

EDITION 9

SUMMER 2022



THEY CALL US EVE

A NOTE TO OUR READERS



They Call Us is a literary magazine created by powerful women and gender minorities wanting to empower other women and gender minorities. Using media, art, and literature as a means to inspire, They Call Us wants to tell the everyday struggles of women and gender minorities from around the world.

The purpose of art is to create change, so They Call Us works to unite artists to tell the stories of those that are normally silenced. Our goal is to ignite conversation and encourage people of all ages, races, sexualities, genders, nationalities, abilities, and the like to share their stories. They Call Us wishes to diversify the messages we see online and change the dialogue to give credibility to all of us who have felt helpless and lacking a credible voice.

This magazine centers around themes of:

religion
religious confusion
rape

They Call Us seeks to tell the stories of any and all who wish to share them. Sometimes these stories, while important to listen to, can be hard to hear.

Above all else, please take care of yourself.

Thank you for reading.

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FOREWORD

By Meg Harris

Depictions of women in religious texts are meant to show us what we are and are not supposed to do, how we are and are not to behave. They are meant to show us our purpose in society and more importantly what happens to those that ignore that purpose.

Religious texts from around the world are full - okay maybe not full but there are a few - of women's stories and in each one a lesson is embedded within. Sarah, the prophetess teaches us to have faith. Khadija bint al-Khuwaylid, the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad, teaches us the importance of supporting the people we believe in. Rachel, from the Torah, embodies the importance of being a strong matriarch.

Despite these empowering examples, most female characters in religion relay how to be a good wife or mother, the importance of obedience, selflessness, and silence. Basically how to be skilled at servicing others. An important lesson for EVERYONE to learn, but not the only one that can be gleaned from our ancient texts. They don't get a lot of attention, some are even cast as cautionary tales but as their acclaimed counterparts they have lessons to share.

