

128. Excavating Our Ancestral Sites w/ Poet Jennifer Barone

[00:00:00]

Daniel Dissinger: Hi, everyone. Welcome to another episode of Writing Remix. I'm your host, Daniel Dissinger, and today is a really special episode for me. Um, it is going to be so much fun. I mean, before we even hit record, me and this guest have been talking for quite a bit, and I'm just like, "I wish all this was secret content I could release behind a paywall."

Because Writing Remix, you know, it's a passion, it's a, it's a passion project. But we-- I'm so excited to have this guest with me. We met, um, at the first ever LA Kerouac Festival, um, at Typewriters Anonymous. Shout out, Typewriters Anonymous. Um, really great organization. I'm gonna put their link in the show notes so you can check them out 'cause it's a really cool place, um, run by some of the most amazing people.

And but we met there, um, her and all these amazing poets that I'm hoping to get almost every single one of them on this [00:01:00] podcast 'cause it was a really, a really great community, and it, it made me feel, um, so invited. So I was, I'm so happy to have this person on. Uh, today's guest is Jennifer Barone. She is an Italian American poet and artist.

She's the author of four poetry collections, including Siren Land, About the Bay of Naples, Ital- about- Siren Land: About the Bay of Naples, Italy, the Siren Mythology, and Stories of the Sea, and Saporoso: Poems of Italian Food and Love by Feather Press. A two-time winner of the San Francisco Public Library's Poets 11 contest for North Beach, where she resides.

She hosts the Voices from the Hill podcast, interviewing Bay Area authors for Telegraph Hill Books, La Brea, La- Libreria Pino, sorry, and leads creative writing workshops that blend writing, alchemy, and Italian culture. So [00:02:00] everyone welcome Jennifer Barone. Thank you so much for being here.

Jennifer Barone: Oh my gosh, thank you for having me, Daniel.

It's just so exciting. Also, when I met you, and you were giving, like, a cool talk about, uh, Jack Kerouac, and I loved your perspective about that, and here I am

in North Beach right now, live from North Beach, about a block away from City Lights.

Daniel Dissinger: Oh. I love it over there. It's one of my favorite places. It's amazing.

The first time I went to San Francisco for a conference, I was like, uh, just walking around that area. It w- I never wanted to leave. It was just so many amazing places, so many cool people- Yeah ... restaurants. San Francisco has to be one of my top food places, too. I mean, it's, like, totally out of hand, like, uh, how beaut- how amazing it is, but so excited to have this conversation.

And- Yes ... you know, we usually ask the, the authors to say, you know, a little bit more about themselves. Is there anything you'd like to tell the audience about yourself that wasn't in your bio that, you know, something to let them in [00:03:00] on anything?

Jennifer Barone: Yeah, sure. Um, well, I also am an artist. I, I do a little bit of painting, which some of is, uh, is in this book, Siren Land.

This is, like, the first book. I'm usually paired with another artist. Like, when I did Saporoso- Yeah ... I was paired with, um, Lam Kong, who did the beautiful drawings. But this is like the first time I've ever, uh, attempted to do the own artwork for my own book, and it was, it was really beautiful. I originally studied art and design, um, but it's the first time out of all my books that I've ever done my own artwork for it.

Um, so it's been a lot of, like, years writing this book. It took me, like, 10 years of traveling to Italy and writing it, and also painting and doing, like, watercolors. But the theme of the book is about the sirens and the sea and the land, but the sea is such a major theme of the book- And so watercolor felt like the right medium for that.

So [00:04:00] doing, uh, watercolor paintings along with, there's some photography in here from travels and the actual land itself. So I do a little bit of art design. I, I also, um, teach yoga. I do energy work. I do sound baths and things like that. And I've been starting to, you know, teach writing workshops for the first time, where I blend all of this, which is very unusual.

So I blend Italian culture, energy practice, metaphysical practices, um, as well as, like, writing prompts and, and also, uh, somatic experiences and embodied experiences. And actually, Philip, who's the, um, proprietor over at Typewriters

Anonymous- Mm-hmm ... um, came to some of these workshops, and he's really great 'cause he's a very somatic poet.

Daniel Dissinger: So much so.

