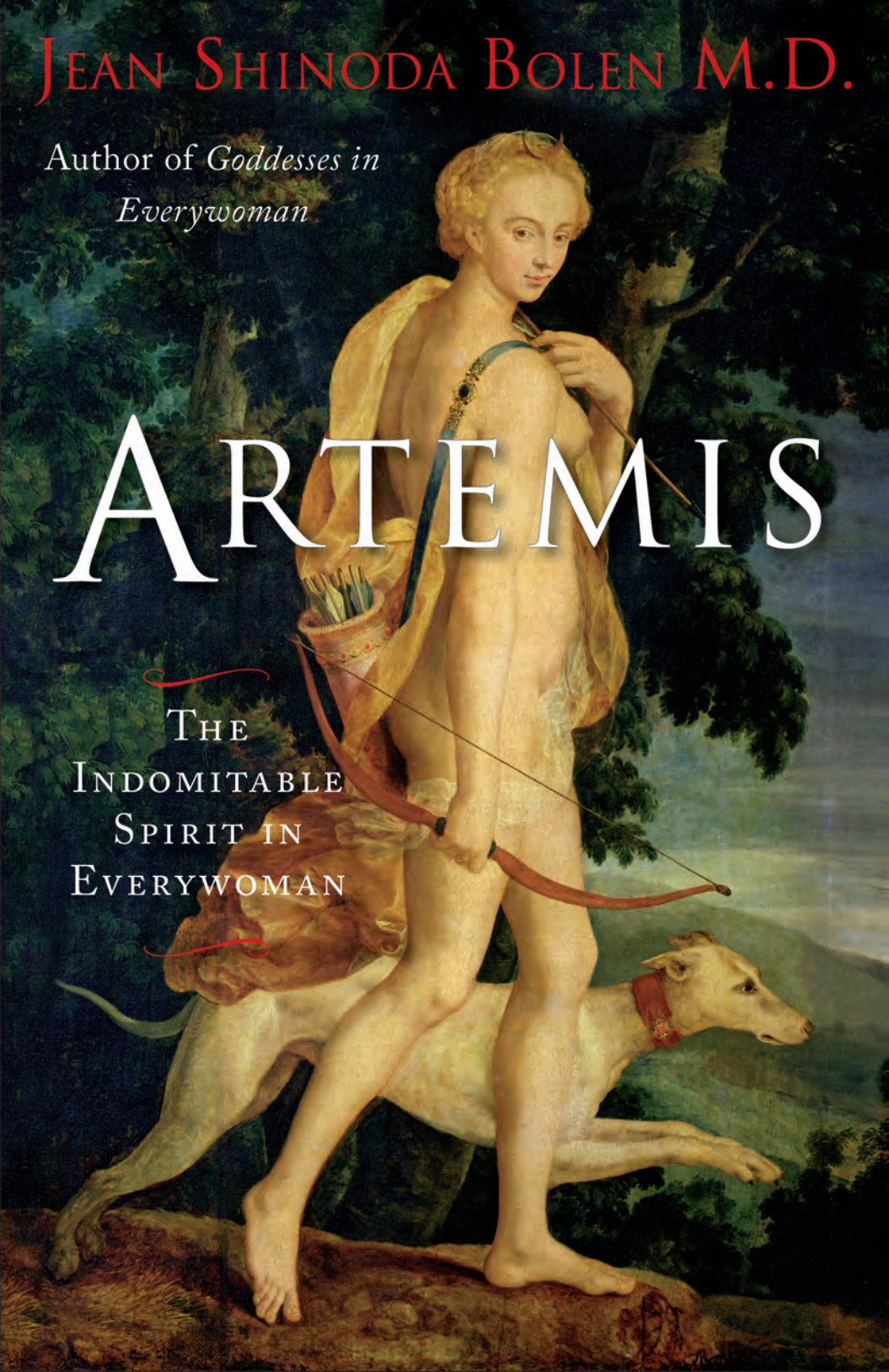


JEAN SHINODA BOLEN M.D.

Author of *Goddesses in  
Everywoman*

# ARTEMIS

THE  
INDOMITABLE  
SPIRIT IN  
EVERYWOMAN



In Jean Shinoda Bolen's best-selling, game-changing *Goddesses in Everywoman*, myths came to life in a whole new way that resonated with our own lives. Even fictional character Bridget Jones was reading that book.

