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# Wise Woman Mandala

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**WISE WOMAN MANDALA**

By

Mary Angela Formolo

**THESIS**

Submitted to  
Northern Michigan University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
For the degree of  
**MASTER IN INDEPENDENT STUDIES**  
Graduate Studies Office  
2011

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## **Abstract**

### ***Wise Woman Mandala***

***By***

***Mary Angela Formolo***

*Wise Woman Mandala* is a multimedia thesis which brings together poetry and illustration. In much the same way as William Blake's poetry first appears on engraved, colored plates, the poetry of *Wise Woman Mandala* is made textually richer by attending illustrations. The script for *Wise Woman Mandala* is a performance based illustrated text with ties to Buddhist meditation. Following the script is a narrative of experiences, teachers and other works directly influencing the development of this project, including an annotated bibliography of influential published works.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

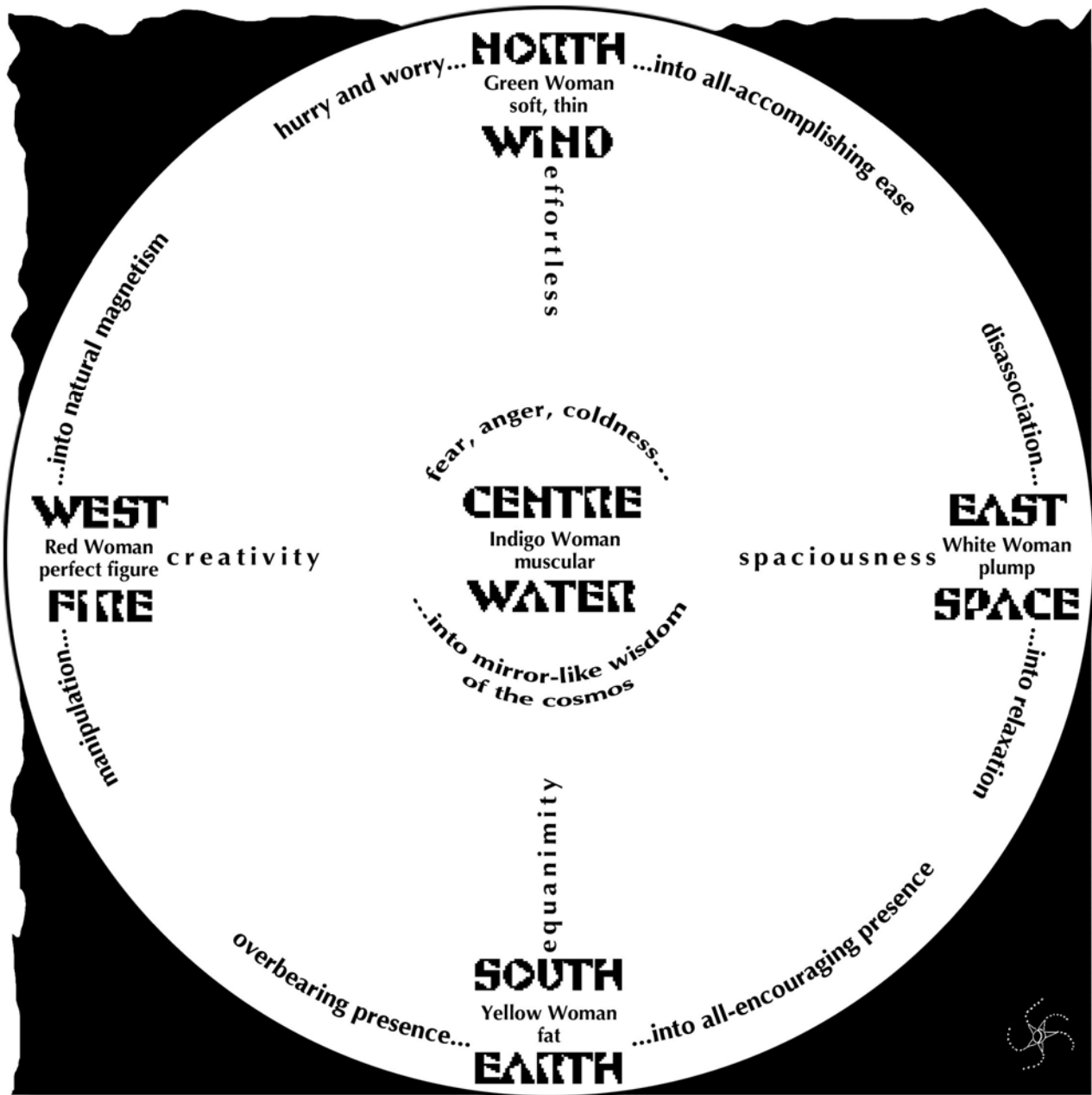
The author wishes to thank her thesis advisor Diane Sautter Cole for her patience, advice and support; Austin Hummell for a balance of inspiration and instruction; Ray Ventre for finding the correct niche for this work within the structure of the university; the Health Physical Education and Recreation Department under the direction of Harvey Wallace for continual support throughout; Diane Raven, addictions councilor at the Lake Superior Recovery Center; Kathy Jeske Casteel of *kj graphics* who worked many hours with me to integrate the writing and the art work of the poetic script; my friends and fellow artists who have played with me on this project and my dance and tai chi students who continually surprise and inspire me. Without all of these people and the scholarship programs available at Northern Michigan University this project could not have been completed.

This thesis follows the format prescribed by the MLA Style Manual and the Department of English. The art work was formatted to fit the requirements as closely as possible with a minimum of distortion.

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# INTRODUCTION TO WISE WOMAN MANDALA



This is the shape of the traditional Tibetan Buddhist *Mandala of the Five Dakinis*. This traditional mandala is also the template for the characteristics of the five female figures in *Wise Woman Mandala*, the illustrated script that is the subject of this thesis.



The origin of the performance art script, *Wise Woman Mandala*, was the Tibetan Buddhist *Mandala of the Five Dakinis* as shown on the previous page. This Tibetan Buddhist mandala is a feminine form of archetypal energies of space, earth, fire, wind and water. The *Wise Woman Mandala* is a performance art work also based on four directions and a center. Each female figure embodies the attributes and transformations that are relevant to our contemporary lives and the performance follows the pattern of the Tibetan Buddhist mandala. Each direction is presided over by a female figure of specific shape, color and attributes. Each female figure transforms a human flaw that becomes the catalyst for her specific gift. Each woman's gift is the flipside of this perceived flaw or failure. It is accurate to translate the Tibetan word for the female archetype, *Dakini*, to the word Angel, which I often refer to as an Elemental Angel.

The idea of angels is rooted in popular culture. Angels have many images and duties. They appear in classical myth and in philosophy and shamanistic visions. They also appear in Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam and Christianity. They emerge in Judaism, though they are never visually depicted (Jewish law forbids such representations). Angels can be male or female or androgynous. I have found that the word Angel works better in the script than the Buddhist word Dakini

### **Cast of Characters for Wise Woman's Mandala**

**EAST**...A plump white woman is in the EAST. She is the Angel of Space who transforms laziness and disassociation into the ***Wisdom of Relaxation***.

**SOUTH**...The woman of the SOUTH is very fat and yellow, loud, bossy and changes her jewels and garments often. She wears lots of makeup. She is the Angel of the Earth who transforms an overbearing personality into an ***All Encouraging Presence and Equanimity***.

**WEST...** The woman of the WEST is naked. She has a perfect 16 year old figure. She wears only flowers. She is a red creative dancer with a third eye in-between her two eyes. Her third eye is always looking up. She is the Angel of Fire who transforms sexual seduction and manipulation into **Natural Magnetism and Creative energy.**

**NORTH...** The woman from the NORTH is thin, soft and green. You only see a blurred profile as she passes by. She is the Angel of the Wind who transforms hurry and worry and workaholic behavior into the wisdom of **All Accomplishing Ease.**

**CENTRE...** In the Centre is an indigo muscular woman, the Angel of Water, who transforms coldness and anger into the **Mirror Like Wisdom of the Cosmos.**

**BIRD...** The Bird is woman or man who is the messenger between the everyday world and the world of archetypes and inner transformation that is the source for outer change.

There could be more than one dancer/actor/singer for each character. *Woman* is the word for the receptive energies of the Elementals. *Angel* is a vehicle to explore many cultural contexts.

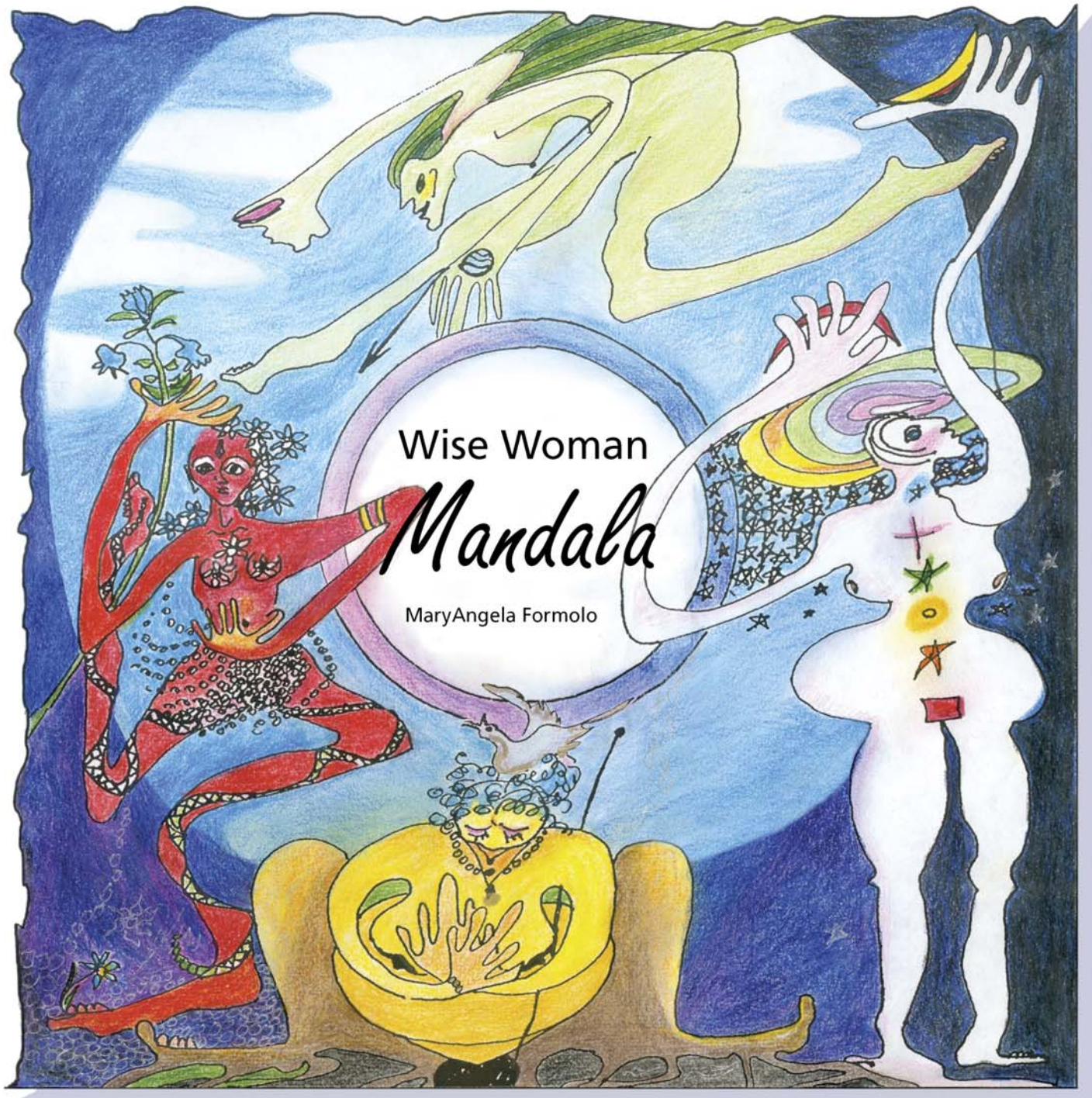
All the Elemental Angels dance with their left foot firmly planted on the earth and their right foot in the heavens. They all hold the staff of their consort in the crook of their left elbow. In their left hand is a skull cup of living blood. Their right hand holds a curved knife, soft on one side and sharp on the other side, to cut through obstacles. This posture is background for the characters and should not confine exploration.

The *Wise Woman Mandala* can be an elemental practice for self realization or it can be a performance event. Spirit and Nature dance together in this mandala.

In keeping with spontaneous practice and art performances of *Wise Woman Mandala*, I invite readers to find ways to add their own preferred songs and poetry and to invent dance patterns inspired by this script. Before I decided to offer the mandala as a public event, I spent a number of years with it as a creative arts personal meditation practice.

The following book, *Wise Woman Mandala*, is a script for imaginative play within the circular structure of a mandala. I worked with Kathy Jeske (*KJ Graphics*) to design each page of my script around the drawings.

