

Mandorla Rising: Reflections and Explorations into the Other Within and the life, work and my life with mythsinger Daniel Deardorff

Judith-Kate Friedman

Creative Dissertation Recital for the Poetics of Imagination, M.A.

Dartington Arts School, Devon, UK

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Welcome

(0:00)

Judith-Kate:

Welcome all. I'm Judith-Kate Friedman, Daughter of Shulamis Levin and Irving Mendl Friedman, granddaughter of Yankev and Rivke Levin and Kate and Abraham Friedman, Great-granddaughter of Sara-Stera and Mordechai Altman and Lena and Sam Sauer Rosenwasser.

I'm thrilled that **you** are here with me for this recital. In many ways it is a celebration of my creative process and especially of my 14-year partnership with my beloved, Daniel Deardorff, who was also my teacher and collaborator in myth, music and

ritual. I come to you from our home, Mossy Rock, in Port Townsend, WA, US, a town of 9,000 once called Qatay by the Sk'llalam people, here on traditional Coast Salish lands.

As many of you know, this year I have been deeply and gratefully immersed in myth studies as a master's degree candidate in Poetics of Imagination at Dartington Arts School, an accredited program of the University of Plymouth in the UK. My creative dissertation project is entitled: "Mandorla Rising – Reflections and Explorations into the Other Within and the work, life and my life with mythsinger Daniel Deardorff, who lived from 1952 to 2019.

For the next approximately 60 minutes, I will share selections of new poetry, art, music, film and mystery in a three-part journey: From the call into relationship with the Living World, to adventures in the underworld and underside of myth and otherness to a homecoming and celebration all about love. Around mid-point there will be an experiential segment, so as I mentioned [before recording began], you'll get a chance to move around a little bit more at that point. For those who can stay there will be time for feeding the story of today's event, afterwards, followed by a brief confirmation and celebratory reception.

(2:23)

A note on accessibility: To support access several poems are included [in the slide

show] in written form although my primary form, myself, is in the Oral Tradition. To aid those with visual challenges or small screens or on phone, I will also describe many of the images. All the works are my own, unless otherwise noted.

(2:45)

I want to thank everyone in my cohort at Poetics of Imagination and guest faculty who are here and those who are not present. All of you who inspired me to make the most of this amazing year – as we came together internationally to explore the medicine of myth amidst a global pandemic. I especially thank my tutors: Drs. Tracey Warr and Martin Shaw and associate faculty Drs. Emma Bush and Bram Arnold.

(3:18)

Many of you knew Daniel Deardorff, Danny, personally or through his book, myhtelling, concerts and teachings. I was blessed to arrive in his life just after publication of his book *The Other Within: The Genius of Deformity in Myth, Culture and Psyche*. I now have the honor of stewarding this book into the third edition to be published by Inner Traditions International in late 2022.

Life keeps unfolding in mythic ways. Let us begin.

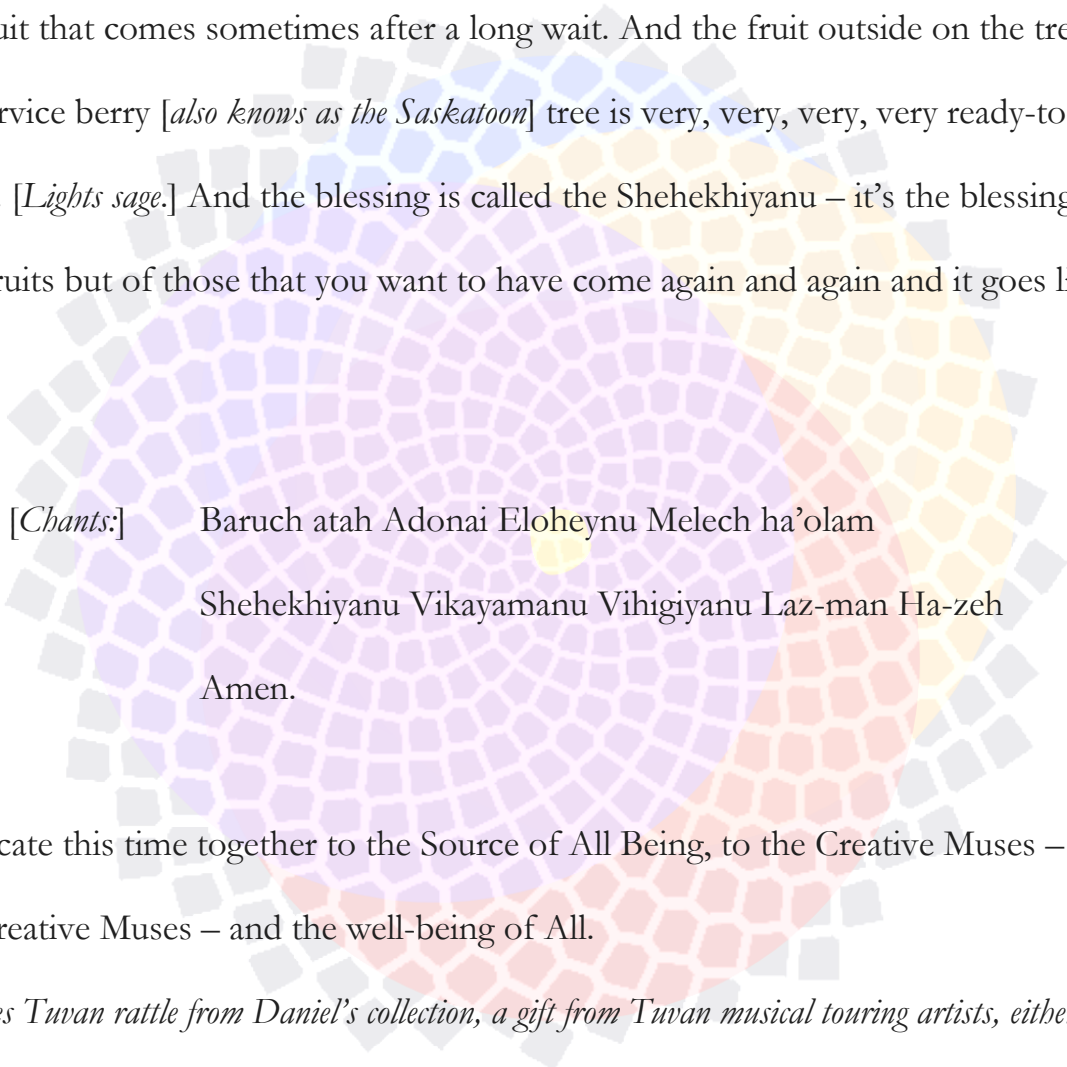


(3:53)

Invocation

JK: [*Rings bells from Thailand, artist of unknown origin, lights sage smudge in an abalone shell.*]

There is a blessing in the Jewish tradition that is the thankfulness prayer and praise for the fruit that comes sometimes after a long wait. And the fruit outside on the tree, on the service berry [*also known as the Saskatoon*] tree is very, very, very, very ready-to-pick mode. [*Lights sage.*] And the blessing is called the Shehekiyanu – it's the blessing of first fruits but of those that you want to have come again and again and it goes like this:



[*Chants:*] Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu Melech ha'olam
Shehekiyanu Vikayamanu Vihigiyanu Laz-man Ha-zeh
Amen.