Jennifer Barone: Oh my God. He's very in his body. He takes over the space. Like, I've learned so much from, uh, being with Philip over the years and performing with him, and even taking some of his w- workshops, [00:05:00] um, 'cause he's, like, a theater background person and a, and a, you know, an actor. So but there really is something, and I feel like this book too, uh, Siren Land, uh, is somewhat somatic.

It's like when you're writing poetry, a lot of times you're painting a picture with words. But the- for me, there's also a somatic aspect to it, where there's the feeling of the land, the feeling of the sea, the feeling of the air, and it's always very specific to a place, you know? So the experience of things can definitely come through or attempt to be described through poetic form.

And so there's that aspect that I like to bring in To some of these writing workshops that I, that I've been starting to do. But I'm hoping to write a new workshop. I did, like, about a three-part series of a writing workshop that was around a little, some metaphysical ideas around alchemy and also Italian culture, which was super fun.[00:06:00]

But this, but I might wanna do, um, my next possible project is to do some writing workshops that are specifically around this theme of, like, mythology and using myth too, because I feel like myth is sometimes also thought of as, like, something separate. Uh, it's, uh, imagination that's, like, outside of ourselves.

Kinda seems inaccessible. It's like the gods and the goddesses, and doesn't really seem like something that you could, like, pull into your actual day-to-day life. But in actuality, yeah, you know, like, them being connected to the myth and actually pulling that in to your real everyday life, um, as something that could be practiced, as something that could be acted upon, is actually I think where it needs to go is to, to make the, make the magical practical in a lot of ways.

Daniel Dissinger: I love that. I, can I just say this is so ... This is- I did an [00:07:00] amazing episode with another Bay Area poet recently. It's released, it's with, uh, Aimee Suzara. She's a Filipino American poet. Unbelievable. So

her new book's coming out too, uh, probably, maybe by this time that this episode comes out, her book is out, uh, Birth Language.

So- Oh. And in that she talks about mythology and myths and, and also the gods and god- like, the, but in, uh, her cultural setting, right? And we talked about that. And then three years ago when I went to Greece, there was the discussions on myths and- Yeah ... mythology. And it started to change because the people, when they were, the tour guides that were talking about mythology in Greece were like, "What we think of now or what the world outside of Greece think of as mythology was literally our practice as Greeks."

Like it was- Right ... it was spiritual practice. And people still have these spiritual practices, but it's been passed off a lot, especially I feel through academia in a way, taken and go, [00:08:00] "Let's study this as this on- only this thing." And it's interesting now, like, hearing you bring that up again being like, how...

Is, is there a moment that's happening, do you feel, or was it that you, was there something inside you calling to you to go, "Yes, there's the, the idea of mythology, but what happens if we, you know, scratch below that, in a way, new surface that was created for it to cap its ability to kind of blossom what it used to be?"

Is, do you feel that there was a calling for you to kind of do that? Like-

Jennifer Barone: Yes.

Daniel Dissinger: Yeah. Wha- what was it?

Jennifer Barone: There, there's, there's- Yeah. Yeah. There's always been a calling, I think. Yeah. And I think, like I said, like, you know, teaching yoga, teaching somatic work, doing energy work is definitely, like, something that led me to that.

But eventually, you know, you want to go back. You wanna know yourself, and as they wrote right on the, like, in Delphi, like, over the Pythia, it's like, "Know [00:09:00] thyself," right? It was, like, scribed there on the wall. But to know yourself is really what you're doing anytime you're doing something creative, anytime you're doing a creative act.

It's like you want to go deep, you know, into the levels of your psyche. And, and in a way unearth, you know, yourself and, and excavate your own self. So like

when we're going to sacred sites, you know, we co- we go in, and it's a very sacred, um, experience to go to a sacred site with reverence, with respect for the energies that are there, for the practices, for the history that's there.

And then to go in and enter and have the experience, but then come out a little bit different, a little bit changed, a little bit transformed. I mean, that's really the goal of going on pilgrimage, going with reverence to places. Um, and that is very much the spirit, I feel like, of this work is, is going and traveling back to the land, [00:10:00] back to the place of my own ancestors, where my family came from.

