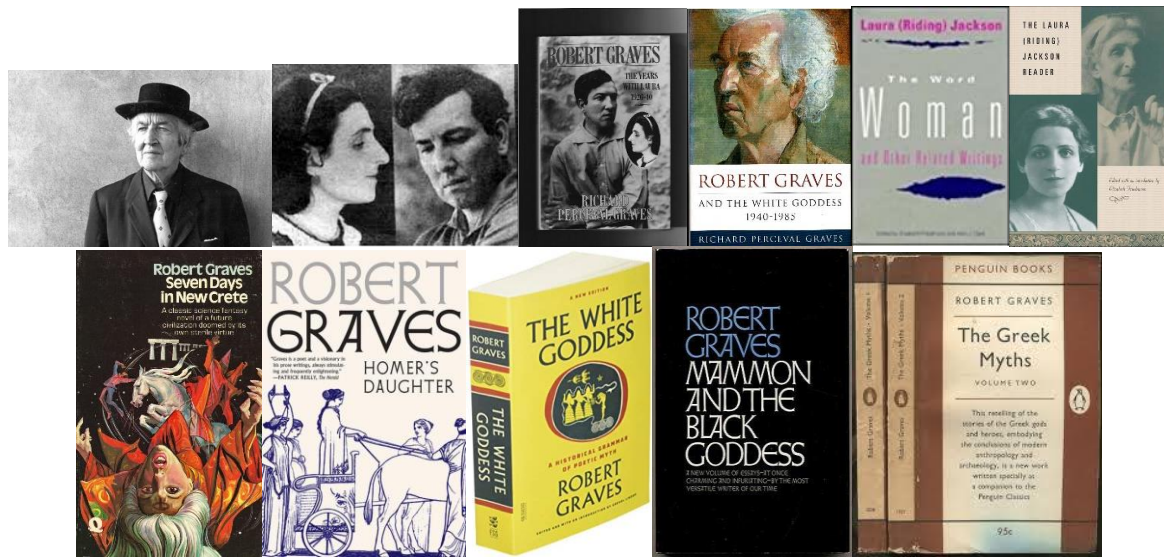


# Robert Graves, Laura Riding, *Druantia* and the Ancient Sources of Creative Inspiration



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**Introduction:** This talk/workshop was presented at **Bendigo Writers Council's** monthly '**Authors Explore**' night held at Bendigo (City) Library on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 (7-9pm). Special thanks to Penny, Scott and the Board at **BWC** for the invitation to speak, also to the writers, editors and members of the public who turned up on the night and shared the results of their writing experiments with the group.

I read Robert Graves's book *The White Goddess* as an 18-year-old after borrowing it from the Auckland library on a whim. In all likelihood there is no stranger book in all twentieth century literature. It was my introduction to English Romanticism gone archaic—to a poetics of 'Origins' in fabulous, if eccentric, revolt against not only Classical science and Enlightenment reason, but also monotheistic and Classical 'patriarchal polytheistic' spiritual paradigms.

It is a heady book outlining a grand historical narrative of the human imagination and creativity that no 18-year-old could hope to effectively critique. Other novelists and poets had introduced me to the great 'crises of subjectivity/meaning' unfolding in our modern era, but *The Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (i.e. *The White Goddess* and Graves's later work '*Intimations of the Black Goddess*', as well as Riding's work *The Word "Woman"*) gave that crisis an immense mytho-historical depth. The book challenges its readers, as much as it soothes them, with its mythopoetic curiosities and impossibly complex argumentation. I was not aware of it at the time, but the book gave me a virulent dose of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Neo-Romanticism!

Graves, of course, was a prolific Anglo-Welsh poet, novelist, mythographer and essayist who came to prominence after WW1 and wrote about 140 books over his life time. He passed away in 1985 and Riding, a key influence on the book, passed away in 1991.

I lapped up Graves's archaeological detective work, likewise the absorbing, if hopelessly complex, catalogue of ancient European and Near Eastern Gods and Goddesses with their accompanying cult centres, archetypal stories, animal and plant associations, and strange archaic rituals. I also enjoyed the retellings of any number of Celtic foundation myths and legends, but most of all I took to heart the book's all-encompassing critique of the cultural forces (and gender imbalances) behind our crisis-ridden modern worldview.

