Seven years before her death in 2010, Mary Daly yielded to the urgings of feminist teachers and her friends and began to give thought to an anthology that would preserve her legacy and offer a grounding in her feminist philosophical thought and creation. Her work, rooted in her focus on the well-being of women and of creation, was instrumental in the development of feminist theologies which are taken for granted today, and it may be difficult to conceive of the radical arc of her life and scholarship from a mostly twenty-first-century perspective. This reader offers a guide to that life and that work, and thus to some of the deep origins of contemporary Pagan thought and practice. Those who have recently entered into such spiritual practices by exiting through the doors of patriarchal religions may not know that they were following in Daly’s footsteps—more or less literally. She imbued the word “witch” with exuberant joy long before the notion of “social influencers” was heard or thought of—and long before it was safe, academically or personally, to do so. She gloried in “ecstatic process,” defined boundary living, and transformed God the noun/verb into terms like Goddess and She who is many verbs. She worked to proudly reclaim words like “crone” and “hag.” Living on the philosophical, theoretical, and spiritual margins, Daly saw further beyond the horizon than most of her contemporaries, and she did not apologize when her visions created controversy.

A founding mother of the “Second Wave” feminist movement, Daly began her theological life steeped in the philosophy and theology of her white working-class Irish-Catholic upbringing. Mary E. Hunt’s biographical sketch describes Daly’s trajectory from obtaining two doctorates at Switzerland’s University of Fribourg and being present as an observer of Vatican II through her years of teaching inside—and outside—Boston College, beginning in 1967. Daly’s first book, _The Church and the Second Sex_ (1968), called out the sexist legacy of the church and called for reform from within; Boston College responded by trying to kick her out (for the first
time) by denying her tenure. Ironically, in light of her fame for refusing to teach women in a class containing men (offering interested male students private tutorials instead), it was her male students (there were no liberal arts women students in Boston College until 1970) who came to her defense with arguments of academic freedom and intellectual integrity, with the result that the college did in fact tenure her in 1969.

Nonetheless, Daly had learned that reformers were not rewarded, and so she moved into radicalism. On November 14, 1971, she made her famous Harvard Memorial Church Exodus speech, which culminated in her leading all of the women and many of the men in the pews of that august church to follow the example of nineteenth-century Abolitionists and early black church founders by walking out of the building in protest of the church’s misogyny. Refusing to participate in tokenism (she was the first woman to speak at that pulpit since its establishment in 1636), she offered both harsh critique and a realistic hope that things might be different; this speech (reproduced in full in this reader) was the origin of her epiphany that as long as God is exclusively male, then men can justify playing God.

Daly’s growing feminist stances included concern for animals, the earth, war, and poverty, all revealed in her landmark publication Beyond God the Father (1973), a full flowing statement of feminist theology which included an affirmation of radical self-trust in one’s own spiritual authority, the introduction of “God the Verb,” and the reclamation of “witch” as one who foretells. The book gave her an increasingly popular as well as scholarly audience, but in 1975 Boston College denied her application for full professorship on the strength of that popularity. Daly responded in part by creating “hedge schools” for Boston-area women’s studies graduate students, reminiscent of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Catholic hedge schools operated in Anglican communities, and also by coining the term “academia.” Moreover, she was an early and active participant in the Women and Religion Section of the American Academy of Religion, where she was known for challenging assumptions and delighting in debate.

Possibly her most controversial book, Gyn/Ecology (1978) embraced the concept of spirals as means of transformation. She also expanded on her concept of biophilia, providing a crucial resource for ecofeminists and all those who found the sacred in nature. The book provoked several splits within the feminist community,
including strong criticism from black readers for Daly’s blindness to the racism of a white woman writing as an authority on black experience; this whole topic is well-contextualized in introductory comments by the editors to each reading. A product of her own gender essentialism, Daly was also tone-deaf in her reaction to members of the trans community, accusing transwomen of refusing to give up male privilege. Intersectionality was not common currency in Second Wave feminism, and Daly reflected her time in that regard. Of particular note was a public dispute with Audre Lorde, who took Daly to task in print for her ignorance of racial issues; the editors have included the relevant chapters from *Gyn/Ecology* as well as publishing for the first time a personal letter from Daly to Lorde in which Daly reaches out for reconciliation. This may be one of the most insightful contributions of the *Reader* to Daly studies.

*Pure Lust* (1984) shows Daly reveling in her word-play, reclaiming the joy in passion and calling for the restoration of spirit into matter. *Webster’s First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language* (1987) unleashes that same joy in a blizzard of radical feminist words and concepts. *Outercourse* (1992), *Quintessence* (1998) (the year before her “retirement”), and *Amazon Grace* (2006) (which details the circumstances of her “retirement”), are Daly’s most autobiographical works, in which her concern with environmental collapse shines through her fundamental identification of women with the earth, with nature, and with transformation. These last three titles are represented by the shortest selections from all of Daly’s works, though the editors offer context throughout the book with quotes from the *Wickedary* and short, informative introductory sections to each excerpt.

Tide-like, social and cultural movements flow and ebb—as do the reputations of their founders. This reader puts Daly on display in all of her life-long radical transformations, personal, theological, philosophical, rhetorical. Pagans and scholars of Pagan studies who have never heard her name or read her work will find a few of the foundation stones of contemporary Paganism embedded in her writings. Those who already know of her and her work will be Re-Minded and Re-Membered by this collection.

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