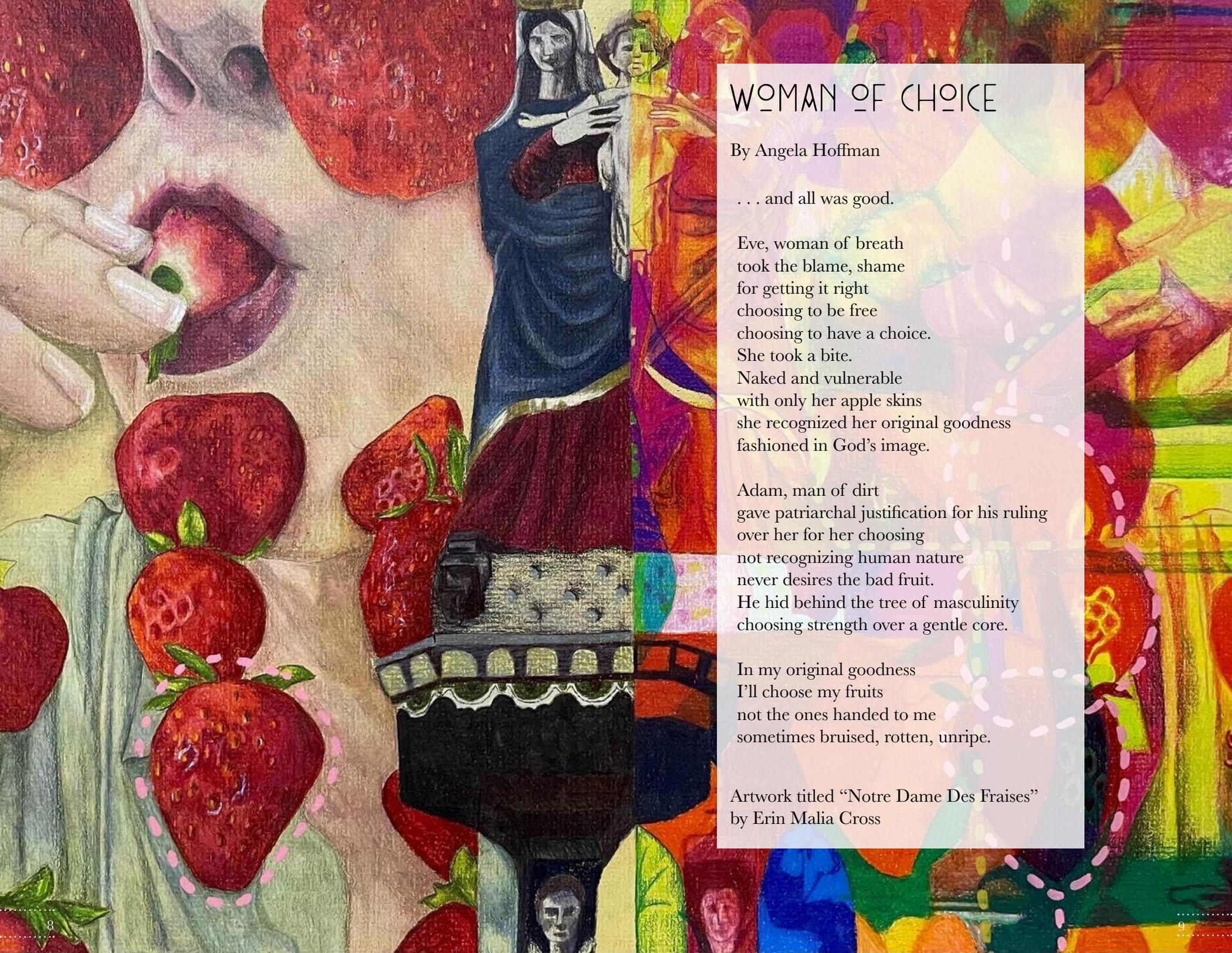
A personal favorite is Queen Esther (this will be heavily abbreviated). By hiding her Jewish identity, Esther was selected to become the Queen of Persia. While Queen, the King issues a decree that all Jews in Persia be killed. Risking death, Queen Esther visits the King (it is illegal to see the King without an official summons) and reveals the decree would also mean her death as a Jew. Her bravery is famously reflected in her statement, "if I perish, I perish." Her

actions cause the king to amend the decree and save all the Jews in Persia. Esther is a wife, but she is also a revolutionary willing to stand up to oppression in the name of protecting minorities and her people.

The Queen of Sheba appears in Hebrew text and the Qur'an. She is known for her beauty, yes, but also for her vast wisdom and cleverness. She tests King Solomon's knowledge with a series of riddles and only when she is satisfied does she invite him to her kingdom. There they spend the night together and he leaves in the morning. A few weeks later she discovers she is pregnant with his son. Not only is she unmarried but she decided to raise the son on her own. The Queen of Sheba is emblematic of how beauty, intelligence and autonomy can play a role in a patriarchal society.

Finally, we have Joan of Arc. While not mentioned in a religious text, she was canonized in 1920 in France. Before she was praised for her leadership skills, bravery, and steadfast commitment to her beliefs, she was a peasant. Acting under the divine guidance of God, she led the French army to victory and saved the nation from being conquered during the hundred year war. As the patron saint of soldiers and France, Joan of Arc is first a woman and remains the only person to ever be both condemned and canonized by the Catholic Church, being put on trial for heresy, witchcraft, and violating divine law by dressing like a man.

All of these women and female spirits embody a range of attributes not normally associated with women. These women teach us to be brave, steadfast, strong, and autonomous. Let us follow their example in moments we feel shame when they call us Eve.



WOMAN OF CHOICE

By Angela Hoffman

... and all was good.

Eve, woman of breath
took the blame, shame
for getting it right
choosing to be free
choosing to have a choice.
She took a bite.
Naked and vulnerable
with only her apple skins
she recognized her original goodness
fashioned in God's image.

Adam, man of dirt
gave patriarchal justification for his ruling
over her for her choosing
not recognizing human nature
never desires the bad fruit.
He hid behind the tree of masculinity
choosing strength over a gentle core.