I dedicate this time together to the Source of All Being, to the Creative Muses – *all* of our Creative Muses – and the well-being of All.

[*Shakes Tuvan rattle from Daniel's collection, a gift from Tuvan musical touring artists, either Tyva Kyzzy or Chirgilchan.*]

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(5:42)

JK: So— An Invocation. [Words accompanying slides]. Woods. A great red circle to the left. To the West. Village – a yellow circle. To the East. Hearth Fire in the place they overlap. Calling fire [4 photos wide shot to close up of Judith-Kate calling fire.]

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(6:15)

JK:

A Prayer to Tatewari ~ Huichol God of Fire, Grandfather Fire

Sparks of fire
The ancients knew
were dangerous embers
of sun on earth
They kept us warm
taught us songs
kindled culture
gave us birth
to cook our food
settle down
burn our houses to the ground

Listen to the crackle

Listen

Power is a fragile

Lesson

Listen to the crackle

Listen

Power is a fragile

Lesson

When we forget fire is sacred

When hubris runs amok in mind

Can we remember we were all born naked?

Clothing is a gift animals and plants designed

Listen to the crackle

Listen

Power is a fragile

lesson

Fire not harnessed as horsepower

Nor chained to a grid

Invention

Wildness

Witness this travesty we've lived

Can we behold all Creation did and does for us and all?

Let us now split the prison hold of Alexander's crumbling wall

Listen to the crackle

Listen

Power is a fragile

Lesson

Listen to the cackle

Listen

Lord Coyote

Bring us sweet transgression

Neglect

Regret

Remorse

Release

Ganesh - Remove all obstacles to peace

Listen to the cackle

Listen

Power is a fragile

Lesson

May the Salmon of Wisdom

attune us to Creation

Help us curb unruly overcompensation

Allow us to feel our mother's degradation

Return us to humility without sedition

Or sedation

For we are not gods
We're accompanied by their grace
Mere mortals here on earth
Not made for space
Trees aren't fuel forever
Keep tar sands in place
Retrieve stolen bones of children
Help us face hatred's disgrace

Listen to the crackle

Listen

Power is a fragile

lesson

Holiness is now heaven *and* hell

Rumi cautioned 'Don't go back to sleep.'

William Stafford said it well:

'The darkness around us is deep.'

-- Judith-Kate Friedman, 25 July 2021

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(9:13)

JK: We now follow Daniel [Deardorff] into the mandorla hut as he sings his song 'To Carry Fire' and calls fire in the traditional manner with flint, steel and charcloth into a cedar bark nest placed into the firepit at wheelchair height.

Daniel Deardorff: Calling Fire/To Carry Fire

To Carry Fire

With the flame in the heart
as the hands work their art
as the voice and the drum
entwine
every gesture unfolds
to bring culture and soul
alive

For the heart and the hands
require
to carry fire
Yes the heart and the hands
require to carry fire


There are five sparks aglow
in the stories you know
and they long for your breath
to burn
So we strive for the skill
for the courage and will
to return

For the heart and the hands
require....to carry fire

Alexander made his wall
of shadow and amnesia
The Mythsinger will recall
all we are
All we've been denied
from the other side
reclaimed

For the heart and the hands
require....to carry fire

---Daniel "3D" Deardorff



3D's last fire May 2019
photo: Judith-Kate Friedman
3D's music is available on SoundCloud
#mythsingerlegacy

[On film, Daniel: 'I think that's gonna do it.'

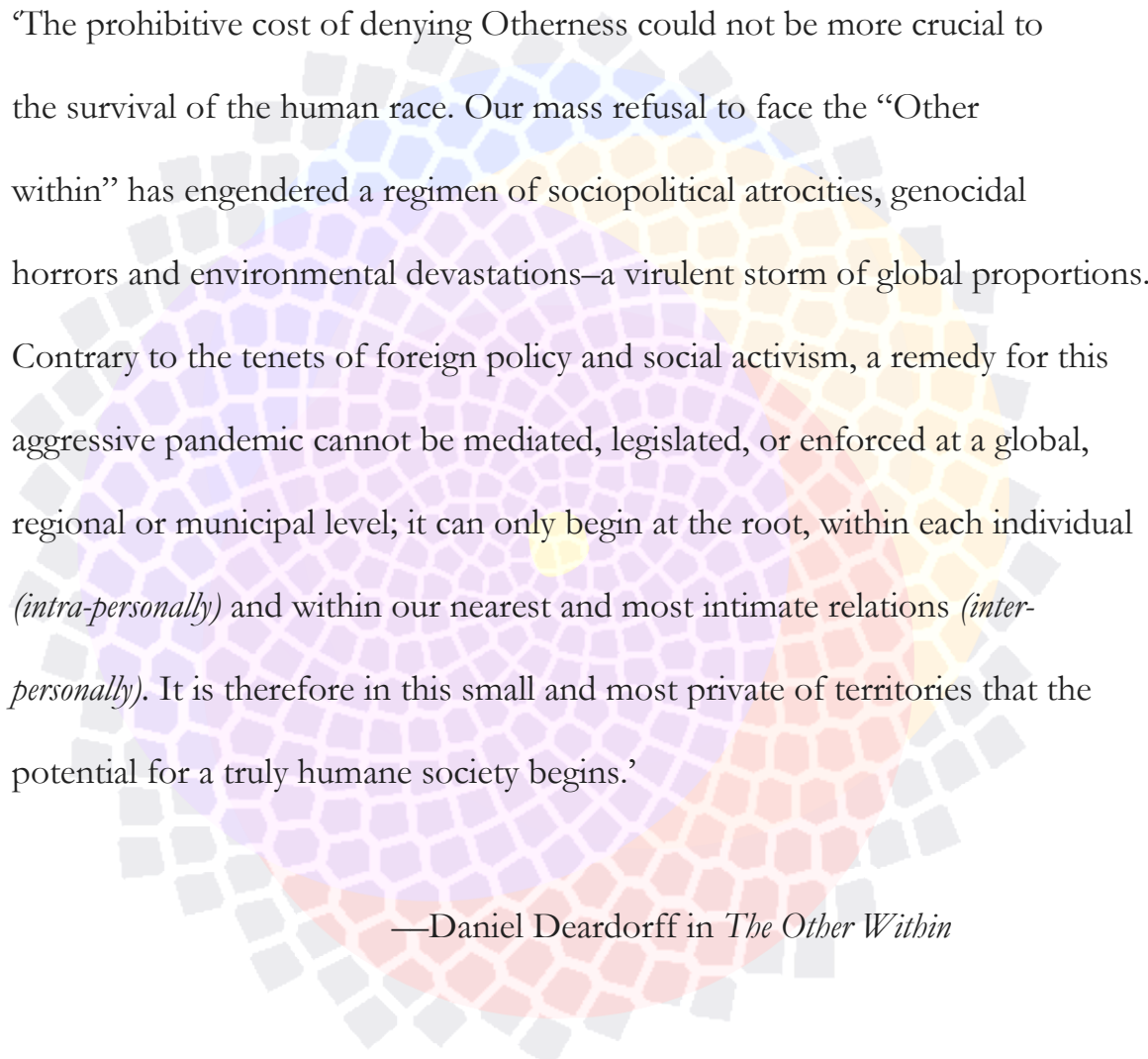
Birch places fire nest into wood crib in the hearth. Daniel: 'Thank you, Birch.']

