and pomegranates and other such many-seeded flora identified Her fertility and abundance (Neumann op.cit.:262). The earth itself was understood as Her belly, the mountains as places of refuge, caves providing shelter for the unborn and the dead (ibid:45). Primal peoples everywhere at some time understood Earth Herself as Divine One - Mother. They languaged this in different ways. In Greece She was known as Gaia (Spretnak 1992:45-46).

Central to understanding the Female Metaphor, is understanding the sacredness of vessels, pots, containers. These objects were understood as representations of Her (Neumann op.cit.:132). Pots, urns, pitchers "made possible the long term storage of oils and grains; the transforming of raw food into cooked; ... also sometimes used to store the bones and ashes of the
dead” (Rich 1977:85). The vessel was felt as an extension of the female body that shaped life, carried the unborn, and provided nourishment. Kettle, oven, cauldron have to do with warmth and transformation; bowl, chalice and goblet are vessels of nourishment and their openness is suggestive of gift (Neumann op.cit:46-47). The making and decorating of pottery was among the primordial functions of woman, often with taboos imposed on men to prevent them from going near (Neumann op. cit.:133-135). In later periods of human culture, in Eleusis, Rome and Peru and elsewhere the sacred vessels were supervised by the priestesses (ibid). The chalice was the holy Cup, felt as Her power to give life (Baring and Cashford 1993:653-654). Riane Eisler in *The Chalice and the Blade* (1987), compares the chalice’s power to give life with that of the blade, which is the power to take life, and develops how this was borne out culturally. Later, in Christianity, woman was denied the right to handle the vessel as chalice - a ritual metaphor for the huge transition that had taken place in the human understanding; it was as if the female body no longer belonged to the female.

Water was a central Goddess abode, as it nourished and transformed, and also contained (Neumann op. cit.:47). She was identified with the water birds and ducks (Gimbutas 1974:134-135). As Bird Goddess She was the life giving force, nurturing the world with moisture, giving rain, the divine food - the very milk of Her breasts (ibid:142). So our ancestors frequently featured breasts set in rain torrents on the jars that they made (ibid:116).

The tree as container and shelter, and also sometimes bearer of nourishment as in the fruit-bearing tree, was a central vegetative presence of Goddess (Neumann 1970:48-49). The figuring of such a tree in a negative context in later religious stories of humanity was not an arbitrary matter (ibid:49-50) - this tree, particularly a fruit tree⁴⁴, was understood by the people of that time to be bearer of the Female Metaphor. The story was clearly a political statement, as Joseph Campbell also suggests (1988:47).

Some animals were identified as particularly potent with Her; the deer with its fast growing antlers speaking of Her regenerative power (Gimbutas op.
cit.:171), the toad with its pubic shape (ibid:174), the bull with its crescent shaped horns (ibid:91), the butterfly that emerged from its dark transformative space (ibid:186), the bear that so powerfully protected the young (ibid:195), the pig with its fast growing body and soft fats (ibid:211). The pig's identification with Goddess had a lot to do with its later denigration, and taboos on its flesh (Walker 1983:112). Similarly, animals with which women have been "insulted" - cow, duck, hen - are animals once sacred to the Female. The snake was especially significant as symbolic of immortality, vitality and rejuvenation because of its shedding skin (Gimbutas 1991:121). The snake's intimacy with the earth, its knowledge of the darkness of the earth's womb as well as the light of the upper world, made it a symbol of power and wisdom (Cirlot 1978:285). It was a Mother-power and wisdom that the later patriarchs rejected, as evidenced in their artwork and literature (Gimbutas op.cit.:321). The treatment of the snake's knowledge in the Genesis myth is a direct reference to the Old Religion (Campbell 1988:47-48). In Christian art, Mary as Goddess is often depicted standing on the snake crushing it.

As the humans developed symbols, one of the earliest representations of Goddess was the downward pointing triangle, the pubic triangle (Gimbutas 1974:159). This was a recognition of the Source of life (Walker 1983:1016), the Gateway (Iglehart Austen op.cit.:112). Sometimes Goddess was depicted displaying her breasts, belly, genitalia, or entire naked body as a form of divine epiphany (Neumann 1974:128). Today, Western science has come to understand that the Universe is still rushing away from its birthplace, still expanding. The Mystery is still birthing. The Gateway still pours Itself forth. All of manifestation is divine epiphany - Her ecstatic irrepressible expression. This ancient Goddess symbol has been renewed empirically.

Central to the spirituality and understanding of Great Goddess is the recurrent cycle of birth and death, the immortal process of creation and destruction (Gimbutas 1974:91). It is a cycle seen most clearly in the moon, with its waxing, fullness and waning; which also corresponds to the body

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45 Stone (1976: 214) theorizes that the tree may have been a fig tree; that the notion of it being an apple tree comes from later Greek Goddess representation.
cycle of menstruation (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:18-19). The constant flux of things is manifest everywhere, in the seasons, in breathing, in eating. This is the nature of Goddess, Her manifestation, Her play. Anthropomorphized, this cycle is Virgin, Mother, and Crone (ibid:18). In Her most ancient and powerful depictions, Great Goddess embodies all three aspects - not just one (Walker op. cit.:1018); for example, Artemis is not only depicted as Virgin, in some images She clearly represents Mother and Crone too (Neumann op. cit.:274-275 and Walker op. cit.:233). These three aspects of the cycle, of Goddess, do belong together, and together they constitute a wholeness. Really they cannot be separated; one phase cannot "be" on its own, that is, a moon cannot always be full, the leaves cannot fall off the tree unless they grew there first, a new breath cannot be taken unless the old one is expired. The cycle has these aspects but it is One. And so Goddess of old was known, a union of three faces, complete and whole, yet ever in flux and dynamic. This triple aspect metaphor was later used to describe the triune nature of the patriarchal God, in both the East and the West (Walker op. cit.:1019), though in the Western teachings of the trinitarian Deity, its relationship to the cycle of Life was a bit more abstract.

Ultimately the Female Metaphor, Goddess, is about the celebration of Life, its eruption, its flux, its sustenance, with all that life demands and gives (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:xi). She is an affirmation of the power symbolized by the chalice, the power to give life: initiate it, sustain it, pour it out. This is the power to Be, that all beings must have; not the power to Rule, that only a few might take. The popular Jungian understanding of the "Feminine" is not sufficient to contain Her, shuffled off as She usually is to a portion of reality, and frequently in the popular mind that is, to passive receptive qualities. These qualities are only part of the whole picture. As Virgin, Mother and Crone, She is eagle, bear, lioness, snake, as well as deer, gentle breeze, flower, rabbit. She is not manifesting "masculinity" when she hunts for food, and neither is the human female when she operates in the world analytically or assertively.

45 Erich Neumann also notes the polyvalent nature of the snake as symbol (op. cit.:144) and its association both with the underground and the celestial (ibid:145).
It is not female biology that has betrayed the female, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton observed more than one hundred years ago, it is the myths and stories that have been told about her, what has come to be believed about her - even by the female herself. In the Christian West, it is common for a woman to be described or to describe herself as "just a mother". It is common for "barefoot and pregnant" to connote powerlessness. Simone de Beauvoir suggested that it was as mother that woman was most fearsome, so it was as mother that she was enslaved (1953:171). Yet there are cultures in the human community where a birthing mother is described as a "great warrior" - going to the gates of life and death, to heave and push a soul into the world (Iglehart Austin 1990:18).

In regards to the understanding of virgin: where once it meant she who is "one-in-herself" (Harding 1955:125), in patriarchal cultures it has been reduced to announcing the state of her hymen. Yet once virgins were just as likely, though not necessarily, sexually active, and holy women (Stone 1978:157). The purity of the virgin was her freedom – all creativity was within her (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:197). Artemis' devotees dressed in special tunics and celebrated an "uncompromising autonomy" (ibid:326). The virgin of the ancients embodied a holy Lust - a sacred ecstasy (ibid:197). She tended the flame (Robbins Dexter 1990:165), kindling the spark at the Heart of existence - and it was not asexual.

The crone aspect of the Female Metaphor is not only about age, it is also about the acceptance and valuing of darkness as essential to the life process. Once this aspect was connected to regeneration and Wisdom (Walker 1983:187), and some cultures understood darkness as the source of being (McLean 1979:13). In a culture where the darkness is languaged as evil, where there is no place for the compost, this aspect is feared and loathed.

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46 See Marija Gimbutas (1991:316-317) for a description of the wholeness by which "Goddess" was understood.
47 Elizabeth Cady Stanton actually said "Woman is made the author of sin, cursed in her maternity, subordinated in marriage, and a mere afterthought in creation ... The first step in the elevation of women under all systems of religion is to convince them that the great spirit of the Universe is in no way responsible for any of these absurdities" February 29, 1896 letter to the editor of The Critic. My particular paraphrase of what Stanton said could also be interpreted from resolutions passed at the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention (Frank and Brownstone 1995:132-134).
Where only the Light is valued as positive, where the nurturance of the Dark has been forgotten, real wisdom and compassion will never be discovered.

Re-storying "Her" means re-storying "her" - the mere human, and vice versa: Her stories are the stories of women (and therefore often of men, indirectly) through the millennia, Her image is the image of women. The patriarchal re-writing of Persephone's voluntary descent to the underworld, as a rape of Her, expresses a change in the human psyche that was taking place (Spretnak 1992:105-107). She was no longer Sovereign, and no longer had the integrity of a Hera⁴⁸/Redeemer who might go to the underworld voluntarily for the getting of Wisdom or the comfort of souls. She once had the same redemptive aura/power as Jesus later came to have⁴⁹, and so She can again. When Persephone's older story, as Charlene Spretnak recounts it (1992:109-118) for example, is re-constellated in the human psyche, She is allowed to move out of victim status. Persephone had the Wisdom of Goddess, She had understanding of the fertility of the Dark terrain - the Mystery of life and death (See also Edwards 1991:179). When the integrity and grace of Her descent is restored, so is Her full participation in the Mystery and adventure of life. In the telling of Persephone's older story, the mere human female is also re-storied, re-visioned, re-imagined from within a framework that has her in mind and in heart; a story the way she or her mother would want to tell it, a story beyond victims and perpetrators where Divine essence is expressed.

The Virgin/Maiden Re-Storied⁵⁰
The Virgin as she has been known in patriarchal times, is a distortion of the original understanding of Her. She is originally primarily in relationship with herself, and she is not asexual. She is decidely self-determined, remains her own property, whether or not she has sexual relationships (Qualls-Corbett 1988:58-59). The term virginity signified autonomy (Robbins

⁴⁸ Spretnak notes that "the word hera predates the masculine form, hero, a term for the brave male Heracles (later Hercules) who did the bidding of his Goddess, Hera. The derivative form heroine is, therefore, completely unnecessary!" (1982:87).
⁴⁹ Joseph Campbell notes that "Jesus took over what is really the Goddess' role in coming down in compassion" (1988:180).
⁵⁰ Other than the specific sources referred to in this section, I am indebted also to Marion Woodman (1985), Batya Podos (1978), Starhawk (1989), and Robin Morgan (1976) for the general understanding and tone of this re-storying of the Virgin.
Dexter 1990:173), and it was a power to be "at cause", instead of "at effect" (ibid:143). It was only in later patriarchal stories, that a Goddess' autonomy was "concomitant" with a loss of her sexuality, as in Athena's case (ibid). The Goddess of old was always considered virginal; it was an ever-present quality of Hers (Baring and Cashford 1993:197). Even in some later stories, before the quality was completely diminished, She frequently "renewed" her virginity ritually (Harrison 1957:311 - 312) - sometimes to suit Herself, sometimes to suit the males with whom She mated (Robbins Dexter op. cit.:167-170). Esther Harding expressed that, "the woman who is virgin, one-in-herself, does what she does - not because of any desire to please, not to be liked, or to be approved, even by herself; not because of any desire to gain power over another ... but because what she does is true" (1955:125). The Virgin's purity is this: Her unswerving commitment to Her truth, Her true Self. This Self-serving purity was a deep commitment to Being. Later patriarchal obsessions with unbroken hymens, turned the Virgin's essential "Yes" to Life into a "No"51. She became reduced in Christian times to a "closed gate" (Warner 1976:73), sometimes naive. In the Olympian pantheon the Virgin often came to be associated with harshness and indifference (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:332).

It was because of the Virgin's association with the beginning of things, the emergence of life, that She came to be understood as passionately protecting the flame of Being – "the 'hearth', which is also the original altar" (Neumann op. cit.:284-285). She loved all beings, desired their existence (Iglehart Austen 1990:132): She knew Creative Lust - Lust for Being. So Virgin Goddesses of many cultures have guarded perpetual flames (Robbins Dexter op. cit.:163), representing this purity of purpose and passion. Diana, Great Virgin of Rome, is depicted with a flame (Neumann op. cit.:plate 161). The priestesses of Brigid, Goddess in Ireland, tended a flame (Walker op. cit.:117); which was later, for a period of time, tended by nuns and Brigid was re-configured as a saint (ibid).

51 I acknowledge the influence of Audre Lorde's "Uses of the Erotic" (1989), in my coming to understand the yes within ourselves, which I came to associate with the Virgin through the before mentioned influences.
As Artemis in Greece, in Her Virgin aspect She was revered as midwife because of her single-minded drive to bring life into being (See Spretnak 1992:77-79). The earliest stories of Artemis speak of a Goddess for whom "each creature - each plant, each wood, each river - is ... a Thou, not an it" (Downing 1984:167). Women called upon Her in childbirth, and the labour-easing herbs used by midwives in Old Europe were called Artemisia (Iglehart Austen op. cit.:52). Artemis came to be known as One that protected and nurtured the young and vulnerable, the will to life, the spirit (See Stone 1984:381-386). She was as much concerned with physical being as with the making of soul - there was no separation (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:332). As Virgin, Artemis was associated with untamed nature, the predomesticated, the pre-informed, the wild (ibid). She was the Possibility of the open mind, the new and untried. She had no need to be afraid, because She was certain of taking care of Herself. Artemis was known as a Mighty Huntress (Stone op. cit.:382), and in earliest human cultures this was not contradictory to deep relationship with the animals that were hunted (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:324). She was also known as Lady of the Beasts (Neumann op. cit.:274-275), the deer was Her animal particularly - an animal associated with the moon and renewal (Iglehart Austen 1990:52). Artemis is often depicted as an archer (ibid:53). Her arrow that flies true and on centre, is just as surely the arrow of Self. Downing declares that "the spear of the goddess is a spear of passion", and notes Rene Malamud's perception that "all passion means fundamentally a search for self" (Downing 180, quoting Malamud in Hillman 1980:56).

Athena has, in Western secular culture, most commonly embodied the patriarchal version of Virgin - depicted as She has been in a suit of armour, with the head of Her sister Medusa on Her shield (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:332-333). In Athena's story as it evolved over time, can be seen a story of women throughout the ages (Daly 1979:13-14). Originally Athena was from North Africa where She was an aspect of the Triple Goddess Neith, along with Metis and Medusa (Walker op. cit.:74). While classic writers of later times insisted on Her asexual nature, "older traditions gave her several consorts" including Pan (ibid). She was "Mother-goddess of Athens, worshipped as Holy Virgin" (ibid). Patriarchal myth accounts for Athena's
existence by virtue of Zeus giving birth to Her from his head, after having swallowed her mother Metis when Metis was pregnant with Athena (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:335). Metis, Goddess of Wisdom Herself (and actually Athena's Mother-Self), cannibalized by Zeus, was said to counsel Zeus from within his belly (Daly 1978:13) - She was in effect, the first woman behind every great man. Athena became the archetype of the patriarchal dutiful daughter, Her father's mouthpiece, used to give authority to his edicts that included the denigration of Her own kind (ibid:13-14). In the Oresteia, one of the most frequently performed Greek dramas, standardly interpreted to be a lesson in the wisdom of state administered justice, Athena casts the deciding vote to acquit Apollo of the murder of his mother. The grounds for his acquittal is that the mother is not a parent, merely the nurse of the male seed, and Athena is proclaimed as primary witness to the glory of a child brought forth from the father (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:336-337). Athena then persuades the Furies, the "last remaining representatives of woman's old powers" to submit to the new patriarchal order (Eisler 1987:81). Whereas, in the older stories, Athena was daughter of the Mother, indistinguishable from the Mother Herself. She was spiritual warrior - protecting the arts and wisdom, not a soldier (Spretnak 1992:97). Her holy quest had been in the service of Life, urging forward the creative spirit, that all may be fully what it is capable of being. It was Her vision, not armour, which was Her strength.

The Virgin aspect loves Herself, as She loves all, identified as She is with Life itself. To despise Self is to despise All. As Aphrodite, She "lifts Her robe to admire her own full buttocks" (Iglehart Austen 1990:132); Inanna too, Great Goddess of the Sumerian people rejoices in Her own sexual beauty very explicitly (Starhawk 1990:43). Aphrodite, like her Sumerian Sister, is the Creative Force itself. In Aphrodite's case, She is identified with the oceans as Source of Life, and doves and waterbirds attend Her (Iglehart Austen op. cit.:132); the actual inseparability of the Mother and Virgin aspects is obvious here. It is interesting to contrast this perspective on Aphrodite with that of Jungian, Robert Johnson, who claims the patriarchal myths as the earliest sources on Her (Johnson 1977:1). Johnson calls Aphrodite "primitive femininity", and after affirming that all women contain "the Aphrodite nature", proclaims "her chief characteristics ... (as) ... vanity, conniving, lust,
fertility, and tyranny when she is crossed" (Spretnak 1992:35 quoting Johnson 1977:6). Spretnak wonders particularly about his inclusion of "fertility" in the "string of negative adjectives" (ibid 35). Johnson goes on to label Aphrodite as "a thorough bitch" (ibid quoting Johnson 7).

Persephone is a Virgin Goddess who has been to hell and back (See Walker op.cit.:786). In Persephone's story, in its earliest version, we see particularly the connection of the Crone and the Virgin, how these two aspects are really inseparable (See Walker op. cit.:187). Persephone chooses to go to the underworld and indeed becomes Queen of the Dead; she comes to know this realm and to guide others through it, but she is equally associated with re-emergence, re-generation. She is not a naive Virgin; she can go into the darkness in trust, knowing its fertility, and trusting deeply her own impetus to sprout afresh, to begin again. She is a Virgin who has been around the block many times, and because of that (not in spite of it), she continues to believe in her capacity to take form again. This Knowledge of life and death, of the cycle, is the Mystery that was celebrated in the rites of Demeter and Persephone in Eleusis every Spring (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:384-385). It was so, long before the Paschal Mysteries of Jesus crept in. Persephone's descent is a return to the depths for Wisdom (see Iglehart Austen op. cit.:72), and Her emergence from the Earth, is an image of the power to Be, that surges through all Creation continuously and is manifest in individual life stories also. She is the Seed of Life that never fades away (see Baring and Cashford op.cit.:368-369). Persephone tends the sorrows - as Spretnak tells in her version of the story. Persephone's pronouncement is:

You have waxed into the fullness of life
And waned into darkness;
May you be renewed in tranquility and wisdom
(Spretnak 1992:116)

Persephone goes into the heart of our sorrows to unfold the Mystery. She is an energy present in the seeds, in each person, creature, all of existence - at the heart of matter, of Life.

These Goddesses are the anthropomorphic forms of an energy, a dynamic that is Virgin. She has been named Artemis, Athena, Brigid, Aphrodite, and Mary ... so that we may speak of Her. These forms that humans have given Her are only one of Her valencies, the way in which we may tell stories; there
are other subtle valencies to be understood once it is clear that we speak of an aspect of Divine Essence (as opposed to a bit of patriarchally imagined female psyche). When I speak of Virgin, I understand Her as the Urge to Be\textsuperscript{52} - whatever it is in the dead looking branch that pushes forth the green shoot. She can be felt in you, as the Urge to take a new breath, as your hunger for food, as your hunger for anything. She is passionate. She can be felt in your longing - any longing. She is that in you which midwifes the soul, and any creative project. She is known when there is real self-love, one's beauty recognized, one's truth held firm and allowed Being. She is the hope, the Promise\textsuperscript{53} of fulfillment - symbolized and expressed in the image of the new crescent moon, and felt, as that fine sliver of light enters your eyes. She is all Possibility within you, within the seething quantum foam. She is essentially a big "Yes" to existence.

I associate the Virgin with the Buddha nature, that Shining One within all\textsuperscript{54}, that calls us forward ... She is the future that calls us to become all that we can become, for whom we "refine the gold". Virgin nature is "She Who will Be", who can hold forth her song despite any forces of disintegration\textsuperscript{55}. She is the courage, confidence and exuberance to say "yes" to each particular small self.

The Mother/Creator Re-Storied\textsuperscript{56}

Where the Virgin is primarily in relationship with Self, the Mother is primarily in relationship with Other. She is the Network of relatedness, the Weaver of the Fabric. She is the peaking of Creative Power. As Mother, the Goddess is primal - the first concept of Divinity, the Creator. She is the beginning and end of all things, the Creative Force of the Universe, parthenogenetically giving birth to all life (Neumann op. cit.:221). The

\textsuperscript{52} This is my own term, and another name for the Virgin aspect that I use frequently.

\textsuperscript{53} I derived this name for the Virgin aspect from Starhawk's term "Child of Promise", which she uses to describe the new young One (1989:219).

\textsuperscript{54} I acknowledge Joan Halifax (1997) for a broadened understanding of the Buddha, the Sangha and the Dharma - which I now associate with the three faces of the Female Metaphor. Ken Wilber also associates I-Buddha, andWe-Sangha, It-Dharma, thus extending the valencies of what he names "the Spiritual Big Three" (1996:131-134).

\textsuperscript{55} This is similar to Wilber’s understanding of the “agency” of a holon (1996:21-22). Harman & Sahtouris (1998:17-18) describe agency as a holon’s “capacity to maintain its wholeness in the face of environmental pressures which would otherwise obliterate it”.

\textsuperscript{56} Other than the specific sources referred to in this section, I am indebted also to Robin Morgan (1976), Batya Podos (1978), Starhawk (1989), and Marion Woodman (1985) for the general understanding and tone of this re-storying of the Mother.
earliest human beings knew nothing of the male role in the process of reproduction - there was no reason or inclination to correlate copulation with childbirth (Walker op. cit.:681). The women themselves must have eventually noted it, since they were the keepers of a lunar based calendar, which coincided with their menstrual cycles (ibid:645-646). The human community, the village, gathered around the primary dyad of mother and child (Fisher 1980:78-79). The woman as mother was perhaps the original civilizing force (Walker op. cit.:680-681), though we have been led to believe, in the texts of our education that it was men who led the way in civilization, that motherhood distracted women from this great enterprise. But there is evidence that in the earliest times, it was motherhood that gave the very impetus to grow, sustain, beautify, count, write (ibid:684-685). It was she

"who wielded the digging stick or the hoe; she who tended the garden crops and accomplished those masterpieces of selection and cross-fertilization which turned raw wild species into the prolific and richly nutritious domestic varieties" (Mumford 1961:12).

Indeed it is still she who comprises some 80% of the world's farmers (Community Aid Abroad). In Egyptian hieroglyphics, "house" or "town" may stand as symbols for "mother" (Mumford op.cit.:12). Ancient civilizations traced their descent through the mother; the mother was the basis for the clan, and it was named after her (Walker op. cit.:681-683). Etruscan tomb inscriptions disregarded fathers (ibid). Even the earliest patriarchies remained aware of and prepared to admit the source of their power (ibid:682); it was only later that the mother became merely passive vessel, particularly in Greek philosophy (Delacott 1966:170). Pharaohs ruled by matrilineal succession. The throne itself is a stylization of the lap of the Mother; that's where the power came from, being a child of the Mother (Neumann op. cit.:98-100). The pharaoh's title was originally Great Gate or Great House, symbolic of the cosmic Womb, by whose power he ruled (Walker op. cit.:682). Since women were the first measurers of time, the Sanskrit word "matra" and the Greek "meter" both mean "mother" and "measurement" (ibid: 685). In some civilizations the female skill in mathematics was thought to be associated with their ability to give birth (ibid). In many cultures, ancient stories tell of the Mother Goddess inventing the alphabet (ibid:685-686).
Barbara Walker also notes how religions based on the Mother were free of what she calls the “neurotic” quest for indefinable meaning in life, as such religions “never assumed that life would be required to justify itself” (1983:693). Such religions were generally free of guilt, fear and a sense of sin (ibid), since birth, not baptism was the only pre-requisite for belonging. Even patriarchal religions have reached for maternal imagery to describe the love of the God. Buddha too described Universal Love in this way:

“As a mother ... protects and loves her child ... so let a person cultivate love without measure toward the whole world, above, below, and around, unstinted, unmixed with any feeling of differing or opposing interests ... This state of mind is the best in the world” (Walker 1983:694 referring to Ross 1966:123).

This maternal energy, seen here as the deep spiritual calling of all humans, has been for most women the zone where we frequently lost ourselves (See Rich 1977). Patriarchal religions have exhorted her to embody this unconditional love of the Other (See Bernard 1975:5-6 and Badinter 1981:190 and 235-236 for some examples), with no balancing factor of love of Self. Where her capacity for this love of Other has been has been given its due, it has not at the same time, been recognized as a capacity for spiritual leadership. In the Catholic tradition, Mary is praised as a paradigm of virtue, and yet women and girls have sacramental roles withheld from them. If it is as perfect servant that she is praised, by their own theology that should make her perfect model for leadership. Mary is apparently the exceptional woman, yet Jesus is obviously the exceptional male - and that fact does not prevent male leadership. In the early days of Christianity, Mariology was a rival religion (Ashe 1988:191-193) – there was grassroots allegiance to Mary as Divine - and that was evidently one of the factors in the decision to proclaim Mary Mother of God in 431 at Ephesus; the church thus took into itself this powerful image (Warner 1976:65 and Ashe op. cit.:195-196) - rather like Zeus swallowing the Goddess Metis, thus incorporating her Wisdom and Creative power, and ensuring huge popular following. Simone de Beauvoir said that "it was as mother that woman was fearsome; it is in maternity that she must be transfigured and enslaved” (1953:171). The fathers of the Christian church have been profoundly ambivalent about the details of Mary’s motherhood, and her relationship to Divinity, Jesus and humanity (see Warner 1976); motherhood is a profoundly ambivalent role in many cultures. Many women
remain very confused. It is clear that the maternal energy is indeed something that it would befit all humans to aspire to. It is a holy passion, but it has been unbalanced and short-circuited; frequently it is a woman locked into domesticity or a woman pouring her life’s energy into mothering a man or an institution from whom she is getting no return. The potentially political and global significance of her consuming passion to sustain the world and make it better, has not been recognized within the cultural narrative\textsuperscript{57}, and it has not been balanced with a consuming passion for her own being. The Mother’s relationship to Other, Her Creative Power to give Life, in earliest mythologies, was not the prison that She was later contained in.

In patriarchal mythologies throughout the world, the Mother of All has frequently become "wife" of some god. Hera is such a One. Known in our times, as jealous, quarrelsome wife of Zeus, She pre-dated him by far as ancient face of the parthenogenetic Mother (Spretnak 1992:88). The first "Olympic" races held every four years, had been Hers, with runners - all girls - selected from three age groups representing the ancient Trinity (ibid). Hera was the primordial Trinity, indigenous to this place, personifying all three aspects of Virgin, Mother and Crone (ibid:87). Hera and Zeus' constant mythological quarrels reflected real conflicts between the early matrinsic cultures and the rising patriarchate (Walker op.cit.:392). She and the Amazon queens who represented Her did not go quietly, and they remained discontented with the new regimes. Hera's troublesome nature in the Olympic pantheon reflects One who had been "coerced but never really subdued by an alien conqueror" (Spretnak 1992:89 quoting Harrison 1912:491). Hera's first consort had been Herakles; the word "hero" referring to him and being the masculine form of "hera" (Spretnak 1982:87). "Hera" predated "hero" and may serve as term for all courageous individuals as noted\textsuperscript{58}, and I do use it that way in the seasonal celebration of Eostar.

In some indigenous traditions around the globe, the birthing mother is understood as a model for courage - Iglehart Austen notes Native American,

\textsuperscript{57} This is evident in derogatory references frequently made in political discussions, to "motherhood" statements and policies, as if "motherhood" describes the statement's/policy's small-mindedness and trivial nature. The word "trivial" itself has its roots in the sacredness of the "tri-via" – three way path.

\textsuperscript{58} See p.71 fn48.
Samoan and Aztec cultures that honoured her as warrior (1990:18). There is evidence that many ancient cultures regarded birthing as a ritual act; in Catal Huyuk there is a ceremonial birthing shrine "with red-painted floors and images of the ubiquitous Open-legged Goddess in labor" (Iglehart Austen op. cit.:20). Vicki Noble describes the birthing woman as "quintessentially shamanic" (1986 - referred to by Iglehart Austen op. cit.:18), for in this act, she goes to the gates of life and death and with heaving and shoving and the most intense encounter with universal forces, experiencing trance states, she brings another being into the world (ibid). Perhaps the phenomena of "post-natal depression" in these times is a symptom of the lack of recognition of this.

Goddess as Mother is also the Weaver of the Fabric of the Universe, with many ancient Goddesses imaged this way (Diner 1973:16). This power came to be feared, rather than revered – in Her "character as creator, sustainer and increaser of life" the Great Goddess came to be seen as "negative and evil" (Neumann op. cit.:233), by a consciousness that desired "permanence and not change, eternity and not transformation, law and not creative spontaneity ...(turning) her into a demon" (ibid). Sometimes the weaving activity of women therefore became known as the cause of illness or a curse (Gimbutas 1991:68-69) with some Christian traditions even forbidding knitting. The Fates of Greece have had nasty stories told about them – the classic texts of this culture telling how they had to be "submitted to the authority of Zeus who commanded them ..." (Larousse 1968:163). Ixchel the Weaver, Mother, Queen, Grandmother to the peoples of Southern Mexico, the Yucatan Peninsula, and most of Central America (Iglehart Austen op.cit.:10), came to be symbolized by an “overturned vessel of doom” (Neumann op. cit.:187) – yet "for centuries, women have made pilgrimages to Her holy places" (Iglehart Austen op.cit:10). Iglehart Austen describes Ixchel as sitting “at Her loom with Her ever-present bird companion, the nest weaver, who is associated with Goddess throughout the world” (ibid) – and how Ixchel “easily and with great presence ... in the bliss of creativity” spins “from her deepest being” and breathes the “breath of eternity, ... the life force into each being” (ibid).
This Mother energy, which sustains and nurtures the new life that the Virgin begins, participates in decisions that affect this life, and allows the Crone to cut the cord when it is necessary, has been named "ten thousand names", so that humans may speak of Her. When I speak of Mother, I understand Her as Holy Context, Place to Be\(^59\). She is the fullness that can be felt in the peaking of your breath, that dynamic interchange within you. She can be felt in the satisfaction of a well crafted project, the satisfaction of the successful tending of needs. Her power can be felt in the holding of another being, when life is given in some form to another. The Mother can be felt in the comfort offered by needed rain, seen and smelt in the full flower, tasted in the ripe fruit. She is so subtle, yet obvious, in the work of everyday, of strengthening networks, weaving and repairing, creating the world, raising children, teaching adults. She is the Promise fulfilled, Creativity in its fullness - symbolized and expressed in the image of the full moon, and felt, as that awesome disc of light enters your eyes. She is the Realization of Passion within you - most likely beyond your wildest dreams. She is the Bliss of Union.

I associate the Mother with the Sangha, that Community of support around the globe - it is complex and multifaceted, and specific facets may be focussed on, but at its broadest, it is the interdependent web without whom none of us would not be sustained\(^60\). She is the present, the eternal now, the living of life as if it goes on forever - and indeed it does; if the thread were once broken, we would not be here. The form changes, but life does go on. She is the pure gift of every moment, filled as each moment is with the Creativity of the whole web since the beginning. She is "She Who Is"\(^61\).

**The Old One/Crone Re-Storied**\(^62\)

The Old One as a phase of Being is significant. The fact that life continues past reproductive fertility indicates an evolutionary interest in the creativity

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\(^{59}\) This is my own term, and another name for the Mother aspect that I use frequently.

\(^{60}\) Similar to Wilber’s understanding of the “communion” characteristic of each holon (1996:21-22).

\(^{61}\) Whilst I summarize Virgin as “She Who will Be” and Crone as “She Who returns us to the Sentence, the Great Subject out of Whom we arise”.

\(^{62}\) Other than the specific sources referred to in this section I am also indebted particularly to the following for much of my understanding and tone of this re-storied of the Crone: Pam Wright (1988), Demetra George (1988)), Kathryn Theatana (1988), Robin Morgan (1976), and Sylvia Brinton Perera (1981).
of this phase; Life has preserved it in the evolutionary story\textsuperscript{63}. The post-menopausal years obviously have some impact on creativity as a whole, since it is an extensive part of the life-cycle before death.

The celebration of this threefold cycle of the Goddess is about the celebration of Life, about Creation and the sustaining of it (Gimbutas 1991:285). There is in it an acceptance of the waning of life, of death and the darkness as part of the life cycle (ibid:321). "The color black, now commonly associated with death or evil in Christian iconography, was in Old Europe the color of fertility and the soil" (ibid:144). Over the centuries, the Christian mind has imagined the religion of the Female/Goddess to be sordidly pre-occupied with death, whereas in fact this may be considered a massive projection; the reverse being true. It is only in the denial of decline and death that we surround ourselves with it, because there is no place for new life to spring from. In the present cultural context where most people imagine/pretend that they are immortal, where death/darkness is seen as an aberration - not normal, we are surrounded by a fascination with it, and we struggle with a planet that is over-burdened by our waste. If the end part of the cycle was given a place, its reality accepted, we would always find ways of dealing with the garbage. It is in the compost, the de-composition, in the darkness, that new life is nurtured, fertility is found. It is in the acceptance of death that wisdom is gained, and life is lived more fully. Patricia Reis suggests that when the Female Metaphor was whole, death was not understood as separate. She points out that for 30,000 years (33,000 B.C.E. - 3,000 B.C.E.) there were no images of a horrific Goddess, indicating perhaps that She only became terrifying when She lost her connection to the cycle (Reis 1988:24)\textsuperscript{64}.

The Crone is primarily in relationship with All-That-Is (where Virgin is primarily with Self, and Mother is with Other). The Crone/Old One is that movement back into the Great Sentience out of which All arises, thus She sees into the elements behind form. She has been known as the "All-Seeing Eye" (Walker op. cit.:294). Her Knowledge is beyond all knowledge; it is the Wisdom of the ages - of all Time and no Time (ibid:493). The Crone aspect is the contraction that initiates destruction, when structure is no longer

\textsuperscript{63} I owe this insight to David Russell via Graham Bird, in a personal communication, 1999.

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necessary or life-serving. Her contraction may also be understood as a systole, a contraction of the heart by which the blood is forced onward and the circulation enabled. She is the systole that carries all away - She is about loss, but the contraction of the heart is obviously a creative one, it is the pulse of life. Is it only our short-sightedness that keeps us from seeing the contraction that way? Is it because we insist on taking it all so personally, when it is not, in fact?

As the end of the cycle, She is known in the breakdown of the endometrium, the shedding of the old, the flow of menstrual blood. She may be represented holding a bowl of blood, as Kali is (Walker op. cit.:273) which signifies “birth fluid” (ibid:724). The blood of Goddess is “self-produced, primeval matter the ocean of uterine blood before creation, holding future forms in the condition of formlessness or Chaos” (Walker op. cit.:723). It is not blood that is shed by the blade, it is blood that naturally flows in the cycle of Life, to prepare for the new. Walker refers to it as “wise blood” (ibid:636 ff.). Menstruation has been such a source of shame and pain for women in our times⁶⁶, and blood so associated with violence, that it is hard for us to re-imagine it as symbol of Wisdom and Regeneration. In the patriarchal narrative, blood shed by violence has been much preferred to that shed by the female. Seeing blood shed by violence even became a form of entertainment, and still is today, though the mythic advent of such acts (shedding blood by the blade), as a grasp for power, can be traced to the Epic of Gilgamesh in the second millennium B.C.E. (Starhawk 1990:47-60). The power being grasped by shedding blood this way can be seen as a synthetic power - a substitute for the power to give life. The blood of the Female is very different; it is indeed awesome, indicating as it does, a dynamic of loss in the nature of things, but the larger arc of that dynamic is consistently creative. Our flesh, like all matter, is in constant flux. “Creation postulates change and any change destroys what went before”(Starhawk 1989:95). The Crone is the one who "clears the decks", without which the new is not possible. She and the Virgin are always linked, the end and the beginning; One cannot exist without the Other. The snake that sheds its old skin, or eats

⁶⁶ The research of Marija Gimbutas suggests this also (1991:316).

⁶⁵ I owe the “systole” metaphor to Loren Eiseley (1957:20). He uses it to speak of an eternal pulse that lifts Himalayas, and then carries them away.
its own tail, is Goddess’ symbol of constant decomposition, constant renewal. It is in the burning that the fire creates warmth and light. The lioness must kill to feed her young. It is in the eating that our teeth and bodies break down what is needed for sustenance - the Crone is our constant companion.

Because of the snake’s association with power, wisdom, transformation and renewal it came to be associated particularly with the Old One/Crone – the dark aspect of Goddess – although originally the snake was “identified with the Great Goddess herself” (Walker 1983:903). Campbell points out the snake’s association with the moon and the female, and that in the Christian West all this became associated with evil (1988:45-48), yet as he affirms “the serpent represents immortal energy and consciousness engaged in the field of time, constantly throwing off death and being born again” (ibid:45). The Christian Goddess, Mary, has been imaged as standing on the serpent’s head, crushing it; probably one of Mary’s more powerful images, yet it is in opposition to Her ancient heritage (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:570). Campbell says that the portrayal of the serpent as a negative figure “amounts to a refusal to affirm life” (op.cit.:47).

Some of the Crone’s names are Hecate, Kali, Caillech, Hel, Lillith and Medusa (Walker op. cit.); the Aztecs have known her as Coatlique (Iglehart Austen op. cit.:86), the Egyptians as Selket (ibid:88). These Goddesses are associated with death, devouring, seduction, rebellion, anger, darkness and awesome power - not always seen wholistically as Iglehart Austen describes the Dark Goddesses may be seen (op. cit.:63-65), but at least they are still present. In the Christianized culture of the West She has almost completely disappeared in these forms. Her remnant is the wicked witch/hag of children's stories and cartoons (Podos 1978:12), whose potency is fairly hollow - children laugh at her more than fear her. The term "old woman" is often used as a term of derogation in this cultural context; it is meant to reflect uselessness. Miriam Robbins Dexter points out that although patriarchal cultures could find a place for the use of the virgin and mother energies, they could find no such use for the old woman (1990:177). The young virgin could represent stored energy, and she maintained some

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numinosity for that reason. The mother transmitted energy, gave it to others (ibid). The old woman however, only had knowledge; this could be threatening, and was increasingly trivialized, as well as actually being truncated in its development by a discriminatory environment<sup>67</sup>.

Eve could be seen as a remnant of the Crone, since from the Judeo-Christian perspective, she is the cause of all death (Walker op. cit.:290). In the fifth century C.E., a church council announced that it was heresy to say that death was natural rather than the result of Eve’s disobedience (ibid). As an Eve, every woman was "the devil's gateway" (ibid quoting Tertullian in Bullough 1973:114). But Eve is really a very passive kind of Crone; even though she is to blame for death, she actually does not do the destroying, the God does; and Christian theologians noted that the devil tempted Eve because she was weaker willed than Adam (Baring and Cashford op. cit.:525). Eve is a far cry from a Kali or a Lillith or a Medusa. Most of what she carries around is guilt, not wrath. And many women have taken on Eve’s burden (ibid:526 -527).

Medusa is a good example of how Goddess in her dark aspect became demonized in the patriarchal context. Gimbutas points out that the earliest Greek gorgons were not terrifying symbols, but were portrayed with symbols of regeneration – bee wings and snakes as antennae (1991:xxiii). Medusa with her serpent hair had been a widely recognized symbol of Divine Female Wisdom (Walker 1983:629) – the serpent representing Knowledge of Change, the very essence of Being, never-ending renewal, and thus immortality. Medusa was deeply associated with Mystery – “All that has been, that is, and that will be” (ibid quoting Larousse 1968:37). In our cultural mythology Perseus was celebrated as hero for being able to defeat her and cut off her head with its so called deadly gaze. It was said that her gaze was so fearsome it turned mortals to stone. There is no doubt that it is fearsome to look into the eye of the Divine; but patriarchal gods have carried the same characteristic, Yahweh for example, without threat of the same retribution<sup>68</sup>. In the patriarchal context, is it really the gaze of the Female that is deadly? It is women who are the chronically gazed upon, whether as sex

<sup>67</sup> Women were barred from education, yet at the same time denigrated as ignorant/foolish. See Wertheim (1995) for some of the story of women and education through the recent millennia.
object or on a pedestal; perhaps this epitomizes Medusa’s/Goddess’ imprisonment - how She is "kept an eye on". The beheading of Medusa – one who is icon of Wisdom, may be understood as a story of dis-memberment of the Female Metaphor/Goddess. The hera’s journey today is to go against the patriarchal injunction and look Medusa straight on (Cixous 1976:184). She is at first fearsome, but the Dark Goddess’ fierceness nurtures a strength in a woman, gives her back the "steel in her stomach" that she needs to live her life (see Perera 1981:41). This Old Wisdom tradition is about recognizing the Power within, and daring to take the journey into that Self-knowledge.

The Crone is known as the Dark One/Dark Goddess, since Her realm is that of the waxing Dark. She leads us into the Void. Hers is the Underworld, that Place at the foundations of Life, where things are broken-down, de-composed, dis-solved; where the old ways are no longer known and the new can only be listened and felt for. It is necessary to come to a re-valuing of the Dark to understand Her. In the earliest of times the night was perceived as part of the day - night was not the absence of light. The night was alive with its own kind of life. Even into more recent times (this past millennium), the day was reckoned "from noon to noon, with the midnight hour in the central position" (Walker 1983:647). A meridian then indicated the full moon overhead at midnight, not the high point of noon as it is now understood (ibid - the term was coined from Mary-Diana, the Moon-Goddess). This was because the first calendars were lunar and menstrual. The light, or what we today call the "day", was understood to emerge out of the dark/night (McLean 1979:13); as indeed all of manifest reality seems to. For some religious traditions the day still begins in the evening, and the Catholic Church still calculates many of its holy days on the lunar calendar. The seven day week is a calculation of the menstrual calendar (Walker op. cit.:645). The Darkness of Goddess is a rich fertile Place, seething with possibility and all that is necessary for Life to begin afresh. Her Darkness is where the new and

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68 It was deadly to look upon the face of Yahweh. Did anyone think to slay him? I understand that he was supposed to be the One – but so was Medusa.
69 Just as the rape of Persephone – one who is Seed of Life/Redeemer/Eternal Thread – may be understood as a story of the dis-integration of the Female Metaphor/Goddess. These stories may be understood as records of the loss of an integrity that went before, just as Campbell notes was true of the story of the dismembering of Tiamat by Marduk (1988:170).
70 The day was “diurnal” – containing light and dark aspects (Neumann 1974:56). It is symptomatic of our present consciousness that “day” has come to mean only the light part.
undreamed of may be conceived. I think of it as the "quantum vacuum" that physicists speak about. Brian Swimme says

"Modern science allows us to reapprehend ... the superessential darkness of (the Divine) in what quantum physicists refer to as the quantum vacuum out of which elementary particles emerge and what I refer to as the all-nourishing abyss" (Flamiano 1997:10 - brackets my paraphrase7).

The Crone's Dark Space is often symbolized in the Cauldron - a place of transformation, where the new is cooked up (Walker op. cit.:150-151). She is the Wisdom, the "Organizing Principle" that knows the recipe; She can be trusted to deliver from deep within. Her cauldron is not for mixing poison as we've been told, but it is a Cauldron of Creativity, frequently found at the bottom of the pit past deep fears, volcanic emotion, deep sadness (See Reis 1987:7). Within Her dark Space is found the essence for re-memorabling. As Patricia Reis reflects,

"Whenever I have felt the Dark Goddess' consciousness filling me there is always an accompanying dread. I know my life will never be the same. I know that I am being initiated into a new aspect of myself, a new part of my journey, which exists separate from my relationships to anyone else. And yet there is also a sureness, a firmness, a resoluteness, as in a re-solution" (1988:82).

Often She is met unprepared: through an accident, an illness, an emotional break - somehow we are broken down, torn apart. Sometimes change may have been desired but the way unknown. Hers is an invitation to transformation. When I speak of Crone, I understand Her as “She Who Creates a Space to Be”72, (where Virgin is Urge to Be, and Mother is Place to Be). She can be felt in the need to exhale, to empty - in the release. She is felt in the ending of things, in the shed skins of all your old shapes - who you have been, and are no longer. She may be felt as pain, or as joy, or as both. Her symbol is sometimes the sword; She cuts through illusion, and that vision is sometimes hard to bear. Hers is a fierce love, which can be felt when you love but something needs to change. She is known in the anger, in the "No more!"73, in the chaos of dismantling a structure no longer needed. The Crone can be seen in the seed pod, the peeling bark, the pruned branches, the scissors cutting the thread. She is the Dissolver, the Transformer - symbolized and expressed in the image of the waning crescent sliver of the moon, before she disappears. She is the Nurturant Darkness that fills your

71 Brian Swimme had used the term “God”, meaning “the Divine”.
72 This is my own term and another name for the Crone aspect that I use frequently.
being, comforts the Sentience in you, allows new constellations to gestate in you.

I associate the Crone with the Dharma, the Truth-As-It-Is. She sees all Truth and can bear it, and Her Compassion is without end. She allows us to let go of our small self limitations74, and is the Return to the Great Subject.

**The Triple Goddess**

She has these faces, but She is One. These faces kaleidoscope into each other, they blur, they support each other, they are in each other – if they were not Life would not go on, for She is a continuous Thread, a multivalent Urge. The three are reflected in each other like a never-ending mirrored reflection, thus the numinosity associated with multiples of three since ancient times; all such multiples were considered to speak a Divine Harmony of some kind (Neumann 1974:228).

As Carolyn McVickar Edwards tells the Celtic version:

“... the endlessly boiling Cauldron was stirred by Nine Sisters....The Nine Sisters represent the Holy Trinity of Maiden, Mother, and Crone, each able to manifest all three of Her selves” (1991:152).

The Cauldron is “the Pot of the World” (ibid), the Cosmos itself, and its magic “is that of endlessly shifting shapes” (ibid), such as we are witness to in the evolutionary story of Gaia – this is Her everyday magic, displayed before us, and in which we are immersed. It is stirred by the Triple Goddess – the Female Metaphor in Her three aspects, the Evolutionary Cosmic Dynamics – who is no simple linear Process, nor only two-dimensional, nor even just a few dimensions, but a web that radiates completely in all directions filling all space, like a Cosmic Sea of Superstrings.

As I deepened into each face, at the Sabbat that celebrated each one particularly, I came to insights into the particular face but also into the collective nature – the relationship – of the triad. There is always the tendency and the temptation to distinguish the Three from the One – is there a Background out of which the Triple One emerges; that is, are there Three or

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74 An expression from *Song of Hecate* by Bridget McKern (1993), written in the last session of a series on Goddess that I was teaching. See Appendix A for the full text of her poem.
are there Four? In the third year of this research, as I worked on the Lammas teaching, and was reflecting on the face of the Crone as I was sensing Her, I was identifying this face almost completely with a perceived Background, the Great Void, the All-Nourishing Abyss\textsuperscript{24}, as I have still done here in this thesis at times; and yet I felt there was something more, and I wrote this dawning awareness down:

There is some distinction to be made between the formless Void/Great Sentence out of whom we all arise and the Old One who returns us to this. The distinction is always arbitrary. Is there any real distinction to be made between Manifestation/the Light – the Virgin, and the Formless Void out of which it All arises?? Perhaps it is that our distinctions are the mistake, the error. There is a fourth element then to this metaphor and it is the Background, the Deep Void, that is the Plenum upon which the three play out a movement, a motion. In fact none of them are distinct from the Formless Void, from Love, out of which All arises. All three are immersed in Love, are aspects of Love. Perhaps then my reason for identifying the Old One particularly with Love, in this Lammas celebration, is part of the re-storying of the Dark to Love. We so often associate Manifestation/Light with Love .. that's easy, we've been doing that for quite a long time – Christmas, the Birth of the Holy Child, Winter Solstice. But to re-instate the Dark One as a manifestation of Love is what I need to do, to understand. Thus perhaps my particular association of this celebration with Her, with Love.

So in the Lammas teaching particularly there is some fuzziness, some overlap, between this fourth element – the Great Sentence, out of which we all arise, in whom we are immersed and to whom we return – and the Old One, who returns us to this. (Lammas Process 2001:10.1.01)

So while I was beginning to realize and sense that each face was a face of Love, of the Background, of the All-Nourishing Abyss - however one names It/That/Who - I still needed at this stage to express the Dark One particularly this way. I understood that and allowed myself this counterbalancing indwelling and expression.

Further to this, a couple of months later, Charlene Spretnak made a note on my work to add "Matrix" into the describing of the Mother aspect of Goddess. However, I did not really want to put it there, though it seemed correct to do so. I was aware that at that particular point I was making some arbitrary distinction between the Mother aspect as a face of All/Matrix, and the All/Matrix. Really when we understand the faces, none of them are distinct from the All/Matrix. Togethe they are the All/Matrix – the "Background", the All-Nourishing Abyss, the Plenum. I hold out from

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} Similar to the capacities of self-transcendence and self-dissolution of holons (Harman & Sahtouris 1998:18). \\
\item \textsuperscript{25} Brian Swimme’s term (1998:97).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
naming the Mother aspect as Matrix, though She of course is, yet so are the aspects of Virgin and Crone - and that is the point. It seems to me that as we deepen into knowledge of the Virgin and Crone aspects, we will sense the "Matrix" in those facets too, just as I was beginning to know the Depth of Love in the Dark One, and guess at the Depth of Love in the Virgin.

THE "RE-STORYING" CLASSES

A Layer of Action

The classes for "Re-Storying and Celebrating" the Female Metaphor were a place where women (mostly) could tell their stories of how these three aspects of Goddess had manifest in their lives; and they could tell these stories in the context of a "Goddess" perspective - that is, within the context of nobler images of the female, from within the perspective of a cosmology that valued their experience - as distinct from the patriarchal context in which they had until now almost certainly, generally storied themselves. It was my job as facilitator to create this "Goddess" context as best I could, with the knowledge I had of an "Other" way of perceiving ourselves. I did this with a ritualistic space from the very first of the sessions/classes, and for each subsequent session/class. I took a lot of care with the setting up of the space, with an "altar" cloth in the middle of the floor decorated with representations of the three faces, and some of Goddess in general that were special to me - there was a pottery brooding water-bird in a nest that always took pride of place. I posted the elements in the appropriate directions, so we could orient and sense ourselves in relationship to Gaia-Earth. I put up posters of Goddess images in the four directions, and one at the door.

In summary, there were six sessions to the series. The first one was introductory; the second, third and fourth sessions focussed on the Virgin, Mother, Crone aspects respectively; the fifth session was devoted to our "Gaian Selves" and teaching the Wheel of the Year; and the final session was for the co-creation of a ritual. For the full description, see APPENDIX B.

These classes built further a body of knowledge. I had created them before this research formally began, but the women who had begun coming to the seasonal celebrations, and then became part of this research, chose to
participate in them. The classes became a layer of action to this research, in-
forming me and in-forming other women, and in-forming each other, that is,
taking that in-forming further, broader and deeper – embodying the
Metaphor and the Creativity it issues.
4

COSMOGENESIS

AND THE FEMALE METAPHOR

- GAIA’S CREATIVE DYNAMICS

"When a woman raised in patriarchal culture ... immerses herself in sacred space where various manifestations of the Goddess bring forth the Earthbody from the spinning void ... She will body the myth with her own totemic being. She is the cosmic form of waxing, fullness, waning: virgin, mature creator, wise crone. She cannot be negated ever again. Her roots are too deep – and they are everywhere” (Spretnak 1993: 143).

Brian Swimme has affirmed that “when he had reflected and meditated on the pre-Hellenic myths until he ‘became filled with a myth’” (Spretnak 1992:xvii), that his thinking about “natural phenomena and the entire universe were qualitatively different” from for instance, a “patriarchal, industrialized, competitive frame of reference” (ibid). His experience led him to conclude that the myths had a very deep biological basis, that could alter our relationship to the universe, and thus the universe itself, if we allowed ourselves to be filled with them (ibid).

Swimme and Berry have noted often that Western industrialized peoples have become dissociated from, or autistic to, the Earth community and the Cosmos (Berry 1990:17 and Swimme 1990:video 9 and 12). Berry has suggested that the only effective restoration of a viable mode of human presence on the planet is through a renewal of human intimacy “with the great cosmic liturgy of the natural world” (1999:19). He suggests that the coordination of ritual celebrations with the transformation moments of the natural world - such as the “entrancing sequence” of the seasons (ibid:18) - gives promise of a future “with the understanding, the power, the aesthetic grandeur, and the emotional fulfillment needed” (ibid:19-20). He suggests that such are the “entrancing qualities needed to endure the difficulties to be encountered and to evoke the creativity needed” (ibid:20). Berry believes that we – the human and the entire planet - are in a moment of dangerous transition to a new era, “a moment of significance far beyond what any of us can imagine” (1999:201), but we are “not lacking in the dynamic forces
needed to create the future”, that we need only invoke the abundant sea of energy in which we are immersed (op. cit.:175).

Thomas Berry describes the Universe as ultimately “a single, multiform celebratory expression” (op.cit.:18). As Spretnak says, “we exist as participants in the greatest ritual: the cosmic ceremony of seasonal and diurnal rhythms framing epochal dramas of becoming ... When people gather in a group to create ritual, they form a unitive body, a microcosmos of differentiation, subjectivity and deep communion” (1993:145). As I will describe in this chapter, this microcosmos of differentiation, subjectivity76 and communion are three faces of Gaia’s Cosmic method of Creativity, used everyday on planet Earth and throughout time and space in Her ever-transforming Cosmogenesis. Central to my thesis - this Poetic research - is the recognition and celebration of this omnipresent Creativity, the association of these three “governing themes” (Swimme and Berry 1992:71) of Cosmogenesis with the three faces of the Female Metaphor - the three faces that the ancients noticed reiterated all around them. The dynamic was everywhere as I will describe, and the ancients - scientists in their observation of the world, of which they felt a part, noticed its dimensions.

ASSOCIATION OF THE FEMALE METAPHOR WITH THE FACES OF COSMOGENESIS

The Moon was a sliver of light when She first appeared out of darkness, She waxed from there into fullness, and then waned to a sliver in the opposite direction, before disappearing into the darkness from whence She came. It was noticed by the women and perhaps some of the men, that the female body cycled with the Moon, waxing into desire and fertility, and waning into menstrual loss. All the body cycles repeated these faces: there was hunger, there was satiation, there was elimination. There was the urge to breathe, it waxed into fullness, there was the need to release – back into the emptiness from whence another could arise. The buds of flowers blossomed into fullness, then lost their petals, revealing seed pods from whence to begin again. The buds of leaves burgeoned out of dead looking branches, unfurled into greenery, then dropped away. Everywhere on the globe, on a daily

76 Swimme and Berry have at an earlier time, named the “autopoeisis” face of Cosmogenesis as “subjectivity” (1990:video 4). By time they wrote The Universe Story they had changed the name to “autopoeisis”.

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basis, light emerged out of darkness - at dawn, waxed into the fullness of noon, then declined back into darkness. On an annual basis, the Sun’s light emerged out of the darkness of Winter, waxed into fullness at Summer, then declined back into darkness.

The darkness itself each day, was understood as an equal part the “day” – a “day” was not only the light part. We have to speak of it today as the “diurnal” day, to recall the sense that the dark part was included. It may have even been the main part – the basis of measuring time (Grahn 1993:155-157). The darkness was a time for rest, perhaps relief from the heat, perhaps a time to seek comfort from the cold - but almost always felt keenly as a time of dreams, perception of subtleties not so noticeable in the world of light. And the darkness of the sky was sprinkled with pinpoints of light in which the ancients could imagine their own forms and those of creatures: the night sky told stories. When the ancients created their own pinpoints of light - made fire, they told their own stories as well. This darkness of the diurnal day was fertile with life, a different kind of life. So too then, the death of the human must be a journey, like a long sleep, or an entry into a different kind of life. The plants grew above the Earth in the light, but the seeds sprouted in the dark, and emerged from there, and remained rooted in the dark to whence the plants would return. The darkness was understood to be the place of beginning - all things appeared to begin there - the womb, the Earth, the dead looking branch, the emptiness before a breath. Today Western science also suggests that the Universe itself seems to be mostly a sea of Dark Matter, out of which all emerges.

The triple dynamic as a whole, complexifies in the web of Life - the Universe itself is a display of these “primordial orderings” as Swimme and Berry describe them (1992:72) - and “the very existence of the universe rests on the power of these orderings” , which govern the universe’s arising “spontaneities” (ibid). Swimme and Berry state that “enshrined in the Cosmogenetic Principle, is that in this universe there are entirely natural powers of form production that, when given the proper conditions, will create galaxies” (1992:70). Swimme and Berry name the three aspects/themes of Cosmogenesis as differentiation, communion and autopoeisis (ibid:71), yet
with the understanding that each face/feature really defies pinning down to "any simple one-line univocal definition" (ibid). Swimme and Berry supply a list of perceived synonyms for each, that do indeed overlap in their definitions, though each remains a distinguishable dynamic of cosmic evolution. Those synonyms are: for differentiation – "diversity, complexity, variation, disparity, multiform nature, heterogeneity, articulation" (ibid:71-72); for communion – "interrelatedness, interdependence, kinship, mutuality, internal relatedness, reciprocity, complementarity, interconnectedness and affiliation" (ibid:72); and for autopoeisis – "subjectivity, self-manifestation, sentience, self-organization, dynamic centres of experience, presence, identity, inner principle of being, voice, interiority" (ibid). Swimme and Berry assume that "these three will undoubtedly be deepened and altered in the next era as future experience expands our present understanding" (ibid).

This complexity and "fuzziness" of the terms for the evolutionary cosmic dynamics is mirrored in the metaphor of the Triple Goddess. That is, each face has a name and distinguishable qualities, and each face can be suitably simplified, celebrated, mythologized and embodied – absorbed and understood in a Poetic way - enabling a creative alignment of the self and/or the collective, with this Gaian Power; yet each face is "impregnated with virtual meaning that provide space for extension, elaboration and negotiation ..." as Dimitrov describes in reference to "fuzzy concepts" (1999:5). Just so, is each embodied face of the Female Metaphor - a deep dynamic, a "primordial ordering" of being.

McLean who has spent much time studying and meditating upon Her, describes relationship/alignment with Her as releasing "such a powerful current of creative energy as few have ever experienced" (1989:12). He contends that "the Triple Goddess archetype (sic) remains a key to unlocking the store of ancient energies and spiritual wisdom" bound up within (ibid:17), that would enable us to become "spiritual vessels for the future" (ibid:12).

77 A term used by Vladimir Dimitrov (1999). He describes that "According to fuzzy set theory, the meaning of words cannot be precisely defined – each linguistic construct in use can be described by a set of 'degrees of freedom', i.e. ways of understanding (interpretation, transformation into actions) by individuals or groups" (ibid:3). The website address of "Introduction to Fuzziology" is http://www.uws.edu.au/vip/dimitrov/fuzzysoc.htm
The Three Faces of Cosmogenesis Developed

Describing differentiation, which I associate with the Virgin aspect - the Urge to Be, passionate love of every individual self, Swimme and Berry say,

"From the articulated energy constellations we call the elementary particles and atomic beings, through the radiant structures of the animate world, to the complexities of the galaxy with its planetary systems, we find a universe of unending diversity... The more intimately we become acquainted with anything, the clearer our recognition of its differences from everything else... There has never been a time when the universe did not seek further differentiation. In the beginning all the particles interacted with each other with minimal distinction. But with the cosmic symmetry breaking, four branches of interactions differentiated from each other. From the thermal equilibrium of the fireball the universe sprouted into a universe differentiated by galaxies, with no two galaxies identical" (1992:73).

Swimme and Berry note that although it is the endeavour of science to refer to the way in which structures are similar – stars, atoms, cells or society – the more deeply we come to know a thing – the Milky Way, the fall of Rome, the species on a particular tree in a rainforest – the more deeply we perceive its "ineffable uniqueness" (ibid:74). They note then that not only is each thing new and different, but that the dynamics of relationship between the new structures are qualitatively and quantitatively different. They add that,

"This diversity of relatedness pertains to human knowing as well - knowledge represents a particular relationship we establish in the world... An integral relationship with the universe’s differentiated energy constellations requires a multivalent understanding that includes a full spectrum of modes of knowing" (ibid).

They find that when the 15 billion year epic of the Universe’s unfolding is viewed as a whole, with its extravagant creative outpouring, there is the revelation of the uniqueness of the creativity of each place and time, and the existence of each being.

As an example of my Poetic translation of Swimme and Berry’s expressions regarding Cosmogenesis: when they say that the universe “at each instant has re-created itself anew” (ibid), and that this seemingly infinite power "speaks of an inexhaustible fecundity at the root of reality” (ibid), I imagine in “Goddess-speak”, the Virgin dynamic of unique beauty expressed and celebrated in early Spring, has layered within, the fertility that is expressed and celebrated in High Spring (Beltane), as She changes into the Mother dynamic of Summer, whose fertility rests in the Dark Interiority of the Old One expressed and celebrated particularly at Samhain. This translation of
mine is kin to William Irwin Thompson’s translation of Lyn Margulis’
description of her study of bacteria: he says that when he saw her film about
bacteria, his thoughts “on the relationship between myth and science took a
jump forward” as he began to understand what his Irish ancestors meant
when they had spoken of “the little people” at work in the leaf mold at their
feet (1987:7).78

Even as Swimme and Berry define differentiation, the three aspects are
constantly drawn into the equation, and again with this perception: “The
multiform relatedness demanded by a differentiated universe rests upon the
fact that each individual thing in the universe is ineffable” (ibid). The
sentience or interiority or presence of each unique thing/being evokes
relatedness in mind-boggling complexity. To help one understand the way in
which the aspects support each other, Swimme and Berry imagine:

“Were there no differentiation, the universe would collapse into a homogenous
smudge; were there no subjectivity, the universe would collapse into inert,
dead extension; were there no communion, the universe would collapse into
isolated singularities of being” (ibid:73).

Each aspect does not really exist without the others, yet each has its own
integrity. In the case of the dynamic of differentiation, Swimme and Berry
say that, to understand the Universe – the entire display – to get the full
picture, we must understand the absolute freshness of each being and each
moment. (ibid:75).

Describing communion, which I associate with the Mother aspect - the
sustaining, relating Context, the reciprocal Place of Being, the passionate
pouring forth for other, Swimme and Berry say,

“... relationship is the essence of existence. In the very first instant when the
primitive particles rushed forth, every one of them was connected to every
other one in the entire universe. At no time in the future existence of the
universe would they ever arrive at a point of disconnection. Alienation for a
particle is a theoretical impossibility. For galaxies too, relationships are the
fact of existence. Each galaxy is directly connected to the hundred billion
galaxies of the universe, and there will never come a time when a galaxy’s
destiny does not involve each of the galaxies in the universe.

Nothing is itself without everything else. Our Sun emerged into being out of the
creativity of so many millions of former beings. The elements of the floating
presolar cloud had been created by former stars and by the primeval fireball ...
The patterns of nuclear resonances enabling stable nuclear burning was not the

78 William Irwin Thompson says that when Lynn Margulis spoke of bacteria laying down the iron ore
Sun's invention - and yet all that followed depended upon this pattern of interconnectivity in which the Sun arose” (ibid:77).
So it is with any entity, with any being - we arise within a pattern of interconnectivity, the beneficiaries of the creativity of former beings, supported by everything that has gone before.

Swimme and Berry point out that a sense of relatedness is at the base of being, “coming even before a first interaction” (ibid:78) – that this is true in the earliest eras of the Universe’s unfolding at the quantum level of particles, present to each other in a direct and unmediated relationship; as well as in later eras as the biosphere of Earth unfolded. They give the example of an unborn grizzly bear, as being already related to the outside world in that she will not have to develop a taste for the foods bears eat, and she is already shaped for her environment and the survival tasks ahead of her; that is, we are already in relationship by the fact of our being – relationships then “are discovered, even more than they are forged” (ibid:77).

Once again, in the process of defining the one aspect – this time communion - all three aspects are drawn into the equation. They say, “… the universe advances into community—into a differentiated web of relationships amongst sentient centers of creativity” (ibid). As I pointed out in the last chapter, the Nine Sisters who stir the Cauldron “represent the Holy Trinity of Maiden, Mother, and Crone, each able to manifest all three of Her selves” (Edwards 1991:152). And so it is with the three faces of Cosmogenesis … as Swimme and Berry say: “These three features are themselves features of each other” (1992:73).

The eating of food is a communion experience – it enters into the being. It is also a dissolution and a breaking down, in which the food becomes something new – perhaps Poetry (Swimme 1990:video 4)! Mating rituals – in the human world or in the world of other creatures - are communion experiences. Swimme and Berry note that the desire for relationships of true intimacy is obvious in the music and dance of the world, and in the energy given to attracting relationship (ibid:78) – of various kinds.
Describing autopoiesis, which I associate with the Crone aspect - the Return to the Dark Sentience, the Wisdom of the Ages within, a passionate commitment to transformation; Swimme and Berry say:

"From autocatalytic chemical processes to cells, from living bodies to galaxies, we find a universe filled with structures exhibiting self-organizing dynamics. The self that is referred to by autopoiesis is not visible to the eye. Only its effects can be discerned. ... the unifying principle of an organism as a mode of being of the organism is integral with but distinct from the entire range of physical components of the organism. ... Living beings and such ecosystems as the tropical forests or the coral reefs are the chief exemplars of self-organizing dynamics, but with the term autopoiesis we wish to point not just to living beings, but to self-organizing powers in general. Autopoiesis refers to the power each thing has to participate directly in the cosmos-creating endeavor. For instance, we have spoken of the autopoiesis of a star. The star organizes hydrogen and helium and produces elements and light. This ordering is the central activity of the star itself. That is, the star has a functioning self, a dynamic of organization centered within itself. ... With such an understanding of the term, we can see that an atom is a self-organizing system as well. Each atom is a storm of ordered activity. ... A galaxy, too, is an autopoietic system, organizing its stars into a nonequilibrium process and drawing forth new stars from its interstellar materials.

Autopoiesis points to the interior dimension of things. Even the simplest atom cannot be understood by considering only its physical structure or the outer world of external relationships with other things. Things emerge with an inner capacity for self-manifestation" (ibid:75).

Swimme and Berry put forth the question then about the sentience of the elemental realm,

"for we now realize that where Earth was once molten rock, it now fills its air with the songs of birds. And if humans bask in an astounding feeling for the universe, and the human arose from the elements, what can be said of the inner world of the elements?" (ibid:76).

They answer this partly, implying innate sentience, by affirming the need "to preserve the continuity holding together an integral universe" and the need to "avoid regarding consciousness as an addendum or as an intrusion into reality" (ibid). They do also allow for the "discontinuity enabling the universe to develop through a sequence of transformations"(ibid). Their interpretation is that the universe is "a place where qualities that will one day bloom are for the present hidden as dimensions of emptiness"(ibid).

Swimme and Berry affirm that, "The universe is a single if multiform energy event; everything comes forth out of the intrinsic creativity of the universe" (ibid). They say:

"The rocks and water and air, just by being what they are, find themselves flowering forth with sentient beings. At the very least we can say that the future experience in a latent form is wrapped into the activity of rocks, for within the turbulence of molten magma, self-organizing powers are evoked that bring forth a new shape—animals capable of being racked with terror or stunned by awe of the very universe out of which they emerged." (ibid:76-77).
In a recent interview Brian Swimme gave a short version of the whole story of evolution: he said,

"You take hydrogen gas, and you leave it alone, and it turns into rosebushes, giraffes, and humans.” He went on, “...The reason I like that version is that hydrogen gas is odorless and colorless, and in the prejudice of our Western civilization, we see it as just material stuff. There’s not much there. You just take hydrogen, leave it alone, and it turns into a human - that’s a pretty interesting bit of information. The point is that if humans are spiritual, then hydrogen’s spiritual. It’s an incredible opportunity to escape dualism—you know, spirit is up there; matter is down here. Actually, it’s different. You have the matter all the way through, and so you have the spirit all the way through” (Bridle 2001:40).