Throughout *The White Goddess*, or *Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, and also in his long essay *Intimations of the Black Goddess* (1965), Graves examines a dizzying array of mythological and poetic material, demonstrating the degree to which particular poets and particular traditions were 'true to the authentic inspiration associated with the Muse Goddess.'

The influence of this ancient female archetype of poetry and creativity can also be found in Graves's poetry, as well as many of his later nonfiction works (e.g. *The Greek Myths*, *The Hebrew Myths* and *The Nazarene Gospel Restored*), and even to a number of his novels (e.g. *King Jesus*, *Seven Days in New Crete*, *Homer's Daughter*, *The Golden Fleece* and *Wife to Mr. Milton*).

In truth, *W.G.* was an early Ethnopoetic text (meaning it was subversively anti-colonialist for its era) as well as a seminal Mythopoetic Feminist text. The power of the argument and the vastness of the erudition had me hooked, even though from the very beginning—given my late 20<sup>th</sup> century 'antipodean' positioning—I saw some blatant holes in the Graves's argument. These concerned, in particular:

a) his understanding of non-European polytheistic, animistic and shamanistic traditions;

b) his understandings of female and other gender poets/creatives, and their experiences of 'creativity/inspiration' and 'desire';

c) Graves's theory concerning the archetypal necessity that a 'tragic' love relationship—basically 'unrequited'—should unfold between 'poet' and 'muse' in order to maximise creative/ imaginative/ inspirational potency;<sup>1</sup> and finally

d) certain inconsistencies in Graves's arguments concerning the ancient Celtic 'tree alphabet' sacred to the Muse Goddess that Graves placed at the centre of his argument, as well as his problematic adoption of James Frazer's late 19<sup>th</sup> C anthropological theories that attempted to universalise/globalise a myth detailing the regular physical sacrifice of a 'King of the Year' (*Rex Nemorensis*) to a local version of the Goddess Artemis/Diana near Lake Nemi.<sup>2</sup>

*The White Goddess*, then, may be viewed as a renegade text based on:

a) reconstructed ancient Celtic culture (i.e. 19<sup>th</sup> C Celtic Revivalism) as well as reconstructed pre-patriarchal European spiritual traditions;

b) 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century archaeological discoveries and anthropological theorising that helped fuel some of the above listed 'revivalism, and;

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<sup>1</sup> Graves' stance here seemed to me to involve a highly personalised theory (i.e. based upon his relationship with Riding). The evidence for this archetypal base to relationships between Creative and Muse Goddess seemed to me to be based more on the localised Medieval 'courtly love' traditions of the troubadours, etc. and as such seemed suspect as a basis for Graves' more universal and global theory of Poet to Muse relationships in primordial cultures.

<sup>2</sup> Here Graves transplanted what was essentially a local political myth to the heart of his theory of the relationship between poet and Muse.

c) Graves's own 19<sup>th</sup> century derived 'Romantic'—and I would say 'Gothic Romantic'—poetic sensibilities pushed in an extreme direction.

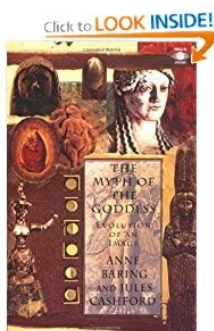
In some senses the book is the ultimate challenge to poetic and literary Modernism (and Postmodernism), however, at the same time, its respect for ancient spiritual traditions still practiced by many indigenous peoples around the world, made it a key early Ethnopoetic and anti-colonialist text, as well as a foundation text for the New Age movement and what became known as Mythopoetic Feminism. It also fed into the environmental/ecology movements of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Through these channels, Graves's 'Triple Muse Goddess' contributed to, at the very least, a powerful alternative strand of 'Postmodernism' looking to critique and find solutions to a range of pressing social and cultural issues.

The book also offers poets, writers and other creatives a fascinating perspective on various primordial sources of creativity and inspiration. At the same time, it offers a re-evaluation and re-affirmation of the important roles played by poets and other creatives in modern societies—i.e. it placed them front-and-centre as nurturers, guardians over, etc. the cultural dimensions to social life. In that role they serve the species' 'life force'.

## **How Might a “Muse Goddess” or “Muse Entity” Be Useful to the Poets and Writers of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?**

Graves's particular understanding of the role of the 'Muse Goddess' in a creative's life can be summarised as follows:

1) True poetry and story-telling is related to "a magical language bound up with ancient popular religious ceremonies in honour of the triple-faced “Moon-Goddess” or “Muse Goddess”, thus, "The function of true poetry and story-telling is religious invocation of the muse."



