

Engaging the Feminine Heroic

Women Writers' Retreat

Spring 2010

An intensive creativity workshop for writers and artists with acclaimed author & Hollywood script consultant DARA MARKS and director/facilitator DEB NORTON

Engaging the Feminine Heroic is designed to help women writers and artists gain greater access to their own internal creative vision in order to write stronger and more compelling stories. This course uses mythic epics as a means of entering more deeply into communication with the feminine mysteries surrounding our shared experiences of maidenhood, marriage, childbirth, menopause, crone wisdom and dying.

What is the Feminine Heroic and why do we need to engage it?

The feminine heroic may be difficult to recognize (even for women) because most of the popular stories in our culture are grounded in the masculine heroic journey. Whereas the essential goal of the hero's journey is to discover, defend, declare and establish our Self in the world, the great achievement of the feminine quest is communion, connection and relatedness to the Other. Therefore, it isn't grit or physical prowess that gives the feminine her heroic stature, it is her ability to descend into dark, forbidding places that lie within each of us to retrieve our essence, which is interrelatedness and love.

The story of our humanity is encoded in all epic mythologies. They reveal how we grow and evolve, how we face life's conflicts and obstacles, and how we *must* endure death experiences in order to

Course Elements

Lecture - Each section of the workshop begins with a talk, exploring various aspects of feminine epic mythologies and their archetypal relevance in our personal experiences and life journeys.

Discussion - One of the predominant themes of this course is the universality of our human experiences. Therefore, sharing these experiences is essential to helping us expand our ability to see ourselves in each other and each other in ourselves. Writing only takes on depth and meaning when it penetrates these boundaries of interconnectedness.

Exercises - We will explore the stages of the feminine heroic journey through timed writing, ritual and play. Our exercises are designed to bypass the critical voices that obstruct creative flow.

Writing - Personal writing is encouraged during non-workshop hours. There will be small "homework" assignments, but participants will find that the work in class will stimulate journal writing, spontaneous poetry, work on a personal project, and other forms of creative expression.

create new life. In this course we *de-code* myth as a means of gaining valuable insight and perspective on the archetypal human dramas that we all inescapably reenact. Archetypes are universal patterns of human behavior that we all consciously or unconsciously recognize. There is enormous power when a story taps into archetypal characters or situations because they enable the audience to identify with the story on the deepest possible level.

Gaining access to the feminine heroic is a heroic journey in itself. This course takes writers and artists on a guided initiation into the feminine realm where you will:

- Transform life's pains and hardships into creative expression.
- Re-context your own experiences, giving them archetypal relevance.
- Discover an incorruptible connection to the essence of the human story.

"I felt something missing at the core of my writing; the thing that I wanted to say eluded me. Dara Marks and Deb Norton are inspirational teachers who helped me write from the most hidden corners of my soul."

Leslie Paxton
Novelist

Intimate...



Challenging...



Creative...



Fun!!

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Dr. Dara Marks



Dara Marks, Ph.D. is a leading international script consultant, seminar leader, and author of one of the top selling books on screenwriting, *Inside Story: The Power of the Transformational Arc*. Dara has specialized in the analysis of the modern screenplay for the past two decades, and *Creative Screenwriting Magazine* has consistently rated her the number

one script consultant in Hollywood. She has worked for most major Hollywood studios, including Columbia, Disney, Paramount and Sony, and her advice has been sought on a variety of films and television programs, over a dozen of which have been theatrically released or are currently in production. Dara has a doctorate degree in Mythological Studies from Pacifica Graduate Institute, focusing her thesis on *The Transformative Function of Story*. Her groundbreaking work in this field continues to help writers engage more deeply and effectively in the creative writing process.

"Dara Marks is in a class by herself."
-Creative Screenwriting Magazine-

"Dara Marks covers everything a writer needs to know about how to take passion and turn it into a meaningful story for an audience. What's more, she does it with the intelligence, clarity, and generosity of a true teacher."

Ellen Sandler, Writer/Producer
—Everybody Loves Raymond

"Nobody can give a writer talent, but Dara Marks can guide us through the craft of telling our stories in the most thoughtful and thought-provoking way. She teaches us to mine our ideas and bring them home."

Iris Rainer Dart, Author
—Beaches

Deb Norton



Deb Norton is a writer, actress, teacher and the Artistic Director of the award-winning Theater 150 in Ojai, California. She is a graduate of the MFA program at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. Deb has been seen on stage at PCPA in Santa Maria, The American Conservatory Theater and Encore Theater company in San Francisco and the Westwood Playhouse and Court Theater in Los Angeles. Critics lauded both her writing and performance in her play, *The Whole Banana*, which also garnered a movie option after its West Coast premiere in Los Angeles. Deb's formal training as an actor and her 25 years working in theater have led her to the development of a unique and holistic approach to writing and teaching. Her workshops have provided authors a place to find their true voice, finish their project and fulfill their dream of living a creative life.

"Deb guided, cajoled and eventually forced me to take my writing to a higher level. Years of rejections have been replaced by agents wanting to represent me. No easy fixes here, lots of hard work and a teacher with a vision of what could be my best work."
-Jane Howatt

"Deb delightedly opens the door to the creative process and invites students to explore in the playroom of their own creativity, without judgment or editing."
-Anne Kerry Ford

Dara Marks is the author of **INSIDE STORY: The Power of the Transformational Arc**, an exciting new book that is considered by many to be the most important advancement in screenwriting theory to come along in years. Her innovative method for structuring a screenplay is designed to keep writers focused on the heart and soul of their story so that plot, character, and theme create a unified whole. The interrelationship of these key story elements forms the basis of the transformational arc of character. Marks explains, "The transformational arc is the deeper line of structure found inside the story. It is an organic template writers can use to ensure that the intricacies of plot and character grow naturally out of their original thematic intention." **INSIDE STORY** not only improves our understanding of story structure, but it also moves the modern craft of writing into the realm of transformative art. (Available at www.DaraMarks.com)