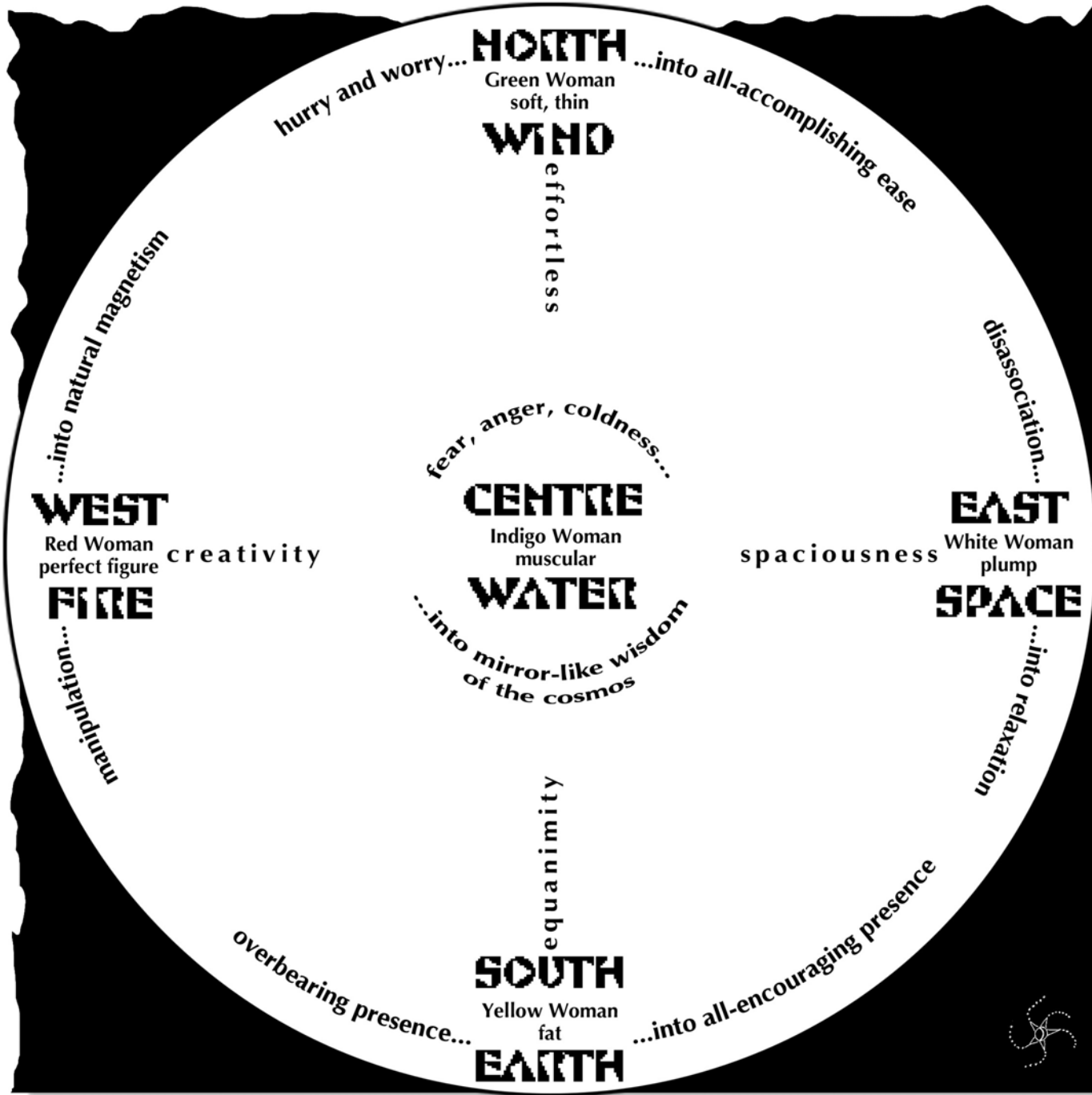
**The verbal text appears in twelve point font after the illustrated book for easier reading on page 32.**



Wise Woman

# Mandala

MaryAngela Formolo



hurry and worry... **NORTH** ...into all-accomplishing ease  
Green Woman  
soft, thin  
**WIND**  
effortless

...into natural magnetism

disassociation...

**WEST**  
Red Woman  
perfect figure  
creativity

fear, anger, coldness...

**CENTRE**  
Indigo Woman  
muscular

spaciousness **EAST**  
White Woman  
plump

**FIRE**  
manipulation...

...into mirror-like wisdom  
of the cosmos

**WATER**

**SPACE**  
...into relaxation

equanimity

overbearing presence...

**SOUTH**  
Yellow Woman  
fat

...into all-encouraging presence

**EARTH**



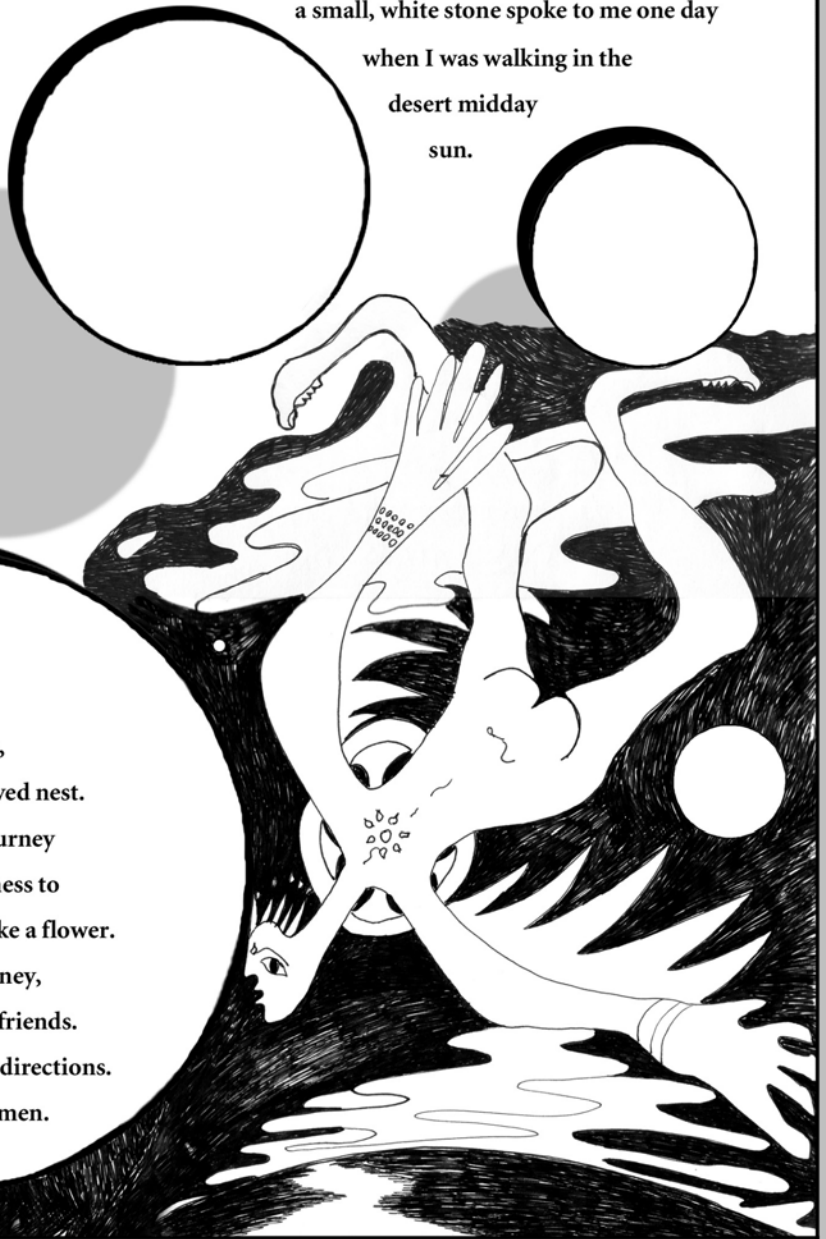
# A JOURNEY

Not so long ago, in a place not so far away...

a small, white stone spoke to me one day  
when I was walking in the  
desert midday  
sun.

This stone was  
engraved with  
reddish-brown  
hieroglyphics.  
This is the story  
told to me, as  
translated from  
the original...

*A* large bird,  
lonely and  
empty inside,  
flies away from a curved nest.  
He is on a long journey  
searching for fullness to  
open inside his chest, like a flower.  
During this journey,  
the bird meets four friends.  
They are from the four directions.  
They are four women.



*Bird says as he leaves the nest:*

## Flip Out

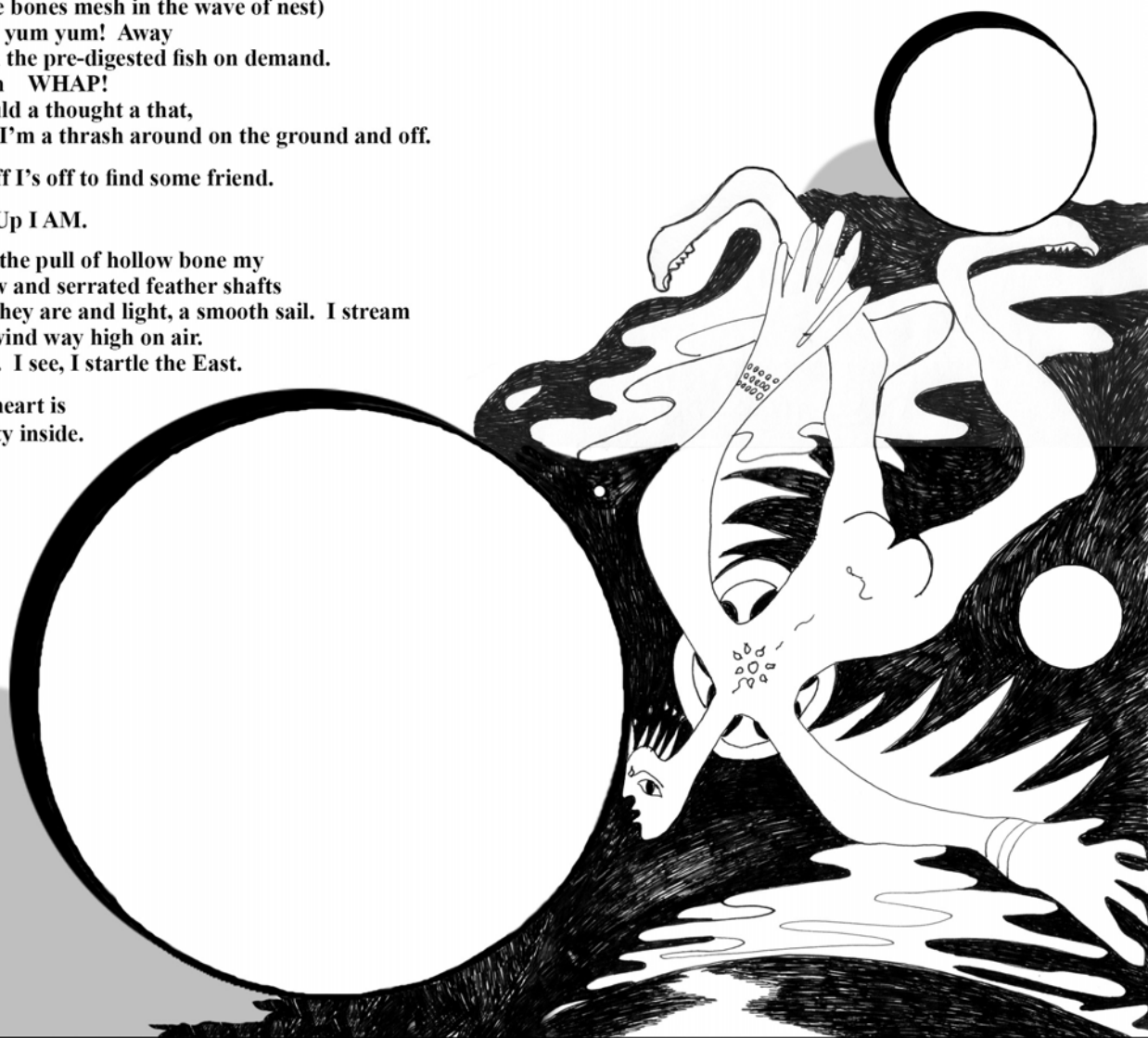
I fly out a my curved twigs  
that clutch the top a Old Pine.  
Away I'm off, off a the lined fluff a rabbit  
(little bones mesh in the wave of nest)  
Yum yum yum! Away  
from the pre-digested fish on demand.  
Achh WHAP!  
Should a thought a that,  
now I'm a thrash around on the ground and off.

I's off I's off to find some friend.

Up, Up I AM.

Feel the pull of hollow bone my  
sinew and serrated feather shafts  
full they are and light, a smooth sail. I stream  
the wind way high on air.  
I see. I see, I startle the East.

My heart is  
empty inside.





The first friend the bird meets  
is from the East.

She is white and plump.  
She is very kind, but  
sometimes she appears  
as vacant as she is kind.

The woman  
from the East  
is the type of person  
who always wants  
to help others.