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(13:57)

The Journey

JK quoting Deardorff:



“The prohibitive cost of denying Otherness could not be more crucial to the survival of the human race. Our mass refusal to face the “Other within” has engendered a regimen of sociopolitical atrocities, genocidal horrors and environmental devastations—a virulent storm of global proportions. Contrary to the tenets of foreign policy and social activism, a remedy for this aggressive pandemic cannot be mediated, legislated, or enforced at a global, regional or municipal level; it can only begin at the root, within each individual (*intra-personally*) and within our nearest and most intimate relations (*inter-personally*). It is therefore in this small and most private of territories that the potential for a truly humane society begins.’

—Daniel Deardorff in *The Other Within*

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JK: He also said — and I don’t agree with everything, I actually hold myself and him in the kind of paradox that we’re holding all, everything today — [he said:]

‘The gift to culture does not come from culture.

It comes from outside culture.

So, if you want to bring a gift to culture,

you have to go out and get something from the wilderness —

some wisdom,

some fire —

to bring cultural vitality in

from the outside.’

—Daniel Deardorff

JK: ‘O, Teachers’ – This doe, who greets me, very often lately in the morning. [Photo of doe beneath the service berries.] And the bambis are running around in the neighborhood –

‘O Teachers, your otherness calls out my kindred soul.’ [-J.K.]

And a dear friend, Susan Duhan Felix, who is between the worlds right now, leaves us with this mantra to live by:

‘Stay amazed!’

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JK: Here are some duets of me and the Living World. And this is my process – the finished songs aren’t finished enough for presentation today. So what you have are the composer’s kind of sketch pad of the things that might be fleshed out, even in symphonic form in the future.

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(16:14)

Duets with the Living World [Rhythmic bird sounds.]

[JK showing her line drawing:] Grief at the center of the spiral. Spiraling out into blooming. [Reads poem ‘Sovereignty within Endurance (*Malchut Sheb'Netzach*, 5781).]

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Sovereignty within Endurance (Malchut Sheb'Netzach 5781)

Deep within the earth
no matter what else happens
music blossoms forth.

Frogs click dawn-wet tongues.

Rains swell sorrel, clay and bone.

All praise Mystery.

Underground roots dive
deep in ancient, fertile soil.
Wild sun stretches up

beyond farthest sky.
In between, our mortal souls
scamper as squirrels.

Witnesses amidst
impossible stillnesses,
cacophonous doubts,
we are each privy
to the Holy of Holies,
Source of all Sounding.

And so it is here
in the place of this *and* that
we receive the call.

Poisons in the well
ache for grief's tears to cleanse them.
This is our work:

To crack ourselves wide
retrieving our broken hearts
'til they rise and sing.

Ken y'hi ratzon. May it be so.

– Judith-Kate Friedman, Spring 2021

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JK: [Describing Mandorla Tree Series – 4 images]

Earth. Sky. Inbetween – a squirrel. We’ll meet him again soon.

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JK: [Describing Heritage Mandorla Series – 2 images]

[1] Branches above, roots below, the mandorla inbetween.

Feeling the verticality. An image – a montage – of evergreen trees above and my father’s cityscape of New York City, an oil painting, below.

[2] Side by side: Past to present to future to the center of all. A heritage mandorla, ‘City-Country Portal.’

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(18:56)

JK: [With photo of Hawthorne tree in full bloom]

Last year, underneath the Madrona [also known as Arbutus] trees which you see in the back – and the Hawthorne in the front – two baby fawns were born. And these blossoms were more resplendent ever than in all the fifteen years that I’ve been here.

So, as I sing with the Living World now, every morning, as part of my practice for this creative project, this song came - from the tree. [Sings on video with tree in breezes and bird songs]:

The Hawthorne's Song

We never give up
Although we give in
We drink the above
And grow from within
We wave in the breeze
We watch you begin
And teach you to listen
For what weaves and spins

Before all the others bloom
I am the one
Feeling the spacious room
Here to become
And so it is with you, too
Sure as the sun
And cycles of the moon
Once you've begun

Everything turning
Yearning from roots below
Delicate clusters and faces
Of those we love
And those we do not yet know

You are a city girl
Now you've come home
And as your broken heart mends
You're not alone

Welcome city girl
May you have ease
Sure as the spring turns toward summer
In the Hawthorne trees

— Judith-Kate Friedman, June 2021

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(22:28)

JK: And here's one of my favorite visitors every morning, or actually I'm a visitor to *their* world. They were probably here in generations and generations before me:
Hummingbird.

[This begins the 'Gardens' section of 'Duets with the Living World,' a 00:05 sec. video of hummingbird on garden fence taking flight. No soundtrack.]

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JK: And frog. [Video 1:00 min. **'Frog and Eye'** begins in silence panning still photos of Madrona trees in snow, the picnic table garden area at Mossy Rock in early Spring before plants were set out and then audio begins with Spring rains over several containers of Japanese Maple and Ash saplings. Judith-Kate adds vocal musical improvisation with a frog seen close up in partial shadow between the planters. At the last measure of music, the frog leaps away.]

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JK: Peony. [Video **'Peony Passages'** follows the life cycle of a single coral rose peony from bud to blooming, from dark, deep red-pink to bright pink to white with bright yellow stamens at center and dew-kissed petals in close up shots. Throughout JK sings an a cappella wordless melody or *nigun*. As the peony reaches the end of its blooming cycle and petals fall in the winds, she adds words, singing to the peony with only three petals remaining:]

'And daily you kept me company

Allowing me to see.

