

## Patriarchy and the Goddess

“When the Immortals would overthrow the things that are today ... they have no one to help them, but one whom the things that are today have cast out.”

W.B. Yeats, *The Adoration of the Magi*

Dublin, Cultural Capital of Europe, 1991. A ‘widening gyre’ is coming full circle and this little island, this Ireland, is being recognized for its contribution to the world. The green of its hills, the stillness of its pools mirroring still skies, the physical and spiritual passion of its sons and daughters have infiltrated every hemisphere of earth. The delicate balance – sometimes imbalance – of masculine and feminine energies that first found voice in the Abbey theatre now resonates throughout the world. Irishmen and Irishwomen, whose roots are in the Celtic goddesses, carry that heritage with them in their profound connection with the unconscious. That connection can be both a blessing and a curse. As blessing, it opens individuals to the creative abyss from which all new forms are born. As curse, it throws them into the abyss where they are lost in creative imagery over which they have no control. The Goddess then becomes Devourer, sucking their lifeblood, trapping them in helpless paralysis. The epitome of the devouring aspect of the Goddess, with whom James Joyce contended – even to blindness all his life – is Molly Bloom. Her unconditional, all-embracing ‘Yes’ is at once an invitation to release the unlimited resources of the maternal unconscious and at the same time confront the danger of being swallowed up in them – like Jonah in the belly of the whale.

Ancient heroes fought this dragon, sacrificed her, drank her blood, and made her strength their own. Modern heroes, with no understanding of sacrifice and transformation, try to murder her. She cannot be murdered. Sooner or later, she comes through the back door in addiction or illness. Creation and destruction are two sides of the same razor. Patriarchal power in both men and women has become the Destroyer of both creative masculinity and creative femininity. Dependent on its own dying structures, patriarchy rages against new values, new feelings, new bodies incarnating light.

Artists are not patriarchs. They search for new forms, for new energies. For this festival, Canadian artists, with the leadership of Robert O’Driscoll, have gathered together an extensive and focused collection. Professor O’Driscoll has secured the co-operation of two of Ireland’s most famed institutions: the Guinness Hop Store and the Abbey Theatre. At the Guinness Gallery Montreal’s La Raza Group – Francis Caprani, Scott MacLeod and Gerald Pedros – see what their subjects conceal a milli-fraction below the surface and move in their work outside the boundaries of the heat contained art gallery, taking their energies to the market place, and even the pool hall. At the Abbey Theatre in late August and early September, another Exhibition devoted to ‘The Goddess’ will be held in association with the international Yeats Festival under the directorship of Professor James Flannery and the sponsorship of Coca-Cola. The theme of this year’s Yeats Festival, which will be opened by newly-elected President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, will be *Sacred Mysteries*, exploring love and sexuality in Yeats and the modern world. Among the featured events of the late August/September festival will be: a dramatic component in the production of three sensitive and erotic Yeats plays dealing with the eternal enigma of love (*Deirdre*, *A Full Moon in March* and *The Shadowy Waters*); a musical component in the form of a Gala Concert, *Mná na hEireann/ Women of Ireland*, featuring Sinéad O’Connor, Enya, Maureen O’Hara, and Edna O’Brien, as well as rock groups U2 and Hothouse Flowers; a verbal component in the form of a Symposium, ‘Patriarchy and the Goddess: Conflicts, Discord, and Harmony between Men and Women’: featuring Betty Frieden and Robert Blyth, the leaders, respectively, of international women’s and men’s movements: and a dance/poetry component, featuring a dramatized reading of Robert O’Driscoll’s recently published poem, *Nato and the Warsaw Pact Are One* (Warsaw and Toronto, 1990) which charts the demise of patriarchy, complemented by modern dances (‘Changingwoman’, ‘Gaia’, ‘Earth’, ‘Molly Bloom’ and ‘Anna Livia Plurabelle’) choreographed by one of the great pioneers of American modern dance, Jean Erdman (Mrs. Joseph Campbell) and her Canadian counterpart in history, the founder of the Toronto Dance Theatre, Patricia Beatty; danced by Leslie Billingham from New York, Tyrell McGuire from Ottawa, and Patricia Beatty from Toronto. These two pioneers, Jean Erdman and

Patricia Beatty, work daily with their companies, exploring new forms to articulate the evolving relationship between masculinity and femininity within the individual.

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In 1921 W.B. Yeats recognized the dissolution of one cycle of history and the coming of another. In *The Second Coming* he writes:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

As the poem continues, the poet perceives the vast reservoir of *Spiritus Mundi*, in which all souls are connected. This universal pool is for him and for all artists the source of symbolic images. It is also the places of endless night:

Who were Shem and Shaun the living sons and daughters of?  
Night now! Tell me, tell me, tell me, elm! Night, night!  
Telmetale of stem or stone. Beside the rivering waters of,  
Hitherandthithering waters of. Night.

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In dance, art, music, and poetry, this Festival on 'Patriarchy and the Goddess' will, hopefully, bring to light the excesses of our outworn patriarchal images and explore the possibilities of the new. In responding to these shapes and sounds and cadences, we may find in viscera of our bodies and the dreams of our souls new images trying to contact our consciousness. What indeed we may be witnessing on the walls of the Guinness Gallery in this exhibition, and in Antony Lorraine's film of O'Driscoll's poem that will run continuously during it, may be last gasp of patriarchy. And a month from now, in the womb of the Abbey Theatre, we experience, at last, the birth pangs of the new masculine and the new feminine.

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