Sometimes, however,  
when people  
or animals  
or trees

or stones

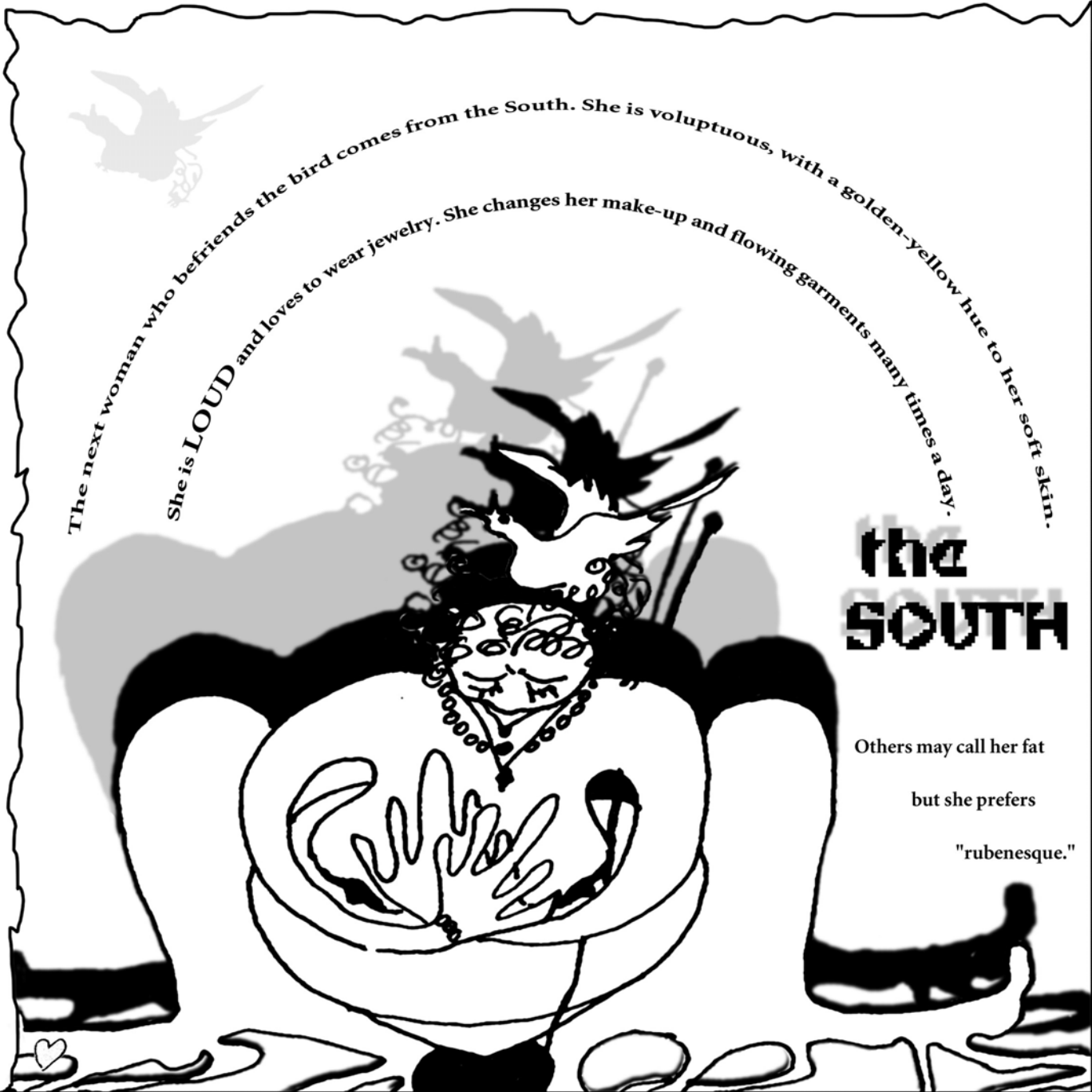
or especially bugs  
ask for help,

she is gone...  
gone, beyond.

Even she does not know where!

the  
EAST





The next woman who befriends the bird comes from the South. She is voluptuous, with a golden-yellow hue to her soft skin.  
She is **LOUD** and loves to wear jewelry. She changes her make-up and flowing garments many times a day.

# the SOUTH

Others may call her fat

but she prefers

"rubenesque."



*From the western setting sun  
a dancing woman comes.*

*She is wearing flowers  
and very little else  
on her perfectly-formed young body!*

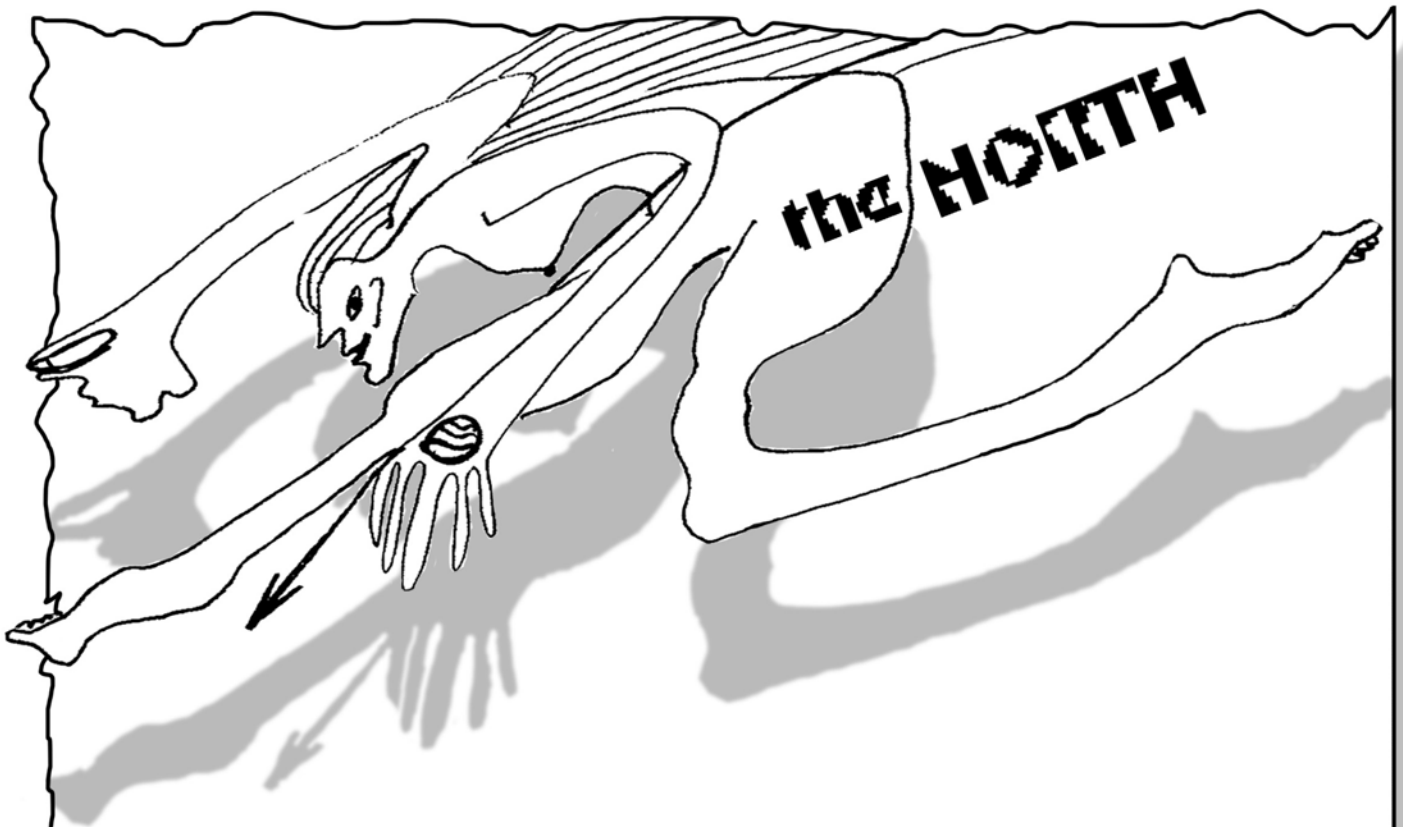
*What is a perfectly-formed young body?*

*Well, whatever it is,  
the woman from the West knows  
that her body is indeed perfect!*

**She is red.**

*She can...and does...and needs to...  
seduce even those without one of the four signs of life.*

**the  
WEST** 



The fourth friend is of the North.

Sometimes others see a luminescent-green glow around the space where she has just been a moment ago.

This friend is very, very, very thin. And she works so hard...

being the child of wonderful parents who instilled a wonderful work ethic into her.

So, to the delight of her family

and the praises of her community,

she becomes.....! a workaholic

the NORTH



the  
L  
E  
A  
P

The once-lonely bird  
and the four women  
become fast friends.

They travel in a small sailing vessel  
with an eye painted on the sail.

One day,  
far from any known shore,  
the five friends leap into the deep water.

for a cool swim.

for a cool swim.



Deep in the ocean, below the surface of wind and sun, they meet the monster of Emptiness.  
This Emptiness is very scary. Afraid, with lungs burning, the five new friends plunge upward.

"grrrrr gruff gruell #\*\*~?!!\*#"

"grrrrr gruff gruell"

# the EMPTINESS

"YEOWLSHREIKSMACK" #\*\*~?!!\*#"

"YEOWLSHREIKSMACK"



Together they break the surface of the water and drag fresh air into their lungs.

But now, this Emptiness is waiting for them on the surface!

It has squinty little eyes and a crooked smile.

This Emptiness congealed can go more than just two ways. It can go an infinity of ways...

oh so mean... or mirthful,

looking cute... or evil!



It sings a little song

"I'M SO MEAN"

in many different languages.

The five friends climb quickly into their one-eyed vessel.  
After much mulling over the pros and cons, they ask this Emptiness to come onto their ship.  
The ugly Emptiness slithers quickly into the centre of the deck.



And behold, a truly amazing miracle happens. This squiggly Emptiness from the deep turns into a perfect circle of shiny water.  
The bird and the four women approach the round, watery mirror.



# the CENTRE

They see below the surface a strong,  
indigo woman dancing and singing.  
She tells them that she is the element of *Water.*  
Mist.

**Her teaching is the transformation  
of fear, anger, and coldness into  
the Mirror-Like Wisdom  
of the Cosmos.**

She invites them all to look into  
her truth, into her mirror,  
to find *their* Centre.

Water





**EAST**

The woman from the East  
goes to stand in her Centre. As she looks into  
the wisdom mirror, she sees a plump, white figure.

Now remember,  
she is the kind of person  
who always wants  
to help others.

But when people  
or animals  
or trees  
or stones  
or especially bugs  
ask for help,  
she is gone...  
gone beyond.  
Even she  
does not know where!

Then, as she moves into her Centre,  
she finds the wisdom that was always there.

**Hers is the  
teaching of Space,  
transforming laziness  
and disassociation  
into the**

**Space**

**Wisdom of Relaxation.**



The next woman  
who befriends the Centre of Truth is  
the one from the South. She is the rubinesque, yellow woman  
who loves to wear lots of make up and jewelry and changes her long  
flowing garments many times a day. Her voice is loud, and she loves to talk.  
She strides up to the mirror and is very confident that she will be  
most ravishingly revealed.

She peers into the mirror and sees



...a most beautiful lizard with iridescent circles of blue and black spots.  
This lizard is close to the Earth, with the whole planet for her belly.  
She wears a delicate, black eye-liner mask. Most people who meet her don't realize that she is the entire planet!  
She tastes delight on the air with her quick tongue and perceives danger in the same way.  
She has exquisite fingers made for jewels.

Suddenly, the lizard, who is the whole Earth in disguise, disappears  
under the golden, yellow woman's right heel.

The woman from the South stays still  
for a long time...until her rubinesque,  
dimpled buttocks  
get sore.



**Earth**

She looks carefully  
under her right heel, but  
the lizard has turned back  
into the whole Earth!

This movement causes  
the woman from the South  
to see herself in her Centre.

**Hers is the teaching of  
Earth, transforming  
overbearing presence  
into the Wisdom  
of Equanimity and  
All-Encouraging  
Presence.**

She becomes still.

Her silence is a golden glow,  
encouraging others  
to find who  
they truly are,  
when even their  
darkness  
shines.

**SOUTH**



**WEST**

The red woman  
from the West  
takes her turn.  
She is much encouraged  
by the others.

The third friend is the one  
who has a perfect figure!  
She is the one  
who can  
and does  
seduce even those  
and needs to  
without one of the  
four signs of life.

She is powerful and creative  
and she always gets her way!  
She knows that her way is the best  
for everyone concerned.

All her friends hold their breath as she peers  
into the Centre.

**RED FLAMES!**  
**...AND FLOWERS!**

She begins to laugh and dance,  
and her friends laugh with her.

**As the fiery woman dances in her Centre, she transforms  
seduction and manipulation into the Wisdom of  
Natural Magnetism and Creativity.**

She is still a perfect dancing figure and most certainly sensual,  
but she is no longer attached to her power.  
Her beauty  
and creative energy are like the flowers  
that grow, bloom, and seed.

**Fire**





the  
BIRD

The large bird, who had started long ago on this journey, is amazed. He stands, streaming with tears in the Centre of the monster of Emptiness, transformed into mirror-like Wisdom, surrounded by the four women of the four directions.

"Patience drops down,  
age by age.  
Water washes my mind  
in rivers of tears."

The bird hops forward and takes his first-and-only human step. His heart opens up like a water lily. Where there had been cold, windy space, he feels his heart emptying and filling, spilling love all around, pulling heaven into earth, and seeing stars in the sand.

It is all a bit confusing.