Ah....'

[Then whispers:] 'I've come all the way from New York City to fall in love with you.'

•••

JK: [Describing image]: Here's one of my favorite pictures from the year [softer iteration of doe at window photo from the website entry portal page, here in a mandorla]: Woods. Village. Inside. Outside. Deer in the window exactly across from my bed [close up looking through the glass.] And on the [windowsill] altar [camera pans], many beautiful things, all with eyes and skins.

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(26:54)

Katabasis

JK: We move to the second part of the journey. Dropping down. Katabasis.

[Quoting]: Daniel Deardorff:

'Make my breath a bridge from this world to the myth world and back again.'

JK: [Describing layered schematic illustration, black and white drawings with red lettering]:

The World Tree, Yggdrasil,* the Norse World Tree, is here depicted by Daniel.

I made this [drawing] originally for my work about the [Greek] Muses. Robert Bly has a quote there on the side. I would like to ask Rafael [Jesús González] – would you be willing to read that one quote?

Rafael: Yes, I'd be delighted, Kate. [Quoting]:

'It is possible that rapid association is a form of content.'

– Robert Bly, *Leaping Poetry*.

JK: Thank you. I love that quote. I love that our intelligence itself is a form of content. [Advances slides to next iteration of the same image now with two circles superimposed: a red one mid/bottom left and a blue one to the mid/upper right, overlapping at the center.]

So, here's a mandorla. Authenticity, as Daniel taught, in the roots. And authority, on high. And inbetween, in the liminal place, in the mammalian place between the serpentine and the aerial, is Ratatask: Drilltooth – the Norse squirrel. Running up and down the trunk as insults—the greatest form of communication in this story—are hurled between the great serpent in the roots and the condor or eagle on high.

Associativity is not something that Daniel talked about in this configuration. It was *implicate*. And so, I have made it explicate, as associative—rather than comparative—mythology was so much what he was about. And yet, it was interesting to me, as I studied deeper and deeper [grammatically: more and more deeply] into all of this—and

looked at his imagery—that I had never heard him add the third “A” – associativity to the other two [that is, authenticity and authority].

(29:18)

So, take in the image and a few words [the words I speak are echoed almost verbatim, but not quite, in a third overlay of text on the previous image.] [JK recites:]

Roots, **authenticity**, humility, humus, wilderness, earth, terrain,
depth, bottom-up. Articulation, seeds. Origins, growing up.

Past, orality, depiction, gesture.

Subconscious, collective subconscious.

Ancestry, memory, memory via the body.

Creation, inside out. Ground, realism, primal, visceral.

•

Authority. Control, civilization, theogony, kingdom, empire.

Religion, theology, transcendence.

Conscious mind, top down. Heavenly, conquest.

Expertise, authorship, male domination, codification,
naming, proclaiming, ownership. Vision. Outside in. Heights,
maturity, seasoned.

•

Inbetween: blend, connectivity, mutability, liminality, flux.

Associativity, essence, balance.

Unifying principle. Yes/and. Soul.

Trickster wisdom, lived paradox.

*[*note: Please pardon my mispronunciation of ‘Yggdrasil.’ It should be ‘Ig’ rather than ‘Yig-drasil’ -jk.]*

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(30:46)

JK: Trickster!

‘The power of Trickster is AND,’ Daniel Deardorff tell us. As in ‘I am dead *and* alive.’

‘Intolerance without breeds intolerance within... Social castigation, on the one hand, and the shame of self-contempt on the other, make the ambivalent battleground of the Other within.

Here is the unremitting struggle, not to redeem or transform oneself image in “the mirror of malicious eyes” (Yeats), but to reclaim and integrate all our negative and anomalous faces: the undomesticated, stupid, ugly, deformed, malignant— each arising to a singular orbit in the constellation of “what we consider we are.”’

—Daniel Deardorff

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(31:50)

JK [back on camera, directly to attendees]: As I consider *all* of this, a series of images has begun to come. And art —visual art—has not been my primary form, as many of you know. So, these new creatures are coming. And this one does not yet have a name. [Shows slide of ‘Mandorla Creature,’ oil pastels on paper in 24” x 18” in black and red on white.] But it will welcome us into a brief meditation if you are willing—or if you are compelled. [*This is a reference to Baba Yaga’s asking visitors to her hut a perilous question: ‘Have you come here by free will or compulsion?’*]

(32:17)

Mandorla Rising Meditation. [*Thai bells, as at the beginning of the recital.*]