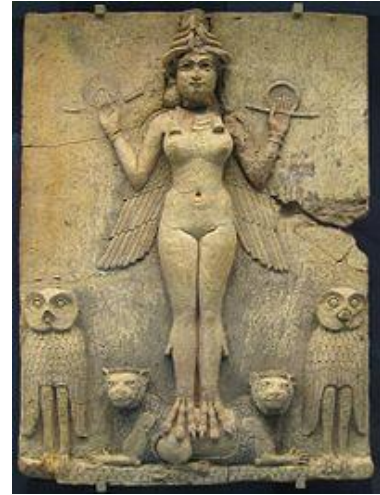
According to Graves this ancient magical language of poetry was obscured, outlawed and denigrated after the emergence of militaristic Indo-European male Sky Gods in the late Neolithic period (this new religious paradigm Graves labelled 'patriarchal polytheism'). Later religious and philosophical developments – e.g. the rational philosophy of the Greek Classical philosophers (especially Plato and Aristotle), the emergence of Hebrew, Egyptian, Christian and Islamic monotheism, and the eventual emergence of scientific materialism (post-1600) only exacerbated a very ancient religious 'gender' problem.

Consequently, according to Graves: "It is only by rare accidents of spiritual regression that poets make their lines magically potent in the ancient sense."

2) For a male poet/story-teller a mortal woman ('the beloved') may become a temporary (or more long-lasting) portal for the otherworldly "Muse-Goddess". The true poet—according to Graves's mid-life poetics—is thus a kind of "priest/servant of the Muse". For the most part, this 'service' involves an ongoing imaginative conversation/dialogue (often recorded in notebooks) between poet and muse on all kinds of creative matters. Interestingly, although Graves had little to say about the female poetic situation (on this subject he remained

depressingly ensnared by the patriarchal traditions he elsewhere critiqued), his former lover, the American poet Laura Riding, through her work *The Word "Woman"* as well as other essays outlining her own poetic, or critiquing Graves's misreading of her work, offers us some interesting insights.

3) We need to pose an important question: How do we know when a poem, story, art-work, nonfiction idea, etc. has been 'inspired' by the Triple Muse Goddess? Graves quotes Welsh poet Alun Lewis who wrote of "the single poetic theme of Life and Death ... the question of what remains of the beloved". Graves interprets Lewis' statement as follows: 'The elements of the single infinitely variable Theme are to be found in certain ancient poetic myths which though manipulated ... yet remain constant in general outline. Perfect faithfulness to the Theme affects the reader of a poem with a strange feeling, between delight and horror, of which the purely physical effect is that the hair literally stands on end. A.E. Houseman's test of a true poem was simple and practical: does it make the hairs of one's chin bristle if one repeats it silently while shaving?'

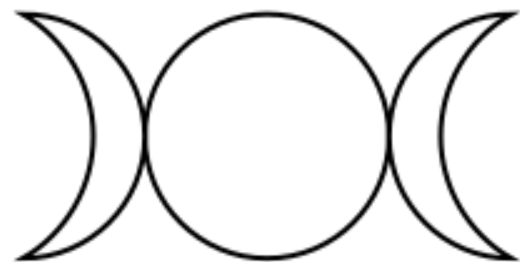


[Image: 'Ishtar' (Queen of night, Old Babylonian relief)]

If one has no, or very few, hairs on one's chin (!) Graves offers up other versions of the test: "The reason why the hairs stand on end, the eyes water, the throat is constricted, the skin crawls and a shiver runs down the spine when one writes or reads a true poem is that a true poem is necessarily an invocation of the Muse Goddess, the Mother of All Living, the ancient power of fright and lust."

In summary, Graves set the poetic bar very high indeed by suggesting that if poets wish to create 'authentic poetry' (or any kind of primordially authentic literature), as against merely ornate and intellectually decorative poetry, they must make it their goal to move readers in visceral and emotional ways.

