

## Reflections on "The Lady of the Day" and The Woman of the Night"

From Statements by Valerie Malhotra Bentz, Ph.D. (Donor)



When I first saw "The Lady of the Day" in the lovely garden of the Fielding Institute at the Shipley exhibit in Santa Barbara, I found myself strangely drawn to her. Vines of leaves and photographic slides attached to her skirt, her weight slung over to one side with burdens, and she glowed in transcendent bliss. Later I came to know that this peaceful composed Madonna is one powerful side of womanhood, but there is another side which balances this sweet one--"The Woman of the Night."



This powerful woman may only come out in my dreams, yet I knew her power was also essential. In the 1980's, I carried out a research project in which fifty-three Texas women participated intensely. There were high achieving women, who were college students, many of them working on graduate degrees. They were also mothers and held down full of part time jobs with responsibilities. They were carrying a triple burden. In addition they were carrying loaded memories which I refer to as "hauntings" from "ghosts" and "inspirations" from "spirits" of their childhoods. (see my book, *Becoming, Mature: Childhood Ghosts and Spirits in Adult Life*. 1989, Aldine de Gruyter.)



There is a wild spirit, akin to that of loyal wolves which women have been said lately to "run with" hiding beneath the muscles of the ladies of the day. "The Woman of the Night is a fierce woman, with hips that could roll over everything like a lawn mower, a woman who would defend her turf and protect those she loves. She may be "Shiva the Destroyer", The Jungian "Terrible Mother" archetype, the Witch, the Hag, the Crone, the one who puts up with no nonsense. She wears a mask which protects her unknowable essences but reveals herself to be a powerful queen, or angry leopard. She is one who would dig her teeth into a snare and remove it from her baby's ankle and who frightened me in the mirror of my dreams. Then I realized she is on my side.



So these two sides of a complete women's soul encompass both the day and the night, the Yin and the Yang, the male and the female, the happy and the sad, the joyful and the angry, the open and the closed, the vulnerable and the formidable.

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