I invite you to get comfortable

Close your eyes

Feel your sitz bones

Your body

feet

hands

Your heart

Your gut

Your bones

muscles

sinews

fascia

skin

Their connection

Yourself as container

connector

The miracle of life

in You

centered in you

and you in all

As if you are a great tree

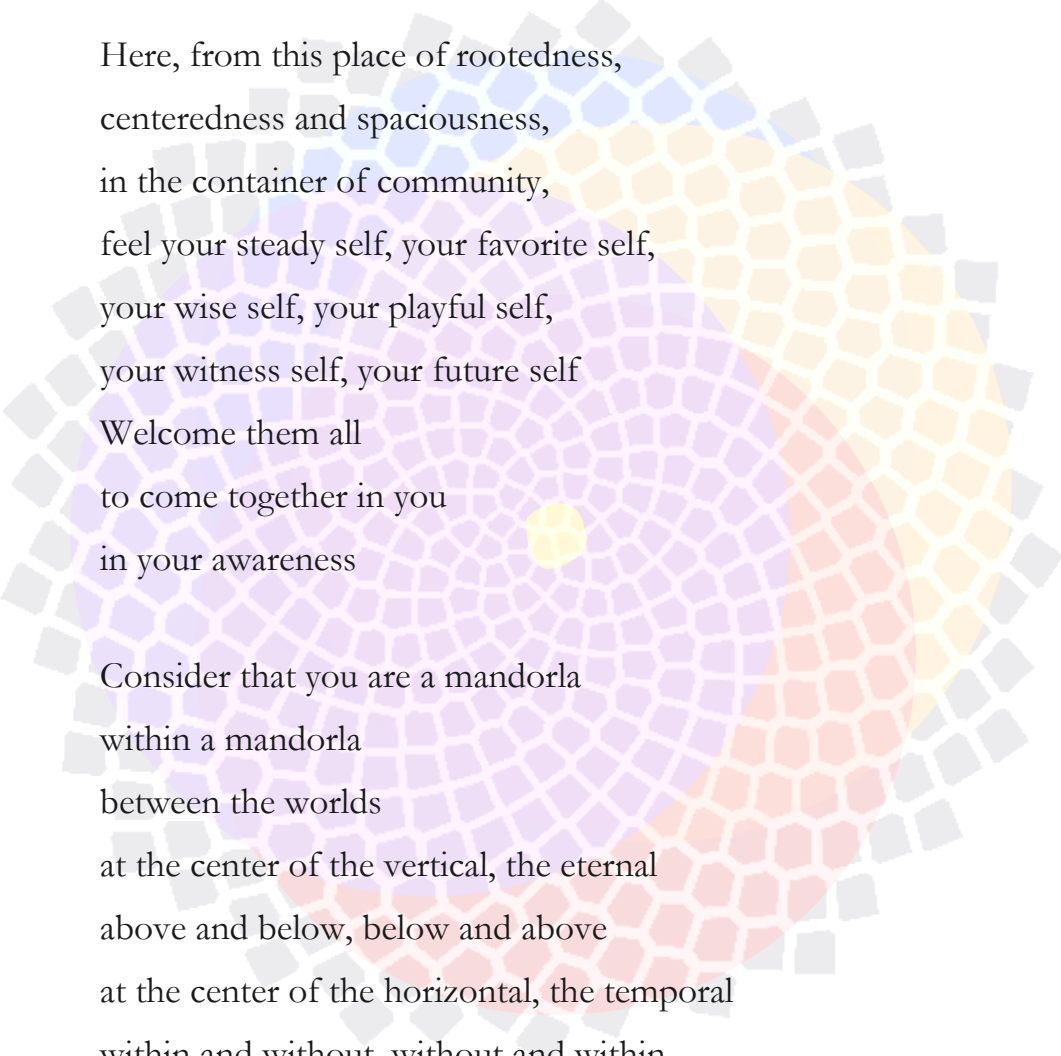
breathe up from your feet, your roots

as if your feet are rooted in deep fertile soil

and you are drinking water and nourishment up from the ground

through the soles of your feet
Breathe up into your thighs, your belly, your chest, your heart,
Up to your throat, your third eye,
breathe up all the way from the soles of your feet
to your head, your mind, your brain
And breathe out through your branches,
arms, hands, fingers, skin
Breathe out through you third eye
Breathe out like a spouting whale through the top of your head
And now feel the spaciousness, the space around you
Allow your attention to stretch out to the very edges of the room
where you are sitting
and beyond the walls
into the great spacious known and unknown
to the wider field
to the even wider field
Allow this sense of spaciousness
of your being something that is within something larger than you
to inform, perhaps de-form, perhaps transform, you
Breathe it in
And on your next in breath, turn your attention
back to your center
bringing this wide, spatial awareness with you
feeling a connection to the eternal, the timeless

into this moment in community in proximity
with each other
here, here in this virtual yet real
space and time
[in] this 'Zoom' room



Here, from this place of rootedness,
centeredness and spaciousness,
in the container of community,
feel your steady self, your favorite self,
your wise self, your playful self,
your witness self, your future self
Welcome them all
to come together in you
in your awareness

Consider that you are a mandorla
within a mandorla
between the worlds
at the center of the vertical, the eternal
above and below, below and above
at the center of the horizontal, the temporal
within and without, without and within
You are a place of both/and
this and that
betwixt and between
particle and wave

For a few minutes
connecting, in the great stream,
I invite you to go with me
on a journey of gratitude and discovery
into your own story

Each of us has an implicate identity
Parts unnamed, not expressed
that which cannot be shown
yet its shape
can be felt

From this place feel
your sense of lineage, heritage,
connection to before and the generations to come

Think of your ancestors
If you feel comfortable, call them in
And ask them for an image of strength
An image to hold as you might hold a rock in your hand—
your dominant or primary hand

And now ask them for an image of brokenness
Hold that image as surely as you might hold a rock in your hand—
your other hand, the non-dominant or less-often used one

Feel yourself holding the balance of these two images
hand and hand
side by side

Now set them in front of you as witnesses

And consider your own life

Ask yourself for an image of strength,

resilience,

gumption,

courage

Something true for you today, now

Strength—hold it in one hand

And now become receptive to a lesser strength,

a place of brokenness, stumbling perhaps,

waffling, less confident,

nervous, damaged,

simply open,

tender, vulnerable

Invite the one who is the outsider in you,

the exiled, the parts of you you'd rather not accept or attend,

the shunned or hidden—

Ask of this brokenness:

What gift do you have for me today?

What message or image?

Hold this image in your other hand

Now feel these images:

Strength and vulnerability,

wholeness and brokenness

in your hands, side by side,
held without judgement,
only curiosity

Allow the strong and the vulnerable to meet and dance

As they dance, see if a new image—a healing one—
may arise and dance with the other two

