



Luciana Percovich

The Wisdom of the Crones. Introduction to the Conference

Rome, May 2026

1. Thank you

I am deeply grateful to all of you – those who have joined us in person and those with us in spirit - for being here today.

Many other women I'd also like to thank who are Crones today and with whom we've shared many other paths. What has brought us here might be called chance or perhaps, more fittingly, chaos: a deeper order beyond the grasp of rational thought.

It feels like we have been drawn to this meeting - that we may have assigned ourselves to long ago) to come together again at this moment of labor contractions of history.

I have never forgotten that moment of deep despair in my adolescence, when the full weight of misunderstanding and loneliness I would have to face suddenly opened up before me, brought on by the realisation of how alien the people and ideas around me were. And yet, in that same moment, I knew that women like me existed all over the world—that I was not alone, and that one day, I would meet them. And that is how my life unfolded, and perhaps yours has as well.

Amongst many, I want to name Mary Condren, who was organising a meeting similar to this in Ireland just before Covid; Peggy Reeves Sanday, who returned to her Mother's womb last summer; Willow La Monte, who, with her magazine *Goddessing* introduced and created connections at the end of the last century - before the internet existed - towards a new women's movement: the 'Goddess Movement' that was being birthed at that time.

Some will remember *Goddessing*, which we read together with Mary Daly's books at the end of the nineties... It was on those pages that I first learnt about women all over the world who were starting to venture into the forbidden and banned territories of spirituality; of a new Quest forming on all continents, of Glastonbury/Avalon, and the Goddess Conference that was beginning its journey, thanks to untamed women who were rediscovering their talents



as drum players, cave painters, Neolithic ceramicists, dreamers, dancers, priestesses, witches...

I had been a feminist since the early 1970s, firmly rooted in what we called “political practices”—a term specific to the Milanese feminist movement in which I came of age. It stressed the importance of putting into action what we were gradually coming to understand about ourselves in Self-Consciousness groups.

At that moment, on the threshold of the new millennium, a new direction opened regarding my commitment to women, as it did for many of you.

And, I would like to thank, from the bottom of my heart, the small group of women who worked with me to organize this meeting. Some of them - mostly younger women - joined quite spontaneously about a year ago. I also wish to thank those who stepped away from the project along the way.

2. *The conference name.*

We have been a forerunner generation (I hesitate to use the word “pioneers,” given the word’s predatory connotations in Western history).

We have learnt and relearnt many more things about what it means to be women, things often less present, or not present at all, in the awareness of sisters who came before us in previous waves of women’s awakening. Those waves followed on, one after the other, like minor earthquake tremors, moving and shifting in a subterranean fashion across the five or six thousand years of patriarchal rule.

Now we are able to see from different perspectives that have recently opened up to us. We know and understand more things.

In English, the word *wisdom* encompasses two meanings, which Italian holds as distinct: *sapienza*—knowledge or wisdom—and *saggezza* - to be a sage. *Saggezza* feels too grand a word here, so we’ve somewhat more modestly chosen to call this gathering *Sapienza delle Crone*—The Wisdom of the Crones. If any of us has managed to grow into that deeper kind of wisdom—what the Italian language calls *saggezza*—it is her own private quality.

“Crones”, in Mary Daly’s redefining of the word, explains what we are today: Elders who know; who have learned through experience; who are coming back to their essence having completed the tasks of the Maiden, the Lover, the Mother.



The Crone finds herself in a time of new and unexpected freedom, that of the Queen, the Dabu, the Lady of the Threshold. She can now gaze out over different landscapes and other planes of Being. Yet at the same time, she knows she must leave her knowledge to others - as Grandmothers have done for millennia - to their daughters, sons, and grandchildren. This is our "political practice" today: to tell, to gift, to let go.

We are a generation of women who came into this world during or after the great wars of the 20th century, and during the process of "modernization" that followed. Despite the prevailing culture of the time, we succeeded in retracing all the stages and transitions of a woman's life, radically questioning how patriarchy had treated them. We tracked our lives from our first bleed to abortions and motherhood; through the male myth that women should feel fulfilled by love and domestic life in a mononuclear family mystified as "natural"; to sexual and economic emancipation up to our last bleed and the new strength and fragility of becoming old in a culture that has long tried to eradicate all respect and recognition for elderly women. Through this different way of traversing life - day after day, year after year – and by re-examining the knowledge carved into patriarchal commandments/Divine Laws, we made a breakthrough into a forgotten spiritual dimension: one where women, above all things, had been systematically banished throughout every phase of patriarchy. A dimension which is still largely absent from what is called contemporary "activist feminism," which deludes itself that it already has a free mind and sovereignty over the body.

We came to understand that without reconnecting to our roots, we are like cut flowers in a vase: seemingly alive, but only for the time of a Mayfly.

