



Women in Praise of the Sacred: 43 Centuries of Spiritual Poetry by Women

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"Hirshfield's current collection brings together . . . an astonishing array of women writers from the 22nd century BC poet Enheduanna to Nelly Sachs and Anna Akhmatova."--*Library Journal*

Women in Praise of the Sacred: 43 Centuries of Spiritual Poetry by Women Details

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From Reader Review Women in Praise of the Sacred: 43 Centuries of Spiritual Poetry by Women for online ebook

Glenn Berger says

Among many wonderful poems is this one by Pan Zhao (48-117?), the most famous woman scholar of Chinese history, on the slow, incremental process of restoring one's connection to our essential nature, on finding the lost heart.

Tempered, annealed, the hard essence of autumn metals
finely forged, subtle, yet perdurable and straight,

By nature penetrating deep yet advancing by inches
to span all things yet stitch them up together,

Only needle-and-thread's delicate footsteps
are truly broad-ranging yet without beginning!

"Withdrawing elegantly" to mend a loose-thread,
and restore to white silk a lamb's down purity. . .

How can those who count pennies calculate their worth?
They may carve monuments yet lack all understanding.

Phyllis Fredericksen says

A compilation of poetry written by women over the centuries. A brief summary of each author's life preceded her poetry. Very well done. I used this as a meditation each day and enjoyed it.

Kelsey says

I appreciate this book for its historical significance, but I'm not intellectual enough for poetry. So it is not the book that's bad, it is me who is a bad reader I suppose. It is also fair to say the women who wrote the poetry within the book are BA. It is a great book for history buffs, poetry lovers, and awesome feminist humans.

Yvonne Flint says

From earliest written records and encompassing many cultures, these deep, wise women spoke my heart.

Gudrun Mouw says

I enjoyed the broad historical spectrum of poetry by women. My favorite poet in the book was Anna Akhmatova. I'm still thinking of the last 3 lines of a poem written 2 years before her death:

I cannot tell if the day
Is ending, or the world, or if
The secret of secrets is inside me again.

Some of the other work seemed a bit uneven to me.

Carrie says

Such a breadth of cultures and time and yet some things never change, as Sumangalamata made very clear in her poem that reads, "At last free, at last I am a woman free! No more tied to the kitchen, stained amid the stained pots, no more bound to the husband who thought me less than the shade he wove with his hands. No more anger, no more hunger, I sit now in the shade of my own tree. Meditating thus, I am happy, I am serene." (6th century B.C.E.) :)

I also loved Edith Sodergran's "Homecoming"- it captured exactly how I feel in returning to certain spots.

ninamo says

I want to buy 6000 copies of this book and pass it on to family, friends, colleagues, and strangers.

AnandaTashie says

A combination of spiritual poetry and history of the poets. Really expansive, beautiful, informative collection.

My favorites were:

p 21, Zi Ye

All night I could not sleep / because of the moonlight on my bed. / I kept on hearing a voice calling: / Out of Nowhere, Nothing answered "yes."

p 31, Gnostic Gospel - Nag Hammadi Library

I am the incomprehensible silence / and the memory that will not be forgotten. / I am the voice whose sound is everywhere / and the speech that appears in many forms. / I am the utterance of my own name.

(...) I am the one you have scattered, / and you have gathered me together.

p 58, Izumi Shikibu

I cannot say / which is which: / the glowing / plum blossom is / the spring night's moon.

p 97, Marguerite Porete (? - 1310) (I want to see if I can find more about her; the biography glimpse caught my interest. Wrote Mirror of Simple Souls.)

p 100, Hadewijch Antwerp

In the beginning Love satisfies us. / When Love first spoke to me of love - / How I laughed at her in return! / But then she made me like the hazel trees, / Which blossom early in the season of darkness, / And bear fruit slowly.

p 106, Hadewijch II

All things / are too small / to hold me, / I am so vast

p 133, Mirabai

Love has stained my body / to the color of the One Who Holds Up Mountains.

p 143, Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) (Want to see if I can find more about her too. Though deemed a saint, she was also known for her humanness and sense of humor.)

p 158, Sor Huana Ines de la Cruz

Since today the Child / leaves heaven for earth / and finds nowhere to rest / his head in this world, / who will come to his aid? / Water! / Fire! / Air! / No, but Earth will!

p 169, Bibi Hayati

Is this scorching a lightning bolt's remnants, or the burning / mountain? / The heat of my sighs, or your inner body?