Give thanks to all three—and yourself

And as you get ready to bring your attention back
into our shared circle

know you can return to this inner mandorla

in all its complexity and simplicity

at any later time

along with the truths and images

given to you today by your ancestors

and your soul

Give thanks to your ancestors

Allow them to recede back into their time

as you come more and more fully

into this present moment

with each other here,

feeling your connection

with all you have received, with the wider field

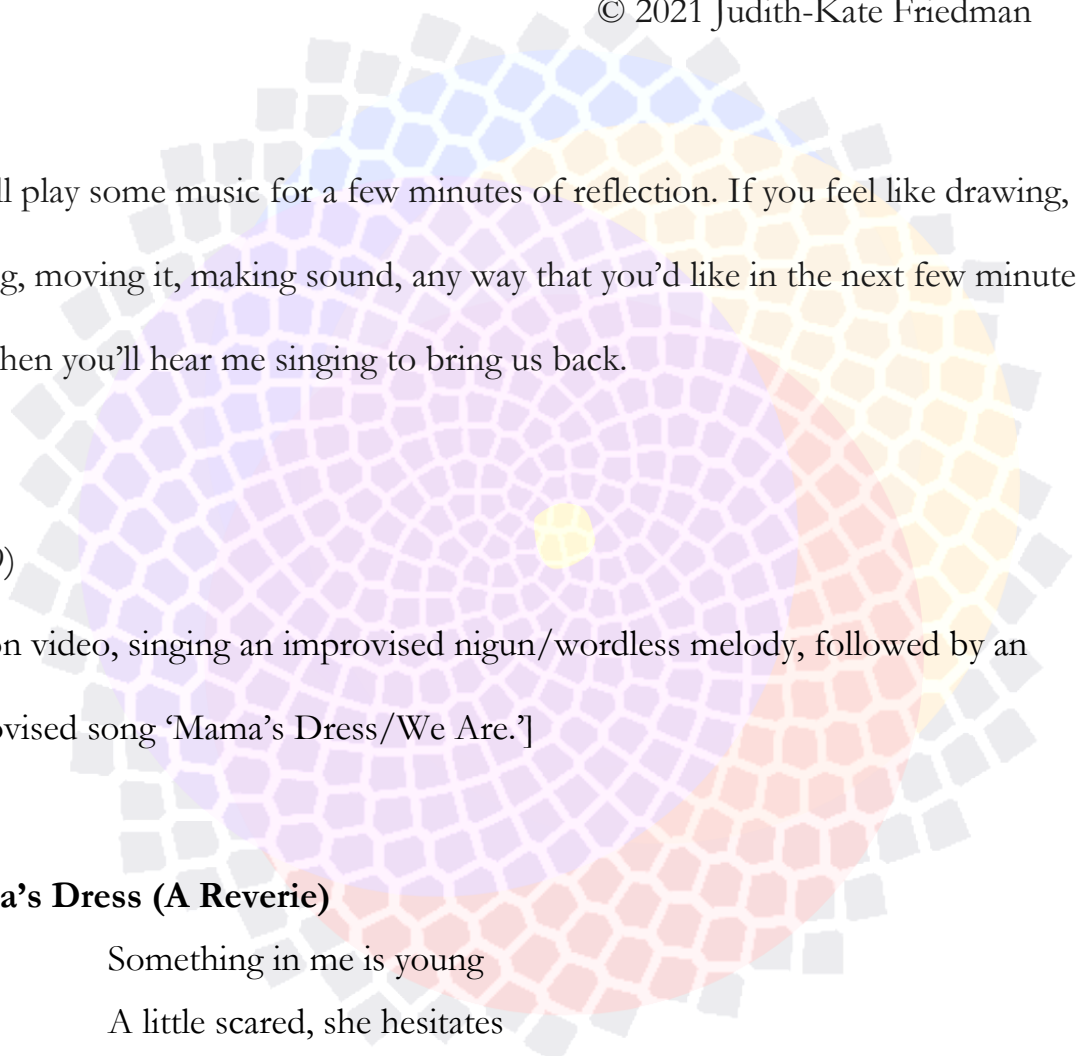
Thanking the field, the eternal

Thanking yourself

Thanking this community and our time together

**‘Mandorla Rising Meditation:
A Journey to the Other Within’**

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JK: I'll play some music for a few minutes of reflection. If you feel like drawing, writing, moving it, making sound, any way that you'd like in the next few minutes. And then you'll hear me singing to bring us back.

•••

(40:39)

JK: [on video, singing an improvised nigun/wordless melody, followed by an improvised song 'Mama's Dress/We Are.']

Mama's Dress (A Reverie)

Something in me is young
A little scared, she hesitates
She hears the mother tongue
And slowly, shyly gravitates
To that place of ancientness
Underneath her mama's dress

Dancing inbetween her legs
Close so close to the ground

Something in me starts to play
Waking to this brilliant day
Hummingbirds fly to say
'You are not alone'
Peonies and poppies bloom
Taking up expansive room
No one's rotting in the tomb
We are soil becoming, returning

—Judith-Kate Friedman

Spring 2021

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(43:42)

JK: [noting entry into the third and final part of the journey]

Love, Homecoming, Confirmation

JK:

Beyond the Hermit's Door [She reads her poem 'Beyond the Hermit's Door, *added to the video after the recital.*]

The poem starts with two lines from 'The Hermit's Hut,' by an unknown Irish author of the 10th c., in a version by Martin Shaw and Tony Hoagland.

Beyond the Hermit's Door

*All nature stays close to such refreshment...
I know where a patch of strawberries grows.
—The Hermit's Hut, 10th c. Irish, author unknown*

I know where a patch of strawberries grows.
You do, too. For three days each spring a pink color
emerges at the center of my calloused hands. You say it's your toes
that tell you the time. We make our way from opposite ends of the glade,
my north, your south, up long muddy footpaths, trousers heavy with longing,
breath growing warm, alert to the fine, faint scent of baby sweet, tiny fruits
nestled between fur-soft leaves. Tasting the loamy air, our lungs full
of dusky moistness, we pause to let a shudder run between us,
the rain-spangled salal so thick we can't see. But we hear the nearing,
feel each other's fingers from each side dip down as if each has an eye on its tip.
Sixteen mischievous, hungry, nimble searchlights reaching with care,
tenderly rooting in the dark. Thumbs out for balance, we hover
and part the protective place of shade, breath audible now,
yet hushed. We lean in and pause again. Ruby flashes, jewels
in dappled light, seven dew-kissed berries gleam, yet shyly.
Like us, they like to hide. They seem to float now, almost too delicate to harvest.
We wait. The woods have worked their magic well, calling our proximity.
Towhees bounce on low branches, sharing this glee. Three hundred sixty-two days
we live alone, sworn to hermit depths. Until like seeds, the need to cleave
to another transcends solitude. There is more than one way
to be sacred. More than one taste between white flesh and red.
More to one story than one ever sees. We share this one fruit,
small and sweet, the dragonflies of our tongues dancing. For soon,
the wrens will come to sip and eat and carry strawberries
through their bodies, gifting their seeds to the deeper forest.
Our holy transgression complete, I open the smalls of my hands
like mouths to take in your pulse once again to mine,
savor the white and red and the cool black earth,
offer my calloused skin to the hearkening wind.