2. *A New Gaze*

This new spiritual awareness has reconnected us with our Cosmic Mother - has reawakened within us cellular Memories and far-reaching Vision - the "long gaze" that really has always belonged to the feminine: the power to see beyond the immediate, to foresee and to prophesy... or more simply put, to look out across space and time.

And unexpectedly, something long hidden began to return. The memory of a Time Before the age of patriarchies slowly started to reveal itself: from the earth and from caves, small figurines began to emerge, rising as if on their own accord after thousands of years of concealment, from an environment that had become far more hostile than the time when the ice sheets covered much of the land at the dawn of humanity. And with them came a woman, Marija Gimbutas, who, guided by her own far-seeing gaze and courage, was able to recognise them.



As if a veil had suddenly been lifted, we saw around us the “indigenous cultures of peace” (to which we devoted our conferences in Turin between 2012 and 2016). These cultures endure in small pockets where they have managed to survive to the present day - communities that remain close to the earliest ways of humanity, those that have enabled our fragile species to endure and continue the process of creation.

Refined and sophisticated cultures - far from anything we might call “primitive.” We describe them as matriarchal or, in a future perspective, gylanic. They manifest in every sphere of life: in family and kinship, in economic practices, in systems of governance, and in spiritual and religious worldviews.

4. Female Symbolism

We have learned to redirect our search for symbolic nourishment - for waters to quench a thousand-year-old thirst - away from male-defined frameworks codified across many and separated disciplines. Instead, we have turned towards what we in Italy call ‘Symbolic Mothers’, without obscuring their faces, even when they appear as the Mother in her wild and fierce form.

We are moving away from the sterile frenzy of Science’s obsessive cataloguing by male hands, increasingly working as hired voyeurs, illusionists, and thieves - those who observe and appropriate. And yet, in recent times through paradoxical paths of development, even Science has begun to change, freeing itself from its artificial compartmentalising and learning to read matter more deeply. And this is leading to the confirmation of theories once dismissed as “visionary,” such as those held by Marija Gimbutas.

We are learning to distinguish between power that manifests only as prevarication and predation, that is, “power over,” recognising it as the perverse version of “power to” - the vital force that enables creation. And we are learning not to be afraid of it anymore.

We have rediscovered that Elders - both in myth and in historical social and cultural systems - were the guarantors of life’s renewal. They gave shape to the most efficient parental structure: the matrilineal. The responsibility carried by grandmothers, as caregivers of the young, also symbolically made them the keepers and preservers of a community’s knowledge and talents. They were entrusted with ensuring that the Mother’s gifts were not exploited to exhaustion, that Her legacy was not squandered so that future generations



would not be deprived of what had been learned, appreciated, stewarded, nurtured. In fulfilling this role, they did not hesitate to exercise their “power to.”

And we, at times, may still struggle to grasp and assert the full significance of our discoveries, shaped as we have been by the narrow aims of individualism and personal achievement, pushing to carve out space under the watchful, judgmental inner eye of God, male even if disembodied, and mostly angry.

We are going to tell our stories from different space and time points in which we are born, but that have not prevented us from meeting and recognising each other. This gathering is a gift we offer to one another, made possible by the work, effort, courage, and resources that have brought us here today and tomorrow.

As Gen reminds us, ‘Giving’ means stepping outside the market logic that dominates so much of the still partially human life. It is the most beautiful thing we can do. It brings us closest to that vital and nourishing ‘power to,’ rooted in love and gratitude. In ancient times, this kind of potency was embodied by the *Potniae*, the Ladies, suggesting the idea of ‘Those who Can’. They were the Powerful Ones long before that meaning was diminished to “goddesses.”

The power of our Ancestresses, the power of the Crones, sits here amongst us.

5. *Structure of the conference*

The conference was an idea that grew through the years of Crone Circles held in various cities, and that matured through the work for the *Cronario*. To bring it into being, we envisioned these two days unfolding as four petals, with the vortex of sounds and voices of Agadez and the Queendoms at the centre—evoking and invoking the “Powerful Ones” under their more recent names.

The Four Petals are:

Themes at the Roots with Gen (the Gift) and Heide (the Mothers) and Joan (Herstory - and Marija Gimbutas smiling at our THANKS)

Paths of Spiritual Research, with Kathy (Avalon), Cristina (art and activism), Max (Homage to the Crone), Starhawk (Earth Paths)



Voices of women of the world, with Paola, a great traveller and weaver between continents, Maria (from Central America), Francesca (Matricomunities and the Mosuo), and Barbara (Natives of North America)

Political practices in Italy, to connect threads that began in the early days of feminism in Italy: Annarosa (women in decision-making places), Alessandra (women in places of resistance and care), Maria (collection, preservation, and dissemination of the New memory).

I wish our questioning and debate times were as the early, formative space of self-consciousness that gave rise to the women's movement: moments when attention to one's own feelings becomes a form of communication, opens relationships, fosters gratitude, Moments of Being in the cosmic embrace of the Mother.