

Interview of Anne Gordon by Anne Allanketner on July 1, 2009

The interviewer is Anne Allanketner. She is a therapist, practicing in Eugene and Portland. She is also a poet and the author of *Spells Of Mending*. Anne Allanketner has been affiliated with the Women's Dream Quest in San Francisco and Portland for over twenty years.



Following is an interview I conducted with Anne Gordon about her novel, *Numina ~ Power, Spirit, Place*.

Anne discovered labyrinths in 1997 and became a Veriditas Labyrinth Facilitator in 2002. She lives in Eugene, is married, and has a 20 year old son. She is a bookkeeper and in addition to presenting lectures on the history of the labyrinth, she has been on staff at Sacred Heart Medical Center as a Labyrinth Facilitator for six years. She is self-publishing *Numina* through LuLu.com. Anne Gordon's novel is available from LuLu.com or by contacting Anne at greeneden@comcast.net

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*Your novel is called **Numina ~ Power, Spirit, Place**. I understand this is your first book. What does Numina mean and what happened along your path that brought you to writing a novel?*

Numina is a Jungian term referring to a spiritual force or influence present in an object, phenomenon or place. *Numina* is the product of a lifetime of musings. I think we all carry with us deeply felt emotions and ideas. I did not set out to write a book, but I found that when our only child left for college, I had the opportunity to transfer this tapestry of thoughts and reflections to paper. These reflections came out as short stories and ultimately as the story line of *Numina*.

This is a work of fiction. Are there labyrinths or labyrinth experiences in the novel?

There is a labyrinth and a labyrinth experience in *Numina*. In the literal sense, one of the main characters who resides in a different time period, makes an annual pilgrimage to a Gothic cathedral. At the end of her visit there, she walks the labyrinth. In the symbolic sense, the flow of the book is very labyrinthine. As I mentioned, there are short stories and these are interwoven with the main narrative. The main narrative takes place in present time and also several hundred years ago. While I take great liberties with linear time in the novel, the characters, whether those of the main plot or those of the short stories, are all traversing a path much like that of the labyrinth. They are in different places on the path. The characters are held by the container of the book as we are held by

the container of the labyrinth when we walk. What might appear to be a detour or backtracking from the plot is actually a necessary meandering. As the reader enters the book, softening his or her focus, it is evident that the characters are all moving towards a common center. This is very similar to watching people walk the labyrinth. The order and interrelatedness of things is apparent only over time.

What are some of the themes in the book?

Women's History, religion, politics, evolving consciousness. When I began writing *Numina*, I thought the book was going to be an examination of the Burning Times, a time in our history when many women (and men) were executed for being different. These people were driven to the margins of society. They were ostracized and condemned for worshipping differently, for being healers, or simply being eccentric. As I followed the story in my mind's eye, watching it unfold through the main characters, I was led to the topic of our creation story. The characters in *Numina* spoke to this damaging portrayal of women and how it may have played a role in allowing atrocities to be committed against women and against many people who revered the feminine face of God. The result was that *Numina* became a story about the betrayal of the feminine and of our relation to the Divine Feminine as she is present in Nature.

Is this a book for men as well as women?

Absolutely. Men and women were cast out of the Garden, and we have been dealing with the repercussions ever since. *Numina* is about healing our stories and ourselves.

Some people think this book is very radical. What do you think about this? Are there radical elements in this story?

Well, if taking a break from thousands of years of acceptance of a story that demonizes half of humanity is radical...then I guess it might be considered radical. If, on the other hand, you feel comfortable examining long-held assumptions in a different light, it would be a story about just that.

You have taken on enormous historical topics in Numina. Why is it a work of fiction?

Many wonderful and informative non-fiction books have been written on these topics. I am not claiming to be a historian, but I was able to weave a large amount of historical fact in with an interesting human story. In writing *Numina*, I realized there was a lot going on in the world that did not suit me, so I created the world I wanted. This book contains a great deal of history and no small amount of political thought, but it is not about pointing fingers or ranting against the patriarchy. It is about posing questions instead of prescribing answers. It is about healing, rather than judgment. *Numina* considers the possibility of restoring a Partnership Paradigm.

You mentioned following the story in your mind's eye. What do you mean by that?

When the storyline of *Numina* first appeared to me, it was in the form of a movie. I imagined being in a small, darkened theater. The screen was black and the sounds of the opening scene came first. Then, I could see in my mind's eye what was happening.

When I was able to quiet my mind, often as I walked the labyrinth, I could re-enter the world of *Numina* and gradually more and more of the book was revealed. Eventually I stopped listening to the radio when I was driving, I wanted to be available if ideas for the book entered my imagination. Gardening was a place of inspiration, so I kept a notepad handy when I worked in the yard. Many ideas and conversations from the novel's characters came to me as I walked the labyrinth. Since I didn't really want to interrupt my walks, I found it became necessary to walk with paper and pen in hand.



How did you know the book was complete?

The characters stopped talking. At first it seemed as if they had moved away. Then I realized they had not moved away, they had simply finished telling me their story.

Thank you, Anne Gordon, for sharing this time with us today. To the readers, I would like to say that I have read Anne's book and can recommend it highly. This book is a collection of conversations and stories that challenge modern cultural assumptions including the Biblical creation story, the armed forces and the history of the Church. If you gravitate towards chocolate brownies laced with habanera chilies, this book is for you. The characters are normal, accessible people who interact and wonder about the world just like people in your book club or women's group. They have humor, warmth, and vitality. Just as you are allowing that familiar taste of chocolate to melt in your mouth, the invisible ingredient hits you. Wham, you are time traveling and rearranging your understandings about women, men, religion and history. If you like to spend your weekends knitting sweaters for your sacred cows, leave this one on the shelf."

-Anne Allanketner anneallanketner@comcast.net