In my original goodness
I'll choose my fruits
not the ones handed to me
sometimes bruised, rotten, unripe.

Artwork titled "Notre Dame Des Fraises"
by Erin Malia Cross



EVEN

By Holli St.

Juice runs down Eve's chin. She licks her fingers.
God arrives to chase her out of the garden.

"You grow good fruit," she says.

His disappointment used to be shrapnel in her
mind; now, it hurts less than the bullet holes of beg-
ging God to forgive her for being human.

He offers clothes to cover her shame.

Eve shakes her head--the first *no*.

She's naked and alone and dancing out of Eden.
Angels watch her go, a miracle of skin, wishing they
had bodies of their own. They whisper to each other:
"God made the world, but Eve created choice."

Artwork titled "Woman Collage_and ain't I a woman"
by Margo Berdeshjevsky

AMONG THE APOSTLES

By Hilary Rogers King

Junia traveled the early Church,
setting the Table. Imprisoned
for ministering, she was gilded
into sainthood. Paul called her

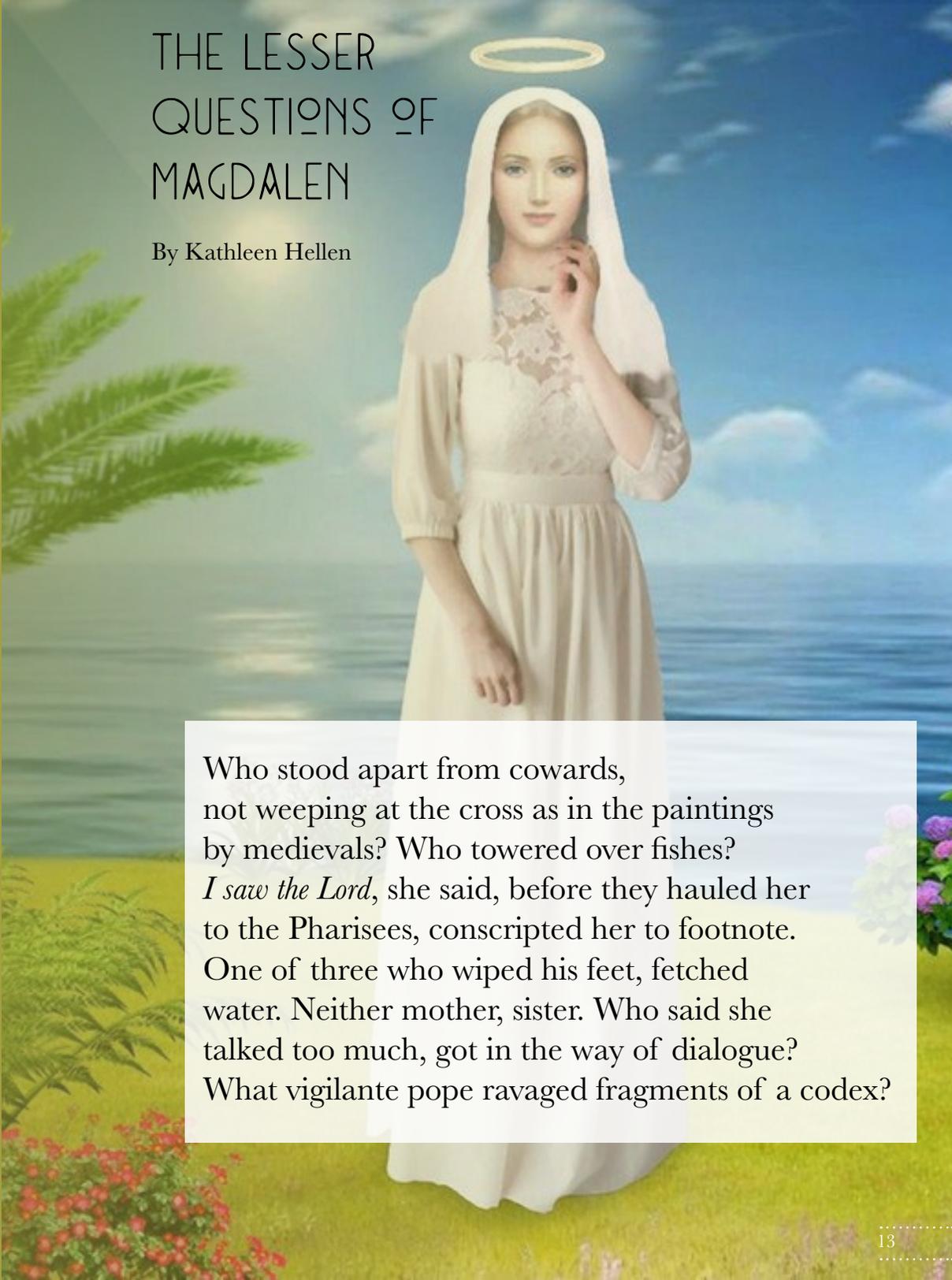
prominent among the Apostles
The Bible makers called her Junias,
adding a letter and subtracting her life,
first out of error, then out of outrage