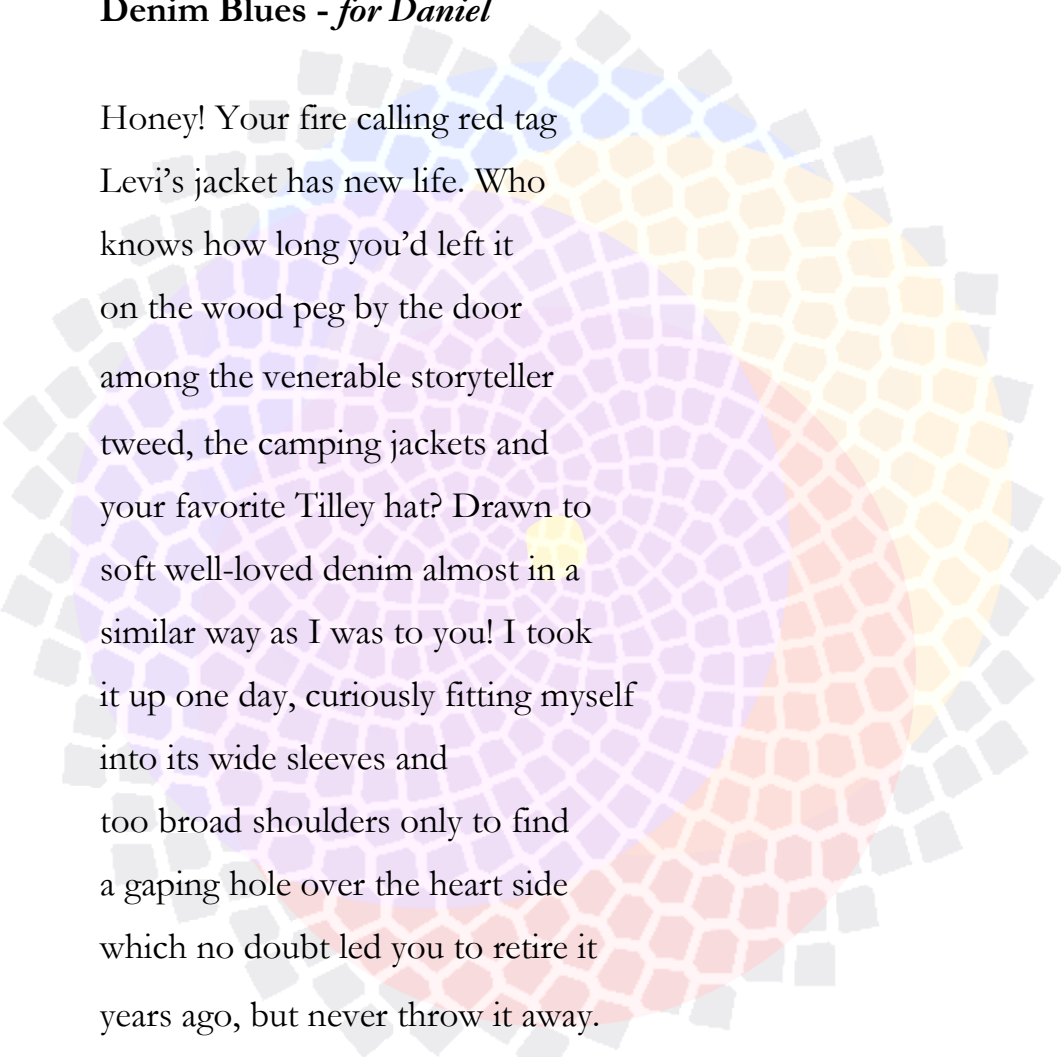
—Judith-Kate Friedman, Spring/Summer 2021



(47:29)

JK: [reads her poem 'Denim Blues – for Daniel.']

Denim Blues - *for Daniel*



Honey! Your fire calling red tag
Levi's jacket has new life. Who
knows how long you'd left it
on the wood peg by the door
among the venerable storyteller
tweed, the camping jackets and
your favorite Tilley hat? Drawn to
soft well-loved denim almost in a
similar way as I was to you! I took
it up one day, curiously fitting myself
into its wide sleeves and
too broad shoulders only to find
a gaping hole over the heart side
which no doubt led you to retire it
years ago, but never throw it away.
Like a story hanging in a cave,
a cloak awaiting its right moment
to be held, considered, voiced, told,
it just floated there, on 'your side'
of the doorway....so long that

'your side' has now become mine.

Who knew it would take so much
daring for me to pick up
each item you wore? To commune
with each, cherishing its scent and
subtle heft in my hands? Most
jackets I immediately returned to
their peg-place clearly not yet ripe,
either in themselves or in me.

Some went swiftly into the giveaway box.

But this one, which I remember
around you, holding you, nuzzling
your neck, open and
shifting as you called fire,
this one captured me.

But I thought someone else
would be the one to sew or repurpose
it, not me. Sadly, I folded it up
into a box and there it stayed.

Through hours of sorting and avoiding
sorting. Through eons of days that
have made up this year beyond all
years. Through autumn and winter
into the pushing through of spring-
time bud by bud. Through the
deep interior indwelling of breath

honored ever more tangibly, more
respectfully, with more sanctity in
these months of sheltering
from Covid, from callousness,
from the hatred that killed George Floyd
body to body, that tore all our
hearts apart world wide in ways
that no one can ever repair
except with fully fidelious care.

Care that acknowledges wounding
for the truth that is, that pauses in
the stillness to absorb the sanctity in
scars, that opens its senses to the air
and now notices, as if newborn,
how fragile fresh air is, how vibrated
by greedy aircraft, how harmed
by sooty particles from millions of acres
of fires, how ragged and rugged this
life on earth, and how inevitable this
moment. As if to take down
everything now, everything rigged
and rigid, down, way down, off its
statued pedestals, its museum walls,
out of its antiquated error-ridden
frames. And so it seems it was with you
and this: You bid me, through the weaves

of this cloth you loved, the denim, longing,
 calling, yearning for proximity to flesh
 and blood, to song and bone. The denim
 began to whisper, insistent as a late
 summer mosquito sensing its time
 was nigh....

Pick me up, make me new.

Refresh my soul, wear me in love.

*Bring me alive through your hands
 and with you. For you are my bride,
 my always bride, for you will always
 be my bride. Can you see? You can
 do this. See what arises? From
 ashes.*

The whisper continued so constant
 it became its own drone, a tone
 almost imperceptible which none-
 the-less built over a series of days
 like a pond simmering with algae
 bubbles when the sunlight is right.
 And so it was that in a moment of
 not-thinking I was drawn to the
 small room where I found the box
 with the jacket well-folded on top.
 I lifted it and beheld you as I ever

so gently slipped it into my hands,
retrieved from the land of grieve
to save. From abandon
to have and hold. From neglect
to I will cherish you always.

I heard its song: *Claim this place,
it sang. Claim this thing. This is yours.*

This is your home.

Put it on. So I shifted
into its body, shouldering
its weight, having forgotten about
the tear, amazed I had ever made
this garment an orphan! Why
would I reject it? How could I neglect
to notice its every texture and fold
had brought you so much practical
warmth and pleasure and loyal comfort.
Its blues in gorgeous hues of indigo
and sky, its frayed places of rending full
of mystery.

*Take this task, take it up while
there's still time,* it sang. *While there's
patience. While you still taste us.*

So it was I found my heart clothed
in warmth, balance, more snugly and
closely than I could have dreamed.

I listened to its wishes and went up
to the loft, called by my mother's
sacred things to see if embroidery thread
might be among her sewing notions. Yes!
Here. And down the ladder steadily,
with care, listening. Pausing
to bring thread and cloth together
in amazed delight to see how close
the colors wed. And then like tinker bells,
the needles called from their jumbled
place in the drawer amidst
unneded medicines and beads
yet to be strung. There among this
place of findings, amidst the maybe
and maybe not, a lone darning
needle said: *let me be the one!*

And we sat for hours in the rocking
chair, as I found my way to stitch
the time, realizing as I began that
it was the one-year anniversary
of your return from the emergency
room, your last return home. They
had kept us there all day and sent
us on with a remedy that required
us to keep vigil all night. So we

watched Bohemian Rhapsody and
wept and wept and wept for the
music and the mystery and the
magic of living so fully in song
when one is called to court rhapsody
in this strong and tragic, fragile life.