In this case, my book is about the Bay of Naples, and it's very famous for Pompeii, you know, the, the, uh, volcano that's there. Um, these are places that are worldwide, like known also the island of Capri. It's kinda lifestyles of the rich and famous, very, very mystical, enchanting island, you know. And then there's other islands that are there and other places.

The Amalfi Coast, like these are places that are becoming more and more popular. But they've always been, because when you go there, it's the land of myth. It's the land... It has such deep history, ancient history. It used to be Greece, um, at various points There were temples, uh, you know, dedicated to Isis from Egypt, uh, dotted around the bay.

Um, and there was just, uh, such incredible culture that's there, um, and history that's there. But there's [00:11:00] also even going further, further back past Greek times, right, is the spirit of the land. And when you're working with, uh, energy work and practices where you get into shamanic work, um, and having access to the deeper levels of energy, you know, there's the spirit of the land, there's the spirit of the sea.

And in ancient times, you know, you would go to sacred wells, sacred, um, pools, you know, sacred grottoes, and they were always dedicated to a spirit entity, uh, that pr- gui- guarded and protected that place. And that exists at all sacred sites and sacred places, usually a place that's connected to a beautiful spot in nature, um, sometimes connected to a spring where people would gather water or a river, you know, or a convergence of rivers or a sacred tree.

Mm-hmm. But there was always a guardian [00:12:00] spirit, and you would come and give offerings, you know? So these, like, myths and these temple sites, it's like, I think in academia and also when you go to museums and archeological museums, you kind of see stuff, like, separated out, and you don't feel like you're able to access them as though they have a living history.

But at one point they did, and I think people are trying to reclaim that. Like, what I've noticed, for instance, like about a few years ago, I, I got so emotionally overwhelmed. I had seen, like, a video, a live video Of the Vestal temples that were in Rome, which used to have the sacred hearth fire. So it was a fire that everybody in Rome came and, like, took the fire, lit it, 'cause it was a sacred fire, and then brought it to their home, and then lit their own home hearth.

Mm-hmm. And it was like everybody was connected to this one, like, f- central fire of the city, and they had a- the goddess of fire, the Ve- Vesta, you know? But so [00:13:00] they went to the temple, and they reenacted the whole ceremony. But there's so, so there's something where people are trying to reclaim, like, it's not about just going to the site and seeing the place and going, "Oh, yeah, this thing happened in ancient times," but it's also like, maybe we need to reclaim some of these practices because they were important.

You know, important to be, um, connected to the elements, connected to the land, connected to the food that grows there, the seasons that happen, the animal, the fauna, you know? And, and we're disconnected from that in modern times, where we don't have, um, that day-to-day relationship with the unseen. Mm-hmm. So, um, there's a lot that happens in the unseen realm for people.

And, you know, it could cross a little bit into, like, mental health-like stuff, where it's like we have shadow work that people talk [00:14:00] about or things that are happening in the under layers of the psyche. But it's als- it's ... And dream work and things like that, like Carl Jung, uh, philosophy. But it's all deeply connected to myth.

It can be connected because, like, myths, uh, had sort of like ancient archetypes, um, that, yeah, you could, uh, apply still- Mm ... even though they're thousands of years old, still to this day, to the way that we are living your life, you know? It had a lesson there, even though it was being told in a very fantastical and, like, poetic form.

Mm-hmm. But in, in ancient times, like, the land was alive. The food was alive. The rivers were alive and they had, you know, unseen, like, spirits that were part of that

Daniel Dissinger: aliveness. Mm. I mean, that idea of aliveness is so ... I think of it now, and it's Especially in the US, like you, I feel like there's, [00:15:00] um, a real disconnection to, to that because we're...

I mean, I, I, when I go and teach, you could see the... I always say this, like my students used to be a group where I'd had to get them to quiet down so we can start. So there was a, there was an energy in the classroom before I even got there. So they were all talking and like loud and kinda just boisterous and like, "We're in this room, but like, let's, you know, whatever."

Now, I go in there and it's like you can hear a pin drop.

Jennifer Barone: Wow.

Daniel Dissinger: And students are just sitting there staring at their phones, and I'm like Whoa. Like, the energy is flat lined. And I'm like, it feels weird because I'm, I'm trying to get them to, to be alive, to almost, like, tap into this idea. It's like, "You're here."