But, with the help of his four friends from East, South, West and North—and the Centre, Mirror-Like Wisdom of the Cosmos, he makes this prayer:

"May my emotions continually flow  
between a ground of peace and a sky of joy!"



the  
JOURNEY

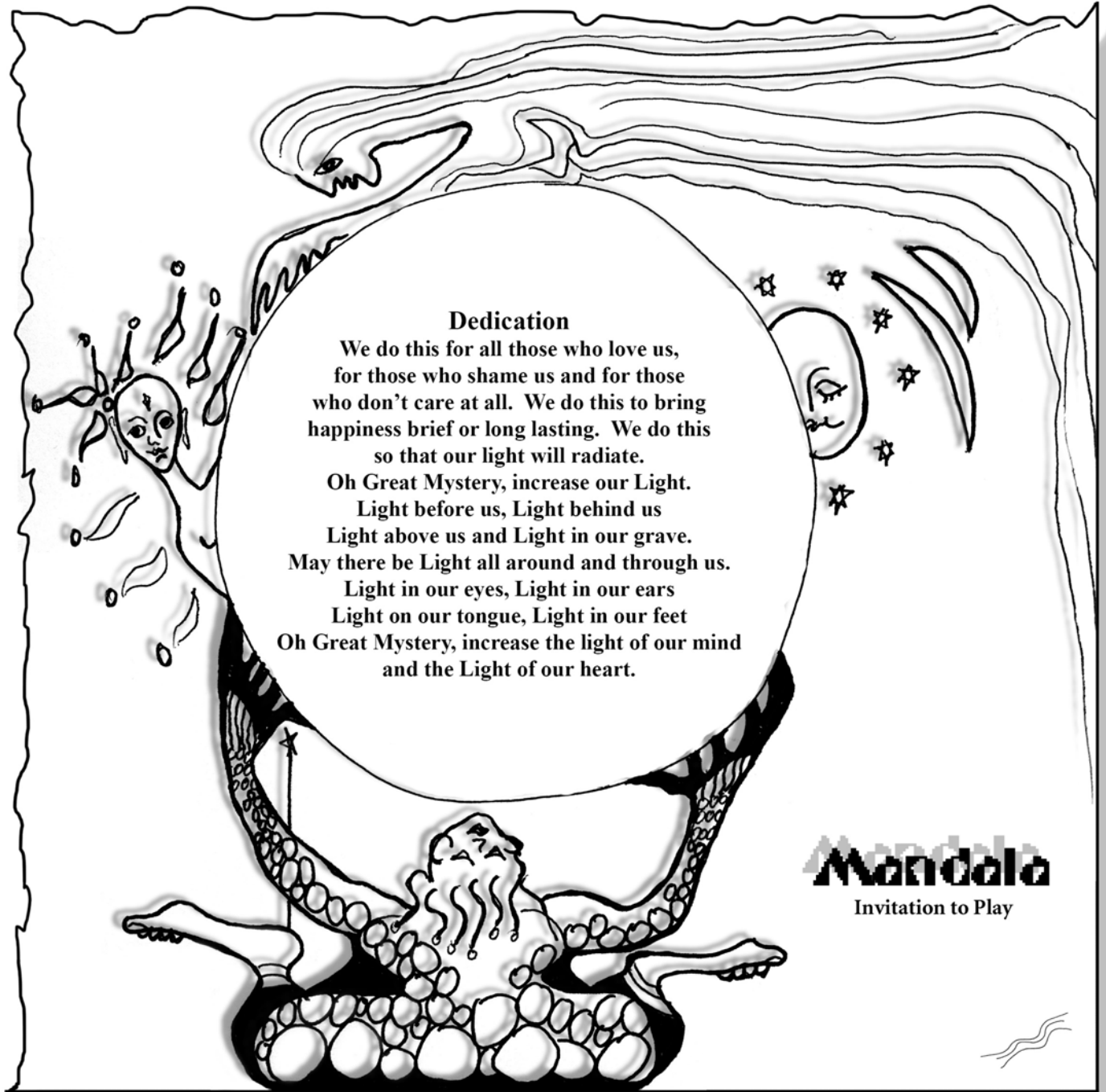
This is a story  
that unfolds in this place  
with all beings who seek  
in humility and pride  
our unrepeatable patterns  
in the Vast Energy  
that holds this planet  
swung in space scattered with stars.



*Skinny Bird and Fat Woman Waltz as the mandala is dismantled; everybody joins in, the dance.*

**Skinny Bird's Words:**

Sipping the light in a schmaltz out of line,  
heart is a beat that I love in my blood,  
runs in to true full of time till I stop.  
Hard as a hat on my head that has shed  
every a feather was part of my then,  
waltzes my now so I see and I feel  
flower of water and petals of light  
stream from my chest and we dance with delight.  
Friends are these women of Fire and of Earth,  
Space in the mirror of Water that circles  
my sight. And the Wind, she sings of effortless  
ease. So I cry and I laugh and I click---  
bones with the rabbits that dance with my teeth.  
Jammin' together we stomp and we turn  
joy in the arc of our jewel shining night.  
Night is the now when we bow out of sight.



**Dedication**

We do this for all those who love us,  
for those who shame us and for those  
who don't care at all. We do this to bring  
happiness brief or long lasting. We do this  
so that our light will radiate.

Oh Great Mystery, increase our Light.

Light before us, Light behind us

Light above us and Light in our grave.

May there be Light all around and through us.

Light in our eyes, Light in our ears

Light on our tongue, Light in our feet

Oh Great Mystery, increase the light of our mind  
and the Light of our heart.

**Mandala**

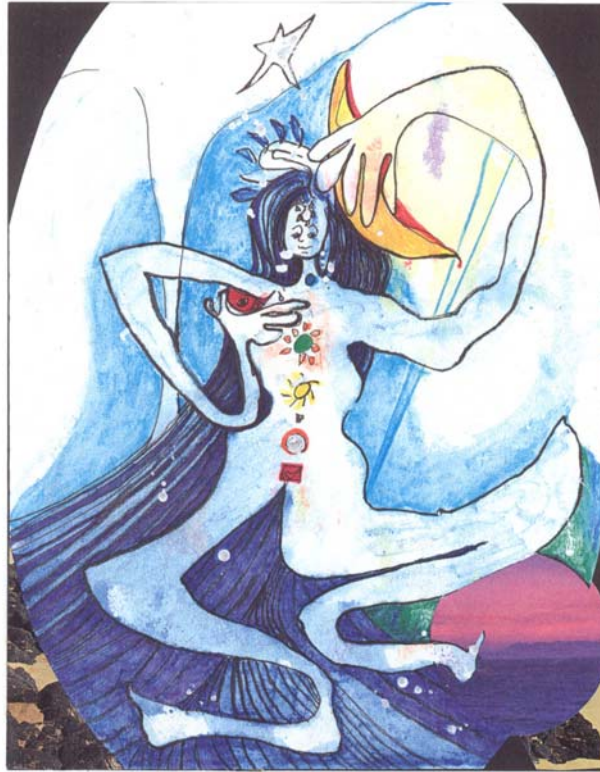
Invitation to Play





The following five pages are laminated cards of the five elemental angels with the information on the back used in performance art events and given to the audience.

## In the Centre we see Water



Ask the wisdom of  
the muscular Indigo woman.

She holds the staff of her consort  
in the crook of her left elbow.

In her left hands he holds a skull cup  
filled with blood. With reverence she  
holds this cup,  
a pledge to  
our life force.

She dances with  
her left foot extended deep  
into earth and her right  
leg raised.

Blue flames flow around her  
hollow yet substantial body.

She holds a curved knife  
in her right hand.  
One side is sharp, the  
other side is soft.  
This knife cuts through  
anger and coldness.  
Inscribed on her knife is a  
symbol of diamond clarity.

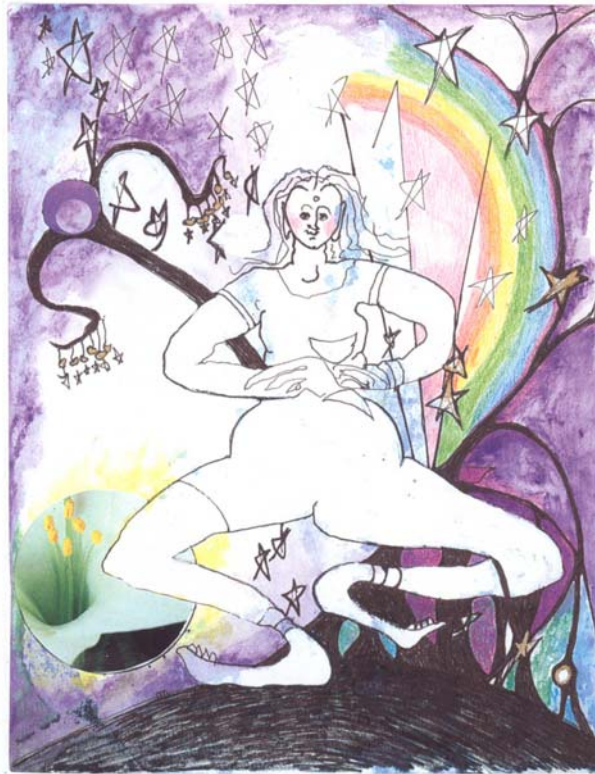
**The Indigo woman of the  
Centre Water  
transforms**

Anger  
and  
Coldness

into

the  
Mirror like  
Wisdom  
of the cosmos

## We stand in the East



Ask the wisdom of  
the plump White woman.

She holds the  
staff of her consort in  
the crook of her left  
elbow.

In her right hand she holds a curved  
knife inscribed with a  
wheel. This knife cuts through  
disassociation.

She carries a skull cup  
of blood in her left hand.

She dances  
with her left foot  
rooted in earth, her  
right foot in space.

White flames spread out from  
her hollow yet substantial  
body.

**The White woman of the  
East space  
transforms**

Laziness  
and  
Disassociation

into

the  
Wisdom  
of  
Relaxation

## Turning West



Ask the wisdom of  
the naked Red woman.

She has a young,  
perfect figure and wears flowers  
and not much else.

She holds the staff of her  
consort in the crook of her  
left elbow and the skull cup of blood  
in her left hand.

Her curved knife is inscribed  
with a flower.

Red flames burn around  
her exquisite hollow  
yet substantial body.

She dances with her left foot on earth,  
and her right foot in the heavens.  
Her third eye always looks up.

Her creative energy is like  
the flowers that bloom and seed  
their beauty without attachment.

**The Red woman of the  
West Fire  
transforms**

**Sexual seduction  
and  
Manipulation**

**into**

**Natural  
Magnetism  
and  
Creative Energy**

## We step into the South



Ask the wisdom of  
the fat/yellow woman.

She wears make up,  
jewels and flowing garments  
that she changes more  
than once a day.

The golden yellow woman  
holds the staff of her  
consort, the skull cup of blood.

Her curved knife both  
sharp and soft is inlaid  
with a jewel.

Yellow gold flames pour  
from her huge and hollow  
yet substantial body

She dances with her  
left foot on earth  
and her right foot in air.

When she walks in a room  
you feel witnessed  
in the unique rightness of  
who you are, forgiven and  
incomparable.

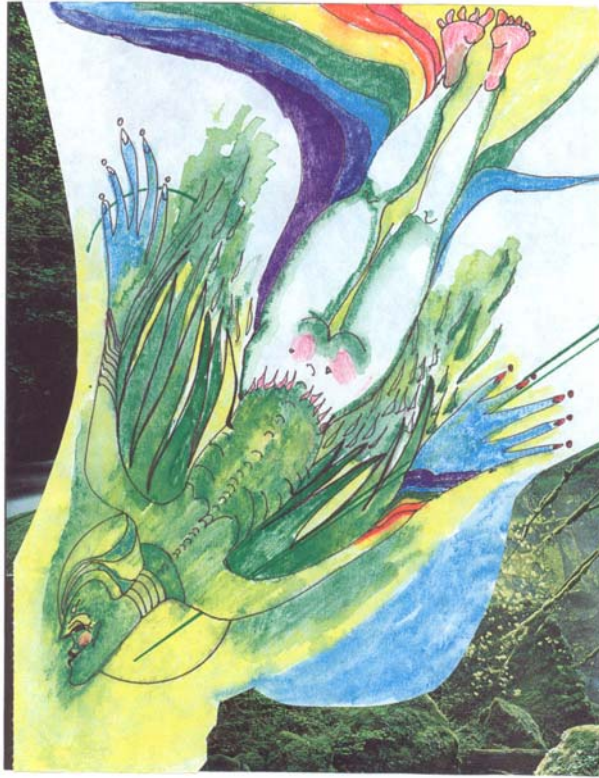
The Yellow woman of the  
South Earth  
transforms

Overbearing  
presence

into

the  
Wisdom of  
Equanimity  
and  
All Encouraging  
Presence

## Moving North



Ask the Wisdom of  
soft thin Green woman.

Sometimes we see a luminous  
green glow where she has  
just been a moment ago.

She is seen in profile  
as she moves swiftly by.

The green woman lands  
with her left foot on earth  
and her right foot in the sky.

Green flames flow from  
her hollow yet substantial body.

She holds the staff of her consort  
in the crook of her left elbow  
and a skull cup of blood in her  
left hand. Her right hand holds  
the curved knife that cuts  
through obstacles.

**The Green woman of the  
North Wind  
transforms**

Hurry  
and  
Worry

into

Wisdom of  
All Accomplishing  
Ease

**All that needs to be done  
is done effortlessly**

## WISE WOMAN MANDALA SCRIPT

### A Journey

Not so long ago, in a place not so far away...

a small, white stone spoke to me one day

when I was walking in the desert midday sun.

The stone was engraved with reddish-brown hieroglyphics.

This is the story told to me, as translated from the original...

A large bird,

lonely and

empty inside,

flies away from a curved nest.

He is on a long journey

searching for fullness to

open inside his chest, like a flower.

During this journey,

the bird meets four friends.

They are from the four directions.

They are four women.

*Bird says as he leaves the nest:*

### **Flip Out**

I fly out a my curved twigs

that clutch the top a Old Pine.

Away I'm off, off a the lined fluff a rabbit

(little bones mesh in the wave of nest)

Yum yum yum! Away

from the pre-digested fish on demand.

Achh WHAP!

Should a thought a that,

now I'm a thrash around on the ground and off.

I's off I's off to find some friend.

Up, Up I AM.

Feel the pull of hollow bone my

sinew and serrated feather shafts

full they are and light, a smooth sail. I stream

the wind way high on air.

I see. I see, I startle the East.

My heart is

empty inside.



## **The East**

The first friend of bird meets

is from the East

She is white and plump.

She is very kind, but

sometimes she appears

as vacant as she is kind.

The woman

from the East

is the type of person

who always wants

to help others.

Sometimes, however,

when people

or animals

or trees

or stones

or especially bugs

ask for help,

she is gone...

gone, beyond.

Even she does not know where!