By “autopoeisis”, Swimme and Berry are pointing to an “interior dimension of things” (1992:75). For them, this aspect / face seems sometimes overwhelmingly associated with the Great Mystery itself – much as I have at times overwhelmingly associated the Old / Dark One with Love itself (as mentioned Chapter 3, pp.89-90). Yet “autopoeisis” and the Old Dark One / Crone are both only meant to be an aspect of the whole Creative Dynamic, and so they are; perhaps in both cases, the emphasis on this aspect’s centrality to Creativity is partly compensatory, given the cultural denial of it. Certainly though, it taps the central Creativity of the All-Nourishing Abyss in a dramatic way – whether it be in the collapse of a star, or in the death of a loved one. Vision and perhaps trust are needed to comprehend such destruction as creative - creative of a Larger Picture than is ours to hold. When “autopoeisis” is described as “an inner capacity for self-manifestation” (ibid), the self that is being spoken of, is the self that at once belongs and “knows”79 it belongs, to the Larger Picture, which is the Source of the Passion to manifest and to organize. The fact that Swimme and Berry image it as the place within, of direct contact with the cosmos that each being has, may be an incomplete comprehension or expression of the other two aspects, which upon reflection, do also contact directly, simply in a different way.

Loren Eiseley refers to a mysterious organizing principle, without which life does not persist -

79 This “knowing” is meant in the broadest sense – not only referring to the human reflective knowing, but also to other ways of “knowing” by other beings and entities.
windows or spaces the meadow lark's song in the interior of a mottled egg” (1957:26).

He speaks of the manifest world as

“an apparition from that mysterious shadow world beyond nature, that contains - if anything contains - the explanation of men (sic) and catfish and green leaves” (ibid:27).

This organizing principle that he perceives, is the One I identify with Swimme and Berry’s autopoesis, and the ancient face of the Old Wise Dark One.

The Three Biological Shaping Powers and the Female Metaphor

As Swimme and Berry reflect on the “three fundamentally related, though distinct causes” that shape biological creativity on this planet (op. cit.:125) – genetic mutation, natural selection and conscious choice (niche creation) - they associate them with the three faces of Cosmogenesis (ibid:132-138). And I in turn find in their descriptions, a further articulation of the nature of the three faces of the Female Metaphor.

Swimme and Berry find in genetic mutation a biological illustration of differentiation (ibid:132) – it is this power of mutation that gives rise to genetic variation. They describe it as a “pressure toward the future within each moment (that includes) a pressure for uniqueness” (ibid:133). They describe this dynamic with various words such as “chance, random, stochastic and error (op. cit.:126), finally summarizing the quality as wild (ibid:127). I associate this energy with the Virgin, particularly as She is celebrated at Beltane – High Spring. I came to call it “the Poetry of genetic creation” in the concluding of this research (see page 335).

For Swimme and Berry, natural selection illustrates the dynamic of communion (op. cit.:132) – it is this power that sculpts the diversity (ibid:127). They describe natural selection as a

“dynamic of interrelatedness ... that presses, always and everywhere, for a deep intimacy of togetherness ... (deep into) the very structure of genes, body, mind” (ibid:134).

Swimme and Berry’s description of natural selection as a communal reality wherein a species engages in finding its place in a biophysical community.

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80 In ordinary scientific accounts conscious choice is often not regarded as having the same importance as genetic mutation or natural selection, but Swimme and Berry argue for its inclusion (op. cit.:128-132), as I will discuss in this section.

81 See page 125-126.
(ibid:133-134) seems similar to David Abram’s understanding of it as a “reciprocal phenomenon” (1996:247). These descriptions deepen my understanding of the Mother face of the Female Metaphor – a Place to Be that is a vibrant Reciprocity, “an immense bonding process” (Swimme and Berry op. cit.:136). In the course of this research I came to celebrate Her as a point of Interchange between the self (a singularity, be it species or individual) and existence (All-That-Is)\textsuperscript{82}.

Swimme and Berry describe niche creation or conscious choice as a “biological illustration of autopoiesis” (op. cit.:132). Ordinarily, scientific accounts do not give niche creation/conscious choice as much importance as the other two biological shaping powers, but Swimme and Berry argue that at points of major evolutionary change “conscious choice becomes the primary cause explaining the change” (ibid). They call for more recognition of the self-organizing dynamics within all life forms – “behavior that can be interpreted as manifestations of memory, of discernment concerning questions of temperature and nutrient concentration, of a basic irreducible intelligence” (ibid). They suggest that even minimal powers of this kind have resulted in primal decisions on the part of organisms which have “sent the biosphere into pathways forever characterized by those decisions” (ibid). As a premise to their perception Swimme and Berry argue against the conventional notion of a “fixed environment” pointing out its limitations (op. cit.:135)\textsuperscript{83}. They present the example of the horse and the bison who come from a common ancestor but are now very different forms of life – the different choices made by their primordial ancestors created two different worlds, with different selection pressures constellated for each, and these shaping the genetic diversity accordingly (ibid:136-137). They describe this dynamic of niche creation as a felt “vision” or simple thrill (ibid:138) wherein the creature responds to this “inner urgency to pursue a particular path” (ibid:136). I associate this energy with the Crone, particularly as She is

\textsuperscript{82} See my description of the “Winter Gateway” p.120-121, and the Summer Solstice as “Gateway” on p. 127-128. Both “Seasonal Moments” are points of interchange between dark and light – Crone and Virgin, “unmanifest” and “manifest”.

\textsuperscript{83} The conventional notion of “fixed environment” is also challenged by the research of biologist Lyn Margulis. Margulis refers to the work of Russian scientist Vladimir Vernadsky and philosopher of science Karl Popper, saying that: “the activities of each organism lead to continuously changing environments. The oxygen we breathe, the humid atmosphere inside of which we live, and the mildly alkaline ocean waters in which the kelp and whales bathe are not deteremined by a physical universe.
celebrated at Samhain, drawing forth the future, conceiving the new, from her Dark Sentient Depths\textsuperscript{84}. In the human it is the power of imagination – sometimes simply felt, sometimes “seen”, always an act of will. I came to call it “the Poetry of trans-genetic creation” in the concluding of this research (see page 334).

Whitehead’s “Threefold Creative Composition”

Process philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead also perceived the Universe as including

\textquotedblleft a threefold creative act composed of (i) the one infinite conceptual realization, (ii) the multiple solidarity of free physical realizations in the temporal world, (iii) the ultimate unity of the multiplicity of actual fact with the primordial conceptual fact\right)\textsuperscript{91}.\textquotedblright

Whitehead conceives the first and the third aspects as having a unity, which is also true in the Virgin and Crone aspects of the Female Metaphor – the beginning and the end are barely distinguishable in their felt proximity to Source; the continuity of the “Urge to Return” and the “Urge to Be” may be more obvious (than their continuity with the “Place of Being”). We are always Returning to the Unity - it is integral with Life; and we are always being Regenerated – Reconceived … our bodyminds in a constant state of Renewal. We are part of some Great Cycle of Returning and Renewal, and the Manifest Reality - the Mother, the physical realization - is the Point of Communion. However Whitehead puts the first and third aspects "over against" the second aspect. He admits the power of the second aspect, as he describes that the "sheer force of things lies in the intermediate physical process: this is the energy of production" (ibid), but his “God” is merely “patient” with it - Whitehead says that “God’s role ... lies in the patient operation of the overpowered rationality of his conceptual harmonization” (ibid). Whitehead’s point was that “God” did not create the world, that “he” was the poet of the world – leading it with “tender patience” (ibid), but the language that he uses invokes and indicates a remnant of dualistic thinking, as does his splitting of the “three-fold creative act” into this oppositional situation. The cosmology of the Female Metaphor has resonances with Whitehead’s philosophy, however he still speaks of a God as an entity as if external to creation, albeit at times also Creature (Whitehead 1929:497 and

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run by mechanical laws; the surroundings are products of life interacting at the planet’s surface” (Barlow 1994:237).
\end{quote}
Hartshorne in Cousins 1971:53) and of "consequent nature" (Whitehead 1929:488).

Nancy Howell notes that Whitehead's "philosophy of organism" does provide a cosmology that radically differs from "dominant mechanistic and patriarchal worldviews" (2000:14), thus providing support for the constructing of "a promising feminist theory of relations, a feminist ecological cosmology" (ibid:13). She describes how Whitehead's process philosophy has provided a "helpful conceptual framework" for the interpretation of women's experiences (ibid:14) based as it is in relational, organic thinking that is systemically inclusive of an "infinite range of experience" (ibid:16), and promotes a continuity of the human with the cosmos/nature (ibid:27-28). Howell notes that the "result" is "a dynamic philosophy that promotes and reflects change" (ibid:17), that describes all nature as "experiencing subjects" (ibid:28), and enables the reinterpretation of many dualisms – subject/object, body/mind, reason/emotion, God/world (ibid:22). Feminist theologians find the reinterpretation of the last mentioned dualism particularly hopeful, since within that discipline "God" remains by choice as an indelible metaphor. Howell describes that "the genius of Whitehead's metaphysics" is that "God and the world" truly affect each other, create each other, receive from each other (ibid:31). Howell is thus confident that this metaphysics feeds "a feminist vision of mutuality" (ibid). However Howell too still speaks of this "God" as a separate entity: to my mind this is still a "meta"-physics, not the "intra"-physics of the cosmogenetic dynamics of which I speak. Howell comes closest in her language to this "intra"-physics where she notes Rita Nakashima Brock's metaphor of "God/dess as Heart, the present divine erotic power" (ibid:32 quoting Brock 1988:46). As Joseph Campbell points out, "'God' is an ambiguous word in our language because it appears to refer to something that is known" (1988:48-49); Campbell elaborates that "in religions where the god or creator is the mother, the whole world is her body. There is nowhere else" (ibid:49).

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14 See page 119.
Gaia as Universe-Earth-Self: A Unity of Being

Earth-Gaia is not separate from Universe-Gaia. Earth is immersed in Universe. There is no seam that separates Earth-Gaia from Universe-Gaia ... She is One. There is no "up" and "down". There is no "out there". Gaia is "in here", as much as anywhere, or She is nowhere. Gaia can be known, felt, in any single articulation of Herself – within any Self. We are IN it, Earth is IN it. Earth floats in the "heavens" – the "heavens" are where we are. This IS it. Gaia is a nested reality – many fold, but at least: Universe, Earth, Self; and inversely Self is Earth, is Gaia. Many spiritualities and most language imply that Earth is a world apart from the Heavens – and even that the Heavens are "higher' and thus "better". Yet we know that Earth is a Jewel in the Womb of Space – we have seen Her. We know that "Earth" is stardust – Her dirt is transfigured stuff of the stars. We know that we and all of it, are made from the same stuff – that we come out of the cores of stars, that a significant percentage of our "stuff" comes directly from the Origins, albeit recycled many times over. Spiritual language must catch up, if we are to stop killing ourselves and other beings with our words.

In 1926 – long before the human eye had actually seen Earth from space - Russian scientist Vladimir Vernadsky, was able to hold a vision of Her in her "cosmic surroundings" (1986:6). He developed a hypothesis of the biosphere "as a unitary agent molding the earth's crust as a primary geological force" (ibid:iv) that was in relationship with the cosmic energies of radiation, particularly solar radiation (ibid:1). Throughout his work Vernadsky scientifically and poetically describes an wholistic vision of Cosmos and Earth, and at times refers to humankind as a "geological entity" (ibid:2). His concept of a biosphere is based on data from all Earth sciences, and because of this synthesis it is a comprehension of “the nature of the Earth on a planetary/cosmic scale” (ibid:4). For Vernadsky, the biosphere is "a place of transformation" of cosmic energies (ibid:7). He says

"The biosphere is as much, or even more, the creation of the Sun as it is a manifestation of Earth-processes. Ancient religious traditions which regarded terrestrial creatures, especially human beings, as 'children of the Sun' were much nearer the truth than those which looked upon them as a mere ephemeral creation ..." (ibid:8).

Vernadsky asserts that the phenomena in the biosphere cannot be understood “unless one takes into account the bond that unites it with the
entire cosmic mechanism” (ibid:10) – the phenomena are “related to the structure of atoms, to their places in the cosmos and to their evolution in the history of the cosmos” (ibid:9).

Earth of course does not need to be named Gaia - Spretnak refers to "Earthbody" (1993:144-145) - but it is a name that now has large appeal in the West, due to James Lovelock and Lyn Margulis' scientific theory named thus, first published in 1974. The name "Gaia" now not only invokes the ancient Greek myth of the Creator-Goddess, but also the present scientific inquiry. Lovelock points out that the Gaia theory is now

"spurring a great deal of scientific research into the geophysiology of our living planet (and) it is also spurring philosophic conceptions of what it means to our species to be part of a living planet. Some of these conceptions stay carefully within the accepted limits of science; others have a religious bent” (Sahtouris 1989:13).

The religious bent is frequently problematic to the acceptance of the theory itself in the scientific community; but the scientific bent to this ancient religious story is most frequently beneficial to a prospective deepening of connection to the hearts and minds of a people seeking relationship with Earth. The naming of a spirituality as "Gaian" today, signifies the integration of scientific knowledge gained by humanity into the vision and metaphor of that spirituality. For Spretnak, knowing Gaia, is knowing that we are

"inextricably linked at the molecular level to every other manifestation of the great unfolding. We are descendents of the fireball ... glimpsing the oneness of the sacred whole” (1991:17).

The Gaia theory states "that our planet and its creatures constitute a single self-regulating system that is in fact a great living being, or organism.” (Sahtouris 1989:9). Elisabet Sahtouris, evolutionary biologist, grounds her philosophy in this conception. She understands the scientific story of Gaian creation as a retelling of the ancient myth, and says that

"once we truly grasp the scientific reality of the Gaian organism and its physiology, our entire worldview and practice are bound to change profoundly, revealing the way to solving what now appear to be our greatest and most insoluble problems” (1989:23).

As participants in Gaia, we may understand ourselves as Gaia, holons of the Large Self, as a drop of the ocean participates in (the whole of) the ocean. I regard the concepts of holons and holarchy, as I learnt them from Ken Wilber (1996:20ff)85 to be a crucial model for understanding a participatory universe.

85 Originally they are Arthur Koestler’s terms (Barlow 1994:90-100).
Harman and Sahtouris define a holarchy as “the embeddedness of living entities within each other (e.g., cell, organ, body, family, community, ecosystem, bioregion, planet, star system, galaxy, etc.)” (1998:130); and they define a holon as “a living entity or system” (ibid). They describe the entire Universe as a vast living entity or holon (ibid:122) and also as “a holarchy containing smaller holons in continual co-creation” (ibid:xxiii). A most significant feature of a holarchy is that every layer/level has as much importance as any other, because they are embedded in each other – and actually the layers of simpler life forms are not dependent on the more complex, though the more complex are dependent on the simpler earlier layers. Within the context of holarchy, it may be possible to explain by physical principles how a quality of living systems “may apply all the way from the most simple single-cell life form to Gaia” (ibid:xxii)\textsuperscript{86}.

Psychologist James Hillman recognizes that the cut between the self and the natural world is arbitrary, and wonders whether it can be made at all - "we can make it at the skin or we can take it as far out as you like - to the deep oceans and distant stars” (1995:xix). Lovelock refers to the human as Gaia (Barlow 1991:19) “She has seen the reflection of her fair face through the eyes of astronauts ...”. He speaks of a "commonwealth of all creatures that constitute Gaia” (ibid). In his early writings on Gaia, he did try to hold back from Her sentience:

"Occasionally it has been difficult to avoid talking of Gaia as if she were known to be sentient. This is meant no more seriously than the appellation 'she' when given to a ship by those who sail in her, as a recognition that even pieces of wood and metal may achieve a composite identity distinct from the mere sum of its parts" (Barlow 1991:3).

However, in 1988 Lovelock spoke of his relationship with Gaia as possibly kin to the relationship of some Christians to Mary. He says, "What if Mary is another name for Gaia?” (Barlow 1991:41), and later,

"If their hearts and minds could be moved to see in her the embodiment of Gaia, then they might become aware that the victim of their destruction was indeed the Mother of humankind and the source of everlasting life”(ibid 42).

He had explained that

"Any living organism a quarter as old as the Universe itself and still full of vigor is as near immortal as we ever need to know. She is of this Universe and, conceivably, a part of (the Divine)\textsuperscript{57} (ibid).

\textsuperscript{86} It is worth noting that a holon itself could be said to exhibit qualities that I identify with the three dynamics of the Female Metaphor and Cosmogenesis – agency, communion, and self-transcendence (Sahtouris 1989:52-53).

\textsuperscript{57} Lovelock actually uses the word “God”, by which I assume he means “the Divine”. I translate it in the text for the sake of continuity of my point.
Gaian researcher, Tyler Volk, treads more carefully, riding a fine edge in regard Gaia's sentience, wishing to "apply the principles of science to study the global metabolism without postulating a global organism" (Volk 1998.ix). Nevertheless, he seems ambivalent; speaking of Earth (not "the" Earth) and of Gaian "physiology", implying a subject, while still using the pronoun "it". Volk speaks of all of us as "cells within the embracing physiology of ... 'Gaia'" (1998:viii), yet holds back from accepting Her as an organism. He says this because Gaia "does not evolve in a Darwinian sense" (ibid.ix), but that leaves it open that She may evolve in some other sense. He speaks of "promoting an informed reverence for Gaia's body" (1998:xiv).

The restoration of the material reality, is a restoration of the maternal reality, is a restoration of the Mother.

"For so long we've considered the Earth as just a big dead ball of dirt. It shocks us nearly out of our minds when we discover we're involved with something that moves ... (that) the whole process is alive" (Swimme 1984:135).

The entire Cosmos itself has been imagined as something dead and static - the heavens as a vacuous space "out there". Just as Aristotle storied the female body as passive matter, so the Womb of Space has been imagined. The cosmology of Earth-based religious traditions, on the other hand, have always understood Earth as Mother, and the Mother as active Creator.

Starhawk writes of Goddess as

"the living body of a living cosmos, the awareness that infuses matter and the energy that produces change. She is life eternally attempting to maintain itself, reproduce itself, diversify, evolve ... " (1989:228).

Ecologist Stephan Harding, who teaches on Gaia and ecosophy at Schumacher College, says that "the whole reason for gathering scientific information is to provide a cognitive basis for developing wide identification with nature", that people love it when they "realize that the planet has life-like qualities of self-regulation" (Barlow 1997:216) - in my own words, people love to hear news of the Mother, that She is alive.

To my mind, Gaian research and knowledge of the evolutionary story, furthers our knowledge of the Mother, and at once, knowledge of ourselves. The definition of self-knowledge is extended to Self-knowledge - knowledge of Gaia. "It is in knowing her that we shall have intimate knowledge of ourselves" (Mae-Wan Ho 1996:305). Just as the prokaryotes, the first cells on Earth deeply effected the planet and its future, so our small organism and the
many, many others effect the planet over long periods of time. This is Gaian spirituality - taking on the mind of the Universe as Brian Swimme says we need to (1998:video 6), participating in the Dream of the Earth, as Berry says we must (1990). We can begin to “know” from within the perspective of Earth, Moon, Sun, Tree – and so on.

The Spirochete as an Example of the Metaphor
The spirochete is a bacterium - one of the earliest forms of life on the planet. It is a prokaryote, a cell without a nucleus – of the kind that has been swimming around on Earth for 4 billion years, and with which Life proceeded to build further. The work of biologist Lyn Margulis, on the earliest of life forms – bacteria – has been ground breaking and has changed the way Life may be perceived88. In her general theory of evolution, the spirochete – an ancient single rod bacterium that has neither head nor tail – is seen as the fundamental building block of symbiotic evolution (Thompson 1998:18). Many other later developments of Life – axons attached to neurons, spermatozoa attached to ova - Margulis saw as “a variant of the biological architecture of the attachment of the spirochete to the larger cell of the protist” (ibid). The spirochete, “the most basic and fundamental form of life” (ibid:21), moves randomly in a wave-like motion in its viscous aqueous medium seeking nutrition. William Irwin Thompson uses the spirochete to begin his story of the evolution of consciousness, and points out three factors associated with the spirochete dynamic – “the meat” or the rod of the spirochete, “the motion” or wavelike motion, and “the waves it makes in its liquid medium by writhing in space” (ibid). These three factors associate very well in themselves and in their developing complexity, with the evolutionary cosmic dynamics of Cosmogenesis and the Female Metaphor; at the simplest layer of perception, the materia/meat is the Mother, the wavelike motion of the materia is the Urge/Virgin, the waves in the liquid that “go out there” are the Crone/the Transformer.

Further, Thompson notes that even at this level of biological development, we encounter the factor of “distinction” – between one end of the rod that

may have found food and thus becomes still and “listens” and “sucks”, and
the other end of the rod that may not have yet encountered a strong presence
of food and continues to writhe (ibid:22). This factor of distinction is kin to
the primary distinction of light and dark – manifest and unmanifest. In the
case of the spirochete, the emergent property of the distinction between one
end’s activity and the other end’s stillness, is “directional motion” (ibid); in
the case of the light and dark parts of the Metaphor, the emergent property is
ongoing creativity.

All this fires my poetic imagination, as it did Thompson’s when he saw Lyn
Margulis’ film of the bacteria (1987:7), although mine specifically sees the
ancient Triple Metaphor and the triple-fold cosmic dynamics at play. Further
to the simple layer of perception of the three distinct factors: within the
materia/meat of the rod – the Mother - is another whole depth ... which is
Sentience/Crone, with its own differentiated entities – Virgin. And the wave
in the liquid – associated with the sentience/interiority of autopoeisis – is
also a communion, and also establishes a new relationship. The motion itself
– the Urge – can only exist in the materia, or at least can only be
seen/manifest there. At this time in scientific research, its manifestation
remains a mystery. The Urge to writhe responds to feedback/presence in the
liquid medium, either in the form of nutrition or of other spirochetes – its
flagellating movement comes into synchrony with others after a period.

There is the question of explaining the stilling and “listening” of one end.
Contemporary science favours a chemical explanation (ibid:22) - “a
molecular reaction along a chemical gradient” (ibid:23). Thompson’s “poetic
imagination” entertains the theory that the stilling occurs when the
spirochete receives back an echo/sonar wave from the “Other”, though he
suggests it may be “an interesting interaction of the two on the membrane of
the bacterium” (ibid). My poetic imagination sees the Reciprocity between
the unmanifest and the manifest – Dark and Light – as celebrated in the
Wheel of the Year.

Beneath/within the form of the spirochete is another whole world, wherein
the “microtubule” is the primary form, and the distinction is no longer the
two states of writhing and stillness, and the emergent property is no longer directional motion, "but the single quantum state" (ibid:26). By shifting one's threshold of perception, one may comprehend a different reality, "an emergent property of coherence" (ibid). So it is with the Metaphor, and Her embodiment in the seasonal cycle of light and dark.

THE "EN-TRANCING GODDESS" CLASSES

A Layer of Action

This series of classes was named thus because its design was for participants to "enter more fully" into our practice of this spirituality - to enter more fully into our own understandings, our own memory, our own sacred awareness, and to develop our own "author-ity" - to enable immersion in awareness of the threefold creative dynamic present within, and to bring forth more of its power. This "entering more fully" is in ourselves and in All, may be an "entrancing" process - a word Swimme and Berry also use to describe the reality of the Universe, expressive as it is "of some ineffable mystery" (1992:224). This series of classes was an intense ritual experience that provided some "gateways" to embodying and expressing the Creative Metaphor that we - the participants - lusted for. I created the sessions using processes and meditations that had catalyzed my deepening into the Metaphor, and that appeared to be successful in enabling me to make changes and move forward in my life.

As with the previous series, I took care with the setting up of the space, creating the context with a ritual setting. For a full description of the processes, see APPENDIX C. In summary, there were five sessions to the series. The first one was a collective contemplation of the triple-faced Metaphor wherein I presented a summary of Swimme and Berry’s three faces of Cosmogenesis (1992:66-79), relating them to the Female Metaphor - the Creativity of Gaia. These women - the core participants and one other - were the first to "try this on", to sit with my understandings of these connections. Part of my purpose was to "test" the sensibility of these connections for others, and to enrich the participation of this core group in the seasonal celebrations as I understood them. I was certainly developing "a
deepening appreciation and understanding of the topic of inquiry” (Braud and Anderson 1998:83), as I listened reflectively, and this translated into an expanded “field of resonance available to successive participants” (ibid) and to these participants, as we went further into the heart of the research, which was the seasonal celebrations.

The second session was body-focussed, eliciting and developing deep and ancient memory held within the personal and primary materia. The third session was focussed on the Story of the Universe – our Context and Origins - as a way of developing sacred awareness. The fourth session was focussed on the Wheel of the Year, and developing each participant’s sense of connection to it. The fifth and final session was focussed on developing a sense of one’s self as a “hera” – author of one’s own life, and a microcosmic embodiment of the larger Universal Power.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, the creation of this series was my response to the request by one of the core participants for “more”. Together we entered into a process of transformation, each becoming “more”. It was facilitated by a special degree of “reflective listening” on my part, a skill outlined as particular to Intuitive Inquiry by Braud and Anderson (1998:83), wherein the process is highly interactive and elicits personal creativity and perceptions from the depths of the participants, as well as my personal creation and perceptions as the researcher. This series took us further into the in-forming of each other of our participation in the Evolutionary Cosmic Dynamics.

99 I use “our” as opposed to “their”, since I too was a participant, albeit also as the facilitator.
THE SEASONAL MOMENTS
– THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

There are eight Sabbats/holy days in the traditional pre-Celtic Wheel of the Year. Each of the Sabbats as I have celebrated them, is based in theme, on the traditional understanding of it, as articulated by Starhawk in the Goddess tradition of Old Western Europe (1989). I have adapted the Wheel of this tradition to the Southern Hemispheric seasonal dates.

The eight Sabbats are: two Solstices - Winter and Summer, two Equinoxes - Autumn and Spring, and four cross-quarter days, that is, meridian points of each quarter of the year. There is a simple division into a light half during which the light is waxing - Winter through Spring to Summer, and a dark half during which the dark is waxing - Summer through Autumn to Winter. There is another division of the year into one half when the hours of light in a day are longer than the hours of dark - Spring Equinox through the Summer to Autumn Equinox, and the other half being when the hours of dark in a day are longer than the hours of light - Autumn Equinox through Winter to Spring Equinox. (See DIAGRAM 1\textsuperscript{90}). On its simplest level, the light that is "born" at the Winter Solstice waxes through the Spring - at first being young and tender, before coming into balance with the dark at Equinox, then waxing into the virulent frenzy of High Spring (Beltane) and Summer. At the Summer Solstice, the dark that is "born" waxes through the Autumn - at first being a remembering of letting go or "harvest", before coming into balance with the light at Equinox, then waxing on into the dark transformation of Deep Autumn (Samhain) and Winter.

I commonly think of the light part of the cycle as acknowledging and celebrating the “manifest” reality, and the Dark part of the cycle as acknowledging and celebrating the “unmanifest” reality. I take these terms

\textsuperscript{90} Whilst the dates on my diagram are correct for the Southern Hemisphere, Annabelle Solomon notes that the South should really be at the top of the page for the Southern Hemisphere perspective. She does this in her diagram of the Wheel of the Year (Solomon 1999:105). See APPENDIX J.
from David Abram’s explanation of Benjamin Lee Whorf’s work in analyzing the Hopi language.

“While Whorf did not find separable notions of space and time among the Hopi, he did discern, in the Hopi language, a distinction between two basic modalities of existence, which he terms the ‘manifested’ and the ‘manifesting’ (Abram 1997:191).

Abram summarizes the meaning of these terms with:

“The ‘manifested’, ... is that aspect of phenomena already evident to our senses, while the ‘manifesting’ is that which is not yet explicit, not yet present to the senses, but which is assumed to be psychologically gathering itself toward manifestation within the depths of all sensible phenomena” (ibid:192).

It is easy enough for the average modern Western mind to associate light with manifestation; the birth of light at the point of Winter Solstice and its waxing through to the fullness of Summer Solstice, is fairly easily taken on as cause for celebration. However, the celebration of the dark is quite another thing; the average modern Western mind finds it very hard to comprehend, having metaphorized the dark as a dead-end, bad, even sordid. Within a linear time frame, where it is disconnected from the cycle, the dark is no longer a space for transformation, for "manifesting". Participation in the Wheel of the Year process, re-enables the "sense" of the dark. With experience of the Wheel’s cycle, one comes to always be aware of the polar opposite Sabbat, in the midst of a seasonal celebration; that is, to be aware of the presence of the "manifested" in the "manifesting"/"unmanifest", and vice versa. For example, at Lammas, where individual self is given over to the dark, there is a memory of Imbolc, when the differentiation of individual self was celebrated; at Lammas, I become aware that I am simply "returning" the "manifested" to the Source or the "heart ... behind and within all the forms and appearances of nature" (ibid quoting Whorf in Tedlock 1975:122). I have adopted the terms because it seems from Abram’s interpretation of Whorf’s work that the Hopi had a sense of space and time that was similar to that invoked by practice of the Seasonal Wheel of the Year, wherein

“one’s own feeling, thinking, desiring are a part of, and hence participant with, this collective desiring and preparing implicit in all things – from the emergence and fruition of corn, to the formation of clouds and the bestowal of rain. Indeed, human intention, especially when concentrated by communal ceremony and prayer, contributes directly to the becoming manifested of such phenomena” (Abram op. cit.:192).

\*I came to using the terms “manifest” and “unmanifest”, which does alter the sense slightly, but it seems clearer to me given my cultural experience at present. I may revert to the terms “manifested” and “manifesting” at some point.
Participation in the Wheel process re-identifies one’s small self with the Larger Gaia-Self. It is the experience of many indigenous cultures that their communal ceremony and prayer, along with their daily activities, participate "in acts that evoke the ongoing creation of the cosmos" (Spretnak 1993:95). Increasingly, as I practice this Wheel of the Year process, I come to understand how we create the Cosmos, whether conscious or not. I did not know this when I began; this awareness has grown in the practice of identifying with the Creativity of Gaia Herself, through the cycle of the "manifest" and the "unmanifest", the light and the dark, the differentiation and the transformation. Gradually I come to understand how these seasonal ceremonies are a response to awakened relationship with Cosmos - thus in some sense, the celebrations become a

"responsibility to the cosmos ... to know grace, to know as intimately as possible the mysterious interrelatedness and spiritual powers that infuse being and to live our lives accordingly" (Spretnak 1993:100).

Perhaps the central/essential significance of the Sabbats is that they are points of expression of relationship with Gaia, who is a Phenomena of storied events. These "events" are not accomplished and "located in some finished past", but are "the very depth of the experiential present", as Abram describes this sense when describing his understanding of the Aboriginal Australian notion of Dreamtime (op. cit.:193); this is so similar to what I call the "sacred awareness" of the Universe we live in. After celebrating the seasonal ceremonies for a period of time, I came to have a clear sense, at each Sabbat, as I/we prepared to celebrate the ritual, of the uniqueness of this moment in the history of the Universe; I understand this as "sacred awareness". It is a sense of the deep time and space of the moment, that is, the moment is "depthed", sensed and known as significant Cosmically. The moment becomes a Moment, as actually all moments are; this sense then was often carried over into my life at other moments.

Each Sabbat has its roots in relationship of Earth with Sun primarily, then in how this has affected Earth’s response, and our response – in the growing of our food and in the tending of animals (both pre and post-domestication); then in how it has affected human understanding of the Mystery at the Heart

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92 Even though the actual Cosmic significance may lie beyond anyone's comprehension.
of existence – how we have storied it, metaphorized it, how we have come to understand Life and Death through “observing” it, in a participatory sense. This then expresses how humans have come to understand personal stories – the search for the Harmony within our stories’ pain and ecstasy. All these layers of story over time, and even varying within a place, and a culture, are intermingled, making a web that is complex, and ever more so; but each Sabbat does retain a particular moment of relationship, a particular “slice” of the Whole Creative cycle of Light and Dark essentially – of “manifest” and “unmanifest” - that invites celebration. Author Caitlin Matthews, who has practiced the Wheel of the Year for decades, describes the “seasonal thresholds” thus:

“The circuit of the earth about the sun is like the ... revolving walk of a pilgrim about a sacred site: at each point of the circumambulation, there arises a different symbology in the changing weather and in the correspondences of the growing world” (2000:339).

The sacred site – be it a particular regional place, Earth Herself, or Sun - is felt as the Centre and Origins of All, which one may enter into through the particular Gaian seasons – Her particular modes of creativity.

Some of the words/poetry in the rituals as I have celebrated them are taken directly from the traditional expressions/stories Starhawk articulates. I have also added much of my own understanding, and storied in the particular emphasis that is the topic of this research. I was taught by Starhawk in 1980, and experienced her invitation to adapt the rituals as need predicated. Starhawk’s version includes a much stronger presence of the God, which is a later (Celtic) adaptation of a story originally based in the phases of the Triple Goddess (Gray 1999:17-18)93. There is no right and wrong way to tell this story of the Wheel of the Year; there seems to be as many interpretations as there are groups of people. These Sabbats/festivals have taken different names in different ethnic groups over the centuries, and their significance altered slightly according to the culture. As one example, Emma Restall Orr gives various names of the festivals and some of the different emphases (1998:234-235); and from a reading of Shirley Toulson’s explanation of the Celtic Year (1993) it seems that the ancestors moved dates around to suit their perceptions of the light and dark, and the stories they wanted to tell.

93 Adam McLean (1979) and Lawrence Durdin-Robertson (1990) also note this earlier (pre-Celtic) Goddess version of the Wheel of the Year, and detail its celebration to some extent.
Starhawk points out that the story will be different for specific places and climates, and that "the way we celebrate the seasonal festivals also changes over time". She explains the celebrations as described in *The Spiral Dance*:

"Some of these rituals - or some aspects of them - we still do very much as is described here. For some festivals, new traditions have evolved that are repeated year after year. For others, each year's ritual is different. Some festivals have specific children's rituals involved; others don't as yet. The opening invocations reflect the old imagery based on heterosexual polarity. Please feel free to change or adapt them. I may rewrite them someday, after a few more turns around the wheel" (1989:245).

Caitlin and John Matthews, scholars and practitioners of the Western Way, point out that the seasonal festivals have much deeper significance than the exoteric celebration of them makes apparent (1994:47). They note how the forms and names of the festivals have changed, but declare that "the inner protective energy remains the same" (ibid), and that "they are the times when the way to the Otherworld stands open" (ibid:48). The festivals, they say, can become "hidden doorways in your life" for vital inner energy and "fostering sensitivity to the important psychic tides which energize the world" (ibid 48). It has been so, in my experience in this research, and also in the experience of the participants, as I will be detailing.

I have adapted the Wheel as a way of celebrating the Female Metaphor - Cosmogenesis, the Creativity that is present really in every moment, but for which the Sabbats provide a pattern/Poetry over the period of a year - in time and place. The pattern that I unfold is a way in which the three different phases/characteristics interplay. In fact, the way in which they interplay seems infinite, the way they inter-relate is deeply complex. I think it is possible to find many ways to celebrate them. There is nothing concrete about the chosen story/Poetry, as I point out further as the research unfolds. Whilst being grounded in the "Real" (Spretnak 1999), it is therefore at the same time, a potentially infinite expression, according to the heart and mind of the storyteller.

Swimme and Berry call for "a more symbolic language ... to enter into the subjective depth of things, to understand both the qualitative differences and the multivalent aspects of every reality" (1992:258). The Wheel of the Year is such a multivalent language, I believe. It can speak any number and layers of
experiences in the dynamic of the waxing into fullness and the waning into emptiness - in our individual lives, in the life of a group, in the life of Earth, in the evolution of the Universe. It happens in time, it is an objective event, but its interpretation is multivalent. I use the Wheel of the Year, and its traditional base, to spell out a cosmology as I perceive it. In the following description of the Wheel, as one Sabbat kaleidoscopes into the next, I will place a relevant moment of the Universe’s Story as perceived by Swimme and Berry, and quoted from their book (1992). This is for the purpose of poetically aligning Cosmogenesis with the Wheel of the Year. This alignment is drawn into the Poetry of the rituals, as later described in this chapter. SEE DIAGRAM 2 for a summary of each Sabbat’s associations.

Samhain/Halloween - April 30th:
Samhain marks the New Year in this tradition because it is the meridian point of the darkest phase of the year, wherein the new is understood to be conceived. Much like any New Year, when "re-solutions" are made, there is particular magic felt in this moment; all is possible, one could decide anything and will it to be - so, it is. This is of course true of every moment, and this celebration can remind one of that, if its significance is not rigidified.

Traditionally, as Starhawk tells it,

"This is the night when the veil is thin that divides the worlds. It is the New Year in the time of the year’s death, when the harvest is gathered and the fields lie fallow. For tonight the King of the Waning Year has sailed over the sunless sea that is the Womb of the Mother, and steps ashore on the luminous world egg, becoming the seed of his own rebirth. The gates of life and death are opened; the Sun Child is conceived; the dead walk, and to the living is revealed the Mystery: that every ending is a new beginning. We meet in time out of time, everywhere and nowhere, here and there, to greet the Lord of Death who is Lord of Life and the Triple Goddess who is the circle of rebirth” (1989:193-194).

I have adapted it in the following way:

"This is the night when the veil is thin that divides the worlds. It is the New Year in the time of the year’s death. The leaves are turning and falling, the dark continues to grow, the days are getting shorter and colder. Earth’s tilt continues to move us away from the Sun.
The story of old tells us that tonight, between the dead and the born, between the old and the new, all is possible; that we travel in the Womb of the Mother, the Dark Shining One within, from which all pours forth, and that we are the seed of our own rebirth. The gates of life and death are opened: the dead are remembered, the Not-Yet is conceived. We meet in time out of time, everywhere and nowhere, here and there ... to transform the old into the new in our own bodyminds” (Samhain 2000).
Samhain is a profound celebration of the Void - the Void before time, the Space between one exhalation and the next inhalation, the All-Nourishing Abyss (Swimme 1996:97), the Sea of Generosity (Iraqi in Chittick and Wilson trans. 1982:76) from which all pours forth, the quantum vacuum. It is regarded as the time for remembering the ancestors - those who have gone before us. From the point of view of Gaia/All-That-Is, death is a transformation; Samhain is a time for remembering this, and being done with the old and conceiving the new. It is a time for recalling the many changes each participant has come through in their particular lives. It can recall the many cultural changes of our human story, the many evolutionary changes - Gaia's transformations, which are also ours - anywhere in the spectrum of 15 billion years. We can remember how old we really are, and we can remember that we are yet "much More", as I say in the ritual - personally and collectively. We may articulate some of these conceptions. This is the autopoiesis of the Cosmos.

Samhain is a celebration of the Crone's process of the transformation of Death. She is the Old One who remembers, and from whose Sentient Depths the new is drawn forth. The imagined conceptions will continue to gestate in the Fertility of the Old One's growing Dark. At Samhain, Her face has begun to move into Mother - the Womb of Winter Solstice.

"A billion years after the birth of the universe, when the galaxies have just emerged, great regions of hydrogen and helium drift about the centre of the Milky Way. In the collapse of our galactic cloud, the spinning of the matter flattens out, dislike, as the angular rotation carries the clouds into the gentle movement of the twirling spiral galaxy. After another hundred million years the invisible density arm sweeps through the cloud and shocks it into collapsing upon itself. No further energy from the galaxy is now required. The cloud that has drifted undisturbed for eons suddenly undergoes a profound transformation that destroys its basic form but gives birth to a cluster of ten thousand diamond lights in a sea of dark night" (Swimme and Berry 1992:47).

**Winter Solstice/Yule - June 20 - 23**

This is one of the easiest of Earth's holy days for people of our time in general to relate to, particularly in Christianized cultures, where it has been celebrated as "Christmas" since the Middle Ages. The Winter Solstice marks
the stillpoint in the depths of Winter, when Earth’s tilt causes the Sun to begin its return. It must have been the first Earth-Sun event that the ancients noticed, it is the most obvious and dramatic. And it is this Sabbat for which the ancients built New Grange, a burial mound or “temple-tomb” (Baring and Cashford 1993:98) whose inner chamber wall carved with the triple spiral, is - at this Seasonal Moment - briefly illuminated by the rising sun; thus enacting the significance of the Winter Solstice.

In this tradition since Celtic times, and in many other cultural traditions, this has been celebrated as the birth of the God. Yet for most of humanity’s history, the Sun was understood as Mother, not as a male principle (see Monaghan 1994). I vary the story as Starhawk tells it, only slightly, to emphasize that what is born, is within each one - the "Divine" is not "out there", we are each Created and Creator:

"This is the time of Winter Solstice in our Southern Hemisphere. Earth’s tilt leans us away from the Sun to the furthest point at this time in our annual orbit. This is for us, the time of the longest night of the year - darkness reaches Her fullness, She spreads her cloak, and yet gives way, and moves back into light. The breath of nature in our part of the world is suspended. She rests. We wait - within the Cauldron, the Dark Space, for the transformation. The stories of Old tell of the Great Mother giving birth to the Divine Child on this night. This Divine Child is the light in you, in me ... is the bringer of hope, the light in the darkness, the evergreen tree, the stillness behind motion, the centre which is also the circumference" (Starhawk 1989:182 blended with my own words from Winter Solstice 2001).

Winter Solstice is the time for rejoicing in the awesome miracle of Manifestation - at the beginning of time, and in every moment. It is a celebration of the Primeval Fireball - the Original Big Birth, as well as the actual birth of our Sun from the “Grandmother” supernova, and the birth of the first cell, and our own personal manifestation, and it is the time for the lighting of candles, and expressing the light we will birth in ourselves in the coming year. It can be a moment for recalling the Great Turning of these times, as Joanna Macy calls it (Macy and Brown 1998:17) - the hope we might hold for the future.

Winter Solstice is a celebration of the Mother aspect of Creativity, the ripening of Her Darkness into the awesome act of creation of form, the Web of Life, the Field of Being. It is a celebration of Communion, a point of interchange from the “unmanifest” into the “manifest”; it is a time for
feasting, and experiencing this essence of existence. At this point in the Wheel She is the Alpha, and at the Summer Solstice She will be the Omega - both Gateways, points of interchange, when dark and light turn. At this Winter Gateway, the Crone's face passes through the Mother to the Virgin. Samhain, Winter Solstice and Imbolc - the next Sabbat, may be felt as the three faces of Cosmogenesis in the movement towards form.

"... the first living cell .... emerged from the cybernetic storms of the primeval oceans... . Life here was born in a lightning flash. ...(the first cells - prokaryotes) were the most fragile autopoietic structures yet to appear ... and yet they were essential for the next advance.... For four billion years the prokaryotic organisms have been remembering the composition from the beginning. ... Though fragile, though liable to destruction and change in an infinity of ways, they could nevertheless perform an aboriginal magic that would enable them to pervade the world: they could swallow a drop of seawater and spit out a living version of themselves. ... Besides these new powers of autopoiesis, cells exhibited a new depth of differentiation as well. Once every million births, a cell was created that was new” (Swimme and Berry 1992:86-88).

Imbolc/Feast of Brigid - August 2nd

Imbolc, the meridian point of the new quarter, is quintessentially the celebration of the new. It is the first celebration proper, of the light part of the cycle, and as such, it recognizes the vulnerability, the fragility, of that new light, those first tendrils of green, that new self. It is especially dedicated to the Virgin, inviolable in Her commitment to Being; She is traditionally invoked as Brigid, who is the tender of the Flame of Life.

Using Starhawk's words (1989:186), in combination with my own emphasis, I state the seasonal purpose thus:

"This is the feast of the waxing light. What was born at the Solstice begins to manifest, and we who were midwives to the infant year now see the Light grow strong as the days grow visibly longer. This is the time of individuation: we each light our own light, and become uniquely ourselves. It is the time of beginning, when the first tendrils of green emerge tentatively from the seed. We meet to share the light of inspiration, which will grow with the growing year.

This is the Feast of the Virgin - Brigid. She who tends the Flame; Artemis, She who midwifes body and soul. She is deeply committed to the Creative Urge - She is the Creative Urge, to manifestation, deeply committed to Self - She is the Self. She is uncompromised, unwavering, noble, true, a warrior of spirit. She will protect the stirrings of Life - She is the Stirrings of Life” (Imbolc 2001).
For women particularly, the Imbolc process/ritual can be an important integrating expression and movement, used as they frequently are, to fragmentation in relationship - giving themselves away too easily. This seasonal celebration of movement into form, individuation/differentiation, yet with integrity/wholeness, especially invoking She-who-is-unto-Herself, can be a significant dedication. It is a “Bridal” commitment to Being, in the original Brigid-ine sense⁹⁴.

The lighting of candles and a central flame is again a big part of this Sabbat as it was at Winter Solstice, this time recognizing that each self is a Promise of Life. Each individual Promise is identified with Gaia Herself, with "the beauty of the green earth and the white moon among the stars and the mystery of the waters" (Starhawk 1989:90-91 quoting the Charge of the Goddess). It is a time for purification, that is, for recognizing what it is in you that inhibits the Spark, the growth, the Power to Be, and what enhances it; then for making a commitment to the tending of this Self. This Earth holy day celebrates differentiation, diversity, the multiform beauty of Gaia, all of which is indeed brought to us through the many challenges that Gaia Herself has encountered as She has developed - our individual lives are no different. The challenges we have encountered and midwifed ourselves through, may add to our complexity, strength and beauty. The Virgin is that aspect that finds the "yes" to being, to loving the self beyond all failings, and steps into the Power of Life - so She moves into the balance of Eostar/Spring Equinox.

"A cloud of elements hovered, floated ... far from the centre of the Milky Way galaxy. ...In our universe, the originating powers permeating every drop of existence drew forth ten thousand stars from this quiescent cloud. To varying degrees, these stellar beings manifested the universe's urge toward differentiation, autopoiesis, and communion. And at least one of these, the Sun, managed to enter the deeper reaches of the universe creativity, a realm where the complexity, self-manifestation, and reciprocity at the very heart of the universe revealed themselves in a way transcending anything that had occurred for ten billion years - as an extravagant, magical, and living Earth burst into a new epoch of the universe story" (Swimme and Berry 1992:78-79).

⁹⁴ “Bride” is another name for Brigid – Great Celtic Goddess - from pre-Christian times (Crowley 1998:57).
Eostar/Spring Equinox - September 20 -23

As the light continues to grow, it comes into balance with the dark. Eostar, or Spring Equinox, is one of two points in the year when the Sun is equidistant between North and South, creating this light and dark balance. Yet the trend at this Equinox is toward increasing light and longer days, Earth in this region is still tilting further toward the Sun. Traditionally it is the joyful celebration of Persephone’s return from the underworld, this is when the balance tips - the victory of light is assured, the darkness has been navigated successfully. As I say in the seasonal celebrational statement, rewording Starhawk slightly:

"Life bursts forth - this is Her time. Persephone beloved Daughter, returns from Her journey to the Underworld - Demeter stretches out Her arms. The beloved One returns, with new Wisdom from the depths. We step into a new harmony. Where we step, wild flowers appear; where we dance, despair turns to hope, sorrow to joy, want to abundance. May our hearts open with the Spring" (Starhawk 1989:187).

The patriarchal version of Persephone’s story is that She is abducted and raped by Hades. I think it is particularly important that this myth be restored. As it is, it is an account of what did happen historically. However, in the oldest tale, Persephone chose to descend to the underworld - she was not forced (Spretnak 1992:105-118). She had the Wisdom of Goddess, who understood the fertility of the Dark terrain, who understood the Mystery of life and death. In this old account, Persephone journeys seeking Self-knowledge and Compassion. She is given back her integrity - restored to Her former grace, and there is a whole "new" sense of Her full participation in the mystery and adventure of Life.

Persephone’s return is the certain return of manifest Creativity. She brings with Her, knowledge of the Depths (autopoiesis), from whence springs all Creativity. Persephone’s journey is about becoming familiar with the inner realms in herself, falling in Love with these depths. In the Creation story of the Faery tradition, all manifestation springs forth from Goddess falling in Love with Her reflection in the curved mirror of black space (Starhawk 1989:31). The ancients understood that the essence of Creative Power springs from Self-Love.
I story this celebration as a "Stepping into Power", identifying ourselves as Heras, rejoicing in how we have made it through, having faced death (in its various forms). It is a time to welcome back that which was lost, and step forward into the light, to fly. Eostar is the time for enjoying the fruits of the descent, of the journey taken into the darkness. It is a point of balance of the three faces of Goddess - Persephone representing both the Wise One from the depths and the newly Emerged, being embraced by the Mother, rejoicing and affirming the harmony of All. It is the three aspects of Cosmogenesis in "a fecund balance of tensions" (Swimme and Berry 1992:54).

Earth is perfectly poised in this balance for a moment, before She tips into the increasing fertility of Spring. The freedom of empowerment, the exhilaration of the full flight of Being, brings with it increasing passion for Life. Allurement awakens, desire reaches for "More" (promised at Samhain – p.119), for fullness; it is the wild, untamed nature of the Virgin who would give Herself to the ecstatic Dance of Life. This is the energy of Beltane.

"Love begins as allurement - as attraction. Think of the entire cosmos, all one hundred billion galaxies rushing through space: At this cosmic scale the basic dynamism of the universe is the attraction each galaxy has for every other galaxy. ... Gravity is the word used by scientists and the rest of us in the modern era to point to this primary attraction. ... (but) the mystery remains no matter how intelligently we theorize. ... The attracting activity is a stupendous and mysterious fact of existence. Primal. ... this alluring activity permeates the cosmos on all levels of being. ... By pursuing your allurements, you help bind the universe together. The unity of the world rests on the pursuit of passion" (Swimme 1984:43-48).

**Beltane - 31st October**

Earth's holy day of Beltane marks the meridian point of the lightest phase in the cycle - some name it High Spring; even though light has not yet peaked, the hours of light are longer than the hours of dark, and they are continuing to lengthen. Beltane is polar opposite Samhain on the Wheel of the Year, when the dark was still climaxing.

Based on Starhawk's telling of it (1989:188), but mostly in my own composition, I express the seasonal celebrational purpose thus:

"This is the time of Beltane, when the days now grow longer than the nights. In our part of the world, Earth continues to tilt us further toward the Sun - the
Source of Her pleasure, life and ecstasy. This is the time when sweet desire weds wild delight, when the Promise of Spring - which you are - weds the Passion of the Waxing Year. It is the celebration of allurement, ... Holy Lust ... that which holds all things in form and allows the dance of life. The ancients called this Holy Lust, this primordial essence 'Aphrodite' ... they sang of Her:

'For all things are from you.
Who unites the cosmos.
You will the three-fold fates.
You bring forth all things.
Whatever is in the Heavens.
And in the much fruitful earth
And in the deep sea.'
Let us celebrate our erotic nature, that brings forth all things.'

Beltane is an opportunity to recognize and ritualize our desire for Life, which we feel in so many ways; and to recognize that it is a Holy Desire. On an elemental level, there is our desire for Air, Water, the warmth of Fire, and to be of use to Earth. There is an essential longing, sometimes nameless, sometimes constellated, experienced physically, that may be recognized as the Desire of the Universe Herself - desiring in us (Swimme 1990: video 2 & 10). We may remember that we are united in this desire with each other, with all who have gone before us, and with all who come after us - all who dance the Dance of Life. Beltane is a time for dancing and weaving into our lives, our heart's desires; traditionally the dance is done with participants holding ribbons attached to a pole96. There is also the exhilarating tradition of leaping the flames, exclaiming what one wills to leave behind - it may be understood as letting the Flame of Love burn away the perceived blocks to one's desires. Beltane is a time for assenting to the frenzy of the Dance of Life, with only Passion as the guide for where to place one's feet; much like the dancing Goddesses of many spiritual traditions. It is being with Life and its intense fertility, in the moment.

One of the shaping powers of life is a wild energy, that Swimme and Berry associate with the causal factor of genetic mutation; and "Genetic mutation refers to spontaneous differentiations taking place at life's root" (Swimme and Berry 1992:125). Wild energy is also associated with Artemis in Her Virgin aspect (Spretnak 1992:75); She, and many other Goddesses were named as "Lady of the Beasts". Swimme and Berry describe wildness as "a

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96 I have named this a Novapole, for our Southern Hemisphere, whereas in the Northern Hemisphere it is known as a “MAYpole”.

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face ultimacy wears", "a primal act within the life process" (op. cit.:125). They say:

"A wild animal, ... alert and free, moves with a beauty ... far beyond the lockstep process of a rationally derived conclusion. The wild is a great beauty that seethes with intelligence, that is ever surprising and refreshing ... The discovery of mutations is the discovery of an untamed and untameable energy at the organic centre of life. ... For without this wild energy, life's journey would have ended long ago" (op. cit.:127).

At Beltane the Virgin's Passion moves Her more deeply into engagement with the Other - Her face is noticeably changing into the Mother. Her desire for complete Fullness continues to wax. Her movement, Her Lust, is to open completely into the Omega of Summer Solstice.

"In the primeval fireball, which quickly billowed in every direction, we see a metaphor for the infinite striving of the sentient being. An unbridled playing out of this cosmic tendency would lead to ultimate dispersion. But the fireball discovered a basic obstacle to its movements, the gravitational attraction. Only because expansion met the obstacle of gravitation did the galaxies come forth. In a similar way the wings of birds and the musculature of the elephants arose out of the careful embrace of the negative or obstructing aspects of the gravitational attraction. Any life forms that might awake in a world without gravity's hindrances to motion would be incapable of inventing the anatomy of the cheetah" (Swimme and Berry 1992:55).

**Summer Solstice/Litha - December 20-23**

The "moment of grace" that is Summer Solstice, marks the stillpoint in the height of Summer, when Earth's tilt causes the Sun to begin its "decline" - its movement back to the North. This Sabbat is polar opposite Winter Solstice when it is light that is "born". At the peak of Summer, in the bliss of expansion, it is the dark that is "born". It is a celebration of profound mystical significance, that in a culture where the dark is not valued for its creative telios, may be confronting. This is the Sabbat for which Stonehenge was apparently built (Osborne 1999:2).

The purpose for the seasonal gathering is stated thus:

'This is the time of the longest day of the year. In our part of the world, light is in Her fullness, She spreads Her radiance, Her fruits ripen, Her greenery is everywhere, the cicadas sing. Yet as Light reaches Her peak, our closest contact with the Sun, She opens completely, and the seed of darkness is born. This is the time of the rose, blossom and thorn, fragrance and blood. The story of Old tells that on this day Goddess and God, embrace, in a love so complete, that all dissolves, into the single Song of ecstasy that moves the worlds. Our bliss, fully matured, given over, feeds the Universe and turns the wheel. We
join the Beloved and Lover in the Great Give-Away\textsuperscript{96} of Our fullness, our Creativity\textsuperscript{97} (my own adaptation of Starhawk 1989:189).

Summer is a time for celebrating our realized Creativity, whose birth we celebrated at Winter, whose tenderness we dedicated ourselves to at Imbolc, whose certain presence and power we rejoiced in at Eostar, whose fertile passion we danced for at Beltane. Now, at this seasonal point, as we celebrate Light's fullness, we celebrate our own ripening - like that of the wheat, and the fruit. And like the wheat and the fruit, it is the Sun that is in us, that has ripened - the Sun is the Source of our every thought and action. The analogy is complete in that our everyday Creativity, and we, ultimately, are also "Food for the Universe"\textsuperscript{97}. Like the Sun and the wheat and the fruit, we find the Purpose of our Creativity in the releasing of it; just as our breath must be released for its purpose of Life. The symbolism used to express this is the giving of a full rose to the flames. We, and our everyday Creativity, are the Bread of Life; just as many other indigenous traditions recognize everyday acts as evoking "the ongoing creation of the cosmos" (Spretnak 1993:95), so in this tradition, Summer is the time for particularly celebrating that. Our everyday lives, moment to moment, are built on the fabric of the work/creativity of the ancestors and ancient creatures that went before us. So the future is built on ours. We celebrate the blossoming of Creativity then, and the bliss of it, at a time when Earth is pouring forth Her abundance, giving it away. We aspire to follow Her example. In this cosmology, what is given is the self fully realized and celebrated, not a self that is abnegated - just as the fruit gives its full self.

Summer Solstice is a celebration of the Fullness of the Mother - in ourselves, in Earth, in the Cosmos. It is the ripening of Her Manifestation, which fulfills itself in the awesome act of dissolution. It is a celebration of Communion, the Feast of Life - which is for the enjoying, not for the holding onto. I represent this Sabbat on my Wheel of the Year with a horseshoe, because its yonic shape is symbolic of Goddess' "Great Gate" (Walker 1983:414): "Greeks assigned the yonic shape to the last letter of their sacred alphabet, Omega, literally, 'Great Om', the Word of Creation, beginning the next cycle of

\textsuperscript{96} Starhawk names Summer Solstice as "the Give-Away time of the Sun" (1989:219).

\textsuperscript{97} This is an expression that I first heard used by Brian Swimme (1990:video 5)
becoming” (ibid). Summer Solstice is such a Gateway. At this interchange, the Virgin's face has passed through the Mother into the Crone. Beltane, Summer Solstice and Lammas - the next Sabbat, may be felt as the three faces of Cosmogenesis in the movement towards entropy.

"Eventually, in a million years or in several billion years, a star's resources against the collapse are all used up. If the mass of a star at this point is large enough, its gravitational pressures will destroy the star. The remaining materials will rush toward each other. Nothing in the universe can now stop them. ... This stellar being that burned brightly for billions of years, that may have showered sentient creatures with radiant energy that they transformed into their living bodies and into cathedrals that rose in wheat fields, has gone, only a black cinder left" (Swimme and Berry 1992:48).

Lammas/Lughnasad - February 2nd

Lammas is the meridian point of the first dark quarter of the year, after the light phase is complete, and as such, it is a special celebration of the Crone. Within the Celtic tradition, it is the wake of Lugh, the Sun King, and it is the Crone that reaps him. But within earlier Goddess traditions, all the transformations were Hers (Gray 1999:18); and

"the community reflected on the reality that the Mother aspect of the Goddess, having come to fruition, from Lammas on would enter the Earth and slowly become transformed into the Old Woman-Hecate-Cailleach aspect ...” (Durdin-Robertson 1990:143 quoting McLean Fire Festivals 20-22) ⁹⁶. I dedicate Lammas to the face of the Old One, just as Imbolc, its polar opposite on the Wheel, is dedicated to the Virgin face. The Old One, the Dark and Shining One, has been much maligned, so to celebrate Her can be more of a challenge in our present cultural context. Lammas may be an opportunity to re-aquaint ourselves with the Crone in her purity, to fall in love with Her again.

I state the purpose of the seasonal gathering thus:

"This is the feast of the waxing dark. The seed of darkness that was born at the Summer Solstice now grows ... the days grow visibly shorter. Earth's tilt is taking us back away from the Sun. This is the time of dissolution, each unique self lets go, to the darkness. It is the time of ending, when the grain is harvested. We meet to remember the Great Sentience, the All-Nourishing Abyss, She from whom we arise, in whom we are immersed, and to whom we return.

⁹⁶ Another indication of the earlier tradition beneath “Lughnasad” is the other name for it in Ireland of “Tailtean Games”. Tailte was said to be Lugh's foster-mother, and it was her death that was being commemorated (Mike Nichols 2000:1).
This is the time of the Crone, the Wise Dark One, who accepts and receives our harvest, who grinds the grain, who dismantles what has gone before. She is Hecate, Lilith, Medusa, Kali, Erishkigal - Divine Compassionate One. We meet to accept Her transformative embrace, trusting Her knowing, which is beyond all knowledge” (Lammas 2000).

Lammas is the seasonal moment for recognizing that we dissolve into the "night" of the Larger Organism that we are part of - Gaia. It is She who is immortal, from whom we arise, and into whom we dissolve. This celebration is a development of what was born in the transition of Summer Solstice; the Dark Sentient Source of Creativity is honoured. The autopoietic space in us recognizes Her, is comforted by Her, desires Her self-transcendence and self-dissolution; Lammas is an opportunity to be with our organism’s love of Larger Self - this Native Place. We have been taught to fear Her, but at this Sabbat, we may remember that She is the Compassionate One, deeply committed to Transformation, which is actually innate to us.

Whereas at Imbolc, we shone forth as individual, multiforms of Her; at Lammas, we small individual selves remember that we are She and dissolve back into Her. We are the Promise of Life as we affirmed at Imbolc, but we are the Promise of *Her* - it is not ours to hold. We become the Harvest at Lammas; our individual harvest is Her Harvest. We are the process itself - we are Gaia's Process. *We* do not breathe (though of course we do), we borrow the breath, for a while. It is like a relay: we pick the breath up, create what we do with our time with it, and pass it on. The harvest we reap in our individual lives is important, and it is for us only short term, it belongs to the Cosmos in the long term. Lammas is a time for “making sacred” / sacrifice; we may “make sacred” ourselves. As Imbolc was a time for dedication, so is Lammas. This is the Wisdom of the phase of the Old One. She is the aspect that finds the "yes" to letting go, to loving the Larger Self, beyond all knowledge, and steps into the Power of the Abyss, encouraged and nourished by the harvest - so She moves into the balance of Mabon/Autumn Equinox.

"If the atoms in the prestellar cloud had been given language and the power to reflect upon inner experience, so that they could ponder the significance of the density waves sweeping through them and the rush of atoms ramming up against them, they would even then not have been able to speak in clear terms about the star they were destined to become.
... The beauty of the star gripped the atoms in some primordial manner; the beauty of the new flowering of Earth's realities likewise grips us and is in many ways the central significance of all our experiences of obstacle, disappointment, dismay, and despair. ... We cannot know with certainty ... what is required of us now. We will find our way only with a deep and prolonged process of groping - considering with care a great variety of interpretations, weighing evidence from a spectrum of perspectives, attending with great patience to the inchoate, barely discernable glimmers that visit us in our more contemplative moments" (Swimme and Berry 1992:58).

Mabon/Autumn Equinox - March 20-23

Mabon is a time of thanksgiving for the harvest - for its empowerment and nourishment, and it is also a time of leavetaking and sorrow, as Life declines (Starhawk 1989:192). As the dark continues to grow, it comes into balance with the light; Mabon/Autumn Equinox is that point of balance. Sun is equidistant between North and South, as it was at Spring Equinox, but in this phase of the cycle, the trend is toward increasing dark. For millennia, in Greece, this Sabbat has been the holy celebration of Persephone's descent to the Underworld, and as mentioned earlier, in the earliest Goddess tradition, Her descent is voluntary - She simply understands the necessity of the Journey.

As I say in the statement of purpose for the seasonal ritual,

"Feel the balance in this moment - Earth as She is poised in relationship with the Sun. Feel for your own balance of light and dark within. Breathe into it. Breathe in the light, swell with it, let your breath go into the dark, stay with it. Shift on your feet, from left to right, feel your centre.
In our part of Earth, the balance is about to tip into the dark. Feel the shift within you, see in your mind's eye the descent ahead, the darkness growing, remember the coolness of it. This is the time when we give thanks for our harvests. Yet we remember too the losses. Persephone is given the wheat - the Mystery, knowledge of life and death - for this she gives thanks. But she sets forth into the darkness - both Mother and Daughter grieve that it is so" (Mabon 2000).

Like its Spring counterpart, Autumn Equinox is also a "stepping into power", but it is not necessarily perceived as such; it is usually felt as loss. Autumn Equinox is a time for grieving our many losses, as individuals, as a culture, as Earth-Gaia. At this time we may join Demeter - and any other Mother Goddess from around the globe - in Her weeping for all that has been lost. The Mother weeps and rages, the Daughter leaves courageously, the Old One beckons with Her Wisdom and Promise of Transformation; yet
all three know Each Other deeply, and share the unfathomable Grief. But Persephone as Seed represents the thread of Life that never fades away. The revelation of the Seed, central to this seasonal celebration, is that:

"Everything lost is found again,
In a new form, In a new way.
She changes everything She touches, and everything She touches changes" (Starhawk 1989:103).

And so it will be. In this way Persephone as Seed, tends the sorrows, "wholes" the heart.

All at once, the three faces of Cosmogenesis are present. As Seed, She is both Queen of the Underworld - Old Wise One, and the irrepressible Urge to Be; and She is the Mother, Source of Life. This is a blessed Moment of Harmony/Balance that streams through the grief and the ecstasy of Life.

This point of balance tips further into the dark, as Earth's tilt and Sun continue their relational dynamic. The nights keep growing, the seed is in the Earth, the grub is in the chrysalis, the Abyss is accepted - the metamorphosis of the dark Sentience is awaited, the fertile Emptiness of the Crone is the moment of Samhain.

"... after billions of years of striving ... Tiamat found herself pressed to the wall, exhausted by the effort, helpless to do anything more to balance the titanic powers in which she had found her way. When her core had been transformed into iron, she sighed a last time as collapse became inevitable. In a cosmological twinkling, her gravitational potential energy was transformed into a searing explosion, ... But when the brilliance was over, when Tiamat's journey was finished, the deeper meaning of her existence was just beginning to show through" (Swimme and Berry 1992:60-61).

With Samhain, the annual cycle - the Wheel of the Year - is complete. It is the time of Death, and the beginning of the New Year.

In summary:
There are two celebrations of the Old One/Crone/Autopoiesis – they are the meridian points of the waxing dark phase. At Lammas, the first in the dark phase, we identify with the Dark and Ancient Wise One – dissolve into Her; at Samhain, we participate in Her process of the Transformation of Death.
There are two celebrations of the Virgin/Differentiation – they are the meridian points of the waxing light phase. At Imbolc, the first in the light phase, we identify with She, Shining and New – as we take her form; at Beltane, we participate in Her process of the Dance of Life.

There are two celebrations of the Mother/Communion - the Solstices. If one images the light part of the cycle as a celebration of the Productions of Time, and the dark part of the cycle as a celebration of Eternity, the Solstices then are meeting points, and are celebrations of the communion/relational field of Eternity with the Productions of Time – a relationship which does happen in this Place, in this Web. This Place, this Web, is a Communion - it is the Mother; the Solstices mark Her Birthings – the “Om” and the “Omega”.

There are two celebrations wherein the balance of all three Faces are particularly present - the Equinoxes, that are also special celebrations of Demeter and Persephone – the Mystery and Awesomeness of the continuity of life, its Creative Tension/Balance. I like to think of the Equinoxes, and of the ancient icons of Demeter and Persephone, as celebrations of the delicate “curvature of space-time”, which enables it all.

The Mother aspect then is particularly present at four of the Sabbats, which are also regarded traditionally as the Solar festivals. I recognize them as points of interchange. At the Autumn Equinox, Mother is present as Giver - She is letting Persephone go. At Spring Equinox, She is present as Receiver - welcoming the Daughter back. At Winter Solstice the Mother gives birth, creates form. At Summer Solstice, She opens again/further, dissolves form.

The Mother is Agent/Actor at the Solstices. She is Participant/Witness at the Equinoxes, where it is then really Persephone who is Agent/Actor.

Another possible way to visual it, or to tell the story, is this:
The Mother - Demeter - is always there, at the Centre if you like. Persephone cycles around. She is the Daughter who returns in the Spring as flower, who will become fruit/grain of the Summer, who at Lammas assents to the dissolution – the consumption. At Autumn Equinox She returns to the
underworld as seed – Her harvest is rejoiced in, Her loss is grieved, as She becomes Queen of the Underworld - the Dark One, Crone. In the light part of the cycle She is Virgin. Persephone is that part of Demeter that can be all three aspects - can move through the complete cycle. The Mother and Daughter are really One, and embody the immortal process of creation and destruction. Demeter hands Persephone the wheat, the Mystery, and the thread of life is unbroken - it goes on forever. It is immortal, it is eternal. Even though it is true that all will be lost, and all is lost - Being always arises again. This is what is revealed in the ubiquitous three faces. The Seed of Life - She never fades away, She is always present; even though it may not be apparent. As Swimme and Berry note, galactic clouds may drift for eons before undergoing transformation (1992:47), but the fertility/potency seethes there.

As one participates in this year long process of ritual and celebration the complexity of the three aspects does become more apparent. Indeed all three aspects/faces/energies do occur simultaneously - sometimes obviously so, as mentioned, sometimes perceived only at deeper levels; and at deeper levels, one can perceive how the three are features of each other. Usually it is fairly clear that the Virgin and Crone aspects are inseparable, and this is true also of the cosmogenetic characteristics of differentiation and autopoiiesis. For example, differentiation/diversity/uniqueness has been enhanced by the advent of death in the biological story (Sahtouris 1989:108); and the autopoietic dynamic is ambivalently self and not-self, it is Self who is larger Self at the same time. This inseparability is congruent also with the ancient perception that the day begins with the evening. The severance comes first - is it birth or is it death? It is not always clear where something ends and where it begins.

There is a symmetry or reciprocity between the polar opposites on the Wheel, some of which I have already noted. One begins to feel these, as one’s familiarity with the Metaphor and the celebrations grows.