It's okay. You can speak. You can move. We can do..." And when you go, like, on [00:16:00] this pilgrimage that you did, like, when you're, you activated not just the act of writing, like, you activated movement and going and seeing and reflecting, and then painting as well. There's such a, there's so much involved there to create a collection that, like, the collection that you did.

Can, can you speak about, like, the 10 year... You said it took 10 years. Like- Yeah ... were the sites picked out specifically? Like, or did you go, h- how many times did you go back and forth? Or, you know, what was the... Did you have a timeline, or did you just let it kind of go as you were trying to create this?

Jennifer Barone: Um, I just let it went.

It was kinda like following, like, sort of a breadcrumb trail where, like, I'd, I'd find something or a site or I'd read about it, and I'd be like, "I think I need to go there," you know? And then I'd find a piece, another piece of information and be like, "I think I need to go back and go to this place." Um, and of course also looking for my cousins [00:17:00] and family that live there, and to hear their stories about it and ask them questions about it, and to go see the grave site of my grandfather.

My grandfather, um, and my grandmother came from this town called, uh, Torre del Greco, which is right on, it's really the entryway up to the, uh, caldera of the volcano Vesuvio. And, um, so f- like, when tourists go up there, they gotta go through my town to kinda get- Oh ... up to the top. But you know, my cousin, last time I saw him, he drove me up there, you know, and it was, it's so pretty.

And it was, like, springtime to be on the side of the volcano because, um, like, the wildflowers were, like, the biggest, most enormous wildflowers like I'd ever seen. Like, so this is, like, one of the photographs of it. Oh, wow. But you can, you can kinda see the volcanic rock that's, like, jutting up. And then the, the, the wild, like, enormous, like, bursts of, [00:18:00] like, every different color of the rainbow, like, wildflowers that are up there.

So it's, like, a place where you, you feel the visceral energy of it. And because it's volcanic- This area, like there's a little bit of danger to it. And I go back and I ask my ... And I have some poems about this, about like sleeping at night on Vesuvius, 'cause for me it's like, oh my God, this is the volcano that destroyed Pompeii, right?

And it also erupted a bunch of times in between. Yeah. Like, and came, lava came down through my town and came down through Herculaneum, which is next to it, which is another amazing, you know, archeological site that has really well-preserved mosaics that are really beautiful. But to visit Pompeii is, uh, impactful in a way that I can't explain.

It's like you have to go see it because you're basically walking through a massive city. I mean, it takes you at least three days to see Pompeii. It's an enormous city that's been excavated that you can just walk [00:19:00] through as if it was like you're walking through that town in the day that it was covered, you know?

Um, and it's just, um, unbelievable. Like, you, you have to, you really have to, uh, you could look at photographs, but you will never understand it until, until you're walking through the streets of it and having that somatic, you know, experience of it. Wow. But, but there's a palpable energy of, it feels peaceful, of course, but there's this underlying sense of danger because, uh, still Vesuvius is a dormant volcano.

That's the categorization. And then even more, uh, volatile is on the other side of Naples is something called a super volcano, which is actually underneath the sea. So the area of, so to the right of the city of Naples is the volcano above ground, but on to the left is a lesser known super volcano that's actually underneath the sea.

And you can go on a glass-bottom boat around like Pozzuoli, I do believe, and, uh, [00:20:00] you could see the sunken villa, like Roman villa underneath the sea because the, the ground is always moving and there's a super volcano

underneath the ocean th- there, or the sea there, and it's constantly like bursting. Wow.

And that is considered even more volatile than the, than the volcano, the other volcano above ground. So, and a lot of people don't know about that. Um, but when you do go there, you know, you hear it in the news a lot. There's been a lot of earthquake activity there, so sometimes some of the sites are closed there.

But then the volcanic activity goes out to the islands too, and there's a gorgeous island called Ischia, a little bit lesser known than the island of Capri, and the thermal, uh, volcanic activity there creates thermal s- water, and they have these amazing spa towns around the island where you're just bathing in these baths of like beautiful thermal water, and it's so healing.

