

Excerpt from “Hymn to Inanna”

Lady of all powers
In whom light appears,
Radiant one
Beloved of Heaven and Earth,
Tiara-crowned
Priestess of the Highest God,
My Lady, you are the guardian
Of all greatness.

Your hand holds the seven powers:
You lift the powers of being,
You have hung them over your fingers,
You have gathered the many powers,
You have clasped them now
Like necklaces onto your breast.

Like a dragon,
You poisoned the land—
When you roared at the earth
In your thunder,
Nothing green could live.
A flood fell from the mountain:
You, Inanna,
Foremost in Heaven and Earth.
Lady riding a beast,
You rained fire on the heads of men.
Taking your power from the Highest,
Following the commands of the highest,
Lady of all the great rites,
Who can understand all that is yours?

In the forefront
Of the battle,
All is struck down by you—
O winged Lady,
Like a bird
You scavenge the land.
Like a charging storm
You charge,
Like a roaring storm
You roar,

You thunder in thunder,
Snort in rampaging winds.
Your feet are continually restless.
Carrying your harp of sighs,
You breathe out the music of mourning.

It was in your service
That I first entered
The holy temple,
I, Enheduanna,
The highest priestess.
I carried the ritual basket,
I chanted your praise.
Now I have been cast out
To the place of lepers.
Day comes,
And the brightness
Is hidden around me.
Shadows cover the light,
Drape it in sandstorms.
My beautiful mouth knows only confusion.
Even my sex is dust.

- *Enheduanna, trans. Jane Hirshfield*

Nahuatl People, "The Midwife Addresses the Woman..." 1574 CE???, translated by John Bierhorst.

Precious feather, child,
Eagle woman, dear one,
Dove, daring daughter,
You have labored, you have toiled,
Your task is finished.
You came to the aid of your Mother, the noble lady, Cihuacoatl Quilaztli.
You received, raised up, and held the shield, the little buckler that she laid in your hands: she your
Mother, the noble lady, Cihuacoatl Quilaztli.
Now wake! Rise! Stand up!
Comes the daylight, the daybreak:
Dawn's house has risen crimson, it comes up standing.
The crimson swifts, the crimson swallows, sing,
And all the crimson swans are calling.
Get up, stand up! Dress yourself!
Go! Go seek the good place, the perfect place, the home of your Mother,
your Father, the Sun,
The place of happiness, joy,
Delight, rejoicing.
Go! Go follow your Mother, your Father, the Sun.
May his elder sisters bring you to him: they the exalted, the celestial women,
who always and forever know happiness, joy, delight, and rejoicing, in the company and in the
presence of our Mother, our Father, the Sun; who make him happy with their shouting.
My child, darling daughter, lady,
You spent yourself, you labored manfully:
You made yourself a victor, a warrior for Our Lord, though not without consuming all your strength;
you sacrificed yourself.
Yet you earned a compensation, a reward: a good, perfect, precious death.
By no means did you die in vain.
And are you truly dead? You have made a sacrifice. Yet how else could you have become worthy of
what you now deserve?
You will live forever, you will be happy, you will rejoice in the company and in the presence of our holy
ones, the exalted women. Farewell, my daughter, my child. Go be with them, join them. Let them hold
you and take you in.
May you join them as they cheer him and shout to him: our Mother, our Father, the Sun;
And may you be with them always, whenever they go in their rejoicing.

But my little child, my daughter, my lady,
You went away and left us, you deserted us, and we are but old men and old women.

You have cast aside your mother and your father.

Was this your wish? No, you were summoned, you were called.

Yet without you, how can we survive?

How painful will it be, this hard old age?

Down what alleys or in what doorways will we perish?

Dear lady, do not forget us! Remember the hardships that we see, that we suffer, here on earth:

The heat of the sun presses against us; also the wind, icy and cold:

This flesh, this clay of ours, is starved and trembling. And we, poor prisoners of our stomachs! There is nothing we can do.

Remember us, my precious daughter, O eagle woman, O lady!

You lie beyond in happiness. In the good place, the perfect place,

You live.

In the company and in the presence of our lord,

You live.

You as living flesh can see him, you as living flesh can call to him.

Pray to him for us!

Call to him for us!

This is the end,

We leave the rest to you.

Drinking Alone Beneath the Moon

Among the blossoms, a single jar of wine.
No one else here, I ladle it out myself.
Raising my cup, I toast the bright moon,
and facing my shadow makes friends three,
though moon has never understood wine,
and shadow only trails along behind me.
Kindred a moment with moon and shadow,
I've found a joy that must infuse spring:
I sing, and moon rocks back and forth;
I dance, and shadow tumbles into pieces.
Sober, we're together and happy. Drunk,
we scatter away into our own directions:
intimates forever, we'll wander carefree
and meet again in Star River distances.

- *Li Po, trans. David Hinton*

my dream about the second coming

mary is an old woman without shoes.
she doesn't believe it.
not when her belly starts to bubble
and leave the print of a finger where
no man touches.
not when the snow in her hair melts away.
not when the stranger she used to wait for
appears dressed in lights at her
kitchen table.
she is an old woman and
doesn't believe it.

when Something drops onto her toes one night
she calls it a fox
but she feeds it.

- *Lucille Clifton*

ASTONISHMENT

Why after all this one and not the rest?
Why this specific self, not in a nest,
but a house? Sewn up not in scales, but skin?
Not topped off by a leaf, but by a face?
Why on earth now, on Tuesday of all days,
and why on earth, pinned down by this star's pin?
In spite of years of my not being here?
In spite of seas of all these dates and fates,
these cells, celestials and coelenterates?
What is it really that made me appear
neither an inch nor half a globe too far,
neither a minute nor aeons too early?
What made me fill myself with me so squarely?
Why am I staring now into the dark
and muttering this unending monologue
just like the growling thing we call a dog?

- *Wisława Szymborska, trans. Clare Cavanagh*

The man pulling radishes
Pointed my way
With a radish.

- *Kobayashi Issa, trans. Robert Hass*

“There's denial, which we saw a lot of early on: *This virus won't affect us*. There's anger: *You're making me stay home and taking away my activities*. There's bargaining: *Okay, if I social distance for two weeks everything will be better, right?* There's sadness: *I don't know when this will end*. And finally there's acceptance. *This is happening; I have to figure out how to proceed*. Acceptance, as you might imagine, is where the power lies. We find control in acceptance. *I can wash my hands. I can keep a safe distance. I can learn how to work virtually.*” – *David Kessler*

“Start seeing God, but keep it a secret.” - *Hafez*

“Language itself is – language and nothing else besides. The understanding schooled in logic calls this proposition an empty tautology. Merely to say the identical twice—language is language—how is that supposed to get us anywhere? But we do not want to get anywhere. We would like only, for once, to get to just where we already are.” - *Heidegger*