## **The South**

The next woman who befriends the bird comes from the South. She is voluptuous, with a golden-yellow hue to her soft skin.

She is LOUD and loves to wear jewelry. She changes her make-up and flowing garments many times a day.

Others may call her fat

but she prefers

"rubesque."

## **The West**

From the western setting sun,

a dancing woman comes.

She is wearing flowers

and very little else

on her perfectly-formed young body!

What is a perfectly-formed young body?

Well, whatever it is,

the woman from the West knows

that her body is indeed perfect!

She is red.

She can...and does...and needs to...

seduce even those without one of the four signs of life.

### **The North**

The fourth friend is of the North.

Sometimes others see a luminescent-green glow around the space where she has just been a moment ago.

This friend is very, very, very thin. And she works so hard...

being the child of wonderful parents who instilled a wonderful work ethic into her.

So, to the delight of her family

and the praises of her community,

she becomes.....! a workaholic

### **The Leap**

This once-lonely bird

and the four women

become fast friends.

They travel in a small sailing vessel

with an eye painted on the sail.

One day,

far from any known shore,

the five friends leap into the deep water.....

for a cool swim.

for a cool swim.

## The Emptiness

Deep in the ocean, below the surface of wind and sun, they meet the monster of Emptiness.

This Emptiness is very scary. Afraid, with lungs burning, the five new friends plunge upward.

"grrrrr gruff gruell #\*\*~??!!\*\*\*#"

"grrrrr gruff gruell"

"YEOWLSHREIKSMACK" #\*\*~??!!\*\*\*#"

" YEOWLSHREIKSMACK"

Together they break the surfaces of the water and drag fresh air into their lungs.

But now, this Emptiness is waiting for them on the surface!

It has squinty little eyes and a crooked smile.

This Emptiness congealed can go more than

just two ways. It can go an infinity of ways...

oh so mean... or mirthful,

looking cute... or evil!

It sings a little song "I'm so mean" in many different languages.

## **Miracle**

The five friends climb quickly into their one-eyed vessel.

After much mulling over the pros and cons, they ask this Emptiness to come onto their ship.

The ugly Emptiness slithers quickly into the centre of the deck.

And behold, a truly amazing miracle happens. This squiggly Emptiness from the deep turns into a perfect circle of shiny water.

The bird and the four women approach the round, watery mirror.

## **The Centre**

They see below the surface a strong,  
indigo woman dancing and singing.

She tells them that she is the element of Water.

Her teaching is the transformation of fear, anger, and coldness into the Mirror-Like  
Wisdom of the Cosmos.

She invites them all to look into  
her truth, into her mirror,  
to find their Centre.

Water

## **East**

The woman from the East  
goes to stand in her Centre. As she looks into  
the wisdom mirror, she sees a plump, white figure.

Now remember,  
she is the kind of person  
who always wants  
to help others.

But when people

or animals

or trees

or stones

or especially bugs

ask for help,

she is gone...

gone beyond.

Even she

does not know where!

Then, as she moves into her Centre,  
she finds the wisdom that was always there.

Hers is the

teaching of Space,

transforming laziness  
and disassociation  
into the  
Wisdom of Relaxation.  
Space

### **Lizzard**

The next woman  
who befriends the Centre of Truth is  
the one from the South. She is the rubinesque, yellow woman  
who loves to wear lots of make up and jewelry and changes her long  
flowing garments many times a day. Her voice is loud, and she loves to talk.  
She strides up to the mirror and is very confident that she will be  
most ravishingly revealed.  
She peers into the mirror and sees. . .  
a lizzard !  
...a most beautiful lizzard with iridescent circles of blue and black spots.  
This lizzard is close to the Earth, with the whole planet for her belly.  
She wears a delicate, black eye-liner mask. Most people who meet her don't realize that  
she is the entire planet!  
She tastes delight on the air with her quick tongue and perceives danger in the same  
way.

She has exquisite fingers made for jewels.

Suddenly, the lizard, who is the whole Earth in disguise, disappears  
under the golden, yellow woman's right heel.

The woman from the South stays still  
for a long time...until her rubinesque,  
dimpled buttocks  
get sore.

### **Earth**

She looks carefully  
under her right heel, but  
the lizard has turned back  
into the whole Earth!

This movement causes  
the woman from the South  
to see herself in her Centre.

Hers is the teaching of  
Earth, transforming  
overbearing presence  
into the Wisdom  
of Equanimity and  
All-Encouraging



Presence.

She becomes still.

her silence is a golden glow,

encouraging others

to find who

they truly are,

when even their

darkness

shines.

South

### **West**

The red woman

from the West

takes her turn.

She is much encouraged

by the others.

The third friend is the one

who has a perfect figure!

She is the one

who can

and does

and needs to  
seduce even those  
without one of the  
four signs of life.

She is powerful and creative  
and she always gets her way!  
She knows that her way is the best  
for everyone concerned.

All her friends hold their breath as she peers into the Centre.

RED FLAMES! ...and FLOWERS! ...grow all around her.

She begins to laugh and dance, and her friends laugh with her.

As the fiery woman dances in her Centre, she transforms  
seduction and manipulation into the Wisdom of  
Natural Magnetism and Creativity.

She is still a perfect dancing figure and most certainly sensual,  
but she is no longer attached to her power.

Her beauty  
and creative energy are like the flowers  
that grow, bloom, and seed.

Fire

## North

Finally the soft, thin,  
green woman from the North  
rushes nervously to the Centre  
and looks into the mirror.  
She is very, very, very thin...and she works so hard...  
being the child of wonderful parents  
who instilled a wonderful work ethic into her.  
So...to the delight of her family...  
and the praises of her community...and to rave reviews...  
and numerous international, national and civic awards...  
she becomes...a workaholic!  
She is nervous as she looks into the Centre.  
Her poor little adrenal glands,  
perched like two pyramids atop her kidney,  
are sick to death of the flight or fight messages  
that have jerked them around for years  
beyond measure!  
They have tried innumerable, subtle to unsubtle ways  
to get their person's mind to relax...  
The adrenal glands of all the friends present  
hold their breathssssssssssssssss

Nobody really knows the woman from the North.

All anyone ever sees of her

is her profile as she rushes by.

She darts into the Centre and sees a soft, green blur.

She starts in on her usual, "Oh no!

I'm not good enough...

I'm better than...I'm just as good as..."

until.....her brain short circuits!

...for a moment!

...for a moment!

...for a moment!

And in that moment...

Creator knows to be quick,

and with infinite compassion,

dissolves the woman

of the North

from a solid...

to a liquid...

to a vapor!

In her

Centre, she

transforms

fatigue and  
overachievement  
into the  
Wisdom of the Wind...  
Effortless Ease.  
All that needs to be done  
is done...on time!  
Wind

### **The Bird**

The large bird, who had  
started long ago on this journey, is amazed.  
He stands, streaming with tears in the Centre of the monster of Emptiness,  
transformed into mirror-like Wisdom, surrounded by  
the four women of the four directions.

*Patience drops down,*

*age by age.*

*Water washes my mind*

*in rivers of tears.*

The bird hops forward and takes

his first-and-only human step.

His heart opens up like a water lily.

Where there had been cold, windy space,  
he feels his heart emptying and filling,  
spilling love all around,  
pulling heaven into earth,  
and seeing stars in the sand.

It is all a bit confusing.

But, with the help of his four friends from  
East, South, West and North—  
and the Centre, Mirror-Like  
Wisdom of the Cosmos,  
he makes this prayer:

*May my emotions continually flow  
between a ground of peace and a sky of joy!*

This is a story  
that unfolds in this place  
with all beings who seek  
in humility and pride  
our unrepeatable patterns  
in the Vast Energy  
that holds this planet  
swung in space scattered with stars.

*Skinny Bird and Fat Woman Waltz as the mandala is dismantled; everybody joins in the dance.*

**Skinny Bird's Words:**

Sipping the light in a schmaltz out of line,  
heart is a beat that I love in my blood,  
runs in to true full of time till I stop.  
Hard as a hat on my head that has shed  
every feather was part of my then,  
waltzes my now so I see and I feel  
flower of water and petals of light  
stream from my chest and we dance with delight.  
Friends are these women of Fire and of Earth,  
Space in the mirror of Water that circles  
my sight. And the Wind, she sings of effortless  
ease. So I cry and I laugh and I click—  
bones with the rabbits that dance with my teeth.  
Jammin' together we stomp and we turn  
joy in the arc of our jewel shining night.  
Night is the now when we bow out of sight.

## **Dedication**

We do this for all those who love us,  
for those who shame us and for those  
who don't care at all. We do this to bring  
happiness brief or long lasting. We do this  
so that our light will radiate.

Oh Great Mystery, increase our Light.

Light before us, Light behind us

Light above us and Light in our grave.

May there be Light all around and through us.

Light in our eyes, Light in our ears

Light on our tongue, Light in our feet

Oh Great Mystery, increase the light of our mind

and the Light of our heart.



## **BACKGROUND TO *WISE WOMAN MANDALA***

### **Living Teachers**

I am a performance artist trained formally in classical ballet and modern dance. Performance art is a variable mixture of body movement, spoken word, sound, music, fabric art, props, sculpture, body sculpture, mask, body art, pedestrian sound and etc. It is often performed in unusual locations as well as on a proscenium stage. Events can be any length and can span weeks or months. Performance art tends to incorporate controversial elements, found art, conceptual art, and elements of ritual. Technology is used in unusual ways, such as amplifying body sounds. Social categories and definitions may be questioned and the observer is challenged.

Most influential on my work were the living teachers who inspired and informed this performance art. Books have been a doorway for expanding knowledge in this project. The living teachers and consistency of personal practice are the deeper influences. Not all of my living teachers are in physical or human form. The best way to describe the major influences on this work is through a narrative.

The narrative of my journey into performance art began immediately after I graduated from college. I went with a group of friends from the Chicago area on a camping trip to Montreal and the World Fair, in 1967. While there, I met

Canadian dancers who told me about the newly formed modern dance company, *Le Groupe de la Place Royale*. I found their studio in Place Royale of the old city and took some classes with them. The director Jeanne Renaud and co- director Peter Boneham invited me to rehearse and perform with the company at Expo 67 in Montreal. I became a landed immigrant in 1968 and joined the company. This company's philosophy emphasized performance art and dance. Visual artists, composers, sculptors, fabric artists, voice, script and dance are all part of the performance with *Le Groupe*, now located in Ottawa with their innovative "Dance Lab".

Other major influences on my work have come from hitchhiking adventures to the Queen Charlotte Islands, Ireland and England. I have pictures of myself in Stonehenge where we slept out on the fallen monoliths and talked about the men landing on the moon we gazed at through the mist. In the morning damp I was woken up by dogs barking. I poked my head out of my sleeping bag. The keeper's wife was out walking with her dogs and stopped to talk. There were no fences then. She told stories of how the dogs would not cross a certain line on the solstice when every other day they ran across. She and her husband had, on more than one occasion, heard thousands of voices on Salisbury Plain. They had called the army to see if they were doing maneuvers. The army official said that they were not. This was the beginning of time opening in a non linear concept for me. I always wrote and drew in my journals over the years. I find that

seemingly small experiences, such as sleeping on Stonehenge, influence the work on the *Wise Woman Mandala*.

I spent time on the Aran Islands off Galway Bay in Ireland and lived in a shed that stored potatoes. I went where I was told that I should not sleep and sure enough the little people came by. I woke up to many soft voices that were like delicate bells, if bells made words. I was too chicken to go out and see them. The next day I was attacked by a milk cow and barely escaped with my life over the stone fence.

The world has always held mystery for me. I am attracted to the inner imaginative worlds, and have the impulse to create a form for the formless and then to share that with others.

Later, I started to study Tai Chi with Victor Shim, who told lots of stories about energy and taught meditation as part of the class. I did not know the name then, but we did Qi Gong as well as Tai Chi forms. In the Edmonton Tai Chi Club, I met Buddhist practitioners who invited me to a three day silent meditation retreat, a wildly new experience for me. Sitting was not my safe place, as my identity was with dancing.

During these times, I saw amazing performances and art in all fields as I continued to make art work in wood block prints and ceramic sculpture. These I

did for relaxation and fun. Later, as dancer and artistic director in Regina, Saskatchewan, I toured with the company to the far north by bush plane, landing on water or ice of the big lakes of Northern Saskatchewan, Alberta, and later the Yukon and North West Territories

The experiences in Native American ceremonies and sweat lodges changed my entire world view and my view of the professional art world. I remember one fly-in village in Northern Canada where the children watched our company class, which is a daily practice for dancers. They were falling down laughing at us balancing on one leg with the other leg stuck out behind. They would mimic us and they were good. Very good! The mental picture of laughing children in the middle of a muddy path, arms akimbo and one booted foot waving in the air still haunts me.

I began training in yoga and was introduced to the chakra system, labyrinths, and whirling in the Dervish tradition. Then, after a severe injury, I had to stop dancing for a number of years. Walking was painful. This event brought me suddenly to the stillness of body. In that stillness, depression had to become a friend to open a door. That was when the blessings of the monks came in smiling quietly. It was my friend Leslie who introduced me to Joanne Hammond Meiers Ph.D., family therapist and art therapist. Joanne is accredited by the American Dance Therapy Association as senior instructor and dance therapist. At the time, Joanne was working on her doctoral thesis. She asked me to be one

of her subjects. This meant that I worked one on one with her in weekly dance and expressive arts therapy sessions without cost for a year! I continued many years with her in group sessions and still keep in as much contact with her as our lives permit. This training in the expressive arts and dance therapy was integral to the creation of the illustrated script of *Wise Woman Mandala*.