And again, it's like one of these [00:21:00] things where, um, the volcanic activity is, uh, simultaneously dangerous but also deeply healing. And there's an immediacy to life when you get so close to that experience of like, "Oh my God," you know, like, we're on the verge of potential death or life or both. Because volcanoes, like, you know, they do explode, but then they create new land, you know?

And so it's a death-birth process, and you're right on the edge of that sensation. So Naples, the city of Napoli, is typically associated with a lot of mythology around death, and like, and probably because of maybe that visceral connection that they have to the volcanic land. And so that's what I mean when I'm talking about getting deeply and, you know, physically in touch with the spirit of the land.

I mean, and 'cause you've got volcano, volcanic activity, and then you've got this gorgeous bluer than blue Tyrrhenian Sea that's like a color that I can't [00:22:00] describe. It's like a cobalt-y kind of blue that doesn't exist- Mm ... in any sea that I've ever experienced. It's something very special to it. And so there's a mystical, like, aspect to just this bay- Yeah

and all the stuff that happening in it. Yes. And s- and so why wouldn't the sirens wanna liv- from the Odyssey wanna live in this bay? Of course they would, you know.

Daniel Dissinger: Absolutely. It's one of the, I, I mean, everything you just, it's so much to like unpack there and this idea of like close to a volatile like situation, but like- Yeah

maybe that's why also when we think about different lifestyles, like in the US, like we're just constantly moving and moving and moving and being like, "Well, I'll work un- up until a certain time, and then I'll enjoy my life afterwards." And then, but in a lot of other places, specifically in, you know, around the Mediterranean, it's like, "No, we, we want to enjoy it now- Wow.

in [00:23:00] the immediate time," and because it's, at some poi- you know, we don't know. But it, that's interesting because I mean, it makes, it makes almost like, uh, especially in the American lifestyle, being so egotistical thinking like, "Yeah, we're, we're always going to be safe." And it's just like, well, I've learned in California, living in California, it's a little different 'cause you d- never know when there's gonna be an earthquake, so- That's right.

it's a little different. You know, there are no earthquakes in New York. So but, like, it, it's such an

interesting thought, though, because you don't know, like, you're living next to something and with something. It's not even next to. Like, you are... There's a coexistence-

Jennifer Barone: On top of it. ...

Daniel Dissinger: that you have with

Jennifer Barone: this, with

Daniel Dissinger: this situation.

Jennifer Barone: Yes, and I guess you really could do a good job of equating, like, living in California with the earthquakes because, like, we have volatile culture in California.

Like, if you think about it, like, California is typically ahead of the curve in terms of the way that it invents things, thinks things. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And you could [00:24:00] potentially attribute that to the energy of the earthquake, uh, fault line energy that we're living on top of because it is... It does maybe create this kind of immediacy that we, "Hey," like- Mm-hmm

we, you know, it could be part of the energy that kinda gets pooled here in our state, um, because it does make you feel like you're always living on the verge of something, and that's basically the energy of California to a certain degree.

Like, a lot of things get invented here. A lot of people come here because they wanna be on the cutting edge of whatever.

We're on the cutting edge- Yes ... of a fault line. You know, the-

Daniel Dissinger: Seriously ...

Jennifer Barone: you know, you could actually connect to that here, that same idea, um, I think.

Daniel Dissinger: Wow, that's so interesting. Ca- I wanna take, like, a step back to kind of... Because I'm always interested in writers and poets and kinda how they come to the, [00:25:00] come to the genre, right?

Like, was there a book or a writer or something that kinda sparked that, that journey for you- Oh, yeah ... as a poet? And, you know, I'm curious what that, what that was.

Jennifer Barone: Yeah. When I was very little, there was nobody in my family that, um, liked poetry, and not even in my friend group, friend groups really until a little bit later.

But I was very drawn to it from a very, very, very young age. I would always be kind of, you'd find me, if you couldn't find me, like, in the library, the school library, like sitting on the floor with all the poetry books. Like, and I loved Emily Dickinson, and I loved, um, Robert Frost. And I thought it was interesting 'cause I grew up in Brooklyn, New York, in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, and, uh, you know, it's kinda concrete jungle-like.