4) But who, exactly, is the "Triple Muse Goddess"? Graves's works dealing with this figure are numerous and multi-genred, thus giving rise to only provisional findings on the exact nature of both the figure he is outlining, as well as the dynamics of poet/Muse interactions. Similarly, great complexity, and at times confusion, arises out of his argumentation



technique—as evident in *W.G.* and *I of the BG*—of simultaneously, a) listing dozens, if not hundreds, of ancient Goddess figures, whilst, b) simplifying their manifestations into a 'trinity' of underlying Moon Goddesses representing three important female life stages – i.e. Maiden (red Goddess), Lover/Mother (white Goddess) and Wise woman/elder (black Goddess). Some critics have suggested that this 'Goddess Trinity' is not historically accurate and was rather an invention by Graves that served to make his proposed ancient 'Muse Goddess' capable of rivalling/challenging the Christian trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. [Images: modern symbol of the Lunar Triple Goddess ALSO 'Hecate' (Roman after a Greek original)]



One would think, however, that the most promising places to start in outlining a many-faced primordial Indo-European ‘Muse Goddess’ would be with the many female deities associated with wisdom, writing, inspiration, communications, omens, libraries, teaching, books, etc. e.g. figures like Seshet (Egypt), Saraswati (India), Athena/Minerva (Ancient Greece and Rome), Hecate (ancient Greece), The Muses (Ancient Greece and Rome), Bridget, Cerridwen and Rhiannon (Celtic Britain), Green Tara (Buddhism), and so on, and though some of these figures are indeed given pride of place in Graves’s book, they are repeatedly conflated (under the ‘Triple Moon Goddess’ heading) with a range of female deities not specifically associated with creativity, wisdom etc. This Gravesian scholastic manoeuvre, from my perspective anyway, is the source of Graves’s inadequate perspective on female creatives, since most of these ancient figures were *active* (rather than *passive*) creatives, intellectuals, artists, poets, healers, educators, etc.

Consequently, we might suggest that the ‘Muse Goddesses’ of ancient Europe and the Near East were not simply Mother goddesses, nor were they simply ‘Lover’ or ‘unrequited Love interest’ goddesses (i.e. passive romantic ‘objects’ for creative men to worship and put on a pedestal in order to create works of art), rather they were quite often ‘active creatives’ themselves as well as, in some cases, varying manifestations of the sacralised/divine feminine—manifestations that might include both life-nurturing aspects and also, in some instances, destructive (or apparently destructive) aspects (e.g. as famously encompassed by the Hindu deity, Kali, and the ancient Greek Goddess of Magic, Hecate).

5) The evidence in Graves’s books suggests an ongoing/enduring internal relationship between the ‘poet/creative’ and a ‘Muse Entity’ of some sort – interestingly, Sappho’s ‘Muse Entities’ were all female from the evidence of her poetry. At times this internal relationship may well become externalized in a relationship with a real woman—as it did for Graves with Laura Riding in particular. This real human being, according to Graves, ‘embodies’ or is ‘possessed by’ a spirit/entity associated with what we could identify as the ‘divine creative feminine’.

We note here, that in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Riding suggested to Graves—who was then her lover—that he might view her as a re-incarnation of Isis, the ancient Egyptian Goddess! Apparently Graves took this statement by Riding quite literally, though it seems likely that Riding might have meant something quite different to the literal interpretation Graves apparently settled upon. Of course, actual possession by deities (usually for short periods of time) was a common experience in many ancient religions—even though it seems quite alien, even disturbing, to our modern sensibilities.

6) The internal, ongoing ‘dialogue’ between poet and ‘Muse Entity’ – conducted by way of the ancient ‘Language of the Moon Goddess’ (which is to say through poetry, highly symbolic language/symbols, music, dance, prophesy, story, myth, folk rituals, etc.) seems to resemble, in many respects, the Active Imagination techniques developed by psychologist Carl Jung out of his readings concerning the long tradition of ‘internal trance dialogues’ he uncovered via his studies of Medieval and Early Modern Alchemical texts. Put simply, the poet (or alchemist, in Jung’s case) begins and sustains an internal, highly charged/symbolic dialogue with an imaginary being who may also be physically manifest in the actual world.

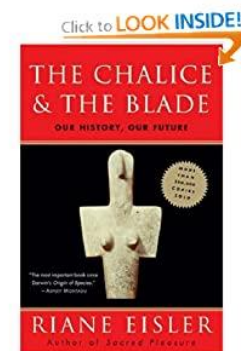
From my reading of Graves, this internal dialogue with a “Muse Entity”, can—provided the five precepts listed below are also evident—lead to remarkable creative breakthroughs.

