



News from

Red Hen Press

P.O. BOX 40820 PASADENA, CA 91114 (626) 356-4760 fax: (626) 356-9974

## Book Description

In two intertwined songs, a feminist epic poem and a dreamlike opera libretto, *Among the Goddesses* traces one woman's harrowing mythological journey of discovery. This unique book includes an epic poem and an opera libretto, two versions of the same archetypal story. Tutored by encounters with seven Goddesses, some frightening and some encouraging, Marie/Lily experiences friendship, loss, rape, and abortion as she finds her own spiritual strength.

The first part of *Among the Goddesses* is the epic poem "Marie Moving." Sweeping in vision and compact in size, this magical story of archetypal encounter takes its shape from the most famous chant of the contemporary goddess movement: "Isis, Astarte, Diana, Hecate, Demeter, Kali . . . Inanna." These seven pre-Judeo-Christian goddesses, from ancient Egypt, Sumer, Greece, Babylonia, and India, have a powerful impact on Marie, infusing her life with increasing self-realization and strength of purpose. Each of these personifications of female power provides the force Marie needs to move her own life forward.

Each goddess who manifests in Marie's life does so in a way appropriate to her own nature and to her situation. Wise Eve, "the mother of us all," sets Marie on her path to wisdom, and Astarte appears as a stone, the form in which she was worshipped in ancient Sumer through the planting of trees. The chaste, independent goddess Diana and the sacrificing mother Demeter help guide Marie through her decision to have an abortion, and she is aided in carrying it out by the death-goddess Kali and the survivor of the underworld, Inanna.

The second part of *Among the Goddesses* tells the story in dramatic form as an opera libretto. Here, chanting and dance interludes add drama and mystery to the story of Lily's descent and archetypal encounters. Symbolism associated with goddesses world-wide for millenia permeates the opera, including the circles, spirals and wave shapes that archaeologist Marina Gimbutas discovered on goddess-related paintings and pottery.

Combining rhythmic, narrative, and dramatic resources of poetry that are not often brought to bear on contemporary feminism, *Among the Goddesses* is a vibrant testament to the inspirational strength of the earth-centered and female-centered spirituality movement. This magical book celebrates contemporary spirituality and gives voice to the power of the goddess and of poetry in today's culture.

## Praise for *Among the Goddesses*

*Among the Goddesses* is a bold experiment. Magical, mystical, musical, it charts a woman's journey that reverses the journey of Odysseus. What is it to be aided by goddesses, if we are women? What is it to face death, and to cause death? How do we become ourselves? "Isis, Astarte, Diana, Hecate, Demeter, Kali, Innanna" may be the mileposts of any woman's journey toward freedom.

—Alicia Ostriker, author of *No Heaven* and *The Book of Seventy*

No art form is as extravagant as opera, and Annie Finch has made a ravishing contribution to it—and to the poetic traditions behind her dramatic encounter with the goddesses. The warp and weft of poem and libretto are designed to reveal the song at the heart of the verse, the characters who pulse within the lines. Her book cunningly becomes a stage on which are enacted inspired rituals of beauty and power. A remarkable achievement!

—J. D. McClatchy

*Among the Goddesses* is Annie Finch's push toward the creation of a monumental work-of-art, an *opera* as totalartwork & as a vibrant mix of theater & epic. In her personal version/vision of these now resuscitated goddesses she ventures beyond the limits of the lyric/confessional mode too long assigned to poetry. And what's even better: she sings it out loud as a litany of sounded/clashing dactyls & classical/classy repetitions & choruses, enough to carry any reader, she or he, who wants to go there. *Where?* Into that genuinely mythic place, the home of poetry & prophecy, where she affirms her artistry & dares us to hear & share her vision.

—Jerome Rothenburg