As part of my thirty or so years in Canada, I toured as a performing artist from Edmonton, Alberta, and for 18 years was artistic director of my own company. This presented many opportunities to work with composers, musicians, actors, directors, theatre companies, sculptors, lighting and costume designers, mask makers, other dance artists, painters and wonderful students of all ages and sizes. Edmonton, Alberta is a city of festivals with art and music, theatre and dance. It is the gateway to the North. I renewed my studies with Indigenous artists and healers. I received guidance again from Tibetan Buddhist monks, who also initiated me into meditation forms.

I was called on for funerals, outdoor weddings, festivals, the creation of art as healing ritual, and for the creation of ceremony. These diverse experiences prepared me for the creative explorations with *Wise Woman Mandala*.

Other events involved whole communities with dance, actors, story tellers, sculptors, painters and musicians. Performance venues included city halls, subway stations, empty store fronts, public fountains, as well as many outdoor

locations. I envision the performance art of *Wise Woman Mandala* as a ritual of celebration that is born from my years spent in creative exploration of the original transmission.

### **Entrance of the Five Dakinis: a Transmission**

I first met the Tibetan teaching of the *Mandala of the Five Dakinis* in the Canadian Rockies with my friend Leslie, who went with me. I remember that the retreat was guided by a woman Buddhist monk who was a poet. At this retreat we were given a “transmission” of the Five Dakinis. A “transmission” is more than hearing words of a concept or a story. A transmission may use words, but beyond the logic of words a guiding energy comes from the person who is giving the teaching. This energy hits you in a permeable place, and your life is changed.

Although the usual definition of a mandala is a circular visual form used for meditation, I heard a spoken description of the circular form with four directions and the center with associated imagery. The words were presented on a recording spoken by a source person. I asked our retreat guide why she used a recording. She said the woman who made the tape for use in retreat had been meditating according to this practice for many years. Consequently the woman carried the energy of the mandala and was able to transmit it through her voice and the spoken word. I heard the mandala spoken three times and took notes.

*The Mandala of the Five Dakinis*, which was the catalyst for *Wise Woman Mandala*, was presented to me as an oral story structured on four directions, colors and attributes and a center. I have extended this seed experience into a performance art event using spoken word, drawings and dance. I experience this performance/meditation event as a secular exploration of Spirit. Though influenced by cultural traditions, the illustrated script and performance event of *Wise Woman Mandala* stands free of belonging to any single source. My intent is to share it anywhere it will be useful for life affirming self-discovery.

### **Deaths and Flaws Become Teachers**

Leslie and I both knew that we needed to dance this *Mandala*. Leslie was slender, young and strong with expressive dance embedded deep into the fabric of her body and mind. Her hands held a language of their own. Neither of us had ever seen or heard of anyone dancing this *Mandala*, though we had both seen Tibetan monks perform in other ways with dance, costume, mask and sound as a meditation. Unfortunately, Leslie was not able to work on our idea as she became ill and her body succumbed to the cancer. I had been working by myself on the *Mandala* and I danced a part of the Wind section at a celebration for Leslie's passage.

Her service was presided over by a Catholic priest and a Tibetan Monk. I remember that while I was looking at her life-altar, a group of us felt Leslie's presence come. Some people got goose bumps. I just had a whoosh of Living Love. It was a moment of grace. Leslie had had a struggle letting this life go. My experience of her passage gave me a *visceral sense* of the energy of unseen forms and the power of archetypes in the human psyche.

A year later my mother died, and I danced at her funeral in church. My father and I were in a state of euphoria at her death. I just kept thinking, *yippee she's home free*. My mother, Rosemary, had planned her funeral in detail. She wanted to be cremated. She did not want people looking at her when she couldn't look back. One of my last memories of her was when a long pale drink of a young priest in black came to give her communion. As he was getting ready to go, she took hold of his hand and he leaned over the bed presumably to comfort her. She gave him a succinct lecture on why the Pope should allow priests to marry and why women would make good priests. She did this little spiel with references. I give the young man credit. He listened quietly all bent over holding her hand and didn't try to save her. My Dad kept quiet, but after the priest left, he told me in private that he didn't think she should have said that because the priest had just come back from the Vatican. I was laughing like crazy inside. She was 92 when she left and from her own bed too. So my Dad and I spent 4 days cooking and cleaning and buying lots of wine, as she had requested. Neighbors and friends piled into our home. We had a great party.



I had known for many years that my mother suffered eating disorders that had started when she was 14. Her mother had made her wear a corset with metal ribs to school so that she would not look like Aunt Kit whose bosom made a shelf that kittens would nap on (my mother's description). She also added that she went crying to school the day she had to wear a corset. When she was 16, she went on a diet eating nothing but oranges until she turned yellow. This body shame is more common than most of us would like to admit. In *Wise Woman Mandala*, each woman has a different body shape and color. The variety of physique of the female figures becomes an excellent oblique vehicle for addressing body image.

The following is small part of an earlier script I wrote for a performance meditation called *Dancing the Heaven~Earth Spiral*. This short piece was inspired by the last months of my mother's life on earth when her spine was crushing her body down from five foot seven inches to almost five feet. (I went shopping with her when she was around eighty-five and remember her saying how happy she was that she could now fit into size small. I said nothing then, and wondered at the sadness hidden in that voice...in my voice.) Witnessing my mother's long and painful termination of a fruitful life came in slow motion after shock, and became incentive to check my "inner body talk". My mother's name was Rosemary. I was at home with her as she left her earthly body. She was 92.

I remember her...  
gossamer bones

shrunk down into her chest cradle...  
embryo waiting for the next birth's labor in years of pain.

Her rose mind opens a memory of...

Gypsy woman strides free there  
long skirts un-ironed - swinging

...she wakes  
in her electric chair  
crying...

Friends received notes in her writing after death.  
When they took off--  
took the wedding ring off her finger curled hand  
I saw

empty shell of a dried Spider.  
But her legs...her legs were long with the creamy skin of a young woman.

I danced at her birth in church  
my mother.

I am dedicating this performance event and illustrated script of *Wise Woman Mandala* to these two women, Leslie, my dancer friend, and Rosemary, my mother; two strong intelligent women who had life long issues with body-image. From my mother, I had inherited this negative body image. This flaw has been a great teacher and catalyst for dancing with the Elemental Angels of *Wise Woman Mandala*.

## **Performance Artist As Story Teller**

In the later seventies, I met Maestro Petre Boduetz, who had escaped the communist regime in Romania and ended up in Regina Saskatchewan, where I was artistic director, performer, choreographer and teacher of Regina Modern Dance Works. He was an ethnographer, dancer, choreographer and director in Romania who had worked with many Romanian Gypsies. He had traveled the world as dancer, choreographer and teacher. He became my mentor, teacher and friend for many years until his passing. Though he had walked into my life before I met the Dakinis, it was Petre who set the ground for dance as a meditation form with spoken word as the music created by the performing dancer.

Petre was a refined man with olive skin and dark eyes who could communicate without good English. He created dance, authentic costumes and old stories. Everything about him was “old world”. During a particularly sad time for me, he saw my distress and taught me a ceremony from the Orthodox Church with blessed water and a long skinny bees-wax candle. I was instructed to sleep alone and for 10 consecutive nights cut and light a small length of the candle that would burn for approximately 10 minutes. Then I was to drink a sip of the blessed water. Then, I was to choose a relative that had died and talk out loud to them until the candle burned out. I asked specifically about the out loud part and Petre said that it was important that what ever I felt was spoken loud enough for

another to hear. I also added a strong hot toddy to the ritual, sipping as I talked out loud. Nothing much happened until the 10<sup>th</sup> morning. I woke up with a soft brushing of a hand on my head and an ineffable peace inside. I burst out laughing, and my Grandmother was laughing too. Speaking out loud without some one else's script was a new experience for me. Years later, Petre's ritual would set the format for finding written words for the mandala script.

Petre also assured me that dance was a spiritual art form beyond what is termed liturgical dance. He explained that the job of a dancer was to become a conduit of energy that connects heaven and earth. The dancer's job was to show the connection in physical form to people who most likely did not understand. We talked about art as a non-denominational spiritual training. The first solo he created for me was called *Incantation*. I had to learn an ancient Romanian Gypsy incantation to throw out evil and sickness. There was no music; only the Gypsy-forged brass bells strapped to my ankles and my own voice. I began to understand the power of words, rhythm, movement and intent. Somehow I felt connected to generations of women who said these same words. Often, I would end up crying in our rehearsals. Petre was calm and patient, never letting up on the creative demand of the work. This training was the beginning of dance and the spoken word for me.

The human desire for a story line seems to be hard-wired (in neuro-science a “cognitive-imperative”). This concept is explored in depth by Richard Schechner, author of *the future of ritual*.

More insight about story telling as performance and soul retrieval came from the Auger family. Rose Auger was an Elder and Medicine Woman, a Cree from northern Alberta’s Big Stone Nation. Dale Auger, her son, was a well known First Nation’s artist, educator, singer, director and storyteller whose work continually influences my sensibilities. Dale was trained in the ways of his people and also embraced the modern world with his wife Grace and three children. Part of his Doctoral thesis in Education from the University of Calgary was the performance event called *Mamawi (all of us together)* written and directed by Dale. This outdoor event was an adventure in Native Theatre featuring stories, song and dance of the First Nation People at White Moose Ranch, Millarville, Alberta, Canada.

Being a performer/choreographer in the *Mamawi* experience was a life drama and nature drama of sunsets and flash floods, mountain backdrops and spectacular sunsets. Horses were a part of the cast with First Nation actors, musicians, singers. A generator brought lighting and sound technology to the grassy stage. Six authentic teepees were part of the staging and also our home for the week. Fire was with us as the afternoon merged from feast to performance and into the night dance. One performance event was spiced with

an electrical storm that swept over the foothills as we were near the end. Grace Auger and the Carscallen family, who hosted this yearly event, tried to stop the performance as many of the actors and singers were hooked up with cord-less mics. We were unstoppable and the performance ended with drama but no fried actors. Most of the audience stayed. Luckily it was a warm Alberta night, though very wet.

The *Mamawi* performances over the years gave me more experiences with the living, evolving culture of the First Nations of North America. Dale always wrote me into the *Mamawi* script as “Owl Woman”, a strange feathered and buckskin being with willow branch wings.

The story that developed *Wise Woman Mandala* into contemporary language started on a sunny afternoon when my inner self was feeling prune-pissed that “others” could talk to stones and trees. Sometimes following the hokiest idea is an intuition of inspiration. So I picked up a small white stone from the sand and looked at the linear markings. I drew them in my sketch book. I pretended that I knew what each of the markings meant. Then I turned to face four directions and jotted down with my non- dominant hand what caught my eye/ear attention without “thinking” about it. What emerged was a short messy poem with a one-liner for each direction. Then I did the same for the center.



page from developing script

From this came a story about women in the five places: east, west, south, north and center. A few weeks after the story was roughed out, I realized that the Five Dakinis had danced into the story line with all their holy eccentricities. It all started with the teachings of a small white stone with brown squiggles as catalyst. I was the translator.

I fused my narrative with the inspirations from the Tibetan meditation with body experiences from dancing the *Mandala* and references from my day with Sun, Stone and Stars. I continued to work with words, movement and drawing. The drawings that accompany the story were started as line drawings that I could color (coloring for me is winter gardening activity). I spent a few weeks possessed by the energy of the elementals. At this time, I had the leisure to spend hours a day drawing, cutting, pasting and coloring. Working with the arts

as a self-guided retreat is a balancing activity in a driven world. It becomes timeless activity as long as there is no pressure to produce an expected outcome. This has been my experience of the ongoing process of creative explorations with the *Dakinis*.

The drawings of the five Elemental Angels and the Bird developed as a survival technique. I had just left my long time Canadian home to return to the U.S. to live in my Dad's cabin in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. I was the assistant builder/plumber to my aging father who tended to not talk much. I came from a place where my home had been a hub of creative meetings. I was immensely lonely during this transition. I asked a neighbor on the adjoining lake, who is a fine artist, to bring me around where I could meet people that were interesting. She and her husband took me to an art gallery opening and the curator said that there was a Tibetan exhibit coming in a few months. Without thinking, I told the curator that I had a performance art piece that I would do for the opening (actually, I had the piece in my mind only).

Two mornings later, I woke up sick with fear at what I had committed to. I called long distance to tell her that I would not be able to do it. Before I could say anything, the curator enthusiastically told me that the artist, Philip Sugden, had liked the idea. They had even completed and sent out a press release! I felt trapped and creatively frozen. I got paper and all the art supplies I had, and spent more weeks possessed by doing more drawing of the Elemental Angels as



five women with different colors and body shapes. It soothed my fears and helped me proceed with this performance work in which I included the images that had “drawn me”.

When I went to the gallery opening for Philip Sugden, his images startled me. He had worked on a huge canvas with a crouching woman as an owl, wings outspread. Owl is one of my totems. I also had been working on woman as bird and Owl had chosen me! To some people, Owl is a harbinger of death. In the Celtic tradition, Owl medicine is for seeing in the dark. Philip had many experiences in Tibet and painted spectacular and emotionally moving images of the land and Peoples who were taken over by the government of China. Their way of life was brutally changed. The Diaspora of the survivors has enriched the Western world with a spirituality that does not separate man from nature.

### **The Art of Translation**

I have given much time to studying other translators, for I see my work as a translation and am aware of the pitfalls for a translator even with the best intentions. I am particularly aware of the arrogance of a colonial view-point. The *Mandala of the Five Dakinis* is from another culture than my birth culture, though it felt immediately pertinent to my life and work. The *Mandala* was given as an open invitation to explore. Buddhism, as I was introduced to it through my Tibetan teachers, encourages discovery and experimentation with respect to the

form. Many Western spiritual seekers are drawn to Buddhist teachings because they do not negate other religious or atheistic belief systems. One does not stop being Christian or Atheist in order to take initiations in Buddhism. Also, Buddhism emphasizes a form of mind training that is compatible with the new biology and cognitive science. I adopt the open-mindedness of Buddhism when I translate from *The Mandala of the Five Dakinis* to *Wise Woman Mandala*.