7) What are Graves’s Five Key Preconditions for an Encounter with Our Individual ‘Muse (or Inspirational) Entity’? To be a true poet/story-teller/artist (i.e. to make our creations magically potent in the ancient sense) Graves suggests that we should:

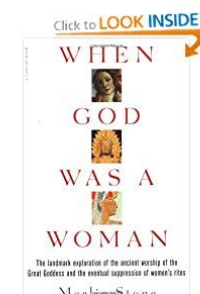
- a) Learn everything we can about mythology, history and philosophy.
- b) Learn everything we can about the mechanics of writing – e.g. editing (grammar and style) and mastery of poetic/writing technique, structure and form.
- c) Learn to trust the processes associated with of ‘proleptic’ and ‘analeptic’ thinking’ i.e. by learning to rely upon the imagination and intuition rather than upon alienated forms of modern reason alone.
- d) Structure our personal relationships and life-goals in authentic ways such that we are true to the quiet, enduring nature-based morality of the Triple Goddess (or “Muse Goddess”).
- e) Structure our lives so that we are close to the natural world and thus can become open to its intricate rhythms.

8) According to Graves, if we work within these simple guidelines at the same time as we ‘open internal communication’ channels with the transpersonal domain, the ‘Muse’ will regularly send us poems, songs, stories, ideas for nonfiction works, etc. that contain the visceral uncanniness and awe associated with her particular creative epiphanies. Also, according to Graves, ‘comfortable (rather than passionate) relationships’, a flawed commitment to ‘patriarchal modes of thought’ (as embodied in many post-Neolithic religions and philosophies), ‘prolonged alienation from the natural world’ (by choosing to live in urban areas for too long) and ‘alienated work routines’ are particularly damaging to the poetic/creative sensibility.

9) To Graves, the way of the Muse Goddess is the way of the True Artist. The eclipse of the Muse Goddess, however, leads to the subtle dehumanisation of self, literary and creative cultures, and, ultimately, society as a whole. Fundamental Creativity is thus seen as central to the human condition; without it human beings become robotic, disconnected from themselves, even violent and dangerous. Authentic, life-nurturing creativity, on the other hand, is a gift given by the “Muse Goddess” to those committed to following the ancient precepts.



10) The poet-artist-story-teller, in honouring ‘the Muse’, also honours: ‘poetic Truth’, the ‘laws of the natural world’, ‘emotional honesty’ (especially on matters of love and desire), the benefits of the *via negativa* or ‘Dark Night of the Soul’, the primordial essence of womankind in all of her life-span aspects and, also, ‘the importance of creativity and the imagination’ to the well-being of individuals and social groups. To Graves, poetry represents a process of psycho-spiritual revelation, and his version of the primordial “Muse Goddess” represents the source of all authentic poetic and creative inspiration. Ancient male deities of inspiration, at least in the Classical religious context, e.g. Apollo, Dionysus, Hermes, and Orpheus are, according to Graves, of only secondary importance.



## How Did Graves Arrive at a Poetic Revival of the Triple Muse Goddess as an Ancient Source of Authentic Creativity?



How exactly did Graves reach a point in his career as a poet and writer wherein the kind of ‘extreme Origins Poetics’ outlined above could replace the various Modernist forms of poetic experimentation evident among so many of his fellow 20<sup>th</sup> century poets i.e. poets proclaiming Symbolist, Imagist, Futurist, Dadaist, Surrealist, Objectivist, Vorticist, Projectivist, etc. sympathies?

The answer lies in both his 14 year relationship with fellow poet Laura Riding, and his personal response to the industrial scale dehumanization he saw all around him—but especially as he’d encountered it in two World Wars; in the industrial scale exterminations of minorities in Europe; in the threat of global ecological collapse; in the often unacknowledged shadow sides to science, Enlightenment reason and a culture espousing ‘technological advancement’ at all costs as an essential component of ‘Progress’ (culminating in atomic and, later, nuclear weapons); and in the predominance of various noxious political ideologies that promised liberation, but led, ultimately, to mass trauma and existential dehumanisation.

Graves’s development of the Muse Goddess/Triple Goddess idea as a fundamental aspect of his poetics, began in 1926 with the arrival in England, and subsequently on Graves’s family doorstep, of gifted and charismatic American Modernist poet, Laura Riding. At the time Graves was unhappily married to his first wife, Nancy Nicholson, and was, so the story goes, struggling to recover from both the traumas of his military service in WW1, and, more specifically, the aftermath of a near death experience related to him being shot, and even pronounced dead at one point, during the Battle of the Somme.