that a woman should be recorded so well.
A name matters most to those without one.
The fame that buried Junia became
the engine of her resurrection.

Artwork titled "Virgin Mary"
by Radiy Sivak

THE LESSER QUESTIONS OF MAGDALEN

By Kathleen Hellen



Who stood apart from cowards,
not weeping at the cross as in the paintings
by medievals? Who towered over fishes?
I saw the Lord, she said, before they hauled her
to the Pharisees, conscripted her to footnote.
One of three who wiped his feet, fetched
water. Neither mother, sister. Who said she
talked too much, got in the way of dialogue?
What vigilante pope ravaged fragments of a codex?

MY PASTOR'S SECRETS

By Darlene P. Campos

My pastor told me we are all sinners because Eve gave in to the devil's temptation and didn't listen to her husband, Adam.

But he didn't mention that when G-d spoke to Abraham, G-d said "whatever Sarah tells you, do as she says."

My pastor told me we are all sinners and so many rules were given at Mount Sinai to show us how often we rebel against authority.

But he didn't mention Shiphrah and Puah who disobeyed Pharaoh by refusing to kill newborn boys and even lied to his face, claiming there was nothing more they could do.

My pastor told me we are all sinners who ache for strong leadership and impressive wisdom which only a man can provide.

But he didn't mention Deborah, the judge whose mind and strategy saved her people from utter destruction.

My pastor told me we are all sinners who only care about ourselves, especially our own interests and we never take others' pain into our hearts.

But he didn't mention Ruth, who graciously told her widowed mother-in-law a compassionate phrase of "wherever you go, I will go."

My pastor told me we are all sinners who thirst for knowledge of the divine yet whatever we do, we will ultimately fail to comprehend.

But he didn't mention Huldah, the prophetess who understood spiritual messages so much so that the high priest hearkened her words.

My pastor told me we are all sinners and we need a strict father called G-d who can discipline us into absolute submission.

Yet he never mentioned Deuteronomy's description of G-d who labored to bring forth and happily nursed with sweet honey and fresh oil.

Artwork titled "For Eve"
by Regan Desautels



REWRITTEN

By R.M. Malar

Sunlight filters in through the large windows of the opulent court hall of the Palace. Ministers and courtiers sit on thrones, their faces inscrutable. The various ornaments they adorn glimmer in the brightness of the sunlight. Numerous voiceless faces fade into the background, a dark curtain overseeing the proceedings with glee. I see my husbands, five strong men, on their knees, their eyes lowered in defeat. I'm sprawled out on the ground, the picture of distress- the woman waiting to be rescued from blasphemy.

I know my story. In fact, I know its ending. I know the blame and the battlefield. I have heard its echoes over centuries, reverberating in the ears of young women- "Draupadi", the symbol of chastity. She was disrobed by her husband's enemies and had to be rescued by a god.