Now comes *Artemis: The Indomitable Spirit in Everywoman*, a groundbreaking new book that explores the archetype of the activist. Indomitable means untamed, unsubdued. It is the one-in-herself quality in girls and women who will not be victims, no matter what. To bring the Artemis archetype to life, Dr. Bolen delves deeply into the myth of Atalanta, the famous hunter and runner in ancient Greek mythology, a mortal woman who is identified with Artemis the Greek Goddess of the Hunt and Moon. Atalanta began life abandoned and left to die because she was born a girl. Atalanta exemplifies the indomitable spirit in competent, courageous girls and in the women they become. This is the passion and persistence to go the distance, to survive, and to succeed.

Dr. Bolen paints a vivid picture of Artemis women in current media, both fictional and real, who grow into their Artemis spirit. She provides the means through which readers can navigate their own personal exploration to become their authentic selves.

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## Introduction

# THE INDOMITABLE SPIRIT IN EVERYWOMAN

*(Latin in + domitare: to tame; incapable of being subdued or tamed)*

**I**ndomitable spirit is an attribute in women who have Artemis as an active archetype. In mythology, Artemis is the Greek Goddess of the Hunt and Moon, known as Diana to the Romans. She was the first-born twin sister to Apollo the God of the Sun. As goddess of the hunt, she roamed the wilderness, armed with a bow and quiver of arrows, accompanied by her hunting dogs, either alone or with her chosen nymph companions. Artemis came to the rescue of her mother, was the protector of pre-pubescent girls and young animals. Pregnant women prayed to her to relieve them from pain. (*Artemisia*—the herb that bears her name, is used by midwives for this). She reacted swiftly to help those under her protection and to punish those who would harm them or disrespect her. Artemis is an archetypal predisposition toward egalitarian-brotherly relationships with men, a sense of sisterhood with women,

the ability to aim for a distant target or rise to a challenge, and a preference to be in nature rather than cities.

*Artemis: The Indomitable Spirit in Everywoman* is a coming-full-circle book. I go back to the story of Atalanta that led me to write *Goddesses in Everywoman: A New Psychology of Women*, a book that initially became an unexpected best-seller, then a classic, celebrated by the publication of its thirtieth anniversary edition in 2014. It began as an entirely different book about two paths of feminine development with the working title *Pathways to Wholeness*. It was based on Greek myths about Psyche and Atalanta, two mortal women, one identified with Aphrodite, the other with Artemis.

In Jungian literature, the myth of Psyche is the model for the psychological development of the feminine psyche. While it does apply to many women, to say that this was the pattern for all women did not ring true for me. Psyche was the mortal woman who offended Aphrodite. Pregnant and abandoned by her lover, she tries to drown herself and finds she cannot. She then is given four tasks to complete and is initially overwhelmed by each task. Symbolic helpers then come to her rescue (each represents an inner resource that she did not know she has) and as the tasks are done, she grows psychologically. I wanted to find another myth that would apply to women who took on challenges, ventured into new fields, defined themselves, and who entered occupations and professions that had traditionally been male stronghold—women who were at ease with men as friends and equals. I found Atalanta.

My focus expanded after I wondered: What about the other Greek goddesses? And then, as if in response to this question, Hera, Goddess of Marriage, “appeared” in the

psyche of a woman who had been taken over by Hera in her jealous aspect. My interest shifted to the major goddesses in *Goddesses in Everywoman*. As a result, only remnants of the Atalanta story remained, at the end of the Artemis chapter, and Psyche's four tasks were incorporated into the Aphrodite chapter.

My interest in Atalanta was renewed the summer before I began writing this book, when I taught at the C. G. Jung Institute in Kusnacht, Switzerland for the first time. Kusnacht is Jung's hometown on the shore of Lake Zurich and, although I did not train there, I think of it as the "mother-ship" of Jungian institutes. For the first time in over a decade, I told the myth of Atalanta and amplified its meaning to an international student body. It came alive in me and in the room. I remembered why I had become interested in Atalanta in the first place.