He also found himself in a creative *cul-de-sac* linked, commentators argue, to both: a) the death knell/final exhaustion of late 19<sup>th</sup> Century English poetic Romanticism; and b) confusion among poets and other creatives over the best direction for poetic/artistic Modernism after the horrors of WW1. The war had changed everything, and Graves was struggling to plot a creative course for himself in the face of the changed circumstances.

If we are to believe the biographers, as well as Graves’s own testimony, Riding assisted him to overcome a number of the most pressing issues he was facing. However, she also assisted him to separate from his wife, Nancy Nicholson—though not before the three engaged in a now famous *ménage-a-trois* named by Riding as ‘The Trinity’.

By the late 1920s, Graves and Riding had left the hustle and bustle of England for a life closer to nature near the village of Deià in Mallorca. It was during these relatively peaceful years that Graves and Riding wrote many of their most important works. It is also during this era that Graves’s classical education and vast understanding of mythology and history merged with Riding’s uniquely feminist—and, I would say, Modernist leaning existential/individualist and often overtly political—‘poetics’.

This collaboration prepared the ground for the unique poetic Graves developed after 1940 (i.e. that we find in *W.G* and *IBG*). The key manuscript of this era, however, i.e. pointing the way to Mythopoetic feminism, is actually Laura Riding's longish essay *The Word "Woman"*, which Riding had ordered Graves to burn upon his return to Mallorca after WW2. Graves, however, was unable to burn the manuscript (thankfully!), and Beryl Graves eventually returned it to Riding after Robert's death in 1985.

The collaboration between Graves and Riding in Deià continued throughout the 1930s, but the Spanish Civil War forced the two poets to abandon their home in 1936 for, firstly, Britain, and later, for Riding's birth country, America. By 1939 Riding had fallen in love with American writer and poet, Schuyler B. Jackson, and the Graves/Riding relationship and creative collaboration began to fall apart.

*The Roebuck in the Thicket/White Goddess* was written as a response to both the final breakdown of Graves's relationship with Riding as well as his horror at the mass inhumanity unfolding during World War II. The main idea for the work—initially called *The Roebuck in the Thicket*—came to Graves suddenly in January 1944. He says the initial manuscript of 60,000 words took him only 4 weeks to write! He gradually enlarged this manuscript, however, and from 1946 on he tried to get it published. The book was finally published in 1948 to both critical acclaim, and confusion/bemusement.

Riding, who was silent about the book for many years, later critiqued the book in scathing terms as simultaneously a work of airy nonsense, as well as a perversion of her own early 1930s 'poetics' which she had all-but renounced by the early 1940s. Perhaps her main ambivalence about the work, however, rested upon her suspicion that the all-powerful, inspirational but occasionally cruel, 'Muse Goddess' Graves delineates in his work actually contained elements of her own personality. If Graves wrote the book to honour Riding and perhaps win back her love he was greatly deluding himself., since the publication of the book served only to worsen relations between the two poets.

The work of articulating the differences between Riding's more explicitly 'reason-based' and Modernist influenced poetics (with its later life focus on the 'truth telling' potential of language), and Graves's regression (as Riding saw it) to an archaic Origins and Icon-obsessed poetics based on primordial European spiritual traditions, is ongoing.

## Conclusions

Currently, I see Riding (Jackson's) more down-to-earth perspectives on 'male-female' i.e. gender, issues in mythic history, actual history and literary cultures (as outlined in *The Word "Woman"*, *The Person I Am* [2 Vols.] and elsewhere) as useful correctives to the anthropological, scholastic and mythopoetic excesses Graves launched in *W.G.*<sup>3</sup> I say this, however, without rejecting Graves's overall achievement—the need for revision is not the same as the outright rejection of an argument. I am also tempted to declare *The White Goddess* a joint project, at least in terms of its thematic concerns.

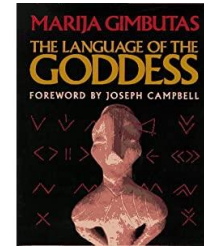
More importantly, Riding's perspectives, also allow 21<sup>st</sup> century poets and writers to develop their own notions of an inspirational 'Muse Entity' beyond some of the gender etc. limitations evident in Graves's work on the topic. If Riding—as the joint originator of the 'Muse Goddess' revival idea (for creatives)—argues that Graves's rendering in *W.G.* needs revision, we should take her suggestions seriously.

