

HELEN MOORE

daughter of dodmen

Avebury, c. 2700 BCE

child of the stones, i sparked here on may morning
in a bed of wild garlic, was born beside an eel pool
at oimelc, when udder-milks flow, birch saps rise.

now fifteen years on, i return
through women's mysteries and menses, chosen
as handmaid to *she who sees*.

of the honour i needn't speak –
enough just to be here in the sanctuary,
which is the serpent-dragon's head, around us the mottled veils
of darkness as we wait for dawn's creep.

with spirals of deep-red ochre my body
has been daubed by the women pressing quietly at my back;
besides this, i wear deerskin, bead-bones,
and for strength these boar-tusk totems.

*blessings on bone hag
who hides in the barrows
when the earth gets the horn –
her shadow never leaves!*

daughter of dodmen – lineage of geomancers
whose dowsing staffs alighted
where the giant stones would come to stand –
i bow my head, fear's torc pressing cold and hard around my belly.

why should i quiver when i've washed at the wellspring,
circled it nines, and chanted our songs?
with my kin i've honoured the greenwoods –

haunts of deer, ox, boar to whose spirits we've prayed,
thanked for gifts of blood, meat, bone.
afterwards we fired up our beacons on the roundy hills,
and gladdened at the sight of other fires distantly beyond;

then, driven between the flames, our herds
were cleansed, now chew dreamily in meadows
jewelled with cuckoo flower, cowslips and day's eyes.

o, that i were still cradled by my kin
who stand invisibly above the all-swallowing ditch! dug by my forebears
with antler picks and ox-bone shovels, this mighty earthwork
radiates the power of our open-air temple.

courage, child, and patience! for some time the tribes
have up held their palms to the stars, attuned to moon-with-child
and to the web of sacred sites and track-ways crisscross these lands.

a night without sleep and with much merriment
yet still we stand; our stones charged by the union
of sun, moon and vortices of water will raise those who lay
hands on their cool, craggy surface.

i mustn't fear *bone hag* – i'm grown up and charmed
from the doings of mischief. yet even *she who sees*
trembles like a reed, sensing for the moment
to begin....

soon i'll lend her my sapling frame and crooky arm –
i, elder-bridge, *she*, in hide cloak and horns
decked all feathery and blossom, moving like drunk,
the bristle-thin flint drowsing between those bulbous, wrinkled breasts.

slowly we'll pass together through the body of serpent –
an avenue of two hundred paired stones glistening like teeth in this heavy dew.
then, at the gateway to the outer circle, i'll wait steadfast –
let the ringing stones wash through me.

from the first inner circle – the solar eye
that lies beside the lunar – we'll scan the eastern hills
to watch sun limning up. as its ruby charge touches our eyes,
the earthen banks will rock with drumming, roaring, clapping,

and the energy will swell, grow enormous –
white lights may even dance amongst the stones, bending stalks
of grasses, tracing cups, rings, spirals.

dragon energy awoken – beneath our naked feet we'll feel it,
springs seeping out to wet the banks of this temple womb.

then, as sun climbs higher in the sky, it will heat the cock-stone,
its long shadow licking at the gapey-hole of cunt-stone beyond.

*blessings on bone hag
 who hides in the barrows
 when the earth gets the horn –
 her shadow never leaves!*

at last *the cunctipotent one* will throw back her cloak,
and arms splayed like wings, she'll rise into the air, hovering above
like a hawk spying out its prey.

now her thunderous voice will roll around the hills,
and her utterances will foretell summer's harvest,
the boons, woes and ills of our people.

when it's done i'll lay myself – shoulders, hip and thigh one with
all-mother, sweat gleaming on my neck, where the bristle-thin flint
will draw a new string of beads... bright thanksgivings
to bless hallowed ground.

and must keep open my eyes
fixed on bear
who guides
 each spirit home