

## **Untitled**

*Marie Kazalia*

no Elvis sightings  
instead I encounter  
Pablo Picasso eating lunch  
a drunk Gertrude Stein  
Jean Cocteau asking for spare change  
and Marcel Duchamp  
with William Burroughs  
faced-off across a chess board  
in a park--

and I look & dress  
something like a middle-aged Mina Loy

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## **Encountering Kali**

*Phebe Belser*

They say it gets under your skin. One week after returning, I remember Varanasi. I see the ghats reaching into the Ganges River. I see the faces of the people: rickshaw drivers eager for business, women in their beautiful saris carrying babies or pitchers of water from the river, holy beggars lining the last block leading to Assi Ghat. I miss the cows wandering freely, never to end up on the menu of the one McDonald's we saw on the way to the airport. I don't miss the wild dogs, sleeping on the side of a busy street between searches in the garbage for meager scraps. On my first rickshaw ride, I vowed, "I can't save all the dogs." Can I even save myself?

In Hinduism there is nothing to save. You are born holy and then you just do your best. Daily dharma and giving garlands of flowers to goddesses and gods. At the Durga Temple, a priest's assistant walked us through everything: leave your shoes, buy offerings of flowers, then pay rupees

at each visitation. At the end, another priest would place a black string necklace with seven knots around my neck and chant blessings. Someone else tied a red string around my left wrist. First the outer circle of the courtyard: Ram, then Sarasvati, Shiva, and Kali. Main stage, though, belonged to the courageous Durga: in the crowd I could barely see her, safe in her alcove with the cage doors opened briefly for darshan [viewing] of the morning crowd. After walking up steps and reaching the domed central area, I rang the bell and made sure I touched the front step, then my heart. Always respectful, aware that Maria and I were the only two Westerners paying homage to the fierce Mother Durga today.

Kali was the one who will haunt me the most: black face with red tongue hanging out, daring us to cross her. Her priest had me place my garland of white flowers on door of the black cage-alcove Kali resided in. There was a flame beneath; I worried about the flowers burning but followed the priest's instructions. I rang the bell three times, first hesitantly, then with more vigor after he did, indicating I should ring it more energetically. Kali had always frightened me. Now, though, I know those skulls around her neck are nothing to fear: Kali is about killing our egos and promising bliss in return.

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## **Morning Wake-Up Sun**

*Helen Crump*

Lying on my stomach,  
head pillowed by the cross-fold of my arms,  
my right leg moved against the back of the left  
in that subconscious and conscious rocking motion

--that reflects the habit of infancy and childhood,  
that soothed the body and spirit, eased the mind,  
and called forth the peace and comfort of sleep.  
I sought that elusive bit of imaginative information  
that encourages and creates dreams,

and transports me to another world  
where I explore unknown powers, skills,  
and relationships,  
where fantasies and desires are revealed and explored.

Having been eased out of one of these  
dream-induced worlds by some desire to wake early,  
therefore, to check the clock  
until it rang of some sufficient time for rising,  
I tried to recapture the wonderfully active dream  
that now seemed just out of my reach.  
As the hour approached 6 a.m.,  
and the sun slowly eased its way  
through shade, curtain, sheer,  
I felt the light teasing  
just below my eyes,  
ever so carefully trying to pry them open  
with hints of light against the outside,  
shining, glowing inside of my lightly closed lids.  
In an attempt to hold back this intrusion,  
I shift the right arm,  
bringing the soft flannel sheet up  
to hide my face from this too early guest.  
Yet, the impression has been made,  
a possibility and reminder of activities initiated,  
and so now I am stretching, turning, rising  
and out of bed to begin my day.

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## **Circe**

*Susan McLean*

Men are pigs.  
Not all men, of course.  
Some are wolves or bears,

quite a few are sheep,  
and Odysseus would  
have been a passable fox  
if he hadn't spoiled my spell.  
But your average man  
makes a really fine porker

They all want to be waited on--  
fed, made comfortable,  
not expected to do anything  
around the house  
but eat and sleep and rut.  
(Only men and pigs  
are in rut all year round).  
My way of giving them  
what they want is just  
a little more efficient.

Odysseus never asked  
his men how they felt  
about being changed back.  
He saw them crying and  
thought it was with relief.  
They stuck around for a year,  
swilling down wine and food  
and pestering the servants.  
In the end, I told  
them all to go to hell,  
and they followed my advice.