Riding explicitly critiqued the way Graves limited inspiration to a particular spiritual 'personality' i.e. the archetype of the Muse Goddess. As a consequence, Riding's more

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<sup>3</sup> Though, in fact, I hold Clayton Eshleman's more recent essay on the topic to be an equally useful 'corrective' to some of those excesses.

Modernist and existential feminist perspectives open the way to a more nuanced and inclusive adaptation of Graves's central insights. Our exercise tonight merges the lessons we can learn from her critiques with the Jungian technique of 'Active Imagination' to provide 21<sup>st</sup> century creatives with more options regarding how they might imagine an 'Inspirational (Muse) Entity'.

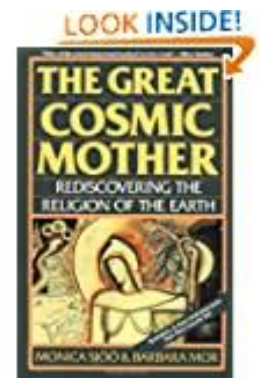


## Graves's and Riding's work Contributed to Late 20<sup>th</sup> C Attempts to Revive Myriad Ancient Goddess Traditions.

\* For many important post-WWII thinkers the catastrophes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - the Atom bomb, two WWs, the brutalities of secular ideologies (such as Fascism and Communism), the reality of an emerging dark side to economic expansionism (e.g. environmental degradation), the horrors of the Holocaust, rising levels of psycho-spiritual alienation, tendencies toward Orwellian technocratic totalitarianism, increasing levels of female alienation etc. etc. ... were outgrowths of a fundamentally sick society/species. The question became: what exactly was the illness?

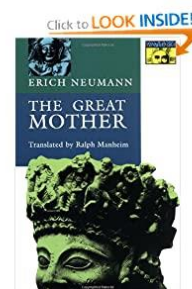
\* Anthropologists, Feminists, poets, writers and alternative psychologists began seriously questioning the fundamental philosophical and religious values of Western society as manifest in Western history. Out of this arose what we might term a 'Goddess Narrative' explaining to some extent what might be unfolding, this involved:

1) Archaeologists, Historians & Anthropologists attempting to piece together the Paleolithic, Neolithic and later history of Feminine manifestations of divinity. This was part of a general desire to reassess the messages and value of Non-Western spiritual traditions. Gimbutas' work is particularly inspirational here.



2) Culture Critics, Feminist Writers and various Poets and Writers began constructing an updated polytheistic-animistic alternative to the value structures of modern secular societies, arguing that Western society is an outgrowth of an alienated, over-abstracted masculine mindset which gradually rose to power through violence and oppression over many millennia. This group argue that only through some kind of return to the Goddess can we overcome the negative consequences of our alienated condition.

3) Radical Psychologists like Jung, Neumann, Grof, Hillman and others began attacking modern constructions of 'The Self' as a purely secular entity. They argued that since modern psychology and psychiatry are based upon alienated secular philosophies they are incapable of overcoming the plague of alienation that comes with highly rational, competitive, abstracted models of self-hood favouring patriarchal modes of understanding typical to our age. Jung, Hillman and others suggested that the human soul needs feminine sacred symbols if it is to avoid psychospiritual illness. Similarly, for whole societies, female deities might be seen as a bulwark against the dehumanization and social mayhem associated with patriarchal spiritual and philosophic systems.



\*Their goal was to overcome a perceived culturally conditioned state of alienation from - the earth, animals, plants, human intuition, feelings/emotions, nurturing, the body, sense of community, the imagination/art/creativity, the sacred, etc.

## Worksheet for Contacting & Dialoguing With Your Personal ‘Muse Entity’

We might define ‘the Muse’, in our Postmodern era, as **any entity**—e.g. alive, dead (but either imaginatively or spiritually present), world transcending, or non-human (e.g. a magical being, or an uncanny animal or plant/tree) etc.—that inspires you to create and that you can communicate with concerning both your creative works and the direction of your creative career (either through normal means or in your mind via using Jung’s ‘Active Imagination’ technique). Your Muse Entity could also be an object or thing that in your imagination takes on some of the characteristics of an ‘animate being’ (thus permitting communication with it). Ideally your imaginative relationship with your particular version of the ‘Muse Entity’ would be long-term, i.e. you would be able to check in regularly with this ‘entity/being’ about matters relevant to your creative life/projects. Finally, your ‘Muse Entity’ need not be a lover/love interest – your Muse Entity might just as easily take the form of a ‘wise mentor’ figure.