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99 See Barbara Walker 1983:546: “Om was Alpha, the letter of creation, repeated again as the final letter of destruction, Omegs, which means literally ‘great Om’.”
RITUAL AS A METHOD OF CELEBRATING AND EMBODYING THE CREATIVE METAPHOR

Ritual is sacred space, “sacred” being defined here as an awareness of deep relationship and identity with the very cosmic dynamics that create and sustain the Universe. In ritual this deep relationship is able to be expressed and nurtured. It is the best place for the playing out of a cosmology – an agreed upon context for our being. It is a space in which we may contemplate this context and also actualize it (Hallowell 1995:42). Ritual may be both an expression of inner truths - perceived relationship to self, Earth and Cosmos, as well as being a mode of teaching and drawing forth deeper participation. We can “play” like we know it, so that we may actually come to know it100; “it” being the stories we believe to be the deepest truths of our existence. Ritual is a form of social action, in that it is a both expresses and creates community, and is therefore empowering. In ritual space, the usual social boundaries are let down, and deeper relationship is found. Starhawk says, that this changes the way we relate to everything, and what we will dare to do (1990). She says that “ritual and myth are like seed crystals of new patterns that can eventually reshape culture around them” (ibid:98). Ritual at its best, is an opportunity to express those deep truths we feel/know in our personal meditations, and to feel/know them in communion with others. Thus it can become a space for activating personal and communal change. Wilber describes a “transpersonal practice” that might “concretely disclose a deeper self (I or Buddha) in a deeper community (We or Sangha) expressing a deeper truth (It or Dharma)” (1996:306-307). I extend this definition to ritual as being such a technology - to disclose a deeper beautiful self (the “T”/Virgin/Buddha), in a deeper relational community (the "We"/Mother/Sangha), expressing a deeper transformative truth (the "It"/Old One/Dharma”). This is the “unitive body”, the “microcosmos” that Spretnak refers to (1993:145).

In presiding as Mistress of Ceremonies/Priestess in the rituals, I am conscious of the importance of my voice, my invocation of the reality of which I speak, when I speak. As Abram notes, amongst indigenous Wisdom traditions, spoken words are “real presences, entities that may be cherished
..." (1997:70). An "invocation" may also be languaged as a "blessing"; it is the actual calling forth of Presence - the sacred depths. I am conscious that inasmuch as I am aware of the depth of what I speak, I may transmit the power of it;

"... the meaning is inseparable from the sound, the shape, and the rhythm of the words ... it remains rooted in the sensual dimension of experience, born of the body's native capacity to resonate with other bodies and with the landscape as a whole" (ibid:74-75).

All others present participate in the calling forth of this Presence, in themselves and in others, and may actually take roles in this regard in some of the processes. It is my understanding that the Poetry has its own integrity, as do I, and as do the recipients; the Poetry is not a monolithic inert slab of information, It speaks to our depths in a relational particularity - each person "selecting" Its valency for them. As Spretnak points out, the ritual creation of sacred space, "actualizes the narrator and listener as engaged witnesses, weavers of a web of being ... avowing existential bonds of community in an eternal present" (1993:141). The role of Priestess is a deeply relational role; it is not just putting out questions, statements. She is evoking, drawing forth, and is already in response to the particular person's being - how they "select"/elicit a particular approach from her. I learned this in the process of doing it - in the midst of this research process. The Priestess listens deeply to the response, so the person is received. Sometimes, a particular invocation/blessing is passed around the entire group, allowing individuals the opportunity to bless another, and to speak it. This kind of participation may also be structured into the creation of the sacred space - the remembering of the elements of Air, Fire, Water and Earth - whenever possible, enabling individuals to practice speaking "to the world", instead of about it (Abram 1997:71). In fact, the language used in the particular rituals for this research, in the remembering of the elements, frequently allows identification with the elements, which varies poetically according to the seasonal theme.

HOW SPECIFIC RITUAL PROCESSES DEVELOPED THE THEME OF THE SEASONAL MOMENT/SABBAT

100 Dr. Susan Murphy gave me this particular perception.
The format/structure that I have used for the rituals is based on Starhawk's format for the traditional seasonal rituals that she outlines in *The Spiral Dance* (1989:181-196). Briefly, the ritual processes as I have done them, flow like this:

"Warming the Energy". This is partly done in the preparation of the space before the event, and also in the greetings and "gaggle" that goes on as the gathering of participants happens. It is also done in the group preparation for the ritual ... going over the "order of service", learning a dance or song, and then I always allowed ten minutes of individual reflection /meditation before we gather for the actual ritual.

**Gathering** - a formal call to gather to the circle – described below.

**Centering – Breath Meditation** – described below.

**Statement of Purpose** – stating the reason for the gathering.

**Creating Sacred Space** – “Casting the Circle” – described below.

"Invocation" – recalling “Divine/Sacred Essence”- described below.

**Seasonal Rite – Body of the Ritual** – the particular processes that give expression to the seasonal moment. These, as I have done them for this research, are in the ritual scripts in Chapter 6.

**Sharing of Food – Communion** – described below.

**Storytelling** – a listening circle, wherein participants may speak to the group without having a discussion. Each seasonal ritual script in Chapter 6 has a suggested agenda for this that relates to the season, but it is really an open space.

**Opening of the Circle** - a retracing of the "Sacred Space" invocations, and a summarized recapitulation of the seasonal ritual process that we had just participated in, with a peace blessing. See the ritual scripts in Chapter 6. The final words that I use are my version of the traditional ones – sometimes sung, sometimes spoken:

"The circle is open but unbroken. May the peace of the Goddess go in our hearts. It has been a merry meeting. It is a merry parting. May we merry meet again. Blessed Be."

It is possible and desirable to shape each aspect of the ritual format, to suit the theme of the Sabbat, so that the full flavour of the Seasonal Moment may
be felt as much as possible. There are any number of ways to do that. I will describe how I have done it, for most of this research process.

CALL TO GATHER:
This is the formal gathering moment of the ritual. Just prior to this, participants have been in individual meditation, and/or taking care of physical needs, in preparation for the “sacred space”.

Imbolc – a single bell rung three times, with each ring being accentuated with a djorge. It is the beginning of the light part of the cycle, the flicker of Life, of Being, in its solitary tenuous Beauty allowed to resonate for a period of time.

Eostar – drums. It is a seasonal moment of Power, heralding dramatic Ascent and Return from the Underworld.

Beltane – conch shell made into a horn, meant to be representative of Aphrodite who is especially invoked at this Seasonal Moment celebrating Desire/Allurement.

Summer Solstice – drums, with participants coming into the circle moving to the rhythm, and continuing to circle several times. This Season is about fullness of expression – being an “open channel for the moving energies of Life”.

Lammas- a bell, being rung several times. It is the counter reflection of the bell used at Imbolc, this time it is used to recall funeral rites. It is the beginning of the dark part of the cycle, the flicker of Death, of Return to Source. When the gathering is assembled, the ringing stops and the celebrant continues with “For whom does the bell toll?”. She asks this three times, then finishes with “It tolls for thee.”

Mabon – drums. It is another seasonal moment of stepping into Power, reflecting that of Eostar, but at this time heralding dramatic Descent.
Samhain – vigorous drumming. It is a dramatic Season, when all is possible.

Winter Solstice – the celebrant team comes in, moving in a circle around the centre, chanting. All the participants join in. There are movements that may go with the chant. All participants keep circling, moving and chanting until it seems right to stop. This Seasonal Moment is traditionally a time for singing together, in the depths of the Dark and the cold, affirming Being and keeping each other warm.

CENTERING - THE BREATH MEDITATIONS:
A breath meditation is the usual method of “Centering/Grounding” at the beginning of the rituals. It is a process of establishing connection with ourselves, becoming present, moving into a reflective space. The way I have languaged them usually follows the flow of Gaia’s breath over the year – connecting the individual breath cycle to the Larger Creative cycle. Generally I have focussed on a part of the breath pattern that matches the particular Sabbat, but not always; for example, the breath meditation for Winter Solstice is an exception. At this Sabbat I have chosen to focus on the felt experience of gravity - as the same cosmic dynamic with which Sun holds Earth in orbit. This focus enables an identification of this everyday felt experience, usually languaged as “weight”, with the Larger Cosmos. Our everyday experience of Gravity is central to Earth-Sun relationship, and to the Manifestation that Winter Solstice celebrates.

Imbolc – the emphasis is on feeling the Space from which the Urge to breath arises, feeling that Urge, taking that breath, and using it to speak “the Mother’s word of Creation – ‘Om’”\textsuperscript{101}. I have also added into the Imbolc format, after the statement of purpose, a visualization of being “a ripple stirring upon the original Sea of Generosity.”\textsuperscript{102}

Beltane – the emphasis is on how in each breath we share in the life of all who have danced and will dance, the Dance of Life – how each breath is

\textsuperscript{101} Barbara Walker describes “Om” as one of Goddess’ “Words of Power” – the “primordial Logos” (1983:546).
\textsuperscript{102} This expression, “Sea of Generosity”, is from Iraqi Divine Flashes (Chittick and Wilson trans. 1982: 76), but also Brian Swimme describes the “ultimate source of all that is, (as)... Ultimate Generosity” (1984:146).
actually filled with the Presence of all creatures who have known/will know breath.

Summer Solstice – the emphasis is the experience of the peaking breath, the filling of the bodymind to capacity, the fullness, and the felt need to release. I have also added into the format of Summer Solstice, after the statement of purpose, a “banishing” process. This would be traditionally understood as “cleansing the space”. I have languaged it as making conscious those inner voices that impede one’s full expression.

Lammas – the emphasis is on the passing of one’s individual breath, the breath “that is yours, and not yours”, how we pick the breath up at birth, let it go at death. We breathe a collective breath, that belongs to All.

Samhain – the emphasis is on noticing the Space between the breaths “into which all who have gone before us have travelled, from which to enter again the dance of Life”. This Space is later identified with the “Womb of the Dark Shining One, fertile with possibility” and with the “Centre”.

At the Equinoxes: the focus is on the experience of balance – breathing in as a swelling with Light, letting the breath go as a letting go into Dark. The focus is on feeling the balance of Light and Dark, and then a glimpse of the shift about to happen – into deeper Dark at Autumn, or into stronger Light at Spring.

CREATING THE SACRED SPACE - REMEMBERING THE ELEMENTS AND DIRECTIONS - “CASTING THE CIRCLE”:
Traditionally this is known as “the calling of the directions” and their associated elemental powers, and “casting the circle”. The essence of this, as I see it, is the remembering of our origins, remembering what we are, and from whence we come, thus creating awareness of a deeper space and time in which we all participate – thus the term “creating sacred space”. It deconstructs our usual personas and social complexities, taking participants into a deeper more basic reality of being – which we share in common, and in which it is safe to speak deep truths and be heard and known. This can be
done with lots of poetry and drama, or with a simple group chant. At the seasonal events for this research, there was always a direct involvement and identification of each participant with each element, with a variation of approach and theme for each Sabbat. At some Sabbats – Lammas and Summer Solstice, as they are written at present - there is room in the script for individuals to add in their own words to the addressing of the elements. Always I conclude with a statement like: “This is the Centre”, drawing attention to the fact that the Centre of the Universe is here. Of course this is true everywhere, but the ritual is a space wherein that is made conscious, and that for me, is what “casting the circle” means – awareness of the being at Centre, in that Awesome Creative Space.

At Imbolc – since this is a celebration of physical manifestation, of differentiated being, the particular self, the language in the calling of the elements focuses on the individual internal physical experience of each element – each one’s sensed knowing of each element. At Imbolc then, we do not even handle the external actual elements around the altar, but simply attend to our internal sensation of each.

At the Spring Equinox, since the celebration focuses on “Stepping into Power”, the Heratic Return from the Depths and into the Power of Being, the language focuses on the elements as Powers that we do know. It continues and deepens the Imbolc focus on feeling the elements, but now with an ability to act with them, an empowerment.

Beltane – since this is a celebration of Desire/Allurement, the language focuses on our experience of desire for each of the elements – our thirst, desire for warmth, and breath and desire for fulfilment of purpose. There is an identification of that desire with all Desire, the Desire of all who have come before us, and the Desire of all who will come after us, and with the Desire of the Universe. We recall our innate desire to outpour our being, share life, to make our mark with the richness of Earth in us.

105 We live in an omnicentric Universe (Swimme 1990:videos 1 and 9).
At the Solstices; since they are moments of Fullness, celebrations of the Mother – the Related One, and particular points of Communion and interchange between “manifest” and “unmanifest”, I chose them as moments to express the identification of each element as a characteristic of human psychological being, as Swimme does (1984). Swimme names these psychological characteristics as cosmic dynamics. At these Solstice moments, the celebrations call upon the blessing and indwelling of each element’s characteristic, that we may come to know them more deeply and enhance our relatedness, to Gaia and to each other.

At Lammas – since the celebration is primarily about Dissolution, the Return to the “soup”, the focus in the calling of the elements is on her “Recipe”, the elements as being in her Cauldron “from whence we come” – Her Cauldron of Creativity.

At Samhain – since the celebration is about the Transformation of Death, the focus is on how each element within us has been recycled since the beginning, thus how we each have been recycled since the beginning - how ancient each element is, and thus how ancient we are, and how there is nothing we have not been.

At Autumn Equinox, there is again a recognition of the elements as Powers (as there is at Spring Equinox), but simply an affirmation that “She is alive in me, and I in Her.” This language echoes part of the Spring ritual, but is also used because the main story of the Autumn celebration is the Daughter becoming Mother, the Seed in the Fruit becoming Fruit in the Seed, how they are in each other, a continuous thread through time. This is an understanding of “fertility” as a deep cosmic dynamic beyond the narrow one it has been given in patriarchal narrative. The rhythm of the calling of the elements is quicker than usual, to create a cacophony effect and get a sense of the continuity. Also, at Autumn Equinox, in the conclusion to the calling of the elements, the participants’ presence to the four directions is emphasized. This is because, incorporated into this seasonal ritual, the way I do it, are some elements of the Mysteries of Eleusis, and people came to this annual event from every corner of the Earth to be initiated. These Mysteries were
thus thought to hold the entire human race together (Durin-Robertson 1990:158).

Overall, throughout the Light part of the cycle, there is a continuation of focus on the sensual experience of the elements, a focus on the individual sensate knowing of the elements, and in this way knowing participation in All. Whereas in the Dark part of the cycle, the elements are acknowledged primarily in their collective aspect, how we are each a drop of, and inseparable from that collective, how we are elementally immersed in something much Larger – not individual at all, how we elementally belong to that “Soup”.

INVOCATIONS:
After “creating the sacred space” or setting up a safe space in which deeper truths may be spoken, it is traditional to “invoke the divine”. I re-language that to mean, a recalling that we are expressions of something Awesome, that in fact the truth of each person is that “here is the Source of everything, here is the Ultimate Mystery of the Universe” (Swimme 1990: video 1). This can be done in any number of ways ... poetry, anointing, a simple gesture. Quite often I will speak it to each person, though just as often participants will pass it to each other. Generally people can memorize any words that are used adequately, with some improvisation and prompting. Ideally, if whatever is said is said with conviction, a deep knowing - it is an invocation of Presence. As I see it, that is what "transmission" is: that is, if a person can tell another with a deep knowing that “Here is the Source of everything, here is the Ultimate mystery of the Universe”, the receiver will most likely get it on some level. That is what blessing is supposed to be, what invocation is. It is a deep knowing that the Power of the Universe is present. That is what it means to be "between the worlds". Usually there is a response from each participant that is central to the whole Invocation process, and usually participants are encouraged to add their own words to any formal ones given.

At Imbolc – where the flame/light is tender and new, and the One who is the “Urge to Be” is celebrated, participants each gaze into a candle flame that is
passed, and affirm that they are: "She, shining and new." Sometimes
Artemisia herbs are then also passed and tasted, recalling the need for the
midwifing of one’s coming into Being, that is the passion of the Goddess
Artemis.

At Beltane – where we celebrate apparently irrepressible Being, the frenzy
and allurement of Being – Her continued growing Light, we name our
favourite Goddesses/Gods, guides, Larger Helpers – the Ones who allure us
particularly. It is an affirmation of our Allurement and Belonging to the
Unmanifest; as in this intensifying Light Space, we are actually moving
towards entropy. (With practice of this Wheel of seasonal ritual one begins to
get a SENSE of growing light associated with dissolution – this is what gets
“written” into the mind – though it may be unconscious scribing for some
participants.)

At the Summer Solstice, which celebrates the full ripening of Creativity in all,
the concentrated fullness of Being, participants greet each other with a bow
of reverence and "Thou art the Fullness of the Mother, Divine One - Queen
of Summer (or Summer King)". The celebration of this seasonal moment
affirms that in this Earth-based spiritual tradition "Oneness is attained not
through losing the self, but through realizing it fully" (Starhawk 1989:27).

At Lammas – where we remember whose Harvest we are, the Dark and
Ancient Sentience within, where the One who "creates Space to Be" is
celebrated, participants receive grains of barley in their hands, and ash on
their foreheads, and affirm that they are: "She, Dark and Ancient Wise One."
When each participant has recalled Her, there is space for contemplating Her
within.

At Samhain - where we celebrate the Space itself – the Fertility of Death – we
affirm the Creator capacity within, and we name ourselves "as we will". It is
an affirmation of a possibility of Being, as ever we wish, as in this growing
Dark Space we are actually moving towards form. (With this practice of
seasonal ritual one begins to get a SENSE of growing dark associated with
becoming – this is what gets “written” into the mind – though some participants may not be conscious of this.)

At the Equinoxes, we are celebrating the Heraic Descent (Autumn/Mabon – henceforth Darkness increases) and Heraic Return (Spring/Eostar – henceforth Light increases). At Autumn, as each participant is handed the wheat by Demeter, each affirms their willingness to participate in the process to Wisdom, to journey into the fertile darkness. At Spring, each participant brings a stone – precious gem of Wisdom from the Darkness, and announces themselves and their willingness to participate in the process/Power with Wisdom gained, to emerge into the fertile light, to add to its proliferation. The Equinoxes are storied with the Demeter-Persphone metaphor, the Eleusinian Mysteries.

At Winter Solstice, which is a birthing, and a particular remembering of Origins, participants anoint each other with oil, and pronounce with authority the Divinity in each other, “Thou art Goddess, thou art That”. As I explain to participants in the ritual preparation, “we are all spark of Goddess, we are all She.”

COMMUNION – THE SHARING OF FOOD:
This is a formal recognition of how we are sustained, what gives us life, and of the fundamental communion experience of the Universe. It is a time within the ritual for thanksgiving, some relaxation, enjoyment, and storytelling space. The food that is shared varies, and it is frequently given to each participant formally, with a blessing – sometimes from the celebrant, sometimes from each other. The food and the process usually connect with the theme of the Season.

At Imbolc, the first celebration of the Light part of the cycle, the bread/tea cake and the wine/juice are white and we also share white gourmet chocolates. For the blessing to each as they are given the food, I use a re-
worded version of the angel’s Annunciation to Mary from the Christian tradition – as a way of reclaiming that metaphor of Annunciation for all.\(^{104}\)

At Eostar, where confirmed emergence from the depths is being celebrated, with reference being made to Demeter and Persephone, the words of Pindar, the Greek philosopher and poet, are used in part, for the blessing: “Blessed are you - you have seen these things...”\(^{105}\). Added to this is a re-worded version of an admonition commonly used in the Christian communion rite, which some participants would be aware of: “Do this in remembrance of She who gives Life” - it is a conscious reclaiming. Each participant is also offered a “Golden Egg” (a gourmet chocolate wrapped in golden foil), partly because of participants’ familiarity with the tradition of eggs at Easter – which is Autumn in Australia - and I wish to call to their experience, chocolate eggs in the right Season. They are told of the Goddess roots of this tradition in the teaching before the ritual, and they are blessed as they take the egg, with: “Remember the Ancient One who lays the Golden Egg – take it, it is yours.”

At Beltane, it is the sweetness of Life that is emphasized, with honey cake and sweet white wine being offered, with the admonitions to “consume your Desire” and to “enjoy it”. Sweet sugary doughnuts are also offered. Since the celebration begins with a special invocation of Aphrodite, and the rose is Her flower, rose petals are used on the cake which is coloured pink. The light use of roses in this way also previews the central role of roses in the seasonal rite at the next Sabbat, Summer Solstice.

At Summer Solstice, which is quintessentially a celebration of Communion – the peaking of Creativity, the Mother in Her fullness of Light/Manifestation, the ripening of the Promise of the Light part of the cycle – each participant affirms, “I am the grain, I am the Bread of Life”, as they take the bread in their own hands and break off a piece. Each one similarly affirms, “I am the grape, I am the Wine”, as they take the decanter and glass from the celebrant and pour wine for themselves. The response to this, from other participants,

\(^{104}\) That is, as a recognition of the Holy One – as the Young One - in Self. See also “Recognizing Her” p.244.
affirms that it is the Sun in each of us that has ripened: “The Sun is in you, see how you shine.”

At Lammas, the first celebration of the Dark, dark bread and red wine/ juice are offered to participants, with blessings for being nourished by Her Harvest, and letting “Her Rich Creative Darkness soak through you.” The latter blessing is, in my mind, a reference to the Womb of the Mother wherein Her Blood is for gestating, is for Life. It also may recall the dissolution theme of this Season.

At Mabon, which is the main thanksgiving harvest festival, the food that is shared is all brought by the participants, as a representation of their abundance gained. The presentation of the food is part of the Seasonal rite, as they state the “harvests” for which they give thanks.

At Samhain, which celebrates death as transformation, portions of apple and apple juice, are consumed. I have chosen to use apples as the communion food for this Sabbat for a few reasons. In the tradition as Starhawk does it, an apple is frequently ritually cut at this Season’s celebration (1989:195-196) because of its traditional representation of never-ending renewal (immortality). The choice of using the apple as a holy food is also designed to re-story and re-experience it, given that most participants will have been imbued with the Judeo-Christian story, wherein the apple is a fruit of temptation and representation of Knowledge that is ruinous. At the Samhain celebration then, as each is offered the apple and juice, the participants are blessed with, “Stand tall, daughters and sons of the Mother – enjoy the fruit and drink of never-ending renewal.” It is a reclaiming of Goddess metaphor.

At Winter Solstice, which celebrates the Event of Manifestation, the Birthing of All from the full Darkness of the Mother, each participant is offered dark fruit cake and red wine, and poetically identified as Her Cake and Wine – made by and for Her, integral with the Cosmic processes. We are Her Communion, we are the Place/Space where it happens: in that sense we are

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106 Jean Houston uses these words, as participants in her exercise “The Realm of the Ancestors” (1993:197), emerge from the “Underworld”.

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Her - the Mother. Communion at this Sabbat, affirms that we, as Cosmic/Earth participants, are “wine poured out for the Mystery” – that is our Origin and our purpose. This resonates with the Communion words of Summer Solstice where participants affirm that they are Food – Bread and Wine – that has ripened.

HOW GAIA’S STORY - THE UNIVERSE STORY – MAY BE CELEBRATED IN THE SEASONAL MOMENTS.

Woven throughout the celebrations, is the conscious celebration of Cosmogenesis – the Creative Unfolding of Gaia-Universe&Earth. The celebrations begin with Earth-Sun relationship – that is the reason for their existence, since the earliest of human times. The resulting Creativity of the play of Light and Dark in this Earth-Sun relationship has translated into food, and into human psyches. The creative telling of our personal stories, and how we wish them to unfold, may be folded into the seasonal moment because that is where we each interface intimately with Gaia. And also there is always the connection to the Larger Story – Gaia’s long Cosmic Story, as our own story, that we are participants in - sometimes quite obviously so.

On the surface of it, the dark Crone phase particularly celebrates Autopoeisis – sentience, subjectivity, interiority, the creative centre; the light Virgin phase particularly celebrates Differentiation – diversity, complexity, multiform nature, articulation. Communion – the Mother phase - is celebrated throughout, though particularly at the Solstices and Equinoxes.

There may be many ways of folding in aspects of Gaia’s story, of languaging in moments that one wants to celebrate, but I have been conscious of some – as follows - in the teaching and the rituals themselves.

At Winter Solstice, it is the Primaeval Fireball, the Great Origin, that is echoed in the Sun’s “return”. It is the explosion of Tiamat, the Grandmother

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Supernova\textsuperscript{107} of our Solar System that is echoed. It is any birth, it is the births in our psyches, imaginations, minds.

At Imbolc, it is the continued birthing – the rushing away of the Fireball, the continued rippling forth of Creation. It is understanding the difficulties, the resistances that even Gaia-Universe has encountered, and how this has served the Unfolding of the Story as we know it. Imbolc celebrates Gaia’s rush to diversity, differentiation; we commit ourselves to this, beginning with ourselves.

At Eostar, when the Light reaches a new level of power, and “Persephone” returns with Wisdom gained, Her emergence may be understood as a collective experience of emergence into a new era – the Ecozoic Era that Berry and Swimme speak of (1992:253-254). As I say in the teaching that prefaces the ritual:

“we may contemplate not only our own individual ‘lost’ wanderings, but also that of the human species. We are part of a much Bigger ReTurn that is happening. The Beloved One is ReTurning\textsuperscript{108} on a collective level as well. We affirm that tonight – we are part of making it happen.”

At Beltane, the centrality of Allurement/Desire to the Universe Story, is celebrated. The Charge of the Goddess says She is that “which is attained at the end of Desire”. Brian Swimme says that “the unity of the world rests on the pursuit of passion” (1984:48). In the presentation of the celebration, individuals may come to sense their participation in this Desire, and to enjoy it. In terms of the Universe Story, Beltane is also a good time to celebrate the advent of meiotic sex, which was an evolutionary move that advanced all three aspects of Cosmogenesis (Swimme and Berry 1992:108). This evolutionary move may be understood as the advent of the male, or certainly as the advent of gender.

At Summer Solstice, it is Gaia’s Teeming Abundant Creativity that is celebrated – how “She gives it away, She pours it forth” as we say in the ritual. We recall that this is what Mother Sun does, this is what Earth does,

\textsuperscript{107} “Tiamat” is Swimme and Berry’s name for the Supernova that was the Mother of our Solar System (1992:49).
\textsuperscript{108} This way of writing “ReTurning” is inspired by Jennifer Berezan’s CD ReTURNING referred to p.184 fn.138. Joanna Macy also speaks of the “Great Turning” of our times (1998:17).
and this is what we may do with the abundant Creativity that ripens in us. This cosmology assents to, and nurtures a concentration of Being that innately demands to be poured forth – it creates a generosity within since abundance is its very nature. We celebrate the innate Generosity of the Universe, for which Sun may be our model. As Swimme reminds, “There is not a single solitary thought or action in the history of humanity that is not a Solar event” (1990: video 2) It is a time for remembering our Source, and the ongoing Event that we are part of, that even the Sun is part of.

Lammas celebrates the beginning of dismantling, de-structuring, cutting the harvest, after the peaking and ripening of Summer Solstice, and there are many such moments in the evolutionary story which could be specifically remembered – perhaps even our present ending of the Cenozoic Era, as Swimme and Berry describe the present extinctions and planetary destruction (1992:241-250). Gaia has done a lot of this de-structuring, it is in Her nature to Return all to the Sentient “Soup”. In the Lammas celebration, as I have languaged it, we do recall the Dark Sentience at the base of Being, to which each is returned. I also use Swimme’s term, the “All-Nourishing Abyss”, expressing as it does, that this Mystery at the base of being, is both generative and infinitely absorbing – a Power out of which particles simply emerge and into which they are absorbed (1996:100). We image this “Power” as the Great Receiver, the Old Compassionate One, complete forgiveness, the Transformer, a Depth of Love – She is all of that.

At Mabon when Dark reaches a new level of power, and it is storied as the departure of “Persephone”, the Beloved One, there is opportunity to recall and express all the grief of the losses involved in Gaia’s penchant for Change and “dis-mantling”. In the long evolutionary story, there have been many told and untold losses – species of flora and fauna that will never arise again, cultural losses, genocides, individual tragedies; Mabon is a time for remembering both the rich harvest gained and apparent, and also this deep loss and pain. Another layer to this recognition of Loss at Mabon, is the Loss of every moment of Existence – the fact that every moment dissolves, and is never repeated: the Story of Gaia-Universe is irreversible and nonrepeatable Swimme 1990:video 10). It is also then true that every moment is totally new.
We may grieve the Loss, and celebrate the Moment. Mabon is also then the time to celebrate the Delicate Balance, the Creative Curvature of Space-Time, that Creative Edge upon which all Life proceeds. The Seed, the “Persephone” that is planted ritually represents that very perdurable balance that has enabled the entire evolutionary story. Six months later, at Eostar, the flowered seed is held up, as evidence of Her never-ending Presence.

At Samhain, the theme is one of journeying yet further into darkness – the Transformation of Death, and therein the conception of the new. It is a time for celebrating the Becomings – the unimaginable More that Gaia has become, and will still yet become. It is a time for remembering the ancestors – creatures, plant and human - out of whom we and the present have arisen; that we are the ancestors of the future, and that we are completely free to imagine/conceive Much More.

THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR IN STONE – AS METHOD
My ancestors built great circles of stones that represented this Wheel. They went to great lengths and detail to get it right. It was obviously very important to them to have the stones of a particular kind, in the right positions according to position of the Sun at different times of the year, and then to celebrate within it.

I have, for several years now, had a much smaller circle of stones assembled, that I have regarded as a "Medicine Wheel". I was assisted in the idea for this by Sedonia Cahill, when I participated in a guided meditation that she led, in which she had participants visualize our own circle of eight points. I had already been celebrating some of the Sabbats, and felt a desire to construct my own circle of eight stones, in which I could sit in meditation. I did so, and I felt it as "medicine". My wheel of stones is a portable collection, that I can spread out in my living space, or let sit in a small circle on an altar, with a candle in the middle. Each stone/object (some are not technically stones) represents a particular Sabbat, and is placed in a particular direction. I have found this assembled circle to have been an important presence. It makes the

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109 This was at a workshop at the Mind-Body-Spirit Festival in Sydney, 1995. In the meditation we each made our own imagined journeys around the circle. I learnt from her that there had perhaps been a lot of cultural exchange between the indigenous peoples of North America and the Celts.
year visible as a circle, and has been a method of "changing my mind" - my feeling about space and time, which Abram understands as "one of the most intransigent barriers" between the modern Western mind and indigenous mind (1997:188). My stone wheel has been a method of bringing me Home to my indigenous sense of Being, though I did not language it that way until a couple of years ago. I simply knew I needed to do it. Abram writes that "medicine wheels" found on the high plateaus in the Rocky Mountains,

"enabled a person to orient herself within a dimension that was neither purely spatial nor purely temporal - the large stone that is precisely aligned with the place of the sun's northernmost emergence, marks a place that is as much in time (the summer solstice) as in space" (1997:189).

The stone circles represent an understanding of, and the creation of, space-time unity, a Larger Picture of where we are, and who we are.

My understanding of sacred awareness is awareness of all that is involved in the present moment. It seems to me similar to Heidegger's understanding of "real time", wherein the present becomes a "presence". (Abram 1997:209). The Wheel of Stones has offered to me a way of experiencing the present as "presence", as it recalls in an instant that

"That which has been and that which is to come are not elsewhere - they are not autonomous dimensions independent of the encompassing present in which we dwell. They are, rather, the very depths of this living place - the hidden depth of its distances and the concealed depth on which we stand" (Abram 1997:216).

The Wheel of Stones, which may capture the Wheel of the Year in essence, locates the participant in the "vast and open present" (Abram 1997:209), wherein the past and the future are "everywhere implied" (ibid:210). "Beyond the horizon" is always present in the gestating of the dark, through the gateways. "Under the ground" is a realm made a conscious part of all that is. This is all continually enacted and expressed in the ceremonies of the Wheel of the Year. At Mabon Persephone descends to the underground for Wisdom, at Eostar She returns bringing with Her the presence of the underground. At Samhain, the future is conceived and gestates in the seething fertility of the Void. At Beltane, the fertility of Life is accelerated, whipping into a "froth", that may be returned through the gateway of Summer, to the concealed "unmanifest/manifesting" depths.

Participation in the Wheel of the Year process may be a re-identification with the entire cosmic process – the time-developmental, as well as the seasonal-
renewing processes – thus healing our estrangement from our place, returning us to presence to the universe. Thomas Berry says that this presence to our habitat is essential for our ongoing participation in the Dream of the Earth (1990).

Swimme and Berry say the ritual mode of expression was from its beginning “the manner in which humans responded to the universe, just as birds respond by flying or as fish respond by swimming. It is an interpretation of existence consequent on the awesome experience that humans have in witnessing the coming to be and the passing away of things” (1992:152). Swimme and Berry recognize that this order of the universe was experienced especially in the sequence of the seasons, and surmise that “since this was a never-ending process without historical beginning or ending, to be integral with this process was to attain fulfillment of existence” (ibid).
6

THE RITUAL EVENTS AND THE SCRIPTS

Following is a description of various aspects of the ritual events, how they actually unfolded – getting the people there, the place, how we spent the time, how the group was prepared for the ritual, something of what the event looked like, who helped facilitate, and the presentation of the ritual scripts/dramas.

The Invitations

For the period of the research, I produced an “invitation” or flyer for each Sabbat. I had begun to do this before the research, when I had first joined my Winter Solstice celebration to the local Winter Magic Festival – thus making my ritual event a bigger, more public affair. For this particular Sabbat, I began to invite public participation. Thereafter, I continued to produce an invitation, even though the other ritual events for the period of the research were not generally so large nor were they public events; indeed I was careful to never state the venue for the ritual events on the invitations, so as only those invited would come. The invitations spelt out the reason for the season, gave a summary of the Seasonal Moment and the sense of the celebration, along with some details of what to bring. Quite often each year, the wording would change as my understandings developed and changed, along with changes to some of the ritual processes. I mailed these invitations out to an interested list of persons that had grown over time. Even people who chose to come to only very few of the ritual celebrations, expressed their enjoyment of receiving these invitations, as reminders of the Season. (See APPENDIX F)

The Place

Although all the rituals took place within the Blue Mountains, each ritual did not take place in the same location. I would have preferred that it did, but it was not possible. I had to move from my home, a ritual space with which I was "familiar" just prior to the beginning of this research. This dislocation was a source of some disruption to me, but one that was expressive of the whole situation of this work: that is, was there a space for it, a place, a
situation, a site? One of the outcomes of this research is the knowledge that there is a place for this work, which is also my passion; and that there was then also a “Place” in a Larger sense. Towards the end of the research I was able to move back into my home, with my new partner, and we have transformed it, consciously re-creating it as ritual/celebration space.

When I had left my home just prior to beginning the research, I realized then that I felt that the trees and plants there knew me - there had already been many seasonal rituals celebrated there. After that, quite often the rituals were to be held in places with which I was un-familiar, that is, I was very aware that I was not “family” with the place; or within structures that had probably never witnessed such ceremony before – for example, the Katoomba Civic Centre. It was important to me that I visited, familiarized myself, and meditated in the space, at least a week before the ritual. On the day of the ritual, I was always keen to get into the space as soon as I could, to set up and settle in. It was always a relief when the ritual was able to be celebrated at my place of dwelling, where I had plenty of time in the space, and also where I did not have to vacate as soon as it was concluded. I did notice that when a particular space was repeatedly the location for sequential Seasonal rituals, that the memory of the previous Seasonal motifs and rites would present themselves spontaneously, as the present one was being prepared and carried out. This was a great pleasure.

The Event

Between the time of arrival of the participants and the formal beginning of the event, there was time for the conscious “warming of energy” – it was/is simply my greeting of each person, people being introduced to each other, people mingling and becoming familiar with the space. This “warming” also happened in the formal beginning of the event, which was a circle formed for the process of the teaching about the Seasonal Moment, and for the ritual preparation of the group.

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I refer again to this outcome in the concluding chapter p.343.
The Teaching and Ritual Preparation of the Group

The teaching about the Seasonal Moment was the first thing that was done when we formally sat in a circle to begin. At this time the doors would be closed to any latecomers, as I considered the teaching important to participant comprehension of the occasion and their ability to creatively and sincerely engage in the processes of the ritual. Closing the doors to latecomers was also felt to be important to creating the “sacred space” – a space safe and known, for the unfolding of each participants’ dearly held understandings. The teachings themselves evolved over time, according to my understanding – there was/is nothing fixed about them, and there was/is also spontaneous comment from me. The participants sometimes asked for clarification, or commented. The teachings were only introduced into the ritual events after this research began, as I realized it was a desirable thing, for enhancing participation, especially of those who were less acquainted with the nature of the Seasonal Moment.

At the end of the teaching I would go over the ritual format with the group, so they would have an idea of how we were going to be expressing our celebration of the Seasonal Moment, and they could learn any songs and dances we would be doing. They could each then also work out for themselves their own particular contributions – their intentions to be expressed - that would arise as part of the process. There was ten minutes for individual meditation or contemplation of their personal intentions, before the ritual began. Some participants wrote words for themselves on pieces of paper. This time was also used for the taking care of physical needs, so as the ritual circle could proceed as smoothly as possible.

The Headpiece and the Wreath

As mentioned in the Methodology (p.36), the headpiece that I wore in the rituals became a year-long art process of creating and destroying and re-creating. This process came to represent the essence of “She” – as Changing One, yet ever as Presence - as I was coming to know Her in this process of research.

On 17.3.01 I wrote in my Mabon Process notes:
"As I pace the circle with the Mabon headpiece in the centre, I see “Her” as She has been through the Seasons. . . the black and gold of Samhain, the deep red, white and evergreen of Winter, the white and blue of Imbolc, the flowers of Eostar, the rainbow ribbons of Beltane, the roses of Summer, the seed pods and wheat of Lammas, and now the Autumn leaves. I see in my mind’s eye, and feel, Her changes. I am learning\textsuperscript{111} . . . The Mother knowledge grows within me\textsuperscript{112}.

The wreath too, as mentioned (p.36), became a year-long art process, of creating and destroying and re-creating.

Below are photos that include the headpiece and/or wreath as they were for some of the Sabbats during the research process:

Winter Solstice

\textsuperscript{111} “I am learning” echoes in me from “The Network of the Imaginary Mother” (Morgan 1976:85).
\textsuperscript{112} “The Mother knowledge grows within me” are words from the Mabon ritual (see p. 206).
Imbolc

Eostar – Wreath and Altar
The Co-Celebrants
The participation of four core women in the cycle of seasonal celebrations for this research was mentioned in the Methodology chapter, and the organic nature of their participation was described. I considered them to be Co-celebrants, and I articulate more of that process in Chapter 9 and 10, in the context of describing the other participants.

For the purposes here of describing their help with facilitating of the rituals, I need to say that throughout the research, these four core participants – Debbie, Lyn, Loret, and Anne - were given copies of the script weeks before each Sabbat. They were free to give their opinion and participate in the altering of details, though the story remained fairly much intact. They were conscious, as I was, that we were experimenting to some extent, with a particular expression/story of the Creative Wheel of the Year. They were happy to go with it.

These women, and one other – Kaye - played significant roles in the rituals. They handled the elements – volunteering themselves for different elements as they felt each time. They played the drums, usually where it was scripted, but their sense of the place and the rhythm was ultimately their prerogative. They frequently served the Communion and spoke the blessings, they often played key roles in the Invocations, and sometimes other special roles that were part of particular rituals, for example, at Lammas offering the bread figures, and at Winter, lighting the cauldron fire. Their participation and understanding was an important part of the whole experience. Sometimes, other participants took roles with the elements. I would spontaneously choose a participant – sometimes one of the four core women, sometimes another experienced participant – to play the Priestess role for me, for example, when at Mabon, it was my turn to receive the wheat, or at Eostar when it was my turn to be welcomed back, or at Samhain when it was my turn to be given a gingerbread snake.

The Ritual Scripts
I considered most of the phrases and language important, it was not a casual thing; yet there was also some variation in the moment, as I sensed the people, the person, the flow. The scripts, as I have written them, have
evolved over time, and I will give some examples of this process in Chapter 7. The scripts continue to evolve, according to my understanding of the Seasonal event and the face of Mystery that it seems to me to express. I am conscious of these scripts as being a “scribing” process, an “authoring”; primarily as a Creative process that is being “authored” largely by me, yet wherein each participant may choose to articulate their personal experience of this particular story.

Frequently participants were encouraged to add their own words to responses, as I wished in some cases to avoid any feeling of “parroting”, or in other cases to ensure a felt resonance for participants with what they were saying. It did not matter at times I felt, if the group response to say, the calling of the elements was of varied individual statements – it became simply a chorus of felt response. At other times I felt the particular wording was significant to the Sabbat, and important to be expressed – yet even then if someone wanted to express the same theme slightly differently, it could be done. Most often the participants were happy to use the response that was offered in the script. Sometimes there was a request for the responses to be printed out on slips of paper, so they could express it just so, and/or onto which they could write additional expressions during the meditation time before the ritual.

Below are the scripts, in their most recent form. Acknowledgement of the work and inspiration of others are noted. I have already noted the use of Starhawk’s work in particular. All words in quotation were spoken by me as the celebrant, unless otherwise noted. A dotted space - (.........) - in the script indicates that a co-celebrant is taking the action. After some scripts, I have included a photo from the Sabbat celebration. I did not allow photos during the ritual, so most photos are before or after, with the exception of Winter Solstice and Imbolc when I employed a professional to make a video of the events. On those occasions participants in general “tolerated” the procedure for the sake of the research.

SAMHAIN

Participants may come dressed in costume. Each bring photos/object that represents old selves they wish to leave behind-have with them at circle. Gingerbread snakes. Scissors. Cut
Call to Gather - vigorous drumming

Centering/Presence "Welcome to all you creatures and beings, who have slipped in from your dreams and wild places – the possibilities between the worlds. Breathe, go within for a moment.

Breathe deep ... as you let go of your breath, notice the Space before you inhale. Don’t try to hold it, just notice it. And again, breathe deep ... As you let go of your breath, notice the Space before you inhale – this space into which all who have gone before us have traveled ... from which to enter again the dance of life in some form. Feel this Space between your breaths."

Statement of Purpose "We are gathered to celebrate Samhain. This is the night when the veil is thin that divides the worlds. It is the New Year in the time of the year’s death. The leaves are turning and falling, the dark continues to grow, the days are getting shorter and colder. Earth's tilt continues to move us away from the Sun.

The story of old tells us that tonight, between the dead and the born, between the old and the new, all is possible; that we travel in the Womb of the Mother, the Dark Shining One within, from which all pours forth, and that we are the seed of our own rebirth. The gates of life and death are opened: the dead are remembered, the Not-Yet is conceived. We meet in time out of time, everywhere and nowhere, here and there ... to transform the old into the new in our own bodyminds.

Let us enter this realm, the vast sunless sea within us - the Womb of All. We can proceed by remembering our elemental origins."

Calling the Directions/Creating the Sacred Space
"Hail the East, Powers of Water."
All: We remember that we are Water.
...... walk the circle sprinkling people. DRUM.
“Water, that has nursed our beginnings in the primordial soup, that walks around in our flesh. We are old, so old." 
All: I remember that I am Water and there is nothing I have not been.

“Hail the North, Powers of Fire.”
All: We remember that we are Fire.
........ light fire and walk the circle. DRUM.
“Fire, that has surged through every thought, and action, that dances at the root of all life. We are old, so old.”
All: I remember that I am Fire and there is nothing I have not been.

“Hail the West, Powers of Earth.”
All: We remember that we are Earth.
........ walk the circle with the rock. DRUM.
“Earth, whose intelligence has conceived us and all creatures, and to whom we all return. We are old, so old.”
All: I remember that I am Earth and there is nothing I have not been.

“Hail the South, Powers of Air.”
All: We remember that we are Air.
........ light smudge, walk the circle with smudge and feather. DRUM.
“Air, that passed through the lungs of ancestors, dinosaurs, and every breathing creature. We are old, so old.”
All: I remember that I am Air and there is nothing I have not been.

“We are this Mystery - we are from all time and no Time, everywhere and no Where. Feel the space within you ... the Womb of the Dark Shining One, fertile with possibility. Take a moment with Her now, breathe ... This is the Centre. The circle is cast, we are between the worlds, beyond the bounds of time, where light and dark, birth and death, joy and sorrow, meet as One.”
(Light centre candle)

113 I acknowledge Bridget Mckern’s “Song of Hecate”. See APPENDIX A.
Invocation

“We are Creator - we are divine. We call the Divine by a thousand names, uttering ourselves. Name yourself as you will.”

Each one: I am ...........

Group response: Deep bow and "Welcome (full name as announced), spark of Goddess, the Divine One."

Transformation Journey

“Let us now remember some the old selves we have been. Let us all take the journey now, remembering some of our transformations.” (the circle takes hands, with the exception of one person who will “journey” first)."

The circle raises hands, the journeyer goes in and out, and the circle chants, "in and out the window", and brings their hands down on a few occasions when the person is in ... the chant stops.

Glenys asks "Who have you been?"
The person shows a photo - around the circle (walking around if they like), saying "this is someone I have been".

Group response: "Hail to you and your becomings."
Receive the greeting with a bow.

After all have woven in and out. .....

Presentation of Snakes

Glenys takes basket of snakes & walks the circle saying:
"O Great Ones, you have come through so many changes, ... (elaborate - with DRAMA) ... as Gaia Herself has done ... and you are More, much More. Accept these snakes, symbol of life renewed."

Servers distribute snakes, addressing each person by name, repeating:

114 Robin Morgan says in her poem "The Network of the Imaginary Mother" (1976:88), “You call me by a thousand names, uttering yourselves”.
115 Usually the order of “journeyers” has already been worked out in the preparation – it is simplest in this case if it is simply around the circle in turn.
116 I think I may have got the idea for this expression from Jean Houston. She says, “You are more than you think you are and something in you knows it” (1996:329). I capitalize the term as I understand it as a name for the divine potential gestating in the plenum which is within and without all.
"You are More, much more."
Response: "It is so."

ALL SIT

**Consuming Old Selves**
"Drawn from the first by what you might become,
You did not know how simple this secret could be.
The carapace is split,
the shed skins lie upon the ground,
(hold up snake) Devour now all your old shapes, wasting no part. " **117**
Glenys breaks off a piece of her snake.
All: I devour now all my old shapes, wasting no part.
All eat some of their snakes. MUSIC**118** ON.

**Remembering the Ancestors**
"Let us remember our ancestors, those who have gone before, bring them into our presence."

Each may name any who have passed on, that they wish to remember.

After all have spoken:
"We welcome all these, who have been food for the Universe, and we remember that we also will become the ancestors. We will be consumed.
May we be interesting food**119**." 
G holds up her snake, and breaks off a piece.
All: We also will become the ancestors. We will be consumed.
All eat more of their snakes. MUSIC ON.

**Remembering the Old Shapes of the Culture**
"Let us remember some of the old shapes of our human culture and story that we would leave behind."

**117** Most of these lines are directly from Robin Morgan (1976:84).
**118** The music I have used for this is “The Shores of the High Priestess” on the audio tape Dreams by Sky, 1988 copyright Ronny R. Bunke, Magic Music PO Box 1111, Mill Valley CA 94942.
Each may name memories/"shapes" they choose.

After all have spoken:
"We devour these old shapes of our culture, of our world, transform them in our beings."
Glenys hold up her snake, and break off a piece.
All: We devour these old shapes, transform them in our beings.
All eat more of their snakes. MUSIC ON.

Silence/Music Down
"Let us sit for a while in the vast sunless sea, and contemplate these endings."

Put snakes down to finish eating later.

Building the Web – Conceiving the Future
G. takes golden ball of thread ...
ALL STAND:
"Having devoured your old shapes, wasting no part
you are free ... free to radiate whatever you conceive, (hold ball of thread up)
to exclaim the strongest natural fiber known - your spirit, your creative self,
into such art, such architecture as can house a world made sacred by your building."

"Take the golden thread now, that emerges from your creative centre, and
spin what you will". START CHANT:- "Free to radiate whatever I conceive".

Glenys passes the golden ball, having wrapped it around herself.
Each takes it and wraps it around themselves a few times.
Let the chant build.
End with: "Free to radiate whatever we conceive."

When thread gets back to Glenys, she holds it.

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119 Brian Swimme (1990:video 5) uses this metaphor.
120 Most of these lines are from Robin Morgan (1976:84) – with some re-phrasing.
"What would you conceive/spin from your bodymind? What do you want to create in your life?"
Pass ball of thread for each in turn to hold - don’t wrap again.
Each: "I want ... create/conceive/spin into my life."
Group response: So be it!
Each cuts thread for person next to them saying: "You are free." Pass scissors.

When ball of golden thread has gone full circle:
"May all these conceptions, desires, imaginings - spoken & unspoken - house a world made sacred by our building."
All: May it be so.

Communion
G putting thread down, picking up apples and juice, and holding them up.
"Stand tall, daughters and sons of the Mother/Eve - enjoy the fruit and drink of never-ending renewal."
Servers, repeating the blessing.

Offer more apple, cider and juice, and more snakes and lolly snakes.

Story Space – stories of transformation.

Open the Circle
G. walking the circle clockwise:
“We have remembered that we are Air, as old as She, and present in the lungs of all who have ever breathed. May there be peace within us.”
All: May there be peace within us.

“We have remembered that we are Earth, as old as She and constantly changing. May there be peace within us.”
All: May there be peace within us.

“We have remembered that we are Fire, as old as She, and surging with Her dance. May there be peace within us.”
All: May there be peace within us.
"We have remembered that we are Water, as old as She, and nursing all possibility. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we are Creator, we are Divine. We have remembered some of our transformations, and those who have gone before us, and we have conceived our futures. We have remembered that we are More, much More. May there be peace within us and between us."
All: . May there be peace within us and between us.
Pass the kiss both ways.

"May the peace of the One go in our hearts."

All: The circle is open, but unbroken
It has been a merry meeting
It is a merry parting
May we merry meet again
Blessed be!

Samhain Communion Food and Gingerbread Snakes
WINTER SOLSTICE


Call to Gather – chanting "A Circle Around"\(^{122}\), all moving in anti-clockwise circle.

Centering

“Take a moment to go within. Breathe. Feel the weight of your body - soft at the back of your knees. Feel your weight ... this is your experience of Earth holding you. This is how She holds you. This is cosmic Allurement ... feel her hold you. This is how Mother Sun holds Earth in orbit - with this same power. Feel her in you now. Welcome.”

Statement of Purpose  “This is the time of Winter Solstice in our Southern Hemisphere. Earth's tilt leans us away from the Sun to the furthest point at this time in our annual orbit. This is for us, the time of the longest night of the year - darkness reaches Her fullness, She spreads her cloak, and yet gives way, and moves back into light. The breath of nature in our part of the world is suspended. She rests. We wait ... within the Cauldron, the Dark Space, for the transformation. The stories of Old tell of the Great Mother giving birth to the Divine Child on this night ... this Divine Child is the light in you, in me ... is the bringer of hope, the light in the darkness, the evergreen tree, the stillness behind motion, the centre ... which is also the circumference.

Let us join the breath of nature in her suspension, the Great Mother in Her birthgiving. Let us recall this Dark Space, this Holy Cauldron within. Let us begin by remembering who and what we are and from whence we come.”

Call the Directions, Creating the Sacred Space

\(^{121}\) I use Gregorian Wanes by Pascal Languirand. Canada:Imagine Records 1991. IMD 2015. It says on the cover, this music “pays joyous homage to the Earth Goddess Gaia: the haunting magic of Gregorian music is rediscovered and transformed ...”.  

\(^{122}\) “A circle around, a circle around, the boundaries of the Earth  
A circle around, a circle around, the boundless Universe  
Spreading my long tail feathers as I fly, spreading my long tail feathers as I fly  
Higher, higher, higher and higher. Deeper, deeper, deeper and deeper.”
‘Hail the East, Powers of Water, Water that we are, we remember you ... re-awaken our feeling, Cosmic dynamic of Sensitivity\textsuperscript{123}, that absorbs, becomes, whatever it touches; let us \textbf{feel} what we are, and respond compassionately.”
Drums as .......... sprinkles water on all with pine branch.
.......... cue participants with gesture when finished with element.
All: Powers of Water we call you.

“Hail the North, Powers of Fire, Fire that we are, we remember you ... ignite us with passion. Unseen Shaping Power of the Cosmos\textsuperscript{124}, that gives us form - flames that we are; may we dance with you and act with Creative Lust for all of life.”
Drums as .......... lights fire in the pot and takes it around.
.......... cue participants with gesture when finished with element.
All: Powers of Fire we call you.

“Hail the West, Powers of Earth, Earth that we are, we remember you ...
always present to us. You hold all the stories of life in your Body, we can learn it all from you; may we remember who we really are, may we hold the Wisdom of all time and no Time.’\textsuperscript{125}
Drums as .............. holds up rock and carries it around.
.......... cue participants with gesture when finished with element.
All: Powers of Earth we call you.

“Hail the South, Powers of Air, Air that we are, we remember you ... inspire us. Cosmic Dynamic of Exuberance, Wind, that moves the trees, the clouds, and brings us rain; move us and inspire us to unfurl our being.’\textsuperscript{126}
Drums as .......... lights smudge stick and carries it around.
.......... cue participants with gesture when finished with element.
All: Powers of Air we call you.

“We are from everywhere and everytime, and we are at the Centre .... which is Divine Mystery. The circle is cast, we are between the worlds, beyond the

\textsuperscript{123} This understanding of Water comes from Swimme (1984:87-95).
\textsuperscript{124} This understanding of Fire comes from Swimme (1984:127-139).
\textsuperscript{125} Generally this understanding of Earth is inspired by Swimme (1984:99-109).
\textsuperscript{126} This understanding of Air comes from Swimme (1984:143-151).
bounds of time and space, where light and dark, birth and death, joy and sorrow meet, as One.”

**Invoking the Divine.**

G takes bowl of oil and holding it up:

“As the oil comes to you, turn to the person next to you and pronounce with the authority in you, ‘Thou art Goddess, Thou art That’, anoint the person with oil on the forehead and bow deeply, as you recognize the Divinity.”

**Stillpoint Dance**

“Let us celebrate this Divinity within, the Stillpoint, in the dance.”

**MUSIC**

**Sit in the Dark**

“Sit in the stillness now, wrap the Dark Space of the Mother around.”

(assistants help with cushions, snuffing candles and switching lights off)

**LIGHTS OFF**

**Lighting of the Candles**

After about five minutes of stillness and darkness:

“The light is in you, let the light be born.”

........... (child with fir garland) lights the centre candle.

"The Universe wants to speak you, the Universe wants to speak you. Take a candle, light it, hold it up ceremoniously and recall to your being, and speak if you like, of the light in you being born this year."

Each speak if they wish, then hold lit candle up ceremoniously (as the cue for all to respond).

All: "So be it. Let your light be born.”

**Light the Fire**

127 I learnt this dance from instructions for the music of “Adoramus Te Domine”, that came with an audio tape called “Sacred Dances” produced for Dr Jean Houston’s work. The tape, with dance instructions, is available from Unfolding Futures, GPO Box 349, Sydney 2001. It was only in the second year of doing the dance at Winter Solstice, which was the first year of this research, that I realised its
Co-celebrant with special clothes and headpiece moves into centre. She motions all to stand and says:

"We recall our Beginnings – the Primeaval Fireball, and Grandmother Supernova Tiamat, and our Star the Sun."

She pours methylated spirits on the sand in the cauldron, and lights the fire.

All sing "The Tiamat Song”\textsuperscript{128} (Songsheets handed out at practice)

Gift of Tiamat, out of the stardust we are born.
Gift of Tiamat, out of the stardust we are born.
Carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, sulphur, phosphorus and trace elements.

\textbf{Song and Process in Spiral}

Sing "Joy to the World"\textsuperscript{129} standing in a single circle, holding candles.

Assistants collect songsheets and move cushions, as it is announced:

"We will now dance the Spiral."

Circle turns facing out, holding hands with candles. Glenys leads into a spiral, with all singing 1st verse & chorus only of "Joy to the World".

When back in circle:

\textbf{Re-Lighting the World}

"Let us take our lights and re-light the world, as the Sun re-lights it. What do you wish for the world, what is the flame in your heart? Join it with all the others."

Each one puts their candle down – firmly - as they speak.
(take holder off and tuck under the cloth)
All: May we be like the Sun and re-light the world.

\textbf{Cakes and Wine}

"All glory and praise be to Her who daily gives us more than we can ask or imagine. We will now enjoy some of Her delights (hold up cake and wine), and remember that we also are Her delights."

\textsuperscript{128} Barlow 1997:83
\textsuperscript{129} We sing a "Gaian" version that I wrote. See APPENDIX H.
Servers take cake around, addressing each person, and repeating the blessing:
"You are cake for the Queen of Heaven and Earth. May you enjoy & be enjoyed."

Assistants get trays. Servers pour wine/ juice in front of each person, addressing them and blessing with:
"You are wine poured out for the Mystery. May your flavour be full."

Offer more cake and juice/ wine.

Story Space
Short toasts or speaking.

Dance
Clear glasses and trays, cake etc.
"May we choose a joyful response to the awesome fact of our being in the Universe, and express that response through the art and dance of our lives."\textsuperscript{130} "You are the choreographer of your dance of life ... feel free to move, dance or watch."

MUSIC\textsuperscript{131}
Co-celebrants lead off, others may join or watch.

Open the Circle
G walking the circle clockwise:
“We have remembered that we are Air - cosmic dynamics of exuberance. May there be peace within us.”
All: May there be peace within us.

“We have remembered that we are Earth - deep memory and presence. May there be peace within us.”
All: May there be peace within us.

\textsuperscript{130} This is a slightly altered quote from Matthew Fox. I can’t remember where he said it.
“We have remembered that we are Fire – shaping powers of the cosmos. May there be peace within us.”
All: May there be peace within us.

“We have remembered that we are Water - cosmic dynamics of sensitivity. May there be peace within us.”
All: May there be peace within us.

“We have remembered that we are Goddess. We are That. May there be peace within us and between us.”
All: May there be peace within us and between us.

“May the Peace of the One grow in our hearts, and in the hearts of all who come to this Winter Magic Festival.”

All: The circle is open, but unbroken
It has been a merry meeting,
It is a merry parting,
May we merry meet again. Blessed Be.

Winter Solstice – Relighting the World

IMBOLC
Centrepiece of large bowl of salt water - the well - under a large clay pot of sand ready for flame. White and lace altar cloth. Smaller bowl of salt water and hand towel. Participants wear “bridal” gear, and bring a “crown”/veil; and bring creative intentions to share. Red
processional cloth laid down facing into the circle. Wreath with budding branches and flower buds. Bow and arrows, artemis herbs and wattle as decoration. Fruit bread, white wine, white chocolate, ricotta, butter, ready for communion. Greenery and buds in the “well”. Artemis herbs on altar. Candles with blue tack, and slate pieces on altar.

**Gathering** - ring the bell three times, and using djorge. All sitting.

**Centering**

“Take a deep breath, and as you let the breath go, become aware of the Space before your next breath, hold it for a moment, feel it and feel the Urge to inhale arise. Take that breath, and speak the Mother’s word of Creation ... Om. And again ... and a third time.”

**Statement of Purpose** “This is the feast of the waxing light. What was born at the Solstice begins to manifest, and we who were midwives to the infant year now see the Light grow strong as the days grow visibly longer. This is the time of individuation: we each light our own light, and become uniquely ourselves. It is the time of beginning, when the first tendrils of green emerge tentatively from the seed. We meet to share the light of inspiration, which will grow with the growing year.

This is the Feast of the Virgin - Brigid, She who tends the Flame; Artemis, She who midwifes body and soul. She is deeply committed to the Creative Urge – She is the Creative Urge, to manifestation, deeply committed to Self – She is the Self. She is uncompromised, unswerving, noble, true, a warrior of spirit. She will protect the stirrings of Life.”

**Creating the Sacred Space** “Let us begin our celebration of Her, by remembering our beginnings, from whence we come. We are Ripples that stirred upon the original Sea of Generosity, we are ripples stirring upon that Sea now. See it in your mind’s eye - yourself a ripple stirring upon the Original Sea of generosity now.”

“We are from the East, and we are Water - filled with the ocean tides, feel the moistness in you, taste it. We are Water, we are this.”

All: We are Water, we are this.
“We are from the North, and we are Fire - sparks of ancient heat, feel the warmth of your body. We are Fire, we are this.”
All: We are Fire, we are this.

“We are from the West, and we are Earth - geological, Gaian formations, feel your weight. We are Earth, we are this.”
All: We are Earth, we are this.

“We come from the South, and we are Air – an ancient river that all have breathed, feel it in you, expand with it. We are Air, we are this.”
All: We are Air, we are this.

“We have always been from the very beginning, and so we always shall be. We are at the Centre of Creativity. The circle is cast, we are between the worlds, beyond the bounds of time and space, where light and dark, birth and death, joy and sorrow, meet as One.”
(light the candle)

Invocation
Pass basket of candles, each take one.
G or other take centre candle around, for each person to light their candle. As each candle is lit: "Gaze into the flame, it is in you."
All sit a few moments, contemplating their flame.
Each put candle down on slate around centre edge, as ready, affirming:
"I am She, shining and new."

Pass the herbs: "Taste the herbs of Artemis, She midwifes you."
Response: May it be so.

Purification and Strengthening
G. taking the bowl of salt water, holding it up:
"Take the bowl of salt water, breath into it, and say where in your life does your power leach away? where do you feel powerless? What are your vulnerabilities?" Drumroll for each person.
Pass bowl of salt water, anti-clockwise.
Each one say... and breath into the water.
Response from all: May you be cleansed.
Drum beat as each washes - drums stop when person stops.

"Let us raise some power now."
Drum ... and improvised voice, raising energy – moving.

Pass bowl back around. "Where in your life do you feel power?"
Each one say ...
Response from all: "We bless your power."
Drum beat as each washes again.(drums stop when person stops)

Glenys pours water into the centre bowl.
"We commend our power to and from its Source – She within."
Co-celebrant lights the centre flame and says: "We are tenders of the flame."

G: “Take up your veils/crowns now and your flame.”
Each one puts on veil/crown and takes up her candle, standing.
G: “And let us sing to She within who tends the flame.”
All sing: "Ave Brigid!”133 - a few times.

The "Bridal" Dedication
"Now is the time for your commitment to Being, your dedication to Self.”
Each step forward, when ready, in turn.
(Words may be written on a card. Option to add own words during ritual preparation/meditation.)
Each: "I commit myself to Self, understanding that I am She - She who is All.
‘I am the beauty of the green earth and the white moon among the stars and
the mystery of the waters”134. I will protect Her and honour Her in myself.
Whatever She needs I will give Her. I will tend Her in myself ...(optional own
words).”

132 This process with the salt water is from Starhawk (1987:304-305).
133 We sing this to the tune of “Ave Maria”.
Glenys: "Rejoice O highly favoured. Gaia Herself rejoices in your commitment and freedom to Be, for you are a Promise - of Life."

Glenys gestures to the red cloth. Each processes slowly up and down the red cloth once, holding up their candle, perhaps with arms raised like Eurynome, while the group responds with:
half the group: "Brigid of the holy well and the sacred flame!"
other half: "Artemis of the arrow, flying true and on Centre!"
first half: "Ancient One, Eurynome, whose passion is Life!"
other half: "Aphrodite, who sings love songs to her own beauty."
All: "We celebrate you in ...........

All sing: "Ave Artemis!"\textsuperscript{135} – twice.
State: Ave (name)!
The person on the processional cloth stands on it until the group finishes it's response and praise.

\textbf{Dance}
Re-light centre flame.
"Let us celebrate together in the dance."\textsuperscript{136} (all put candles down on the slate)
MUSIC ON

\textbf{Communion}
Glenys holding up fruit bread, white chocolate, and white wine:
"Let us enjoy our manifested state with food of the Mother, brought to us by Her and by the creativity of our ancestors."

Someone to pour wine/juice. Servers take glass of wine and food plate to each, addressing them and saying:
"Rejoice O highly favoured.

\textsuperscript{134} This sentence is from \textit{The Charge of the Goddess} by Doreen Valiente (Starhawk 1989: 90-91).
\textsuperscript{135} Sung to the tune of "Ave Maria".
\textsuperscript{136} The dance that we do at this Seasonal festival of the Virgin is one that I learnt as the "Miserlou" from Jean Houston, at her workshop in Sydney in 1990. The music for this dance is listed by that name on an audio tape "Sacred Dances", available from Unfolding Futures, GPO Box 349, Sydney 2001.
Blessed are you amongst women & men & children.
And blessed is the fruit of your Creativity.”

Offer more food and drink, and ricotta, and butter, and white chocolates.

**Story Space**
For speaking of creative projects/intentions.

**Open Circle**
“We have remembered that we are Air, we feel Her in us. May there be peace within us.”
All: May there be peace within us.

“We have remembered that we are Earth, we feel Her in us. May there be peace within us.”
All: May there be peace within us.

“We have remembered that we are Fire, we feel Her in us. May there be peace within us.”
All: May there be peace within us.

“We have remembered that we are Water, we feel her in us. May there be peace within us.”
All: May there be peace within us.

“We have remembered that we are creative Ripples stirring upon the Sea of Generosity, the Divine One ... shining and new. We have dedicated ourselves to tending the Flame. May there be peace within us & between us.”
All: May there be peace within us & between us.

The circle is open but unbroken
It has been a merry meeting.
It is a merry parting
May we merry meet again
Blessed Be.
EOSTAR

Each one to bring a stone/rock and a Spring mask and a large bouquet. Potted flower from Mabon on altar. Centrepiece: cauldron or large clay pot of soil, overlaid with fresh green wreath and some flowers, with centre candle. Greenish altar cloth. A "gateway" from the "Underworld"/garden into the circle – marked with stone or cloth. Lit garden flame torches in garden and one near door. Harp musician. Masks around altar, stones in basket, bouquets near archway. Poppyseed ring cake, sliced but whole. Chocolate eggs.
Call to Gather ... drums

Centering ... and breath meditation:
“This is the time of Eostar, the Spring Equinox, the moment of balance of light and dark in the light part of the cycle. The days and nights in the South and in the North of our planet, are of equal length this day.

Feel the balance in this moment - Earth as She is poised in relationship with the Sun. Feel for your own balance of light and dark within. Breathe into it. Breathe in the light, swell with it, let your breath go into the dark, stay with it. Breathe in the light, swell with it. Shift on your feet, from left to right, feel your centre ... breathe it in.

In our part of Earth, the balance is about to tip into the light. Feel the shift within you, see in your mind’s eye the energy ahead, the light expanding. Feel the warmth of it. Breathe it in.”

Statement of Purpose “This is the time of Spring’s return. The sound of joy is heard in the land. The young light that we celebrated at Imbolc, has grown strong and come to balance with the dark. Life bursts forth - this is Her time. Persephone beloved Daughter, returns from Her journey to the Underworld. Demeter stretches out Her arms. The beloved One returns, with new Wisdom from the depths.

We step into a new harmony. Where we step, wild flowers appear; where we dance, despair turns to hope, sorrow to joy, want to abundance. May our hearts open with the Spring.”

Creating the Sacred Space
“Let us begin our celebration by remembering our true nature, let us enter the eternal Space and Time in which we are immersed and embraced.”

(Drums) “Hail the East and Powers of Water, powers of sensitivity, emotion and response: I am wet with you, I taste you, I know you.”

.......... take the water, and each wet their hand and wipe it on themselves.
Response: I am wet with you, I taste you, I know you.
(Drums) “Hail the North and Powers of Fire, powers of shaping, passion and understanding: I am spark of you, I feel your warmth, I know you.”
........... light the fire, take it around, each passes their hand over it.
Response: I am spark of you, I feel your warmth, I know you.

(Drums) “Hail the West and Powers of Earth, powers of memory, presence and action: I hold the story of you in my body, I hear you, I know you.”
........... take basket of rocks around, each takes one.
Response: I hold the story of you in my body, I hear you, I know you.

(Drum) “Hail the South and Powers of Air, powers of perception, awareness and inspiration: I breathe you in, I expand with you, I know you.”
........... light the smudge stick and take around to each
Response: I breathe you in, I expand with you, I know you.

“This is the truth of who we are. We are beyond the bounds of time and space, we are at Centre - the Centre is here, where light and dark, birth and death, joy and sorrow meet as one.”
(light centre candle)

Invocation
“Let us invoke/recognize the Divine - the Hera in us.”
Each person holding up her/his rock/stone announces:
"I am Divine One, Beloved One, a Hera ... returned and Wise.”
Each step forward holding up their rock/stone continuing in their own words, with something of their experience e.g. “I have been held in the Hand ...” – conscious of what they have made it through.
Group response: Beloved One, (repeat however they named themselves), we welcome you.

SIT DOWN
“Let us sit and listen to the traditional story of this season.”
**Story**: "Persephone had gathered three poppies and three sheaves of wheat. Then Demeter had led Her to a long, deep chasm and produced a torch for her to carry. She had stood and watched Her Daughter go down further and further into the cleft of the Earth. ...

For months Persephone received and renewed the dead without ever resting or growing weary. All the while Her Mother remained disconsolate. .. In Her sorrow She withdrew Her power from the crops, the trees, the plants. She forbade any new growth to blanket the Earth. The mortals planted their seed, but the fields remained barren. Demeter was consumed with loneliness and finally settled on a bare hillside to gaze out at nothing from sunken eyes. For days and nights, weeks and months She sat waiting.

One morning a ring of purple crocus quietly pushed their way through the soil and surrounded Demeter. She looked with surprise at the new arrivals from below and thought what a shame it was that She was too weakened to feel rage at Her injunction being broken. Then She leaned forward and heard them whisper in the warm breeze: 'Persephone returns! Persephone returns!'"

Glenys holding up the potted flower from Mabon:
"The Seed of Life never fades away. She is always present. She has returned. Let us put on our masks, we are the Persephones."
Each put on their Spring mask.

"Let us sing and dance!"

**Chant/Song**: "Rejoice, rejoice. Persephone Returns!"

**Dance**: Join hands, grapevine counterclockwise for "rejoice". let go hands and each spin for "Persephone returns". Start with left foot back first. Once around in the circle, then move outside.