A translator must have firsthand experience of the culture. It is helpful if they know and love individuals of that culture. Jerome Rothenberg, the editor of *Shaking the Pumpkin*, gives an in depth discussion of the research involved in translating an oral tradition onto a written page. He believes translation is the work of crossing cultural boundaries. This is not always a comfortable process. A cross-cultural translation expresses the human experience and implies a core unity, though life experiences may be worlds apart. *The Mandala of the Five Dakinis* translates beautifully from traditional form into contemporary form that westerners can appreciate.

Rothenberg comments that through translation we begin to accept the “truths” of another’s language and also become aware of our cultural limitations as well as our cultural lies. He comments that both translators and poets must keep constant vigilance on this truth. He gives explicit linguistic examples of the challenges of translation from Seneca world view into the European/ English

world view. I found his analysis helpful in my work with the Tibetan Buddhist mandala.

Our western concept of poetry is that words are the central component *of a poem*, yet many indigenous lyrics of the “Elder Brothers” of North America have no words. They use articulated phonetic sounds and rhythms accompanied with gesture, dance and other sacred actions. In this indigenous poetry, every moment is charged and nothing is incidental. No sound or action is too ordinary for conscious poetic expression.

The presentation on the page takes into account other elements beyond the words. In this manner, books like *Shaking the Pumpkin* and *The Illuminated Rumi* have influenced my work with the *Five Dakinis* illustrated script. As is said in “Directions for an Inuit Service” from *Shaking the Pumpkin*:

*“Use the language of shamans.*

*Say “he turned my mind around” and mean “he told me something...”*

## **Mandalas from World Cultures and Nature**

**Sufi Spoken Word and Whirling.** Another major influence on my work comes through the Sufi tradition. The life and poetry of the Persian mystic poet, Jalaludin Rumi, (1207-1273) born on the Eastern edge of the Persian empire, now Afghanistan, enhanced my natural desire to spin. Rumi founded the Mevlevi Dervishes, a spiritual order that uses sound and whirling movement as one form of ecstatic meditation. Rumi would speak his poetry while spinning and his students would copy it down. Historical writings record that St. Francis of Assisi met Rumi (another source cites Shams, Rumi's Friend) on a Crusade and it was this encounter with the Sufi mystics that changed Francis. (The Illuminated Rumi & Love Poems From God). Rumi is currently one of the most widely read poets in the western world.

**Sufi Teachings and Meditations.** Pir O Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan ( master musician and spiritual teacher who founded the Sufi Movement as a non-Islamic Sufi organization) provided esoteric attributes for the elements in his vision of a new world that is here in our midst.

EARTH is grace.

WATER is emotion and glory.

FIRE is passion, wisdom and illumination.

AIR is joy and

ETHER, which I identify with the elements of sound, light and cosmic thought, is peace.

Mind and breath are harmonized in an elegantly simple breath practice for purification of body and mind to start the day. This elemental breath practice gives an added layer of experience for performers and workshop leaders as well as those witnessing *Wise Woman Mandala*.

**The Five Elements Theory from Traditional Chinese Medicine** TCM uses a circular form with seasons, colors, organs of the body and negative and positive emotions. *The Taoist Five Elements Theory* (one of a number of theories from TCM) links each organ to one of five elements in nature: air/metal; water; wood; fire; or earth. It also connects these elements to the seasons, to color and to qualities of nature. Body, mind and spirit are seen as an integrated system in this view. This theory finds that debilitating emotions such as anger, fear, cruelty or excessive excitement can injure organs and cause disease. Until recently the meridian lines and acupuncture points were thought to be imagined. Now the Chi or Qi energy system of the body/mind is recognized as an interdependent but definable system different than the circulatory or nervous system. The same energetic paths (a close word is electro-magnetic) are described in the ancient Vedas from which Hatha Yoga is developed.

**Chakra from the Vedic Tradition.** “Prana” life force is the name for electro-magnetic lines in the ancient Vedic tradition of India. The seven chakras (Sanskrit for wheel) of this system of esoteric anatomy are elements of the human energy field. This system has similar energetic channels as the Five

Elements Theory of TCM. The chakra system illustrates the individual as a microcosm and holistic paradigm of the macrocosm. Chakras have come to western attention through the practice of Yoga. Yoga means yoke or to unite. The chakras are wheels of light/life, generally unseen by most humans with the naked eye. They are located from the base of the spine to the crown of the head and influence the endocrine system and organs of the physical body. This system originated as an oral tradition roughly ten thousand years ago and a written tradition four thousand years ago. The human energy field is made up of seven major chakra wheels and an eighth that surrounds the body as an egg shaped aura. The aura or patterns of light around living bodies has been photographed with Kirlian photography.

**Labyrinths from the Celtic Tradition.** Labyrinths are circular forms with a winding path that leads to a central position. Unlike a maze, there are no dead ends. The seven circuit labyrinth is often used as a chakra meditation walk. The eleven circuit labyrinth was taken from Celtic cosmology and derives from the geometry of a thirteen-pointed star that signifies the thirteen moons in a solar year. The eleven circuits wind in and spiral out again but always lead to the center. The curved design on the outside represent the phases of the moon. The Roman Catholic Church adopted this geometry and walking it became a surrogate pilgrimage when it was dangerous to travel to the Holy Land during the crusades. The most famous Christian labyrinth is in Chartres Cathedral in France. The resurgence of labyrinth walks has brought this form of meditation

into retreat centers and hospitals. VERITAS, the world wide labyrinth project spearheaded by Lauren Artress of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, CA, has been a major resource for developing community labyrinths. Labyrinths of all sizes, from finger labyrinths to garden-size, focus energy in a meditative walk, using the geometry of the labyrinth as a life path metaphor. Geomancy, the sacred geometry of a living Earth, focus on labyrinths as a personal and planetary healing tool. In one theatrical version of *Wise Woman Mandala*, we performed on a four-circuit painted labyrinth that was multi-leveled.

**Native American Medicine Wheel.** The Medicine Wheel is an ancient symbol used by almost all the Native people of North and South America. There are different ways that the basic concept is expressed: the four grandfathers, the four winds, the four cardinal directions, etc. It is used as an evolutionary learning tool and teaching device to help the individual see and understand things that are abstract ideas.

**The Maori Mandala.** Angeles Arrien taught me the Maori circular pattern given to her by the indigenous people of New Zealand to share with their western siblings. This is a form that I have used and shared with others for over 15 years. It is a self-diagnostic tool that uses eight universal cross-cultural symbols placed in a circular form. It can be created as an art project or an outdoor “Earth Work”. The symbols are Bird, Butterfly, Snake, Home, Tree, Path, Mountain and Flower. Each has a universal meaning as well as a personal interpretation. I use

it as a creative art therapy practice. Writing and dialoging with the personal experience of rendering the images may suggest the direction of the next year for the individual's health and well being. The difficult concept to share in our society is that in the Maori language there is no word or concept for comparison. However you draw or place the symbols in a circle is absolutely perfect and a key to self discovery. The *process* of the rendering is informative as the person is taught the role of a shaman/interpreter.

**Water Mandalas.** Crystalline structures of water may be examined to see how thoughts and words affect the cells of our bodies. *The Hidden Messages in Water* is the first publication of metaphysical scientist, Masaru Emoto. He worked with a photographer to find ways of viewing frozen water crystals under a microscope and then photographed them with super high-speed equipment. His experiments were dramatic. He put distilled water in a jar. The structure of distilled water crystals is clear with a simple geometric shape. Then he pasted different words facing in on the glass. Angry hateful words corrupt the crystals into dark blobs and words like *thank you* or *peace* will form delicate snowflake patterns. These patterns are mandalas formed by nature responding to thought and sound symbolized by the written word. In Emoto's book there is a picture of Japanese people crowded around the banks of a river. It was polluted and the frozen crystal structure of water taken from the river was a dark blob. After prayers, songs and poems that the villagers brought to the water, the crystalline structure was restored to symmetry without any change in the source of the



pollution. In *Wise Woman Mandala* the indigo Elemental Angel is the Angel of Water at the center.



water crystal responding the word "gratitude"  
from *The Hidden Messages in Water*

These are only a few of the traditions to establish that human beings have found that patterns create states of being. *Wise Woman Mandala* is presented here as one of the patterns that can be performed as an individual or group practice, or staged as performance event.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

*Wise Woman Mandala*, inspired by culturally rooted concepts, holds relevant teachings for contemporary life. Old rituals are changing and new ones are continually evolving. Where there is freedom of expression, the human spirit searches in the non-physical worlds for a sense of self as well as a sense of unity. Mandalas, medicine wheels, labyrinths and other forms have been used throughout human history as a gateway to self discovery interconnected with the world and the cultural context of the individual experience. The characters of the five elemental angels of *Wise Woman Mandala*, modeled after the Buddhist Five Dakinis, speak across age and gender. Their personality flaws transform into their gifts as they look into the center of the mandala they are dancing. The written work and illustrations in the script came from performance events where storytelling, dance, music and mask functioned as an exploration of art as meditation. This work presents a pattern that can be adapted to a wide variety of art forms, performance events, or personal meditations.

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The medicine wheel concept is put into a multi cultural context and translated for practical use. Arrien teaches spirit with practical feet. The art work and poetry are from many cultures past and present. The author is careful of cultural appropriation and tracks a global and cross cultural use of different forms of the medicine wheel for teaching and developing the human potential.

Barks, Coleman & Green, Michael. The Illuminated Rumi New York, NY: Broadway Books, 1997.

This book is a visual treat. Every page is art work and words combined into a unit of expression. Barks is a wonderful translator of Rumi and with the artist, Green, a unique art of beauty and wisdom is created. Both men come from a meditational background that is reflected in this work which translates a Persian mystic, Rumi, for new generations.

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This illustrated book gives teachings of the Native American Spirituality related to the medicine wheel. Different aspects of the Medicine Wheel are explored. It is designed in such a way that Native American Spirituality is inclusive and inter tribal. The wisdom teachings of the Medicine Wheel could be incorporated with the major religions or used without any religious background.

Cooper Albright, Ann. Choreographing Difference: the body and identity in contemporary dance. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1997.

Albright is a feminist scholar as well as dancer and writer. This is an interesting resource book for dancers and therapists that investigates the impact of modern and post modern dance on contemporary society.

Emoto, Masaru. The Hidden Messages in Water. Hillsboro, OR: Beyond words Publishing, Inc., 2004.

Emoto's research is focused on the effect of word and thought on the crystalline structure of water. The photographs make the book understandable. Emoto's research expresses the resonance of the morphic field of Sheldrake's theory in a form visible to the naked eye. This work is in accord with the new physics and the new biology as well as ancient forms of universal knowledge such as the Five Elements Theory of Chinese Traditional Medicine.

Judith, Anodea. Eastern Body Western Mind: psychology and the chakra system as a path to the self. Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts Publishing, 1996.

Judith is a therapist who incorporates Eastern Vedic wisdom into contemporary analysis. This book is organized in such a way that it can be used as a reference. Her table of references is divided between esoteric study and western psychology with the emphasis on a Jungian point of view. Graphic reference charts make an easy access point for the western person who will not read a 500 page manual. After an overview of the ancient system that is described in western terms, each chakra is laid out in order. Case studies from Judith's personal experience are shared. The book includes creative therapy practices that she has found useful for her clients described in enough detail to follow, even for a person untrained in creative arts therapies.

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This is a well researched and deeply moving book that has writing/meditation practices for emotional clearing.

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The translations of Hafiz are easily accessible for the modern reader. Through this translation we are brought into another time and a mystical vision that is earthy and wildly exuberant.

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Each of the twelve poets are introduced with a two page biography that sets their time and place in history. Following each biographical sketch is a selection of poems, graciously spaced and translated for easy reading. It is a wonderful introduction to twelve visionary poets and the times they lived in.

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Lipton is a delightful teacher of the new biology. His graphic images make the science understandable for non-scientists. This book has been used by many people to change negative thought patterns for health and well-being. The Earth is seen as Gaia, a living entity, with all life forms interconnected. The new biology describes the survival of the most loving.

Nagrin, Danial. *Dance Improvisation and the Specific Image*. Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 1994.

Nagrin is a philosopher of dance as well as dancer and teacher. This work has detailed descriptions of specific exercises and how dancers responded. Nagrin brings body, mind and emotion together with spirit. This is a useful resource for anyone teaching improvisation technique.

Rathbun, Catherine, Lama Jetsun Yeshe. *Developing the World Mind: the elements mandala of Tibetan Buddhism*. Toronto Ontario: Friends of the Heart, 2002.

Lama Jetsun Yeshe is a recognized Tibetan Buddhist meditation teacher and founder of Friends of the Heart in Toronto, Canada. She was a member of the National Ballet of Canada before beginning her Buddhist training, is married and raised a family. The approach of this book is called simple and down to earth by the author

Ricard, Matthieu. Happiness: 25 centuries of the wisdom of Buddhism with the neuroscience and cognitive psychology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006.

Ricard has been a monk for over twenty-five years and is a trained scientist recognized by the scientific community. He offers a non denominational path for spiritual development and backs up the Buddhist methods and beliefs with western scientific findings in brain research and psychology. There are simple exercises described at the end of chapters to develop the potential of individual mental and emotional health.

Roseman, Janet Lynn. Dance was her Religion: the spiritual choreography of Isadore Duncan, Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham. Prescott, AZ: Hohm Press, 2004.

