

**ODE TO THE OLDER WOMAN  
(AN AFFIRMATION -- A CELEBRATION)**

Noeleen O'Beirne

*I'm alive -- yes, alive  
For I have known what it is  
To be a woman and survive.  
For--*

*I am a warrior-woman, a lioness,  
A blazer of trails  
A builder of bridges and a mender of them, too,  
A champion of the many--not the few.*

*I encompass the earth, I touch the sky  
And plummet to earth,  
Phoenix-like I rise from the ashes of my dreams  
Once more to fly and fly and fly.*

*I am quite literally the stuff  
Humanity is made of.  
I am a nurturer, giving birth  
Not only to my kind, but thru' the  
fertility of my mind  
To concepts unconfined by societal  
expectations.*

*I am a welder of bonds, strong and  
enduring  
Of motherhood, sisterhood,  
nationhood,  
A donor of life force, endowed with  
experience  
Adorned with wisdom and love  
I am a place of refuge, a dove  
I countenance no killing of another's  
daughter  
Or a son--my children everyone*

*I am the music of the universe, from  
generation to generation  
You'll hear my lilting song.  
I am the white crane dancing  
with extended wings  
Dancing to silent music.  
The snow leopard, alone, aloof in lofty  
solitude,  
The dolphin frolicking in turquoise  
waves.*

*I am a chameleon -- wife, mother  
worker,  
Artist, dancer, teacher,  
The gentle moon illuminating  
The darkness of ignorance and hate.  
I am a page well-written  
My history finely etched  
Upon the parchment of my face  
So survive I have-- and gloriously,  
not in defeat.  
Sing out! sing out! in celebration of  
our sisterhood.  
We'll meet the challenge life still has  
in store  
With valour, for  
Each of us is WOMAN--ageless and  
unique.*

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