And you let me hold you, wracked
with weeping, let me tell you all
about how it really was for me when
you'd almost died five months before.

Honey, you let me cling to you
like arctic ice must daily seek now
to hold fast to its ancient home,
slipping and resisting slippage until
it can cling no longer.

A whole year has passed now.
As I breathe and stitch and
feel into the every day between
that day and now, between you
and me and us. I look down
at my hands and with ancestral
satisfaction, growing stronger
with each stitch, I hear.

I understand. I receive and honor
your geis: *Weave this seam for
three days. Find a bead to make*

*the suture shine. Wear it well into
the New Year. For it will soon be
the Birthday of the World. And you
will have this old new garment
and me to shelter you and bring you
to the new time.*

*To hold you as you honor
my forever flight, my first yabrzeit,
and call a fire and let me go on
a little further, knowing I will
love you always, close and
from afar, watching you as
you rise and fall and dance
into the year arising, sure as
a needle through the cloth of time,
as my heart beats now
as earth herself, as your lips
part to drink in the blessing kiss
and greet this new year's very first
shape of moon.*

—Judith-Kate Friedman

September 2020-Summer 2021

•••

(57:02)

JK: [reads her poem 'Butterfly Girl,' added to the video after the recital.]

Butterfly Girl

Beautiful, tender, willing, shy,
the young me rises in the now me's body.
She is twelve and suddenly remembers
where she left the promise of puberty.

She directs me to rise and retrieve a small
tissue-paper box tucked in an old folio.
Wings of thread, gradient blue, tiny antennae,
soft as her inner hand.

This butterfly adorned her well-worn jeans.
The ones with white strings stretched taut
across a hollow knee hole next to awkwardly
chain-stitched letters spelling *Dave*.

She bids me witness, sensing I need something she has.
Earnestness, fervor. Her trust in me is surprising,
unshakable. I'm startled by her accurate nimble touch.
As she threads a slender needle, she rests, thinks,
invites patience to enter between placement and push.
I recognize her way in how I pause
to find words.

Nobody taught her that to sew is to pull thread
between worlds. Or that a love of precision
would follow her everywhere once she discovered
the flavor of Dave.

Delicately winding kindred tongues.
Sometimes we aren't taught, yet we learn.
We live and later find shapes of daring
forever embroidered on our souls.

Now in shadow, she vibrates
like a bug in a thicket. Slowly, she takes
my hand, presses a thin strand of her hair
into its creases and steps back.

Humble lifelines connect us to invisible realms,
tenuous yet strong as spider wire. We know
there are places we will both visit,
though rarely together.

It has been this way for centuries.
Childless women are welcomed back
into the womb of their own misfortune
and greatness. If we are willing,
we are greeted nightly in caves.
Greeted in caves of innocence
and memory by the very children
we once were.

Or so she tells me.

–Judith-Kate Friedman, Summer 2021



(100:00:1)

Finale JK [again on camera, speaking directly to all]:

And so, my dear friends, I do have a closing song—from Daniel and my concert together—which as part of this dissertation project I’ve also finally edited a twenty-song concert that we gave together. [Image on screen of JK and Daniel together.]

I’ll allow Daniel to have the last word. This is one of my favorite songs of his, called **‘For Now.’**

For Now

I’ve been climbing up this mountain

It is a dream of love

Searching for the sunlight

So high above

The hopeless and the hated

All the broken hearted

The doomed and the fated

The bound and departed

I’ve never really seen the top, you know

But still I must believe

That the top of my mountain

Is waiting there for me

And you must cling with all your might

And keep on dreaming of the sky

Oh yes and one sweet day you will arrive

But you must have two wings to fly

One will never do
To fly you must have two
good wings

And these are my wings
You have given them to me
And they are love and trust
Oh, don't say another word
Those two will be enough for now
They will carry me
So high above the meaningless and worldly
I've never really seen the top, you know
But still I must believe
That the top of my mountain
Is waiting there for me
And you must cling with all your might
And keep on dreaming of the sky
Oh yes and one sweet day you will arrive
But you must have two wings to fly
One will never do
To fly you must have two
good wings

And these are my wings

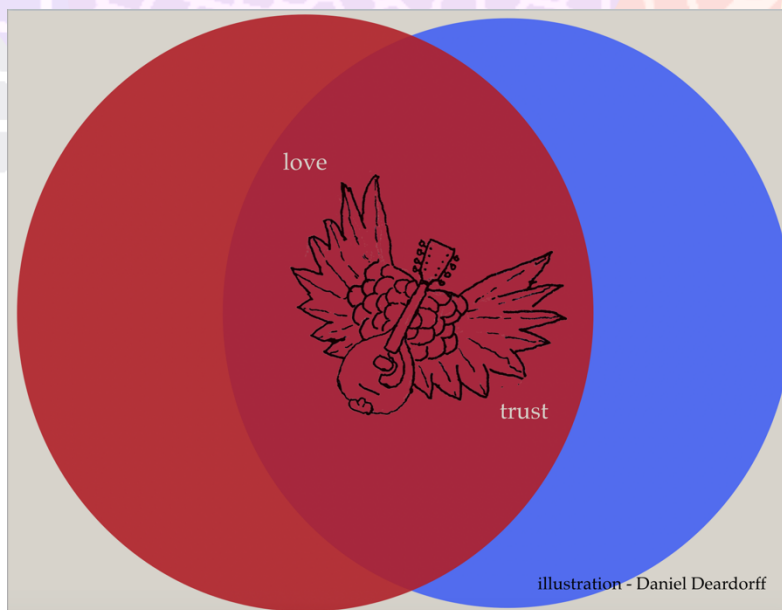
You have given them to me
And they are love,
Love and trust
Oh don't say another word
Those two will be enough for now

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(1:04:53)

JK [describing image of winged mandolin mandorla]: Our closing mandorla—love and trust—with a winged mandolin drawing by Daniel in between a red and blue circle. In the overlap: the mandorla heart. And embers [showing image of hearth-fire at its close] burning down at the close of our fire. **Thank you.**



•••

(1:05:21)

JK [back on camera, beaming with gratitude]: I am just completely grateful for you all. And there is much more work. And much of it is finished and much of it is not yet finished. And much of it will be finished – because I have learned about finishing work – more, in this new time. And everyone’s going ‘yes, yes, yes’ [shakes head in affirmation and holds hands in a shape of thanks]. Thank you so much.

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Scrolling Credits:

Mandorla Rising: A dissertation recital

Judith-Kate Friedman

Thanks:

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And most of all

thank you

Daniel Duane '3D' Deardorff

for believing

in music

love

myth

me

and

'If it's not impossible,

it's not worth doing.'

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www.mandorlarising.net

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