Mm-hmm. And I think that there's an aspect inside of my body that always wanted to have this connection to nature but couldn't really. It was very difficult to access- Hmm ... um, for [00:26:00] me. However, I did live in an Italian immigrant neighborhood, and probably the closest thing that I could remember were Italian immigrant neighbors who would have these, even if they had just, like, the smallest little patch of dirt in their backyard would be growing like some tomato plants, you know- Absolutely

some basil. Absolutely. And I never had that 'cause my family rented. You know, we didn't own property. Mm-hmm. But I did have some friends on the block and s- and I would be oh, so excited when they would, like, ask me to come over and help them harvest tomatoes and can tomatoes. I would just be like, "Yeah." Like, and to- So neat

to like, touch dirt, to touch a plant, to touch a vegetable or a fruit. It's just like, it, you know, with Italian people, and I think we were talking a little bit about this before, but there's something in us that needs to grow our own food, needs to cook and eat food that we grew with our hands. And it's like I still to this day have not had that experience of doing that, but I [00:27:00] feel, and there's poem- the last poem in my book is very much about that.

Mm-hmm. But it's like I feel like if I die without having this experience, I'm gonna have missed some really deep, like, important philosophical learning in my life. So I, I'm kinda hellbent a little bit on experiencing that at some point in my life. And I have, um- You know, a little bit of a pot, you know, garden out here with some flowers, like, you know, little pots, you know, that get just a little bit of the sun 'cause I'm in San Francisco.

But I've been on the waiting list for about eight years for the community garden here. And I'm pretty sure that by the time they get to my name, I'll be like, "I'm moving to Italy" or something at that point. And so I'm kinda, now at this point I'm just waiting, like, for them to call my name, and I'll be like, "Okay, now it's time for me to move too."

Yeah. But yeah, so I think, you know, there's, again, that's another [00:28:00] aspect of, like, going in... Like, when you, um, want to access your ancestors, like you and I were talking about how important it is to, like, reconnect and get the stories- Mm ... of your ancestors. But, you know, you can go into your body, because you are your ancestors.

You have that DNA. You have that makeup. But you can go into your body even and ask your ancestors, like, the questions that you wanna ask if you don't, like, literally have access to them anymore 'cause they've passed or whatever. And the answers will come, like, if you listen deeply, like, in your own blood, in your own spirit, in your own mind, because they're with you.

They're with us, and, um, they're always here. And that's another aspect of, like, Napoli culture. 'Cause like I said, Naples is like the city of death a lot of the time. Yeah. It's like, you know, these passages to the underworld are there, you know, to Hades, to all sorts of things. [00:29:00] So because of the volcanic activity probably, too.

But, like, Italian people have a very accessible culture of just talking to their ancestors all the time. Like, my aunts, you know, my grandparents have passed many, many moons ago, but they still talk to them, like, every day. When they

have a problem, when they need to find a parking space and they're looking for a parking spot.

Like, just basic everyday things they'll be like, "Please help me find something," or, you know, "Please..." Like, it's like we pray to so many things. Like, we pray to, like, religious gods, but then we also talk to our ancestors in our mind as though they're here, and because they are here. You know, and it's like another way of keeping them alive, too, in our memories when we have these kinda active, like, relationships with them.

And I grew up with that, so for me it's very normal. I don't think it's weird to be, like, trying to talk to my nonna, like, out loud. Or my [00:30:00] aunts or uncles or my father who passed. You know, it's like they're still around and they're still here, like, ready to give advice- Yeah ... and ready to help 'cause that's what they love to do anyway.

Daniel Dissinger: That's what they love.

Jennifer Barone: They

Daniel Dissinger: love that.

Jennifer Barone: They love it. Yeah. Yeah. I feel

Daniel Dissinger: like a lot of times Italians can be very, um... We were talking before, either they're very talkative or, my grandfather was very s- very soft-spoken and didn't talk a lot. And when he did talk, he would say something and you're just like, "Oh, okay."

And then later on in his life, him and I used to be on the phone a lot. We, he would li- he was living in Florida. And, um- We'd like to pass, uh, recipes to each other or talk about what'd you cook today- Yeah ... or, and you know, I made this soup, or I made this thing, and he was getting used to the fact also that I didn't eat meat anymore, so he's like, "Oh, I found this cool thing that you could do."