The foreword by Alonzo King, choreographer and artistic director gives the overview of the three women towards the physical body as *a secretly coded condensation of limitless power encapsulated in form*. Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham all had an intuitive understanding of the body as the temple of God and in their liberation of movement they went beyond child-hood fervor of free experimentation.. This book gives the reader a taste of three women who changed history through their art.

Rothenberg, Jerome (editor and commentaries). Shaking the Pumpkin Traditional Poetry of the Indian North Americas. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972.

A book of poetry, word games, drama and lyrics for ceremony from the First Nations of the Americas. The introduction is an analysis of the challenges and rewards of translating non-western cultural wisdom to western contemporary language.

Schechner, Richard, the future of ritual: writings on culture and performance. London: Routledge, 1993.

In this study ritual is taken beyond religion and mythology into the street as a stage. Schechner relates his personal experiences and astute observations of cultural rituals such as the week long Waehma at New Pascua, Arizona and the month long event at the Ramlila of Ramnagar, India. There is discussion about colonial cultural appropriation and the psychology of ritual as it affects culture.

West, Melissa Gayle. Exploring the Labyrinth: a guide for healing and spiritual growth. New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2000.

This is a practical book on the meditation of walking the labyrinth for health and well being. A brief history of labyrinths is given. Detailed instructions are clearly laid out for the seven circuit and the eleven circuit labyrinths. The final chapters delve into creativity and intuition, ritual and celebration as a healing for body, mind and soul.

Wilber, Ken & McCormick, Carlo. Sacred Mirrors: the visionary art of Alex Grey. Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1990.

The exhibit titled *Sacred Mirrors* is the focus of this book with large color plates. The introduction takes us on a short tour of some of the well known modern artists and their relationship to spirit. The performance art events of Grey are also described with accompanying photographs.

Wilson, Peter Lamborn. Angels. London, England: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1980.

The documentation and photographs take us on a cross-cultural tour of winged spirit messengers from ancient to contemporary times. The research is rooted in art and history.

## APPENDIX A

### WISE WOMAN MANDALA IN PERFORMANCE

The variety of body shape and personality traits of the five women make an excellent vehicle to open discussions of body image and self image, an issue that is important to many people in our society. I have had the experience of sharing *Wise Woman Mandala* as a performance event a number of times in a variety of situations.

After the opening of Philip Sugden's paintings of Tibet at the Boniface Art Center in Escanaba Michigan, I was invited to a detention home for teens to do a performance and workshop. I had no idea of what to expect or what reactions would be elicited. The space on that Friday evening was a gym. I was able to spend some time alone preparing body/mind and space. Then the youth came in. They were orderly and their keepers were quiet sentinel presences who sat behind them. There were about twelve young men ages thirteen to seventeen and two young women.

To start with, I introduced myself. Then each person was given a gift of sage and a feather while listening to a brief background of the mandala.



Assuring them that I would be back immediately, I excused myself for a 30 second transformation into a lion mask made for me by Ida Bagus Anom, a mask maker and performer in Bali.

This mask is a contrary scary-sweet face of wood and horse hair. The Lion runs in roaring and banging on an old pot making an infernal racket echoing in the gym. He has big teeth and a jaw hinged with leather. The lion is friendly and his job is to break up stagnant energy patterns. The lion has a pouch from which he produces gift bundles of laminated color drawings of the Five Elemental Angels with their teachings from the Five Dakinis and a short poem on the flip side of the image. The gruff voiced lion gives instructions to look at the cards and tells the people that he will come immediately back.

The Lion leaves for another quick change into the Blue-Black Beauty, another mask by Anom. The Blue-Black Beauty is an exquisite and flowing silence. Her feather-fingers dance as she glides to each person and bows to them showing the palm of her hands. There is a convex mirror in each palm. After the silent greeting, she goes to the center space and slowly takes off her gloves that have fingers of feathers, then her mask, then her dark blue constellation robe revealing a raggedy rainbow garment and the narrator/dancer has returned. After this introduction, the story of *Wise Woman Mandala* begins. The performance

ends with a wind dance in a costume of 42 meters of silk that spins up to 12 feet high or swirls out in waves near the ground.

After the performance event (which lasted around 30 minutes), I sat down and asked the young people to talk to me about how they felt. The girls said that the lion mask scared them to the point of wanting to leave. (I as lion had felt this and made him get into his sweet side and did not approach the young women.) All the young men said that they liked the lion after the initial surprise. The Blue-Black Beauty of mirror palms and feather fingers did not bring comment. The boys were vocal in discussing their opinions of the Five Elemental Angels and appeared to have had a good time. The girls were mute after telling that they were afraid of the lion.

The next day I worked with them in art therapy and we talked some more. The girls loosened up and showed me their rooms. The first thing that one of the younger boys said in the art session was that none of them were bad. He was emphatic that I understand and acknowledge his truth. I did. As a result of this experience where a mask caused fear, I introduce the masks first if I feel that there are young people who would react with fear.

These experiences and one that was done at the end of a weekend workshop with adults was a major inspiration to delve deeper into the work

and take it as a service where needed and invited. It was also produced in an intimate theatre setting as a part of a performance called *The Nubian Woman* with co-director, creator, performer Colleen O'Hara. In this theatre event an African soul retrieval story joined *Wise Woman Mandala*. The performance was placed inside a labyrinth that curved up and over a multi-leveled performance space.

Another performance event occurred in Canada around an early version of the *Mandala* script in the Riverdale Community Hall in Edmonton, Alberta. The story was told in tandem with a story written by an actor friend about a dragon. This event was cast with two women and one man as dancers, singers and actors. Having a man in the mix was great fun with gender role reversals.

These previous experiences with the Elemental Angels “out loud” have informed this presentation of the script.

I have kept the integrity of the Tibetan Buddhist *Mandala of the Five Dakinis* intact while translating it into a form that is relevant in language to contemporary non Buddhists.

## APPENDIX B

### RITUAL AND PERFORMANCE ART

The word “ritual” is sometimes associated with *evil* in the western world. It can have an association with satanic. The sacred and the secular curves in and out of each other depending on the point of view. The ethnological definition of ritual described in *the future of ritual* by Richard Schechner is ordinary behavior transformed by repetition, rhythm, exaggeration or condensation into sequences of behavior. Insects and fish have set rituals. Human rituals are divided into three paths. There are *social* rituals of every day actions, sports and politics. *Religious* rituals are rites of passage, observances and celebrations. *Aesthetic* ritual reflects ingrained cultural patterns or newly created spontaneous events. In *Wise Woman Mandala* I am working in the ritual of a newly created event inspired by the cultural pattern of a Tibetan Buddhist mandala.

Felicitas D. Goodman, founder of the Cuyamunque Institute of New Mexico, guides workshop participants in making masks and performing dances. “What distinguishes our performance from other similar ones is that our ideas and imagery do not come about by “rational” planning, but originate in a non-ordinary dimension of reality, to which we gain access via a particular kind of change of consciousness--the religious trance... Received wisdom used to hold that there

were a number of different religious trances, but since the early 1980's researchers have come to realize that there is only one neurophysiologic change which underlies a number of different religious experiences" (p243 the future of ritual).

She had her students take ritual postures from native art. The postures, when held in a trance state, induced specific images and physical sensations. One of the postures derived from a seven hundred year old stone effigy in Tennessee, is called the Tennessee Diviner. This figure, Goodman says, is particularly useful when we need advice concerning ritual matters. Using such divining techniques, the masks and choreography took shape during a six-day workshop (p244 the future of ritual).

The use of rhythmic sound and movement in the performance of ritual reconciles opposites: omnipotence/vulnerability, tranquility/readiness for the most demanding physical action. This is also my experience of the trance dance forms in Sufi tradition. I have had similar experiences in extended authentic movement as well as drumming journey work. In performance with a Butoh company with live meditative music and intense slow motion movement over the course of a few hours, the experience became numinous.

In his book *Happiness*, Matthieu Ricard, western scientist and Buddhist monk, describes meditation practices as mind training to create consciousness that

flows in a state of relaxed heightened awareness. This is also one of the benefits of ritual events. The long term practitioner of meditation has an enhanced brain wave pattern that can be directed by will. Thoughts and emotions are worked with as a learned skill the way a poet or a professional dancer or musician would train in their art form. In the Buddhist way, these techniques do not oppose Christianity or agnostic belief systems. The techniques offer a point of view for a secular spirituality. The concept of emptiness that describes a flow of energy not blocked or diverted by egotism is taught in Buddhism. This does not imply a loss of personal identity. It opens up identity to a receptive state for universal mind. For the artist this is a valuable concept. I became aware of the importance of this mind training in dance and art therapy as well as from Buddhist teachers. Religious ideals frame this concept as part of a larger dogma that cannot always be shared in a public multi-cultural setting.

Descriptions of mind in Buddhist thought and in cognitive research say that pure consciousness exists even in the absence of mental/emotional constructs. Much of the research in cognitive science is compatible with Buddhist thought and counter to Freudian theory that separates powerful emotions from conceptual thought. Cognitive science has identified that the brain regions that are identified with emotions are also identified with aspects of cognition. Emotion centers in the brain mesh with those supporting cognition (Happiness p109). The ritual participant/witness goes through a meditative process where emotions and mind are in heightened activity. The judge and jury of the self conscious ego is lost for

the duration. This super reality often vanishes soon after the conclusion of the ritual event. In creative and expressive art therapies, the spontaneous ritual process is repeated as a meditative practice with the intent of gently replacing debilitating thought forms with life affirming patterns.

Ricard's book, *Happiness*, describes a state of lasting well being that allows inner freedom and balance to support compassion towards others. This is a discipline of mind that routs out the toxins of hate and obsession. Become familiar with your own mind. *Sit quietly and watch without judgment the wanderings of the mind. Breathe.* These are beginning meditation practices. These are also the instructions before an authentic movement session in dance therapy. These same instructions I use at the beginning of a movement improvisation session. These simple techniques are instrumental in the performance and workshops around *Wise Woman Mandala*.

## APPENDIX C

### PERFORMANCE ART AND THE WITNESS

Important in performance art and expressive arts therapy is the consideration of audience as witness. "Audience" implies a passive role. *Witnessing* is a term I first came across in dance therapy and authentic movement training. Witnessing is a process where judgment is replaced by innocent perception. What is, just is.

The communication of the body is defined in the moment with stillness, movement, sound, silence, light, dark and etc. The body can also be lyrical, barbaric, sensual. As witnesses we are not voyeurs. We allow the experience to inform our personal definitions and beliefs through sympathetic resonance with the experience of the artist. Often the traditional concepts of woman, man, fat, thin, graceful, clumsy, rhythmic, arrhythmic, sacred, profane are challenged and blurred. The concept of audience as witness to a tearing down of what has been considered normal is challenging and often healing.

The book, *Dance was her Religion: The Spiritual Choreography of Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham* by Janet Lynn Roseman, draws a living picture of these three wildly creative out of the box women. Isadora, Ruth and Martha were forerunners of the feminist movement before the political



movement was invented. None of them had time to be angry feminists of the first wave. Their art form was their prayer form. They did much to elevate the idea of the body as sacred. By the normal standard of womanhood they were renegades and were viewed as fools that endangered society, especially religious society that separated body from spirit. Ruth St. Denis brought the East Indian Sitar master Hazrat Inayat Khan on a U.S. tour, the spiritual master and musician who formed the non Islamic International Sufi Order.

I saw Martha dancing with her company in Chicago when she was in her seventies. Her presence on stage was riveting with a ravaged face of beauty and power.

In the 60's, I held an unpopular view of feminism: that men and women are basically the same since our true identity is non physical. It is still wildly unpopular. As dance artist and educator, my job is to connect the energies of heaven and earth and show this male/female, dynamic/receptive connection as a balance within each individual human. I am no longer attached to the "men and women are the same" script except at a sub atomic level. At this level, we are the same as *all matter in the cosmos*. While this may not be apparent, I use it as a thought form in dance improvisation techniques to stimulate authentic movement in myself and my students.

Another structure for discovering movement is to dance what is male and what is female without being locked into the sex or sexual orientation of self. Patience is required. The individual is guided to start with quiet contemplation and let all the stereotypes come without censure. After awhile the body/mind will settle on a pathway if the inner and outer critics are quiet for the moment. In expressive art as a therapy it is important to let our well-developed critics go. They will come back, and hopefully, with expanded vision.

## APPENDIX D

### PERFORMANCE ART IMAGES



The Beast Under the Bed, solo concert,

Maria Formolo, Citadel Theatre, Edmonton, Alberta, 1985



Calumet, Michigan, Street Festival 2003 Maria dancing with young passerby, the daughter of the piano player, Clay Hillman.



Wind in the Forest dancer: Maria Formolo



Boniface Art Gallery 2000 *Mandala* event



### *Lizard Dreams 1, 2, & 3*

Conceived and choreographed by Maria Formolo assisted by Kathleen Arnold in a sculptural environment created by Sandra Bromley.

Lizard Dreams is an evolutionary journey through medicine wheels from a multi-cultural perspective. A series of three Performance Art pieces were conceived, created and presented at The Works festival in 1995, 1996 and 1997.

Based in ritual and performance as a meditation, Lizard Dreams takes the audience on a personal journey of discovery. Use of white clay slip as whole body paint, primitive smells and fire completes the ancient timeless spell.

Audiences are invited to join in by entering the "pools of unknowing."  
(Large pools of white and red clay slip)

Use of live video projection for Lizard Dreams 2 adds an element of intimacy and technology to this event. On two large sections of wall are projected video close-ups of the dancers as they move through the piece.





Rosemary's Funeral Service  
Sitar: Patric Marks Dancer: Maria Formolo