**Raising Energy**: “Let us wake up Mother Earth and ourselves!”
All: "She who is alive, is alive in us, and we who are alive, are alive in Her” with foot stomping.

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Move back inside with Persephone dance – keep the chant going in the circle for a while.

**Stepping into Power:**
"Now is the time for us to step into the Power of growth, to soar, to fly, to welcome back that which was lost, and to welcome the New Wisdom."
Two to hold an arch at the "gateway".
......... light the torch at the door, and stand with it at the outside of doorway.
"ReTurning" music on – someone to pause it when each person reaches "gate"/doorway.

Each one in turn, as ready, goes out and takes the torch and walks in the garden outside the circle, then back to the "gateway" – hands the torch to the keeper, walks in the doorway to the arch. (pause music)

Each: (Optional words ... may add own) "I have gained new Wisdom. I leave behind the binds of the past - they are for me ....
I welcome back my beloved Daughter/Child within – She/Who is for me ....
I step forward with Her .. into freedom, into the light."
Each steps through the arch, takes off their mask, is embraced and given a bouquet by the celebrant (Demeter).

Group response: “Yay, yippee ... (cheer, clap))! What a hera! We bless your empowerment. You made it!” etc.
Switch music back on, and await next person to take the torch.

**After everyone has returned:**

**Sitting**
"Let us sit quietly for a while, and rest on our laurels!"
Harp music.

**Communion**

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"Blessed are you – you have seen these things. You know the end of life and you know the divine–given beginnings. May you enjoy the fruits of your journey."

G. take up the cake:
"Take and eat - do this in remembrance of She who gives Life."

G put pieces on two plates – pass in each direction. Each repeat blessing as they hand to next: "Take and eat - do this in remembrance of She who gives Life."

G. take up the wine:
"Blessed are you – you have seen these things. Take and drink- do this in remembrance of She who gives Life."
Two decanters of wine passed in each direction. Each repeat the blessing as they hand to the next.

....... take glasses & juice around.

Offer Eostar eggs:
"Remember the Ancient One who lays the Golden Egg – take it, it is yours.

Offer more cake and wine.

Stories
"Let us tell each other stories of empowerment."

Open Circle
"We have remembered that we are Air, we are the breeze, She expands in us. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we are Earth, we are the story, She speaks in us. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

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139 Referred to p.146 fn105.
"We have remembered that we are Fire, we are the dance, She is our form. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we are Water, we are the juice, She feels with us. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we are Divine - Heras, we have remembered our Power and embraced Her. May there be peace within us and between us."
All: May there be peace within us and between us.

"The circle is open but unbroken, may the peace and courage of Goddess go in our hearts."

It has been a merry meeting.
It is a merry parting
May we merry meet again
Blessed Be.

Music: "Shine"140 - hand out words.

BELTANE
Outside altar, near a prepared firepit40. A pole hung with ribbons142. Doughnuts hung in bushes. Pink ring cake, with rose honey and petals - cut up but whole. Rose essence in jug of water in East. Earth paints in the West, paper for each person, and water and towel for hands. Perfumed flowers for Air in South. Participants wear garlands of flowers.

Call to Gather – Conch horn.

140 From Deity by Wendy Rule, Shock Records, 1998. WENDY007. See APPENDIX I.
141 I usually use the sand-filled cauldron set down into the ground, with the usual methylated spirits. It gives a soft, less dangerous flame. I make the diameter of the pit to be leapt as small as possible to enable the timid to have a go at leaping. Those with skirts hoist them up. Some choose not to leap, and only pass their hands over the flame as they speak.
142 I have often used the traditional Australian clothes line as a pole.
Centering "Breathe deep ... in that breath we share in the life of all who
have come before us, and danced the dance of life: & we are present to all
who will come after us and dance the dance. Breathe deep ... and feel the
Presence. Wriggle, yawn, stretch, come to your senses. Welcome."

Statement of Purpose "This is the time of Beltane, when the days now grow
longer than the nights. In our part of the world, Earth continues to tilt us
further toward the Sun - the Source of Her pleasure, life and ecstasy. This is
the time when sweet desire weds wild delight, when the Promise of Spring -
which you are- weds the Passion of the Waxing Year. It is the celebration of
allurement, ... Holy Lust ... that which holds all things in form and allows the
dance of life.

The ancients called this Holy Lust, this primordial essence

'Aphrodite' ... they sang of Her:

'For all things are from you.
Who unites the cosmos.
You will the three-fold fates.
.... You bring forth all things.
Whatever is in the Heavens.
And in the much fruitful earth
And in the deep sea.'

"Let us celebrate our erotic nature, that brings forth all things."

Creating the Sacred Space

"Let us begin by remembering the Sacred Space present."

"All hail the East, presence of Water!"
All: All hail the East, presence of Water!
"We desire you, thirst for you, as all have done before us."
All: We desire you, thirst for you, as all have done before us.
Drums, while ......... takes water jug around, pours into each one's hands, for
each to drink.
Each: I desire you, thirst for you, as all have done before me.\textsuperscript{143}

"All hail the North, presence of Fire!"
All: All hail the North, presence of Fire!

\textsuperscript{143} If this element process is done with some speed, it can become like a litany.
“We desire you, gather round you, as all have done before us”
All: We desire you, gather round you, as all have done before us.
Drums, while .......... lights the fire on the centre altar.
Each comes to flame and pass their hands over it saying: I desire you, am
drawn to you, as all have done before me.

“All hail the West, presence of Earth!”
All: All hail the West, presence of Earth!
“We desire you, are held by you, desire to make our mark with you, as all
have done before us.”
All: We desire you, are held by you, desire to make our mark with you, as all
have done before us.
Drums, while .......... attends the wet earth and towel and bowl.
Each one comes to the wet earth, puts in their hand and marks a piece of card
paper - on the ground.(water bowl and cloth for rinsing hands)
Each: I desire you, desire to make my mark with you, as all have done before
me.

“All hail the South, presence of Air!”
All: All hail the South, presence of Air!
“We desire you, reach for you, as all have done before us.”
All: We desire you, reach for you, as all have done before us.
Drums, while .......... takes perfumed flowers around to each.
Each: I desire you, reach for you, as all have done before me.

“We are united in our desire, in our longing, and with all who have come
before us and all who will come after us, in their desire and their longing.
Our desire, our longing, is the Beloved, is the Universe, desiring in us. Feel it.
We are at Centre, beyond the bounds of time and space, where light and
dark, joy and sorrow, birth and death meet as One.”
(light centre candle)

Invocation

..........: “Listen to the words of the Great Mother, who of old was called
Artemis, Astarte, Dione, Melusine, Aphrodite, Ceridwen, Diana, Arionrhod,
Brigid, and by many other names: Whenever you have need of anything ... you shall assemble ..... and adore the spirit of Me who is Queen of all the Wise. ... Sing, feast, dance, make music and love, all in my presence, for mine is the ecstasy of the spirit and joy on earth."144

G: "Name and call upon, your favourite Goddesses/Gods/totems – those who speak to your heart, kindle your passion, help bring you Home."

The Dance145
G: "With all these guides, Goddesses and Gods – spoken and unspoken, let us dance the dance of life."
All move to the pole.
"Take a ribbon of your choosing and weave in to your life what you will."
Each person: "I choose red, for ......." or "I choose blue, for ......."

Chant as the group dances:
"We are the Dance of the Earth and the Sun
We are the Life that's in everyone
We are the Life that loves to live
We are the Love that lives to love."146
After it is woven, the chant continues. Continue dancing, drums start up moving over to the firepit.

Leaping the Bonfire
When energy is raised, drums abate.
Light the flame.
"Let the flame of Love burn away your petty disharmonies and habitual negativities. Leap the Flame, and leave behind what you will."

Each takes a turn leaping the fire, saying what they leave behind to the flames.
Drum roll for each leap. Group response: claps and cheers.

144 Excerpt from The Charge of the Goddess by Doreen Valiente (Starhawk 1989: 90).
145 Dance instructions: number off as 1's and 2's. All 1's face right, all 2's face left. All 1's go in and under first, all 2's go out and over first.
When the excitement quietens down:

**Sitting**

"Let us sit with this healing, and name others for whom we desire this."

After the naming:

"Feel this desire in you now. This is the primordial essence, that brings forth all things."

**Communion**

After a few minutes of quiet:

G. holds up honey cake and wine

"Take and eat and drink ... consume your desire."

Servers take cake around, or pass it around circle, each repeating the blessing:

"Take and eat ... consume your desire."

Server take glasses to all. Servers take sweet wine/juice to each person, or pass it around the circle. Each repeat the blessing:

"Take and drink. Taste the sweetness of life. Enjoy it."

Invite all to find and eat the doughnuts hanging about.

**Storytelling**

Space for speaking, and telling stories of Passion.

**Open the Circle**

"We have remembered the presence of Air, how we reach for Her. May we know peace within us."

All: May we know peace within us.

"We have remembered the presence of Earth, how we are held by Her, how we desire to make our mark with Her. May we know peace within us."

All: May we know peace within us.

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166 Taught to me by thea Gaia who wrote it.
"We have remembered the presence of Fire, how we are drawn to Her. May we know peace within us."
All: May we know peace within us.

"We have remembered the presence of Water, how we thirst for Her. May we know peace within us."
All: May we know peace within us.

"We have remembered our Holy Desire, that unites the cosmos, that gives All form. May we know peace within us and between us."
All: May we know peace within us and between us.

"May the Delight and Ecstasy of the Divine - Goddess and God, Beloved and Lover - go in our hearts."
All: May it be so

**Song:**
"The circle is open but unbroken. May the peace of the Goddess be ever in our hearts. Merry meet, and merry part, and merry meet again. Blessed Be!"

**Beltane Dance Music**

**SUMMER SOLSTICE**
Large light-colour altar cloth. Fire ready. Each one brings a full rose or two. Roses, lollies, small fruits, flowers in baskets. Wreath of roses near fireplace. Loaves of bread. Wine and juice. Queenly/Royal attire, and a small shoulder bag/pocket for "small edibles you might get". Dyad poem copies for all. Olive oil for bread.

**Call to Gather** - drum beat, participants moving in a circle to the rhythm - several circles if necessary, feeling the rhythm.

**Centering**
"Breathe deep, feel the weight of your body-sink into it. Breathe deep, fill your bodymind to capacity, until you can draw it no longer, feel the fullness ... Let it go. Again, breathe deep, fill your bodymind to capacity, hold it a moment, feel the need to let go. Release it."
This is how Gaia breathes in our part of the world at this time. She is filling to capacity, and will soon need to release.”

Statement of Purpose
“This is the time of the longest day of the year. In our part of the world, light is in Her fullness, She spreads Her radiance, Her fruits ripen, Her greenery is everywhere, the cicadas sing. Yet as Light reaches Her peak, our closest contact with the Sun, She opens completely, and the seed of darkness is born.

This is the time of the rose, blossom and thorn, fragrance and blood. The story of Old tells that on this day Goddess and God, embrace, in a love so complete, that all dissolves, into the single Song of ecstasy that moves the worlds. Our bliss, fully matured, given over, feeds the Universe and turns the wheel. We join the Beloved and Lover¹⁴⁷ in the Great Give-Away of Our fullness, our Creativity.”

Banishing
“Let us begin by remembering that we are each Goddess and God – Divine, open channels for the moving energies of Life. We banish all those voices that tell us we shouldn’t/can’t, that hold us back and fragment us. Turn to partner or group of three - voicing the negative to each other - what are some of their voices?” Allow five minutes of interaction.

“Let’s scare them all away! and raise our energy.” - stomp, growl, rattles, drums.

“Having banished those states of being which are not native to us, we will call to us those which are.”

Creating the Sacred Space
“Hail the East, Powers of Water, Cosmic Dynamic of Sensitivity.”
All: Hail the East, Powers of water, Cosmic Dynamic of Sensitvity.
“... that absorbs, becomes, whatever it touches; let us feel what we are, and respond compassionately.”
Drums, while .......... sprinkles water with an oak branch.

¹⁴⁷ I chose to use this ungendered form of metaphor for lovers when possible, for the sake of inclusiveness – not just of homosexual relationships, but also of all inner metaphor for the Beloved of the soul.
All: Let us feel what we are, and respond compassionately. (or own words)

"Hail the North, Powers of Fire, Unseen Shaping Power of the Cosmos."
All: Hail the North, Powers of Fire, Unseen Shaping Power of the Cosmos
"... that gives us form - flames that we are; may we dance with you and act
with Creative Lust for all of life."
Drums, while .......... lights fire in the pot, carries it around for each to feel.
All: May we dance with you and act with Creative Lust for all of life. (or own words)

"Hail the West, Powers of Earth - always present to us."
All: Hail the West, Powers of Earth - always present to us.
"You hold all the stories of life in your Body, we can learn it all from you;
may we remember who we really are, may we hold the Wisdom of all time
and no Time."
Drums, while .......... holds up rock and carries it around for all to touch.
All: May we remember who we really are, may we hold the Wisdom of all
time and no Time. (or own words)

"Hail the South, Powers of Air, Cosmic Dynamic of Exuberance."
All: Hail the South, Powers of Air, Cosmic Dynamic of Exuberance
"... wind that moves the trees, the clouds, and brings us rain; move us and
inspire us to unfurl our being."
Drums, while .......... lights smudge stick, carries it around to each.
All: Move us and inspire us to unfurl our being. (or own words)

"This is what we are ... Mysterious Flashes of Water, Fire, Earth and Air, and
we are at Centre. The circle is cast, we are between the worlds, beyond the
bounds of time and space, where light and dark, birth and death, joy and
sorrow meet, as One."
Light centre candle.

Invocation
"Let us recognize and invoke the Fullness of the Mother, the Divine One –
Beloved and Lover - in each other."
G: start in two places - female and male, both directions. Then each person to the next, around the circle.

"Hail ........, thou art the Fullness of the Mother, Divine One, Queen of Summer" OR "Hail ........, thou art the Fullness of the Mother, Divine One, Summer King."
Bow of reverence, take their hand- optional.

"Let us continue the invocation of the Divine in us with the poem":

**Dyad Poem**¹⁴⁸ (inner and outer circles - facing each other)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inner:</th>
<th>Outer:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nameless One</td>
<td>of many names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eternal</td>
<td>and ever changing One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is found nowhere</td>
<td>but appears everywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond</td>
<td>and within all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeless</td>
<td>circle of the seasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknownable Mystery</td>
<td>Known by all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother of all life</td>
<td>Lady of the dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engulf us with your love</td>
<td>Be radiant within us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**All (with actions):** See with our eyes./ Hear with our ears. /Breathe with our nostrils. /Touch with our hands/ Kiss with our lips/ Open our hearts/ That we may live free ... joyful in the Song of all that is.

**Song/Toning** - stay in the two circles

G and co-celebrants start. People pick up on it, join in.

**The Give-Away**¹⁴⁹

G. and servers take the baskets of blossoms first, then baskets of lollies and fruit, throwing handfuls of the contents in the air – repeating the blessing:

"They - Beloved and Lover - give it away, They pour it forth."

(Everyone pick up lollies, fruit - puts them in pocket/bag.)

**Spiral Dance**

"Each pick up a rose and let us dance the Mystery of the Spiral."

¹⁴⁸ This is an adaptation of a poem in *The Spiral Dance* (Starhawk 1989:119). Participants chose inner or outer circle, as they wished in the moment.
Each pick up a rose and form a circle facing out, take hands.

Start chant first, then continue as the group moves:
"She is shining, crowned with light.
We are radiant, we are bright.
We dissolve into the night."\(^{150}\)

As the circle opens back out, lead to the fireplace. Light it.
"Let us join in the Great Give-Away, each give it away, give our Creative
Fullness away ... to the Universe."
Each one comes forward, and may speak a few words if they wish, hold up
their rose (the cue for response from others), then throw the rose on the fire.
Group response: "We bless you, and the Gift that you are" (or other
appropriate words).

**Silence** ... as we all watch the roses burn.

**Wreath**\(^{151}\)
Held to each person's face, so they can see the flames through it.
"See with clear sight."
Then held aloft, in front where person can see it.
"And know the mystery of the unbroken circle."

**Communion**
Glenys and servers pick up trays of wine and glasses, and bread from table
near fire, and take to centre.

G. holds up the bread
"The Sun is in us, it has ripened, it is ripening, we are ripening.
We are the grain, we are the Bread of Life. See how we shine."\(^{152}\)

\(^{149}\) I first experienced this "Give-Away" process with Moonskinds ritual group in Woollongong NSW at Summer Solstice 1995.
\(^{150}\) My own variation of a chant in *The Spiral Dance* (Starhawk 1989:190).
\(^{151}\) A process from Starhawk (ibid:190).
\(^{152}\) Some of these words are directly from Starhawk's Summer Solstice ritual (1989:190).
G. hands the bread to each, as they come forward - each breaks off some bread, holds it up - in front or high. 
Each: "I am the grain, I am the Bread of Life."
Group response: "The Sun is in you, see how you shine!"

G. holds up the wine
"The Sun is in us, it has ripened, it is ripening, we are ripening.
We are the grape, we are the Wine. See how we shine."

G. hands the wine and a glass to each as they come forward - each pours their wine/juice, holds it up - in front or high.
Each: "I am the grape, I am the Wine." ("I am the apple, I am the juice.")
Group response: "The Sun is in you, see how you shine!"

Draw up cushions ... all sit.

**Stories**
"Let us enjoy some of our fruits and lollies and let us tell each other stories of the Rose, blossom and thorn ... 
- your Passion, what you are creating - perhaps every day
- what is peaking in you, flowering in you
- what you desire to give."

Group response: "May you be fruitful" or other appropriate words.

**Open the Circle**
"We have remembered that we are Air - cosmic dynamics of exuberance unfurling our being. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we are Earth - we hold all the stories of life in our bodies. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.
"We have remembered that we are Fire - dancing flames. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we are Water - absorbing, becoming all that we touch. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we are the Fullness of the Mother, that the Creativity that pours forth from us is Divine, that our Passion released, may feed the world. May there be peace within us and between us."
All: May there be peace within us and between us.

The circle is open but unbroken,
May the Peace of the One go in our hearts,

All: It has been a merry meeting,
it is a merry parting,
may we merry meet again. Blessed Be.
LAMMAS

Each bring a bread figure that they made with meditation on what they fear. Bread figures in basket on altar. Wear black preferably, bring dark veil/crown. Rye bread & red wine and grape juice. Basket of star cookies near fire. Cauldron of water with cloves in the East with ladle. Firepot in North, with long matches for each. Cauldron of wet earth in West. Cauldron with lit smudge stick in South. Centre candle in claypot with wreath of dried roses on it (from Summer), and wheat stalks, rosehips and flower pods added. Fire ready. **Put on veils or garlands before meditation.**

Call to Gather - a bell, ringing several times.

Centering

"For whom does the bell toll? It tolls for thee ... 
Breathe this breath that is yours, as if it were your first ... do you remember that it was so? Breathe this breath that is yours, as if it were your last ... do you remember that it will be so? Breathe it now, this breath that is yours ...
but not yours. We breathe this breath together (take hands) ... we are the breath of the Cosmos in this time and in this place.”(let go hands)

Statement of Purpose
“This is the feast of the waxing dark. The seed of darkness that was born at the Summer Solstice now grows ... the daylight grows visibly shorter. Earth’s tilt is taking us back away from the Sun. This is the time of dissolution, each unique self lets go, to the Darkness. It is the time of ending, when the grain is harvested. We meet to remember the Great Sentience, the All-Nourishing Abyss, She - from whom we arise, in whom we are immersed and to whom we return.

This is the time of the Crone, the Wise Dark One, who accepts and receives our harvest, who grinds the grain, who dismantles what has gone before. She is Hecate, Lillith, Medusa, Kali, Erishkagel - Divine Compassionate One. We meet to accept Her transformative embrace, trusting Her knowing, which is beyond all knowledge.”

Creating the Sacred Space
“Let us slip between the worlds into Her dark space. Let us begin by remembering Her Recipe, the elements in Her Cauldron from whence we come.”

“Hail the East: Water we are
- filled with the ocean tides - in Her Cauldron of Creativity!” DRUM
Each presented with cauldron of water, each ladles into their hand, holds it to the East and responds, "Water I am! ... in Her Cauldron” (sip it)

“Hail the North: Fire we are
- sparks of ancient heat - in Her Cauldron of Creativity!” DRUM
Each presented with the firepot, faces the North, lights a match from the pot and responds, "Fire I am! ... in Her Cauldron.”

“Hail the West: Earth we are
- geoformations - in Her Cauldron of Creativity!” DRUM
Each presented with cauldron of earth, takes some and holds it to the West & responds, "Earth I am! ... from Her Cauldron." Touch "dirty" hand to own forehead/throat/chest.

"Hail the South: Air we are - particles of light and inspiration - in Her Cauldron of Creativity!” DRUM
Each presented with the cauldron with lit smudge stick in it, lifts it out, holds it to the South and responds, "Air I am! ... in Her Cauldron."

"This is Her recipe, we are made from this, these are our Origins. We are at the Centre, in Her Cauldron of Creativity. The circle is cast, we are between the worlds, beyond the bounds of space and time, where light and dark, birth and death, joy and sorrow meet as One."

(Light centre candle)

Invocation
Glenys with small bowl of wheat grains, and small bowl of ash in one hand. "(name) you are the Grain that is harvested - you are the Harvest (put wheat in their hand); remember the Dark Sentience within you.” (touch their forehead with ash)
Response: "I am She, Dark and Ancient Wise One."(option to add own words)

Music and Sitting
“Contemplate Her now within you.”
MUSIC

“All stand – put your grains in the centre.”

Dissolution - the Bread Figures
.......... takes the basket of bread figures and invites each to take their bread figure from the basket..
She asks: "What holds you back from opening to the Old Compassionate One, what do you fear?"
Each person speaks, then summarizes with one or a few words. The server and the group repeat the answer, encouraging a chant. After circle is complete: hold up bread figures.
"Let us take all our fears and give them to the Old Compassionate One."
Group chant, moving in a circle – the chant being a repeat of fears we have just heard, as they come to mind. Let it build.
G. lead procession to the fire. (Someone go ahead to light fire)
Each steps forward, as ready and says: "To the Old Compassionate One - the Transformer" as they toss bread figure into fire.

All respond: May it be so!

Silence
"Everything passes, all fades away."\textsuperscript{154}
Few moments silence as we watch the bread figures burn.

"I am Love"
G. holding the basket of stars: "She says: I am Love, I am the All-Nourishing Abyss. All manifestation springs from me - you have given yourself back. You will reap the harvest ... you will proceed in joy and abundance. For this is the Mystery."

The Hoped for Harvest
G. takes the basket of star cookies around.\textsuperscript{155}
"What do you hope to harvest? What do you hope for?"
Each says, then summarizes with one or a few words.
G. and group repeat the answer, echoing it a few times.
After circle is complete:
"Let us carry all our hopes back to the circle and gestate them."
Group chant – the chant being hopes we have just heard, as they come to mind. Process back to circle.
All hold up their stars.
All: "May it be so!"

\textsuperscript{153} I use "Ignacio" by Vangelis Papanassiou. Belaphon BLPS-19242, which Jean Houston has used in her Underworld experience (referred to in APPENDIX C p.373-374).
\textsuperscript{154} Starhawk (1989:191).
All sit and eat the stars.

Music ... few minutes

Communion

G. holds up plate of dark rye bread and decanter of red wine:
"May you be nourished by Her Harvest. Let Her Rich Creative Darkness soak through you."

G. offer bread to people either side, with the blessing:
"May you be nourished by Her Harvest."
Each repeat it around the circle, as they offer the bread to the next person.

Someone distribute glasses to each person.

G. offer the red wine and glass, to people either side, with the blessing:
"Let Her Rich Creative Darkness soak through you."
Each repeat it around the circle, as they offer the wine/ juice to the next person.

Offer other dark foods.

Stories

"Perhaps there are stories of things you are letting go of."

Dance

"Can the grub imagine the butterfly she will become? Can we imagine what will emerge? Let us dance in celebration of the Harvest."

Open the Circle

"We have remembered that we are Her recipe - that we are Air, in Her Cauldron. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

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156 I use Le Fleur from Odes by Irene Pappas and Vangelis Papathanassiou. Polydor 2473 109.
157 I call this "The Harvest Dance" – the version we do is based on the Menousis dance that I learnt from Jean Houston. I did not realize it was a different dance. As we have been doing it: form a circle holding hands, take three steps to the right, pause, then three more steps to the right, pause and sway LRL. Its music, listed as Menousis, is on Odes referred to in fn.156.
"We have remembered that we are Earth in her Cauldron. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we are Fire, in Her Cauldron. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we are Water, in Her Cauldron. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we belong to the Dark Sentience within - we are Divine and Ancient Wise One. We have remembered that our harvest is Her Harvest. May there be peace within us and between us."
All: May there be peace within us and between us.

"The circle is open but unbroken
May the Peace and Harmony of Goddess go in our hearts."
All: It has been a merry meeting
It is a merry parting
May we merry meet again
Blessed Be!

Lammas Group – Post Ritual
MABON

Wreath with some wheat and Autumn leaves, around centre candle. Wheat sheaves for each participant, tied in bundles of three with red ribbon. Basket of bulbs. Each bring fruit or wine or juice or homemade cake/cookies/fancy bread - put next to themselves in the circle. Glasses, plates, cutlery, bottle openers ready. Each bring a plant pot with soil-put outside near cauldron full of soil, with small spades. Garden flame torches to light path to the pots (the “underworld”). Each bring a shawl - and a story of loss/grief-one heard everyday, one lost in history of humans, other species, and their own; and may bring symbols of it. Lantern lit near music switch. Bells. Bowl of water and towel near pots and soil for handwashing.

Call to Gather - energetic drumming

Statement of Purpose and Centering

“This is the time of Mabon, the Autumnal Equinox, the moment of balance of light and dark in the dark cycle. The days and nights in the South and in the North of our planet, are of equal length this day.

Feel the balance in this moment - Earth as She is poised in relationship with the Sun. Feel for your own balance of light and dark within. Breathe into it. Breathe in the light, swell with it, let your breath go into the dark, stay with it. Feel for your centre, shift on your feet, from left to right ... breathe it in.

In our part of Earth, the balance is about to tip into the dark. Feel the shift within you, see in your mind’s eye the descent ahead, the darkness growing, remember the coolness of it. This is the time when we give thanks for our harvests – the abundance we have reaped. Yet we remember too the losses. Persephone is given the wheat - the Mystery, knowledge of life and death - for this she gives thanks. But she sets forth into the darkness - both Mother and Daughter grieve that it is so.”

Creating the Sacred Space

“Let us enter the sacred space, wherein we may speak the Mystery. Let us begin by remembering our true natures.”

“Hail the East, powers of Water we call you.”
All: Hail the East, powers of Water we call you.
.......... takes the water around the circle and sprinkles it on all. (AVANTI)
Each respond as they feel the water: “I remember that I am Water. She is alive in me and I in Her.” (cacophony effect)
"Hail the North, powers of Fire we call you."
All: Hail the North, powers of Fire we call you.
............ takes the fire around. (AVANTI)
Each respond as the fire passes by: "I remember that I am Fire. She is alive in me and I in Her." (cacophony effect)

"Hail the West, powers of Earth we call you."
All: Hail the West, powers of Earth we call you.
............ takes the rock around for each to touch it. (AVANTI)
Each respond as the rock is felt: "I remember that I am Earth. She is alive in me, and I in Her." (cacophony effect)

"Hail the South, powers of Air we call you."
All: Hail the South, powers of Air we call you.
............ takes lit smudge around for each to smell. (AVANTI)
Each respond as the smudge is smelt: "I remember that I am Air. She is alive in me, and I in Her." (cacophony effect)

"We remember that we are present you and I, in the East, the North, the West, the South, we have been present always in each stage of Gaia's story - She is alive in us and we in Her. We are at Centre, which is everywhere. The circle is cast, we are between the worlds, beyond the bounds of space and time, where light and dark, birth and death, joy and sorrow meet as One." (light centre candle)

Invocation
All chant: "Demeter, Demeter ... Mother we call you", as Glenys ties on mask of Demeter, adds "mists" and trailing autumn leaves to costume - assistant helping. G picks up wheat bundles.
LET ENERGY BUILD. Co-celebrants finish with "Demeter!"

G (Demeter) goes to each one:
" (name), I give you the wheat - the Mystery - the knowledge of life and death. I let you go as Daughter(Child), most loved of Mine ... you become
Queen(Sovereign). You will return as Mother, co-Creator with me. You are the Seed in the Fruit, becoming the Fruit in the Seed. Inner Wisdom guides your path."

Response: "It is so. I am Daughter(Child), becoming Mother - Seed becoming Fruit. The Mother knowledge grows within me."

G takes off her mask and trailing leaves and "mists", and receives the wheat.

**Thanksgiving for the Harvest**
"Let us give thanks for our harvests - all that we have gained."

Each one picks up her "harvest" (foods they have brought), and puts it in centre, saying: "I give thanks for my harvest of ..."
Group response: "Your life, it is blessed" OR "Your harvest, it is wonderful. We hear your joy" OR ... 

"We have harvested much, our lives are blessed. We are Daughters and Sons of the Mother."
All hold up their wheat, and respond: "We give thanks."

**Remembering the Losses and Sorrow**
"It is time now to take our Wisdom (the wheat), and remember the sorrows - the losses involved. Let us put on our shawls and remember the grief of the Mother, of mothers and lovers everywhere, our grief. Persephone descends."
MUSIC\(^{158}\) on. Process in a circle

Take turns to speak, as ready, when near the music switch. Each pauses the music: "I remember the ...... " (may put symbol on altar)
Group response: "For this we grieve."

Repeat for as long as necessary.

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\(^{158}\) I have used "Gentle Sorrows" on *Dreams* by Sky (p.165 fn.118). I copy it three times in sequence so that it runs for the time needed.
G: “Sit with your partner now and tell each other anything further in your heart, the losses you grieve ... or just sit with each other in silence.”

G ring bell after a few minutes ... cue to switch.

Ring bell to bring to silence.

Song: (start softly)
“Ancient Mother we hear you calling, ancient Mother we hear your song
Ancient Mother our grief and pain is yours, ancient Mother we taste your tears.”

Silence

The Hope of Persephone
The basket of bulbs is passed around. Each take one.
"Persephone goes forth into the darkness to become Queen of that world. She tends the sorrows. These represent our Persephones, who tends the sorrows. Let us go out into the night with Her and plant our seeds.”

G take the lantern, co-celebrants start singing the chorus of "Changing Woman." All follow G outside.
Chorus: "She changes everything She touches. Everything She touches, changes."

Planting bulbs, while singing continues. Co-celebrants sing a verse or two of the song. (rinsing hands when finished planting)
Bring planted pots back in.

Communion
G hold pot up, and others hold their pots up.

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159 A slightly adapted version of an old chant.
160 This has been sung by many, but the version I have is by The Gaia Choir on WOMANSONG. Byron Bay: BAHLOO MUSIC, 1992.
"These represent our hope. The Seed of life never fades away. She is always present. Blessed be the Mother of all life. Blessed be the life that comes from Her and returns to Her."\(^161\)
Response: "It is so."

"Let us eat, drink and enjoy Her gifts and give thanks."
Servers cut cake, open wine etc. and serve.
All eat and drink, and serve each other.

**Storytelling**

**Open the Circle**

"We have remembered that we are Air, that She is alive in us and we in Her. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we are Earth, that She is alive in us and we in Her. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we are Fire, that She is alive in us and we in Her. May there be peace within us."
All: May there be peace within us.

"We have remembered that we are Water, that She is alive in us and we in Her. All: May there be peace within us."
May there be peace within us.

"Take up your sheaves of wheat, and your pots. We have remembered that we have been given the Mystery - Her knowledge is within us. We are the Seed in the Fruit, becoming the Fruit in the Seed. We have remembered our harvests, our sorrows and our hope – the blessed Harmony/Balance of the Cosmos. May there be peace within us and between us."
All: May there be peace within us and between us.

\(^{161}\) Partly from Starhawk (1989:193).
**Song:** “The circle is open but unbroken. May the peace of the Goddess be ever in our hearts. Merry meet, and merry part, and merry meet again. Blessed Be!”

**Mabon Altar – Post Ritual**
EVOLUTION OF THE RITUAL SCRIPTS

I had begun to facilitate the celebration of these seasonal rituals, in some form, in 1988, with Winter Solstice being the first. I had experienced some such celebrations in the Northern Hemisphere, done at the correct seasonal time, and could no longer participate in the Earth-alienated religious practices that were the main fare in the Southern Hemisphere. I took matters into my own hands, celebrating a Winter Solstice ritual in June for a number of years before developing celebrations of any of the other Sabbats – Summer Solstice being next. I had begun, by the early 1990’s, teaching an embryonic version of the “Re-Storying” classes, in which a body of knowledge and celebration was growing. I began to facilitate a few more seasonal rituals – Samhain, Eostar, Beltane, Mabon. When a few women and I formed a group that met on full moon, the process strengthened a little, with a more consistent group of participants. Sometimes in these early days men came as well, and sometimes one would take a co-celebrant role. In the Summer of 1997, when I perceived a readiness of a larger community for such celebrations, I began to formally write the scripts for all the Sabbats, preparing myself to teach the celebration of the whole Wheel as a course. Lammas 1998 was the first formal production, the participants being the members of the full moon group, friends and acquaintances. The formal research process did not begin until Imbolc 1999 (late July-early August 99), by which time the basic script for each Sabbat was formed, and from which they continued to evolve. The rituals increasingly became expressions of the Female Metaphor in Her three phases, and the Creativity of the Story of Gaia-Universe.

Each year, as I prepared for the ritual celebration, and immersed myself in the seasonal moment to be celebrated, and its stories and theme, there were always new revelations to be added, new dimensions. There was always a deepening of awareness of the significance of elements of the ritual as it was at that time, and sometimes changes that could be made to enhance that
significance. The evolution of the ritual scripts has been at base, an intuitive one, done in consultation with the work and inspiration of others, as has been noted. It has been intensely involved with my personal process, which for the research period was particularly noted and recorded. This chapter then, in its describing of parts of the evolution of some of the ritual scripts, is as much about this personal process as well.

None of the words for the rituals have been superficial things. They hold a depth of significance that echoes in my being in the meditations prior to the Sabbat. Over the years of practice, the words that have been spoken in the seasonal rituals will frequently bubble up as they resonate with my experience – on a daily basis, yet particularly as I prepare for the ritual; for example, in the Samhain season, as I sensed the richness in me in meditation, I felt myself as “fertile with possibility”. I increasingly became “sensible” to the “sentience” of Gaia’s Seasonal Moment. There are many other examples, already mentioned and in the following descriptions. Within the following processes of a few Seasonal Moments, parts of whose evolution I will describe, are examples of how the process of the script writing unfolded.

LAMMAS:
The changes in my understanding of Lammas each year have been crucial to the deepening of my understanding of the whole Wheel. It is the understanding of Lammas, and perhaps of the whole Dark part of the cycle, that has come to seem central to a depth of the personal and cultural change that this thesis proposes.

In 1999, as I prepared for my second celebration of this Sabbat, and as I had now been around the entire seasonal Wheel, through all the phases, there was a growing ability to identify with the Dark One and to trust Her within me, and as a dynamic. At Imbolc, we had identified with the Virgin, the Self; and there was commitment to the Self, the growing Light of Self, and I was beginning to realize the connection between all the Sabbats, and in particular between the opposites. Lammas is polar opposite Imbolc, and there seemed

162 It was then that the research was given official ethical clearance, though my research focus had already started by Lammas 1999 (January-February 99).
an imbalance in the addressing of the Crone as I had written it for 1998. 
Whereas at Imbolc we had all come dressed as “Virgins”, we had not in 1998 
come dressed as the Dark One. As I wrote it in my preparatory notes 1999:

Building on what we have done through the light cycle 1998 ... Whereas 
Imbolc is a commitment to Self, the growing light of self ... throughout the light 
season She grew in strength and power and creativity ... Lammas is a 
commitment to the void that the grown, full beautiful self dissolved into at 
Solstice. Lammas is polar opposite Imbolc, the feast of the Virgin. Lammas is 
the feast of the Crone, the Creativity of the darkness. At Summer Solstice the 
seed of darkness was born, we threw our full roses on the fire, gave our 
Creativity to the Universe. We said yes to the release of our passion ... to feed 
the world, the Universe. We celebrated our fullness and said yes to becoming 
food. Lammas is a celebration of the beginning of that process ... an assent to 
the chaos of falling apart, returning to the elemental, the grinding of the grain 
into flour, acceptance of the randomness and creativity of the darkness which 
will grow. We accept the ocean of darkness.

All come dressed as the Dark One ... wear black. It is a dedication to Her 
Creativity ... a letting go to Her. Her knowledge is beyond all knowledge. We 
accept not knowing.

I played with the idea of each participant putting on a crown of snakes, to 
mirror the crown/tiara that each wore at Imbolc. The crown of snakes would 
be an owning of this Medusa image as one of Wisdom. This did not actually 
eventuate, but it was part of my changing awareness of the integrity of the 
Dark, my actual sensing of the Medusa face as one of Wisdom. The seasonal 
celebrations were teaching me in my physical and psychological being how 
this could be so, whereas before I had only theorized that it was so. As I 
understood better the integrity of the Light and dedicated myself to that, I 
also then became more aware of the integrity of the Dark and its place - 
though a corresponding dedication of myself to the Dark did not unfold until 
the following year\textsuperscript{163}.

I continued in the 1999 notes, mirroring the Imbolc process,

\begin{quote}
Now is the time for your commitment to Wisdom, your assent to the Dark 
Nourishing One. Each one come forward in turn, put on crown of snakes: 
‘I am the Wise One. She is Dark, She is chaotic. She pulls apart so that new 
composition may arise. I am immersed in Her ... I trust Her creativity.’ 
Process around the circle ... “See me, I am She.” 
Response: All things proceed from Her and to Her they must return.
\end{quote}

This is the feast of the waxing dark. What we gave over at the Summer Solstice, 
melts into the cosmos ... everything passes, all fades away. This is the time 
when self assents to dissolving. We remember the Void, and accept Her 
embrace. This is the feast of the Crone ... the Dark Abyss, from whence comes 
all, and to whom all returns.

\textsuperscript{163} See APPENDIX F for how the wording on the Lammas invitations changed from that of 1999 to 
2000. They are situated in the APPENDIX next to the Imbolc invitation for comparison.
These words did not in the end go in the ritual script, but they did affect it, as the focus more clearly became a celebration of the Crone in Her Beauty, which I was just starting to understand. I began to feel that this celebration of the Crone was central to the changing of our minds, that is, to real personal and cultural change. In practice, when we actually did the 1999 celebration, I realized that Lammas seemed to radically confront the Western Christianized culture that stories the Dark as negative, hopelessly entropic, if not downright evil. There we were in the backyard dressed in black, burning our bread figures, with laughter sprinkled into the seriousness. I thought to myself in the moment, as the neighbours strained to glimpse the party, of how this was what the witches were burned for – for this acceptance and celebration of the Dark. I asked the question later:

“What might be the consequences of changing our minds sufficiently, so that Medusa can be comprehended as a metaphor for Divine Wisdom? What might it mean for our minds to welcome Her back? Would that alter the way we relate to earth, to Being?”

I had for a number of years in my workshops invoked the Crone with:

“There is a time for the waxing and there is a time for the waning. Medusa, Hecate, Kali ... we call you. Once you were not separate, we restore you to your place in the cycle, in the communion” (class notes).

And now through this ritual practice of the seasons, I was beginning to be able to embody this restoration of the Dark One for myself – into the communion, back to the “sisterhood”.

In the preparation for Lammas 2000, when the research and reflection was well under way, there were more new thoughts about the Crone aspect and the celebration of Her. I was starting to understand the Sentience of the Dark, partly because of my connection of this phase to Swimme’s Autopoietic face of Cosmogenesis. It was also because of my practice, as I continued to relate Lammas to the other Sabbats - to the Wheel as a whole - and to the other Crone celebration of Samhain. My preparatory notes for Lammas 2000 read:

Lammas is not a celebration of Death exactly, but it is an assent to that Journey. The Crone is the Old Phase - not only death. Death is celebrated at Samhain - polar opposite Beltane. The Crone lives into the Old Phase, past fertility. She is post-menopausal, but She is alive and representing a relationship with the foundations of Life, the Great Sentience behind and within All. Lammas is celebrating the beauty of the Dark, the Waxing Dark - it is a time for celebrating our love of this aspect, our hunger for this knowledge, this place out of which we arise, that is therefore Native to us. As I look upon the last sliver of the Old Moon, it is the Waxing Dark that fills my being, comforts me. She promises rest, and something new, dreams of something else.
I would like to focus on the Nurturant aspect of the Dark for Lammmas ... I think I do anyway, that is, I think the ritual last year was written rather that way. The feeling about it depends on whether one is trying to hold onto something, something one does not want to release. If we are able to let go of even our Passions, knowing they are not ours to hold ... Lammmas is an assent to the release, letting go of small self’s Passions, remembering their Source. At Imbolc we committed ourselves to those Passions, the nurtureance of them, understanding that the small self was at One with Self, that we were to become all that we could become. At Lammmas we are remembering small self’s dissolution - we are added to the soup, we contribute that full flavour we have become to Larger Self, the Bigger Picture. It feels like Death, because it is indeed an assent to that process. (27.12.99)

I continued a few days later:

I have been writing about Samhain, and as I contemplate it in relation to Winter Solstice, I notice the link. I notice how much Mother metaphor is present at Samhain ... just as at Beltane I noticed how the Virgin was changing into Mother of Summer. Samhain is about the Old One for sure, but She is also the Womb of the Mother, for "re-solution". In contrast to this, Lammmas is about "dis-solution". Lammmas is more purely the aspect of the Crone that dissolves, dismantles, de-structs. It is the harvest time, when the grain is cut, to fulfill its purpose. (7.1.00)

Lammmas is an opportunity to express or be with our organism’s love of Larger Self - this Native Place. ... our organism's desire for self-transcendence and self-dissolution. (9.1.00)

On 28.12.99 in my notes I had written:

At Summer Solstice, as the Wheel turns into the Dark phase, we sang of how “we dissolve into the night. The “night” that we dissolve into is the Larger Organism that we are part of - Gaia. It is She who is immortal, from whom we arise, and into whom we dissolve. Whereas at Imbolc, we shone forth as Her individual, multiforms of Her; at Lammmas, we small individual selves remember that we are She and dissolve back into Her. We are the Promise of Life as we affirmed at Imbolc, but we are the Promise of Her - it is not ours to hold. The fulfillment of the Promise is that it becomes interesting food for the Universe. My peakking is not for my immortality - it is Gaia who is immortal. We participate in Her immortality. At Lammmas we remember that. The Old One of Lammmas is the Return to the Great Subject.

As I came to these awarenesses, I wrote them up as part of the pre-ritual teaching

13.1.00 ... FOR THE TEACHING
This celebration is about tapping into our deepest sentence - the Source, the Creative Dark within. The Dark Goddesses may be our guides for this. But we have been taught to fear Her. She is the Reaper, She is awesome - and Lammmas is clearly the time to celebrate that; it is the traditional time for harvest, the Celts celebrated the harvesting of their Grain God. And we are the Harvest - .... To understand this celebration, it is really essential to re-story the Dark. You can imagine the Dark as shining or velvety if you like - the Dark can have many textures.

And I pondered how best to language these understandings in the ritual processes: in my process notes (13.1.01) I wrote:

"I have been having to really contemplate the ritual, and come up with some changes to the wording and the processes, as my understanding has shifted some this year. I think it is more difficult for me to come to an understanding of the Dark and the Old One ... I am a product of my culture."
It is difficult to find words that will suit people ... each one may have their own prejudices and feelings about certain expressions, and I don't want to be morbid - that is the problem. I have to be careful in my balance ... that I am not overemphasizing certain aspects, and be able to accommodate where individuals may be in this process."

"You are the Grain that is harvested ..."

The development of one line and action as simple as "(name) ... you are the grain that is harvested - you are the Harvest"; and putting grains of barley/wheat into the participants' hands, can be complex and long. I will tell it as fully and concisely as I can. In the years previous to 2000, at Lammas for the Invocation, we had simply put ash on our foreheads, with the blessing: "Thou art Crone, the Divine – Dark and Ancient Wise One", but I was becoming more aware of the "harvest" at this time – we had just celebrated the fullness of Summer. The following are notes from my Lammas Process 2000:

14.1.00
Conversation with A. ... she reflects that she is more into the harvest she is reaping ... herself as reaper, rather than herself as the harvest ... and that is true too. I am experiencing this at this time ... reaping an abundance. Yet the cosmology that I am focussing on and developing is less anthropocentric ... I am focussed on how we are the process itself ... we are Gaia's Process. We do not breathe (though of course we do) ... we borrow the breath, for a while. It is like a relay ... we pick the breath up, create what we do with our time with it, and pass it on. The harvest we reap in our individual lives is important, and it is for us only short term, it belongs to the Cosmos in the long term. With our harvests the Cosmos is created ... with what else? if not upon the small actions of each small organism? When I heard the story of the prokaryotes, and how they affected the planet and its future, it made me aware of how my small organism and the many, many others affects the planet over long periods of time.

Aahh!! It is that "our harvest is Her harvest!"

27.1.00
There are not many people coming to the ritual as yet ... perhaps it is that this festival is so hard for people to get into ... it is a bit foreign to most. There is no resonace with it in the culture. People can light candles, but they don't want ash on their forehead. This season is a time of ending ... the fullness of Summer has turned (which is why it is really best celebrated after school has gone back). Lammas is a time of remembering endings, things don't go on forever in the same way - they peak and then end ... but endings can also be joyful. I might change the way I do the invocation ... mix a lot of grains of wheat with the ash and put some in their hands, then touch their foreheads.

29.1.00
This Lammas is such a multi-dimensional celebration. I feel it as my death - this harvest. I am ready to be the wheat, to "sacrifice". I have reached some kind of peak, some level of fullness; I can't/don't want to push it any further. I am ready to let go. This is what it means for me, this Lammas. I know it is different for some e.g. A. who is more conscious of what she is reaping right now. I know that is true for me too, and I don't wish to be ungrateful for the level of fullness I have reached, but I am also ready to let it go ... there is More, and I
can't attain it unless I let go. But that is not why I let go. I let go because I am
tired of pushing it ... It is an odd depressed relaxed state. Even now, I'm like a
horse that is resolutely not going to be pushed ... as I usually succeed in doing
to myself. Maybe it's this Dark Sentence, that is really having a say."

B. told me today how her husband used to force her sexually ... it makes me
angry. I put this together with thoughts I am having about "sacrifice". The
Christian cosmology appeared to condone the "going unwillingly". Sacrifice
was understood to mean the going unwillingly, and "good" people did it as
often as possible - so it exacerbated the oppressive relationship women had
with the world. Who was she to argue? In the cosmology of the Female
Metaphor/Creativity, women have the chance to story themselves as sacred
agents ... we may make ourselves sacred.

31.1.00
It seems to me that this "making sacred" of the Goddess, is very different from
the "sacrifice" demanded by the Christian cosmology - that is certainly my
experience. The kind of "sacrifice" demanded by the father god of Christian
cosmology, left nothing for me - it was an abnegation of myself. Whereas this
current experience of making my life sacred, is an acknowledgement of the
Source of my Creativity, the One to whom we belong. So it is not taking
something from me, it is remembering the roots of me - where I am planted.
And my fullness is Her Harvest - the more the merrier. My desires are Her
desires ... they are one. This is very different from having to submit to some
tyrant, and forego what is in me! (Women are so used to being forced in this
culture. And I used to give myself to almost any man who would have me - I
could imagine that he desired me. How scary it felt, when I did that. How
devastating it was when I realized that he didn't actually desire me.) It is my
experience that the god's "sacrifice" had nothing to do with Love.

1.2.00
DECIDING TO PUT GRAINS IN THEIR HANDS AT THE INVOCATION - on
the 27th. Realizing that being the grain cut for harvest is also a joyful thing, that
YOU are sacred ... the ash by itself did not say it. The ash is part of it - and even
that when it signifies belonging to the Dark Sentence, can be a joyful thing; but
generally ash is associated with our personal "final" end. Out of my own
process, I had a feeling for being the grain - sensing my body as a grain. So on
the 27th - when I was trying to be writing, but it didn't want to happen - as I
prepared for the ritual, it came to me to put grain in their hands .. to let them
feel themselves as grain. I then went out to get wheat grains, but couldn't; only
barley was available, so I got barley. Last night I read in Jane Ellen Harrison
about the sprinkling of barley grain being part of ancient sacrificial rites
(1957:86).

Often I put things in the rituals, or come to know things through listening to
my own process, which is enriched by others around me ... like the spider who
builds her web, I can know by listening deeply.

"I am Love, ..."

Another significant part of the Lammas ritual is the statement made by the
Dark One at the fireplace, as the bread figures burn:- “She says,

    "I am Love, I am the all-nourishing Abyss. All manifestation springs from me.
    You belong to me - you have given yourself back. You will reap the harvest ..
    you will proceed in joy and abundance. For this is the Mystery."

I wrote this into the very first Lammas script that I did in 1998, and I cannot
remember how I came to write this, or how I came to feel that I knew it.
Perhaps, I was aware at that time that much of what had been taken from my life was a blessing, that the terrible things that had taken place could be compost for renewal, though I had no idea what would grow. I was at that time already willing and able to ask the questions, “What will the seed be? What will remain?” as I did in the Statement of Purpose that first year; and also to have the Dark One ask of each participant, “You who are the Beloved, what is it that you hope for .. what will nourish you?”. I did already know in myself, some level of trust in “the One beyond all knowledge”, that is, in the “Unknowing”.

For some reason I left the “I am Love” statement out of the 1999 script. Perhaps I was more focussed on the awesomeness of Her grinding process at that time – that seems reflected in the Lammas Invitations of 1999, as compared to those of Lammas 2000, as I will describe. However, I added the statement back in to the script of 2000, as I came to consciously feel it as my experience and important to express.

The Lammas Invitations
In the year 2000 – the third time I had celebrated Lammas – I changed the invitational flyers to mirror the image articulated on those for Imbolc, which is polar opposite Lammas on the Wheel. The Imbolc flyer had stated:

“This is the time of individuation, and celebration of the uniqueness and beauty of Self. We meet to share the light of inspiration, to be midwifed, by She who is deeply committed to Life”

Whereas, the Lammas flyer had stated that:

“We meet to remember the Void, to accept the embrace of the Wise Dark One ... who dissolves all, who grinds the grain – which we are.”

As stated before, I now realized the need to balance the language between the celebration of the Virgin and that of the Crone. I was coming to understand the Return to the Dark as something much more positive, and as a process that also required “midwifing” – perhaps more so, given our cultural derogation of the Dark. The Return to the Dark was a continuation of participation in the Creative cycle, that is, “the Dark One” didn’t just grind the grain for the sake of it – there was a purpose, and that was/is
transformation, so that the whole Event (Universe/Creativity/?)) could go on. So I changed the statement on the Lammas flyer to read:

“This is the time of dissolution, and celebration of the Great Sentience, Larger Self, to whom we return. We meet to accept the embrace of the Wise One, to be midwifed, by She who is deeply committed to transformation.”

MABON:

I have records of Mabon ritual scripts for each year since and including 1996, though I had always referred to it simply as “Autumn Equinox” prior to the 1998 formalizing of the celebrations. The main process of the 1998 ritual was what I called a Holy Tantrum. I storiied the Season as the “time for Demeter’s rage”. It was a time in my own process that required this sort of energy. I note now, as I reflect on the script writing process of that year, that I had already at that time been inspired by Brian Swimme’s articulations of the Universe expressing itself through the small “particulars” of Itself, that is, through the desires/feelings/actions of any particular self (1984 and 1990: video 2 and 10). My preparatory notes for that ritual read:

“Transformative power of anger, of Demeter’s rage - creates a barrenness, a fallowness essential to change. The rage exclaims a need for, a desire for, change - the resoluteness of the will, the Holy Ego, the self that will have its desire - which is the Universe expressing itself - the Holy Tantrum. We join ourselves to Demeter, Kali Ma, Medusa.

Perhaps use masks for expressing anger - holy tantrums - ‘I will ...’. Rage against the dying of the light.”

I was somewhat influenced by Starhawk’s Angry Ritual (1987:127-128), as well as my own need to rage and heal and affirm my power. The Statement of Purpose in the ritual that year was:

“This is Autumn Equinox, Mabon - this is the time of harvest, of thanksgiving and joy, and also of leavetaking and sorrow. This is the time when the dark comes into balance with the light, yet is about to tip into being the larger part. Henceforth in the cycle until Spring Equinox, darkness will be the larger part. We give thanks for our harvests, yet we face the descent into darkness.

Persephone, beloved one, takes leave of her mother; and Demeter throws a Holy Tantrum leaving the fields barren. Dumuzi, beloved one, takes leave of Inanna ... she casts him out, yet she grieves. Tonight we will join Demeter, Inanna, Kali, Pele - outraged Goddesses whose fierceness and grief is essential to change.”

164 Her “Darkness” was articulated on the invitation in other places, so there was still a balance in emphasis between the Light of Imbolc’s statement, and the Dark of Lammas’ statement. See APPENDIX F.
The raging process during the ritual, began with each participant taking scissors and cutting a circle of gold ribbon that was connecting us all, expressing as she did so, what she was angry/sad about. The group responded with: “The ribbon, it is cut. We hear your loss & anger”. When all were done with this, the celebrant then encouraged the participants to dramatize their rage together, with:

"Persephone descends - she is going, Dumuzi descends- he is going. Take up your mask now. (All put their masks on)
Remember your loss, and grieve and rage - join Demeter, Inanna, Kali, ... you are Her, throw Her Holy Tantrum, your Holy Tantrum ... and make the fields barren.”

Music was played that helped the process. After raging for a while, we each then became the seed in the Earth and lay very still, resting for a while “in the barren fields” that we had “made”.

This was a wonderful process and I wouldn’t mind doing it again, but in 1999 something else was impressing upon me, as Mabon came around.

**Demeter Handing the Wheat to Persephone**

As Mabon approached in 1999, the ancient image of Demeter handing Persephone the wheat kept coming to my mind (Iglehart Austen 1990:73 - see FIGURE 1). The process of creating the ritual then, proceeded from this image. I could feel the Mother handing me the wheat. I was personally at that time, in receipt of new dimensions to my life – I had been accepted into the Doctoral program, and granted a scholarship. I had made it through so much relatively intact. I was an initiate, but I had also gained so much – both at the same time. I wrote in the preparatory notes:

“Persephone gives thanks for what she has harvested, takes the wheat - knowledge of the mystery, and descends to be Queen in all realms. The gaining of Wisdom ... Persephone is handed the wheat, She now knows.”

I could feel the words that the Mother was saying to me, and these words were spoken in the 1999 ritual to each participant, as they were handed the wheat from “Demeter”. She said:

"(name)...., I give you the wheat - the Mystery - the knowledge of life and death. I let you go as Daughter, most loved of Mine. You become Queen. You will return as Mother, co-Creator with me. You are the Seed in the Fruit, becoming the Fruit in the Seed. Inner Wisdom guides your path.” (The “Seed and Fruit” metaphor comes from Starhawk 1989:196)
Handing of a wheat stalk to ritual participants had always been a part of the Autumn Equinox celebrations that I had created, but it had never had the central and conscious significance that was unfolding now. By late 1997, I had begun to understand something of its meaning, as I offered the wheat to participants in a conference at that time, when I delivered a paper in ritual form. I said then:

"The three faces of Goddess that I have storied for you today, are three aspects of holistic actualization that can never really be separated, they are present to us constantly, in a moving dynamic of balance and flow. In the grain of wheat all three aspects are present at once - the beginning, the end, and the food of life - that is why the wheat is sacred to Demeter, it speaks of the Whole, the complete cycle. It can remind us of the Mystery present every day, in every moment. It can speak of the profound Unity and Poesis, of what may appear to be disparate and degenerative."

I passed out sheaves of wheat, and continued:

"Take one if you would like, and remember the Unity and Poesis, the Wisdom of Goddess in yourself, that you carry forward in space and in time - you are Her story."

Now, in 1999, as the research was beginning, the multivalent depths of this "handing of the wheat" was touching the shores of my consciousness and thus becoming the central invocation of the Mabon celebration. By the following year, when Mabon came around again, the research had confirmed that this "revelation of the wheat" was central to the Eleusinian Mysteries (Durdin-Robertson 1990:165-166). I understood a little more of how the wheat signified the Wisdom of the Mother.

The Grief Process

Mabon is traditionally the season of thanksgiving for the harvest, and also of leavetaking and sorrow. I was beginning to understand the dimensions of this association of grief with thanksgiving. In the preparation for the 1999 Mabon then, I was aware of the cost of this Wisdom we received, the losses suffered, the grief of the "Mother". Women as mothers particularly, have a lot of grief to express. As Adrienne Rich remembers in her classic text "Of Woman Born", motherhood is "unmentioned in the histories of conquest and serfdom, wars and treaties, exploration and imperialism", but it "has a history, it has an ideology, and it is more fundamental than tribalism or nationalism" (1977:15), and Rich asserted that her seemingly private pains as a mother, and of the mothers around her are distorted and exacerbated in the patriarchal context (ibid:1-22). It certainly resonated with my experience.
I recalled another ritual wherein we had put on shawls and told stories of the sorrows of the mothers, the world's grief (Women-Church ritual 1990165), which so often weighs on hearts unarticulated, with no larger Self to bear it. There was also a piece of music that seemed to “speak” this grief - it was one I had used in a radio program on the Mother aspect of Goddess166 (1994). As I said on the program,

“This music always reminds me of the mothers of the ‘disappeared’ in the totalitarian regimes of South America, and really of the mothers everywhere who lose their children, grown or otherwise, through war, violence or politics; and increasingly through ecological mismanagement.”

As we celebrated the receiving of our Wisdom as Initiates at this Seasonal Moment, it seemed necessary to remember and express our feelings about the losses that we had known, that Gaia has known, and that are known daily – globally and personally. The pain is thus understood in the Larger context, in which it all truly exists.

In the natural course of things, when Persephone’s descent is voluntary – the Journey of a Hera – as in the Old Wisdom, then Demeter’s emotion is perhaps more one of grief, than rage. It is perhaps only when Her Daughter is stolen and raped – as in the patriarchal story, that She rages the most. It does not seem that either emotion was particularly drawn forth at the Eleusinian Mysteries, nor in traditional Mabon rituals as outlined by Starhawk. However I think that Mabon is an excellent time to express all kinds of deep feelings of pain about the situation of Loss, no matter what its cause is perceived to be.

**Planting the Bulbs**

Traditionally at Mabon, there is always an expression of hope, an expression of the continuity of Life. As I wrote in my 1999 notes;

“I felt the planting of some bulbs would go well but when I bought them, I did not really at that stage comprehend the depth of this rite. Only after writing it into the ritual did I grasp a new feeling for it, as the words came to me. Persephone tends the sorrows - as Sprütnak tells in her version of the story. Persephone goes into the heart of our sorrows to unfold the Mystery. She is an energy present in the bulbs, in each person, creature, all of existence - at the heart of matter, of Life. So each of the participants takes a bulb:

165 A group of three of us created this grieving ritual, but the main author of it was Christine Doyle.
166 The music is “Gentle Sorrows” by Sky on Dreams (fn.118 p.165). The radio program was a documentary series called “Re-membering the Great Mother”, that I wrote and presented on 2BLU-FM 89.1 January-April 1994.
'These represent our Persephones. Persephone goes forth into the darkness to become Queen of that world. She tends the sorrows. Let us go out into the night with Her and plant our seeds.' ... and so we do ... singing 'She changes everything She touches, everything She touches changes'.

I consulted Starhawk's outline of a Mabon celebration, and the wording of the promise of the bulb planting emerged from there, in inspiration and some of the actual words. Upon coming back in, the planted pots are upheld, with the affirmation that 'The seed of life never fades away. She is always present. Blessed be the mother of all life. Blessed be the life that comes from Her and returns to Her.'

I could feel these words; I knew them to be true, objectively and subjectively. I had been increasingly coming to the understanding of Persephone as the Grain that goes into the earth to be reborn, that She was the Grain Goddess, "dying" of her own volition that Life may go on – long before Jesus did it – but it was only with the writing of these words and the composing of this ritual script that I really comprehended Persephone as "Seed of Hope", "Redeemer" if you like, the Awesome Seed of Life that has never faded away. By Mabon 2000, my understanding of this imagery around Persephone extended to the Seed representing the continuous Creative Harmony/Balance that streams through the Cosmos, and that Mabon/Autumn Equinox celebrates. I wrote in my notes

18.3.00
What we celebrate today is the Creative Curve of the Cosmos ... the Curvature of Space-time ... that fine Balance in which all of this comes forth. I can almost feel it ... this fine edge of Creativity in which it all comes forth. This is the continuous thread that Demeter hands Persephone. It is handed on and on. We may pick it up if we wish. We celebrate the awesome Continuity, carried forth in that fine Balance of the three faces of Cosmogenesis.

I tune into the Virgin space within me, which calls me into relationship, which then calls me into transformation ... so they lead onto each other. The Virgin urges me forward ... wants to bring forth Herself. She comes into relationship – with environment, with other beings ... of course She is always in relationship, but it becomes activated. That activation creates Transformation and a new Coherence is arrived at ... which tips yet again, and it goes forward. She goes underground, She rests. She is the Crone space, yet has also arrived back in Her Virgin space - which is also a space of dissolution – She is nowhere. And out of the nowhere She is born again. And so it goes on.

In my mind then, I came to comprehend Her as metaphor for the Curvature of Space-Time, that delicate Balance in the Universe that has enabled All Life to go on, that "balance of forces ...(that) ... gives to the Earth its special qualities" (Swimme and Berry 1992:260): that is what I now "see" when I look at the ancient icon of Demeter handing Persephone the wheat. Swimme and Berry develop this Curvature of Space-Time as the pattern for a final integration of the new era Earth may be entering:
"When the curvature of the universe, the curvature of the Earth, and the curvature of the human are once more in their proper relation, then Earth will have arrived at the celebratory experience that is the fulfillment of earthly existence" (ibid: 261).

This is very kin to the purpose of original Eleusinian celebrations. So the process of deepening into the Metaphor continues.

The Presence and Addressing of Men at Mabon

Mabon 2000 was the first formal Mabon wherein I would be including men in the circle. I felt that I would need to make changes to the language of the Invocation and participant response. This was a bit tricky for me, since Mabon had become, in this research process, so fully a celebration of the Mystery in Mother-Daughter metaphor; and I, and the other women, liked the invocation and the response being language entirely this way. At first I thought that the men could identify as “Sons of the Mother”, instead of as “Mother” – I thought that was a suitable initiation into Goddess Mysteries. I consulted with one of the regular male participants, and his inspiring response was that he wanted to go with what I felt comfortable with. However, it was at that time that I read about how the initiates in the Eleusinian Mysteries – women, men and children - all identified with Demeter, and perhaps even with Persphone. (Pollack 1997:220-221). So I took the step of requiring of the men that came, to identify at least with the Mother, and then if they felt able to, with the Daughter also – it depended on their subjective experience of the language and pictures they might have about it in their own psyches. It depended on whether they felt able to grasp the metaphor, as metaphor, for a deep mystery that included them. I could not expect that, but the process did at least require an ability to identify the Larger Self with the Great Mother – with Demeter therefore. At other previous Seasonal rituals, participating men had been required to identify with “She” – as one of the aspects of Goddess - and it had never been problematic, but at this one, the invocational imagery was more central, relational, and strongly stated. The whole point was participation in the continuity of the Wisdom passed from Mother to Daughter, who became Mother, and so on.

I tossed and turned with the language, and thought long about it. I opted for neutral terms “Child” and “Sovereign”, as possible replacements for
"Daughter" and "Queen". I felt we could not use "Son" and "King" because of dominant associations of these terms still in our culture. With the Christian heritage so close to many still, these terms have lost their Earthly-egalitarian significance/relationship. In the Christian patriarchal heritage, "Son" has been above "Daughter" and "King" has been above "Queen". Neutral terms like "Child" and "Sovereign" retained the possibility of being more relational, not in dominant position to others, while not requiring complete identification with the Female Metaphor. I wanted to maintain the emphasis on the Female Metaphor – that was the nature of my research; and in the Mysteries of Demeter and Persephone, I had discovered, it was traditional for it to be so. Yet in our times, I wanted to allow some flexibility, for men who may not feel comfortable with that – so I chose neutral terms as an option where possible. For the women it was important to maintain the Mother-Daughter-Queen imagery, as we re-instate the integrity and pride into these words and images. As it turned out the men who participated in the 2000 ritual chose spontaneously (that is, they did not say so before what they would do, they simply did in the moment of the ritual), to identify with both Mother and Daughter in their response – they used that option, instead of the neutral term "Child".

For Mabon 2001, I also decided to re-language the call to the Grief Process. It had been stated thus: "Let us put on our shawls and remember the grief of the Mother, of mothers everywhere, our grief." I wanted to include men in the grieving experience, yet I felt that to add the term "fathers" was inappropriate to what I was doing – to the space I was creating. Some women (and even some men) would be offended, as so much of their pain and loss is directly associated with the father, and, "the Father". Certainly "fathers" in our cultural context are simply different from "mothers". I opted this year to state the Grief call thus: "Let us put on our shawls and remember the grief of the Mother, of mothers and lovers everywhere, our grief". In this language, men may include themselves, and it remains appropriate to traditional Goddess story, as well as avoiding the possibility of patriarchal metaphoric imposition.
In General

Through the research, I have become more aware of the connection of this whole Seasonal celebration to the ancient Eleusinian Mysteries, and the deeper dimensions of it. This has influenced the teaching I did beforehand, and certainly the consciousness with which I did the ritual celebration of this Season: and it continues to. As part of the ritual preparation of the team for Mabon 2000, I supplied each with a copy of Mara Lynn Keller’s “The Eleusinian Mysteries: Ancient Nature Religion of Demeter and Persphone” (1990:41-51). I continue to ask new questions, and there are old ones still unanswered.

SAMHAIN:

At the base of the inspirations for the processes of this seasonal rite as I have constructed it, is Robin Morgan’s poem, “The Network of the Imaginary Mother” (1976:63-88), and some portions of the script are directly her words. This whole poem had moved me for years, and I had dramatized parts of it in ritual before, but the particular passage that was now finding a place in the Seasonal ritual celebration of Samhain is this one:

"Drawn from the first by what I would become,  
I did not know how simple this secret could be.  
The carapace is split,  
the shed skin lies upon the ground.  
I must devour the exoskeleton of my old shapes,  
wasting no part, free only then  
to radiate whatever I conceive,  
to exclaim the strongest natural fiber known  
into such art, such architecture  
as can house a world made sacred by my building”  
(ibid:84).

There was also a poem I had written in 1980, called “Mother-Warriors” - partly inspired by Robin Morgan’s poem and also by Monique Wittig’s Les Guerilleres (1973) - in which I was able to begin conceiving/conceptualizing the great Creative Power within me and within other women (though it would be yet many moons before I would begin to sense it in myself). With the poem, I was for the first time, seeing my Brave Creative acts - of say, continuing my study at extreme cost to my family - as maternal, as a way of caring for the world. I was struggling towards understanding that the transformative process that I was asserting to, that seemed so “wrong” in my patriarchal cultural context, was actually what “Mother-Warriors” had
always done. I was one of the Mothers – in the Largest sense – though it seemed I was aberrant. Of relevance also, to the imagery background to my forming of the Samhain ritual, is a dream I had at this same time in my life: it was that all the stars fell from the sky. I interpreted this devastating experience as a loss of all “constellations” by which I would normally be able to guide my “ship”. A guiding image that I did have, amongst others, was one by Mucha; an image of the evening star as a woman, appearing to my interpretation, to be spinning and telling new stories, with her hands. She was my image of myself as a myth-maker, creating new realities, by which my children and I might live. Some eighteen years later, when I was well into re-storying Goddess and developing Her Seasonal celebrations, I had a dream wherein I was quietly and subtly killing the “mythology of the fathers” with my hands.

This sense of personal power had also been affirmed by work with Jean Houston, and of particular note for this Seasonal Moment, was her frequent declaration and experiential affirmation, that “you are the point of the present that chooses what to pass to the future”. Samhain is a moment for such decision. My experience of Houston’s “Underworld” Journey particularly, lent a significant expansion to my imagination and inner knowings, and my capacity to create the Samhain ritual.

Samhain is an excellent Seasonal Moment for becoming conscious of one’s participation in the evolution of consciousness, for fashioning a myth that will be of service to our time. Many call for such renewal, but continue to attempt mere reform. Our times call for the casting away of the old in a radical way: Samhain ritual processes may facilitate such possibility.

The Transformation Journey and the Devouring of Gingerbread Snakes

By the time of composition of the first formal Samhain ritual, I was aware of Gaia’s story of transformation/evolution, as told by Swimme and Berry particularly. Gaia had made amazing transitions, since the beginning in the

167 I first experienced her work in 1990.
168 Referred to in APPENDIX C p.374 fn.4.
Primaeval Fireball, with the aid of catastrophic events, and with a minimum of materials – “wasting no part”. Remembering Her story, and meditating upon it, gives humans some clue about the present, and how to proceed; and so it may also be with the remembering of our own personal stories.