And so we would like go back and forth, and that was something that we [00:31:00] shared a lot, and he was, um, would tell me these books he's reading 'cause he's like, "It's not like the books you read, but I'm reading now." And he would tell me about these things, and I'm like, "That's great." He would read this guy David Balducci, which is so random.

And I was like, "Is it because his last name is D- But he, um... That is, that is something that I think about a lot, too, and I think ab- how you said, like, there is a connection to ancestry in that way, where like there's to talk to them as if they're, you know, with them being here, 'cause they are here. Or I know we keep I know I keep a lot of things from them.

Like I have- Yeah ... his pots and pans from he- when he died, they were passed to me. Oh. Or my mom's like, "Pa- here's some things from the house. What would you like?" I'm like, "I, if I can take these, I would." Of course, I have to learn on them, so I've, they kept them supremely clean for their whole lives. And me, I burn them or whatever, but I still keep them.

Or this thing they made coffee out of where I had to figure out how to do it, where [00:32:00] you put it and then you flip it, and then it... So I sometimes, I'm like, "You know what? I'm gonna make coffee out of that today." And it's like this moment where I'm like, I'm making coffee, but we're making it together. I- And it gives me that connection.

It's theirs. They, my grandma and my grandfather, like, it's theirs. They used this. This is theirs. Or my grand- my dad gave me his mother's rosary, so I have that in my house. So you, we collect things, and I feel like, especially in the US, there's a lot of times a push towards minimalism, where like I feel like I'm much more like a maximalist in a way of like their things, my parents' stuff, photograph, books, things where I'm just like, you know, this is a history for me, my old notebooks and, and things like that.

And it does create a mythology inside a mythology.

Jennifer Barone: Yes.

Daniel Dissinger: A part of the mythology just continues it.

Jennifer Barone: It's your personal mythology, I think. And, but it, it, like, look how you just described that. It's like people just make coffee, and it's like, eh. [00:33:00] When you're making coffee, you're making it with your ancestors.

Your ancestors are around you, and they're probably like so happy that you're using it, you know? Right? Like, and it still has a life to it, you know? And so, well, I'll read you a poem that has something to do with that. Oh, I would love to. Yes. 'Cause it's about what we're talking about. So We Need Magic. "I do not want to live in a world that does not believe in miracles, who fails to

recognize a direct line of communion with saints, that doesn't dream of strange animals, who can't talk to apparitions or angels."

All night I speak with the dead, hear my father laugh when I close my eyes, speak Italian with Nonna in dreams. Visiting a grave opens a portal, instantaneous phone calls from family around the globe. We don't need a boat. We could astral plane over a great silence in the middle of the ocean. I do not want to live in a place [00:34:00] that does not believe eyes can bless or curse, illness is cured by olive oil and a prayer.

The unseen requires imagination. Spirit needs a random act to communicate. To learn Italian is to learn surrealism. We need eyes in the feet, eyes in the hands, eyes in the back of our heads. All day I dance with the dead, with relatives known and unknown, invite them to dinner to understand how I know the pasta is ready just by looking at it.

Our ancestors sing. We carry out their wishes to remember all they lost and all we gained. Even though you're alone in your room, everyone is here. You are never alone.

Daniel Dissinger: Wow. Okay.

Jennifer Barone: So why would [00:35:00] that poem even be in here? Well, like the sirens, 'cause it's a book about the sirens, and like the whole Bay of Naples is home to the sirens in the famous Odyssey.

But like a lot of people don't know this, but prior to the Odyssey story where they appear, you know, the sirens used to, uh, be connected to Morpheus, which was connected to the god of dreams. And so I talk in there about learning Italian in order to speak to my nonna, to my grandmother, 'cause I didn't really have a relationship with her.

She only spoke Italian, in a very thick dialect, in fact. But when I- I t- I've been learning, studying, uh, on and off Italian for about 20 years. I, I am not fluent, but I could have a conversation, you know. And it... And when I, more that I learned, I was able to start to talk to my cousins in Italy, and actually go see them and reconnect with them, 'cause a lot of them don't speak English.