## ATALANTA AND ARTEMIS

Atalanta is a famous hunter and runner in the ancient Greek myth of a mortal woman, who was rejected and left to die when she was born. She survived, the ancient storytellers said, because she was "under the protection of Artemis." Atalanta exemplifies the indomitable spirit in competent, courageous girls and in the women they become. This indomitable spirit refuses to give up on what she knows to be true for herself. These women have grit and the passion and persistence to go the distance, to survive and win.

Girls and women with indomitable spirit are the new protagonists in many of the most-read novels and fictional series of this century. They have emerged in the creative

process of authors with a reality that seems to blend invention and active imagination. I believe that these emerging female heroes are captivating readers because of a morphic resonance. Energies and archetypal patterns in the collective unconscious are rising into our individual consciousness and changing assumptions about women and in women.

Katniss Everdeen is an Atalanta in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy; Lisbeth Salander is a darker side of this same spirit in Steig Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. I also see Atalanta in Anastasia Steele, the main character in E. L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* who ventured into the wilderness of emotion and sexuality. These are young women who call upon their intuition, depth of feeling, and courage to go beyond previous limits; who feel fear and outrage and have to adapt and endure and not give in or give up. Each has an inner spirit that is not subdued, a will that is not broken. Each in her own way is a quirky, independent, courageous person who is in uncharted territory—the metaphoric wilderness, the realm of Artemis.

Until the Women's Movement in the 1960s, the enduring fictional character with Atalanta qualities was independent-thinking, hot-tempered tomboy Jo from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Jo is the one sister in the March family who pursues a career and who, when she finally does marry, makes a conscious, personally meaningful choice. In novels, as in real life, it's not what happens to us that counts, but how we respond.

In Greek mythology, Atalanta the mortal and Artemis the goddess have similar sounding names and qualities. Artemis is the goddess with the silver bow and arrows,

the hunter with unerring aim. Atalanta is also a renowned hunter. Like Artemis, she is at home in forests and associated with animals, the mother bear in particular. But Atalanta is mortal and, as such, can be affected by Artemis or any of the other divinities in the Greek pantheon. She can also suffer the consequences of being a woman in the cradle of patriarchy.

In the age of feminism, Atalanta became known to several generations of children through Marlo Thomas' *Free to Be . . . You and Me*, which entered the popular culture as a book, as a recording, and then as a television special. The book became a children's classic. In this version of the mythic tale, the Princess Atalanta is an athlete and astronomer who promises her father that she will marry the man who can beat her in a footrace. Atalanta has also been featured as a hunter and a runner in videogames, in comic books, and on television. She even became a toy action figure following her role as a strong character in the video series *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*.

## GODDESS ARCHETYPES IN EVERYWOMAN

*Goddesses in Everywoman* introduced a new psychology of women based on archetypal patterns personified by eight major goddesses in classical mythology, one of whom was Artemis, archetype of the sister, competitor, goal achiever, and feminist. All archetypes are potentially active in every person—as lived out in us, projected onto others, or recognized when encountered in ancient myths or contemporary films. Just as we come into the world with innate natural gifts and personality traits that may be encouraged or suppressed depending upon expectations of family and



society, so it is for the archetype of Artemis that Atalanta personifies.

The Artemis archetype was expressed at Seneca Falls in 1848, in the Declaration of Sentiments that was the beginning of the Women's Suffrage Movement, only one of which was the rallying issue of the right to vote. It took until 1920 for American women to gain this right through a constitutional amendment. Feminists in the mid-1960s through the 1970s emphasized sisterhood. They demanded equal access to education, jobs, and professions; they insisted on opportunities for girls to participate in sports; they demonstrated for reproductive rights. Thanks to their efforts, gains were made that rippled out into the world, but there was not enough support to pass the Equal Rights Amendment.

Even with the liberation of Artemis in American culture, there are some who hold to the same assumptions and values prevalent in cultures where a girl belongs to and obeys her father until she marries, after which she becomes her husband's possession. In these cultures, a woman's role is to maintain the household, please her husband, and bear male children. She must maintain her physical virginity before marriage, or at least the appearance of it. Sexuality is not for her own enjoyment, but for her husband's pleasure and the procreation of children. When virginity is the hallmark of value and honor, with bride price or dowry dependent upon it, women do not belong to themselves; they lack sovereignty and independence. When Hillary Clinton addressed the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 with the ringing assertion that "Women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights," she brought attention to the reality that

human rights are not extended to women—that democracy, even where it exists, often can only apply to men.