p 172, Emily Dickinson

Who has not found the Heaven - below - / Will fail of it above - / For Angels rent the House next ours, / Wherever we remove -

p 181, Wild Nights - Wild Nights! / Were I with thee / Wild Nights should be / Our luxury!

p, 192, Christina Georgina Rossetti

Tread softly! all earth is holy ground.

p 198, Osage Woman's Initiation Song

I have made a footprint, a sacred one. / I have made a footprint, through it the blades push upward. / (...) I have made a footprint, I live in the light of day.

p 209, Anna Akhmatova

Sunset in the ethereal waves: / I cannot tell if the day / is ending, or the world, or if / the secret of secrets is inside me again.

p 213, Gabriela Mistral

Scatter it in a song, / or in one great love's desire.

p 226, Edith Sodergran

On foot / I had to walk through the solar systems, / before I found the first thread of my red dress. / Already, I sense myself. / Somewhere in space hangs my heart, / sparks fly from it, shaking the air, / to other reckless hearts.

p 230, Now I shall drink wisdom from the spruce's sap-filled crowns, / now I shall drink truth from the withered trunks of the birches, / now I shall drink power from the smallest and tenderest grasses: / a mighty protector mercifully reaches me his hand.

p 232, Marina Tsvetaeva

The wind is level now, the earth is wet with dew, / the storm of stars in the sky will turn to quiet. / And soon all of us will sleep under the earth, we / who never let each other sleep above it.

Nina Cooper says

What I loved most about this book is that it is about women who experience spirituality and express it in their poetry. This is not a collection of Christian ideas, although they play an important role in it too. Instead, there are many poems from pre-Christian times, just as from other religions and eras. The common theme, according to the title, is the 'praise of the sacred'. I was not always sure about the meaning of 'sacred', and would have rather preferred 'spirituality', but this is just a matter of personal preference and does not subtract any from the wonderful read. The book is definitely awesome when you are interested in women's voices, a huge variety of poetry with one common theme. I loved the beauty of the poems and often enough found them rather universal in their meanings and they absolutely touched me.

Hope Struck says

i checked this out from the library.

next, i will buy it.

then, i will roll around on top of this book and rub it all over my face. i will shower in this book for the rest of my stinkin life. that's how much i love this book. fyi.

John Evans says

I discovered a passion for poetry upon reading "Women in Praise of the Sacred: 43 Centuries of Spiritual Poetry by Women". The depth and substance of each poem phenomenal, sacred, and embraced by esoteric value and richness. I also enjoyed discovering ancient, as well as modern female voices who speak (or write), about the mysteries of life, especially that of the soul. One of my favorites was by Lal Ded (Lalla), 14th c. perhaps, p. 120, "I was passionate / filled with longing / I searched / far and wide. / But the day / that the Truthful One /

found me, / I was at home." This poem spoke volumes referencing the beauty of not only Truth, but the Divine Who resides from within. Beautiful! Exquisite! Phenomenal! Each poem allowed me to become new again, a new creature, within each moment. I began to not only learn of life, but live life upon reading this very well researched anthology.

Katrina says

This collection of poetry is transporting. It's chronological span alone recommends it, but the variety and beauty of the selections seals this as one to read and enjoy. I borrowed it from the library and recommend you do likewise.

Gina Herald says

"I was passionate
filled with longing,
I searched
far and wide.

But the day
that the Truthful One
found me,
I was at home."
-Lal Ded

I view this work as women coming home to themselves, and their gifts. I can only hope for so much in this alienating and deeply confused time to be alive. This is a wonderful guidebook to return to for that purpose.

This celebrates turbulence, cycles, gentleness, shameless exuberance, empathy, and many of the human traits that are culturally notated as feminine. Whether or not they are, all things referenced as the feminine are celebrated in a way that it has literally become taboo and uncomfortable to celebrate anymore, though they are in finality human qualities. I think that's a good challenge for anybody.

Carrie says

Much of the poetry I've been reading lately is a hard intellectual chew. This volume is spacious and inspiring, humble, doesn't work too hard. Jane Hirshfield brings together women from diverse pools of spiritual thought. Some were personally strengthening for me, and others just made me give pause. (One I even ripped out!) Hirshfield makes it easy to go deep—a great introduction to many underrepresented poets.

Ivan Granger says

This is the first anthology I got years ago that made me say, Wow! Includes Sappho, Rabia, Yeshe Tsogyel, Hildegard von Bingen, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Hadewijch of Antwerp, Lalla, Mirabai, Bibi Hayati, Marina Tsvetaeva. The best collection I've found of women's voices in sacred poetry.

