



Jane Eyre's Sisters: How Women Live and Write the Heroine's Story

Jody Gentian Bower

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Countering the voices, inner and outer, that demand women's silence, fiction writers imagine new possibilities into being.

The works of a substantial number of Western women writers reveal a major theme: the journey of the “aletis,” or wandering heroine—a woman with an inner compulsion to leave home to seek her own authentic self and find a way to express that self in the world. Jody Bower's *Jane Eyre's Sisters: How Women Live and Write the Heroine's Story* powerfully brings forth the aletis archetype to help women understand their deepest longings for freedom, authenticity, creative expression, and independence.

The hero's journey, so often written about by men, has been well documented in literature and myth, and the path from boy to man, from initial vision to victorious return (usually with a princess on his arm) is well marked, with signs, symbols, and mentors along the way. But what does the journey to maturity and full creative power look like for a girl? Bower, who holds a doctorate in mythological studies with an emphasis in depth psychology and writes and teaches on mythology, archetypes, religion, psychology, and neuroscience, expertly traces the aletis story in myths, folk tales, and women's writings from the 1600s through today to make a compelling case that Joseph Campbell's model of the hero's journey doesn't work for women.

Down-to-earth and conversational, Bower's book offers women a context in which to understand some of the deepest issues of their lives, reveals how cultural expectations may be unconsciously imprisoning them and thwarting their development, and shows that there are, and always have been, role models that, despite having been ignored by a male-centric culture, can be powerfully liberating for women.

Amplly referenced and with an extensive bibliography, Bower's arguments in favor of the aletis archetype are compelling, and her keen eye for what is really going on with women living in a patriarchal culture opens doors for them to see and understand both what has been holding them back and the quest they must undertake if they are to become the heroines of their own tales.

KRISTINE MORRIS (Spring 2015)

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