Artemis embodies the virgin-goddess archetype, a woman who is one-in-herself psychologically. She may or may not be a virgin physically; she may be of any age. The archetypal part of her maintains autonomy in her inner life, even when it is not allowed outward expression. She may need to keep her feelings, thoughts, and imagination of a different life to herself until she is old enough to leave a fundamentalist family headed by an authoritarian father. Or until she can join other women to express or protest, such as the women in India who demonstrated against authorities who disregard rape, those who joined One Billion Rising and danced in streets to end violence against women, or took part in the Arab Spring uprisings.

## STORIES

In Jean M. Auel's *The Clan of the Cave Bear* (1980), Ayla is an orphaned five-year-old who is tolerated by people who are not like her own in prehistoric Europe. The way Ayla learns through observation and abuse, adapts and survives, and has her own goals is echoed by stories of real children and by women who see in Ayla something of themselves.

In *Game of Thrones*, Arya Stark is a young Artemis girl on her own in a devastated and dangerous world. Her once peaceful world was brought to an end, not by an earthquake which left Ayla orphaned, as natural disasters can do, but as a consequence of armed conflict. Wherever there are massive natural disasters and few resources, or ongoing fratricidal wars such as those in the Middle East and in central Africa now, and in Europe and Asia in the

twentieth century, the psychological situation and dangers faced by these fictional girls are quite real to girls who lose parents, have no home to return to, and have the indomitable spirit and will to survive and not become helpless victims, no matter what. Anonymous to us, are the innumerable real life girls and women who are heroic and ordinary. Maybe you will recognize yourself as one.

The girl who does not give up on herself when others write her off as worthless taps into the indomitable spirit of Artemis, which is her archetype. This is the same source of indomitable will that is in the girl who devotes hours and years to master a skill or a sport or an art that takes commitment and practice. The bow and quiver of arrows which makes a sculpture or a painting of a goddess recognizable as Artemis is a meaningful symbol. To send an arrow to a target of your own choosing requires aim, intention, determination, focus and power. You can bring down game to feed yourself and others, punish enemies, or demonstrate confidence: metaphorically, you can take care of yourself.

When passion and perseverance come together day after day, the indomitable will that results can provide an energy to go beyond former limits. Diana Nyad is a stunning example of this. She was sixty-four when she became the first person to swim from Cuba to Florida in 2013, succeeding on her fifth attempt, the fourth since she turned sixty. She swam one hundred and three miles, took nearly fifty-three hours and did it in shark-infested water without a protective cage. Nyad said to Dr. Sanjay Gupta on CNN: “You have a dream that doesn’t come to fruition, and move on with your life. But it is somewhere back there. And then you turn sixty, and your mom just dies,

and you're looking for something. And the dream comes walking out of your imagination." While she was swimming, she got three messages: One is "never, ever give up," two is, "you are never too old to chase a dream," and the third was, "it looks like a solitary sport, but it's a team."

Stories are wonderful vehicles for images, feelings, atmosphere, and depth because they lead the readers or the audience to identify with and learn from the characters. We begin with our own experience and make a connection; something rings true and illuminates something important that we didn't recognize before about ourselves. When it reflects a deep truth, this insight is liberating. My hope for this book is that readers will find soul nourishment to grow into the people they were meant to be. By readers, I mean male as well as female readers. The ability to imagine ourselves as the main character, or even as all the characters, in a story, with no consideration as to the gender of that character makes us aware of the universality of the masculine and feminine in us all. This ability lets us recognize the qualities that are human and not gender-based.

When you *feel* personal and archetypal traits together, when there is a connection between you and the story that holds your attention, when you realize a truth that you have not before seen, this is an *aha!* moment—a moment when an unacknowledged archetype comes to life. For women in whom traditional roles and archetypes like daughter, wife, and mother (Persephone, Hera, and Demeter) coincide well with their expectations, Atalanta/Artemis may stay dormant until that moment of truth. Similarly, a woman who has been an Artemis and never wanted to be a mother, may, in her late thirties or early

forties, feel that she must have a child if the maternal archetype lays a claim on her psyche.