In my preparatory notes in 1998, I wrote:

Consume gingerbread snakes - "I devour my old shapes ... I see them there in my mind's eye (photos ??), I thank them for being a stepping stone ... I am More, much more .. something New is being conceived. I transform my old shapes in my powerful bodymind."

The children’s game of “In and Out the Windows” came to mind as a way of each person recalling and sharing some of their “old shapes”, that is, some of the “selves” they had been. Each person could go in and out the arches of arms formed by the circle of participants, and when the arms came down, the person could hold up a photo and affirm this image as one of their past “selves”. After all participants had completed their “journeys”, the celebrant would then ceremoniously laud their achievements and each one would be awarded a gingerbread snake, with the affirmation that they were yet “much More”.

Robin Morgan’s poem did also include the remembering of old cultural shapes, particularly the holocaust of the witches. She asked repeatedly throughout the poem, “What have they done?” I wanted to remember the cultural context in this process – other holocausts, the indigenous people of this land, what has been done. In the preparatory notes I wrote:

We are part of a new conception. What we do to the web, to others, we do to ourselves. We conceive a world made sacred by our building.

The consumption of the snakes then, was developed to include (i) the devouring of personal “old shapes”, (ii) the devouring of cultural “old shapes” that formed and shaped our world and all beings; and (iii) to include the recalling of our ancestors who had been “consumed”, as we would be. There was thus three parts to the “devouring” process. This would constitute a complete consumption of the old, creating a free space for visualizing and conceiving the new.

**Building the Web – Conceiving the New**

In my preparatory notes in 1998, I wrote:
White wool thread ... make a large web ... exclaiming the strongest natural fiber known - each one's spirit expressed, spun from her body. (hook it on something, so she can pull it through her hands ... and say, "I conceive from my Self ... ")

The participants in this ritual were able to make a web in this way in my sunroom which had lots of hooks for them to connect the white wool thread to. In the following year, 1999, the ritual was held in a space that did not have the facility of hooks so I had to re-invent the process of building the web. I wrote in my notes:

What emerged on the 11th April, about one month before the celebration, was an image of each person wrapping a golden thread around themselves and passing it on. The web would be cocoons instead ... like the silk thread that silkworms spin from their bodies, instead of the fiber that spiders spin. I was encouraged also in developing this metaphor by having seen Anna Huenke's art ... her golden mandorla's/yoni's ... sacred Gateway, Creative Space ... metaphorical place of our conceptions. This shape, known as vesica piscis, and as mandorla, actually signifies the divine female genital. I wear a ring with a blue topaz in this shape, signifying myself as priestess, one who bears the Female Metaphor. Previous to finding this ring I had been attracted to the Omega shape/horseshoe, also significant of the divine female genital. And earlier, in 1980 at the beginning of my quest to know the Mother, I had realized how the Yoni was held captive symbolically, in the patriarchal church, in the figure of Mary.

Sacred Yoni ... Captive?
(upon recognizing the female genital shape of most statues of Mary in catholic churches)

What is this?
do they not know?
The fertility goddess
stands in their very midst.

The cunt, the yoni
she stands in their every church
the Source of Life
the Omnipotent.

But she has been castrated, weakened, petrified
... her power stolen and transferred.

She is watched on her golden pedestal.

After seeing Anna's artwork and contemplating this golden thread that signified the "strongest natural fiber known" that we spin from our bodyminds, housing "a world made sacred by our building", I wrote:

The Golden Thread is within me,
in my Centre
from Here I weave the world.

I pull the Golden Thread
from my Sacred Yoni
Creative Space

Great Gateway
Creative Principle

169 Anna Huenke (1999).
present in me ....

.... to house a world made sacred by my building.

What is it I conceive?

I only need imagine it.

So in the Samhain ritual for 1999, and also for 2000, the participants wrapped the golden thread around themselves as they conceived the future.

As I prepared for the Samhain celebration for 2001, I became aware more clearly of how this Seasonal Moment is a “moment of Conception”, a moment affirming that power – Conception - as the primary act of Creation, how each participant may feel herself as Creator170. I have become more deeply aware of the import of the words, “say what you will”. I understand much more how we all may collectively and personally, Dream the Not-Yet - Imagine it, Spin it. I have realized this year how the Creativity/Fertility of Samhain, contrasts with that of Beltane, its polar opposite in the Light part of the cycle. Samhain’s Fertility is in the interaction with Sentience – the Crone, Beltane’s fertility is in the interaction with other differentiated beings – Differentiation – the Virgin. I also understand more clearly the flow of the Dark part of the cycle, from the acceptance of Dis-solution at Lammas; thanksgiving for the harvest and grieving the cost, at Mabon; then at Samhain, having accepted the Journey into the Underworld - into oblivion - we meet all possibility. We may celebrate the freedom to conceive what we will. It is the Crone’s moment of Re-solution. I have thus become more aware of how the Crone’s face at Samhain, begins the transition to Mother of Winter, preparing to give birth; just as at Beltane I had noticed how the Virgin was changing into the Mother of Summer, coming into full fruition, preparing to dissolve.

At Samhain then we understand ourselves as performing the Act of Creator - the Power of Conception. In Western philosophy, the female was assigned a passive role in this act. We now know (again) the central role the female Seed plays in the continuity of cellular material (Coates 1993). In these ritual

170 This is a reclaiming of female Creativity in Conception. As Rachel Adler points out in her work (1977:241), in the Judeo-Christian tradition conception was valued as the essential creative act and was seen largely as a male accomplishment.
celebrations as I have storied them, we reclaim the “Seed” as female – the female Creativity of Conception. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the maternal powers have been birthing and lactation – the male alone bore the seed of Life, he and the “God” held the power of Conception. Then even birthing came to be devoid of real significance and power; since the extermination of the witches/midwives in recent millennia, women were “delivered” of their babies by doctors. Lactation was also stripped of its integrity, as theologians decided that lactation was a “burden” of the Fall (Warner 1976:204), and our Western mothers largely submitted to the wisdom of the experts, feeding their babies according to a mechanical time. In the Western part of the world, women have largely reclaimed these powers, but there are many places and cultures where these are still no longer known as hers. Many of the participants in these seasonal celebrations would not be conscious of this “political” import, having long since re-storied themselves, but in the early days we were conscious of this; and the change now remains as an achievement – a milestone, if you like, just as the voting by women is now one.

The Samhain Invitations – the Naming of the Season
For the Samhain invitations, I had decided to name the Season “Halloween”, because I did want people to associate that seasonal title with April 30th, our Southern Autumn. There is such a strong cultural current for “doing” an American Halloween on October 31st, in the height of our Southern Spring, at Beltane. Participants seemed to need all the help they could get to “re-mind” themselves of where we are and what we are celebrating. That consideration remained as a factor, though increasingly I desired to name it in its Older traditional way, as regular participants became more familiar with the Old name and the feeling for the Seasonal Moment. On the invitations for Samhain 2001, I finally changed to naming the Season thus: Samhain.

For Samhain 2000, I changed the language on the invitation to state more clearly the position of Earth in this Season - as moving more deeply into the Dark - and associating that with Transformation and a New Year. I used less of Starhawk’s traditional language, which contained “God” metaphor that I felt was less consistent with how I was beginning to interpret Samhain in the
Goddess-Cosmogenetic cycle, which was the language/imagery with which participants had been celebrating the whole Wheel. See APPENDIX F for all three versions of the Samhain invitations– 1999, 2000, 2001.

I was also choosing a colour for the flyers. As I wrote in my process notes on

27.3.00:
“... I decide on gold – not grey (death) or orange (traditional Halloween stuff), I am choosing to story this Sabbat as a transformation – on the flyer I talk of being transformed in the Womb of the Shining One, and the Shining image of Selket has come to mind. I am re-visioning the way I see Death in the cycle ... making a clear statement that I see it as a transformation ultimately. We may experience it as Darkness, but within that Abyss is the Gold – that is what I am choosing to portray ... because that is the Gaian reality, and that is what I am trying to learn.”
MY PERSONAL PROCESS

How do I write about a process that has taken me from fragmentation and alienation to wholeness and belonging? In the Old Western way,

"The receipt of story by eyes or ears was regarded as a vital pathway of blessing, if the reader or listener were in a state of proper attention and respect... But when we memorize a story, its blessing works at a deeper level within us. It is then that we enter fully into its workings; it is then that we become the story. When we become garments of story, we are able to clothe others with blessing" (Matthews 2000:334).

This chapter is something more of my context, and something of the process of my personal response to the re-storying of the Female Metaphor, her association with Cosmogenesis, and her embodiment in Seasonal Ritual Celebration. It was my personal response to this that enabled the thesis proposition itself as a possibly viable one, that is, I knew what I was bringing myself through, and this process was sustaining this personal evolution. My process and response enabled the questions in part, enabled me to script and sculpt the process, and in part to facilitate it for others.

White Australian – Southern Hemisphere - Context

It was my experience that white Australians – especially female ones, grew up devoid of relationship with nature more than any other peoples. Even though my babyhood and some toddling years were spent on a farm - eating lots of red dirt as I imagine it – the rest of my childhood and early adolescence was spent in a town where there was centrally a house, and human culture. I never went into wild bush; my brothers did, but a girl would have been too vulnerable. I was indeed particularly blessed as a white female Australian that I did have some experience of dirt and even of trees – as the local school had grown a pine forest of modest proportions, that we used to play in. However, the Earth/Nature itself, was devoid of real consequence; it was human activity upon it that was of consequence. Humans made the best of it by growing gardens and crops, and even then they had to control its waywardness with sprays and fertilizers. It was a big dead ball of dirt upon which we played and travailed, and from which we would be saved by "God" eventually.
I was raised as a Protestant country girl, in a land being colonized by my people - white Western Europeans. The new authorities to this ancient land had named the piece/"State" marked out, as "Queensland", for their divine representative. The white Europeans found themselves trying to make a living. My parents were the grandchildren of pioneers, but they themselves no longer had a vision, a reason, for being here in this "new" place - they just were. They were not even conscious of it being "new" any longer. My spiritual heritage was in contrast to, and at odds with, the rich red soil in which I played as a toddler. The spiritual heritage of both my parents, was largely unspoken - my mother was a "bush-Catholic" (that is, baptized a Catholic, but not instructed), and my father of Scottish descent was a nominal Presbyterian. It was the paternal lineage that held sway in the way things were understood. At the centre of the cosmology that I was handed, was a harsh father-god, who was no Poet; his creation of the cosmos in seven days was literal. He was a Mechanic, and the Universe was a machine, and he was definitely a male. He - this god, and indeed most of us white Europeans, were products of a long history of humanity in another part of the planet, and in more recent centuries, of events in Europe such as the Reformation and the witch-burnings; but now, these were no longer conscious. There was also now for these people in this new place, no visible memory of something that had been even earlier - some kind of relationship to the natural world. These Europeans were Reformed Christianized people transplanted here from the Northern Hemisphere, with no sense of their historical roots, who knew no synchronicity of the religious festivals that they continued to pay homage to, with the seasons of the Earth. Here in the South land, the supernatural Christian drama of God and Jesus was completely unrelated to place. It was a particularly barren, cerebral religion. While at least in the Northern Hemisphere, when my ancestors had lit candles and sang at the Winter Solstice, though they called it Christmas, there remained a resonance with the land, a memory of something earlier, upon which this ritual was based. In the Southern Hemisphere, there was no such resonance of the religious practice of the Europeans with Earth; and the children here of this religious practice inherited a poverty of spirit, a deep
divorce from Earth that few other religions in the history of Gaia have ever known.

It is common these days for people in Australia to celebrate Halloween on the 31st October, with absolutely no idea that it is supposed to relate to a season, to Earth. Many find it difficult to grasp that it makes any real difference our being in the Southern Hemisphere and experiencing Spring at this time of year. Australians – especially white Australians - are so used to the seasons having no connection to celebrations. Many of the same people will sometimes even be advocates of tuning ourselves to Aboriginal spirituality and connection to the land via this indigenous tradition.

Just as the oak tree outside my back glass doors remembers, even though she is transplanted from the Northern Hemisphere, that she is oak tree - she holds all that genetic memory, and grows as she is coded to do; so I remember the code within me. Just because I was transplanted to a different land, I did not forget from whence I came. I did not suddenly become a different plant. I brought my indigenous nature with me, though it may have felt strange. The oak tree may have felt strange too. Now this land is home, and we will be shaped by it, as we shape it. This is the way of evolution, this is the way Gaia has always done things. A creature/being chooses a new environment, and comes into new relationship; over time both are changed. Certainly I have different freedoms than the oak tree - there is a trans-genetic code that I have as a human, that complexifies my choices; but the dynamic of evolution remains similar, and my resonance with her as sister from the North remains.

Sex Object
A strong part of the cultural milieu in which I grew, was that I was identified as sex object ... with no subjectivity, no space to Be. I have a clear image from my father's pornographic magazines, of women being pursued by salivating men - and the men either believed that she desired this, or they did not care to ask her. In later years, there was a cartoon about a French male cat who obsessively pursued a female skunk - people thought it was funny; it made me so angry.
Christian cosmology has appeared to condone the imposition of a dominant will upon another - at the very heart of it is "the sacrifice of the lamb". To go unwillingly, has been understood as essential to the Universe. Women have been especially vulnerable, with their submission openly advocated (see Rita Brock 2000).

"Marilyn", they sometimes called me, simply because of my babyhood waved platinum hair. I was not particularly cute as I grew up, on the contrary, I was skinny, had buck teeth, freckles and a bad haircut. But Marilyn was suggested to me by this naming, as someone I could model myself after. I didn't think about it a lot, but I don't remember any other significant famous women in the first decade of my life. As a child I was very conscious of being looked at, and perhaps on reflection, it was because I was female. I did feel transparent and vacuous. This was a very early, encompassing experience for me. I had no privacy. I clearly remember believing that others (particularly adults) could see my thoughts. God/He knew everything about me. Santa/He did too. The male humans imitated the Deity with constant Gazing, in magazines, movies, wall calendars. I could only hope to be chosen to be worthy of his desire, yet at the same time it was known that he could be dangerous.

I felt acutely the identification of myself with the "inanimate" world, as it was understood to be - dead and inert. I had no words for it of course. Ursula Le Guin says, "We are told in words, and not in words, we are told by their deafness, ... (that) ...the life experience of women, is not valuable ... to humanity." We have been valued by the patriarchal viewpoint only "as an element of their experience, as things experienced" (1989:155). The male in this worldview was also “inanimate”, albeit the machine that was expected to perform.

Even now, as I come to writing this, I feel the terror of my silence, the "deafness" of the Universe; and I wonder, "Why will it listen now, when it hasn't for so long?" I am an inventor, who has "with few tools, and little by way of appropriate parts", invented "ways of repairing" (Denzin and Lincoln
1994:584). I am a mythmaker, knowing that to survive I must find a story that "Named" me, as Mary Daly has understood. It was Daly who first set me "spinning gynocentric metaphors to Name" (Caputi in Larrington 1992:428), and hence change, reality (Daly 1984:25).

Perhaps one of the earliest indications of a direction to take, came from my mother's hesitance about the stories available, to read to her children. The stories had bits in them that she did not seem to want to tell. She would falter as she read, and then proceed as if making it up. It caused me to wonder, "what did the wolf really do to Little Red Riding Hood and grandma? What other horrible things were possible, that I had not yet imagined?" It seemed my mother would have spared us the whole tale if she could have. I felt my mother's wish for more hopeful tales, tales of a better world. My mother had an ember in her heart that longed for a world that she could embrace, one that she could even just dream of ... if something would help her imagine it. So I always listened for Something Else. Hints of Something Else did come through - in the revelation of the vast starred night sky; and in the revelation of the ancient relationship of sun and land, that this country girl had time to ponder. Something Else also came threaded through poetry that she loved at school, and music on the airwaves from far away places. This music and its culture were revealing that many humans on the planet were pushing the envelope for change, in a big way. She knew she had to go away to find the Something Else - a long way away - into Other Times and Other Places.

Another clue, not in a cognitive level but in a deep intuitive visceral level, came when I experienced the Creative Force of Life in my body - was pregnant for the first time. This was truly revelatory ... it, the Cosmos, Ultimate Mystery, was in me! It was a shock to realize that "something" could grow in me. There was nothing second rate about this. All previous stories had hidden its significance from me. But still I had no words to describe it - no possible expression for this. The knowledge sat in my heart like an uncut jewel, awaiting its time. It was only many years later that I was able to write this story:
Immaculate First Child

She had not really accepted that her body was female. Such a body had no validity, it was not the real thing. Yet here she was apparently pregnant. Her abdomen was beginning to bulge in a very unfamiliar way. She looked at it in amazement. That amazement in itself was one story, but it was one that could not be thought through right now. The story most pressing was, what was she going to do? She was young, single, a college student. Would she tell her mother? Would she marry the father?

She was of spiritual inclination ... a Christian hippie variety; sufficiently hippie to allow her to fall into bed with her bloke, sufficiently Christian to cut her off from the acceptance of it. She really did love him, he was everything she could have wanted. In fact she had really saved herself for such a one. And in contrast to her self image that developed in later years, she had no thought of being inadequate or not good enough for this love, or for him. The spiritual and sexual connection was overwhelming and integral. It was a taste of the Divine, such as she would not know again for a long time ... a taste of the Divine that she was not sufficiently conscious of, else she might not have let it slip through her fingers as it did.

They had imagined themselves in the genre of other great lovers of history and myth, and indeed they were, but they did not really know it. When they came face-up against the social reality they lived in, they could not hold on to what they had known in their hearts and spirits. Their grip on this Poetry was lost, as the social context pounded them against its well defined paradigm. Originally, when her pregnancy was confirmed, they expressed the joy in their union: yes, they celebrated. But it was not long before she was at her wit’s end with despair, tearing at herself, ripping her hair, trying to knock from herself some answer. Where was this Divine Love now? She did not know then that it was her shadow of doubt, and his too, that had eclipsed their joy. They did not have it in them to dare to live this inner Song.

They both hoped for some en-couragement from their pastoral leader, looked to him for some guidance, since they were active in the fostering of church community. Would he support their stepping forth, with the revelation of this Love to the community, so the child could be welcomed? They hoped for acceptance. But he turned them down. The pastoral leader said that it all must be hidden, that the young woman must go away. There was no ambivalence in him about what was right and what was wrong. He seemed to know for sure that this inner, truly human Divinity that they had known as integral, was shameful. And so indeed, it became a thing of pain. She went away.

She went away to grow fat with the child, to birth it, and to give it away. This, she had come to believe, was the “will of God”; that which must be done for the greater good of all, including her own. She even hid her pregnancy from her mother. Some place in her did not believe that her swollen body was shameful, but nothing in the world around her reflected that belief back to her. And it reflected, that “God” was quite different
from whatever it was that she and her lover had known. This "whatever it was", this mystery, had no spokesperson. It remained silent, for a time.

As her pregnancy progressed, her increasingly huge and obviously fertile female body, incubated an awareness of foreignness. The child stirred within her. The "God" believers, the church (and she thought she was one of them), offered her residence in a home for "unmarried mothers". The home was run by nuns, dressed in mediaeval style, many of whom no doubt struggled to story their own desiring, bleeding female organism in a context that gave it no words. Her fertile fatness just made it more confronting. Then one day, as she sat in a church as she frequently did, a crack appeared in her cosmic egg - something in her ripened. She had the strangest thought: "What if the Deity was Female?" It was like a lightning bolt through her mind. Where did such an idea come from? No-one had whispered any such possibility to her. The feeling persisted: "What if the Deity knew this experience of swollen breasts and belly, this moving ocean within Her?" The young woman knew simultaneously that everything would be different. There would be no "will of God": the Divinity in her would be manifest, the joy in the life within her could be lived. She would no longer be outcast. Amazed at this wonder, she went and wrote to her lover. Come and be with me she said, we can do this together, there is a way, I have seen it. But it was like Magdalen trying to tell the disciples of her vision; it seemed to them pure nonsense. And so it seemed to her lover. He had no grasp of what she could be babbling about. This inability in him, this refusal in him, closed the door again. There was no reception of her epiphany. She must be mad. The Mystery went back into its shell. She shut her mouth and got on with the "will of God", for a long time to come.

She gave her immaculate first child away. He was not to be hers. Neither she, nor the father, had it in them to hold this Mystery; and the world was allowed to go on, as if it never existed. The only thing changed forever was her soul, hidden like the marks on her body. She spent many years being ashamed of her inability to hold the Mystery, feeling so inadequate.

But her hunger for it was something that would not be cut off from her for long. It would rise again like the ocean, come to claim her. It would call to her, and she would go. She would give up much, travel far, spend years looking. She would find some bits and think she had it all. She would dig herself into some disastrous places. She would have to sort through some stinking garbage within herself, in the midst of which she would forget what it was that she was searching for.

What she sought was a capacity within herself to hold the Mystery - is this what was meant by the Holy Grail? Was the Holy Grail a place, a vessel in one's self, wherein was a potent essence of knowledge of Integrity? This too was her quest, not just to taste the Divine as she had done before, but to know it so profoundly in herself that it could not slip away again.
The Quest for the Mother

I remember the first time I sensed the Mother in the ocean ... it was in Santa Cruz, I was pregnant for the third time, I had heard of Goddess by then, and She had been in my dreams. In the ocean I saw the hugeness, the depth, the source. At that time I was still a long way from naming Her, remembering Her so intimately, but within a year, I did invoke Her and begin a committed research of Her story. It was with the words of poet H.D., that I dedicated my lust for this knowledge:-

"Swiftly re-light the flame,
Aphrodite, holy name,

Astarte, hull and spar
of wrecked ships lost your star,

forgot the light at dusk,
forgot the prayer at dawn;

return, O holiest one,
Venus whose name is kin

to venerate,
venerator" (1973:75\(^{177}\))

Though She was already present, I now presented myself, took up residence in my observatory, dusted it off, opened my telescope to the hidden depths of my inner space. As light travels through outer space to us from the beginning, so I called Her light forward through the millennia within. The Daughter in me heard Mother from the ages call, streaming up through time. I listened, I put pen to paper. H.D.'s words encouraged me. H.D. wrote - in 1945:

"she must have been pleased

with the straggling company of the brush and quill
who did not deny their birthright;

she must have been pleased with us,
for she looked so kindly at us

under her drift of veils,
and she carried a book" (ibid:100)

The book had "... blank pages of the unwritten volume of the new" (ibid:103).

\(^{177}\) From H.D.'s "Tribute to the Angel's" 1945.
My quest for the Mother, ironically, did involve the leaving of my children for a period of years. It was a painful initiation, that only makes sense at all when considered in a Larger context; that although the particulars of my life construed to eventuate in this, I was also part of something much bigger. On reflection, I understand that the passion which drove me on, was the wish in my mother’s heart, and then in my own, for a world to give my children. I did not want to give them the one I had grown up in. And the world that the children needed was one that would nurture spirit, and matter - it was to be One, or there would not be a world at all.

I have been delighted to have found in more recent times that I have been in good company. Ramakrishna, Hindu mystic of the 19th century, was caught in a passion for the Mother. His pupil, Vivekananda said, "It was no new truths that Ramakrishna came to preach, though his advent brought old truths to light" (Walker 1983:493 quoting Encyc. Brit., "Ramakrishna"). Ramakrishna had ecstatic experience of the Mother’s oceanic being, and revitalized understanding of Her.

My journey however, began much more naively, with not as much sense of what I was biting into, less prepared in spirit than Ramakrishna for what lay ahead. The journey into Her story, means a participation in Her descent and return, it means a shattering of what went before. How does a woman stop being object, and become subject? How does she become the body in her own mind? It requires more than a headtrip, it requires the descent of Inanna, a falling apart. I was still a product of patriarchal narrative - sex object really, and still seeking the Beloved (the Mother) outside myself. What did it take to move from that, to allow a fertile darkness within, from which the Self could begin? The regaining of integrity, and an understanding of why we lost it, or did not have it, can require a great darkness. My life did fall apart, I was lost.

“Completely dismantled
- all the stock taken out of the cupboards.
Strip them bare
   Pull apart my knowings
- rip them open, let the connections be severed.

Expose all the parts, every cell
to the sunlight
de-toxify
throw away
move it all around
mix it, mix it
skim the dross

With mortar and pestle pound Her
Is She mortified sufficiently yet?
Has She seen it all yet?

Pound Her more, take it from Her

Like panning for gold ......
is there any?
What will be left?

The grit, the metal, the stones
found at the bottom of the wash ....
This is the new composition.
Begin composing it now.

Write it, sing it, melt it back together,
re-Form it, re-Cognize it,
breath it, dance it.

Let it grow.

Praise the Dark One who dismantled you dear
who took off your robes
exposed you
She took you apart
- because you lusted to know
Now She has filled your cells,
your blue print
with new possibility
- bled the poison
emptied the cup
that it may be filled.” (Livingstone 1995)

I began to find words, and consciousness of my assigned cultural destiny as sex object. I wrote:

What did it take to move from that, to develop a shell, a protective boundary, to pull the shades on the imposing mostly male Gaze, to allow a fertile darkness within my being, where "I" could begin? What did it take to create this kind of darkness, a safe place to Be, to shut out the world and scream "I"?
... A sex object has to completely fall apart before she can rebuild herself in her own image. She has fall into the mud, begin again, perform her own acts of Creation, mold herself of this solid material. It is out of the mud that the lotus blossoms. It does not grow on some pedestal, under the light of the eternal Gaze. ... How ironic that our paternal mythmakers made Medusa's gaze the deadly one!
Thus my comfort with the Darkness of She, Her autopoietic aspect – I have found in my research that this was also the experience of the Dark of other women who had known invasiveness/objectification of a sexual kind (Loret and Sandy). My creativity comes out of my subjectivity, my inner depths; this is where my ability (able-ty) springs from. I have barely believed in this sentience myself - this Source of my ability. I am ambivalent about writing "Source" with a capital, as I also want to affirm that it is "source", with a small "s", to affirm that it is in me - and of course, it is the Ocean, it is Source; but my small part of it springs from the ground of my own small source. This Goddess Metaphor, this Wisdom tradition, is about recognizing the Power within each one ... making the Hera's journey, taking it for ourselves ... empowerment: as opposed to a worldview that says some have this sentience and some don't. It is the difference between Kali, who is an agent of destruction and creation, and Eve who answers to a Creator outside of herself. In this Goddess cosmology, I "participate directly in the cosmos-creating endeavour", as Swimme puts it when speaking of the autopoietic aspect of Cosmogenesis (Swimme and Berry 1992:75). I am not a passive recipient or bystander.

As She was re-storied/re-stored within me:

**Personal Poems of Self-Resurgence**

The Form and the Shape that they sought
was not in any Atlas,
Her gaps had been covered up,
Her hollows filled in,
Her name blanked out.
She lay buried beneath things, silent,
but with a detectable visceral pulse.

**VIRGIN**

Virgin,
- warrior of the spirit,
urging me on
calling forth my green shoots
singing them out of the darkness.
in love with this new life
no-one can distract you.
Yet you do not curse the darkness
you know it and trust it.
After the storm, the tempest, the destruction,
in the compost,
Is there a will to live?
something to grow?
From whence will come the mighty forest?
Where does it begin?

Artemis, great Virgin Goddess
of the hibernating bear who wakes in the Spring
of the deer whose antlers regrow so fast

Protect our spirits, our will to life
tend the Flame within us.

MOTHER
Mother ... mother
Matrix of whom I am a part
Elements flux in and out
a continuation of the Original Ovulation.
In silence I reach to
increase the space inside of me.
As traction decompresses the spine
Silence and stillness decompress my spirit,
quickening new electro-chemical impulses
in my matrix ... matter ... mater
making room for new gestations
new.birthings.

Mother,
  Mother

reaching for you within me
reaching for me within you

Birthing you birthing me.

The Re-Birth of Her Spirit  (See FIGURE 2\textsuperscript{172})

And the Goddesses came
  and helped Her from the water.
One on each side they supported Her.
Her legs were weak and quivering,
  like a young foal she wobbled.
So uncertain She was of Her step.

\textsuperscript{172} This image is Plate 155 in Neumann 1974, where it is named as “The Birth of the Goddess”. It has been the central icon for my self-resurgence. Some time after the image had come to my consciousness, as expressing this journey I was on, I realized how much in contrast it was to that of the icon of Roman Catholicism – a dying mutilated god alone on a cross.
Candlemas

The light now beckons me
calls me forward and out.

I, the small green shoot
reach for, slither to, the light.

Her energy pulls me out and up.

Goddess Prayer 2001 C.E.

Mother - She within me Who is deeply related
Virgin - She within me Who is ever new
Crone – She within me Who returns me to All
Holy is my Being.
The Mystery pervades all...
May I understand my Inner guidance.
I graciously receive the infinite daily abundance
I forgive my insensitivities and lack of skill
- and forgive others the same.
May I respond to my Divine Passion.
    I am in Awe ...
    and give thanks to the Light & Dark within.

Recognizing Her

I feel the urgency - the Urge-ncy of Being to unfold.
    I have called it panic. I have panicked.

Now ... recognizing Her in me.

I tremble, the tremor of uncertainty, the quantum fluctuation
    - is Her presence ...
    before She unfolds,
    rushes away from Herself, with news of Herself.

I feel Her emptiness.
    I have called it vacuous.
    It is Her fullness.

... this is Annunciation.
Now recognizing Her in me.

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173 This is the Christian name for the Imbolc Season – a name I still used at the time (1995).
174 I first wrote this prayer in 1995, and made changes to it, as my perceptions shifted. I have records of
each of its stages of evolution. It was based on “The Lord’s Prayer”, and the contrast of expression and
The Personal Practice of Meditation

This has been essential to the research, to the deepening into each Sabbat, to the attending to the subtleties of the processes, and to my embodiment and comprehension of the Female Metaphor.

The three candles ritual meditation that was part of the evening meditation, was always evolving, incorporating emerging complexities and current experience of the Metaphor. For example:

23.10.99
I lit the first candle ... remembering all who have come before me, who bring me to this present moment. I remember the supportive community - who are my Place ... my Place to Be. I know the Mother in the support from others - Graham, Erin, Susan ... This is the Place where I can Be.

I lit the second candle ..., remembering the One who Will Be, the Urge. I see my children as manifestations of the Future ... I think of the Future stretching out into the millennia ahead. I think of Artemis' arrow flying true and on Centre, unswerving.

I lit the third candle ... remembering the Crone, Holy One who creates the Space to Be, She who returns us the Sentience. I think of death, how She creates room for the new, the ongoing revelation.

16.12.00, I was becoming more aware of how each one was all three, and so I expressed it:

I remember all who have gone before me – it is the Mother, the Sustaining Net, yet it is also the Crone; it is the past as well as the present, and the future is seeded in it.

I remember all who will come after me – it is the Virgin, the Not yet, but it is for whom I my life is given, given over – so it is the Crone, it is the Return, my dissolution.

I remember All-That-Is – it is the Wisdom of the Old One, it is the Present - the Eternal Now, and it is all that we do not yet perceive.

This developed further by 29.1.01. My notes were:

All who have gone before me – present now ... my teachers, the Sangha, the ancient creatures ... it is past, it is present – those who provide the Network of the Mother, the Web of Life. And it doesn’t stop here in this moment ... it goes on into the future, and I am part of the Web/Network provided for the present and the future.

All who come after me – the future - present now ... the children, the bright Shining One within, the Buddha, potential, the ever renewing Virgin ... present from the beginning. present now in our decisions in every moment, we are creating this future. It is past – unknown and felt for ("haunted by a melody we
can't quite sing\(^{175}\), it is present in our daily actions, it is future – unknown and
dreamt of/imagined.

All-That-Is ... present Now, the open Moment, Eternal, the Dharma, the
Ancient One beyond all knowledge, the Truth as it is, All, seen at once, with no
distinction – All Now. It is past, it is present, it is future.

These three are not univocal ... they dwell within each other, yet are dynamics
in themselves... as we are entities/dynamics yet dwelling within each other,
within the Larger One.

The Re-Storying and the Seasonal Process

I do realize at this stage, an embodied knowing of Belonging – here in Gaia -
and something of what that entails. I have Re-Storied, and continue to Re-
Story, myself to Centre, which is where all of us belong – to an
understanding of ourselves as at Centre. This Creative process – and
certainly the conscious reflection upon it - has largely overcome the dualistic
patriarchal injunction in my heart, enabling real transformation of my life. It
has been a Return to the Mother. The Female Metaphor renews herself over
and over – and so may I. The practice of seasonal cycle of rituals reminds me
constantly of impermanence, yet takes me deeply into each
transition/Sabbat. They are indeed “moments of grace” – holy days. This
practice teaches me how each moment is an event, that does not last, is ever-
new, to be celebrated and savoured – not to be pre-occupied with the past or
the future, so that this moment is missed.

This year - 2001, in the weeks leading to Winter Solstice, a time of recalling
the Stillpoint, I wrote:

She calls me in to the stillness. It's like I speak the words of the ritual, the
season; they dwell in me and begin to “scribe” me, they “script” me – I am not
pre-scribed, I have scribed these words of my choosing, they “spell” me.
“Let us join the breath of nature in her suspension” I say; and I come to feel the
need to – I succumb.
“She rests, we wait, within the Dark Space, within the Cauldron ...” I say; it
happens to me, I perceive the need to rest, to wait – I feel I will “unravel” if I
don't.
I reflect that I do “spell” myself with this process, but it is a Creative Spell – a
healing, wholing process that is trustworthy given its Creative track record.
And it is not a betrayal of She within me.

My Mabon Process 2000 notes (pp.16,17, 18, 21, 29) reflect an experience of
being able to story my experience of loss of self - of losing balance – with this
seasonal metaphor; thus retaining my sense of alignment in some way,

\(^{175}\) Swimme (1990:video 7).
 retaining my sense of connection to centre. I reflect how this has been important - to have a cosmology that will support my everyday experience; and how Mabon season and its story, as I dwell in it, lets me know that I am Child of the Mother – even in my loss and in my losing.

In the Samhain Process notes 2000, as I was preparing for big changes in my life – a new significant relationship, that I sensed as a marriage from very early on176, I wrote:

30.3.00
... I feel like a Queen – as Demeter invokes at Mabon ... “I let you go as Daughter, most loved of mine ... you become Queen.”

At Lammas we identify with the Dark and Ancient Wise One. At Samhain we participate in Her process. At Imbolc we identify with the Virgin; at Beltane we participate in Her process.

At the end of my meditation tonight, as I make my transition now:
I have remembered that I am She... I am the Bright Shining One, I am the Dark and Ancient Wise One, I am the Bread of Life. This is Who I am ... I have remembered.

Of course, this self-alignment with Self, is not without its uncertainty. My diary notes for Mabon-Samhain Process 2001 (26.3.01) record:

Even as I came to write this up ... the panic .... old stuff ... a lack of belief in the Sentience within. This was why I hadn’t stayed on in Berkeley to finish my M.A. ... why I eventually had to leave my family to finish my M.A. ... an inability to allow myself Space to Be. I had to perform radical acts to take it for myself. Now I am offered the chance again ... to allow myself the Space ... it is being handed to me ... I simply have to accept it, let it grow in me. I remember my poem ‘Recognizing Her’ ... meditate upon it.

I relax more during the day ... enjoy ... remember some of the “compost” that has brought me to this point of great Beauty – those who have brought pain yet also taught me things that add goodness to my life now. I bless those in my past. I feel a new cycle of Power.

The poem .... It is so Samhain .... or is it Imbolc? ... it is both.
Even in Samhain I feel Imbolc ... in the Dark Space, the Creativity/Power begins ... I begin to feel it more. Just as at Beltane, I sense and know the immanent Dissolution.

Imbolc Process 2000 notes record how much of a challenge I had found the celebration of the Light, of Manifestation – the articulation of self: I had written in August 1998 – Imbolc:

It seems to me more daring to celebrate manifestation, the virgin, Imbolc, the growing light - because it has seemed more temporary, a flash, an event of short term. So it has seemed more correct and real to celebrate the Dark.

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176 He is now my partner, having ritualized our marriage for ourselves in a ceremony at Stonehenge later that year.
Yet, as I was writing that into my research notes in January 2000 - Lammas (Wheel of the Year 11.1.00) I reflected then on my grown awareness of Creativity of Gaia - 15 billion years, as not so temporary, not such a flash. I realized then that it is only my particular self that is the flash. I wrote:

Yet the cycle calls me to celebrate the light with equal fervour. How can I do this knowing it won’t last - to attach to what flashes in and out of existence? It occurs to me that it requires loss of ego also, because of course, manifestation does go beyond me - I participate in it and in its process, but Creativity is the name of the journey, and that always has and always will go on. We humans have more of an empirical sense of that than ever before.

So when I dedicate myself to the Virgin in my Self - to my self - I am dedicating my small self to the Larger ongoing Self - the virgin aspect of the Creativity of the Cosmos that does go on. It is awesome and worth celebrating, worth participating in consciously. The Virgin energy is celebrating differentiation. We each ‘light our own light and become uniquely ourselves’, celebrating ongoing manifestation (like the early stages of the Fireball). To venture into apparent separation and to rejoice in that, requires the noble, the warrior spirit, the strong of heart. It also requires strength not to fall into self-importance and ego - to remember the Larger Creativity of which this self is part (Lammas will remind one of that).

And in Lammas Process 2000:

The spider outside my doors teaches me about Sentience. She has a creative capacity to make her web, the most amazing construction. She doesn’t go to school to learn it. She knows it. We have at least this kind of consciousness, that enables us to participate in the cosmos creating endeavour. We have to listen to the depths (20.1.00).

And a few days later, I reflected:

“I am able to feel myself as the Grain that is harvested, I feel myself as the Harvest. I remember the Dark Sentience within me. I am able to let this individual self go ... trusting Her Knowing” (24.1.00).

In that same Season, I was preparing to go to visit my mother in Queensland – the landscape of my early years. I had some anxiety about it. I wrote:

How will I remember that I am Dark and Ancient Wise One? How will I remember the Dark Sentience within me? - especially say, when I go to Queensland. What will I wear that will remind me? I put some grains on my altar, ash in a little shell, touch the ash to the centre of my chest. Increasingly today, I have the sense of having made a "dedication" to the Sentience ... equivalent to the "bridal dedication" of Imbolc. This dedication of Lammas is what the statement at the fire is about - we have given ourselves back to Her. Increasingly today I feel this ... I am not scared of it, as I was before. And the promise is that we will proceed in joy and abundance ...

I arrange the veil on my headpiece where it sits on the bookshelf, aware of my need to ponder its darkness more, and remember to whom I belong. I am more deeply Hers ... it is just happening, as part of this process. I am not so afraid because it is to myself that I am saying I belong - She is not separate. That is the amazing thing about this Metaphor and the rituals etc. ... coming to know this.
Am I Making All This Up?

Early on in the research, I did worry at times whether I was “making all this up”. In Lammas Process 2000, I wrote:

Am I making all this up? Is there support for it - for using Lammas this way, in any Goddess tradition? (27.12.99)

I then went to my references for reassurance. I found in Durdin-Robertson’s *The Year of the Goddess:*

"The festivals of late summer open the great Mysteries of Life, ... They celebrate the Goddess as the Source of all life, the Creatrix and Sustainer of the cycles of existence through which the soul moves. The ultimate revolution in the life of every soul, turning back to the Goddess is particularly a subject for meditation during the late summer and autumn" (1990:141-143).

And Durdin-Robertson referred to Adam McLean’s *Fire Festivals* (1979:20-22), saying that “Lammas ... is the festival marking the transformation of the Goddess into her Earth Mother aspect, ... ” (1990:141-143) – which I took to mean Her chthonic aspect, which I language as Crone.

I settled into my role as storyteller, writing:

I am "making some of it up" to some extent - I am an inventor, a myth-maker. It is "gynergetic symbolization" - I think it is a remembering of the Female Metaphor which has been completely forgotten and misunderstood. She hasn’t been known for a long time in Her fullness. But it does fit in with Celtic understandings of Lughnasad ... as Starhawk speaks of the Dark face of the God ... the one who understands death. I think I am simply remembering aspects of that celebration, as well as creating them afresh - (which Starhawk invites), as I move into the Mystery of the full cycle, of the full Darkness, re-instating darkness and the movement into Darkness to its full integrity.

As I come to completing the three aspects for this first document, I get a sense of a Gestalt in my being. (Lammas Process notes 27.12.99)

In Mabon Process 1999 notes, before these reflections, I had noted a sense of how the script writes itself – emerges in me once the intention is set. After the Mabon ritual 1999, I spontaneously awoke early and went out to see the dawn – this was highly unusual for me. When I saw it, the actual physical experience seemed really important - the permeation of the light into my being, into my eyeballs ... to physically experience the dawn and that it happens ... to know it. I later read in Mara Lyn Keller’s account of the Eleusinian Mysteries that this was a part of the rites - to witness the dawn (1990:50)\(^{177}\). It was like I had started playing in a structure, and a house began

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\(^{177}\) I thought then that I would make this part of next year’s Mabon ritual; as it turns out it is not practical at this stage because so far, the rituals are only one-evening events. I do, in the course of the Mabon teaching however, encourage participants to witness the dawn the next day.
to form. The building was an intuitive process, supported and encouraged by
the work and inspiration of others.

I had long been encouraged by the words of Monique Wittig where she
describes the attempt to remember an earlier mode of being for which it is
said "there are no words" and therefore perhaps "it does not exist" (1973:89).
Wittig says, "Make an effort to remember. Or, failing that, invent" (ibid).

The encountering of difficulties in carrying out the rituals -
learning to maintain focus:
Mabon 1999 was at the beginning of the research process, and though I felt it
was a particularly powerful experience, it had also been fraught with
procedural difficulties – possible distractions. I wrote in the Mabon 1999
post-ritual notes of how:

(i) one person phoned after the meditation had begun wanting to be picked up
    from the station ... I said no, it was too late, no-one could come now.
(ii) I realized when we began the Invocation that I had not taught this chant,
    thinking it would be easier to pick up. We pushed on. It was OK.
(iii) one person arrived late during the Invocation. That was very tricky to
    maintain the focus. In fact in future that should not happen.
(iv) During the ritual, I had to shift gears when I heard the rain come. We had
    planned to plant the bulbs out of doors and it was all set up out there. So that
    all had to be re-arranged when the time came, while not breaking the focus.
(v) the relaxed communion was a challenge for some new people who
    collapsed into casual discussion, but I was able to hold the focus by
    spontaneously telling the story of Demeter and Persephone in the Goddess
    tradition, and then toasting these Goddesses and affirming the omnipresence
    of the seed of life.

Realizing the importance of my personal journey to this project:
Mabon 1999 notes:

I realize that I could not facilitate this ritual, if I had not been there ...
descended. ... and returned. I have identified with Persephone, stepping the
path to the Underworld ... and I must have carried the "wheat" - the Inner
Wisdom guided my steps, for I made it back out. The seed of Life has been
present to me, and I now realize that this omnipresence is a Truth of the
cosmos ... it is affirmed in quantum physics and the new biology ... I am at
Centre which is everywhere, and the Creative Principle is present.

Samhain Process 1999:

I love this Samhain ritual because I feel it in my own story. I know what it is to
have discovered that I am More, to have consumed and transformed 'shit' in
my being, to have dared to enter the Creative Space where all previous
constellations are gone.

I then did a very passionate meditation, beginning to embody and memorize
the ritual. I called upon the support of the sisters who have celebrated this rite
before me, who know well this energy and place. I found myself taking a belly
dance pose that I have never attempted before, arching backwards and
holding it while moving my hands and arms snakelike.

"Able to clothe others with blessing"^178

As I have found the "Poetry" present now in my Being, I have become
confident at this stage to facilitate spontaneous improvised ceremony for
large groups^179. I wrote of the Poetry in my journal this year:

I wanted it on my lips, in my mind, in my eyes, in my hands and feet – and it is
so. These ritual scripts, these ritual experiences take me there. (Journal 19.2.01)

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, with the quote from Matthews,
this intensely personal process of research, is one that has blessed and
enabled others as well. Yet it has not been a simple one-way traffic, nor even
a simple two-way traffic; it has been a complex reciprocal process wherein
they, by their participation, have enabled the process itself – my personal
process – as I enabled theirs. They blessed me as they felt the story with me,
and listened and responded as I told it. They heard me, and I heard their
response – I unfolded, they unfolded – we were delighted. We found a
resonance with the storying of Gaia’s Seasons, we noticed Her more – around
us and in us, and each of us continues to – with our own unique Poetry.

^179 For example, at the Closing Ceremony of the UWS Summer School 2001.
THE PARTICIPANTS, THE INTERVIEWS
– THE QUESTIONS AND PROCESS

As I come to writing this part of the thesis, including the next chapter, as I contemplate the raw data that I have, and then sit with it, I realize that this is the heart and soul of the thesis. These chapters are about the Place within where it actually happened/happens. This is where “She” is carried forth, related with, conceived and re-conceived – by all the participants including myself. This has been and is, the interface, the Communion – of inner and outer, the Point of Interchange, the Fruition – where the Fruit is eaten by us all, or not, as we speak “Her” and our deep truths with each other, in the sacred space. In the language of Mies and Shiva, this is where the research integrates with social action (1993:40), where in the tasting/knowing the status quo is changed (ibid).

My task then is to try to articulate some of what took place for people in these experiences, either at the moment or over a period of time. I have already mentioned in the Preface, that I understand the incompleteness of such an undertaking, because there are subtleties to be perceived that perhaps even the most astute may miss or at least find may find unspeakable. However there are many perceivable effects, that have translated into the everyday lives of participants, and these chapters will be a conveyance of those and their complexities.

The process of participating in “sacred space”, as it has been articulated within this thesis, is different from simply being lectured to or told something, or from having a discussion. In sacred space, the whole being is engaged; we are able to speak and hear the depths of our felt knowings. In this sacred space, we are close to the blueprint of our lives, as close as each is able to be; and that ability within each is varied and complex. The variation of ability to approach the “blueprint”, from time to time within the same person, and then from person to person, affects what a participant will gain and possibly integrate.
The Participants in the Seasonal Celebrations - in General

The groups of participants that form for each Sabbat are very diverse – different every time, though there is always a fairly consistent group within that – they are the ones for whom this has become an important expression. The degree of involvement for each participant varies. Throughout the research period there have been both women and men, and sometimes children, in attendance. The women are by far the largest proportion of the group, and for quite a period of these rituals, we were the whole group.

Except in the case of those interviewed for this research, no questions are asked about participants' spiritual traditions or other practice, but from casual conversation and what has been voluntarily told, most participants come from a childhood of Christian tradition, each usually having added variations of spiritualities since. Quite a few of the interviewed participants – as it turned out - had had fairly intense involvement in varied Christian denominations in the past; and before coming into these celebrations, had been through a period of staying away from "packaged religion", as one called it (Linda). They thus came into participation in these Seasonal rituals "being-aware" of not going along with processes they felt uncomfortable with, or "being-aware" of what it felt like to not be truthful to themselves.

Most of the participants are of white Western European descent, and a consistent factor especially for those who repeatedly participate, is a desire to find a way of celebrating their relationship with Earth and/or ways of deepening their relationship with Earth. A few would be categorized as having a "deep ecological" background, while others would be only ideologically committed at this point in time; with many variations in between. Mostly, the people who provide the context for these events of celebration, have no label for their variety of religiosity, and they have no regular group through which they experience religious/spiritual expression. Some do belong to, or loosely adhere to, religious/philosophical groups - Anthroposophy, varieties of Eastern spiritual practices, varieties of Pagan spiritual practices. Once, a Muslim woman who secretly nurses her own sacred understandings, "snuck" out to attend a celebration - it took courage and daring for her to do so. The participants are all desirous of a communal
expression of their understanding of the deep truths of existence - a communal expression that honours their integrity, calls them to their depths, and fosters the growth of those depths. The people do desire a "place", a gathering, moments/events, where they can share with others, and express for themselves, the wonder, awe, pain, joy, hopes, gratitude, of life, in a metaphor/language that is resonant with them. Some people simply want to celebrate the season, though this too comes in varying individual conscious depths - this is especially true at large events such as the Winter Solstice. The men who participate are frequently, but not always, partners of the women; but they are all to varying degrees familiar with the Goddess metaphor for themselves, and usually embrace some form of Earth-based spirituality - Celtic, Pagan, Taoist, Gaian; some have no name for it.

There are some participants who come with very little prior knowledge, especially to the more public celebrations, and then they go on to attend others. One example of such a person, is a woman who had come to the Winter Solstice ritual after seeing it advertised as I did for that event. She phoned to book for the Eostar ritual, after I had sent her an invitation about it. She said that she had looked up the dictionary to find out who Persephone was. I gave her a brief explanation of the pre-patriarchal version of Persephone's story, and encouraged her to find her own connection with this. Basic to this thesis is the assumption that just because a person does not know the name Persephone, does not mean she do not have an inkling of "who" She is. This woman no doubt has experience that she could and may, understand as spiritual/sacred, but with which she never thought to associate Female Metaphor. It is my contention that this sacred experience may come more fully to consciousness if it can find a Poetry. The Female Metaphor is a Poetry, perhaps more suited to female experience, and it is my thesis, to the Creativity of the Cosmos.

Some of the people - women and men both - who attend the celebrations are particularly conscious of making a "gynergetic foray into language, myth, symbol and image", and "laying claim to the power of Naming and hence realizing (making real) ourselves and the world we invoke" (Caputi in Larrington 1992:438). It is a shamanic tradition, in accord with an
understanding of shamanism as finding "for ourselves our individual role in the matrix" (Drury 1989:101). All humans have the right and integrity to do this ... "if we find it not within ourselves, we will never find it without."\textsuperscript{180}

The Four “Core” Participants – Debbie, Loret, Anne, Lyn

These women had been participating in the seasonal celebrations since within the first year of the first formal scripting of the rituals - 1998. Two of them had heard me speak about my work at a women’s group they were part of, and they knew the other two rather loosely through the Steiner school that all of their children attended. At that time they were not particularly linked as a group of four friends. They each started into the process at different Sabbats that year – some at Mabon, some at Samhain; but by Winter Solstice 1998 - my first public seasonal ritual, they were all present. With the exception of one, they participated as drummers at this event, thus to this extent and sometimes more, they participated consciously as co-celebrants – albeit with limited knowledge in some ways\textsuperscript{181} - from this beginning time. They continued as drummers at the celebrations thereafter, and by Samhain 1999 when it was clear that they would likely become part of the research project, they also formally took the roles of handling the four Elements, as each Element was invoked in that ritual, and at rituals thereafter. We then formally entered into a process wherein they were given the ritual scripts before the event, and we would meet so that their roles and the drumming could be worked out.

When the research began, they consented formally to remain with the process, with an added post-ritual meeting each Sabbat, and my recording of their expressed experience at each of the meetings. The pre and post-ritual meetings became, at that time, more of a space for teaching about the Sabbats, so that their capacity as co-celebrants could be deepened; so that they could more easily take on roles of blessing and invocation knowing something more of the depth of what they were saying. The class processes that they participated in, also enabled these roles. These four “core” participants attended a “Re-Storying and Celebrating Goddess in You” class

\textsuperscript{180} As it states in The Charge of the Goddess (Starhawk 1989:91).
\textsuperscript{181} ... realizing that my own knowledge had its limits also.
series, just prior to the beginning of the research process. These women were the main reason for, and the initiators of, the “En-Trancing Goddess” class series. They all attended this series, as the research was beginning.

At the time of each ritual, a few moments before it began, we would all five – sometimes with other co-celebrants, gather in a circle holding hands, to centre ourselves as a group. Their support became important to me, and to the whole ritual process, just as they expressed to me that the rituals and all that I brought became important for them.

**Those Chosen for Interviews**

The final and formal interviewing of each of the four core participants for the research was then an obvious choice. The decision about who else to interview was also largely obvious, in that as the research period progressed, there was a pool of participants who had become quite regular. The main choice that had to be made was simply one of drawing the line at some number, for reasons of managing the data. I decided on ten more – Kaye, Geoff, Cath.T., Helen, Annie B., Annabelle, Sandy, Catherine K., Gareth, and Linda.

Five of the ten chosen had at different times, participated in the series of “Re-Storying and Celebrating Goddess in You” - Kaye, Cath T., Helen, Annie B., Annabelle. Though this was not a deciding factor for my choice to interview them, it may have been a factor in their choice to participate in the seasonal ritual celebrations so frequently. One of these – Kaye - had also participated in an “En-Trancing Goddess” series, and had become a drummer sometimes at the rituals during the research process; thus she entered into some pre and post-ritual meetings, and was in receipt of some of the ritual scripts and teaching.

Another two of these five – Annie B. and Annabelle - were women who had participated in the seasonal celebrations from their early inception, and with whom I was and am, in Moon Circle. Both of them had attended a “Re-Storying” class series, a year or two before we began celebrating the seasons together. The presence of both of them, was crucial to the birthing and the
continuity of the rituals in the early informal days; and they each took varied celebrational roles. At the early formalizing of the rituals, Annie B. in particular was frequently energetic support and thus co-celebrant. At the first public event, it was important to me that she was present and handling the Elements, because I felt she knew the depth of the sacred space and its processes – due to her own spiritual practice. She had also been support person at a “Re-Storying” Goddess workshop I taught. Both of these women continued to be frequently present at the celebrations throughout the research period, though they each now gladly became “part of the crowd”.

One other of the interviewees – Linda - had been part of the Moon Circle in its early days, and had participated constantly at that time, in the seasonal celebrations, as well as being fairly constantly present now.

Sandy was a more recent but frequent participant, who began early into the formal research period. Catherine K. had only attended a few seasonal celebrations, but her enthusiasm had been marked. She invited me on occasion, to facilitate a seasonal ritual with her women’s group.

The two remaining interviewees were men – Geoff and Gareth. Gareth is partner of another participant and interviewee, but his attendance at the celebrations had its own integrity. Geoff was a friend of mine, who began to come to some of the first formal rituals in 1998, and continued participating throughout most of the research period. He was the first man to be so frequently present, and was one of two men who first verbally identified with “She” in the rituals. His participation, like that of other men, was always without any outer note of his different gender; neither he nor the women made an issue of it. Though I can say, that personally for me, and for some other participant women with whom I later spoke, it was of inner note to hear Geoff speak the invocational response at Imbolc 99, wherein he first identified with Virgin – She - in himself. For the women - amongst ourselves, without noting it publicly - this kind of identification from the men, with the Female Metaphor, has been a healing of another aspect of our own alienation.
Other Participant Feedback

I also have consent from other participants to write into this thesis, their unsolicited written feedback.

The Interview Methodology

At first, I felt some of the questions for the four core participants should be different than those for the others, and this was actually the case to some extent; but frequently as I progressed with an interview of a “less involved” participant, I ended up asking some of the same more “in depth” questions, as I found an openness to extended experience. I will list the questions here, as they were generally asked, but there was nothing “hard and fast” about the exact way they were asked and in what order, as sometimes the interviewee would jump “ahead” in their responses, causing me to skip questions or rephrase. The interview was, to a degree, conversational, as sometimes the insertion of my experience would elicit from the interviewee their own experience, and further articulation of thoughts, imaginings, feelings\textsuperscript{182}. As researchers Miller and Glassner point out (1997:100), it is only in interviews that

“recognize and build on their interactive components (rather than trying to reduce and control them), that ‘intersubjective depth’ and ‘deep-mutual understanding’ can be achieved (and, with these, the achievement of knowledge of social worlds).”

I agree with Miller and Glassner (1997:99) that it is possible to gather information about the social world through interviewing, despite criticism that interviewer and interviewee create and construct narrative versions of the social world. The whole point of this thesis is the recognition that each, and collectively, we create narratives; that is, that the participants and I are in the process of “re-storying”. So in the interview I am not afraid of this, as long as the interviewee is the one allowed, as much as possible, to be the one “writing the script”; that I position myself as a ‘good listener’ (ibid:104). All the interviewees are conscious to some extent of telling a “collective story” (ibid referring to Richardson 1990:25); that is, one which they perceive to be their part of a Wisdom that has been silenced for generations, and which is also their co-creation of a “not-yet” Wisdom. They have all understood that

\textsuperscript{182} An example of this is in the interview with Cath T., where I describe an experience of mine and she responds.
their participation in the ritual celebrations and in the research project is not part of a mainstream cultural story, but in the telling of an “alternative” one (ibid). For this reason the qualitative interview is the ideal tool for this research project, having the capacity to “access self-reflexivity among interview subjects, ...” (Miller and Glassner 1997:104).

Pertinent to the interviews for this research is “the issue of how interviewees respond to us based on who we are - in their lives” (ibid:101). I had developed a relationship with the interviewees over time – we generally shared “social category/membership” (ibid), we knew each other as friends. The interviewees were not just responding to a bunch of facts or prescribed pills, they were responding in part to our relationship, and to the Poetry/Story we had co-created; and they were responding not only in the context of the actual interview, but also in the context of all the celebrations I have facilitated in which they had personally participated. The interviews were frequently jointly understood as “formal” containers for feedback, which had sometimes already been stated to me informally, in unstructured situations. We were both somewhat conscious of being “willful persons” who “create and maintain meaningful worlds” (Miller and Glassner 1997:103 referring to Dawson and Prus 1993:166), as this is what we had been doing together in the ritual celebrations. The interviewees then, in this context could be said to be particularly willing to reveal themselves and their responses to me.

“Of paramount importance regarding how (and how much) we present ourselves is the influence this presentation has on interviewee’s ability and willingness to tell various sorts of stories” (Miller and Glassner 1997:103). In this research, neither I, nor the material – the ritual/language/Poem/Story - had ever been purely “presented”: it was always participatory, that is, the interviewees had brought their own agendas to the script. They had co-created the “result”. The interviews then were a telling of perceived effects of this subjective participation.

I found frequently that the interviewees “answered” many of my questions without my asking them. They simply told me what I had wanted to ask about; that is at least, I recognized in their “narrative”, elements of personal and cultural effect, some of which I had thought to ask about, and some of which I had not. It was different for each person, according to their
experience. There was not a predictable outcome that could be said to be constructed by me – the experience of the issue/concept/phenomena varied for each person. What was frequently common was a change of some kind, sometimes in opposite “directions” – according to what each person required. Discernable themes did emerge from the material, which I was able to categorize, albeit somewhat arbitrarily at times – I will discuss this “arbitrary” nature of the categories in “General Comments” on participant-interviewee response in Chapter 10.

Wherever possible, I allowed the interviewee to speak without the frame of a question, knowing that my frame may be irrelevant to their experience, if not outright displacing their experience. Many interviewees did speak without my questions. Interviewees were always given the chance to set aside my formulations/frames/language if it made no sense to them. I arrived at the questions partly from noting my own experience – what had occurred for me. I did want to know if the other participants had had similar experiences, but I also wanted to know just what their experience was. I endeavoured to frame the question, and create a context, so as to evoke from them their own narrative – their own actual experience. My role was an “active” one, that sought to activate “narrative production” (Holstein and Gubrium 1997:123). Given that the nature of the research is so subjective, there is no real formula for the opening to specific experiences that may otherwise remain hidden. It was largely done intuitively, with great respect for what is assumed to be, the interviewees unique perspective; that is, being cautious

“not to dictate interpretation, but to provide an environment conducive to the production of the range and complexity of meanings that address relevant issues, and not be confined by predetermined agendas” (ibid).

Overall, I think that the interview process for this research could be recognized as “creative interviewing” (Holstein and Gubrium 1997:119), wherein a climate for mutual disclosure was established. My approach, like that of Holstein and Gubrium, differed from Douglas’ traditional approach (ibid:119-120) in that the subjects were not passive. According to the guidelines for “creative interviewing”, the interviewees were enabled to

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183 An example would be in the responses of Cath T. and Catherine K. to the darkness and light question. See p. 297 and p.298.
184 An example of this would be in the interview with Linda.
185 Holstein and Gubrium refer to Douglas (1985) for the term, but describe their own definition of it.
"deeply disclose", that is, move past "mere opinions" (ibid); and there was "continual self-analysis on the part of the interviewer ..." (ibid:120). However, the interviewees were also "active", that is, their responses partly formed the questions and what was discussed – the interview was "a kind of improvisational performance" (ibid:123): the interviewees were each "a productive source of knowledge" (ibid:121).

The Design of the Questions, and the Questions

The questions were designed to elicit perceived changes in:
- sense of self: small self, social self, cosmic self.
- sense of space and time
- relationship to darkness and light
- understanding and embodiment of the Female Metaphor, and its effects
- relationship to, and sense of participation in Gaia/Earth/Cosmos

These were themes that were in accord with the research project, that served as points of reference, that were frequently subsequently confirmed by the interviewees as relevant. Other themes that had not specifically occurred to me, were brought forth, often repeatedly, from different interviewees as they talked. The themes then, that I elicited and/or that I discerned from the "data" are:
- effect on sense of space and time
- effect on sense of self
- increasing trust in "process"
- creation of community, and communal values
- affirmation of femaleness
- effect on feeling about darkness
- effect on feeling related to Earth/Cosmos, through Seasonal and Elemental identification
- effect on understanding of the three faces of the Female Metaphor
- manifestation of intentions
- affirmation of, and ability to deal with, grief and loss
- awareness of gratitude
- increased sense of responsibility
- sense of connection to ancestors, or belonging
- helping deal with change and/or specific relationships
- rejuvenating, refreshing - the power of celebration itself
- effect on family, friends, and community

The Questions

The following questions were mainly asked of the four core participants, and then some others who had been present at many celebrations.

1. Did you, at any specific point, or over a period, experience any change in relationship to a Bigger Picture? How do you understand that Bigger Picture, and what, if any, is the change in relationship?

   This was specifically relevant to the purpose of the project, and partly based in awareness of my own experience. An example of such a change for myself was my experience of “making sacred” at Lammas 2000, per notes in process 31.1.00.

2. Did you begin to feel the process in any way?

   This was specifically relevant to the purpose of the project, and I was made more aware of this as a likely consequence by David Abram’s book The Spell of the Sensuous. It was also grounded in my own experience, for example, at Lammas 2000, I began to sense dissolution following the frenzy of light and life – the Dance of Beltane and the peaking of Summer, and correspondingly its opposite – form coming out of darkness and stillness – the Transformation of Samhain and the peaking of Winter.

3. What is your feeling about darkness and light? Has this process affected that feeling at all?

   This very important theme came to my attention over the period of the research, by my own experience of the seasonal cycle, and by my awareness of the treatment of Darkness and Light in my cultural context. It was also an effect about which I had received spontaneous feedback from participants.
4. Did participation in the Wheel affect your sense of space and time in any way – your perspective? If so, how did this affect your relationship with Earth? Your actions? Your values?

*This question was specifically relevant to the purpose of the project, but the framing of it in this way was mostly inspired by Abram's chapter “Time, Space and the Eclipse of the Earth” (1996:181-223), which articulated some of the effects I had experienced and was experiencing by participation in the celebration of the Wheel of the Year; which was more frequent immersion in the “deep space and time” of Gaia’s rhythms.*

5. Did you become more familiar with the three faces of the Goddess of Cosmogenesis? Could you say how you understand these three aspects?

6. How does it feel to be using the Female Pronoun/Metaphor in the rituals – to address the Earth and Cosmos that way? And to address yourself that way? How has that, and does, that affect you?

9. Has participation in this ritual process affected your relationships with others? – friends, family – parents, children, school or other groups?

*These were specifically relevant to the purpose of the project.*

7. Since starting the work, have you had any particular experience of being identified with Goddess? Do you identify yourself that way? .. since starting this work? Does that have any effect on you? your feeling about being female?

*This was inspired by spontaneous feedback given by a few participants.*

8. Did you have a way of expressing your spiritual self before? Do you now? Has that changed through this seasonal celebration process?

10. What is your understanding or image of the Wheel of the Year? Overall and then each specific Sabbat? .... Samhain, Winter Solstice, Imbolc, Eostar,
Beltane, Summer Solstice, Lammas, Mabon? Did you become conscious of resonances between the Sabbats? What were they?

11. Go through each seasonal celebration attended specifically.... Do you remember, or did you note any key experience.

These were to elicit further reflection that might be relevant to the purpose of the project.

Other Interview Questions
The following questions were framed for those interviewees who had participated less frequently in the celebrations.

1. What has been the significance for you, of your attendance at the seasonal celebrations?

2. Do you tend to be conscious of the Sabbats? What do they mean to you?

3. Have you had, and/or do you have, other ways of expressing a spirituality?

4. Through participation in this work, did you become more familiar with the three faces of the Goddess?

5. How has it felt for you to be using the Female Pronoun/Metaphor – to address Earth, Cosmos, yourself - in the celebrations?

6. Would it feel different for you if Male Metaphor was used? How would that affect you?
Sometimes this was asked of the first group of interviewees as well, to elicit further reflection.

7. Do you relate to the name of “Gaia”?
Sometimes this was asked of the first group of interviewees as well, to elicit further reflection.
8. Were your feelings, thoughts, imagination or actions affected by any of the ritual processes?

9. Do you remember any significant experience during any of the rituals?

10. Any challenges?

Each interviewee was sent the questions before the interview so that they had time to reflect on their responses, and recall any significant experiences.

For some who come to these celebrations, they have already had the experience of relationship with Earth – it is already happening for them, and the celebrations are a chance for them to express that in a group. For others, the celebrations are a beginning place, where the words are really instructive, an entrance way into the possibility of experience, of relationship with Earth in this way. For me personally, it has been a bit of both … and indeed perhaps for most it is a bit of both … we are all learning this. A little step this way, a little step that way, slowly slowly – one foot here, one foot there – Poetry, experience; experience, Poetry.
PARTICIPANT-INTERVIEWEE RESPONSE

As I stated before, the categorization of the themes that emerged from the data is sometimes arbitrary, that is, some of the themes are so related, “fuzzy” in their boundaries – not univocal – as to make their confinement to a particular category, arbitrary. I will frequently point that out as I proceed, though there may be many cases where that is so, and the reader will discern it for themselves from their perspective. Some examples of this “fuzziness” are: an “increased sense of responsibility” could be said to come under the theme of “effect on sense of self”; at times, the “effect on feeling about darkness and light” could also be said to be within the theme of “sense of self”, and this is also true of the “sense of connection to ancestors, or belonging”. Further examples are: the theme of “manifestation of intentions” could frequently be said for some participants to be a conscious “increased sense of responsibility”; and “helping deal with change” overlaps with the theme of “increasing trust in ‘process’”.

In what category does one put experience of “deep connection in the calling of the elements” as stated by Anne386, and as described in some detail by Geoff. Anne goes on to describe her experience of connection: “both how small we are and what a powerful Big Picture it is” I interpret this as a feeling of relationship, and it is both an ‘effect on sense of self’ and an ‘effect on feeling related to Earth/Cosmos’. Geoff describes an ‘effect on sense of space and time’, when the elements are called/invoked – “a shiver goes through me and I feel liberated in some way from all that conditional existence, into another space, into another type of consciousness I suppose …” - which he also describes as connecting him to “what we’re made of, where we come from”, which is also then an ‘effect on sense of self’.

Even more complex is Lyn’s response to the question about the use of the Female Pronoun/Metaphor in the rituals:

386 All actual participant response will be in Italics throughout this chapter.
“And the thing of stepping into ‘She’ was awkward in the beginning for me, because it was separating it out instead of being universal for everyone … but because it was in a She continually (laughs) it helped/kept making my connection through me being a woman, and it opened up much more connection for me. … in my sense … I always had a sense of awareness or Being-self, but not as much - as in being able to really let it breath more through me.”

GLENYS: So the continual use of She … what helped let it breath more through you …?

LYN: Well it helped bring it through me as a woman so that I could be in a spiritual place, have more of a connection of a spiritual place than before … and it brought me into the thing of it being – spiritual Essence - being more Universal for everyone, and many different practices. For some reason actually it bridged that. As it turned out, it ended up bridging it for me.”

GLENYS: So as it took it more particularly through you, it ended up taking it out to be more universal …

LYN: Yeah so that I have more acceptance of everyone else’s different spiritual practices.

The interpretation of this is multivalent:- it is an affirmation of her femaleness; it is a deeper connection to self, which according to her articulation of this, is also felt as an ‘effect on feeling related to Cosmos’; it is a deeper connection to others - as she recognized this same essence in all – bringing the communal value of acceptance of difference.

Similarly, Loret’s response to the first question contains many themes/layers. She said that participating in this

“has had a really profound effect on my whole understanding of myself - myself as a woman, myself within my family, and in my community, and so on and so on. And it has given me a much deeper understanding of why I am here … not so much the nuts and bolts and what do I do, but actually why I am here, you know the whole Greater Picture, the Bigger Cycle, my whole evolution. … I’d known it in a funny kind of … but now I have a much better handle on how to apply it… it gave me a lot more tools of understanding, rather than just a gut knowing. …. it brought it out – from the inside out. I didn’t know how to take that kind of unformed knowing into something in my life … this has really given me a tool in which I can either articulate it to somebody else and explain it, or, a method of investigation for me, and just a way of bringing it to my children so they don’t actually lose that knowing to go find it again. … It’s given me more clarity and focus … that’ll go on developing, … My actual personal relationship to the Big Picture has just become … more affirmed. I really actually had that before … but it has affirmed it for me and allowed me to come out of the closet so to speak, and have more confidence in being able to say: ‘well this is who and what I am.”'
In this way, many of the interviewee responses defy categorization, though I have proceeded with it, sometimes adding allusion to the complexity when I perceive it. I have also decided to largely leave whole sections of response and/or dialogue intact, for the sake of more of a sense of the interviewee’s story.

