

Aug/Sept 2021
Commission for Inside Out Dorset Fest/ Activate Arts
In response to Luke Jerram's Gaia

Primordial Mother Speaks for Herself **By Zakiya Mckenzie**

Before the birth of civilisation
I was
Primordial
Picked from the order of which
Root itself burst first
In the wet, blackout belly of blue
Deep secret sages and siren sisters
Seen only in the slumbering (submarine) visions
Of divine women who open their eyes
Not knowing they carry my blessing on their heads

When night wraps up in deep violet and delicate velvet
These siren sage women exhale
(Children sleep)
Wanderers moving through shadow
Floating as galaxy
Everything within

When light flees into shooting star and no wish can satisfy
She is like the drinking gourd¹
Playing the hand of the sky
Pulling hope through hardship
Steering boat through woods of discord
The caravan's only true guide
through astral waves and landed shore

Before the growth of modernisation
I was the mother primordial
Watched over by the old woman who

¹ Another name for the Big Dipper. According to legend, people running away from slavery in The United States "followed the Drinking Gourd" to freedom.

sat with daughters she did not bear
Yet poured into them
with the affinity of moss covering softness
Shaded from time
Taller branches older
For ideas, for flowers
Folded into terra firma
As a baby is swaddled
As a tonic is swallowed
For rhythms that flow through connected veins
Turning bitterwood to sweetwater
when heartblood is mixed in

2.

Primordial mother answers to many names
Oya², daughter of chaos
thrashing as hair pulled from scalp
Howling outwards, whirling inwards
Still
An eye full of calm
As smoke is silence and signal
in the same
She is sweet with the salt of duality
Her mercy is potion that washes the throat
Of those under her grip
She opens the gate while watching the earth rot
Ushering empty souls to overflowing plots
Standing guard at this monument to the anthropocene
Waiting to close the crypt and end the script
Of this earth exhibition

Like a fledging bird finding steadiness on wind
If it never returns, she wont say a thing
For content is primordial mother
that in this eleventh hour

² In the Yoruba pantheon, Oya is the Goddess of destruction, war, chaos (Gaia is the daughter of chaos in Greek mythology). Oya was a mother who bore no living children of her own. Shango, God of Thunder, was her consort.

She gave
She gives
Refusal of honey for taste blunted on sour
Is outside of her power
She may wail for her creation but will preserve her essence
For primordial mother will return to elemental nothingness

3.

*Before the birth of anything sure
My bones chalked and my flesh mangled
into dust that made me indistinguishable
From that which made the first man*