Anyway, back to the present. I'm prepared to act the part. Do I even have a choice? I wonder at history helplessly. The pages of the epic tale have been etched in my memory. I watch as words of fury and lust thunder across the marble floor. I listen only to the silence of five men, the kings of my heart. I close my eyes to try and disappear into obscurity- a meaningless wisp of smoke. I'm a pawn, sacrificed at the altar of Desire, in the name of religious honor.

The tale of Mahabharata, unfolds slowly, but steadily. Duhshasana, with a mocking sneer, begins to unfurl my crimson sari, its ends trailing on the marble floor. I cry, scream, and kick about like an insect caught in a spider web. My tears flow freely into the stream of Misery. I have nothing to do but wait and watch the ensuing bloodshed. I know what they'll say. There is no use pretending to be wise. I belong to history, in the past. Time inches towards the moment of my rescue- to the heroic intervention of the divine Lord. I remember my words of despair, pleading for help.

If He doesn't rescue me, my nakedness will become a matter of shame. My history will be nothing more than a story of ribaldry and juicy scandal. I have to be rescued, protected and avenged upon. That's why I should cry aloud- "Krishna!" But what if I don't want to cry out loud? What if I want to change my story? Make a tiny tweak? I intend to rewrite my story. I cannot and will not be a pawn. For, I am the queen. I stand silent as my sari is torn, flung, rustled and discarded. No God comes to save me. Raucous laughter echoes around me. Naked in my glory- I am clothed in dignity.

I open my eyes to angry flames, engulfing the whole world in its beautiful embrace. At last, I see her- my true self, hidden behind volumes of furious poetry. "Draupadi", I whisper her name. I leap out and disappear in flames.

Artwork titled "High Priestess"
by Roopa Dudley



Draupadi is a mythological figure in the Indian epic, Mahabharata. Born from fire, she is hailed as a goddess in India. In Mahabharata, Lord Krishna intervened to save Draupadi from public dishonor by making her sari endless. Religious honor and chastity in India, is closely tied to a woman's dress. It is high time, we change that.

YOU HAD A NAME (AN ELEGY)

content warning: rape

By Julia Kennedy

Your small, sturdy body was no match for their rough hands that slapped, and pushed and pinned in cruel attention to your suppleness. They smeared your head in dirt, scraped you to a heap, a crumpled pile of clothes and matted hair.

Your master cast about at dawn's first light. Your still-soft limbs, unmoving, bade him see. He straightened, and he saw, as a man sees, while God held fast, and saw what none can know.

I cannot hear your screams, only their laughter clawing at my ears as I hunt your voice. Meek and passing mention from scant text is all you receive. There's nothing here for me then. Not a thing. Just you and me left figuring it out.

The morning's light revealed what they left silent. Your flesh said "look," and so I see, and know that you are one of thousands, millions gone, whose flesh delighted but without your yes, unwilling finds of soldiers, paying customers, your image sold online against your will.

You are not a thing.

And afterwards, when master cut you in pieces to proclaim his property defiled, justice undone, my God railed that so much more was lost. He bears your agony and holds it up within that tiny crispness of the page, so all who choose may look and fall, ashamed.

"So the man seized his concubine, and put her out to them. They wantonly raped her, and abused her all through the night until the morning... 'Get up,' he said to her. 'We are going.' But there was no answer."

- Judges 19: 25-28

Artwork titled "Eve Bites Back"
by Gretchen Gales

WHIPLASH

By Miette Elisheva

From purity rings
to wedding rings
to smoke rings
to cock rings
I'm whiplashed
from church
and home
and school
and the look in your eyes before you touch me
and it seems to me that no matter where I stand
my definition is in my value to someone else.

I bob and weave
through feelings of impurity
and the thrills of danger
and questions for God about
my purpose
and questions from you,
"Are you sure?"
"Does that feel good?"
"Is it okay that I can't stay?"