The stories about Atalanta exemplify archetypal qualities of Artemis as goddess of the hunt. There is, as well, the meaning of Artemis as goddess of the moon, which is an affinity for mystical and meditative experiences, a sensing of subtle energies, a capacity for inner reflection. This lunar aspect is in activists who are “closet mystics,” most recently attested to in Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Living With a Wild God* (2014). Known for her books and essays about politics, economics, social class and women’s issues, Ehrenreich wrote her unexpected memoir about mystical visions she had as a teenager, the extensive reading she has done since and the sense she makes of this personal reality as a scientist and atheist. Artemis is one of the three goddesses of the moon. She is the archetype of the waxing (or young and growing) crescent moon. Selene is the archetype of the full moon, while Hecate is the archetype of the waning crescent moon. In delving into these archetypes and their meanings, women can see and appreciate them as stages in themselves.

Artemis, Athena, and Hestia make up a second important trinity; they are the three Virgin Goddesses. As archetypes, they differ in attributes and values with one important quality in common: each has a one-in-herself inner core. Intelligent strategy is Athena’s gift, introverted centeredness is Hestia’s.

Atalanta and Artemis are the means through which readers can drop into their own depth psychology. There are many real-life stories of women in these pages, as well as mythological and fictional examples of women who are similar to Atalanta. If Artemis is a strong archetype in

your psyche, you will see reflections of yourself and will value the indomitable qualities that have sustained you. You may also realize how you may need to grow. It may also be that you are someone who has imagined yourself in the stories about indomitable girls and women, but has kept this part of yourself under wraps. If so, perhaps this book—or a vivid dream, or synchronicity—may help you to realize that an indomitable spirit exists in you. And, with right timing and courage, you will be true to the Artemis in yourself.

## Chapter One

# ATALANTA THE MYTH

Stories often change with the telling and the point of view of the storyteller. In Greek mythology, there were two versions of Atalanta's origins as a famous hunter from either Arcadia (as told by Apollodorus) or Boetia (as told by Hesiod). In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Greek myths were assembled and retold in Latin verse. I describe Atalanta as being from Arcadia because it is in this version that we get the account of her birth and how she was abandoned and suckled by a bear.

Atalanta is also mentioned as wanting to enlist with Jason and the Argonauts on their search for the Golden Fleece. She is refused because her presence as a woman among men would be disruptive—the same argument that was used to keep women from serving in the military until recently. This didn't stop Atalanta, however, as told by classical scholar Robert Graves (*The Golden Fleece*, 1944). Graves describes how, as the *Argo* casts off, Atalanta jumps aboard and, invoking the protection of Artemis (for her virginity), joins the heroes. In another vignette, when two centaurs try to rape her, she kills them with her arrows.

I have taken liberties as a storyteller to combine elements from separate myths in which Atalanta is mentioned, adding some embellishments. For example, when I tell how the bear finds her, I incorporate Bernard Evslin's version of how she and Meleager meet (*Heroes, Gods, and Monsters of the Greek Myths*, 1968). I tell of her return to Arcadia after the hunt for the boar to provide continuity between the hunt and the footrace. Here is the story as I tell it.

### THE MYTH OF ATALANTA

In the kingdom of Arcadia, the king is eagerly awaiting the birth of his first-born. When the new baby proves not to be the son and heir he expects, he vents his anger on his unwanted daughter and orders a shepherd to take her to a nearby mountain and leave her there to die of exposure or an attack by a wild animal. Atalanta begins her life unwanted and rejected. But what was intended as the end of her life in fact turns out to be an unusual beginning.

The shepherd does as he is told. He takes the baby and places her among the rocks on the mountain. Atalanta wails; she is hungry, wet, and cold. Her cries attract a mother bear whose den is somewhere nearby. Whether out of curiosity or maternal instinct, the bear investigates and sniffs the baby. Atalanta grasps the fur of the bear and the human infant and mother bear bond. The mother bear takes the baby to her den, suckles her, and keeps her warm. It was said that the goddess Artemis sent the bear.

Bear cubs are small and helpless when they are born. Like human babies, they cannot survive without maternal



care. They grow to adulthood faster than human babies, however, so Atalanta is raised with a succession of cubs as siblings. In another version of the tale, when she is able to walk, she is found by hunters who raise her and teach her to hunt and speak.

## **Meleager**

At about the same time that Atalanta is born, in the neighboring kingdom of Calydon, another king eagerly awaits the birth of his first-born. It is a boy! The son is named Meleager and his birth is greeted with festivities and celebration.

