

ECOLOGY: CREATURES OF MEMORY DIE INTO THE WILD PRESENT

“If you want to realize yourselves all your pet illusions must be unmasked.” —Mina Loy

“The only reason we don’t open our hearts and minds to other people is that they trigger confusion in us that we don’t feel brave enough or sane enough to deal with. To the degree that we look clearly and compassionately at ourselves, we feel confident and fearless about looking into someone else’s eyes.” —Pema Chödrön

“Equality is not a concept. Equality is like gravity.” —Joss Whedon

“Wild doesn’t even begin to explain the present.” —Ivy Rae Jackson

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Thank you for asking me to take part in this. I begin in answer to some of your questions. Bias is assault. Underrepresentation is suppression. Sexualized and gendered violence takes many, many forms. Violence is not sex. Consumption is not desire. Privilege is not perception.

Our habits must cease or destroy us. There are new ways to be a-tune, which are also constant.

It is only through taking our hearts more seriously that justice may fully come into being.

Because yes, we are, finally, birthing a new time. The potentiality is available to all. Love is inevitable.

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I write as a survivor, a witness, a mother, an aunt, a mentor, a peer, a friend, a sister, a cousin, a student, a daughter, a niece, a granddaughter,

an inheritor of the works of women writers who came before, and of those whose works and methods of discernment were lost, suppressed, destroyed, or never articulated. This list describes some of my relationships, not my limits.

I am self-made. I'm a rogue, lol. I inhabit gorgon poetics.

Here is what I have to offer, and it resides in ongoing conversations with many poets and other loves, some of whom feel they have less of a voice than I do, or are less inclined to speak.

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It can be more spacious, now. It already is.

We all must discern and define ourselves from the deepest, most interior and core places. This is some of the difficult and necessary work of our time.

This work might allow us to truly know, and tend, ourselves, each other, other life forms, our earth.

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Misogyny is a mental illness; it is a cursive disease.

The negation and suppression of the feminine has happened at every level and in every crevice. It is heartless and it is incorrect.

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As to the matters at hand in several poetry communities of which I feel peripheral at best.

I've often said the things academics and others invested in the status quo won't say. This willingness to be brave and to thus be the scapegoat began in childhood. I'm kinda done with the latter. The former is of a piece with my life's work, apparently.

Btw, where are the feminist men? Or are they pretend like the ancient matriarchies? Also, you don't have to be a feminist to attempt basic human decency. That's called being a human.

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Men thinking that they own, school, and define us (in this instance by us I mean women); putting everything they don't want to acknowledge in themselves on to us; taking everything they don't want to acknowledge in us from us; this is extreme and it is unbalanced. It is dis-ease. It's untenable and it has already ceased, truthfully. It's fake, corrupt, an illusion.

These actions we women object to are not tender and are imprecise; **they are not poetic.**

Men, their work, their reading lists, their versions, their ideas, their desires, their 'radicality,' are not more important than women. They never have been in a million years.

I'll share two minor instances. As an already established poet, a community leader, and a mother (all achieved despite the apparently requisite wading through debilitating patriarchal quicksand), overhearing a young man (at the release party for the anthology *Bay Poetics*) telling an even younger woman what 'radical' male-authored classic to read (to really understand the world and possibly appeal to him) and seeing her (possibly feigned) polite interest. The exhaustion of this tiny tiny tiny passing moment. The utter weariness. Holding my young girlchild in my arms.

Again having reached this far into my 30s (at least a decade ago now), being slightly embroiled online as two men of the generation above me (the be all end all baby boomers) claimed they had been more radical activists, less compromised creatures, during their student days in the 1960s, than one of their contemporaries, a woman. No matter that she was far more talented, far more visionary, and far more generous to other writers and far less self-aggrandizing than them... blah blah blah: the egotism and irrelevance of their statements was bizarre. These were and are 'respected' men. I objected online (back

in listserv days) both to their false overblown notions of their own glamorized historicized - showy - radicality (don't get me started on how some of my contemporaries serve this baloney to their tenure committees) and, more importantly, to their lack of respect for her being, her experience, and her life's work. One wrote to me privately in a patrician tone claiming surprised disappointment with my supposed lack of professionalism. This email contained judgment and threat of the kinds parents and teachers often use with children, cheaply relying on false and unfair power dynamics at the expense of human understanding. That's not rad, dude. The other at another time called me 'shrill' publicly rather than actually engaging with my critique of his sloppy comprehension of literary history.

This kind of clinging to patriarchy's supposed benefits, to men's own inherited (and false) sense of dominance and entitlement, to men's judgments, positioning and categorizing of women, is so freaking exhausting. It is pervasive and it is destructive (not in a good way). **It lessens and distorts men's real contributions as well as women's.** It is inhumane.

[NB. I don't see women as monolithic or without error, nor do I experience or regard gender as a polarity; however these seem rather minor points at present, or at least beyond the scope of this space, the limits of which I am already pushing against.]

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The harsh and demeaning questioning of women who have survived assault and found voice and strength to speak is a disservice to us all (in this instance by us I mean earthlings). Their courage helps us all. It is a hard-won gift, motherfuckers. Try listening.

The harsh and demeaning judgment of women, both internal and external, who have lived under patriarchy and with misogyny so overlong...is not useful. It is not discernment.

Perpetrators need to face themselves. Men need to face themselves. Fathers need to face themselves. Professors need to face themselves. Administrators need to face themselves. Critics need to face themselves.

Publishers need to face themselves. 'Flirts.' [There can be no true flirtation without liberation, without a deep comprehension of equality.] And on and on and on. Let the crucial questioning begin within. Wake up. Get real.

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Females are not born here on earth to have our energies depleted and negated and used in this way. **We really exist** and we really really really have better things to do with our imaginations and our bodies and our time and our stories and our poeties and our institutions and our agency and our relationships and our breath and our precious, holy being.

As to our precious, holy being: I'll show you mine if you'll show me yours.

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The illusion of separation is painful and has only been an unfortunate side effect of our experience of differentiation, not of it.

I am not interested in condemnation, although some condemn themselves through fear. (And in doing so condemn us all.)

I am calling for personal and collective accountability and transparency.

For a world of actual trust.

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Here is our cardinal signature; now is our languageless phrase.

Degraded binaries and hierarchies wilt and transform. **We are all clergy now.**

There is room for truth and reconciliation, for healing and integrity, for fairness and recompense, for redemption, for alignment and for joy, for all of us in this world.

#yesallwomen #yesallchildren #yesalldaughters #blacklivesmatter
#earthabides

December 26, 2014—February 5, 2015

(Thanks to Sarah Anne Cox, Ellis DeVecchi, Susana Gardner, Arielle Guy, Gemma Jean Jackson, Ivy Rae Jackson, Alison Moncrieff, Nicole Stefanko-Fuentes, Jill Stengel, & Carol Treadwell for their feedback as I wrote this.)

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