

Wild Girls: The Path of the Young Goddess

Patricia Monaghan

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From pre-history to the present, the feminine image of deity has captured the imagination of artists, poets, and composers. Today, the threat to the planet from pollution, the gift of affluence and greed, has sparked interest in earth-based religions. Recent years have seen a resurgence of paganism and witchcraft. Often images of goddesses are of a trinity of maiden, mother and crone, and scores of books celebrate mother goddesses and wisewomen, yet few books have given place to the springtime goddesses, the “wild girls.”

In *Wild Girls*, Monaghan takes the reader on a journey across a variety of cultures by way of mythic tales, from Luonnotar, “world creator” of Finland to Pali Kongju, “dancing spirit doctor” of Korea. Monaghan, faculty member of the School for New Learning at DePaul University and author of *The New Book of Goddesses and Heroines*, opens each chapter with a rich folktale of courage, wonder, healing, or compassion, often from cultures one rarely sees represented in books on goddesses. For example, the saga of the Baltic sun goddess Saule, the moon god Meness and their daughter Austrina tells of a time when sun and moon were together in the sky: “Saule and Meness lived together in a little house on the edge of the sky. From earth you could see them next to each other: the radiant sun and her husband, sitting side by side on the horizon.” The crime of incest shattered this family; Saule chased Meness the moon away from their daughter, and to this day continues to chase him away.

The lyrical tales in *Wild Girls* offer a range of material for the reader with an interest in anthropology, but the real treasure of this book lies in the active encounters with the goddess presented in its pages. Each tale delivers challenges or magical actions a girl can perform to heal herself or others, to rejoice in her life, or to honor the gifts of the earth. Luonnotar of Finland presents the challenge to make a sacred space, an altar filled with objects of deep personal meaning. Kuan Yin of China gives the gift of meditation, stilling the “monkey mind” so decisions come more easily and life becomes calm. Finola of Ireland offers a healing charm. Though the tales are ancient, the magical activities presented are grounded in the lives of girls of today.

The book addresses many of the situations in which a girl may find herself, including incest and poverty, as well as the everyday trials of the adolescent girl. This book, however, is not just for young women. Women of all ages can find their own inner treasures when they reach for the “wild girl” inside themselves.

CAROL LYNN STEWART (May / June 2001)

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