Shortly after Meleager is born, an unusual visitor—Atropos, one of the three Fates—calls upon Meleager’s mother. A blazing fire heats the room in which the queen receives her guest. Atropos goes to the fireplace, stands on the hearth, and points to a log that is burning on one end. She says: “Do you see this? As long as it remains unconsumed, your son will live!” The queen leaps up, grasps the log, and smothers the flames. She then wraps it up, locks it in a brass chest, and hides the chest and the secret away. Meleager’s life (or death) has been put into his mother’s hands.

Meleager grows to manhood, raised to someday become king. Tutors teach him what he is expected to know to fill this role. His mother concentrates on finding him a suitable wife. Meleager spends as little time as he can in the castle. He prefers to be in the forests and wilderness of Calydon. Every so often, his mother insists that he meet an eligible young woman from a suitable family. Time and time again, the matchmaking fails. Meleager

isn't interested in soft, frilly, feminine, simpering girls with whom he has nothing in common. "Find me a girl," he says, "who can join me in the outdoors, who can be my companion."

### **Atalanta and Meleager**

One day when Meleager is out hunting, he hears the sound of a large animal and sees that it is a bear—a worthy trophy for him. With his strong arm and bow, he sends an arrow into the bear, wounding it badly, but not fatally. The bear, in pain and loosing blood, instinctively goes in the direction of its den, away from Calydon. Meleager follows, intent on bringing the bear down. The bear plunges through the brush and trees, hour after hour, mile after mile, losing blood and getting weaker as the day goes on. Finally, at the foothill of a mountain, the bear collapses.

Meleager has just caught up with the bear, when he sees a woman coming down the mountain toward him. He is immediately enthralled. She is everything that the girls he knows at court are not. She is as beautiful as any creature in nature—sun-tanned, long-haired, long-limbed, graceful, athletic—his dream girl!

"I am Meleager," he tells her. "I killed this bear, and I will give his pelt to you as a trophy!"

"I am Atalanta," she replies. "That bear is my brother, and now I will kill you!"

Atalanta rushes at him with killing on her mind. But Meleager, now smitten, has love on his. They are evenly matched and it seems as if they wrestle for hours.

Outdoors in the mountain air, with the smell of crushed grasses under them, both perspire as they wrestle, skin to

skin. Atalanta's focus shifts to being in this totally new experience. This is the first time she has wrestled with a human being like herself—the first time she has felt skin rather than fur. The embrace begins with her wanting to kill Meleager, and him holding her to prevent it. As they struggle in this embrace, however, new feelings and curiosity arise in her.

However it happens, Meleager and Atalanta become a couple. Soon they become famous. Seen hunting together, they are a handsome pair, each as striking as the other in appearance and in skill. Meleager's mother seethes when she learns about the relationship. Atalanta is totally inappropriate for her son! She is truly a nobody, a rustic with no known family, and totally without social graces. Definitely not a proper young woman to become queen someday.

Meanwhile, the king has a major problem on his hands—a huge boar sent to devastate his kingdom by an outraged goddess. He brought this on his kingdom by neglecting to honor Artemis in the yearly rites. Meleager's new girlfriend is probably not as much of a concern to him as the destruction caused by this creature.

## **The Hunt for the Calydon Boar**

The boar is enormous. With its sharp curved tusks and its huge feet, it rages through fields, destroying crops and trampling domesticated animals and people who can not get out of its way. It destroys villages and threatens the whole countryside. Artemis, Goddess of the Hunt, fashioned the boar out of mud and gave it life in retaliation against the king who neglected her while making sacrifices to other divinities. Although this is the usual reason

given for her wrath, however, another cause may be the awe that people feel toward Atalanta, a mere human. When they look at Atalanta as if she were Artemis, this offends the goddess.

Regardless of the cause, the boar has to be dealt with. The king invites the heroes of Greece to gain honor and reward for themselves by hunting it. Among those who answer the challenge are many of the heroes who went with Jason as Argonauts and later took part in the Trojan War.

The heroes assemble prior to the hunt. The last to arrive are Meleager and Atalanta. The other hunters are scandalized. Even though she is now a famous hunter, how dare a woman join the hunt! There is muttering among the men, with Meleager's uncles speaking aloud against having Atalanta there, using demeaning words. Meleager rises to her defense, draws his sword, and challenges them. Cooler heads prevail and all are reminded that they are, after all, there to kill the boar.