**A NOTE ABOUT PSYCHOSPIRITUAL RESISTENCE:** The modern secular/materialist/Classical scientific mindset has great difficulty with the ‘Muse Entity’ concept, but please bear with me in this exercise, as we experiment with an adapted version of Graves’s attempt to revive primordial European, North African and Ancient Near Eastern polytheistic, animistic and shamanistic thought processes linked to the creative imagination. We are pondering, in this talk and workshop, what such ancient modes of imagining/creating might offer modern creatives.

1. Place yourself in a comfortable, quiet and relaxed state and try to picture the most inspirational setting imaginable for you (i.e. for the purposes of evoking your creativity). Note key aspects of your ideal setting – i.e. is it in a wilderness area or is it in a town or city? What distinct natural etc. features immediately present themselves to your mind’s eye? Are you inside a building or structure or outside somewhere? What is the weather like? What season of the year is evident? What part of the day have you landed in? Note also any animals, insects, birds, creatures, people, etc. (whether ordinary or magical) populating the scene? Note also any vegetation whether ordinary, magical, alien, etc. in the scene. Where are you personally situated in the scene and note anything strange about your body, clothing, etc. Briefly write out your answers below.

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2. Imagine that a being/entity, Your Personal Version of ‘the Muse Entity’ (i.e. your ultimate

incarnation of an inspirational entity capable of sparking and guiding your creativity) enters your setting and moves to a place near you in the scene before halting/resting. Look closely at this entity/being and note any unique features: Species? Gender? Age? Size? Body type? Clothing? Is the entity a Living person, the Spirit of a dead person or a Magical entity of some sort? If a magical entity what kind of entity: a God/Goddess/Magical creature, animal, plant, folk entity, etc.? Or is your entity an 'animate object' of some sort? Does the entity have any unique gestures/ways of moving/ways of expressing itself, etc.? What features of the entity make you believe it to be an inspirational figure for you? Does the entity begin communicating with you about your creativity (or anything else) instantly? Briefly write your answers to the above questions in the spaces provided below. Note: please be as vivid, in terms of the 5 senses, as possible since the more you bring the setting and your 'Muse Entity' to life in your imagination the more useful this exercise will be for you.

3. Imagine yourself acknowledging / saying hello etc. to your Muse Entity and asking it some or all of the following questions. Exchange pleasantries, then put some or all of the following questions to the entity ...

**Q1. Writer: Am I on the right track with my creative pursuits or can I do/achieve more? If I can do more what specifically must I do?**

**A1. Inspirational Entity:** [Record the answer you are given ...]

**Q2. Writer: Are there any blocks to the full manifestation of my creativity that you feel I need to address? If there are blocks, what are they and how should I remove them (from your perspective)?**

**A2. Inspirational Entity:** [Record the answer you are given ...]

**Q 3. Writer:** What is the most promising creative project in my life right now that is currently unfinished? Could you give me any advice regarding furthering/developing etc. this project?

**A 3. Inspirational Entity:** [Record the answer you are given ...]

**Q 4. Writer:** Do you mind telling me more about yourself, i.e. where do you come from and where do you ordinarily live? What sort of entity are you? What 'creative

**discipline/disciplines do you specialise in? Are you eternal or spiritual? Are you a creature/being from the archaic past, a creature/being from the future or a creature being from outer space or another dimension? What is your purpose in presenting mere mortals like myself with [circle one or more of the following:] ideas for poems, songs, stories, creative nonfiction articles or books, plays, movie scripts, etc.?**

**A 4. Inspirational Entity:** [Record the answer you are given ...]

**Q 5. Writer:** What do you think I need to do to become more inspired/creative more often? Could you detail the behaviours, attitudes and life situations that will promote my creativity? Also, what behaviours, life circumstances and attitudes etc. am I permitting or indulging in that are actively depleting/diminishing my creative output? How, specifically, might I address these uncreative behaviours, circumstances and/or attitudes?

**A 5. Inspirational Entity:** [Record the answer you are given ...]

**Asks/discuss with your Muse Entity at least THREE more questions about your creativity, methods of inspiration, current creative projects, etc. that seem deeply important/meaningful/relevant to you ... Write each question below then record your Muse Entity's answer in the spaces provided.**

**Q. 6**

**A. 6**

**Q. 7**

**A. 7**

**Q. 8**

**A. 8**

**And so on ....**