

lems. Cults in particular are also an institutionalized and symbolic way of defying male domination.

The continuing vitality of African traditional medicine and the role of female spiritual healers, in particular, reflects the capacity of these healers to adapt to the rapidly changing conditions of social and economic life in Africa today. African traditional healers lost status and power during the colonial era. Many of the cults which formerly occupied an important place in religious life of the people have become periheral in the contemporary era. Even though not much of the past "glory" has been recouped since independence, the spiritual healer still occupies a unique position in African society.

In view of the role played by female spiritual healers, especially for women, the definition of women's health and well-being must incorporate the entirety of their lives, the full range of their needs and activities, and all the discomforts and illnesses that they face. This perception of women's health is recognized in traditional medical practices.

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SHULAMIS YELIN

On Making My First Fishbone Sculpture

Lord, when you first put
those small bones together
and made a fish
with skin and bones and scales
and head of
incomparable complexity and design,
did you, too,
stand in awe and wonder?

Did you first fantasize
its frame and shimmer
then fashion it?
Or was it all
a lucky accident—
like random toss of stars
on August nights?

And when you saw it finished,
did you, too, smile
from depths of child in you
who made that wondrous toy?

Shulamis Yelin's poetry appears earlier in this volume.