It is a large hunting party of very strong, wily men, each wanting fame and reward for taking down the boar. Some are slashed or gored or trampled in the attempt. The canny boar takes its stand in a place where hunters can not act as a group, but have to attack the boar singly or in pairs. None of them succeed in even wounding the animal, because the boar's pelt is impervious to arrows and spears.

No one draws blood, until Atalanta faces the boar. The boar charges straight at her, its razor-sharp tusks now covered with blood, its massive weight bearing down upon her. Atalanta's bowstring is taut, her arrow at the ready, her eye steady. The boar is almost to her when, with unerring aim, she sends an arrow through one of its eyes,

penetrating its brain. It staggers, but is not dead. Now it is Meleager's turn to act. He takes his sword and delivers the death blow.

The boar is dead! Meleager has the right to the pelt, but, instead of claiming it for himself, he gives it to Atalanta. This is truly an important trophy and there is resentment among the others that a woman should have it. It isn't just that it is a symbol of a major heroic achievement that will bring fame to the one who possesses it. This pelt can be made into a garment that is flexible, warm, and impervious to spear and arrow. There could be no better armor.

Meleager's uncles are enraged. Such a prize should not go to a woman! If Meleager doesn't want it for himself, then, they—as his male relatives—should have it and not Atalanta! They speak against her. One of them attempts to snatch the pelt from her. Meleager responds with his drawn sword, lopping off first this uncle's head and then the other's; silencing all protest.

Now it is time to return to the castle with news of the death of the boar. All but Atalanta and Meleager tramp back to the castle, where the king and queen await them. The returning hunters come back with good news—the boar is dead. And then comes the bad news—Meleager has killed his uncles, the queen's brothers.

The queen now learns that Atalanta shot the arrow that drew first blood and Meleager then killed the boar and gave the trophy to her. Then she learns how Meleager was provoked by his uncles' insulting words and their disrespect to Atalanta, and how he killed them. This is too much for her. Maddened by this news, the queen goes to where she hid the locked chest. She opens it and takes

out the log given to her by Atropos. Then she orders the servants to build a fire—and throws the log in.

### **The Death of Meleager**

Atalanta and Meleager do not return to the castle after the hunt. They stay with each other where they are most at home, in the wilderness of the forest and hills. They are in each other's arms when, suddenly, Meleager makes a horrible sound and, clutching his abdomen, cries out in pain. Then his torso blackens as if burned, his face turns ashen, and he dies.

Atalanta grieves for him. Nature is her only solace. She weeps and wanders for weeks in the forest and glades. Then, one day, she realizes that she must leave this place that reminds her of Meleager and their time together. With him gone, there is nothing here to hold her and no one who matters.

And so, she leaves Calydon and travels through forests and over hills toward Arcadia.

### **THE FOOTRACE AND THE GOLDEN APPLES**

Meanwhile, the fame of Atalanta has traveled to the neighboring kingdom. The heroes who return from the Calydon hunt tell about her beauty and prowess as a hunter. When Atalanta arrives home, her description and fame have preceded her. The king welcomes her and, perhaps from her story or appearance, realizes that she is the daughter that he ordered exposed on the mountain years before. In the intervening years, he has not had a son and heir. Now he recognizes Atalanta as his daughter—a

daughter more accomplished and famous than any son he might have had.

Atalanta is now not only beautiful and famous; but she is also an heiress to a kingdom. This makes her very marriageable. After many suitors turn up, her father demands that she must marry one of them for the sake of the kingdom.

Atalanta doesn't want to marry anyone. When her father insists, she finally agrees, but only under one condition. The man she marries must be able to beat her in a footrace. And if he loses the race, he must forfeit his life.

Many men, thinking they can beat her, accept this challenge. But Atalanta is swift and wins race after race. Men come from afar, lose to her, and forfeit their lives.

Finally, only one man remains to race her—Hippomenes, a most unlikely suitor. All of the other men who accepted the challenge thought that by beating Atalanta they would acquire a kingdom and a famous and beautiful wife. Hippomenes, on the other hand, knows he can not win the race. He is not a heroic figure; he is not particularly strong or swift as a runner. Nonetheless, he intends to enter the race. He has followed Atalanta from Calydon. He knows of her love for and loss of Meleager and has compassion for what happened. In short, he loves her.