I'm full of lust
and love
and fear
and doubt
and all I can see are hands on skin
and hands clasped in prayer
and hands waiting for communion
and hands waiting for you to hold them

And I'm crumpled.
broken at God's feet
at the foot of your bed
trying to put one foot in front of
a lifetime of politely accepting compliments
and crossing boundaries
and feeling dirty
and washed up

and I was only thirteen
and I didn't say no
and will I always be

Impure.
Unlovable.
Unworthy.
Or will you see me as
Prudish.
Reclusive.
Untouchable.

I don't know which I prefer.
I don't know which is correct.
I don't know who I am
or whose I am.
All I feel is

whiplash.

Artwork titled "Shhh"
by Ariana Gaila





I AM A SAINT

By Christina L Ivey

I am a Saint like
Christ's foreskin as a wedding ring
Translated to sapphires and rubies
Like the Church could acknowledge
A woman's fever dreamed marriage
To Baby J Himself
Only if He could afford a ring
Worth talking about

I am a Saint like
Locking myself in a room full of books
With my cat
Dozing off to dreams
Full of intellectual women
Who conquer the world's problems
Reason
Rectitude
Justice
Like bursting through a glass ceiling
Was as easy as opening a door

I am a Saint like
Answering prayers with a beard
Excommunicated for falling in love
With another nun in the Abbey
Wailing all the way to my Mecca
Like I'm pretty sure Jesus was queer as fuck
Like I use They/Them pronouns to talk about God

I am a Saint like
The Church would make a martyr of me
To prevent me from preaching my Gospel
To stop my ecclesiastical purge
My holy rejection
I am a Saint like anyone
Who would refuse to be canonized

ARTIST STATEMENT

My self-portraits reproduce a modern-day version of saints using my own image as all the saints. As a child, I was told to look up to saints that never looked like me, all of them were fair-skinned with blue eyes, none of them had brown skin with brown eyes. By reproducing them with brown skin, I am creating a more relatable representation that is more inclusive.

Artwork titled "La Virgen De Guadalupe"
by Gabi Magaly

PANDORA

By Julia Wright

When I see the jar at dawn, I'm unimpressed. It sits on a pedestal, facing a window towards the east. Behind the jar, a western window clouds the clay with the musty blue of early morning. The climbing sun illuminates it just slightly. But Helios doesn't know that there's nothing to illuminate; no heroes, no monsters, no patterns, nothing. Just a dull, terracotta jar. At dawn, when I can see the jar in all its glorious mediocrity, the urge to open it is at its weakest. But it's there. It's always there.

The gods gave me gifts when they made me. Beauty, intelligence, a womb. They all looked at Zeus with awe as he presented me with the jar. Maybe because it was so unappealing, or maybe because he said, *You must never open this jar. Ever.* Why would he create a jar if he didn't want it to be opened? They hadn't given me curiosity yet, so I didn't ask any questions.

When I see the jar at noon, the urge grows stronger. I pass it on my way to the kitchen, and once it's in my sight, my hunger grows exponentially. Maybe there's bread, or cheese, or fish in it. But I remember my original orders. I am suspicious of my new ones. I resist, even though it takes all my strength to do so.

My second night on earth, I couldn't sleep. I walked about the halls of my new home, the one belonging to my husband. The husband I was gifted to. The gods showered me with gifts, but it turns out I was a gift myself. They had not gifted me resentment, so I didn't mind. I walked in the moonlight until I reached a courtyard. To my surprise, he was waiting for me. I bowed to the king of the gods, and he looked at me with delighted scorn. He placed his hand on my head, the way the others had when endowing me with their

gifts. And he said, *I gift you curiosity and ambition.* Suddenly, I wanted to ask questions. But before I could, he asked if I remembered how important it was that I obey him and keep the jar closed. I nodded. He looked around, like he was worried someone was listening. Then he leaned in and whispered, *I gift you disobedience.*

When I see the jar at night, it's as though my blood is magnetic and pulling me towards it. I know there is something wrong with this urge; if not, why would Zeus gift it to me in secret? So I try and try and try to ignore it. For a long time, I do. But one night, the sky is clear. The sun sets right behind it every night, but tonight I can't tear my eyes away. The golden rays surround the jar, making a sublime silhouette, a divine halo. It's still the same dull jar, but I swear I can see specks of light move around on it. They form the shape of men, of women, of heroes, of monsters, of stories. I reach my hand out. Why should I control this urge? How could something so beautiful hide anything but beauty?