Analysis of the Data
For the sake of ease of reference throughout this analysis, I will number the themes, that I elicited/discerned from the data:
1. effect on sense of space and time
2. effect on sense of self
3. increasing trust in “process”
4. creation of community, and communal values
5. affirmation of femaleness
6. effect on feeling about Darkness and Light
7. effect on feeling related to Earth/Cosmos, through Seasonal and Elemental identification
8. effect on understanding of the three faces of the Female Metaphor
9. manifestation of intentions
10. affirmation of, and ability to deal with, grief and loss
11. awareness and expression of gratitude
12. increased sense of responsibility
13. sense of connection to ancestors, or belonging
14. helping deal with change and/or specific relationships
15. rejuvenating, refreshing – the power of celebration itself
16. effect on family, friends, and community

Theme 1 – effect on sense of space and time
I had proposed a question specifically for this, partly inspired, as I said, by Abram’s chapter on “Time, Space and the Eclipse of the Earth” (1996:181-223). Abram discusses how oral, indigenous cultures are related deeply to specific place (ibid:185). In such cultures, this specific place is not perceived as in any way separate from the larger place of Cosmos/Universe/Earth. So, in the responses of participants in this research, which indicate a deepened relationship with the larger place of Cosmos/Universe/Earth, this is not
perceived as separate from the specific place – wherein the events of our lives and our human cultures occur. Thomas Berry says that so many humans today don’t actually inhabit the Universe (1988). For participants in the Seasonal rituals, there was a practice of the place in which we find ourselves – the Universe - as not being merely “an arbitrary backdrop for human events” (ibid:183); an awareness that this “Place” revealed itself in the Seasonal stories, and that we were participating in them. The specific place – the home garden, the region, the bodyself – became more deeply the touchstones of Place – Universe/Cosmos/Earth.

Abram also discusses how

“it is easy for most of us, living amid the ever-changing constructions of literate, technological civilization, to conceive and even feel, behind all the seasonal recurrences in the sensuous terrain, the inexorable thrust of a linear and irreversible time” (ibid:185).

Abram says that, in contrast, when a culture is engaged sensorially with one’s earthly surroundings, in a regular periodic repetition of stories, the human community is bound “to the ceaseless dance of the cosmos” (ibid:186), that through the disclosure of Mythic Time in this way - and becoming the ancestral being - there is a rejuvenation of “the emergent order of the world” (ibid:187). This Wheel of seasonal celebration is the formulation of experience inside of nature, and the enactment of human drama within place. It is a way to “stand apart from the conventions of history” – the white Western invention of history “whose central theme is the rejection of habitat” (Abram 1997:181 quoting Paul Shephard).

I think it is the case, that for the participants in these Seasonal celebrational rituals, including myself – as white Westerners – we are only in Grade 1, in terms of learning to relate with Earth Mother, when compared with examples of well-storied indigenous groups given by Abram (ibid:182). We know it is “early days” for us yet, as Debbie said in her interview (see p.300); but we are making a start.

Debbie described the ritual celebrations as:

“Time-out” for me, to actually get off the wheel of life, and yes, acknowledge that in fact that energy (the same breath runs through all of us – animal, human, plant, cosmos ...) does run through everything – to re-connect with it consciously .. and where I am in my life, and pay special gratitude to that”
GLENYS: ... so the rituals offer a space ..?
DEBBIE: ... it’s like a prayer space I guess .. a space where I can hop off the wheel of life, and just pay 100% of my mind ... you know, a woman’s mind can go on a hundred things at a time ... I just get off ... and pay respects and gratitude to All-That-Is at that point in time – bringing in the relative things for that ritual.

Later, in response to the direct question on this theme (Q.4), Debbie responded:

“... it’s neated my year up, rather than just going round and round and round .. with before, the main point being Christmas, the end of the year, we start a new year. Now I’ve been able to divide it up ... now I’ve got the points quite clearly, to sort of help me put my year in perspective. You look back and say “the year has gone so fast”, but OK, I look between Samhain and Winter Solstice .. and it just helps me to think, “a lot has happened, I haven’t been ripped off or anything.”

GLENYS: I notice you use the seasons as a point of reference. Do the Sabbats come more into your everyday language?
DEBBIE: Yes I can relate to them as point of reference ... not excessively, but it’s in my language, it’s in my way of thinking now.

Anne’s response to this question of effect on space and time was:

“Definitely!”, in ways, she said, that she had already stated in response to Question 1, that is, that participation in the Wheel of the Year was an “EnTrancing experience of going back in time”, and had “put my personal processes into a Bigger process, beyond my control. Just as I feel the Aboriginal Dreaming to be real, so I feel the letting go to this cycle, is an entering into that reality”. Anne went on to comment in this context that “the calling the elements affected my relationship with Earth. I feel I have a greater understanding of how what I do as an individual, can affect the Earth and others around me. She noted how her seven year old was aware of the effect of a ritual on life – he had spontaneously remarked that if they didn’t have the Spring festival at school that day, “Life will be very different”. Anne said, “There is a relaxation about needing to ‘do’ so much ... the children and I are ‘being’ more” Anne had found

“that being in this process – allowing oneself to experience the seasonal cycle, is a bit of a contrast to mainstream culture - in contrast to (her partner’s) involvement with hustle and bustle of mainstream work, which does not operate according to our actual seasons”.

Anne became aware of the
"ongoing rhythm and cycle ... you are not just connected at one point, at one Sabbath... it's in a process... an ongoing connection. The Solstices and the Equinoxes have particularly become significant points... with a feeling for their reciprocal aspects - light and dark balance of Equinoxes, light and dark containment at the Solstices."

Loret, in responding to the "Bigger Picture" question, had described it as a "multilayered reality" and that

"there are moments when I can glimpse and feel it... really feel totally timeless and spaceless and at peace, and I just know that I've gone back into that aspect."

GLENYS: Do you think that these seasonal celebrations enable your relationship with that?
LORET: Yeah, they have.
GLENYS: Does it translate into any kind of action in any way?
LORET: There's less fear... more sense of purpose, and a growing level of tolerance.

I interpret that Loret's "timeless and spaceless" experience is inextricable from effect on her sense of self as agent and less fearful, and on her growing communal value of tolerance.

In response to the actual question on time and space, Loret had referred to understanding

"'cause' and 'effect' much more profoundly. I have a much deeper sense of awareness... of what's going to happen... and now I find ways of compensating for it... I'm not blind anymore so to speak, of the things. And in terms of the Whole Universal Picture too, the idea of a ripple just going out and out and out - they're don't just stop at this little planet here."

GLENYS: So, in a sense this process has made you more aware of your responsibility?
LORET: Absolutely, my responsibility on all the levels - within my family, my community, where I live, my planet, my planet's part in its Universe, and my Ultimate responsibility in the Mystery. That's what I'm saying, my little bit - what I do, is important. It's not just a little ant that wanders around. It really is profoundly important."

Lyn's response was that the rituals had created a sense of

"... being here and ancient Wisdom being brought in and having a meaning now... as in more of a connection to history, for me... that I haven't really had... haven't really drawn on before. It sort of surfaced the thing of being here, being Australian, being here 200 years and what is being Australian. It's sense of time in Earth and things... The ritual has been like a reminder of the thing of collective consciousness... drawing on that, as in my meaning of that... being present now."
Lyn went on to say how this Goddess and ritual work – the calling in of the elements all the time - had caused her to think more about “the Spirit of this land” and the mixing of her European heritage with the heritage of this land:

“So the Goddess work has brought me in touch with, bump up against Aboriginal spirituality, being here as well as ... and how that sits with reconciliation and what that means, and how you can find meeting places with that.”

Geoff alludes to sense of space and time in response to a question about how the seasonal celebrations may have affected his being in the world. He said:

“it’s the continuity of it – the seasonal rituals happen every 6 weeks and also happens every year. There’s that building of rituals upon rituals ... that seems valuable. And knowing that when you’ve done one ritual, it’s not the end because there’s another one in six weeks, then you’ve got the same one again in a year. There’s something that provides a “holding”, a sense of security in being part of this larger circular or spiral kind of process - a feeling of being held by the rhythm of it - as opposed to the emphasis on instant gratification – I need something different to that – you know I’m not feeling good right now, and now is all there is, so I’m never going to feel good. If I know there are things I can do on a regular basis, and there are people going to be there ... it feels good.”

Cath T. said that,

“doing the circle of the year ... that’s a way of getting consciousness for me. ... life would become just a blur, and I’d be lost in that pressure. So for me, it’s a time to withdraw and be conscious again of what I’m actually doing. It’s just creating a pause for me.”

For Cath, this helps manifest her intentions; she says,

“It gives me about three hours where I can sit and think about what is happening at that point in my life and make some decisions about it... and then make some proclamations about where I would like that life story to go in the future. It helps direct my life.”

For Linda, her growing “sense of the Year process”, gave

“a continuity... processing all the stuff that happens in your life, the seasons ... sometimes some of the things don’t speak to me right then and there, that’s alright, they’ll speak to someone ... there’s always something there for me and I feel like I’ve given something as well. So it seems like a good exchange. It keeps me stirred up thinking about Life, the Universe ... it feels like it helps give that balance in my life. .... a chance to reflect, a kind of a stillpoint, and like stepping into a pond and just standing there and then refreshing oneself – as you need to do – you can’t go through life not washing. It’s very practical to me ... people talk about their “spiritual life” “... for me, it has to be a very practical thing, and I find these celebrations are that.”

She also specifically, that participating in the seasonal celebrations had,
"contributed to a sense of calmness about space and time. I know it’s helped me feel more tolerant of other people, being around other people. Yes it has. I find it easier to be around people in that ritual ... Time doesn’t weigh heavy at the rituals, whereas it has often stressed me. Time just passes."

Catherine K. said that the notification of the Sabbats provided “punctuation marks” for her year, instead of it being just

“a blur. ... and what it means to me is that it puts my life in some rhythm with the Cosmos. I feel part of that whole change, and it fills my being whereas before it was ...” It’s February, oh it’s humid ... oh well it would be, it is Summer “... I mean totally being unaware of where we were in the scheme of things, and to be slip sliding and crashing into Christmas. You’d come out of the depths of Winter and there would be this short amount of time until Christmas. Now my world is not punctuated with Christmas as such, and so I’m able breathe more deeply, and take in the seasons more rhythmically and have time to enjoy them. And it’s not sort of ‘Oh my ... we’re straight out of Christmas, and into bloody Easter ... Easter eggs in the shops! ... that sort of shock horror. So my life is not punctuated by those events anymore ... so therefore there’s time to breathe, and actually be in rhythm with the actual seasons, and it’s pretty marvelous.”

Annabelle had been involved in her own research on the Seasonal Moments, and re-acclimatizing herself “to the Southern Hemisphere in tune with the stories of the ancestors.” For her,

“the ritual celebrations absolutely helped me to embody this process of learning, and I think also realizing them like that, you can also realize the space in between them, and think about what you’re looking towards and what you’ve come from. Right now, we’ve had Beltane and we’re looking forward to Summer Solstice. ... And it’s just given me a different perspective on time and space, and where I am in time and space. ... e.g. with Summer Solstice in a few weeks we’re going to be considering the decline of the Sun already, and I guess as an Australian I hadn’t considered that much in the peak of heat in Summer ... it gives me a different perspective, it gives it another layer of who we are in the Universe ... and where we are.”

Sandy felt that her participation in the seasonal celebrations, had enabled her to be

“more in tune with the daily cycles ... on a daily basis now, I’m more in tune with the Creative forces around me ... out in the garden, I’m aware that there is life just bursting forth all around me ... I feel so much part of it, it’s such a joy to go out and see something new each day. For me, it’s been more vital than it’s ever been.”
Theme 2 – effect on sense of self

I did not ask a specific question on this, but it was a theme – perhaps the main one - that was pertinent to the research project. As stated in the purpose of the project, this was an “inquiry is into the effects of such imagery and seasonal celebration on personal feelings, thoughts, imagination and behaviour. It also seeks to know of any affects on relationship with others, and with the culture at large; and then also to know of any affects on relationship with Earth and the Cosmos”. As I explained in Chapter 3, this research assumes no split between the layers of self and the immersion in Context. I was conscious then, that the responses that spoke to this theme of ‘sense of self’, might contain all layers of self – small/particular, social, and cosmic – or they might only contain one or two of these; and this is the case, so I will not belabour the point as I present the responses here. This theme in particular may be the “fuzziest” of all the themes, spilling over into a lot of other themes, as it is from this place - sense of self – that thoughts, actions, feelings, arise. It is also inversely the case that other themes contain specific reference to sense of self, especially the theme of ‘affirmation of femaleness’, and this will be addressed more under that theme.

In general, the main descriptive words of the effect on this theme of sense of self that I interpret from the interviewees’ responses, were “expanded”, “stronger”, “increased authority”, “creative being”.

For the four core participants, it was possible for this theme to be a more marked effect, since they had a fuller participatory role – they had inbuilt opportunity for more self-reflection, and were taking active roles in the rituals, and they were expressing themselves in group preparation and feedback. However, even for those who took a minimum level of participation, there was always a certain amount of self-reflection and expression encouraged at the actual event, and each chose their level of comfort within that. Though each participant was always free not to reveal “deep truths” in the ritual context, the self is spotlighted in the ritual process, and encouraged - and required to some extent - to participate. As an example, one woman who came was very shy, yet gradually warmed to the opportunity to speak and participate more fully, even on her first occasion.
She has continued to come again, gaining apparent confidence in "presenting" herself.

Anne, at the Imbolc pre-ritual meeting said, "The rituals help me understand that I am bigger than just myself." She later wrote:

"Speaking with Glenys about the preparation of the ritual, ... I had a big realization that I am me Anne at this time, but that I am actually me who I am because of all that has gone before. That helps me be more comfortable with all that,..."

During the interview Anne expressed having had realizations about how important personal responsibility is, and about what is important and what is not. She went on,

"... and I don't have to do it alone ... there is a circle of support... And I'm more able to take a stand on issues I think are unjust – to let go of fears. There is a deeper trust in my intuitions and gut feelings and the Bigger Picture."

Anne felt she was becoming more expressive, dressing up more for celebrations, she felt "less need for alcohol in celebration events, ... I'm entering more just into being and enjoying life ... I've gotten back to a younger more free self." Anne also said,

"I'm more conscious of how I speak my truth, and really always have, though this has not always been received well by others. I'm more conscious of my effect on people now, ... and more prepared to endure the discomfort that it appears to create with others."

In written feedback for Samhain 99, Anne had noticed a new "courage to speak my truth." She liked the process of devouring old shapes, and

"found the phrases used to call the directions in this ritual extremely powerful. ... it helped me accept that there is nothing I have not been."

Loret expressed,

"... a much stronger self ... less fear of standing alone against other's attitudes, and especially my family ... less need to go full circle to be rebellious. More a sense of just a calm 'this is me', and I need to do this."

She had explained,

"The fear that was really brought into sharp focus in these rituals for me is actually standing alone and not worrying about other people's reactions and what they said. It brought into sharp focus for me just how much I still needed to be affirmed by outside rather than inside."
In written feedback, both at Samhain 99 and Winter Solstice 99, Loret expressed feeling "honoured to bless another person", and how it was "especially empowering".

In response to the question on the use of the Female Pronoun/Metaphor, Loret responded that "it was very self-empowering" and that addressing herself in that way had

"really helped me with understanding the infinite Source that's inside me... and I'm not just this little squashed thing that gets up, does this and goes down... my little tiny part of the infinite plan is just as important as anyone else's and I need to do it right."

Loret added later:

"Each Sabbath is different – it doesn't matter how many I've done. Each one is different because I'm different every time I enter the circle. I come out differently every time I come out of the circle."

I am aware that this response could be as much an effect on Loret's sense of space and time, and an acceptance of change, as much as on her sense of self.

During the interview with Debbie, she showed me photos of herself, with the other core participants and another woman, dressed as what she described as "Warrior Women". They had created their own ritual weekend, after having started this work of re-storying and seasonal celebration. The ensuing response revealed a few thematic categories: sense of self, creation of community, trust in process.

DEBBIE: We did that lovely dance ... what is it? We all did these shields ...

GLENYS: Would you say that this work ...?

DEBBIE: It's affected my creativity...

GLENYS: ... and it's helped create a community of women?

DEBBIE: Yes, it's brought it much stronger together ... during this work. Me and Loret, Anne and I – we've become quite close, and what happens is when other women in the community hear we're going off for a women's weekend to do women's work, then they start asking questions ... "what do you do?" and that starts them thinking about their own self worth, and what do they do for themselves ... so the ripple effect starts to happen. Sometimes I worry we don't take enough people away on these weekends, or we have to start doing bigger weekends ... but I feel we are actually teaching people on many levels. ... rather than going out there "Ra-Ra" with coloured brochures (laughs) – I think we are doing it ... and over time, like only a year ago, I couldn't stand quite comfortably at one of your rituals, and be a part of it, without panicking ... "have I got my words right, or have I got this ... but now I can stand at one of the rituals and feel quite self-empowered, and not panic about getting the words right ... and be really "in" the ritual, and confident now. I feel
that probably, now if someone asked me to bring something together, I would trust in the process that I could bring something together ... be spontaneous.

General Comment

I am aware that there are at least two layers to the resultant effects of participation in these seasonal ritual celebrations, and it is evident in Debbie’s response and also particularly in the following responses of Lyn, Linda and Kaye. There is the effect of the “ritual space” itself, and there is the effect of the specific orientation of the ritual space – that orientation being the Seasonal celebrations - participation in Earth’s Wheel of the Year. They are distinct aspects, yet they are connected. The ritual processes are participatory events, as is the ritual space; they are both co-created. The ritual processes themselves are specific to the Season, though the “sacred space” in which they are facilitated, may be enabling of authentic/deep participation or not. For example, the Grief Process is specific to Mabon, and its qualities as a process are tied into Earth-Sun relationship, but the space in which it happens is a product of the group and the facilitator. This research is about the effects of the Seasonal celebrations and use of the Female Metaphor, and such research might well be disabled in a context of poor ritual space. So the optimization of the quality of the ritual space, is simply like having a clean laboratory, so that the research processes are not contaminated. As much as possible I played my role in ensuring that this was so, and this factor cannot really be separated out from the “result”.

Lyn, and those who knew her, recognized that she was coming from “the thing of being really really shy and not speaking ... “, so for Lyn, as she said,

“... the thing of being in the ritual spaces – having to initiate my speaking from my experience, what I experience, my truth has been amazing ...”

GLENYS: ... to honour your experience and to speak it ....
LYN: Yeah yeah ... that’s shifted me into being more present here spiritually – feel it more, as in me being more present here.

In written feedback at Mabon, Lyn said how, “Speaking has been an issue for all of my life. Speaking from my level of experience is now OK ... that my point of view, my level of experience is mine, is OK.” She added,
"I also gather so much courage to speak my simple truths from hearing other women speaking from their place of experience. The quality of presence when women speak from their inner places, to share and not be judged — to remove the critical eye and ears and voice, to remove judgement in these circles and share ..."

It was a struggle for Lyn to take on active roles in the rituals, and it was never required of her beyond her own wishes. She wrote at length of such a struggle within herself, in written feedback for Winter Solstice 99; she wrote of how we all as a group responded to her needs, and of how she eventually came through to enjoying the role of serving the Communion cake. She said, "I enjoyed it. I could look at each person. When we circled at the end of the ritual I also made sure I acknowledged the presence of everyone."

It seems pertinent to write here at this point, of Lyn’s response to question 2 about feeling the process of the Wheel. Her response was so much an effect on her sense of self, as well as trust in process, dealing with change, feeling related to Earth/Cosmos, manifesting her intentions and the rejuvenation of herself. She said,

"When I was thinking about that one, I went straight into something about the rhythm of the year, as in the Wheel of the Year and the different stages, and that checking in point every six weeks. The thing that first came to mind was, there is something in that rhythm helped me personally, not get stuck in a certain place in myself ... so then instead ... like at a certain time, if I was sort of stuck in being depressed or despairing, something like that ... that that going through a point of transitional change — one of those points of the year, and with a particular focus each time on something to let go of and something to bring forward, actualize ... really helped me personally. The feeling of each point in the Year ... it helped me process things slightly differently. It took me into a broader rhythm, and that broader rhythm helped me not get so stuck in different places. There was something that would bring me out ... so specific to each point in the year ... The example of the process of letting something go and bringing something to actualize something in ... even though there’s a particular flavour each time — like Samhain the fertile possibility, but that particular process which was focussing each time, that sort of, that’s in my memory now as standing out, as being a strong thing ... letting something go and bringing something in, so that to renew myself."

In response to being asked about the effect of calling the elements, Lyn said, "Well it’s brought it into being here, through my body, as in more aware ... rather than the thing of the body being separated out. ... I can only really explore my spirituality through me, through Lyn Ward."

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Linda, who had participated in the earliest Moon Circle seasonal celebrations, and was something of a “veteran” by the time of these research events, said,

“I had come from being in a really vulnerable state emotionally and spiritually, and this has helped a lot, helped me to recover things for myself and develop my own world view along with that – and it’s ever changing. It feels safe to me because it relates to something real. … One survival mechanism for me was to become invisible, as a woman, as a little girl, so no-one would bother me … but now to come out of that and be fully in the world and live in it as fully as you can, you have to be able to hear yourself and your intentions and it’s good that you hear other people’s too – because you think … it’s normalizing … you know you feel I’m just like them – not exactly, but that’s really precious, that’s really important. We make ourselves vulnerable to each other in those celebrations, but in a safe sort of way. I see some things in religion can be far too safe, and they just get stuck; and other things can be too challenging for each person … but there’s room for me to pull back or not go into detail if I need not to, and I can see that I’m not obliged to do that, but at least I can see for myself what I was thinking and what’s making me feel that way … it holds up a mirror I suppose to me as myself and also as another human. We reflect each other … it’s easy to process that information, yet it’s stimulating and still challenging.”

At the end of the interview, Linda commented that at these seasonal celebrations she had been able to “see aspects of ego more clearly and less judgmentally - everyone needs some ego to operate in the world. It is a very unjudgemental place.”

Kaye mentioned how “very introverted “ she is – “not good on the social side”. She often experienced “trepidation” about being at the celebrations, though “once I get there, it’s usually something that I need to do. … Once the ritual starts, or you start doing the teaching, it feels comfortable.” She frequently helped with handling the Elements and with drumming; she said, “and it’s a big thing for me to do these things … but it’s another step in my journey. I always push the comfort zone, and since having children, I push it a lot more.” Kaye mentioned early in the interview that her presence at the rituals had to do with her feeling comfortable with the Female Metaphor:

“I remember things I used to say as a kid … it was always – Earth etc. – it was always Mother Nature. I was actually in that mode when I was young … to me there wasn’t a God, She was female. I mean people thought I was strange, and I was saying this when I was a kid, and a teenager – that God is female, which is a big thing. That’s why these
rituals and reading about the Goddess, and doing work from that point of view sits well. It felt right.”
GLENYS: So it has been a re-connecting for you, with something you already knew ... but you might not have necessarily remembered ...
KAYE: that's right.

Geoff said that he was particularly struck by “some words” he said at Imbolc 99, that affected his sense of self quite dramatically187. He said,

“I can’t remember the words, but its about being God and Goddess and a part of the Earth ... and I AM that manifestation of the Goddess in some way ... It's THAT, remembering who I am that has stuck with me ever since. Although I don’t remember the specific words, the “who I am”, that Bigger Picture of ... remembering that I am connected to the whole Cosmos, that I actually am an expression of that. When I remember that, the little complaints and miseries and criticisms everyday, get put back in that proper perspective.”

Annabelle had gained “a greater sense of agency, of myself as contributor, and participator in the whole – the Cosmic journey”, from her participation in the Wheel of the Year process. She said that

“being in this Wheel process ... makes me feel much more in touch with the Bigger Picture, and what the Cosmos is doing, and gives me a sense of deep relatedness to it, that is reflected in my own soul cycle as well ... it just gives me a whole new understanding of myself – a different identity, and it allows me to step outside those already perceived norms of who I am, of who I should be, as woman and mother ...”

Annabelle had a significant experience that “was affected by the Imbolc celebration – writings that I found from that experience – what we had said at that ritual.” She described it in detail:

“It was at a time when I was not feeling particularly in touch with my own self-Love, and where I was in terms of relationships and where I was going. When I read I that ... I mean, through the rituals and through the whole process, I’ve been coming much clearer of myself as being the Universe, as well as being part of the Universe, and the same with She as being Her, as well as Her being me. I saw clearly then ... again I was going into a lot of self-criticism and self-blame and using a lot of analytical approaches ... When I re-read that particular oath (from Imbolc), I saw for the first time, or saw clearly, strongly, that – because it is an oath to commit yourself to Her in yourself and to give her what She needs – I was able to see Her also as not me, but that I could actually give Her what She needs, that I had that capacity to do that, that I didn’t

187 They were the invocational response: “I commit myself to Self, understanding that I am She, She Who is All. I am the Beauty of the Green Earth and the White Moon among the Stars and the Mystery of the Waters. I will protect Her and honour Her in myself...”
need to rely on somebody else telling me what’s wrong with me – or even me telling myself what’s wrong with me … that what I really needed to do was to listen to what it was that “She” was looking for, from me, in me, through me, at that particular time; and it might have been as simple as going and lying in the bath – which is what I did do, with rosewater and things. Simple things like that are often so hard to do, because you think you don’t need it … ‘I don’t need to do that, I need to clean the house – get the vacuum cleaner out, or sit and write at my desk.’ When I did that, I read somewhere about the Scandinavian Goddess of abundance – at this time of the year, Summer Solstice … She used to go through the Wheel of the Year, and at the end of the Wheel of the Year, She always took a ritual bath, and the author said it was meant to restore Her Virginity. So I thought … it feels right … the bath felt right because it was actually restoring that sense of myself as Virgin - to myself again, in terms of my capacity to be agent for myself, in the way that I needed to be.”

Annabelle recalled and spoke the words she had said in the Imbolc ritual\textsuperscript{108}, and continued,

“Remembering this affirmation enabled me to listen to those simple needs. I have now made a promise to myself to read that every day, and light a candle … I found this approach to myself much more useful that a psychoanalytic approach, because the psychoanalytic approach will go into the storying of WHY it is that you feel that way, … I know why it is that I feel that way, because I was brought up Catholic etc…. and I can explain all of it that way. It doesn’t make any difference. After the explanation, how do you physically turn that feeling around? … I suppose that’s what the rituals do, … they elicit that sense on a feeling body level, of where you want to be, … when you experience it through celebrating ritual cycles and through recognizing certain aspects in the Dark and the Light, as in the different times of the Year, you can bring that into your own space, and into your own actual daily living. And that gives you some agency in the matter, rather than someone saying to you “STOP being depressed” or “here’s a handful of valium” or something.”

Annie B. expressed how “enormously supportive” she had found the Female Metaphor, and an example of an effect on her actions was:

“When I went to support Dan at his school, I did a meditation in front of my altar, in front of my Goddess, before I went. I put on my proper ‘mother’ clothes, and I went down to the school to deal with these people, and I find confrontation very difficult. What was extraordinary was that I knew I was a Warrior, I knew I was taking the Virgin Warrior with me. I felt like I had a hidden weapon with me, because they didn’t know I was a Warrior. That image gave me enormous strength and clarity about what I was doing. In a way like that, it does have a huge impact on the way I am in the world.”

\textsuperscript{108} Again, the words as above, with Annabelle’s own added phrases, as each person is invited to do.
Annie B. said that “the ritual celebrations constantly remind me of who I am and what I can be and where I come from, and who my Mother is.”

For Annie B., the calling of the Air in the rituals had helped her recognize her breath as

“the Breath of the Goddess … and how, as part of my moving into my power and moving forward in my life, I need to become very conscious of my breath. Through not breathing to my full capacity I am lessening myself, I’m not taking the full support that’s there for me, and I’m not stepping fully into my possibility.”

For Gareth, the Seasonal celebrations enabled a connecting to emotions, and self-expression. He responded,

“I’m a fairly detached individual, I don’t live with my emotions close to the surface - I trained myself that way. But I did find myself participating far more than I expected, and feeling emotions as they went. Certainly as one turned to the four corners, I felt a definite identification with that … I found that very powerful and emotional.

And when you turn to people and say to them (the Invocation) something about ‘I honour you’ or whatever … I found that very good, because that’s something I would never do. And in that one where we had pictures of ourselves – Samhain – that allowed one to bring out in public, aspects of oneself and one’s connections and memories … and people were responding to that. An unusual opportunity to share with a larger community, to bring very personal things to the surface, and a number of people did that – for some it would be very easy, they spill their guts – but for me, it was a significant step, not normal. I found it helpful in that it allowed me to say something about myself that I don’t normally say … and my background … in a gentle kind of way …’’

Gareth said he had been “trained” to suppress his feelings,

“… things were covered up, so I carried my own emotional burdens through that period of youth. The rituals are a wonderful way of doing these things … actually expressing yourself.”

Louise was an occasional participant, whom I did not interview, but who gave me written feedback. Louise wrote, after Mabon:

“I find it so powerful to just remember the elements and where we come from right at the beginning. The whole ritual, like all the others, reminds me of who I am, and what I want to be, and what is important to me. And my sensuality – I had quite an erotic dream after the last ritual. I came home and started to relax more in my relationship to G. (partner). As I started to reflect a little on the ritual, I started to feel my own sensuality again, instead of being so caught up in Life, that I can’t feel. G. noticed the ‘softening’ in me.”
Louise also wrote the following to me after the Imbolc 99 ritual:

“I came home and G. said I looked like the cat who ate all the cream. I had a smile on my face! A smile! ... what happened? ... how did it effect me? Profoundly. There have been times in my life when I felt very much at peace with myself and with All-That-Is. Part of the reason I became a Catholic in 1981 was because I loved the rituals involved, that meant more to me than any words being said.... I could happily rephrase all that was said by the priests to suit myself. I could see a lot wrong with the Church and why people have hang-ups about it. I remember several occasions when I went to church after a long time of not going, and I would cry. I would feel as though I had been away from home for so long and that I was being lovingly held ...

At Glenys’, I did not have to change the words to suit me. I did cry, or at least had tears in my eyes, as soon as she started recalling the elements within. I had the same sort of feeling: of being gentled, and held and brought ‘home’. But in a way it was even more meaningful, more powerful because it was more me, I did not have to ‘interpret’ it all before I could accept it.

In our society, it seems this ‘gentling’ and holding has been forgotten. ... It is wonderful to be reminded of a better way to be. It is wonderful to be supported and encouraged and allowed to be who I truly am: ‘a ripple on the sea of generosity’.”

**Theme 3 - increasing trust in “process”**

I had not referred to this in the questions specifically, but it was constantly mentioned in the interviews as an effect, which extended to other aspects of the unfolding of the participant’s life. The theme sometimes emerged in a participant’s response to the question of their understanding of the three faces of the Goddess, and usually then I will categorize their response under that theme.

**Anne** reflected that because of this work, “there is a deeper trust in my intuitions and gut feelings and the Bigger Picture”, though later she also reflected that as she became more aware of the possible consequences of the process she was entering into, even with each ritual, she consciously experienced more fear than she used to – “as I prepare to face things, but there is also the excitement of knowing I am going to come through it”. Anne said that in the ritual process, “the fear recedes as I enter into that ‘safe’ space”, that she understood ritual as “extraordinary” space, and that she now has more of
that in her life than "ordinary" space. She said, "I feel safe there, partly because of how we know each other ... we hold each other."

Debbie expressed an increasing ability to experiment with, and trust, an organic process of creativity in herself. She defined this as allowing the divine in her to come through. As an example, this process was expressed on one occasion when sculpting with clay. She,

"just starting playing with the clay, ... just, to see what came out, and after an hour something came out."
GLENYS: so trusting the process?
DEBBIE: trusting the process ... that's a very clear thing for me ... that I am supported. Trusting I am supported, I'm not alone.

Debbie also described how this Seasonal celebrational process had helped her be "less rigid" about certain things needing to be done at a certain time. She now could relax more knowing and trusting that "... suddenly the energy will come one day and you'll just have it. But if I try and fight it, and make it happen before its time, I get half way through and in a bigger mess... " She no longer needed, "to go to all ends and think it must be done. ... It's all about letting go and trusting in the process."

Loret felt that the ritual celebrations helped her bring forth her intentions, but also

"to recognize that things don't always happen as they seem either ... to have that trust, that if the intention is honourable – even if it doesn't come out in the way that I, with my brain, think it will manifest, ... Something deeper within me has a deeper Wisdom than just my brain."

Lyn had a breakthrough in her understanding of the life-death-rebirth cycle, when at Samhain "eternal life" was languaged as "never ending renewal". She remembered it as a key experience –

"that was really strong – strong as a concept, as meaning. It made a connection then, to understand it ... and it was interesting having a conversation not long after that, with someone who had a meaning of "everlasting life" as – he's actually been on the TV - The true meaning of everlasting life is being to evolve scientific knowledge to be able to clone us – clone individuals so they don't die. They will have everlasting life ... and I said, I have FINALLY (laughs) come across a meaning of everlasting life, and it's never ending renewal, so I can't believe what you're saying. That's a total misconception to meaning. But I sat with it much better than that, in the sense that that's what he thought, and then
I just sit this next to it, as in, this is what gives me meaning to everlasting life, as a life-death-life cycle. And the thing of never dying doesn’t make sense anymore.”

Lyn who is an artist, particularly connected with the image of “She who Shines in the Dark”, that was used in Mabon and Samhain rituals. Lyn said,

“Artwork came out of that. She represents a movement out of restrictions I hold over myself, gradually meeting and disentangling, untangling all the knots threaded throughout my body and being, weaving into life balance, courage and bravery … to face obstacles in order to meet my true intuitive soul, and out of the depths from the tearing and tying, pinning and sewing, arranging and placing together of all the component parts, She appears ragged, rough and shimmering. … out of the Dark, and a deeper trust … as things occur … if that’s where one is, then that’s where one’s power is … being vulnerable – that is a powerful place to be … that it is, perhaps a new sensitivity coming through, or being sensitive, a young place there, and not feeling established, but it has its own power, its own truth, …”

For Catherine K., this trust in process was mentioned in relation to coming to terms with death – of her mother in particular – and it was related to her feelings about darkness and grieving. As she told it to me:

“The darkness was a frightening place to sink and fall into, and to seem to fall deeper and deeper as each Winter month went by, and there didn’t seem to be that Light that I needed – light that I was looking for exteriorly … it just disappeared and I seem to sink into a darker and darker place.

The Mabon experience was a further development … I wasn’t sure I wanted to come. … It was a bit scary to go to. The grieving thing that we did was very valuable to me. I had always had this very close relationship with my Mum, and was an only daughter … I had fear of death, for Mother to leave. I couldn’t imagine this to happen – negation of the highest level … and gripping fear in every part of one’s being. So to go into a place where there was going to be this idea of grieving was very scary for me … and it was associated with dark and death and that phase. So it was a very tricky one, but that process was extremely valuable. … Mum was deteriorating in front of my eyes, and it was very scary for me, and a lot of the time I had negated that. That process allowed me to understand the whole process of the living and the going … that also there would be no separation, that it was a process that I COULD go through, that I could actually enter into … which before I’d never entertained the idea of … so it got me that far … that I could!

Planting the seed was beautiful … and to know that Mum would enter that place that was not Darkness, that was also safe and quite part of our living experience … and wasn’t again a separate experience, … It was just simply a process. That’s what I seemed to discover – the word PROCESS seemed to come alive. It was OK for her to go … there was
this new life for her, and in some way a new life for me as well. But that
there was nothing frightening or Dark about it at all – in the end
picture.”

Kaye, who has had to deal with depression over the years, particularly as a
young mother, affirmed that this Goddess work had helped her be
“more positive, and when I’m feeling depressed or dark, I don’t feel that
it’s as drastic … I suppose that I sort of think of Persephone – going
down and coming back up … which sort of brings back the thing of
cycles.”
Kaye’s understanding of the three faces of the Goddess as a cycle had been
particularly helpful to her, and I will tell more of that in theme 8.

For Sandy, the honoring of the Crone at Lammas was
“an opportunity to honour my process, as torn as it’s been – there’s an
acceptance there, that each part of the process has brought me to this, to
the awareness that I have now.”
The honoring of this “torn-ness” as OK, had enabled a stronger sense of self –
more insight into who she was.

Theme 4 - creation of community, and communal values
Over the research period Anne often mentioned in various ways, how
important it was for her to hear “other people’s sharings” (Imbolc 99). In the
interview, she spoke of the Mabon grief process as
“amazing … the whole group thing is incredibly powerful, because others
will express what you feel … it’s like, ‘ah yes!’ … it’s just there for
everybody. … I don’t get so fearful about what I’m going to say, I know
that I experience more than I can ever think for myself. It’s so wonderful
having everybody’s sharings.”
In response to Question 9 about whether the ritual process had affected her
relationships with others, Anne replied,
“Yes definitely. It has created a sense of community with the others who
have done it … like it would have been in traditional times … learning
the depths of another person … becoming more accepting … learning
what others are going through.”

Loret’s experiences of growing tolerance and effects on her relationships
with others have been largely addressed under other themes. Her growing
willingness to be “seen” and present herself, to stand in the Light as this
aspect is celebrated in the Wheel, seemed to have a lot to do with the effect
on communal links and values. She articulated this in many ways throughout the interview, and in written feedback. It was in response to the question about Darkness and Light, that she described the shift for her:

"I was scared of the light because I didn’t want to come out and shine, you know, because I was happy in my own sense of being in the Dark — not because I was morbid or depressed or anything — just because that was where I was safe. I knew I could be held, and I knew I could do it. ... I still get my bones rattled when I have to come out and shine, but I’ll come out, you know, the Warrior in me has been awoken to the light, so to speak.”

GLENYS: Daring to step into the light?
LORET: Yeah, my Athena is there — She’s not hiding in the corner anymore. She was always there, but She was busy with Persephone down in the Underworld, but now She’s happy to be up there in the light, and wait for me when I come back up.

Loret described how

“trusting women is the really tricky one for me, ... so being able to understand the many facets of woman through the Goddess has been profoundly healing, and being able to actually do it with a group of women where I really can show the different parts of myself, and actually trust them. ... In the past I’ve not been able to show my true self.”

Loret had also spoken of how these experiences were bonding the group of four core participants, as they could speak to each other about their experiences and feel understood, or help each other with understanding some of the material (21.10.99). They were becoming closer friends.

Lyn felt really nourished by

“just from hearing how each person speaks so differently ... what they want to mention, what they talk about, and how they talk about it — so different ... each person’s experience.”

In response to a question about whether she perceived the seasonal celebrations as a spiritual practice, Lyn said that she did now, though not in the beginning; and that she now felt more affinity with, and respect for her father’s work as a minister, and for her Mum “and the thing of them being Christian”. Lyn explained that because she felt supported and enriched with this seasonal ritual and Goddess work,

“I can respect prayer, the process of prayer more ... as a means, a connection. And so I actually use the word ‘blessing’ more now, but I’ll also say ‘to pray’ or ‘do a prayer’. I suppose I can keep unfolding the
meanings with myself and my daughter, who has relatives who are very strong Christian.”

In the interview Lyn spoke at length about the development of the friendships with the other three women. She said,

“I’m really surprised. The four of us are so different and I wouldn’t have imagined we would become friends, as enjoying the processes together, and with you and things in a group of women … I thought too different, too different from me.”

She said they had not had a simple or easy time at all, but that she “a deeper commitment to these three” and they were now meeting once a month, “as part of an ongoing process, to look at … to keep our journey, to do with our spiritual journey and the communication in that, and our creativity with that.”

Sandy particularly remembered the Beltane process of leaping the flames and stating to everyone “all the crap” she was leaving behind. Sandy said:

“I went over the flame, I don’t know how many times. I’ve been working with my emotional stuff for so long … It enhances it doing it in a communal context, when everybody’s doing it – some are more willing than others, depending on where they are in their personal process. And I think it’s a safe space; that’s what we need more than anything - where we can show our vulnerability.”

Sandy commented about the Eostar celebration:

“it really helps you accept where people are in their process, and it helps you honour them in that space … you know the confusion of youth, you know it’s just part of a process of coming to know what they want. It’s helped me look at other people’s processes with more compassion too.”

Catherine K. had invited me to facilitate the Mabon ritual celebration with her women’s group. She described:

“That was an outpouring of real grieving and none of us, as close as we were in my women’s group – knew the depths of grieving we had in our souls. It was a really important moment. It made another dimension to our group … because so much you do keep within. I had told everyone in my women’s group about this unfortunate tragedy and of course the right sympathies were said and everything like that, but nobody understood the depth that I felt it, … Then everybody said afterwards … how much grief was there that we didn’t know about – it was untapped, but it was allowed to be opened up. … You know if you don’t belong to the church group, and nowhere in the church group do you get the same degree of what is offered here … yes there is ritual, but it doesn’t allow for the full expression and certainly the seasonal thing is not connected cosmically or anything – it’s quite a separate thing, very ‘calendar’ like if you know what I mean, not cosmically linked. It had quite an impact on my women’s group and it came at a time when there seemed to be all sorts of
things in our personal lives and it drew us so much closer. It was a group
growth experience.”

Annie B., who participated in the small Moon Circle as well as the bigger
Seasonal celebrations, expressed enjoyment that the latter offered “a wider
sense of community”. Annie had felt very supported by the ritual group on
the night of Winter Solstice, when her mother died. She described:

“I felt that even though there was a lot of those people I didn’t know,
it was as though they added their consciousness and their goodwill
and their support to my mother at that time of her passing and that
was really quite wonderful.”

For Geoff, the seasonal rituals were “an opportunity to be with others to
celebrate something Divine and particularly ... something about the Earth”,
because he was otherwise “very individual” in his “practice”. He said,

“I’m impressed with the kinds of things I see and hear people coming up
with, and they actually do share quite deep personal things, and I guess I
do too to some extent. It’s difficult to really plumb my depths in that
short space of time, but sometimes what other people say will touch
something.”

Geoff added that he liked “these eight seasonal rituals and the cycles of the Earth”
because “they have a lot to do with indigenous cultures of the North, but also the
indigenous cultures here as well.”

One of Helen’s main reasons for attending the seasonal celebrations was for
a strengthening of her “sense of community – that it’s not just a lone journey.”
The celebrations were a place where her particular path was “mirrored ... and
it resonates very deeply. It’s like I rejoin the sisters in the story.” The rituals
helped her honour the process that was going on in her life “all the time, yet
gives it a form and a shape that is shared by others – which is empowering ... this is
... a rites of passage almost.” Helen emphasized that she loved “the celebration
with others – sharing sacred space in that communal way.”

Gareth found that the seasonal celebrations were

“part of the restoration of a life I had as an active member of the church,
but with a different symbolism, where the symbolism of the church had
lost its power or meaning for me, perhaps a communion with other
people, and a gentle honoring of one another – that goes with life, but is
mostly unsaid.”
Theme 5 – affirmation of femaleness

This theme was specifically elicited in question 6 about the use of the Female Pronoun/Metaphor, and somewhat in question 5 about familiarity with the three faces of Goddess. It also frequently emerged in interviewee response to other questions and in the course of the conversation. For the women, the affirmative response was very connected to their sense of self, and had far reaching effects. For the two men interviewed, it did have visceral impact but it was articulated more as a sense of balance.

As a general comment on the response to Question 6 – the use of “She”, I found that I frequently had to juxtapose it with a question regarding the interviewee’s possible feeling if I had used the Male Pronoun in the celebrations. Otherwise the interviewees were consistently concerned with being “fair-minded”. Usually also, if I emphatically reiterated the request for their felt experience, as opposed to their thoughts on the matter, I would get a very different response. Consistently, the women interviewees expressed feeling a strong pressure from the community to be “even-handed” in the use of “He” and “She”; a pressure to which they bowed somewhat unconsciously in some cases – they did not want to appear myopic or simple-minded. Though upon questioning regarding their feeling if I had used the Male Metaphor, their responses were unequivocally and almost unanimously, that they would not have been participating. Their actual personal experience, and viscerally felt preference, led them to exclusive use of “She” to express the Sacred/Divine for themselves, but they usually needed further questioning to reveal this “secret”.

Even in the evolution of these celebrations, as a year long celebration and story of the cycle of the Female Metaphor, there was debate within myself and with the group of women, about the exclusive use of the Female Metaphor – as has been described in Chapter 7’s detail on Mabon (p.223–224).

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189 I did not offer the option of nongendered metaphor because frequently supposed “nongendered metaphor” is in fact gendered in the mind, as I have discussed in earlier chapters especially in regard to the use of the term “God” (see p.44 and p.49).
Perhaps Helen's response expresses this struggle quite well. She exclaimed that she loved the use of the Female Pronoun/Metaphor to address self/Earth/Cosmos in the celebrations, and went on:

"I did have, and still sometimes do have - I don't know whether it's a little guilt trip, or a sort of, maybe I've got to say 'He' sometimes - but, coming from this Protestant background which totally denied any female Deity or Power, Mary was just the vessel, didn't have much say in it and certainly didn't feel much, and ... I mean there's no real person there and no woman. I've gone through huge anger about that, again, which I think the celebrations have helped release. The sense of fear, which I realize has been huge in my life, is only assuaged by this sense of returning to Her. I fight it and I do all kinds of things, but I finally return to the Garden and am embraced by this image of the Goddess ... come Home really, just have to keep practicing it, which is something you do when you do these rituals all the time. They continue to remind you that you can return as often as you need to."

Helen said, "It's the experience Glenys - my experience of sacred is the feminine. These rituals affirm that", and by comparison, she felt that Male Metaphor separated her from her "own body rhythms" and hence her own "sacred experience."

Linda's commentary on the matter, reflected both thoughts and feelings. She responded:

"To address the Earth, it feels perfectly appropriate. If we're talking about the more airy dimension, I suppose the spiritual one - 'God'/ 'Goddess' or something - it feels really nice because we hear mostly 'He', I hear mostly 'He', and it feels like a good redress of balance to that.

To address myself that way as 'She - Who is All' ... it feels right. I thought about this, how it would feel if I said 'He', and I think I would probably throw up - it just wouldn't come ... because I am female. Gender is a pretty loaded kind of thing ... but it feels comforting to be in a place where we speak of 'She' as what we're part of. It makes it feel safer to be there. I love the fact that the men there also address themselves that way - as 'She Who is All' - I just love it, that they get an opportunity to do this. I can't imagine what might go through their minds coming along to these gatherings, but I just really like that they get a chance to do that, and they're prepared to do that. ... It just feels like ... it's such a nice change, to hear so many 'shes' in the world. I've never been able to understand or come at 'God the Father'."

Geoff was at first philosophical about the question. He said:

"There's been so much overuse of the Male Pronoun - that's one reason I feel it's fine to use the Female Pronoun. And we are talking about an"
Earth Mother religious tradition here, so it seems entirely appropriate to ... we worship the Earth in Her femininity ... I suppose. I feel OK identifying with this.”

When asked if it would feel different if Male Metaphor was used, Geoff responded: “It DOES feel different actually, and it’s good to be reminded of that ... It’s a feeling of greater wholeness, to be using Female Metaphor.”

Even for Sandy, who of all the interviewees, felt the most comfortable with the possibility of some use of Male Metaphor in the celebrations, expressed a dramatic enjoyment of “identifying more as Goddess”. For Sandy it meant valuing herself more, and taking more care to attend to herself, her vulnerability, her tenderness, her beauty. She said, “The Goddess energy is about me as a person ... there is a richness that comes from that.” For Sandy, Earth and Cosmos had

“always been my Mother, so I don’t have a problem with it. And whatever I do, it’s always Mother first ... in all my groups, in all the prayers, in everything we do ... it’s always Mother. It’s normal for me.”

Sandy said that her first spiritual experience was when her first child was born, but it was not until later that she realized the significance of the experience. She found the Imbolc celebration very affirming:

“where we walk up and down on the red ... I thought, how wonderful it would be if we could celebrate our womanhood and our femininity, and as people change their view of the menstrual cycle and saw it as the Creative process rather than a pain in the bum and a nuisance. That really came up for me when I had children. I thought ‘oh this is amazing to think that I’ve had this all my life, and never really thought about the creative process beyond carrying children’.”

Sandy continued her reflections on the matter in general, and was amazed that, “The menstrual cycle is not acknowledged by many cultures as Creative ... there’s all sorts of negative stuff around it. ... That’s incredible, I was appalled when I read about it.” She was thus particularly pleased to associate the red we walked on at Imbolc, with the menstrual flow of the Goddess; it made her “stop and think about it”. Sandy said that it also made her

“realize I am still Goddess even though I haven’t got it! – and I’m glad! This post-menopausal phase is the face of the gaining of Wisdom and the face of Peace I think – with yourself, for some of us. But also that you’re giving out in a different way to your family. It’s time to find your own
Creative process and fill it ... that makes you more fulfilled as a person.”

Debbie, in the interview, expressed a continuing struggle with “balance” of “masculine and feminine”, especially as she felt she needed “to be careful” raising two boys. She expressed an ease with using the Female Pronoun in the rituals, and how good it was that she met up with me; she said she “didn’t let go because there was an innate part of me that needed to be found again, that wanted to find my feminine ... truly find my feminine ... not just for me, ... for my daughter, and everybody that’s in my life.”

Debbie later said that she wore her Goddess pendants inside her clothes, keeping that side of herself “quite personal”, not wanting other people’s interpretations. However, amongst her close friends, she often identified herself openly as Goddess, and she laughed as she said, “it feels like you’re wearing a crown! ... you know it taps into that Divinity ... you know you are special.”

Anne expressed that use of the Female Metaphor as we did, felt very powerful and that it helped her

“with the whole understanding of the Bigger Picture, an understanding of the relationship and the connection. ... This work helps explore and accept the roots of a lot of what we do in our modern world ... which didn’t just come down when Jesus was born! ... it has a much bigger history ... and that’s all part of that connection and the Bigger Picture really.”

She found it useful or more accurate to speak of “the Original Ovulation” say, rather than the “Big Bang” ...

“something was birthed – the Universe was birthed, and therefore it does makes sense to think of it as a Female, rather than anything else. I accept that re-storying is what we are doing, and through that creating clarity.”

She reflected that ‘Big Bang’ fills her with fear, when she thought about it. Then she continued, “It makes me feel more comfortable with being a female ... as compared to feeling like a second class citizen.” Towards the end of the interview Anne said that she felt it was impossible to tell the story without female imagery. She said:

“it is the story ... it’s like the Dreaming ... you have the possum, the rainbow serpent ... they are the story. ... To speak about Demeter and
Persephone ... you can’t say anything else ... they are the story. Mother-Earth says it all.”

Anne liked how she was identified as “the Goddess” in community contexts now, and delighted in the comfort with which her young boys referred to “Goddess” in everyday exclamations and “supplications”.

Loret said that the whole process of identifying herself with the Female Metaphor has

“been very good, very healing, because even though I did a lot of healing of stuff in my family, I still couldn’t help feeling that if I hadn’t been female it wouldn’t have happened to me. So in that respect it’s made me very proud to be female … proud yeah … and to recognize the really wondrous thing I’ve done by having children … and to give me more courage to – well I held a lot of resentment, and probably still do hold some resentment about being at home as a mother … however I know that using the Female Metaphor and all that stuff, is helping me to chip that away and recognizing that primarily is one of the most important jobs that we can do … I’m bringing up these beautiful new beings, part of She.”

GLENYS: Re-valuing?
LORET: Yes, that’s the word …

Lyn expressed feeling very comfortable with “the Great Mother” as a qualification of the Female Metaphor, and with putting one’s hand in the Hand of the One (laughs) – the Unknown”, but she said,

“I still sit beside it when I talk to my daughter and myself, as in say ‘Goddess’; I’ll use the word ‘Creator’/‘Divine One’/‘Great Mother’ … I’ll still move between those. I’m just aware of being in a community context, different spiritual practices and meanings on things.”

I asked her if she used the Female Pronoun. She responded: “Not all the time, but I do use it, whereas I never used to use it before.” Then when I asked her how it felt different to use the Male Pronoun when she did, she said,

“Well it doesn’t sit with me anymore … (laughs) … it doesn’t sit with me as a Universal embrace thing of me. The ‘She’ goes into all embracing right now, for me, because there’s been such a struggle to come through. That’s given me more permission to align myself as a spiritual being than before.”

Even though Kaye had “felt right” about the language for the Divine being female, as I spoke of earlier, she said that to address herself that way “felt strange at first … but if we are all part of the whole, then it makes sense.” I juxtaposed the question about her feeling if Male Metaphor had been used,
and she said, "It would feel really uncomfortable ...". She found it interesting that men in the circle felt OK addressing themselves as "She", and was philosophical about why "it shouldn't hurt for them to say 'She' occasionally ... we all have male and female hormones, so it's there ..."

Gareth had specifically and spontaneously mentioned how important the language was to his enjoyment of the rituals, and in regard to addressing himself as "She", he had "no difficulty with that ... we all have a masculine and feminine side. It's the discovery of that ...". He found no difficulty with "using the Female Pronoun to describe Earth and Cosmos", and affirmed that he found it "helpful", as to for him, it "brings an emphasis on the caring connectedness."

Cath T. responded that it felt "very natural" to speak of Earth as "She", and that it would feel very different if Male metaphor was used in the celebrations. She said,

"I grew up and lived in a very patriarchal world, that took me many years to shake off. I still live in it, I still have to think against it quite often. And ... if Male Metaphor was used in the celebrations, I don't think I would see so much of my own value there."

Like many of the interviewees, Cath. T. remained a bit confused mentally on the issue, although experientially she was not. She explained further:

"When I say 'I am She, She who is All', I'm not thinking of myself, I am thinking of the Deity, and the Deity is both male and female for me; but I think if you said 'He', it would change the experience for me - I don't know why ... I wouldn't feel it was so personalized, although there is that fence between myself and the fact that I know I'm talking about a Deity, spiritual elements, the Life Forces - I haven't thought that one through."

Catherine K. found the use of the Female Pronoun/Metaphor in all ways, "Wonderful! ... and a further affirmation that in the whole creation of things, there was this magic Female dance as well. So we further celebrate this ... it's just a wonderful revelation, once you do discover it.

Using the Female pronoun in this way made very much of a difference to how I feel about myself, because when I was a little girl, I was brought up with the fact - the tragic fact -that I was the last of the line. ... I was the end of our dynasty ... my father's name ended with me. ... Grandmother used to say 'It's so sad, so sad isn't that you weren't a boy'. I did try very hard ... I was very tomboyish. ... Discovering the female was not there to start with, and it has been a journey ... and the
more I have discovered of the Feminine the more ecstatic I have felt, and the more exhilarated ... to be fully female and fully feminine."

For Annie B.,

"using the Female Metaphor means everything to me, and if that wasn't there then I really wouldn't be particularly interested in doing the seasonal celebrations.

Addressing myself as She, makes me feel empowered, grounded ... because it does connect me with that ancient history, and it connects me with all possibilities. I grew up as a Catholic, with male metaphor for everything ... there was the Virgin Mary of course. Going to Italy affected my relationship with Her. ... The celebrations really focussed 'She the world', 'She the Cosmos' ... they have been significant in my being able to really imbibe that Metaphor. They have helped me embody it and celebrate it.

It has completely changed my life ... like, it's a constant ongoing process – constantly finding new things, but it's like that is the bottom line for me now. ... I found this awareness of this Goddess connection affected the way I lived my life, and it was like touching Home.

I've had a spiritual practice – a form of meditation – on and off for twenty years, the form now is Vipassana which focuses on the breath – essentially a Buddhist form. But everything I do, I do with a consciousness of the Goddess ... the predominant image is probably male – Buddha. I don't feel connected to the Male Metaphor, that's not an expression of me. I don't feel grounded and rooted in it. I can feel a connection in my belly with the Goddess ..."

Theme 6 – effect on feeling about Darkness and Light

For Lyn, this was a far-reaching osmotic change, that was brought about by the language, over a period of time. She said,

"I found it really difficult to embrace the word "Darkness" as a concept and then I suppose, from my Christian background ... and then of course the Anthroposophy, Steiner education with primary school children, you're not to use the colour black ... you can use light colours and you're bringing them through into the Light all the time, constantly. So then entering this, this was like bumping up against it ... so then going through it ... Darkness now has a richness in it, it has a very strong meaning for me now – Darkness."

She said she now felt much better about darkness, and that the words about darkness have been Openings into a new feeling of

"honoring myself more as a woman ... like, the womb, being in a woman’s body, the belly, and the Dark – the night, the night sky, the Dark, the Richness, the soil, the Earth, as in what grows out of the dark, like commonly seen as a ... it's such an important part of the cycle of..."
growth, life, death, Earth, growth rhythm ... That’s my association with
the Dark anyway ... as in the soil, in the Earth, and in the belly, and in
one’s depths as in contemplation times ...”

GLENYS: whereas before, Darkness would have had a ... always
been seen as a despairing place or a negative?
LYN affirmed: ... or a negative. So Dark and Light is just there, and ...
if something’s negative or an obstacle, it can be in the Dark or the Light,
to me now.

Catherine K. had a dramatic response in regard to this theme, with her
first seasonal celebration, which was Winter Solstice. As she told it in the
interview:

“That was such an impressive ceremony, because all my life I had
suffered from that SAD disorder every Winter season – it’s been awful, I
would disappear into the darkness of Winter, I would be quite bereft by
August, think I couldn’t manage another winter – seriously depressive
stuff every Winter; and that was a magical night, and I’ve never looked
back since. It was a life changing experience – it was something that
nothing else had been able to do ... nowhere had I been able to feel any
relief from the darkness until we did that ceremony. What stands out is
the beckoning of the light, and it was valuable making those affirmations
... of what’s being born in you.”

Catherine K. felt able to experience and feel the darkness within –

“have it be part of you ... not to be frightened of it ... like I used to
have a real fear and dread of Winter and that dark space. But the
processing ... allowed me to experience it and then realize the Light
will come back, and is also part of you ... and that this is balance, and
there isn’t a separation between dark and light...”

This dramatic response in Catherine K. was also a pathway to feeling
connected in a new way to “the Bigger Picture”. She said,

“That was the start of the Bigger Picture. I remember coming out of that
Winter Solstice ritual and seeing a shooting star, and the stars seem to
be in three-D, like I’d never felt them before. Some sort of transformation
had taken place, and I had the significance of being part of it for the first
time in my life ... there seemed to be no separation ... just looking down
into the void, and suddenly just being part of it ... not having this dark
sky separate from little me. I seemed to be part of this whole magnitude,
this whole cosmic thing.”

In contrast to Catherine K.’s experience, Loret had always loved the Dark,
and I have quoted under other themes how this seasonal celebration process
had helped her feel more comfortable with the Light. However it remains a
challenge for her “to come out and shine”. Loret’s experience of the Wheel of
the Year expresses it: she said the Wheel was

“a constant rolling ... for example I come into mid Winter, there’s still a
bit of Samhain .. and often the ritual is the “kick up the bum”, to leave

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the other part and to move into that. ... I seem to be a late leaver. I love Mabon and Samhain right, so mid-Winter (because of the Light business with me) gives me a real kick up the backside to say, 'listen you’re going to go into the light whether you like it or not ... time to leave those, time to go into the Light.' ... Imbolc and Eostar are terrifying – Imbolc especially. However I have become more at ease with them as the time has gone on ... I find that Beltane is a breathing space from the intensity, and it’s always fun – for me. ... By the time mid-Summer comes, I’m cruising the Light ... and I’m not ready to start going down! ... I start lagging. By time Lammas has come, it’s a case of ‘I’ve only just got into Summer’ ... again that’s another one that gives me that kick that says ‘You’ve got to start moving into this next phase ... the cave’s open’. Then once I get to Mabon, it’s like a Beltane, I’m happy, I’m free, I’m out. Then I’m happy. Then mid-Winter comes again ... and it’s that kick. The cave door’s opening again girly, out you go into that intensity ... I’m hoping ... that’s why I still need them as a way of giving me that framework, that punctuation, because they also help me stop, reflect, take stock in the chaotic Light. She said that “It’s been particularly difficult the last year, as I’ve had more awareness of who I am and my own sense of power and my own sense of my abilities ... so it’s actually become more concentratedly frightening, as I’ve realized who and what I can be and who I am ... that’s a journey that I am still on.”

Anne had never felt comfortable about expressing the Dark as a negative thing, and enjoyed celebrating it as a positive part of the whole. For Cath T. it was a similar experience; she said that she had grown up in the country and “saw life and death all the time.” She had already valued the Dark as a shaping force and a growth process, and these celebrations were an affirmation of that.

For Debbie, the effect she expressed was in terms of “a much healthier respect for the Dark, and a feeling that it should be more celebrated than the light really, because that’s where our learning is I think ... a lot of my learning is in my dark.” She said she “used to think of Darkness as something quite negative ... and bad.”

Sandy loved the Lammas celebration of the Dark One, enjoying the honoring of that “stage of the process”. Sandy was coming from an orientation where she said, she did not “believe in Darkness and Light in a spiritual sense”, that

“everything is Light, and it’s our own fear that creates the Darkness.”

However, the seasonal celebrations had made her more aware “of the changing cycles of the Earth – of the Light and Dark of the Earth –
every six weeks ... it’s made me more aware of that and generally more aware of how much we take for granted ... I mean the Light and the Dark comes and most of us don’t even think about it. But for me there’s a greater awareness of all that cycle now.”

Annabelle who had had a long period of experience of the seasonal celebrations, responded that through participation in this process she had come to have a clear embodied sense of the connection of Darkness and Light — a feeling for “the fact that you can’t have one without the other.” She went on,

“even though sometimes when I am there personally — in terms of my own moods, it doesn’t feel good. But I also know that it is a space, if I can stay with it and work through it, that it can become very productive and very creative. So rather than going into a lot of self-blame, and self-criticism and that type of thing, I can try now to avoid that, realizing this simply is part of the cycle ... So it’s helped me to look at the wholeness of things — trying to break down that dualism, binaries, that we are so prone to live within ...”

For Annie B., consciousness of the Darkness, through the seasonal ritual work, has made her aware of “the importance of the seeds that are planted in that place”, and gave her “extraordinary support” through the deaths of her parents and the illness of her brother. Annie said, “There’s been a huge shift in my perceptions of the Dark”. She had been shocked recently by an imaginative experience wherein the Dark Mother

“was this image like the night sky, a swirling starry Blackness that was utterly forgiving, utterly embracing, utterly supportive. It just blew me away, and it was not at all what I expected. I’d always imagined Her before as avenging, someone to be feared ... and it was shocking to find Her so beautiful.”

Theme 7 - effect on feeling related to Earth/Cosmos, through Seasonal and Elemental identification

Because of this theme’s relatedness to one’s sense of space and time, and sense of self particularly, quite a bit of the material for it has already been covered in interviewee responses categorized under those or other themes. However there is more.

Debbie’s core participation in this whole process affected her sense of relationship with Earth to the extent that she made a ritual dedication of
herself to Earth for her 40th birthday. The other women who were core participants also, assisted in the facilitation of the ritual which took place at a special site, as the culmination to a weekend of preparation together.

For Debbie, her engagement with this seasonal process and the reflection and meetings and teaching, was quite intense. She was organically deeply committed to learning and growing. She kept a special journal for the work. Just before the formal research process began, she missed the Winter Solstice ritual, and felt that she had needed a rest; she understood that honoring herself on this occasion meant staying at home, and allowing some stillness.

Debbie remains very focussed in her participation in the seasonal celebrations, still wanting the teachings and the ritual scripts beforehand. She said in the interview:

“I’d like to follow this work ... ongoing through my life now, and try and tap into each Sabbat more ... really, it’s only such early days with each point of the year – the energies that each point has. I’d like to work more with that, and get into that myself, until the day I die ... you know through art form, through ritual, through ... what it takes. It’s a great tool. I’d like a whole week at each point, where I could just go into a cave, with my women friends, or escape by myself if I wanted to, and just really focus on that energy in that point in time. I mean there will come a time when I can do that ... without interruption, without having to stop to get everyone’s meals, without having to answer to children.”

GLENYS: So you feel a call, a call to deepen into ...
DEBBIE: Yeah, sure ... but it’s OK, I trust in the process. I think a deeper understanding of yourself, is one and the same with a deeper understanding of the earth ... that runs through all.

In addition to what I have already noted of Loret’s response along this theme, she also said in response to Question 2 about feeling the process:

“I’ve always felt the seasons ... I feel that I’m closely connected to the elemental realm and Gaia. What its given me though in my busy and chaotic world, is a way of hinging it, so that I actually do something formal and deliberately consciously respectful for it. So it’s given me a framework ... which I actually need – I used to think I didn’t need that but I do.”

Loret noted feeling the Stillpoint in the Winter Solstice ritual, how it was her “heart’s desire to remain in the stillpoint”, how the ritual was “a wonderful physical and practical way of knowing the Winter Solstice.”
Anne’s feeling for this theme has been extensively noted under other themes, but in addition, her feeling for each of the Sabbats, as she expressed in the interview, was notable. She contrasted her kind of knowing about the seasons with that of a young family friend who knew lots of “facts” about the Universe; and though she would like to know more “facts”/empirical knowledge as well, she was happy with the depth of relationship with Earth/Universe that she was growing in. As an example, she said, “Knowing that Spring comes after Winter ... not because someone told you, but because you feel it ... this is a different kind of knowing.”

Anne had a significant experience of Stillness during and after the Winter Solstice ritual in which the Stillpoint Dance is one of the processes. She wrote: “I absolutely enjoyed ... the magic of the stillpoint when we were all linked in the middle”, and she had a “sense of emptying like water out of a bath.” Anne again experienced it

“after an amazing weekend (of Winter Festival celebration), and the children doing their spiral on the actual Winter Solstice right the next morning, I felt an incredible stillness. I have experienced incredible synchronicity in regard to a number of things with regard to the cycle.”

Anne had frequently felt quite casual about attendance at the ritual celebrations in the earlier days – it sometimes “seemed too hard” to get to; yet after being away from it, she described feeling “transformed”/“struck” by a simple reading of a preparatory ritual script, and gradually coming to know that she wanted to be there. Anne said that the more she had done the rituals, the more benefit she had perceived, and the desire to participate increased. She added:

“I’m far from a point where I know it all - and I don’t need to be there anymore - and I don’t know, but once you get in deeper, it is probably even harder to step back.”

She felt that there is no way back really, saying that sometimes she thinks she would like to “be unconscious” again; but then she thinks “no, I don’t want to be that person again.”

She finds that she is able to participate more deeply in the intention of the rituals, as she has become more familiar with each of them. She finds them all very powerful, and the desire to read over the script/process emerges ...
it is a self-nourishing process (autopoietical). It is not an effort for her anymore ... it is something she looks forward to. It has become a treat, and it helps in the understanding as well. Sometimes after a ritual, she said she will review the script, as a way of deepening her reflection on the process that happened.

So much of Lyn's experience of feeling related to Earth/Cosmos through this celebrational process has been articulated already, but she also described how this feeling of connection keeps her focused, "on track" with her personal journey in a daily kind of way, as she goes through changes. Lyn said that her understanding of the Wheel of the Year was:

"the rhythm of each year, checking in ... usually with the process of letting go of something and actualizing something. That's very strong for me, and I like that rhythm of doing that ... it's connected me more to Nature, being in Nature, and me being part of nature, and part of the wind and rain ..."

GLENYS: This feeling of being more connected to the Earth – the wind and the rain, has it affected your actions at all?
LYN: ...(hesitates) I don't know, I'm trying to simplify things. I'm also trying to simplify things in a daily rhythm, and that go through the week, and go through the year..."

GLENYS: So you feel like this increasing connection to the Earth is calling you at least, to simplify things?
LYN: Yeah, because I step out of nourishing myself too much ... it's a reminder to keep on nourishing myself in different places in myself, and to keep a connection to being nourished ... I suppose it means doing priorities – of purpose, or what to be involved in, because otherwise, I'm dispersing ... or separating out. If I'm too busy, I'm actually disconnecting myself from being nourished by Great Mother – Life Force, in me, around me. And it brings back the reminder of cultivating energy – cultivating. It's very renewing, but it's a reminder, you have to do it on a day to day, ... once every six weeks is a good reminder, and then the reminder's coming through now of creating that sacred space – at home as well.

In describing her experience, Sandy reflected that,

"... this whole process has made me more aware of the cycles, on a daily basis ... when I walk every morning now I salute the elements – the woman I walk with thinks I'm nuts, but it's deepened my connection with the Earth. I already have a deep connection with the Earth, but it's deepened it. It's hard to put into words..."