On the evening before the race, Hippomenes prays to Aphrodite, Goddess of Love and Beauty. He prays that Atalanta may love him and for there to be a way for him to win her. All the others who had lost the race (and their lives) had prayed to other gods to be able to overcome and possess her. Some prayed to Hermes for

speed, others to Zeus to overpower her, others to Ares for strength to beat her.

Aphrodite hears Hippomenes' prayers and appears to him with three golden apples and some advice. On awakening, he thinks it was all a dream—until he sees the three apples.

The next morning, Atalanta stands at the starting line waiting for Hippomenes to arrive. She has noticed him before, and wished that he would not race her, since the outcome is inevitable. He is no match for her as a runner.

Hippomenes arrives clutching his arms around his waistband, holding the three golden apples out of sight. This strikes Atalanta as peculiar, and then it reminds her of how Meleager clutched his abdomen just before he died in her arms. She goes into a reverie, taking her mind off the race. So when the signal to start is given, Hippomenes runs as fast as he can, but Atalanta is not prepared. Startled by the realization that the race has begun, she runs to catch up. As she draws even with Hippomenes, he drops a golden apple. The rolling motion of the apple catches her eye and reminds her of how the heads had rolled when Meleager came to her defense.

The apple is irresistible. Its golden glow and beauty draw her and she has to stop to pick it up. She gazes at it and sees a reflection of her own face, distorted by the curves of the apple.

Meanwhile, Hippomenes races ahead. Atalanta is so swift, however, that she soon overtakes him once again. Then he drops the second apple, which rolls across her path and to the side. Again she stops to pick it up.

Now Hippomenes is in the lead, with the finish line in view. Atalanta puts on a spurt of speed and catches up



with him. At this moment, Hippomenes drops the third apple. If she ignores it, she will win the race. If she picks it up, she will lose the race. Atalanta reaches for the apple as Hippomenes crosses the finish line. He wins the race and Atalanta in marriage. But did she let him win?

## THE MEANING OF THE MYTH

The end of the footrace is not the end of the personal story for women who resemble Atalanta. It is, more likely, the beginning of the second half of their lives. This is also not the end of Atalanta's mythic story. There are versions of the myth that do not end with the race, but go on to tell how Atalanta and Hippomenes are punished and transformed into a pair of lions and yoked together to pull a divine chariot. The story deepens when these events are seen as metaphors and interpreted as symbolic.

While Atalanta is a mortal in the image of Artemis, her life is influenced and changed by more than one goddess. Through Hippomenes, Atalanta feels the spell of Aphrodite's golden apples. This is the case with contemporary women as well. All of the goddesses are potential archetypal patterns in every woman and, while Artemis may be dominant in the first third of a woman's life and can remain a strong influence, often one or more other archetypes may emerge in the second and third phases of life.

Atalanta's story has the power of a big dream with many layers of meaning. At first, it is intriguing to take in the whole story with the images that come to mind as you read it. Even at first glance, a particular image or detail may catch your imagination. Enduring myths are similar to important dreams that people remember because

there is “something” to them. They touch the psyche of the dreamer, reader, or listener, even without interpretation. Atalanta is a mortal and is like a real woman who appears in a dream or in life, bringing the archetype of Artemis or a quality of Artemis to life. When this happens, a woman who is like Atalanta can become a combination of goddess and mortal to others.

The story of Atalanta becomes very personal to girls and women who find similarities between her qualities and their own—between her story and theirs. It can also give some insight into often difficult and painful experiences for men and women who love or have loved them. Being in a relationship with a woman like Atalanta whose dominant archetype is Artemis can be more difficult or challenging to others than being her. A prime example: Nobel Laureate poet William Butler Yeats, whose yearning love for beautiful, fiery, feminist Irish revolutionary Maud Gonne was immortalized in his verse across five decades. She married someone else, and much later, he did also.

Delving into a myth is very much like working with a dream. To understand the meaning or interpretation, a Jungian analyst works with the person whose dream it is, amplifying elements in it, which is what I will be doing with the myth of Atalanta in this book. Myths have the power of collective dreams and fascinate us because the themes in them are ours to inhabit or to observe.