I did what I was supposed to. Zeus says I was disobedient for opening the jar. He and I both know that obedience led me to the jar, that Zeus's orders opened it. But I am the only one who says it, and I am the one they don't believe. I am the one who brought ruin upon men. When men were without woman, there was peace. They built a paradise. The gods sent me there. They placed me in the paradise men had built, and made me destroy it. Now, I am not just woman, but also destruction. Now, woman is destruction.

At dawn, the jar whispers to me. The rising sun shines on its dull surface. It is as ugly as ever, but it's different. It is not still. Something inside is moving, desperate to get out. I think I can hear whispers. Whether I am wiser now, or tired, or broken, I feel no urge at all to open it. Still, I move closer, and listen.

The gods say, *We made a woman, and look what she did.*

The men say, *The gods made women, and look what they do.*

Artwork titled "A Bride of Earth and Stars"
by Stephanie Oplinger



Artwork titled "Body Image"
by Isabella Mack



SONG OF LILITH

By Jackie Fox

content warning: rape

You'll notice that the Bible leaves me out.
Fashioned from the same pure clay as Adam,
in this, his earthly equal. Or so I thought.

In coitus, I said I would not lie below.
He craved submission more than he craved me.
But I was not a vessel to be filled
and when I said no, and fled him for the desert
He took another wife. The one you know.

That's when the rumors started.
How I bred evil spirits on the wind.
People hearing bird cries in the desert
blamed them on me.
It's Lilith mating with demons again, they said.

How I stole back to Adam's tent in deepest night
and straddled him with sturdy coal-hot thighs.
Drained him of his seed as he lay helpless,
creating demon children of our own.

How no man dare be in a house alone
or I'd force myself upon him the same way.
And were all these men more frightened, or aroused?
I'll leave the judgment of their fate to you.

How I agreed with angels to an oath
to protect the newborns under my control.
Yes, infants too. My schedule was full.
I'd suck the life from them if not protected
by amulets that bear the angels' names.

I said no. And the carnal witch remain.
The price of my strong will and stronger brain.

(A slightly different version of this poem appeared in Conclave: A Journal of Character Issue 2.)

WHAT WOULD MARY DO?

By Eloisa Perez-Lozano

O Heavenly Mother of God
what would you do if you were listening
to the Word, seated attentively in the pews
and your Son started to tug at your robes?

Would you quietly tell him to wait
tuck your veil behind your ears
before picking Him up and heading
to a bathroom stall, closing the door to feed?

Would you anticipate such a request
and therefore sit among other families
in a room reserved for you and your young
who might need you more than the rest?

Would you stay put and use your cloak
as a cover, a shield to make this meal
a private and modest one, at the risk
of your Babe yanking it away?

Would you maneuver like a magician
laying down the Christ Child in your lap
while discreetly unbuttoning a flap in the fabric
leading his head to block the view as he latches?

Would you unsheathe your bountiful bosom
from the confines of clothes and do it bare
without shame since He's the Son of God and
all you do for him is holy and full of glory?

Artwork titled "Dreams"
by Irina Novikova



MARY MAGDALENE AND THE PRODIGAL SON

By Mary Crosby

After everyone had been sated from the fatted calf and turned in for the night, she put down her mop and stepped into the dust covered courtyard where he lingered. How, she wanted to know, had he succeeded in being absolved, and loved unconditionally, when she too was a sheep who had wandered away from the fold and been found again. For her there had been no rejoicing. She was still considered a wicked woman.