Linda described how before coming to these celebrations, she had sought to "have a spiritual practice of some kind that made some sense to me" She had at
that time “weeded out religious dogma” and stayed with what she understood
to be “real – “the seasonal stuff” and watching “the phases of the moon, and the
sunrise, and the sunset.” She said,

“... it was just a sense of being involved. I just feel it’s something to do
with the society that I grew up in ... you never had a sense of
involvement in it, you always felt on the outside, so it was a search for
something that made me feel involved and connected to Life and to other
people. The seasonal celebrations are a chance to practice that
connection.”

Linda expressed the significance for her of participating in the calling of the
Elements:

“It’s like we create the space and it’s just such a feeling of empowerment
I suppose - the whole thing that we all do take part in it so much ...
Although the calling of the elements takes a long time with everyone
doing it, I like it that we get to say things because there’s a great
difference between thinking something, and saying it. When you say it,
you make it a lot more solid, others hear you as well as yourself. Those
sound vibrations go out into the world - as a musician I always think
along these lines - it helps it to grow somehow. I already had a good
sense of the elements before, but what it does do is make me think of them
a bit differently. I had a scientific training and a scientific kind of
curiosity before I had a kind of spiritual yearning, and so it helps me
think of them less rigidly if you like. I think of them in a more personal
way ... quite nice. I actually do feel more connected ... less afraid of
water I suppose. And when I look at the Earth, I remember some of the
things we say ... it makes me look at those things differently and
sensing the combinations ... it’s enriched it.”

For Catherine K., the ritual celebrations were her first occasion of
contemplating the Elements, and she loved it – “how we do it with everyone
participating ...”. She felt it as “absolutely essential” to her overall sense of
being part of “the Bigger Picture”. Catherine said,

“So many times we’re so busy and so disconnected, that we don’t see
ourselves as part of the Cosmic Picture – I certainly didn’t before these
rituals - you know, Earth, Fire ... I love it when you light the fire.”

For Annabelle also, the participatory method used in these celebrations for
calling the Elements, was felt to be important. As Annabelle said it:

“... just by saying it and doing it, it’s an embodiment, it’s a physical
thing that your tongue is saying that ... and you’re breathing in that
smoke, or you’re putting your hand in that water. The last seasonal
ritual (Beltane) with the hand in the earth was great. I was thinking
about getting mine framed actually, because it is a very strong hand
and I like it. It feeds back to me as an image - strength and clarity. It’s
a reflection to me of myself and my particular imprint in Earth, and we use that term in the ritual. And it’s also reminiscent of ancestors and indigenous people’s handmarks on walls. It elicits that whole sense of lineage and history and the Wheel turning – it has lots of layers to it.”

Annabelle commented:

“Each time that we go through the process, it deepens in your psyche and your body what is actually happening. At Spring Equinox where we had the ‘ReTurning’ music, I found having that on in the background while people did their pieces, it brought home a real sense that She is returning – to ME personally, and IN me ... you know it’s not about a worldwide revolution or anything, on levels like that ... and the bringing in of images that are very physical ... I think it really makes a difference.”

Cath T. expressed how she loved the calling of the Elements, and how it connected her to environmental history, and gave her perspective – affected her sense of space and time. Her words:

“I love it (laughs) it connects me to history then. I’m an environmental scientist, so I really understand that we are made up of all this. This is a living experience for me. When you say that, you’re talking my language, talking what I know to be true, and so I can really say ‘Yay’ to that. And it makes me conscious again, that I’m not here alone in this particular time. This is not only my experience, whereas it is an individual experience – my life, I’ll go back to the ground again, I’ve left my seed here, but I’ll be part of nourishing the Earth again, and part of the people who’ve gone before me and who are a part of nourishing me – so we’re all very much connected, it links me ... and then your little day-to-day traumas don’t seem so important. It somehow gives you perspective …”

Helen was coming out of being very affected by Christian stories, which warned against this Old Earth tradition. She affirmed that the celebrations help her relate more to the elements and the Earth, and she went on:

“... helps me in overcoming this sense of the fear of the black magic ... you see this is part of my whole history, the devil, the fire, the fire is devil ... there’s a sort of, black song that has to be undone in my whole history. And as I work in these rituals where it’s honoring and empowering, the link that it has ... it goes beyond the kind of teaching of the Christian which is so deeply ingrained in me ... it’s like centuries I have to undo. So the rituals – because they are rituals, once I get over this ‘Ooh, gosh, black magic here’, and I think that’s why I’m becoming so much stronger, because it does make deep sacred sense about honoring the Earth and the elements of the Earth, and the more I have done them – and I’m recognizing this as I speak – the more I am able to recognize these elements within my own psyche. As we do the rituals, and we say ‘I am Air’ ... intellectually I have known this, intellectually I’ve been able to tell you anything about this, but that’s where the split is ... it’s
like I'm now really seeing this relationship between the breathing and Earth and the Cosmos and my own body ... and sacred self, the energy if you like within me."
Helen affirmed that it has been really important for her, having spent all her life trying “to escape the body in to the spirit – not real, not here, living”, to be able to have a way of “grounding” herself.

Theme 8 - effect on understanding of the three faces of the Female Metaphor

For most of the interviewees, the understanding of the three faces, meant a connection to self and its complexities, which translated to a connection to others and to Universe. Thus this theme has been streaming through other already noted thematic categories, sometimes quietly, though at times it has been quite explicitly.

For quite a few of the participants interviewed, it was the celebration of the aspect of the Old One/Crone particularly that was most significant. For each of these interviewees, this often meant different things, and for most, this re-storying of the Old One was multilayered and complex; thus it may have already been noted under different thematic categories. For some, this celebration of the Old One/Crone was the celebration of old age, for some it was a celebration of menopause – helping “story” this change, all mixed in with a celebration and re-storying of the Dark. For others still, it was more manifest in an increasing trust in process. For some, it meant an acceptance of energies in themselves that were not usually affirmed, for example, anger and depression.

Anne responded quickly to the direct question on this, that she had come to

"a deeper understanding of the dark ... the image of the Crone, the witch ... coming to understand the power of that aspect. And coming to understand that we have all the aspects within us and we can be more than one aspect at the same time."

Lyn’s significant experience of the Dark One has already been noted. Her immediate response to this direct question about the three faces of Goddess, was that she said she had gained a significant understanding of these in the
three layered Stillpoint dance of Winter Solstice, which I had storied as embodying the Virgin, Mother and Crone; and she described the qualities of each as she felt them, commenting that she loved this ritual for this experience. An interesting perception that Lyn had was the noticing of how these three qualities are present in groups of people:

“When I’m in circles, in gatherings or one to one, quite often there’s sharing from one’s individual self, and there’s a thinking when we share ideas or feelings, something else occurs; then a third thing happens ... then the thing of being at One ... sometimes there’s just a common understanding or meeting occurs. So it like we create something from being together.”

GLENYS: so you notice these three levels of creativity in a group or in interactions?

LYN: I find it fascinating ... I just notice whether those three things are attended to ... (laughs) because it’s really satisfying when all of them are.

GLENYS: I’m glad you are aware of them as energies, and not just as chronological aspects of ...

LYN: Yes, that’s what I thought it was at first ... that’s what’s commonly handed down. It can be chronological, but it moves in and out of the day or being together, just sort of, more the qualities of it. It makes it more immediate to draw on. That’s unfolded from the ritual space, the way you’ve scripted it.

Cath T. was elaborating on what the Sabbats meant to her, when she gave this multivalent response:

“The seasonal celebrations help me to celebrate that third phase, the Older One, and I’ll often take on that role because I love Her as much, and I’ve worked in age-care, and I can see that the older phase is very mystical – the compassion, and the understanding they can exhibit for each other, and also for the workers that are there – which are often younger and can quite often mistreat them out of ignorance or wanting to do the right thing. They actually insult them very often, and I can see that the older people exhibit great compassion, understanding and grace, and that is very much one of the beauties of old age – something grows when something else is lost. ... 

The seasonal celebrations have also affected how I feel about the other two phases as well- the Virgin and Mother, because I can see how these two elements are still in me. I don their robe when I want to, and celebrate them in myself. Now that I’m in my late forties, the early fifties are going to be a time when I become a Virgin again ... I will have fulfilled my duties, I will be free again, to express myself. Already I’ve been doing that for some years now, just thinking what is it that I want to do, what’s right for me, and I make my own choices and they’re based on the knowledge of what the consequences are. I accept those consequences, and that’s really Virgin stuff. It’s just honoring me. The seasonal celebrations have helped me language that ... it’s given me
some words that I can now talk to myself, and say, ‘Ah-hah, that’s what
that means. Ah-hah, I’m not the only person who has looked for these
symbols over the years, ... it’s always been there.’ ... and that’s
actually what keeps people sane – is hearing the stories when they start
feeling some of the balance moving in their life or they’re feeling out of
balance. If they can identify what it is they need to do, and they can see
that other people have done this too, it gives them the courage to actually
shift and grow with their maturity of the years. If they can see that
they’re moving away from what they can see as the Virgin phase, and
know that they’re growing towards the Mother phase in their life, and
from that look at menopause and depression – if those women could very
easily move towards that they could be the Crone with some dignity, I
don’t think there would be so much resistance to being between phases.
And also in relationships when they change ... if they could see that there
were new roles that they could see their partner in or themselves - and
we get that from storytelling, we’ve lost so much of a sense of our
community – it’s the dancing together, the different gatherings that give
us different ways to see things.”

Debbie responded with a feeling for all three faces:
“I relate to the Mother energy in my overall life right now ... but of
course in different aspects of my life, I have the three energies flowing.
... the Virgin represented my earlier years, up until the early-mid
twenties ... a powerful independent woman who had her own mind, and
could achieve anything she wanted ... as long as she didn’t harm anyone
else. I still carry that aspect in me now, even though I relate more to the
Mother, who is more sustaining, nurturing, more of a fixed energy.
Loret and I were relating the three to the modalities in astrology – fixed,
cardinal and mutable. Then you move into the Crone later on. I’m
looking forward to the Crone. I feel I only stepped into the Mother
ergy at my 40th last year – I feel I really deserved that, thank you.
Rather than being upset that I’ve reached forty, I sort of more rejoiced in
it - I am deserving of this, which was quite powerful for me. The Crone is
more mutable ... it can change and take what it needs, and transforms
the rest, to go back into the Virgin energy, or whatever ... goes around in
a circle again.”

Debbie also felt in general that, “with the mythology for the particular Goddess
types that you bring in every so often, I have been to relate to the particular energies
within me.” Debbie felt for example that an awareness of Kali helped her
“story” her anger sometimes.

Kaye said she found it helpful having a name for the present place she was
in, that is, a name (Virgin) to describe all the new things that were happening
for her – doing TAFE (studying), her daughter starting school. Though, she
said, she had
“a sense of it always being new, because even at the end or in the process, there is always ‘infinite possibilities’. The ending is the Cronish phase I suppose, but then it immediately opens up in the same instant to the ‘infinite possibilities’. I love that. Since doing this work I see more of the cycle - not feeling so stuck in any one phase, knowing that it shifts, for example: one day you may be more in Mother phase, because that’s what you are doing, but the next day you’re in the Virgin part because you’re off to do something different.”

Sandy also felt that the three faces were a useful way of naming “the changes that are going on in our lives ... whereas we don’t have that on an ordinary basis, and I think there’s a lot of confusion ...” Sandy said, “I see them as the three major changes - cycle of change - in our life, and ... by celebrating them, it gives us the chance to own and move through for the next cycle.”

Linda found that,

“Ways of talking about that sort of thing is really good ... it’s very comforting somehow to recognize those phases of Life and that we’re part of that. And everything turns into everything else and that’s how it goes, it renewes and away we go again. What’s nice is ... you/we can get to take part in all those other aspects of Virgin, Mother, Crone - on an annual basis. That feels really refreshing.”

Linda also wrote: “we, being goddesses, are some mix of all three faces, at any time. It helps me understand complexity.”

Annabelle’s familiarity with the Female Metaphor in general and the seasonal celebrations over time, gave her a definite sense of the three faces in herself and at certain Sabbats; and she commented:

“They can’t be separated out, because I think we are All at the same time. The separation of them helps us to articulate what’s happening for us at a particular time I suppose. Virgin means internal strength, a capacity to be true to who you are in that process of evolution, in the process of evolving and coming into being as well – without restraint or fear, without withholding. So it’s very vibrant and energetic, and enthusiastic, and also innocent. I’ve been calling on the Virgin energy quite a lot lately, because I think I’ve done enough of the Mother for a while. The Mother energy is that nurturance, the capacity to both give and receive, unconditional Love, and recognize the Beauty in providing nurturance, sustenance - and the strength in doing that. So a very strong sort of image. And the Crone ... I was thinking the other day - because I light my three candles quite often too - and my prayer the other day was for the Peace of Cronehood, that inner sort of Peace, that internal understanding of the life process that you’ve been living, that you’ve come to a deeper understanding and acceptance of it I suppose ... a recognition of it as being what it was for you, how it has been for you.”
Annie B., who was also a veteran of the seasonal celebrations and the Female Metaphor in Her triple aspects, commented:

"That's one of the things I love about the seasonal celebrations, is that they are a ritual celebration of that very thing — (the three faces). So the more I participate in that, the more refined my consciousness becomes. ... The colours we wear and the things that we bring to the seasonal celebrations makes me conscious of the aspects we are celebrating — especially the colours white, red and black have a strong symbolic resonance for me. Because I did the course first I'm very aware of the cycle moving through the faces of the Goddess – the Goddess in myself, in my life."

Helen described the three aspects as energies within "that are reflections of the Divine energy", and that it was the Virgin’s Warrior quality, she said, "which was not in my knowing, which I'm becoming much more aware of ... that power to initiate what She wants and move out there and protect.” Helen expressed a rich understanding of the three and concluded that,

"The seasonal celebrations have very much helped me to strengthen those understandings. And I think because they're cyclical, it's helped me to live it in my body, and honour that process. I become aware that it's a really vital part of a lot of people's lives, so that the cycle of my own life, the cycle of other people's lives and the cycle of the Universe, is all affirmed in those celebrations."

Theme 9 – manifestation of intentions

It is my understanding that the power of ritual to bring about desired intentions is primarily in the person's intention – the will and focus they bring to it. Many people can participate in the same ritual, yet each one has different intentions, motivations, openness and readiness for desired changes. It is my understanding that the person's particular focus may draw forth a response in themselves, to enable a movement towards that which they desire and imagine. After the first interviewee included comments on this theme in her conversation, I usually put a question directly to the later interviewees, if it wasn’t mentioned spontaneously. I found that some earlier written feedback also contained mention of this theme.
Lyn felt that the group context was inspiring, encouraging and clarifying of one’s intentions, and had helped her practically and creatively – for example, “finding a home, and trying out different art things”. She said that

“to come into the collective - the group - I find that inspiring, hearing more of the group, I actually stay with my intention. My intention comes clearer and clearer. It’s help me develop, be more responsible to myself. It’s brought me more into initiating - when one says ‘Yes’ to a suggestion from someone else, one is taking full responsibility for that, and hence is initiating. So it brought me more into consciously initiating and being more responsible for myself. In the circle, each person is in there initiating what they want to bring or not bring.”

Anne wrote of asking for forgiveness in the Winter Solstice ritual, and then realizing two days later “that it was exactly what was needed in relation to school relationships. Then the children’s spiral (ceremony at the school) was the beginning of the healing and forgiveness.” She spoke in the interview, of a fulfilled early ritual intention to become a younger, more free self.

Debbie expressed a feeling of this theme being one of the main points of the Seasonal celebrations: “that’s why I stop at these points – it’s the housekeeping of my life!”, and she had described this earlier:

“... what don’t I need anymore, what emotions, what thought patterns, what belief systems, what material things even ... and what do I want to bring in to support me in the next year – to the next point in time, the next cross-quarter day or whatever.”

For Cath T. it was similar, as noted already as her response in theme 1 – effect on sense of space and time. For Cath T., the ritual space, the seasonal celebrations, were a way of “becoming conscious”. Cath further elaborated:

“I think that’s the whole point for me: get into your ‘higher’ self again, think about where you are in the Greater Universe, the Cosmos, and then, if you’re in that frame of mind, and then say what it is I want to do in the future. Can you see that would be very different to:- if you’re over the kitchen sink thinking about all your little petty problems, what plans you would make for your future then – how different it would look. The ritual celebrations have helped me bring forth my deeper intentions in this way, and they have allowed me a place of acceptance to express those intentions at times, which has helped to fulfill them. When an intention is stated like this, it takes on a life of its own – that’s why I do it, and look forward to these festivals ... so I can do that, state what it is I want to happen – you then devote a bit of energy towards it. It’s like visioning yourself. People who work to a vision actually achieve much more than people who don’t work to a vision. The vision is its own magnet – it
draws you there, it keeps you focussed, it applies your will ... and somehow, it's a little bit magical, it works things around you to help it happen. That's been my experience."

Loret had also articulated awareness of “cause” and “effect” as one of the main effects on her sense of space and time, and I have noted it under that theme. She elaborated further to say that she is aware daily now, of being more intentional “as a matter of course”.

Sandy was very aware of “the whole process over the year” gradually helping her “move”. She said, “There’s been something each time that I’ve been able to look at.” In regard to Sandy’s experience after Lammas, she said.

“My life has exploded, absolutely everything has changed, the healing energies have been so strong. I needed the six weeks to settle down and get back into balance, because the energies were just phenomenal. It hasn’t just affected the emotional relationship side, it’s affected my process as a healer. These celebrations have been a big part of the whole process ... and it’s been me acknowledging me and doing something for me, rather than others.”

Linda’s contribution to this theme was substantial really, but it has all been noted under other themes, because of how she expressed it as so related for her to community, sense of self, increased responsibility, and the power of celebration.

Annabelle felt that the ritual processes helped bring forth one’s intentions partly because they helped clarify those intentions – “in the process of bringing forward what you thought you want, you become clearer about what it is that you do want.” She continued, “There is an element of will in there, and when you recognize it, it gives you a space in which to change ‘at will’ ... but it takes practice.”

Helen felt particularly encouraged by the Eostar ritual, because “energetically” she is “able to acknowledge what has been happening and make a commitment to the new.” The Eostar ritual resonated exactly with where she had been in her “journaling and inner journey”, and she reflected: “the idea of Hera – taking on the courage aspect – was like I could shed the old skins and step into the new energy. That’s what I find each time I do one of these rituals.”
General Comment - “Con-text-ualizing” phenomena

Connected to this theme, though perhaps also needing its own category is the phenomena of participants experiencing a synchronicity of their everyday life with the Seasonal Moment. Anne expressed this in written feedback connected to the Winter Solstice. Debbie expressed it in the interview, beginning at first with how consciously she felt the energy of each particular Sabbat, but then going on to give an example of how she was tuned into it even unconsciously now:-

“I would feel the energy of the different points, especially since we were meeting and talking about them ... again that gave me an opportunity to get off the wheel of life and just have my whole mind and energy focussed on that. So I would feel it quite strongly, and talking to the other women like we did – our meetings – you could see that the energy was there. And different things would happen in community, that would be particularly ‘Eostar’ energy, or particularly ‘Solstice’ - you could see it happening. A classic example: last Eostar I was actually down at Pebbley Beach, all this stuff was just happening and I had forgotten that it was Eostar, and I felt just so out there. I took down my favourite green dress, and this particular day I thought, ‘I’ve just got to wear this green dress’. So I put it on, and just went for a walk along the beach, and I wrote poetry, and there was a beautiful moon. I came back, and then all these flying ants hatched - and I thought, goodness me, I think this means something; and then I went and checked my diary, and ‘Oh, it’s right on Equinox’, and I’m thinking ‘Oh wow, it’s in me anyway, I’m doing it anyway, whether or not I brought it to my consciousness and celebrate it. I live it anyway now.”

GLENYS; did you do that kind of thing before you began this process ... in a conscious way?

DEBBIE: No ... not really ...
participants are writing themselves into context, they are “con-text-ualizing” themselves. This could be perceived as a meta-narrative beneath much of what has been noted in other themes, and sometimes it has been noted as “feeling related to Earth/Cosmos” in theme 7; an example of such would be Loret’s description of her interaction with the Wheel of the Year as it goes around, albeit that she sometimes felt “dragged” around. Another example would be much of what Catherine K. said about her relationship with Darkness and the Winter particularly noted in themes 3, 6, and 10, but also her relationship with the other seasons as noted in theme 1. Often interviewees spoke of it in response to Question 2 of “feeling the process in any way”. I do interpret it as part of growing relationship with Gaia.

Annie B. was responding to Question 1, about the significance of her attendance at the rituals, when she spoke of Samhain, and elaborated,

“... I’m very conscious of the energy that’s happening at that time of the year, and how that reverberates through my life, and I’m conscious of looking at the imagery of that time of the year – whether we’re moving into the Light or into the Dark.”

Annie affirmed, “I do feel the process. It works for me, it’s a strong reality, not so much at an intellectual level but at a feeling level.”

Theme 10 - affirmation of, and ability to deal with, grief and loss

This theme emerged from interviewee response to questions about any significant experience from the rituals. A few spoke of the Mabon process of Grieving, as one of their key experiences. From the feedback given by these interviewees, this theme is entwined with the theme of the power of celebration itself, and rejuvenation and refreshment. My interpretation is that we need witnesses to the depths of our feelings, if this depth is to grow. When our grief is heard in its depths, the cup can be emptied, and there is room for the new. Thus this theme is really also directly connected to the manifestation of intentions, and dealing with change.
Anne found the grief process challenging at first, but through it, found an acknowledgment she hadn’t expected. She wrote of the significance of the process for her:

"I didn’t think that I had any particular grief to share. It was wonderful to be able to share with others’ griefs, many of which were also my griefs. Others sharing theirs also brought awareness to me of mine. It was amazing to experience grief without being enveloped by grief."

Without prompting, Anne reiterated this experience in the interview.

Debbie also mentioned feeling challenged by the speaking of her personal grief; but how easily she resonated with that of others and how strongly the process brought up feelings of “rage, anger, then grief” as she heard the grief of others. Overall though for Debbie, the most powerful parts of the Mabon experience seemed to be the Harvesting of the Wheat and the Planting of the Bulb, as I will note in Theme 11 – awareness of gratitude. Debbie did speak a few times of how she loved Mabon, and she wrote: “After the process of the ritual I felt extremely balanced and a deep inner peace and rightness.”

Lyn responded powerfully to “the space to be held to experience and feel the grief and loss and pain as a collective voice”, and she was surprised at

“the depths you could go to feel and then re-enter out of that space we had just honoured ... to not get stuck in the grief, but dare to go there. Such an honoring process. I have felt so relieved, more aware of concerns and issues of grief affecting women, more nurtured, more courage.”

Catherine K.’s experience of the Mabon grief process has already been noted as part of her response in the themes of increasing trust in process, and creation of community. It was also specifically in relationship with the death of her mother. I mention it again here in the context of this theme, as it was such an important movement for her through what had been a barrier of grief, into a balance. She expressed this dynamic when during the interview she spontaneously recalled the Communion at Mabon:

“We each brought something – part of our harvest. We got to say what it meant for us. I brought the black grapes from my own vine – the symbolism for me ... I brought one lot of black grapes and one lot of white grapes, and I talked about the Light and the Dark and what it had meant to me, and why I had brought it, and then I said to taste and let it be sweet – the taste of life. I remember feeling really good about that.”
For Helen, the affirmation of generations of grief and pain came in the Eostar ritual, and enabled her to feel that she was part of stepping into something new. As she spoke it:

"The Hera thing at the Eostar ritual was related to my mother's death ... and the whole Celtic vs. Christianity, this kind of struggle and guilt and grief, and the enormous weight of pain that had been carried through my mother's generations — that was part of the Hera journey in the Dark. I was able to affirm that publicly, and step through that doorway ... these are the old things I let go and these are the new that I'm going to take up."

Theme 11 - awareness and expression of gratitude
This was a theme that was implicit in much of the feedback, as well as being explicitly mentioned at times. When people relate tales such as have been told here, there is joy and gratitude in the heart, and its expression cannot really be separated out from much of what has been noted above already. It was heard frequently in such phrases as "a truly magical experience", "I feel so privileged ...", or simply "thank you". Participants in general frequently expressed it — not just the interviewees - often in the ritual "storytelling" space. Some of the interviewees expressed gratitude specifically, in thankfulness for participation in the celebrational process/project itself, and some spoke of it as one of the effects of specific seasonal rituals — an effect on their attitude to their lives in general.

Louise expressed it by repeating back to me in the first person, in her written feedback, the words of blessing at the Imbolc Communion: "Blessed am I among women, men and children. Blessed is the fruit of my creativity."

Catherine K. had initially felt challenged by the seeming "alternative" nature of what she was about to attend — her first Winter Solstice celebration. As she said she "was coming out of a very structured place ... a disenchanted church person .... ". In the interview she reflected, "I wish the world could know this other experience. I wish I'd known it in my youth”, and "I'm eternally grateful for this new dimension in my life."
Debbie's awareness of the ritual celebrations as a time and space for thanksgiving, has been noted in theme 1. Mabon seemed to be especially that for her, as she expressed:

"Harvest I always love ... I always love Mabon ... for some reason – I look back over what I've asked for, what I've got resolved, metaphorically, spiritually."

As I noted above, for Debbie, the most powerful parts of the Mabon experience seemed to be the Handing of the Wheat and the Planting of the Bulb. Her response to these experiences seem to speak specifically to this theme:

"The giving of the wheat was like being given hope and new life and gifts and personal growth to nourish me ... the bulb is the actual physical reminder that this will happen as I have planted it in a spot where I pass each day."

She added, in regard to this ritual: "... celebrating my harvest was very rewarding, being able to speak out loud what I had gained, and not feel I was being an exhibitionist."

Anne wrote, "I usually find in preparation for a ritual in contemplating the darkness, the light comes up. I realize how much I have to be grateful for." In regard to the Winter Solstice ritual celebration, Anne expressed:

"It was absolutely magical. I absolutely loved the section towards the end – the dance – and the words 'May we choose a joyful response to the awesome fact of our being in the Universe'. This has become my category for life."

Loret was speaking in the context of this work making her more aware of what she does everyday being profoundly important, when she exclaimed that she had “so much to be grateful for”. She wasn’t sure if it was this work specifically that had brought her to this feeling of knowing grace, but that she felt graced by the presence of this work in her life. In her words: "... I just know that the whole set of circumstances that occurred, that first connected me to you and to this work, was synchronistic."

**Theme 12 - increased sense of responsibility**

Once again, the interviewees themselves alerted me to this effect; they told me of it explicitly, as enmeshed in their experience of participation in this Seasonal Wheel. Much of what they said about their increased ability to
respond, and their awareness of the impact of their response – on self, other and Cosmos – has already been noted amongst other themes. I read this effect as a movement – sometimes quite marked - towards a sense of “creating the cosmos” as Spretnak notes as part of indigenous Wisdom (1991:79-113), and Abram also describes (1997:191-192).

For Anne, she was aware of it as entwined with her sense of space and time – as she understood more of her relationship with Earth, as noted; and it has also been noted in relation to her sense of self which she also tied into a sense of communal support. She said,

“Understanding more about all these things goes hand in hand with being more responsible about who I am, and how I am in this world ... and getting a greater understanding of where my struggles are.”

Loret’s increased sense of responsibility is notable in her responses to quite a few of the questions. It is evident particularly in the complex example of her response given at the beginning of this chapter, as well as in her response to her sense of space and time.

Lyn’s feeling of how being in the ritual circles had helped her manifest intentions was particularly entwined with an increased sense of ability to respond. I will reiterate here, part of her statement as noted fully in theme 9:

“So it brought me more into consciously initiating and being more responsible for myself. In the circle, each person is in there initiating what they want to bring or not bring.”

Lyn’s statement here, and her expressed experience in general of moving out of extreme shyness into self-articulation, reminds me of how Spretnak describes that “All the various Indian initiatory rites are informed by a sense of personal awareness as the heart of responsible participation in the cosmic community” (1991:97).

Annie B.’s articulation of this theme, came when I asked her if she had experienced any challenges in her participation in this work. She said:

“I mainly find it really supportive rather than challenging ... I mean, Life is a challenge, but the view that it gives me of Life I find helps get me through difficult times. It helps me take me more responsibility for who I am and what I am and what I do in the world. ... I mean I see Life as spiritual work – whatever we do can come from that place. I am now
able to be more conscious about what I speak, as living in a time of chaos, a time of crisis for the Earth and all who live on Her … So I’m trying to say something about stepping into my power and greater responsibility about what I put into the world.”

For Linda, it was in reflection upon the clarifying effect on her sense of self that she experienced in the ritual space, that she expressed:

“When I can see more clearly what’s going on, I can respond better … and it gets easier. The ability to respond in a healthy way to a situation … my ability there has been helped greatly by the fact of going to these celebrations. And I think that’s been a real steadying kind of an anchor for me, and an anchor not a ball and chain. It’s somewhere to go out from and back into … that whole thing of creating the circle … you know, it’s like we create the space and it’s just such a feeling of empowerment I suppose – the whole thing that we all do take part in it so much.”

Theme 13 - sense of connection to ancestors, or belonging

Some interviewees expressed feeling a sense of “coming home”, and it varied in its nature a lot. For some it was clearly ancestral awareness, either because of this Earth Wisdom tradition itself being in the interviewees ancestral heritage, or because of a more generalized sense of “all who have come before”. For some it was specifically felt as a connection to the Spirit of this land – Australia – and its indigenous people. For others it was an emotional general feeling of belonging to the Universe – not to the specific group of people gathered, but a heartfelt belonging to, and identification with, the Poetry; that is, feeling they knew who they were and where they came from. Much of this kind of theme, of sensing/knowing connection in some form has already been expressed above, within other themes; but there were a few other specific references.

Loret expressed that this work had given her a deeper connection to her own culture, about which she had known nothing. She said that this work had encouraged her to make a journey to the lands of her ancestors next year “to various sites and various places, in order to I suppose, lay to rest something there, and bring something back home, and continue my spiritual work here which is where I live – because my culture is not Australian. I come from a family that is cultureless too – they are lost completely. They have no way of anchoring themselves either. They’ve
taken on the materialistic culture that most people have — to hide the pain you see ... I need to go back and find my roots. You know ...”

GLENYS: So there’s been a connection more with the ancestors?
LORET: Yes ... and out of that also has come a reverence, an appreciation for my own ancestors - even though perhaps the superficial memories are not good, the respect and the need to own and understand has really formed during this process.

At the end of the interview, Loret expressed a feeling of a past knowing of this work. As she said it,

“... and as the work unfolded, and on the level of knowing it, in terms of my roots and my culture, there was this real sense of ‘Ah yes’, and it was a real sense of coming Home. I got a real sense /feeling that I had been and done this stuff before ... much deeper, MUCH deeper, really quite profoundly deeper ... and what this was doing also on one level was just dusting off the coding memories of things.” Loret had asked for more classes after the first series finished, feeling that the knowledge was “in there, but I’ve not known how to access it or do it ... too frightened. And I asked for the workshops because I needed to remember. I already knew but I had forgotten.”

Sandy, expressed that the Wheel of the Year “has been a very personal, deeper connection than I’ve ever done before ... when you move through each of the processes we go through, there’s a deepening each one, in the sense of connection. Each Sabbat rolls into the next. Each one is preparation for the next, and each new one is saying goodbye to that one and continuing the cycle.”

Sandy described that this seasonal celebration process was part of her “inner need”, that it has “been like coming Home.”

Cath. T’s feedback that comes under this theme was included in her response to Question 5 about her familiarity with the three faces of the Female Metaphor. It was these stories and the ancient images, in the context of the seasonal celebrations that had helped Cath. T. to realize a connection to people in the past who had, like her, looked for “these ways to reflect”. She said she would try to give this sense of connection and the stories to her children, that it might give them courage as it had done for her, knowing that they could “trust the process, it’s always been there.”

Kaye expressed having overcome a feeling of being “an insignificant part of the Universe”. The ritual celebrations had confirmed in her an understanding that there was something “a lot older” in her, that had been “through a lot of
things” over time. She said that the ritual celebrations had given her a sense of connection to a “collective/larger consciousness”; that whereas before, problems she may have thought of as merely personal, she now could understand them as “perhaps being part of a larger collective reality”. Sometimes this actually made her “angrier, sadder … but at least, this sense of connection” helped her to “make sense” of her feeling.

Gareth said that the seasonal celebrations reminded him “of the generations back … simply a part of man’s, woman’s, age old search for fully understanding the depths, or what lies beyond the depths.” They gave him “a connection to the past that extends much beyond (his) usual thoughts of a past - into Celtic and earlier times.”

Theme 14 - helping deal with change and/or specific relationships
Interviewees spoke of being enabled, by their new understandings, in processes of change that were occurring in their lives; these changes sometimes involved specific others. They also spoke of changes they were making, or had made, as a result of awarenesses growing out of their participation in the seasonal celebrations.

Lyn spoke of “starting to enter into menopause” and she experienced that “this rhythm, and just the thing of Crone as a stage of one’s life”, helped prepare her “to enter that”. She had done a recent artwork “called ‘Renewing Fertile Ground’, as in ovaries – the energy from that starting to go now. So it’s fertile ground, but in another way.” Lyn said, “… this work has helped me with that too … it’s helping with that transition especially in the circles and having an age range.”

For Annie B., a growing sense of the seasons and the celebrating of Earth’s cycles, has eventuated in her “decision not to celebrate Christmas this year.” She said, “For quite a while on Christmas cards I have been putting ‘Happy Solstice’ … “ This decision will affect both her immediate family and her “family of
origin”. For the former, this would not be a problem – her partner had “quite a strong connection with the Earth”, but Annie spoke of the latter as “all still practicing Christians”, and belonging “to a culture that I no longer belong to”; however, she desired and felt able, to honour their beliefs and practice, and be with them in their gathering at that time. For herself, she said,

“Last Christmas, I just started to think, this is really silly. If this honoring of the Wheel of the Year is really my experience, then … they keep saying ‘put Christ back into Christmas’, but really, let’s take him out – he was the ring-in. If you really are conscious of that and there is some other way of being that has become important and it doesn’t fit with the major culture that you live in, why continue to have those empty … if you have rituals that are rich and full and meaningful, why practice somebody else’s that doesn’t work for you anymore.”

In this context, Annie said,

“One of the things that’s happening is that I’m moving further and further away from any kind of practice of the religion of my birth. Last time I was visiting my sister who’s a nun, I went to Mass with her, and it was the first time I wasn’t actually able to say the stuff. It was all there, I remember it, it’s so firmly put in from all through my childhood, but I just would hear the words and I couldn’t say them anymore …”

I then mentioned my own experience of arriving at the point of not being able to say “Lord I’m not worthy to receive you …”, and Annie responded that that was “a perfect example”.

Loret spoke of identifying with Demeter’s grief at Mabon, as Loret was feeling the loss of her daughter who was starting school. She said,

“The ritual process helped me generally, just to stop carrying it around, and just recognize that things will move on. I’ve lost her for her own descent, which is really for her highest will and good. When she emerges I’ll have her again, but how she needs to be.”

Loret spoke of how the rituals of Imbolc and Mabon particularly, made her more aware of how she relates with her daughter; as she said it:

“… how I clip my daughter’s wings, as a result of how my wings were clipped … (those rituals) made me very aware of the matriarchal cycle in my family and how I continue it. And so it’s actually helped me to step back and try not to do that. I can be some role model to her, in the realm of the Light and freedom, that my mother couldn’t be for me … then I will have actually done something in the whole cycle, of moving this.”

For Sandy, there was a big shift in relationship with her father. As she expressed in the interview:
"I felt a really big shift when we did the one with the ancestors – Samhain … because I was able to say out loud, in front of people, that I was ready to forgive and let go of the past. I've done a lot of work on forgiveness – of my father – but I've never verbally expressed it in front of other people, and I think that was a really important shift."

Kaye had found "being a mother … often really difficult", and that she didn't "feel she was mothered that well" herself. Kaye had suffered from depression quite badly after the birth of her daughter. Kaye said,

"Since having Mikhala, I’ve been more aware of Darkness because I went into a pit. With the rituals, it’s knowing it’s a cycle, and even though I went into a pit, the cycle was coming out of it again. Before the rituals I would not have been able to say that."

She felt that the ritual process had brought up "horrible sad emotions", but she felt she "had to go through that to deal with things" of her childhood … and she said, "to make sense of my childhood. It has helped me make sense of going through the depression."

Kaye expressed that this work had also helped her "sort out stuff about mothering", and that she was able to see things she couldn’t see before, and she improved the relationship with her mother.

Cath T.’s family were aware of her attendance at these seasonal celebrations, and sometimes her daughter came with her. It was of some note that she was dressing up, and painting her face, as she liked to do, to go out for these events. She related that her husband wasn’t interested, and that she felt “OK” about that. Cath said that all this had made her “more relaxed” amongst her family. She described it:

"It’s made me more myself, more relaxed about relational tensions and the impermanence of things, more focussed on what I need to do – that is, if the dishes aren’t done, if someone need to be picked up, I’m more able to let these things be done by someone else so I can go to the ritual. I am Virgin again in my life!"

Helen had a "very significant" experience with the Summer Solstice celebration. Helen’s mother was dying, and there were relational issues for Helen to come through. Helen was already very conscious of the richness of the “Solstice energy” for the process she was in, in her meditations and journalling, and the ritual celebration then became available to her as a space
where “things that had to be honoured were honoured, and the things that had to be completed were completed.” Helen’s process included being able to make an internal statement to her mother: “If you need to go without me, so be it.” Helen said, “… and I think that was part of what happened.” For Helen, this also meant a change in her sense of self. She said,

“I found the Mother in myself, and it was the first time that I think I actually named myself as a good mother, and as a good daughter. I really named it and honoured it – that full powerful Mother bit, including the Kali power … not just being nice and lovely. At some level I sensed my fear of that role. The rituals have helped me constantly affirm those aspects of myself. Being a good daughter is big! … I thought I was, but it’s at a deeper level, it’s going below the thought, it’s going into the energy, the sacred energy place where things shift and change.”

Theme 15 - rejuvenating, refreshing - the power of celebration itself

This theme is one that the interviewees brought forth, and that I noticed. It is my understanding that we need witnesses to our wholeness, to bless it. We need others to dance it with us, to acknowledge what is so, what we believe or experience to be so. This is part of how we know, and are thus renewed. One of the powers of celebration is the nourishing of the true, the flame within, enabling deeper self-expression. We come truly into being when we are expressed, and this ripples out – it is inevitably relational; and often the interviewees recognized that self-expression is originally relational also, that is, it is called forth by the presence of others in this celebrational context. This understanding and this theme has been present in the texts noted above.

Although Annie B. had been introduced to much of the Female Metaphor and the Seasonal celebrations through this work, she had a deepened sense of these through her own spiritual practices and personal development. For Annie, the seasonal celebrations were precisely celebrations and affirmations of what she believed to be true. She said,

“The great things about the ritual celebrations is ... the fact that they’re a celebration of that reality, the fact that they are constant reminders ... they’re beautiful, joyful, empowering, playful, colourful, delicate, ritual celebrations of immense historical weight ... things that are really deep
in their connection with the Earth and with our human evolution, and with our spiritual possibility.”

Helen expressed that it had been a challenge moving into this Earth honoring tradition, coming out of a Christian background,

“because of the fear about it, because of the internalized senses that this is wrong, this is witch, sinful, magic ... because of the fear of punishment.” She persisted in this challenge because of feeling dissatisfied with alienation from “Truth” as she put it, since leaving church attendance behind. At the end of the interview, Helen commented spontaneously that the ritual celebrations had

“... helped resonate the singing in my soul ... that kind of poetic dimension, which is a way of accessing the sacred ... that celebratory poetic dimension of the ritual was so powerful ... It was something I hungered for, and didn’t even recognize the hunger because what seemed to be offered in the Church was so dead and empty. It was that living sense of the liturgy.”

Helen said, “I find joy, peace, courage in this.”

Sandy expressed her joy in regard to the Eostar celebration, and what it had helped her to move:

“I think going through the arch there is just beautiful - going out into the garden, wandering around, and the celebratory feeling as you come through the arch, that you really have left those things behind, that you really are opening up and celebrating the future, and you’re taking the bouquet as part of that. And you’re doing it on your own, and you’ve got the group energy there as well – to confirm and enhance. Somebody actually came up to me and said afterwards that they felt I was very brave to say that I was leaving behind the effects of the sexual abuse. And that was personal to her, because her mother is still tied up and can’t seem to move. People have to move through their process ...”

Sandy “felt really good” about celebrating the Crone at Lammas. She said enthusiastically, “... I have a beautiful dress to wear this year. It’s a wonderful celebration.” Sandy felt this as a real honoring of herself, whereas before she had done plenty of “honoring of others”. Sandy became emotional as she reflected that this honoring of the Old/Crone phase enabled her to see the value of her whole life process – even in its “torn” places.

Linda described these celebrations as keeping her

“stirred up thinking about Life, the Universe. I need what these celebrations offer and ask of me – it feels a two way thing. It gives me
Linda’s response illustrates an awareness of a connection between renewal and intentionality, which according to Kremer, many tribal cultures were very conscious of (1992:175); that is, many tribal cultures understood that the world as they knew it was renewed and thus maintained through ceremonies. Kremer points out that Western consciousness simply does not generally realize “its own rituals of world renewal”, because it is unconscious of “worlds as intentional”, and unconscious of participation in the phenomena of the cosmos (ibid). Participants in these seasonal celebrations have expressed in theme 9 particularly, an awareness of “worlds as intentional”, thus becoming aware of the power to renew the world they know – albeit in a relatively modest way for some (of us) at this stage.

Loret simply stated spontaneously towards the end of the interview, that the ritual process “always forces me to see myself and my views, my life, in a new way.”

Anne expressed how at Imbolc, she really enjoyed being able to celebrate “me, the creation, my creativity – really being able to enter into that and own that for myself, rather than just going through the motions of it.” Anne felt she was becoming more expressive, dressing up more for celebrations; though she “did not ‘think’ about it” she said, “it was simply emerging”. She felt “less need for alcohol in celebration events, … I’m entering more just into being and enjoying life.”

Anne noted Beltane as “a really joyful expression of life … being able to celebrate that joy and Passion”, and she laughed heartily as she related that Lammas “felt really good all outside in the dark, around the fire, just celebrating the Crone and being comfortable with that in a different light.”
Gareth’s enjoyment of the ceremony and language of the seasonal rituals has already been noted in the Introduction, and in this chapter. Whereas he had once been an active member of a church, he had not for a long time felt resonate with the church “symbolism”; but he said,

“I actually quite enjoyed the Evensong and the liturgy, and I guess it’s not unlike your ceremonies … It taps those connections - to the Evensong, and probably my love of things like Gregorian chant, even though there’s not much chanting.” Gareth was realizing as he spoke, “it’s the repetitiveness, probably has something to do with it as well – that’s an important part of the ritual isn’t it. That’s what it is …”

Geoff said that what stayed in his mind about the rituals particularly, were the moments of “joyous celebration”, for example, at Beltane – “the Nova pole and jumping the fire.”

Theme 16 – effect on family, friends, and community
Some of the relevant material to this theme has already been noted in other themes, and also in a relatively small way, it was partly addressed in theme 14, though that was more to do with specific noted changes for the interviewee themselves. This category, theme 16, has more to do with the influence of unknown effects, that interviewees have with others in their everyday lives as they frequently translate their experience and sensed knowledge into effect in these places. Though the quality/nature of this effect is not really known by me, nor can it often be known by the participant, it was included as a question, so I could have some idea of where the “ripples” go. Frequently this effect was proffered as part of interviewee responses to other questions.

Loret mentioned it in relation to her son, who on one occasion asked – “Mum why do you have all this Goddess stuff?” Loret liked that he had to get used to her speaking that way. She went on that it has “been very useful in educating my children”. Loret said, “Earth has always been a female energy for me … and so has Cosmos”, and this work was enabling her to communicate that more easily. Loret also spoke of being identified at her children’s school, as one of those “Goddess” women.
Anne also mentioned without prompt, that she was similarly identified by others at the school; that she had been referred to as “the Goddess”.

Kaye mentioned specifically how her children “were always talking about the Goddess to the neighbour’s kids.” She said her children “think it’s wonderful!” Kaye said that her children know the other children go to the celebrations sometimes – Anne’s, Debbie’s, Loret’s and Lyn’s – and that supports their participation; though Kaye feels her children are independently interested anyway. Kaye elaborated;

“In Christian services, children are not treated as equal participants – they are to be seen and not heard. Whereas in the rituals, the children participate, and would have traditionally. They are connecting with something they intuitively know.”

Kaye’s young son did attend the Summer Solstice, as the other children did also. Kaye’s son came up to me as he was leaving and expressed thanks.

Cath T. described how her son who is a drummer, often looks forward to her telling him about the celebrations and the drummers there; she said, “It’s visible to my family … all of my family know that I come and why.” She added that sometimes the neighbours see her all dressed up, and that if they ask, she tells them where she is going and why.

However, Cath’s influence has also had larger proportions, in that she has brought awareness and experience of the Seasonal celebrations into her workplaces. As the senior executive of a retirement home, and in a similar position in a large city hostel for otherwise homeless people, she was able to introduce something of the seasonal celebrations into the cultural experience of the residents in these places. As she told it to me in the interview:

“I feel that the seasonal celebrations could help people deal with change, as they have helped me deal with change. In the aged care centres that I have run, I have put in the festivals for that very reason, that – well for two reasons:– when you move into a residential facility you lose the rhythms that are in your home life, you’re not looking out your kitchen window watching the tree go from bearing mulberries to losing its leaves, and then seeing it growing new leaves again, then the fruit again … So we would always have the dried coloured leaves in the Autumn, the fruits, the flowers of Summer. But it was also a venue, a setting where people could work through some of their psychological things – so we’d use stories, we’d use candles, we’d use their proclamations. They could if they wished, come and remember their dead friends that died
that year – we’d include them in the festivals, we’d light a candle for them which was a way for them to acknowledge the love they had for these people and in one way to say good-bye. But also it allowed them to do what I use it for, which is to give them some direction for the next year – to express in a community setting that I’m letting this go and I’m taking this up. They actually loved these celebrations, in the retirement villages. I did them very gently, because it was very new. We introduced folk dancing with it – some participated in those, but they certainly loved to watch it. We made the seasonal celebrations a focal point for the performing arts. We’d have at least four every year. We’d have food that reflected the season – we’d use it as a multi-cultural expression. We had everything from mime, violins, Byzantine chanters … we used local performing artists, to reflect in the retirement centre what was in the community, to get this breathing in and breathing out again, to break down the isolation and sterilization that the modern world brings. It helped both the individuals and the community … they told me it did.”

Cath. is now making moves to initiate the full ritual celebrations of the seasons in her most recent workplace, which is as person in charge of a University residential college.

Annie B., was speaking of how important it was to her that the right season was being celebrated in the Southern Hemisphere “when it’s meant to be”, and how upset she gets when sees “kids celebrating Halloween” in Spring. Then she said how she changed to thinking,

“Well no this is a wonderful opportunity for me to begin to educate people, and the last time when I was at ‘Halloween’, working … everyone at that place knew that it wasn’t Halloween – in the Southern Hemisphere!”

and she laughed.

Annie also spoke of a relationship with a young teenager “who is like a niece/daughter who I can connect with about this stuff.” Annie said,

“… it affects the sort of gifts I choose to buy for this young girl … ; for her first period, I brought her a red stone necklace – that’s something I wouldn’t have done, without my imagination being fired about how we can acknowledge young women coming into their fullness.”

Annie later emphasized the importance of this relationship, and how she felt “able to support and celebrate other young women approaching menarche, more openly and clearly.”

Catherine K. was speaking about how her grown children have been disillusioned with religion for a long time, and how she now feels
“in some way there was something being filled by the church which isn’t there for them in any way now, and I fear for them.” Catherine sees herself filling the role of teacher in this matter. She reflected, “So the re-storying now comes through from me, for my children and my children’s children. It’s up to me to now to take the re-storying, and it’s a re-storying that’s very much more linked to the Earth and the Cosmos ….”

The unsolicited written response of a participant in the larger more public Winter Solstice ritual went like this:

“The work you are doing has renewed/given me great hope for our children and our collective future. (Unfortunately this time I left my children at home because as I wasn’t sure whether it was appropriate for them, I will have no hesitation to involve them in future celebrations). Friday night reminded me that ‘in the dark light is born’... with so much of my own work focussed on charting the spiritual darkness that prevails over us in our time, it has often been difficult to maintain faith and to remain hopeful. That you and so many people who attended can envisage peace and love in their hearts and a joyous fulfillment in their daily lives not only for themselves but also for our world is a profound and potent affirmation. Thank you again.” (David, email 25.6.00)

General Comment on the Participation of Children

This commentary is connected to the above theme, in that it is noteworthy that the four core participants in particular had eight children between them, all of whom participated in the seasonal ritual celebrations on occasion. The children were always eager to do so, but we as a group – myself and the women - were almost always ambivalent about it. On the one hand, we valued teaching the children about this Earth Wisdom tradition, and yet on the other hand, the women did not want to be distracted from what they needed to process for themselves in the ritual, and also from their roles as drummers and co-celebrants. So usually the children only attended when the fathers were also able to attend, and take most of the responsibility for them and guide the children’s participation. Some Seasonal celebrations seemed to lend themselves better to the participation of children, though all of the Sabbats have been at one time or another attended by at least one child. In each case, the child participated in the whole ritual process, at their own level of understanding, and it was always with a guiding parent. The children always seemed to have a good experience, and most of the adults
seemed to value their contributions, sometimes even despite some perceived compromise of “adult space”.

It is of some interest to me that the Sabbats that seemed to work best for numbers of children, as long as they had parental guidance, were both the Solstices – which are also the main celebrations of the Mother aspect in the cycle, as I have storied it. The exception to this is Beltane, which seems to be good available space for children and adults together also.

Whenever the children participated, their enthusiasm was noteworthy.

**Catherine K.** said she loved the Summer Solstice ritual

> “because there were so many kids and they were magnificent. I couldn’t believe how seriously they entered into this. It was very much a family celebration that one because the kids were so present.”

She said she wished she had known such experience and soul in her youth, and how she envied those children.

**Helen** also commented on the children’s participation at Summer Solstice:

> “It was wonderful to see the children taking the bread and saying the words at Communion. I thought ‘What power! For those children to be able to say it’; I mean it is for us too - very life-affirming.”

From one father whose son came with he and his partner to Mabon: he wrote in regard his son, “M. really benefited from the grieving process. He was noticeably up the next day ... M is already talking about next time.” (Bruce, email 22.3.00).

There had been one occasion when a proportionally large number of children were present at Samhain, that is, there were seventeen adults and nine children. This was quite difficult to handle, in terms of maintaining the process for the adults; and the group of us learned about our limits and how to manage future inclusions of children. We did not wish for these ritual celebrations to be children’s events – they were not designed that way. We were conscious then of either nursing the children more carefully into the “adult” context, or, of creating special ritual events for the children. The former is actually what we decided to do, and it was successful for our
purposes; the latter option may eventuate if one or more of the parents takes it on.

It is also noteworthy that for the Winter Solstice ritual, a child was always chosen and invited to light the Solstice candle. This became something that was perceived by the children as an honour and a rite of passage; this was obvious in the case of Anne’s boys when it was the older one who was to have his turn, before the younger one. The younger one was to have to wait for his turn, for another year or perhaps more: yet it was a rite that he could look forward to.

The Continuing Response of the Four Core Participants
These women have elected to continue to meet in a circle, for their own spiritual nourishment and development, as has been noted in theme 4. They invited my participation in this circle, but I declined as I already have a Full Moon circle that I have been part of for years.

A ceremony to mark the core participants’ initiation, or completion of this initial process, was suggested by Debbie. Debbie felt at first that in some way, she had become “priestess”, though she was shy about the term; she had made herself a ritual headpiece from birdwings she had found. When we discussed the possible ceremony and its significance as a group, I assured the women that I felt they had “initiated” me into my role as “priestess”, as much as I had “initiated” them, and they all felt somewhat uncomfortable with “priestess” label anyway. We agreed on a ceremony that would celebrate our joint initiation of each other. I feel that it is true that they each became more clearly co-celebrants over the period of the research; each of them grew into a knowledge of the Seasons and the rituals and the Poetry in general that gave them confidence to take more authority. And for myself, this was true also; and they had participated in that process by their receptivity, presence and commitment. We have yet to create this ceremony for ourselves. They continue at this stage to participate in the seasonal celebrations.
The four core participants recently collaboratively created a work of art for an exhibition that textile artist and doctoral student Annabelle Solomon curated, called “re-fabricating our lives”\textsuperscript{130}. They called their work “It’s Just What We Do”. It was very much an expression of what they had learned with participation in my research process – I could see that for myself, and it was also something they later confirmed.

\textsuperscript{130} Braemar Gallery, Springwood, 18 May – 10 June 2001. The exhibition was described on the advertisement as “an exhibition of Australian women’s contemporary textile art”. It was a part of Annabelle’s doctoral project. Annabelle is mentioned above as one of the participants in my research.
A COSMIC METAPHOR FOR CREATIVITY

A vision of the whole annual Wheel becomes clearer to me. As I walk the spiral at the Winter Solstice with a candle in my hand, images flash to mind of walking the spiral in this same space at Summer Solstice, with a rose in my hand. The experience and the images - the candle, the rose, the spiral, in the same space - is a Sense, a Knowing of a pattern, that is forming in me. As I look at the tree in my backyard with her Winter nakedness, I remember her Summer dress, and how I have celebrated both - I have not let her beauty and her phases pass by without note. As I put the candle of Winter on the altar and express my wish for the world - "the flame in my heart" - images of past Winter rituals arise; I spontaneously recall the same moments of putting the candle down, or lighting the candle, and the intentions I expressed then ... and I wonder at the magic I have witnessed in that time, how I feel the movement, the growing strength and capacity in me, and the keen delight of others. I spontaneously "see" and feel the movement we have celebrated into Light and into Dark, the Pattern we have danced many times. It is a rhythm I am coming to Know.

My primary vision of the Wheel's Pattern is one of Creative Power. The Female Metaphor, in Her triple aspects, is a metaphor of Creativity, based in actual Life processes. The evolutionary cosmic dynamics - Cosmogenesis with its triple aspects - is an actual Creative process - a "physic" of the Universe. The Seasonal Moments of Gaia express this actual Creativity. The three together - the Female Metaphor, Cosmogenesis, and the celebration of the Seasonal Moments - are a Language of Creativity, a Poetry that can express and create.

Language is a primary habitat of the human (Swimme 1990, video 9). Wisdom traditions have always understood the power of speech and image; the Western technological-scientific culture has forgotten a reverence for this capacity. The Wheel of the Year as it has been celebrated in this research has been a remembering of this Power, a consciousness of what we are "spelling"
out. It has been a “spell of the sensuous” – of the “sens-ible”, wherein the language has been regarded as “material” - as hard as rocks - as “real”. The participants and I have spoken, danced and dreamed a Language, a Metaphor, that we understood as resonant with the evolutionary cosmic dynamics. All speech participates in the creation of something; it may participate in the Creative Act which is ongoing in every moment, at one with every breath, and action. I sense the celebration of the Wheel of the Year – the Seasonal Moments - as a Creative Gaian Power wherein our “small daily acts” and the way we breathe, makes a huge difference.

As I dwelt on the evolution of the Samhain ritual script for this research, I felt how this Sabbat was a face of the Crone moving into Mother – the face of the Crone as Creator, how Her Transformation of Death, was truly a Moment of Creative Conception. I remembered the words pronounced at Mabon, “You will return as Mother, Co-Creator with me ...”, and I made the connection that at Samhain – in Deep Autumn - we begin this journey to Co-Creation, with the Power of Conception. I thought about how this Power of Conception at Samhain – as a Power of the Old One - corresponded to the Power of Fertility at Beltane - High Spring – when the face of the Virgin moves into the Mother. I traced a trail, and noticed how the polar opposite Sabbats corresponded:

MABON: “You will return as Mother, Co-Creator with me ...”. There is a descent to Unmanifest Sentient Power.
SAMHAIN: the Power of Creator as Conceiver – we say “what we will”, we celebrate the power of dreaming, the spinning from our own bodyminds. It is the Crone’s moment of “Re-solution”, the Power of Creation through imagination, an interaction with Her Dark Sentience, Her re-generative fertility. It is “transgenetic” creation.\(^{191}\)
WTR SOLST: the Birth – the Unmanifest breaks into the Manifest.
IMBOLC: the Nurturing of the new manifest unique self, the Dedication to it – the breastmilk. It is the Virgin’s Moment of the Beauty of Differentiated Form, and commitment to it.

\(^{191}\) The term “transgenetic” is used by Swimme (1990:video 9), as he develops Thomas Berry’s ninth principle of a functional cosmology (see APPENDIX K). It is meant to speak of cultural coding – the
EOSTAR: the Return as Co-Creator as promised at Mabon, the ascending to Manifest Power – a “Form-al” Power, as juxtaposed to the “Sentient” Power of Mabon’s descent.

BELTANE: the Power of Creation through Allurement. It is the Virgin’s moment of Desire, the Power of Creation through interaction with Other – other differentiated beings – manifest reality, Her generative fertility. It is the Poetry of genetic creation.

SUMM SOLST: the Climax, the Maturing, the Fruition, the Peaking of Love – the Manifest breaks into the Unmanifest.

LAMMAS: the Consuming of the Fruit, the Receiving of the Fullness into Unmanifest Larger Self, the Dark Embrace, the Return to Source, nurturing the Sentience. It is the Crone’s Moment of “Dis-solution”, the Beauty of Immersion, and commitment to it.

The whole Wheel is a Creation story. The “Mother” – the Matrix - is present at each and all the Sabbats: Conception at Samhain, birth at Winter, lactation at Imbolc, power at Eostar, fertile at Beltane, mature fruit at Summer, receiving/consuming at Lammas, descending to the Power of the Dark at Mabon.

At Samhain, the Crone is Creator towards manifest form, at Beltane the Virgin is Creator towards unmanifest dissolution. Corresponding to the Crone’s movement of re-solution (re-forming), is the Virgin’s movement of desire (dis-solution/receiving/consuming). As I come to know this dynamic, how the Dark process corresponds to the Light process - how they mirror each other, I come to perceive the Dark more clearly as a quality of Life. I come to more trust in the Process – this Gaian Process.

Desire

I begin to understand Desire afresh. The Poem of Old says She is “that which is attained at the end of Desire”. I begin to realize how Desire turns the Wheel. As the light part of the cycle waxes, form/life builds in Desire. At Beltane, Desire runs wild, at Summer Solstice, it peaks into Creative Fullness,
Union ... and breaks Open into the Dark part of the cycle – Dissolution. She becomes the Dark One, who receives us back – the end of Desire.

It has been a popular notion in the Christian West, that the beautiful virgin lures men (sic) to their destruction, and as I perceive the Wheel, it is indeed Virgin who moves in Her wild delight, towards entropy/dissolution; however in a cosmology that is in relationship with the Dark, this is not perceived as a negative thing. Also, in this cosmology, there is the balancing factor of the Crone’s movement towards new life – a dynamic and story that has not been a popular notion in recent millennia.

Desire seems not so much a grasping, as a receiving, an ability/capacity to open and dissolve. I think of the open bowl I have always had for a signifier of the Virgin’s Gift. The increasing Light is Received, and causes the Opening, which will become a dispersal of form – entropy, if you like. This is Beltane – the Desire that is celebrated is a movement towards dis-solution ... that is its direction. In contrast, and in balance, Samhain celebrates Resolution which is a movement towards form – it is a materializing gathering into form, as the increasing Darkness is received. It seems it is Darkness that creates form, as it gathers into itself – as many ancient stories say, and it is Light that creates dispersal. And yet I see that the opposite is true also.

I think of how there is a desire for this work, this research – it is already being received. Desire is receiving. What if I wrote this, and it was not received/welcomed in some way. But the Desire for it is already there, and perhaps the Desire made it manifest. Perhaps the Desire draws forth Manifestation, even at Winter Solstice, even at Imbolc, as we head towards Beltane – it is Desire that is drawing that forth, drawing that Process around. Desire is already receiving, it is Open. Its receptivity draws forth the Manifestation. And then the Manifestation climaxes at Summer and dissolves into the Unmanifest, which is perhaps where the Desire is coming from – the Desire is in the Darkness, in the Dark’s receptivity. It becomes very active at the time of Beltane, it lures the differentiated beings back into Her. So the lure at Beltane is the luring of differentiated beings into a frenzy,
into a froth and dance of Life, whereupon they dissolve ecstatically back into Her - She is “that which is attained at the end of Desire”. And in the dissolution, we sink deeper into that, and begin again. All the time, it is Desire that is luring the manifest into the unmanifest, and the unmanifest into the manifest. Passion is the Glue, the underlying Dynamic that streams through it All – through the Light and the Dark, the Virgin-Mother-Crone, Differentiation-Communion-Autopoeisis.

If desire/allurement is the same cosmic dynamic as “gravity” as Swimme suggests (1984:43), then desire like gravity is the dynamic that links us to “that which is” (Holler 1990:2), wherein we “become embodied and grow heavy with the weight of the earth” (ibid) – where we know that “being is being-in relation-to” (ibid). Holler says that when we think with the weight of Earth, space becomes “thick” as this “relational presence ... turns notes into melodies, words into phrases with meaning, and space into vital forms with color and content, (and) also holds the knower in the world” (ibid). “I” at last become a particular, a subject, a felt being in the world – a Place laden with content, sentient.

The Themes from the Interviews
It is possible for me to categorize some of my response to this Process under the themes that emerged for participants in the interviews. However, much of my personal response and the effects on me, have already been stated and woven into my observations and creation of the research. There are a few additions I will note here, that emerged as I wrote this research into its form, and as the Wheel continued to turn. The small text is direct from my process notes.

Theme 1
- effect on sense of space and time ...and themes 7, 8, 12, 13, 16.

Samhain 2001
As I meditated on the Samhain ritual script, at the point of the Statement of Purpose, I felt a growing sense of how “we meet in time, out of time, everywhere and nowhere, here and there”, as the Poetry says. I have the feeling for Here – this Cosmic Moment – as I often do express in the team circle

193 Perhaps the popular cultural association of the darkness/black lingerie etc. with erotica is an expression/“memory” of this deep Truth.
just prior to the ritual. I recall then to the team, as I do now, that this is a completely unique moment in the history of the universe.

I sense more often, the Depth of the Present Moment. It is the aspect of Communion, as the present moment seethes with connection to past and future – in a kind vertical depth - and to the web of the present - in a kind of horizontal depth. It is the aspect of Sentience – it is alive with an inner principle of being. It is the aspect of Differentiation – it is totally unique in the entire history of the Universe.

23.5.01
I see the cemetery in Goulburn ... We are always Returning ... it is integral with Life; and we are always being regenerated ... our bodies in a constant state of renewal. We are part of some Great Cycle of Returning and Renewal, and this Manifest Reality is the Point of Communion. The sooner we get this, the sooner we release so much suffering.

14.6.01 – Winter Solstice process
A friend’s mother has died, and I reflect on what to say to her. Some weeks ago, an Aboriginal elder died – he was a great and significant teacher. I reflected then ... "sometimes the dissolution of a good person is required in ‘unmanifest’ reality. The Void/All-Nourishing Abyss requires the sustenance for the manifest. This is different from a sense of a person being taken away, as in linear space and time." I reflect now on my friend’s mother’s death, how her mother can perhaps now care for my friend better than she was ever able to before, now that her mother has passed into Larger Self, dissolved into the ‘unmanifest’. I sense the ‘unmanifest’ reality as present, as I never have before. As I lie still today, I feel myself as the Seed in unmanifest reality; I sense unmanifest reality as present – knowing Death now.

A few months later I read in Vladimir Vernadsky’s The Biosphere (1986:40):

"Immediately after the destruction of an organism, the greater part of the atoms almost invariably enter into some other part of living matter. Only a small part forssakes the processes of life for a long period”,

and that

"the biosphere consists of an enormous mass of matter, of which less than 1 per cent is in the ‘activated’ form of living matter, the recipient of the Sun’s energy”

(ibid:41).

I understand this as the presence of the ‘unmanifest’ which we have celebrated in the dark part of the seasonal cycle.

Theme 2 - effect on sense of self ... and themes 5,7, 9, 11

Samhain 2001
As I meditate on the old selves I leave behind, I recognize how much stronger I feel this year, as I am able to remember painful selves and times without crumbling, without allowing these to define me. I am able to accept these old selves, digest them. I can also allow myself to go into the unknown of the future, to become the More, the much More.

As I was cleaning out old papers, and reading old diaries, as part of my Samhain preparation, I came across writing from twenty-one years ago, wherein I spoke of myself as a "monster". I felt at that time that I was perceived that way - as an unacceptable outsider - by the social context, because of my Passion for Knowledge of Goddess: and I realize now how much I concurred with that perception – submitted to it, was a victim of it. I am amazed now at the marked transition to my present position: from this perception of myself as Monster to now being enabled to perceive myself as partaking in Divine
Wisdom. This is the change that the Medusa in me has experienced. She now knows her intimacy with the Centre of the Universe, and is at Home here ... not dependent on the cultural story for my identity. I am more confident of my identity as Daughter of the Universe, and thus experience my beauty, integrity and freedom. I have come Home to the Mother, and the Medusa in me knows She is Wise One, where She did not before; though Her Wisdom is also beyond my conscious comprehension. As I have changed this for myself, I have also participated in the change for others.

Theme 3 – acceptance of process ...and themes 6 and 7

I was raised to think that everything in the Universe was plopped here in its present and complete form ... there was no understanding of things evolving ... being a process over time. I had an expectation in me that I should be able to perform things instantly and completely, and that things needed to be in tidy and static arrangement at all times. This seasonal process and its embodiment of Gaia’s methods of creation evolving over time, have helped me to shift this earlier, anxiety-producing state of being. I am now able to live with things in process for long periods of time. I can allow long term temporary arrangements of my environment, where before things had to be settled permanently and quickly. I am quite conscious now, in the daily process of living, and especially when I am making changes in my house, of how Gaia has created what we see around us – how She used things here for a while, then after a few thousand years reshuffled things, and used those things in another way. I am happy then to do things in a similar way, given Her success story. I do want to live my life, not run around on an impossible perfection track. Embodying the Mother’s – Gaia’s – processes helps me do that.

From experience of how the Seasons slide into each other – the continuity – how things are not finished yet ... through embodiment of this process over time, I am more able to “hang with” feelings, thoughts – allow time to pass before acting or speaking. I can make fewer impulsive conclusions, allow “being” ... at last.

25.5.01

In the writing up, I notice how I have come to have absolute faith in the process, however it is – even when I feel stuck. I notice how I have come to trust that when I am listening and open I will be guided in the best possible way by my inner knowings, my intuitions; that the chaotic darkness, and stuckness are guides as well.
Theme 6 – effect on feeling about Darkness and Light
I have said much about this, in the course of the entire project, yet my perceptions in this matter continue to evolve. As I prepared for the Winter Solstice celebrations 2001, these evolving perceptions were translated into the Winter Solstice teaching, and affected my deepened participation in, and presentation of, the ritual. I perceived the Dark as being the “normal” state of things in the Universe, that it was Light that was the “interloper” – different – in an otherwise Dark Place. As I witnessed the day-light, I felt it as a temporary experience. I understood why the ancients considered the nights as the measure of time. Even an expression like “the light in the darkness” – one so commonly used, and one that I use in the Seasonal Statement of Purpose - began to shift in meaning. The Light is simply Manifestation – neither good nor bad. The Darkness is simply the Unmanifest, the state of things – neither good nor bad. I perceive that while we do celebrate the Light and Manifestation with Joy, it is not because it “triumphs” over Dark. It is simply because it is a miraculous Moment, one that Dark in Her fullness produces. This is a subtle yet radically shifted position. The night/dark is not “a place of the death of the light”, but is the very “source of the light” (McLean 1979:13).

Theme 7
– feeling related to Earth/Cosmos … and themes 13, 15, 16.

Samhain 2001
As I meditate on the calling of the elements for Samhain, I get a sense of my Cosmic age … I sense the age of the water in me, the age of the fire, the earth, the air that I breathe, as my imagination extends and the story comes alive.

In the morning after the Samhain ritual, I walk outside and feel the Winter beginning – it has been marked by our ritual. It feels nice, I will enjoy the cold process ahead.

My partner and I contemplate making the Sabbats three to five day events, after this research is complete. I like this idea as I realize this would be a significant deepening of the rituals - they would become more serious in their attunement, and others would participate more fully in the preparation and production.

As I prepared for Imbolc 2001, I put in place changes towards this deepening – smaller groups for the rituals, and meeting with a preparatory group a few times before the event.
Imbolc 2001

I notice Sun’s change of position on the horizon in the West and in the East -
She is “moving” South again. I have noticed Sun’s movement on the horizon
this year more than ever. I will mark the position in the window at Equinox;
the room’s position seems particularly suited to noting this Sabbat – both of
them then, Spring and Autumn.

As I sit to have breakfast looking out at the garden, I notice the growing Light –
more than I ever have. I can feel it in me.

As I go walking and see Moon over the city, I notice how spontaneously I
imagine from within Her Gaze – Her Gaze over this place for eons, as this place
has changed over time and so quickly in the past couple of hundred years;
what She has seen. I reflect with joy that my mind has ease with this capacity,
and that this is part of what Brian Swimme means about “taking on the mind of
the Universe” (referred to on p. 108 of this thesis).

Theme 8 - effect on understanding of the three faces of the
Female Metaphor ... and several other themes ...

1,2,3,6,7,9,11,13.

I experience a deepening of knowing the Dark Sentience in myself – this
aspect particularly – and in Other, and in the Cosmos; where before I was
trapped on the surface of things, not believing in my own depths, and thus
not in Other or really in the Cosmos, and I would become afraid. I now
perceive much more of the depth of things. I am thus more capable of loving
another, and being loved. I know that the Deep in me, in Other and in
Cosmos is unending ... and that I can fall more deeply – no need to be
trapped on the surface. In joining the Female Metaphor in her three aspects
to the three faces of Cosmogenesis, I have come to understand Her more
depth and feel Her everyday as the dynamics of Life that I am immersed in.
I understand how I manifest Her.

28.5.01

The Urge to Return is not separate from the Urge to Be ... it is a continuation of
the same Urge, the same Thread ... it flowers then falls away. The Sentience is
perhaps felt more in the Virgin and the Crone, the beginning and the end ... the
Source is more obvious.

I begin to feel Beltane in Samhain, Virgin in Crone, Allurement in Death,
Differentiation in Autopoiesis ... the old chant from the Goddess tradition ...
"all things become another, in the Mother". I begin to see Her triple face
reflected in each one face, then the multiples of three faces reflected in each of
those. I begin to understand the ancient reverence for the multiples of three.
Swimme and Berry call Her by new names, and draw Her into the new
empirical way of knowing that humans have developed, to see there Her
qualities – yes even manifest in what Wilber calls the "It" zone (1996:126ff); and
as Robert Wright points out in Barlow (1994:245), even from a conventional
Darwinian reductionist view we are all kin – is that awesome or what?
When I began this research, I barely understood how the third face of the Female Metaphor was resonate with Autopoiesis, but that connection of the two has deepened my feeling for the Old One, and my connection to the Return of self.

There has been a growing knowledge within me – a comprehesion – a sensing – of the communion of Love of self, Love of Other, and Love of All-That-Is. I am experiencing in my life with my partner, how the love of myself is not separate from the love of him. This is especially the case when the other truly loves the self and other in a reciprocal way, and shares the same priority of connection to Gaia-Mother - then it all works so ease-ily. Then the three aspects of this Metaphor reverberate in each other, and move through their phases ... and it turns and hums. I feel free – as I sense this unconditional limitless Love.

When you know each face, you notice them, and their inseparability.

Theme 9 – manifestation of intentions and a few other themes
... 4, 7, 11, 12.

30.1.01
(as I prepared for the Lammas ritual – the first rithual to take place back in my home, and at the beginning of analysis for the first draft of the thesis) Bliss begins to set in. I meditated in the living room space with the centrepiece there. As I did the final dance, I had a sense of the Harvest as I know it – my personal one and something of the one of others who will be present at Lammas. I enjoyed the space to dance and meditate ... I felt free to be as I am, and to let Taffy be free ...

As I sat down, my eyes fell to contemplating the wheel of stones. These stones have been collected for the last seven years, and I have been internalizing this wheel, coming to celebrate it ... deepening my knowing of it. I contemplate each of them. What a joy to have them set out.

"to dream the impossible dream, to reach the unreachable star" ... that is what we are doing here. We are performing magic ... as Gaia does everyday.

31.5.01
As I sense the thesis nearing completion, and feel satisfaction with what I have put together, I have a feeling of having achieved what I have always wanted to. It expresses in a satisfactory way, something essential that I have wanted to create. I reflect that this Something More has always been present in me, as others too have this Something More present in them. One needs someone to see it in you, so you know its there in some way. In the circles of the seasonal rituals, there are constant reminders and visions of this – calling forth and identifying that Seed within. So it has been for me and the participants.

12.6.01
"Oh how I've dreamed of things impossible" – this song keeps playing in my mind. I am conscious of the blessedness of my life as it is now ... the presence of my partner, the completing of this work. I think of the Winter Solstice celebration of Manifestation ... how impossible "All" seems, and yet it is Manifest, and goes on constantly, even when it seems it's not.

195 ... my partner.
Coming back to the Introduction to this Thesis

My own alienated mind has come to understand her participation. I have stopped “slaying my Dragon”. The Moon and Her beautiful phases, which I gaze at often, reflect to me how Life proceeds. The Deity of my early days was “no Poet”, and I went in search of the Poetry – the Metaphor in myself. I have found that it is indeed Poetry, that which I have been doing. Calling it “Poetry” was an intuitive understanding. The rituals were enacted communal Poetry. When I called it that I hadn’t read Robert Graves’ The White Goddess, wherein he says that true Poetry is “an invocation of the Muse” (1999:xiii). He also says that true Poetry is about “the Theme” – Life and Death – and he notes the seasonal festivals as being remnants of real Poetry (ibid:19-20). Often throughout the process, in my notes, I commented that each Seasonal ritual felt like an Initiation - I felt it as a small death. Each ritual that I facilitated took me to the Creative Edge, and I found myself contemplating my death.

In my journal notes 30.5.01:

The Poetry is all in place – “in Place” as well196 – I simply need to deepen into it more. I am in the Pattern of Creativity. I am Home, and deepening in. In my meditations each day I open to receive it – to receive the Sentience of the world – in myself and around me. I receive it, relate and return with it197 - all at the same time.

The experience of the Wheel for me has been a ReTurn to the Mother – knowing Her in my cells, in my Place, in my Context.

In my journal notes 29.8.01:

As I light my three candles for meditation, I reflect simply ...

“I am a Place, I am an Urge, I am a Space – I am all Three.”

I have “situated myself in my place”, to rephrase Irigaray (see Introduction p.9). I have brought to life within myself “the dynamics that fashioned the cosmos” (Swimme as referred to in the Introduction p.12) – the dynamics of my Place.

195 The song line is from Wendy Rule’s “Oh How I’ve Dreamed” - Deity, Shock Records 1998, WENDY007.

196 The Larger Cosmic Context of Place as referred to in the Introduction in general, and specifically on p.27-29 and p.153-154. I also mean it as relationship with others - participants (Other) - as referred to p.252, and also as my Self – none of these are separate. She is a Unity of Being.

197 My partner, Robert Seabone, “stories” the three faces of Gaia – or as he says, “the 3 R’s of Reciprocity” – in this way: as Receiving, Relating, Returning. This is how he perceives the dynamics of relationship – and as primarily occurring in that order. And on a daily basis his “3 R’s” correspond generally to the times of day; that is, each morning we receive All, we then relate with All, and when we sleep – particularly in dreamless sleep - we return too All.
Gaia’s Story and the “Meta-religious” Challenge of Our Time

Thomas Berry has said that we need to understand that the challenge of our time - that is, the apparent planetary siege by the human, is not just an outcome of the last few hundred years of Western scientific thinking. It is not just Cartesian, it is not just economics; this moment, he says, has required everything. He calls the challenge of this moment, “meta-religious” (1996:8). He says that we, as a species and as a planet, are in a “moment of transformation”\textsuperscript{198}. It is my understanding, that part of what that means for humans, is to realize that we are not in control – we never have been, and never will be. While it is true that we participate, that we are in it, we are not the Story. It is Gaia’s Story. We are participants through whom the Creativity proceeds ... whether consciously or not, whether as compost or new growth, we participate, and She proceeds with Her Creativity.

Berry lists three rights of all creatures (ibid): the right to Be, the right to Habitat, and the right to Fulfill its role in all existence. In my mind these three rights correspond to the three faces of the evolutionary cosmic dynamics: it is an ethics based on the Creative impetus of Gaia, an ethics that may enable Life as we know it, to proceed. Intrinsic to it is a balance and a recognition of, Love of Self, Love of Other, and Love of All-That-Is. It is based in a balance and recognition of, Urge to unfold, Place to be, and Subjective Space.

Deep in the present moment, all the Creativity that is necessary, is present. The Wheel of the Year, as it moves through the three phases, articulates and celebrates this fullness; and the truths expressed and celebrated at each Sabbat are conversely, present in each moment. As Thomas puts it, “The Beauty of the Universe is intrinsic to every moment” (ibid), and he says that this Beauty may be enabled to break forth, when we release our fixations on forms of the past (ibid). “Divinity” is not located at some other place and time – it is not “out there”, nor confined to the Beginning. What is “Divinity” if it does not enable deep participation in, and knowledge of, being at home in this place; if it does not enable the Knowledge of being a

\textsuperscript{198} In a talk he gave on June 4 2000, at the Center for Ecology and Spirituality, Port Burwell Ontario. It was a 5 day colloquium on “The Cosmology of Religion”. I have a video of his talk that was made by a friend.
Loved/Supported and Loving/Supporting Being in the intricate Balance of Gaia – our home and context? 

Perceptual psychologist, Laura Sewall advocates awakening our sensory systems, which are “exquisitely evolved channels for translating between ‘in-here’ and ‘out-there’” (1995:203). and she describes this skillful ecological perception as a “devotional practice” (ibid), of coming to recognize Earth’s call (ibid:214-215). Sewall lists five “perceptual practices”:

“(1) learning to attend, or to be mindful, within the visual domain; (2) learning to perceive relationships, context and interfaces; (3) developing perceptual flexibility across spatial and temporal scales; (4) learning to reperceive depth; and (5) the intentional use of imagination” (ibid:204). This research has met all of these practices. It has been such a “devotional practice” - of becoming receptive to Gaia’s speech.

I notice in myself and others who continue to participate in the seasonal ritual celebrations, an opening to subtle perceptions and sensitivities that do enable and evoke a passion for adopting everyday changes to our domestic lives; that is, how we relate to the water we use, the food we eat, the methods of transport we choose. It seems that as each actually feels “the unitive dimension of existence” (Spretnak 1993:22), feels themselves to be “a node within a vast network of creative dynamics” (ibid), becomes more mindful of flux, wonder and awe (ibid), that we do in fact begin to devise strategies in our lives whereby we may be more authentic in our relationship with this expressly sentient Earth and Cosmos. Some participants have given up their cars, found ways to reuse water, are learning how to garden organically, relate more consciously with the flora and fauna around them – care more, and feel that their small care does make a difference.

On a broader scale there seems increasing ability in the hearts and minds of participants to step outside the anthropocentric frame, as increasingly each one becomes more conscious of an “Earth Jurisprudence” (Bell:2001), that is that Earth Herself has innate wisdom – a wisdom that they can sense and come into relationship with, that is “primordial” (ibid:4), as they do constantly express and enact in the rituals. There is in participants more humility about the place of the human in the scale of things, more

See Figure 2 for an ancient depiction of such Reciprocity.
willingness to step back from the human impress on the planet and other beings, and to reframe more inclusively.

The Snake Bites Her Tail – the Circle Comes Around

I referred in the Introduction to beginning the analytical process of this research, by sitting in the middle of my circle of eight stones that represented the eight Seasonal Sabbats. Here is the full description of that moment:

I sit in the middle of my stone circle which I have laid out on a black cloth in the middle of my study floor. I sit with my back to the South – the darker part of the cycle i.e. the half where the dark part of the day is longer than the light part, wherein there is a celebration of Crone to Mother to Virgin – the three characteristics of Cosmogenesis in the movement towards form (Samhain to Winter Solstice to Imbolc). At my left hand, there is a continued deepening of the dark (Mabon/Autumn Equinox to Samhain to Winter Solstice), then at my back and moving towards my right hand, there is the transition to waxing light (Winter Solstice to Imbolc to Ostara/Spring Equinox). I am facing the North – the lighter part of the cycle i.e. the half where the light part of the day is longer than the dark part, wherein there is a celebration of Virgin to Mother to Crone – the three characteristics of Cosmogenesis in the movement towards entropy (Beltane to Summer Solstice to Lammas). At my right hand there is a continued heightening of the light (Ostara/Spring Equinox to Beltane to Summer Solstice) then at my front and moving towards my left hand, there is the transition to waxing dark (Summer Solstice to Lammas to Mabon/Autumn Equinox). See DIAGRAM 1.

I notice that the process of this analysis is leading to further development of the themes and the rituals … further into their intended purpose … articulating and celebrating the Creative, Cosmogenetic Cycle. It is practice leading to theory, leading back to deepening of practice, which will lead further into understanding, and so on.²⁰ It is reflection on experience of the script, becoming added to the script, and the deepened script leading to further insight, leading to further scribing.²¹ “We shall never be finished” as Robin Morgan says (1976:88). My engagement with the process of the Seasonal Wheel continues, and the method of approach to it is in flux, taking unknown pathways.

Now, as I come back to the middle of the stones again, my perceptual threshold shifts to the Centre. I feel the Reciprocity of each of the four axes, and the Presence of each Sabbat in the Moment. As I step around the Wheel through the year, ritually celebrating each, as I continue to, I seem to deepen

each time, into the Joy and Beauty of celebrating each Moment of Gaia’s Creative Earth-Sun relationship.

In the Introduction I stated that “This thesis itself will be ordered, structured and organized by these features, and I hope to be able to illustrate that, as it comes into focus” (p.25). The thesis had so many disparate parts at the beginning. It had many threads, and each of those threads had their own three features of creation. Each was complex, and the threads criss-crossed in no perceivable pattern. Part of the research process was allowing the disparate parts to reveal their relationship, to show their resonances. This was largely conceptual. Another part of the research was taking the courage to weave the threads, and see how they responded. The weaving into a fabric was a work and a skill – a crafting - and then watching – “did it sit well?” and perhaps “did it take on an energy, a life of its own – was there a communion into which they arrived, a deeper relationship that already existed there?” This was the production – done with sensitivity. Then there was allowing and witnessing the synergy, the self of the work to come through – witnessing the conflagration, the transformation of the parts into one, a gestalt, becoming its unique self. This was active receiving of the work’s autopoeisis, which flowed back into a new differentiated being.

Now as the Wheel continues to turn, and the work is given over to something Larger – it disperses. It becomes many seeds in the minds and hearts of readers who may take it further. This is the Return of the finished work. It is consumed by the reader – the audience. It loses itself in a new context, many new contexts – it becomes many seeds – to come to life in a new way, within others. The cycle begins again in many new Places.

THE THREE CANDLES MEDITATION
– as it has evolved, May 2001

Light the first candle:
I remember She within me Who is deeply related – the Mother – the Matrix – She Who Is – everything within me that connects me to the past, upon which the present is built – the Depth of this moment. I remember the Sangha, the
community around the globe that supports Life, those in particular that have and do support my life – all those who have been my teachers.

**Light the second candle:**
I remember She within me Who is ever new – the Virgin – the Urge budding forth – She Who will Be – the future, the children, the descendants of body and mind – the much More in myself and all selves. I remember the Buddha, the Self, the Shining One within all, for whom I refine the gold – for whom this life is given, those whom I support.

**Light the third candle:**
I remember She within me Who returns me to All-That-Is, to the Great Subject - the Old One – She within Who creates the Space to Be – Who dissolves the old in every moment – Who knows the Truth of all things – Who is the Sentience within all. I remember the Dharma, She within whose Wisdom is beyond all knowledge.

This is the Creative Context in which we are held - in the Context of all that supports this present moment, in the Context of the future that is being conceived and nurtured right here, and in the Context of the Old all knowing Compassionate One who receives all – all three present within each unique being ... right Here.
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APPENDIX A:

SONG OF HECATE
(to be read uproariously)

LET BIRDS OUT OF CAGES!
LET BITCHES BITCH!
AND DOGS BE DOGS
SCREECH AND MOAN TO THE MOON
LET CROWS DE-FEET THE PLASTIC SURGEONS
AND CRY "FAARCK" TO THE OPEN SKY
WE WILL HAVE AGE IN ALL HER BEAUTY.

RIVERS OF TEARS AND MOUNTAINS OF GROANING
THE SEAS ARE THICK WITH MY BLOOD

AND YET I LIVE WITH EVERY BABY'S FIRST CRY

TO CLEANSE THE EARTH OF THE SINS OF ADAM

XXX

I AM OLD - SO OLD; AND YET
METHINKS THIS IS THE DAWN OF TIME

FROM THE DEEPEST CAVERNS OF EARTH
THE CRY GOES FORTH
"NO! NO! NO MORE!
UNTIL THE FINAL "NO" HAS BEEN UTTERED.

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........ ALL IS STILL UNDER THE FULLEST MOON.
NOW THE GREAT "YES" ARISES
OUT OF THE SEA ...........

Bridget McKern 1993
APPENDIX B:

THE “RE-STORYING” CLASSES – THE PROCESSES

The first session - began with a bell to take us into a centred place, and then an invocation that I understood to be the guiding Way for where we as a group were orienting – it was part of Doreen Valiente’s version of “The Charge of the Goddess”:

“Hear the words of the Star Goddess, the dust of whose feet are the hosts of heaven, ... I who am the beauty of the green earth and the white moon among the stars and the mysteries of the waters, I call upon your soul to arise and come unto me. For I am the soul of nature that gives rise to the Universe. From me all things proceed and unto Me they must return. Let My worship be in the heart that rejoices, for behold - all acts of love and pleasure are My rituals. Let there be beauty and strength, power and compassion, honour and humility, mirth and reverence within you. And you who seek to know Me, know that your seeking and yearning will avail you not, unless you know the Mystery: for if that which you seek, you find not within yourself, you will never find it without. For I have been with you from the beginning, and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.” (Starhawk 1989:90-91).

I would then, with the music “Hymn to Her”¹ playing, slide project about thirty different images of Goddess for the next ten minutes, with the opening invitation to view theses images as “equivalent to being in the presence of that deity” as in the Hindu practice of darshan (Muten 1994:3). After years of always being in the presence of Goddess images, I felt that I had learnt more from this visible disclosure than I could have from words that tend to track along the current cultural curves of the mind. I would then re-project the same images with names and summarized commentary. I would conclude this section of slides with a timeline that gave some perspective on our present consciousness (see APPENDIX D²).

From within this context we would introduce ourselves. We would begin our speaking in the circle to each other with name, ancestral roots, geographical place of origin, spiritual heritage, and any work or involvements one wanted to mention, and the particular interest in this group and/or familiarity with Goddess. I always felt intuitively that the geographical place of origin was important – before I later understood with my cognition, from reading about Gaia or “sense of place”; I felt that I needed to hear where each woman was

¹ “Hymn to Her” by The Pretenders, 1986, produced by Bob Clearmountain and Jimmy Iovine. Audio tape The Singles, marketed by Warner Bros. Inc..

² APPENDIX D
born, and grew up ... and that they needed to place themselves there for this re-storying process to begin.

Without much introductory commentary, I would read them Charlene Spretnak's version of the Demeter and Persephone story (1992:109-118). It was to present a quality, an example, of the re-storying that we were shifting into. We would discuss how this version of the story varied from the story they might have heard before.

I would then spend half an hour or so, in a simple teaching format, introducing the re-storying of Goddess by giving information, much as I have written in the first section of chapter 3. This first session would conclude with a breath meditation which I understood to be the personal primary place of experience of the Metaphor – in the waxing, peaking and waning of the breath – which is at the same moment transpersonal (see APPENDIX E – though the script would always vary somewhat). This guided meditation included a contemplation of light wherein participants were invited to see the visual field before them as "simply textures and patterns without category, without names", to encourage an awareness of the indigenous place in themselves, that might indeed have its own names for things. I understood this light contemplation as a method of entering a timeless place, and clearing some enculturated layers of perception. The meditation concluded with re-forming as a circle, to look upon each other with these refreshed eyes, or as I would put it, "to greet the Ancient One in each other." Participants were then given time alone to write or draw, before I made supper for them.

The second session – was devoted to the Virgin aspect. Participants would have read pertinent information and articles that I had previously supplied, and they would have come with a story to tell – relevant to this aspect in their lives - and brought objects and/or photos to embellish their telling. The same care as noted above, was taken with the setting of the environment, and I would place objects representative of Virgin on the altar.

2 The timeline is not drawn to scale and the manner of referencing was not meant to satisfy academic requirements, although they are correct.
When all the women were present in the circle, we would begin by sitting with music and a slide image of the Virgin aspect. I would then proceed with an invocation of this aspect, before lighting the centre candle and moving into a teaching – giving information along the lines of what I have written above in “The Virgin/Maiden Re-Storied” section of Chapter 3.

Participants would then be invited to tell their stories, in a formal circle process wherein listening - to self and to others - was of paramount importance. This particular kind of formal storytelling has its own way of helping a person to hear themselves, to feel for how they wish to speak themselves, and to really feel their story, as the others in the circle hear them. It is “hearing each other into speech” (Nelle Morton 1985:205), it is being the “ears of the universe” (Jean Houston, workshop 1990) – receiving and hearing “the cries of the world”, and it is one’s own Word and self being received. In this reciprocal process of hearing and speaking one embodies Deity for self and other, as both Creator and Recipient, at the same time. I gave instructions such as:

- each person to speak when they felt it was their turn
- to hold one of the significant Virgin objects while speaking
- speak from “I”, your story, your experience
- it is not a discussion; others simply to listen, not offer opinion
- if/when a person gets emotional, to let them be with it – not try to fix
- confidentiality was assumed
- each story acknowledged formally with “We hear you”, and a bow

After a break, I would guide a meditation that focussed on the Virgin energy, wherein participants began by standing and were invited to allow themselves the freedom to move if they felt to. The meditation concluded with a re-forming of the circle to look upon and “re-cognize the Virgin in each other”; then I would ritually anoint/bless each with oil, affirming the “Creative Urge of the Universe” present, and their freedom and self-love. After a period of time allowed for personal reflection, writing or drawing, and the option to share that in a circle, I would teach them an ancient circle dance, which we would then do.
The third session – was devoted to the Mother aspect. Once again the participants would have read pertinent information and articles that I had previously supplied, and they would have come with a story to tell – relevant to this aspect in their lives - and brought objects and/or photos to embellish their telling. I would have placed objects significant of the Mother on the altar, and when all were present in the circle we would begin with a chant that I would teach them. The invocation of this aspect would include connecting the circle by holding hands, before I lit the centre candle and proceeded with a teaching on “The Mother/Creator Re-Storied”.

After the formal storytelling circle, I guided a meditational experience that included each one taking on the role of creating the Universe, as well as then imagining becoming foetal and receiving all they needed, and being nurtured by the Oceanic Womb of the Mother. This guided experience concluded with each one “coming into shore” (re-forming the circle), and “greeting the other Holy Children” who’d “been washed up on the shore”

I would then feed them bread and wine/juice in a formal Communion, that I call “Communion of the Goddess”, and that (without saying so) places the Christian ritual communion in this context – that is, actively reclaiming the symbolism. It was for some, a challenge. The words I used were partly inspired by lines from Robin Morgan’s poem “The Network of the Imaginary Mother” (1976:86-87). My words were:

(holding the bread) “This is the body of the Mother, of women everywhere, given daily for the life of the world - take, and eat. This is her Body. She is the Bread of Life.” (break it and pass it around)

(taking the wine) “This is the blood of the Mother, of women everywhere, shed daily for the life of the world - take and drink. Do this in remembrance of Her.” (Pass it around)

“This meal it is ours, it is Hers. We are 80% the world’s farmers, we prepare the food, serve it. We celebrate our physical & spiritual creativity.”

We would conclude the session with singing songs and chants together, that I would teach them, or others that they might know.

Session four was devoted to the Crone aspect, and would begin with the group sitting with a slide image of Kali and devotional music to Her. A bowl

3 For Virgin celebrations we usually did a dance known as the “Miserlou”, referred to on p.178 fn.136.
of ash would be passed, with which each could mark themselves and say if they liked, “There is a time for waxing and there is a time for waning.” I would invoke the Crone aspect recalling Her to her place in the cycle, light the centre candle, and proceed with the teaching on “The Crone/Old One Re-Storied”.

After the storytelling process, I would guide a meditation that concluded with time for drawing. I would teach the group another circle dance that seemed appropriate to the time of waning, of harvest\(^5\). These songs, chants and dances that I taught them were with the view that they would be able to create a bit of a ritual for themselves – for us all – for the last session.

**Session five** was devoted to “our Gaian Selves”, and began with a meditation on the elements. The altar was decorated with my eight stones signifying the seasonal points\(^6\). I would give a teaching on cosmology - recalling our origins - concluding it with a visual and audio experience\(^7\). The participants would have read pertinent information and articles that I had previously supplied, and had also been instructed to have time outside sensing into the consciousness of some creature, rock, tree or whatever. The formal storytelling circle at this session was for the sharing of that experience, or some other experience of connection with Gaia – in the form of the “other than human”.

We would then have an interactive session of learning about the seasonal points in the Southern Hemisphere, and relating them to the present cultural religious festivals; that is re-storying the “holydays” they knew, to their original significance, as well as learning of the whole annual Wheel of the Western European Earth tradition. I would explain my own circle of stones, and suggest they make their own, for the enhancement of their own understanding. The session concluded with one of the dances they had learned, and a poem to Gaia.

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\(^4\) This “Holy Children” expression is from Jean Houston’s work.

\(^5\) This dance is referred to on p.202 fn.157 of this thesis.

\(^6\) Referred to on p.150 – 152 of this thesis.

\(^7\) I have used my own summary of an unpublished paper and presentation entitled “The Quest for the Grail: Science and the Search for God” given by Darryl Reanney at The Climbing River Foundation Conference in Melbourne 1990.
The sixth and final session was for the co-creation of a ritual. I began by guiding a meditation that I called a “Self-Blessing”. Its purpose was to lead them to write a self-blessing from a strong place in themselves. It focussed on the three aspects of the breath cycle, and connected this to the breath of Gaia, and to the moon, and to other cycles of body and psyche. It concluded with specific affirmation of the powers of the three faces of the Goddess within them, and an affirmation that each participant was Her story in time and space. They each then wrote down how they felt called and blessed at this time.

I would then do a teaching about ritual in general and outline the elements of ritual as I had learned it. We would then proceed to create our own celebration – assigning parts to different volunteers, adding in poems, songs, dances they wanted, and any other ideas of expression they had. They had already been invited to bring special clothing, objects, musical instruments, and food that they wanted to include. They were invited to include their self-blessings. We took time to prepare our parts, and practice anything we needed to, and then we did it.
APPENDIX C:
THE “EN-TRANCING” CLASSES – THE PROCESSES

The first session was “Entering More Fully into the Metaphor”, and the altar was decorated with symbols of the three aspects, and three candles. I began with an invocation of the three aspects and a blessing, which is really a statement of intention to give “greater focus, coherence and discipline ... (and creating) ... a movement in consciousness in a particular direction.” (Braud and Anderson 1998:87). The first meditation was on the Virgin-Mother-Crone, with my lead into each aspect with my understandings and expressions, then opened to participants with the invitation to speak “of how you feel Her, how you have known Her, or see Her”; thus it became a collective contemplation of the triple-faced Metaphor. I then presented a summary of Swimme and Berry’s three faces of Cosmogenesis (1992:66-79), relating them to the Female Metaphor – the Creativity of Gaia. Each woman was given a formal time for her exclusive response to the material, and that was followed by more informal discussion of it. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, these women – the core participants and one other - were the first to “try this on”, to sit with my understandings of these connections.

In this first session, I also led the participants into a collective version of the “Three Candles Ritual Meditation” (mentioned in the Introduction), teaching it to them and inviting their expression. At that time in the research, I had primarily developed this ritual-meditation as a threefold remembering as follows:

Light the first candle:
“I remember all who have gone before us - the story of cosmic evolution, the many life forms and creatures, all the ancestors, all that has created and does create this present moment. This is the network, the Mother, the communion, the subtle and infinite relationship - this is the Sangha, the community around the globe that supports life, that has and does support me.”

Light the second candle:
“I remember all who come after us - the children, the young ones, the descendants, the new and potential everywhere and in each self, for whom I refine the Gold, for whom I am responsible. This is the Virgin, the Buddha, the Self. I remember the Beauty of Her, I remember the Power of She who is within, who calls me to become More. I remember the Future to which this life will be and is, given.”

Light the third candle:
“I remember All-That-Is, beyond time and revealed in time. This is the Old Wise One, the Dharma, the Truth as it is, which is beyond all knowledge,
which dissolves me into the Mystery from whence we all come - present now in me as I am.”

In this collective class experience, I would specifically name my personal objects and photos that I associated with each “remembering”, before opening it to the participants to specifically name their own objects and photos that they associated with each “remembering”. I had instructed them to bring these kinds of things to the class, giving them some preview of the process.

We concluded this collective ritual-meditation with the Yoga Mudra¹, which I had taught them before beginning; I encouraged their imagination and awareness of the multivalence of this triple-fold corporate experience, by outlining the nested layers that I perceived. These nested layers are:

-  breath – waxing, peaking, waning
-  Love of Self, love of Other, love of All-That-Is
-  Virgin, Mother, Crone
-  Seasonal change - waxing light/early Spring, through “high” Spring to Summer, then the turn into the Dark/early Autumn, through “deep” Autumn to Winter.

The first session was completed with a circle of sharing and the following prayer – “Goddess Prayer 1998 C.E.” I called it, which had evolved into this form at the beginning of the period of the research²:

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Mother-Virgin-Crone
who is within me ...
Holy is my Being.
The Mystery pervades all...
May I understand my Inner guidance.
May I accept the infinite daily abundance with gratitude
May I forgive my insensitivities and blunders
-may I forgive others the same.
May I respond to my longing, my Divine Passion
I am in Awe ...
and give thanks to the Light&Dark within.
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I then prepared them for the second session by asking each one to bring her own prayers and Goddess images – posters and/or sculptures - for a prayer wall and altar that we would create. They were told that they would each have the opportunity to guide us in a pose of one of these Deities, and to

¹ This yoga pose and its significance to my methodology is noted in the Introduction p. 26.
read one or two prayers if they wish. It was not a story-telling session, as much as sharing a practice/prayer with us.

The second session was “Entering More Fully into Memory via Body”, and I introduced it from the premise that:

“Our bodies hold memory of the entire evolutionary history just as Earth holds the memory ... seen most obviously in fossils. And just as Earth’s movements have uncovered some of her memories, so our movements can release some of our memories ... or awaken us to something new. And taking on the poses of deities/totems can enable us to take on the consciousness of that entity more fully” (class notes).

I continued,

“So tonight we will be taking on the poses of some ancient Goddesses, and we will be moving our ‘land’ – our bodies - in an organic/intuitive way” (class notes).

I proceeded to lead them in the gazing upon and mirroring of four Goddess images that were posted in the four directions. The participants were then invited to lead us with their own favourite images in a similar way, after which we sat quietly in front of the prayer wall, and each woman read or shared the prayers she had brought. This section was developed further with all of us taking a pose of individual choice and holding it for the duration of about eight minutes while some flute music played, then resting for a few minutes, before being invited to move/dance “from your Centre” – that is, they were encouraged to listen to themselves, to follow their own body feeling and imagination, to follow their intuitions and sensations. This was a practice in “listening to Her and moving accordingly”. After about ten minutes of this, each was invited to share her experience or show us any of the movements she liked, and I shared with them some of what I usually do, as this kind of movement had been an everyday part of my evening meditations. The dance and Deity poses are about the embodiment of Grace and Power, not just conceptualizing them.

Although this body-focussed work was quite an experience in itself, it was also being used as a warm-up to an exercise I had learned from Jean Houston, which had given me a deep sense of connection to the past and to the future. I know it as the “Underworld Journey”, though it is entitled “The

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2 The most recent version of this “Goddess Prayer”, as it has evolved over the period of the research - as I feel it now in 2003, is in Ch. 8 p.244. I detail some of its story/process on p. 244 fn.174.
3 I first experienced this process of holding a pose at a Jean Houston workshop in Sydney, 1996.
Realm of the Ancestors” in Houston (1993:197). My experience even on this occasion as facilitator was a feeling the next day of deep joy and harmony, as I experienced a sense of deep connection - to self, other and all-that-is. This “Underworld” experience is an imaginative exercise/journey into the realm of the ancestors, into the realm of archetypal patterns, and into the realm of the descendants. I understand it as a deepening into the Power of the present moment, where all who have gone before and all who will come after are (in) Present – the Point of Communion. It is a communion experience, and it is an opportunity to play out imaginatively, one's personal story with the Larger Context.

This second session was completed with a circle of sharing and the following song that one of the women knew and suggested:

“We are the old women
we are the new women
we are the same women -
wiser than before.”

The third session of this series was “Entering More Fully into Sacred Awareness”, and in my class notes I defined “sacred awareness” as “awareness of what is involved in this moment ... what it has taken and what it takes, to create and sustain this moment. It means being able to notice the awesomeness of the world, being able to feel it.” I added: “It might be what Jean Houston calls being able to live with the windows and doors of our lives open to the depth realm (op.cit.:xv).” Such awareness deepens one's participation in ritual celebrations; it also enables deeper personal confidence to lead such celebrations – as one gains confident knowledge of the truths spoken in that context.

The floor of the room was laid out with a spiral, made simply of a thick woolen thread, which represented the story of the Universe. Along the spiral path were unlit candles representing events of note. The women had been

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4 My experience of it was at Jean Houston’s Sydney workshop in 1990. The script I use is in Houston’s The Hero and the Goddess (1993:197-200). Joanna Macy describes a version of it in her book “Coming Back to Life” (1998:138-142), and refers to it as “Harvesting the Gifts of the Ancestors”.

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given a version of the Epic of Evolution⁵ (see APPENDIX G) to take home the week before, in preparation for this session.

We began with a showing of Brian Swimme’s video “The Story of Our Time” - from “Canticle to the Cosmos” series (1990), whereupon each one was given the opportunity to respond in a formal circle without a discussion. After a break, we participated in a group reading of the Epic of Evolution and walk⁶, wherein one person walked the spiral path that had been laid out in the centre, and stopped to light a candle at the moment that each event was recalled. After the reading and walk finished, we sat gazing quietly at the lit-up spiral for a while, before I read a summarized version of the story. Each participant then turned to a partner and taking turns at the envisioning and receptive roles, they looked at each other as I suggested:

“The person you have before you is a recapitulation of the entire history of the Universe ... the entire evolution of the Universe is present here ... if it wasn’t they would not be here. Every cell remembers the first cell, the transformations all the way along, the eyes carry the memory of photosynthesis... and so on” (class notes).

Each “envisioner” was invited to gesture reverently with her hands when she had the vision, then swap to become the receiver. They had been invited to affirm verbally: “Here is the Source of everything, here is the Mystery of the Universe” – a line they had heard in the video, where Brian Swimme speaks about people you see everyday.

This session was concluded with a circle chant:

“She changes everything She touches, everything She touches changes.”

In preparation for session four which was “Entering More Fully into the Wheel of the Year”, they were asked to bring eight stones/objects for the construction of their own wheel, and they were given copies of graphics of some versions of the Wheel of the Year (Diagram 1 and 2 and APPENDIX J) to contemplate through the week. I also gave them a copy of “All-Nourishing Abyss”, a chapter from Swimme’s book The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos (1996:97-104) as background to the nonmaterial realm, and the nature of the emergence of the material, from a contemporary physics point of view.

⁵ This version is essentially Ruth Rosenhek’s version that is based on one by Miriam MacGillis, who based hers on the work of Lyn Margulis and Elisabet Sahtouris.
Upon arrival, each participant laid out her circle of stones/objects, in accord with the directions, and in a big enough circle so that she could sit in the middle of it. We began the session with a group contemplation of the elements, turning first to the East. The participants were invited to address the element associated with that direction, or to speak of it, and to gesture/move/pose as they felt. I took that element then, around the circle for them, affirming the moment as an opportunity for each one to feel their desire for that element, and to interact with it – by smelling the smudge in the case of Air, by feeling the warmth in the case of Fire, by tasting in the case of Water, and by making a handprint with mud in the case of Earth.

Each participant then sat in her circle of stones, and we would begin this contemplation by facing South - the Winter Solstice. I read to them Starhawk’s version of the story of the Wheel of the Year (1989:218-220), inviting them to follow the wheel around in their imagination, as the story flowed along. I then asked them:

"Did you have a resonance with a particular part of the cycle ... if so, turn to that Sabbat/stone, or in the general direction ... the feeling might have to do with something very currently happening or might be some larger issue for you ... or maybe you just liked the image or feeling" (class notes). Each one was invited to speak about her resonance with that place, and then to speak about her wheel/stones as selected - her feeling for each of the Sabbats, the story as she understood it. I went over a summary of the way in which I understood each of the Sabbats, and the story with which I and they had celebrated them this past year. They were then given free time in their circle to write, draw or dream about their own sense of the Wheel. They were invited to recall where it was on the Wheel that they “came in”, that is, were born, and to mark it. I alluded to the Celtic tradition called "sitting out", where an individual questing for vision, will sit out all night awake in a circle of stones.

We spent the rest of the session, with my presenting to them more of my development of the Wheel of the Year, and how I understood its significance.

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6 I first experienced this process named “Timeline of Light” with Ruth Rosenhek and John Seed’s presentation of it in Sydney 1999.
7 I first experienced a similar process in a presentation by Margi Curtis and Graham Wykes to the Australian Transpersonal Association in Sydney 1997.
as a celebration of (i) the seasons - the Earth-Sun cycle and (ii) of the cosmos -
the Primeval Fireball - manifestation and ongoing creation, and (iii) of your
self ... your story; that it could be a celebration of their biological,
psychological, ecological, cosmological selves - which were not separate. I
gave them information about other groups that celebrated the Sabbats, and
something of how these groups storied them.

The session concluded with the guided meditation on photons of light that
we had done in the previous series. I introduced it to this group as a way “to
slip between the worlds, to journey beyond time, into the timeless realm that
threads through time, and is always present. Particles of light are
manifestations of timelessness.” We had a brief sharing and a chant to open
the circle.

The fifth and concluding session to this class series was “Entering
More Fully into Self as Leader”. This whole session was a build-up to, and
the enacting of, a Jean Houston exercise/ritual called “A Friend in Court”
(1993.:62-69). They had been given copies of Jean Houston’s story behind the
exercise (ibid:60-61), which is that it is based on the journey of Odysseus, and
this in particular is based upon his representation by Athena in the “Court of
the Gods”. Jean Houston describes the experiences and initiations of
Odysseus on his journey as “about the restoration of the unity of the Triple
Goddess” (ibid:54); that The Odyssey is a re-weaving of “the fullness of the
Great Goddess in all her qualities and manifestations” (ibid).

The class participants were given an outline of the procedure, at the end of
the previous session; it was important that they knew the context of the
exercise, and what would be required for participation. They were told that
they would each incarnate an archetypal friend in court, speaking for the
needs and needed changes of her own “everyday” life, and referring to her
“everyday” self in the third person. They could name this incarnated
archetypal friend or “Goddess-Self” as they each chose – Persephone,
Athena, Hathor or whomever – and enact this archetype with appropriate

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*As told to me by Sedonia Cahill in a personal interview 1996.*
change of voice, gesture, language and energy. As I put it to them then, informed by Jean Houston’s guidelines for the exercise (ibid:66-69):

“In this role each speaks for the life of their human self from the realm of the Goddesses and Gods, allowing yourself as goddess ‘to observe the causal weave of circumstance that informs the life, the strengths and weaknesses, the lacks and the possibilities of your human’(ibid:67). It is a compassionate telling of your human’s life story. ‘Observe where this person is coming from and where she could be going. Above all, state what is needed in this life to get on with it’(ibid) - either to enable a move out of a stuck position, or to deal with a state of transition the human may be experiencing. Remember that ‘the perspective of the Goddess is always helpful and empowering. Should your local human feel any negativity about your life, you must be careful not to let your Goddess partake of it’ (ibid – with my substitution of “Goddess” for Houston’s “gods”).

The other Goddesses ‘listen with attention and compassion, and after the Goddess who is speaking for the human client presents the case, they then offer helpful, thoughtful, and Goddess-like suggestions. They speak only from this Larger Self - they do not try to do therapy’ (ibid:68-69 with my words mixed in).

Each Goddess will be allowed 10-15 minutes, whereupon the guide will ring the bell to indicate time to finish up. After each has spoken for herself, there will be time ‘for each to give an overview and summation of the life and needs of her human charge ...in the light of further reflection and the briefs presented by the other Goddesses” (ibid:69 – “Goddesses” substituted for Houston’s “gods”).

As Jean Houston admonishes: ‘Remember the example of Athena who was able to give active suggestions for what was needed and volunteer for service herself” (ibid). (class notes)

I introduced this session then, lighting three candles, and speaking of the nested layers of the self – the biological, cultural, cosmological as at least three of them. I spoke of Jean Houston’s outline of three “major realms of experience” (1987:23): they are
(i) historic, factual, biological - "This is Me" - small, local self.
(ii) mythic, symbolic - "We Are" - Larger Self.
(iii) the unitive - exists both beyond & within the other two - "I Am"

The direction of this session’s process was that the Hera moves past her personal, local historic limitations to new emergent human forms, to open herself to the deeper realms and to carry that knowledge with her into her everyday life to put it to use (Houston op. cit.:16).

I drew in Swimme’s perspective. He says that "laced into the interaction of the protons is the desire for stars" (1990:video 2) - laced into the microcosm is the macrocosm, or laced into the small, particular self of you, is the desire of the Universe - the cosmos. Our small interactions here, are part of the
forming of the Big Picture. The little things make a difference, your daily acts make a huge difference, even the way you breathe – as Barbara Ardinger says, "Your life may just create the ripple that grows into the wave that may turn the tide in the course of the history of life on Earth" (1995:x). This is not just fantasy. Houston says that we each influence at least two million people in our lifetime; teachers influence up to twenty-five million or more (workshop in Sydney 1990).

I talked further:

“So there is immense power locked up within us - like the power released in a nuclear explosion ... and we tap it occasionally - in creative ways. Our intention here is to dredge more of it up into the light of day and creative possibility.

We are all potentially heras ... leaders, authors, of our own lives at least. Taking this on for ourselves can only be empowering for the rest of the world. Women particularly have been afraid of power, because in the old definitions it meant giving up relatedness. But in new understandings of the nature of life, of living systems, Joanna Macy says, power requires relatedness, 'openness, vulnerability and readiness to change. This indeed is the direction of evolution' (1995:256). In the Goddess tradition as Starhawk has taught it, a commitment to any 'self' is simultaneously a commitment to the other levels/aspects (1989:96) – they are nested realities (biological, cultural, cosmological ...). Therapists are now writing about this (Hillman 1995). Power may be understood as 'the ability to be open to and to contribute, from one's unique sense of self, to the well-being of the whole system' (Sarah Conn 1995:165). This is leadership, and the kind of power that will enable our future. So tonight we are going to enter into a practice of power and compassion - beginning with ourselves” (class notes).

I gave them an overview of the ritual/exercise process, which was that we would warm up to the event with some belly dance, for which they were invited to don special clothing they had each brought. As the dancing finished I would begin to drum and chant¹⁰, and they would join the chant continuing it until the energy peaked. Each woman would then incarnate an archetypal friend or “Goddess-Self”, and the Court would begin.

We began with the warm-up of belly dancing – envisioned and comprehended as an in-corporating of Goddess, of body Wisdom, since what we were moving into was a “speaking for ourselves from the

⁹ And in that context Houston also quotes Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces Princeton: Bollingen, 1972:19-20) to support this process objective.

¹⁰ The chant was part of Jean Houston’s script for the exercise (1993:66). We chanted it as follows, with my substitution of "Goddess" where Jean had "God":
Near is, but difficult to grasp, the Goddess.
But where there is danger, the saving powers also rise.
Goddess/Priestess place in ourselves” (class notes). I encouraged the participants verbally, as their dance proceeded, to “dance the Goddess, and allow Her to dance you” (ibid). They could interact in their dance if they wished, and take turns in the centre.

We then entered into the exercise. The Court concluded as Jean Houston suggests, with a chant\textsuperscript{11}, and then by thanking each other and dancing in celebration. Each woman then took time on her own to write in her journal. This was a challenging process both for the participants and for me as the facilitator, requiring a lot of focussed attention and care\textsuperscript{12}. It went very well, and we as a group, learnt a lot about the honouring of the integrity and story – the Sacred - within each of us.

\textsuperscript{11} The chant was part of the script given by Jean Houston (ibid:69), as follows:
\textit{Near is, and available to hold, this Human.}
\textit{For where there is openness,}
\textit{We saving powers are here and known.}
\textsuperscript{12} In future series of “En-Trancing Goddess”, I employed the presence of a skilled psychotherapist, as an “anchor” and back-up, to support my facilitation of a safe space for this intense process, and also for the “Underworld” exercise.
Earth is 4.5 Billion Years old
The Biosphere - 4 Bya (the first cell)
Humans - 2.6 Mya - Tools - Lower Paleolithic

REFERENCES:
Merlin Stone 1978:104-105
Heidi Güttler-Abendroth 1998
Barbara Walker 1983
Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry 1992:270-275
Anne Baring and Jules Cashford 1993:145
Judy Chicago 1996:31

I acknowledge MARIE TULIP whose 1980 CE TIMELINE was the basis for this one.
APPENDIX E:

BREATH MEDITATION SCRIPT
Lie down on the floor, palms up, eyes closed. Feel for any tension in your body ... deal with it in some way ... stretch, yawn, wriggle whatever. Loosen any tight clothing. Take a few deep cleansing breaths, relax your jaw. Just let your body go, let go controls of your breathing.
- Allow your body to breathe for itself, using your mind for awareness. Let your mind simply watch as your body reaches for its breath in its own time ... simply observe. There is nowhere else you need to go, nothing more you need to do. You are at Home now with yourself.
- Notice how you feel as you inhale ... notice your feeling as your inhalation peaks ... and where do you feel it?
- Notice how you feel when you exhale ... if you are "watching", shift consciousness to feeling it.
- Notice now the space between one exhalation and the next inhalation. Don't control this distance, this space ... just watch it, feel it ... this Void. Notice as the urge to breath arises ... feel this urge to reach for a breath.

Imagine yourself as a beach, your breath the ocean ebbing and flowing, watch it come in, fill you, peak ... feeling it ... feeling it all . Watching as it runs back out of you ... then the space ... the void ... feeling it. Then in its own time, feeling the urge to swell again.

This urge to breath that you feel, is not a metaphor for the Urge of Creation, this is it. Creation was not a one-off event, it is happening constantly ... and the Urge in you, that you can feel is Creation happening in you. It is the Beginning – the Virgin - happening in you. This is the same Urge that moves the stars and grows the seed ... feel it in you.

The Peaking, the Fullness that you feel is the dynamic interchange of Life happening in you ... oxygen crossing over, carbon dioxide rushing the other way, in every cell in your body-mind. This is what sustains you ... this is the Sustainer – the Mother - happening in you.
The exhalation, the letting go ... feel it as it arises. This is the need to end things, to empty, to let go of the old, to destruct. This is the dark part of the cycle happening in you – the Old One - the descent. Your life depends on it. Allowing it to happen ... just being conscious of it.

The space between your breaths, the Void ... is not a metaphor for the Void, it is the Void, present in you. This is the Nurturant Abyss out of which all arises ... in you. Feel it.

... just watching your breath happen, feeling it ... this is Goddess happening in you. And She happens in you all the time in many different ways.

Continue to be very aware of your breathing, as you begin very slowly to come to sitting. Notice the muscles you use, and be aware of your weight, as you come slowly to sitting ... keeping your eyes closed ... staying within.

... sitting now as effortlessly as possible, continue to let go of controls on your breathing, aware of the life of your body-mind. I’d like for you to allow your eyelids to slowly open and as they open allow whatever light comes in to your eye to be nothing more than light stimulation to the cells at the back of your eye. It has no category or name ... it’s just light creating different experiences ... that have no name, no categories ... just different textures and experiences. If you find that having your eyes open gets you out of touch with your body awareness/breathing, allow your eyelids to slowly close again. When back in touch with your breathing and body-mind sensation, allow your eyelids to open again. Once again just allowing the light that comes in to your eye to be nothing more than light stimulation to the cells at the back of your eye. It has no category or name ... it’s just different experiences, and textures. At light speed time stops. To the photons, the particles of light, time has no meaning. They are zero-mass and zero-time. Past, present and future are one. If you would see timelessness, here and now, simply experience light as you are doing now.

Close your eyes again.
"There was a time when you were not a slave ... remember that. You walked alone, full of laughter, you bathed bare-bellied. You say you have lost all recollection of it, remember ... You say there are no words to describe this time, you say it does not exist. But remember. Make an effort to remember."¹

SWITCH ON MUSIC²

What is it that we must try to remember? ... It is a "memory we cannot escape, yet long for still."³

She is the Old One - "The Crone to whom all things return"⁴. The memory is deep in our collective unconscious, ... passed down through our ancestors ... of an ancient past, prehistoric, when the life that the Mother gave was held sacred. Her holy Cup and the power to give life was revered. The memory, is of wisdom.

She is "the Mother who unravels from herself the net sustaining you"⁵. The memory is present; deep in your flesh, within the space inside of you, is held the memory of the elements from which you are formed. We know Her in the fullness of the everyday miracle of existence. The memory is the ability to connect with your own lived experience, your Being.

She is "the Virgin born only now, new, capable of all invention"⁶. The memory is future - present in your early childhood, the Possibility of the open mind, pre-domesticated, pre-informed, the wild. The memory is of an Urge, a will to live, to begin, to be, to reach within in trust and hope.

Open your eyes .. come to the circle and greet the Ancient One in each other.

Take a few moments on your own ... writing, drawing or reflecting.

¹ Wittig (1973:89).
² I use "Ancient Pines" by Loreena McKennitt, Parallel Dreams QRCD 103.
³ Morgan (1976:87).
⁴ ibid:88.
⁵ ibid
⁶ ibid
Samhain 1999
This is the time of the New Year,
the veil is thin that divides the worlds.

You are invited to celebrate
HALLOWEEN

On this night, between the old and the new,
all is possible.
We set sail over the sunless sea, between the worlds,
which is the Womb of the Mother.
We leave behind the old,
the dead are remembered, the Not-Yet is conceived.
Join us, from the cracks and the gaps, your dreams
and wild places.

Friday 7th May, 7pm

WHO TO CALL: Glenys (02) 4751 6100
WHAT TO WEAR: Costume
WHAT TO BRING: Photos/symbols of the old being left behind. Photos of ancestors. Dinner to share.

Samhain 2000
Earth’s tilt leans us further into the Dark -
this is the time of the New Year.

You are invited to celebrate
HALLOWEEN

On this night, between the old and the new,
all is possible.
The veil is thin that divides the worlds.
The dead are remembered, the Not-Yet is conceived.
We remember that we are More, much More.
We meet in time, out of time -
to transverse the old into the new,
in the Womb of the Dark Shining One within.

Saturday 29th April, 7pm

WHO TO CALL: Glenys (02) 4751 6100
WHAT TO WEAR: Costume, if you like.
WHAT TO BRING: Photos/symbols of the old being left behind. Photos of ancestors. Dinner to share.

Samhain 2001
Earth’s tilt leans us further into the Dark -
this is the time of the New Year.

You are invited to celebrate
SAMHAIN

On this night, between the old and the new,
all is possible.
The veil is thin that divides the worlds.
The dead are remembered, the Not-Yet is conceived.
We remember that we are More, much More.
We meet in time, out of time -
to transverse the old into the new,
in the Womb of the Dark Shining One within.

Sunday 29th April, 7pm

WHO TO CALL: Glenys (02) 4751 6100
WHAT TO WEAR: Costume, if you like.
WHAT TO BRING: Photos/symbols of the old being left behind. Photos of ancestors. Dinner to share.
Winter Solstice

on the eve of Winter Magic Festival ... as Earth leans us away from the Sun to the furthest point

You are invited to celebrate

WINTER SOLSTICE

Darkness reaches her fullness, and turns - into the Light.

The story of old tells us that on this night,
the Great Mother gives birth to the Divine Child
the Light in You, in Me ... all manifestation itself.

This is the season for the lighting of candles.

We celebrate the stillness behind motion,
and the miracle of existence -
the phonaeval fireball, our grandmother supernova,
Mother Sun.

Join us on this Holy Night

Friday 22nd June, 7pm - by booking only

BOOKINGS: (02) 4751 6100 - numbers limited.
WHAT TO WEAR: your ceremonial & bring a cushion.

Summer Solstice

This is the time of the longest day of the year ...

You are invited to celebrate

SUMMER SOLSTICE

This is the time of the rose, blossom and thorn.

Now, Light reaches her fullness, she ripens
and yet ...

She turns, and the seed of darkness is born.

This is the mystery.

Self dissolves in the bliss of expansion, of creativity.

The Sun ripens in us, we are the grain, the rose -
We give our fullness to life.

Saturday 23rd December, 4pm
TO BOOK: Phone Glenys (02) 4751 6100
BRING: a full rose or two. Dinner to share.
ATTIRE: as Queen/King of Summer (optional). A pocket, or a small pouch over your shoulder.
Lammas 1999
This is the season of the Crone, the Reaper...
You are invited to celebrate

LAMMAS

This is the feast of the waxing dark.
The seed of darkness born at the Summer Solstice
now grows...
We meet to remember the Void,
to accept the embrace of the Wise Dark One...
who dissolves all, who grinds the grain -
which we are.

Friday 5th February 7pm
WHERE: Phone Glenys for Venue: (02) 4751 6100
BRING: a bread figure (made by you if possible),
and dinner to share.
ATTIRE: black and a dark veil, to honour the Crone.

Lammas 2000
This is the season of the Crone, the Reaper...
You are invited to celebrate

LAMMAS

This is the feast of the waxing dark.
The seed of darkness born at the Summer Solstice
now grows...
This is the time of dissolution, and celebration of the
Great Sentence, Larger Self, to whom we return.
We meet to accept the embrace of the Wise One,
to be anointed,
by She who is deeply committed to transfiguration.

Sunday 30th January, 7pm
TO BOOK: Phone Glenys (02) 4751 6100
BRING: a bread figure (made by you if possible),
a dark veil/dried garland, and dinner to share.
ATTIRE: black preferably, to honour the Crone.

Imbolc
This is the season of the Virgin, the Self...
You are invited to celebrate

IMBOLC

This is the feast of the waxing light - of Brigid,
She who tendeth the Flame.
What was born at the Solstice begins to manifest.
This is the time of individuation, and
celebration of the uniqueness and beauty of Self.
We meet to share the light of inspiration,
to be anointed,
by the One deeply committed to Life.

Sunday 1st August, 6pm.
TO BOOK: Phone Glenys (02) 4751 6100
BRING: a crown and/or a veil - of white/light colours.
Your Creative Intentions. Dinner to share.
ATTIRE: white preferably, to honour the Virgin.
Eostar

This is the time of the Spring Equinox,
Earth is poised in balance of light and dark

You are invited to celebrate

EOSTAR

Life bursts forth – the sound of joy is heard.
The Beloved Persephone returns from the Depths ...
as "Hekate" - courageous One, victorious, torch in hand.
Demeter stretches out her arms to receive & rejoice.
We leave behind the binds of the past.
We step forward, with new Wisdom, into the light.
Now is the time to soar, to act, to grow the New!
She is alive in us, and we in Her!

Sunday, 17th September, 6pm.

TO BOOK: Phone Glenys (02) 4751 6100
BRING: a large bouquet, a Spring mask, a special stone/rock. Dinner to share.

Mabon

This is the time of the Autumnal Equinox,
Earth is poised in balance of dark and light

You are invited to celebrate

MABON

This is the season of Thanksgiving for our "harvest",
the abundance we have reaped,
that we enjoy daily.
Yet we remember too the sorrows, the leavetaking,
the cost of Wisdom.
The loved One descends, is lost ... Demeter grieves.
We join Her, and wait the unfolding
of the Mystery.

Saturday 18th March, 6pm

TO BOOK: Phone Glenys (02) 4751 6100
BRING: Harvest fruit or wine or cake. Pot & soil. A shawl. Stories/memories of loss. Dinner to share.
Beltane

Earth tilts us further towards the Sun -
the Source of Her pleasure, life and ecstasy

You are invited to celebrate

BELTANE

This is the time when sweet desire
weds wild delight.
The Promise of Spring exalts in Passion
- Holy Lust, Allurement, Aphrodite ...
  Who holds all things in form,
  Who unites the cosmos,
  Who brings forth all things,
  Who is the Dance of Life.

Saturday 4th November, 6pm.

TO BOOK: Phone Glenys (02) 4751 6100
BRING: a garland for your hair. Dinner to share.
APPENDIX G:

THE EPIC OF EVOLUTION SCRIPT

REFERENCE: Ruth Rosenhek’s version (personal communication 1999) based on one by Miriam MacGillis, who based hers on the work of Lyn Margulis and Elisabet Sahtouris.

1) From the great mystery, all of us came to be. From the void, from the dark, came the light and the spark. Some 15 billion years ago, a great ball of fire expanded outwards into the creation of the Universe, space and time, shadows and light. The Universe expands. After a million years, things cool sufficiently for hydrogen and helium to bring with them new forms of matter.

2) A billion years later. Galaxies come forth. Stars are born, live, and die. Larger stars in their death throes explode and become supernovas, as they blast out into the cosmos. Supernovas are the mothers of the Universe, creating in their wombs the elements of life. Birth, death, and rebirth are ancient themes of the Universe.

3) 10 billion years later, 4.6 billion years ago - our Grandmother Star gives up her life in an explosion of possibilities. She becomes a supernova giving rise to our Star, what we call the Sun. The Grandmother Star was huge in comparison to her child, nearly 5 million times the diameter of the Sun.

4) 4.5 billion years ago - The planets of our Solar system are born from the remains of the supernova explosion, circling around our Sun. Earth itself appears to have formed largely from a swarm of cold, solid bodies, which ranged in size from grains of dust to larger than the planet Mars.

   Great Bombardment! Comets and meteorites pelt the Earth. The moon is born when Earth is impacted by a Mars-sized body which also causes the Earth to tilt to the side giving rise to the seasons of the year.

5) 4.4 - 4.1 billion years ago - As Earth cools, lightning storms rage for millions of years. Torrential rains fall on, and on, and on. Great seas form. Exuberant volcanoes expel hotly agitated deep earth to the surface. Over
hundreds of millions of years, Earth has grown from dust particles to a large, hot, molten rock.

(6) 4 billion years ago -- Bacteria emerge from the boiling waters. The first living cells ... the Mother cell - all our cells hold the memory of her.

(7) 3.9 billion years ago - Small creatures, who had run out of food in the primordial soup, learn to capture the sun and store the energy chemically in what we call photosynthesis. A pollution crisis ensues as oxygen is left free floating in the environment, a waste product for these early life forms.

Oxygen, a scavenger, searches everywhere for food and threatens all life. It invades rocks and living cells, causing the primordial cells to disintegrate from the excess heat. The majority of species are unable to adapt to the new conditions and the first great extinction spasm takes place, a mass of lifeless chemicals cover the Earth.

(8) 2 billion years ago, oxygen loving cells emerge. The first global environmental crisis is averted by the creativity of these tiny cellular creatures who invent a use for oxygen as they breathe it in and use its energy. Oxygen levels continue to rise until it reaches near present-day levels.

Individual organisms learn to cooperate and specialize within giant cell cooperatives. Perhaps this begins as one cell forces its way into another refusing to leave but eventually, some evolve into symbiotic relationships with some making food and others moving the organism here and there. The individual parts become less independent but more secure as inseparable parts of the new wholes. Cooperatives!

(9) 1.5 billion years ago, crisis conditions such as food shortages, lack of moisture or extreme temperatures drive hungry ancestral organisms to resort to cannibalism. Sometimes, these tiny cellular beings cannot digest what they have devoured and a type of sexual union arises. Death simultaneously emerges as many perish through this enterprise. With the evolution of sex, the genetic possibilities for life increase enormously with the power of preserving the achievements of a particular lineage. Sex!
(10) 700 million years ago - Some organisms begin living together in colonies, finding ways to communicate with each other using chemical messages. New ways of cooperating emerge, especially in divisions of labor among different cells: some cells specialize in making food, others break food down and digest it, and still others specialize in sexual reproduction. Through the rise of multi-cellular organisms, life on Earth discovers Community!

(11) 600 million years ago light sensitive eyespots evolve into eyesight. The Earth sees herself for the first time.

The first soft-bodied animals evolve in the oceans. Over the next 70 million years, previously naked animals protect themselves with shells. Jaws, beaks, and skeletons follow suit.

(12) 460 million years ago organisms seek the adventures of land. Leaving the water animals, such as worms and molluscs and crustaceans seek the adventure of weather and gravity. Algae and fungi venture ashore as well. The first plants evolve as mosses. Insects evolve with nearly weightless bodies which permit them to take to the air as the first flying animals. Algae, fungi, insects!

(13) 395 million years - The first amphibian animals hop and lumber onto land, trading in their gill slits for air-breathing lungs, transforming fins into stubby legs and continuing to return to the water to lay their eggs. Frogs and toads!

(14) 335 Million years ago, the first subtropical forests evolve. Over generations, these forests load themselves with carbon extracted from the atmosphere which later becomes fossilized as coal and oil. As the forests spread, amphibians transform into pre-reptilian creatures with the grand innovation of self contained eggs that allows them to move inland. The Great Age of Reptiles begins.

(15) 235 Million years ago - Following the 4th and greatest mass extinction, the end of the Permian period is followed by the emergence of dinosaurs. For
170 million years these creatures flourish. Dinosaurs, sometimes as large as 40 meters, are social animals that often travel and hunt in groups. Dinosaurs develop a behavioral novelty unknown previously in the reptilian world - parental care. Dinosaurs carefully bury their eggs and stay with the young after they hatch, nurturing them toward independence. Reptiles evolve a grand variety of sizes, shapes, and habitats, including water, deserts, and forests.

(16) 225 million years ago, the first mammals, small and nocturnal, jump, climb, swing, and swim through a world of giants. Some rodent-sized insect-eaters evolve lactation, enabling mothers to spend more time in the nest keeping their young both fed and warm.

(17) 150 million years ago. Birds emerge, a direct descendant of the dinosaur as leg bones evolve into wing bones, jawbones into beaks and scales into feathers. Far larger than today's birds, wing spans are as large as 12 metres. Birds!

(18) 114 million years ago Flowers evolve gorgeous and overt sexual organs, and make themselves irresistible to insects by way of colors, perfumes, and delightful nectars. Insects, drawn to the nectar, unknowingly transport pollen from one flower to the next, fertilizing the plants on which they feed. Flowers!

(19) 65 million years ago - Shortly after primates appear on the scene, the Cretaceous period ends with the 6th mass extinction after an asteroid 6 miles in diameter hits the Yucatan peninsula leading, in time, to a severe drop in temperature. This marks the end of the age of dinosaurs and the beginning of the age of mammals, the Cenezoic era. With the dinosaurs gone, the once dark and sheltered small mammals stride into daylight moving quickly to occupy available ecological niches.

Over the course of the next 60 million years Earth greets rodents, whales, monkeys, horses, cats and dogs, antelopes, gibbons, grazing animals, orangutans, gorillas, elephants, chimpanzees, camels, bears, pigs, baboons and the first humans. The Age of Mammals!
4 million years ago Humanoids leave the Forest, stand up, and walk on two legs. The savannah offers the challenges and opportunities for these early creatures to evolve into humans.

100 thousand years ago Modern Humans emerge. Language, Shamanic and Goddess Religions, and Art become integral with human life.

11,000 years ago Agriculture begins. Humans begin to shape the environment.

3,000 years ago Classical Religions emerge. Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam

250 years ago Scientists calculate the Age of the Earth. Humans try to understand how old the Earth is through empirical observations.

68 years ago Empirical Evidence of an Expanding Universe.
For the first time humans are aware that they live in a developing universe.

31 years ago Scientists find Evidence of the Origin of the Universe.

28 years ago Earth is seen as Whole (from space). The Earth becomes complex enough to understand her own integral beauty.

Today the Story of the Universe may be told as our sacred story – the story of our Origins. The flaring forth continues as this moment, as all beings, as one.
APPENDIX H:
Joy to the World (Gaian version)

Joy to the World
The light returns
Let All receive Her Love

CHORUS:
Let every Heart
Let every tongue
Repeat the sounding Joy
Repeat the sounding Joy
Let Creatures, and all of Nature sing

She moves the stars
With all Her might
Let All receive Her Power

She grows the seed
With all Her Love
Let All receive Her Wisdom

She lights our Hearts
She grows our food
Let All receive Her Joy

Joy to the World
The light returns
Let All receive Her Love

Winter Solstice, Southern Hemisphere, 1997 C.E.
Glenys Livingstone
APPENDIX I:

SHINE
by Wendy Rule

You were bound, You were lost, You were captured ...
With Your infinite soul counting hours,
In a web were each thread held a future,
And the future holds infinite powers.
You are braver than mythical heros.
You have rescued the Child of the Dreamland.
You have conquered the beast of the Shadow.
Well ... the Universe is Centred on where You stand.

Feel the world at Your feet,
Freedom calls You from time ...
And all because You shine.
You ... You ... You
Are drinking a Nectar Divine.

You have broken the rings that hold Saturn.
You are shedding the clothes of Your sorrow.
And the Summer is singing its Passion.
And the Universe calls You to follow.

Feel the world at Your feet,
Freedom calls You from time ...
And all because You shine.
You ... You ... You
Are drinking a Nectar Divine.

APPENDIX J:
OTHER GRAPHICS OF THE WHEEL GIVEN AT THE
"EN-TRANCING GODDESS" CLASS SERIES

THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

The Wheel of the Year celebrates the larger cycles of life’s rites of passage as well as the seasonal cycles. In the southern hemisphere the wheel moves counterclockwise.

CONCEPTION & BIRTH  S  DEATH

peak of the dark – and birth of the light
opening to the mystery of the dark – initiation

YOUTH

WINTER SOLSTICE

MARCH 20–23

REVIEWING AND LETTING GO

TURNING WITHIN

YULE

JUNE 20–23

ACCEPTING & GIVING UP

SAMHAIN

AUGUST 2

RECEIVING AND TRANSFORMING

AUTUMN EQUINOX

SEPTEMBER 20–23

SPRING EQUINOX

QUICKENING AT THE INCREASING LIGHT

MABON

OCTOBER 31

MATING

SUMMER SOLSTICE

DECEMBER 20–23

MARRIAGE & CHILDREN

BELTANE

JULIA

delight in light and love
peak of the light – and birth of the dark

MATURE & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- at Spring Equinox the amount of light in a day starts to outweigh the dark -
- at Autumn Equinox the balance tips and darkness gradually increases -

REFERENCE: Rowan Hagen, unpublished. Personal permission given.
APPENDIX K:

THOMAS BERRY'S PRINCIPLES OF A FUNCTIONAL COSMOLOGY

1. The universe, the solar system, and the planet Earth in themselves and in
   their evolutionary emergence constitute for the human community the
   primary revelation of that ultimate mystery whence all things emerge into
   being.

2. The universe is a unity, an interacting and genetically related community
   of beings bound together in an inseparable relationship in space and time.
   The unity of the planet Earth is especially clear; each being of the planet is
   profoundly implicated in the existence and functioning of every other being
   of the planet.

3. From its beginning the universe is a psychic as well as a physical reality.

4. The three basic laws of the universe at all levels of reality are
   differentiation, subjectivity, and communion. These laws identify the reality
   of the universe, the values of the universe, and the directions in which the
   universe is proceeding.

5. The universe has a violent as well as a harmonious aspect, but it is
   consistently creative in the larger arc of its development.

6. The Earth, within the solar system, is a self-emergent, self-propagating,
   self-nourishing, self-educating, self-governing, self-healing, self-fulfilling
   community. All particular life forms must integrate their functioning with
   this larger complex of mutually dependent Earth systems.

7. Genetic coding process is the process through which the world of the
   living articulates itself and its being and its activities. The great wonder is the
   creative interaction of the multiple codings among themselves.
8. The human is that being in whom the universe activates, reflects upon, and celebrates itself in conscious self-awareness.

9. At the human level genetic coding mandates a further trans-genetic coding by which specific human qualities find expression. Cultural coding is carried on by educational processes.

10. The emergent process of the universe is irreversible and non-repeatable in the existing world order. The movement from non-life to life on the planet Earth is a one-time event. So, too, the movement from life to the human form of consciousness. So also the transition from the earlier to the later forms of human culture.

11. The historical sequence of cultural periods can be identified as the tribal-shamanic period, the neolithic-village period, the classical civilizational period, and the emerging Ecozoic era.

12. The main task of the immediate future is to assist in activating the inter-communion of all the living and non-living components of the Earth community in what can be considered the emerging Ecozoic era of Earth development.
THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

LITHA
Peaking of Life
Bliss of Union
Pouring Forth
MOTHER

LAMMAS
Waxing Dark
Dissolution
Sentience
CRONE

BELTANE
Dance of Life
Allurement
Fertility
VIRGIN

MABON
Harvest & Loss
Grief & Wisdom
DEMETER & PERSEPHONE

EOSTAR
Heralic Return
Joy & Wisdom
DEMETER & PERSEPHONE

SAMHAIN
Transformation
of Death, Renewal
Possibility
CRONE

IMBOLC
Waxing Light
Individuation
Differentiation
VIRGIN

YULE
Manifestation
Birth of Light/Being
MOTHER
REFERENCE: Iglehart Austen 1990:73