He swirled the wine in his glass, exhaled a cloud of cigar smoke that floated just above his head as he considered what she said. *Well, he told her, if you want to roll the dice, drink nay, guzzle life's elixirs, feel their hot fire coursing through your veins, partake of tender flesh that yields to your touch, if you want to be able to commit every sin and live with impunity you will need to change: Cut off your long curls, rough up your smooth skin, exchange your flimsy garment for a thick robe. In other words, you will need to become a man.*

Artwork titled "Toolbelt"
by Rae Tedeton



Take a bite, gentle sweet
Unquestioning maiden
Chosen of heaven and earth
Bite deep, pierce flesh
Come away anew
Eyes widened, take in the paradise
Of funhouse mirrors and
Lies, your were blinded to

Go on now, young girl
Bring your new truth
To the one you are bound to
Show him the refuse
You were birthed from
Open his eyes as I have yours
No, as you have yours

It was your will that shook the
Jeweled leaves
Of the decayed trees
Of this, your home
But he does not want awareness
He does not want your new truth
And your master does not know
What to do with either of you
Now that you can see
Passed the assumption of grace

You, like all his pets,
Will be left to rot beyond the
Walls of this sanctuary
This lie of a sanctuary
He would prefer it
But not you, dear girl
You want to know
To really know what lies
Beyond the walls of this cage

And to see
With your own awakened
Self, beyond this
Most terrible of dreams

HOW TO TELL IF YOUR APPLE'S GONE SOUR

By Amber Davis



Artwork titled "Blossoms of Life"
by Gretchen Gales

COVEN CONGRESS

The concept of a witch originated from a societal fear and hatred of independent women. Any woman who dared to challenge societal order, to not have children, to take up work outside the home, to think for herself was tortured and burned. Though the punishment is less explicit, the hatred of the witch remains.

In defiance of this stigma, we are reclaiming the word. We are witches and the Coven Congress is our little sabbath. For each edition, we gather witches from all walks of life to talk about our experiences, opinions, and ideas. Next, we let the discussion inspire content included in *They Call Us*. Coven Congress allows us to amplify the voices of a variety of women and gender minorities so the world can hear and learn from our tales.

Special thanks to our Coven Congress participants, for bravely sharing their stories and allowing us to use them as inspiration, and for pretending to put pants on after a long Zoom work day so we could safely debunk the patriarchy from the comfort of our homes.

OUR TEAM



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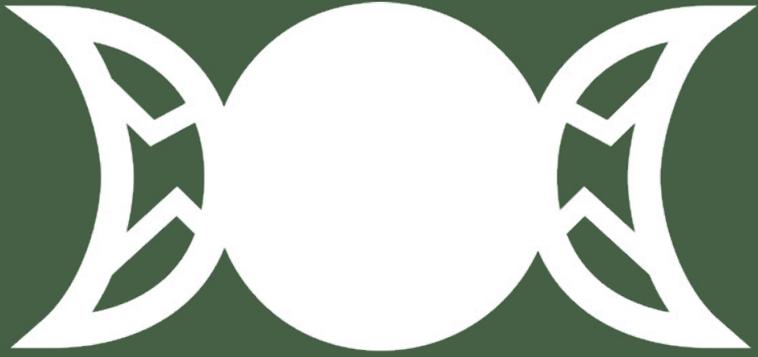


Asko Skladany
Illustrator

OUR PATREON

They Call Us is a not-for-profit organization. To fund our magazine, we've created a Patreon page and a merch shop. By donating through Patreon you will receive exclusive invites to Coven Congress, Patreon only merch, sneak peeks into upcoming editions, and access to a feminist only discord group. Please consider donating on our [Patreon](#), purchasing merch [online](#), or just sharing this magazine with friends.

They Call Us is a passion project for our team members and, although we do not make any money through the zine, it helps our organization to host events, donate to other feminist causes, and support our contributing writers and artists.



THEY CALL US

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If you're interested in submitting work for our next edition, please email us at theycalluszine@gmail.com or visit our website at theycallus.com.

Thank you for reading!