But the other thing that happened to me very profoundly was I would, [00:36:00] as I started to learn and get deeper into the language and also go back and visit Italy, my grandmother would come into my dreams and have

conversations with me in Italian. And so it was... And that's why I say in that line in the poem that, like learning, visiting a grave opens a portal, you know.

Um, and also learning a language opens a portal, so language is a portal. And a lot of things can be a portal to another dimension, to another person, to another aspect of life, you know, if we open ourselves to it, like mentally and, uh, emotionally. But when I, when I got deeper into studying Italian, yeah, I'd have full-on conversations with my grandmother in my dream state in Italian.

And I would struggle also in my dream state trying to communicate. But, but a lot of the times, um, yeah, I'd have ancestors who'd come in dreams and try to show me pictures of people or try to tell me stories about people that I don't know who they [00:37:00] were. And I would be like, "Who is this person?" And they'd be like, "He's your great uncle, or your great cousin, or this or that."

And it was a wild ride I have to say. So like my journeys, like in this book, through this book is about, um, visiting literally Italy, but also in the dream state also, you know, uh, in other ways, and especially through the writing, a lot of things would happen. But the sirens, um, were connected to the dream state through Morpheus, the god Morpheus.

There's many stories there. They're also connected in Sicily to the myth of Persephone and going into Hades. So the, the sirens grew wings in order to find Persephone when she was lost in the underworld- Oh, wow ... and separated from her mother. So that's how they became bird. Um, but, but when you think about the sirens as half woman, half bird, what they really were, were liminal creatures.

They were able to transcend the dimension of [00:38:00] death. And so a lot of the times in Greece and also sometimes in Italy too, the sirens would be put on gravestones and, uh, they were very much connected to this kind of like liminal creature that was able to access the dead. Um, and I experienced that through writing about them, you know, and accessing them through this book.

Like, I very much accessed my ancestors through the dream realm, as well as literally physically going to my town multiple times and finally seeing my grandfather's grave. I had never met my grandfather, but my grandfather, uh, came to New York and he went back and forth on a boat maybe, uh, and brought my, my grandmother maybe like seven years later after he established a house in, in Brooklyn.

But my grandfather strangely didn't die in the United States. He went back on a trip to vacation to see family with my grandmother, and he [00:39:00] died in his sleep on Vesuvio. And when he died, he had a family legend of like an insane funeral. It was like a massive funeral in this town. He had a glass carriage was carrying his coffin.

It's very mythological. And then they had something called hired mourners. So I don't know if you're familiar with that tradition. Not many people are. But it's the tradition of when somebody dies, you hire mourners and they come, and they are very loudly crying at the funeral and, uh, they... at the foot of the bed of the person who's dying.

And then in ancient Greece-- So I went and I, um, researched this tradition 'cause it was a family legend about my grandfather's funeral with the hired mourners and all this stuff. Um, but it comes from ancient Greece, the tradition of the hired mourners, and in Italy they're called le prefiche Um, but that tradition to me really connected to the sirens because the [00:40:00] sirens sang songs of wisdom, right?

They were, they were vocal spirits of the land and the sea. And, uh, the mourners in Greece, you know, the way that the tradition would be is they wouldn't just cry, but they would sing the story of the person who died. You know, they would make up songs throughout the whole day or a few days of the funeral, and their songs would start, like, very sad, and then they'd crescendo into kind of like these joyful, like, "This person was wonderful, and they did all these beautiful things."

And then they would kind of come down and end on this beautiful note. And the, the reason for, and the cause of wanting to do that was to help the music and the song about the person's life, was to help shepherd them across the dimensions so that the spirit wouldn't be grasping on the earth plane. It wouldn't be, like, trapped here, that, that it would move, uh, into where it needed to go [00:41:00] next on its journey.

And so there's a lot of traditions in Naples when somebody dies. You know, they do things like they cover the mirrors, or they, uh, do certain things around the house. Like, the goal is that we want our love beloved to be going toward their next place. We don't want them trapped here. We don't want them grasping here or with unfinished business or things like that.

And many different spiritual cultures have traditions or death traditions around that, and this is, like, another thing that American culture is very detached from.

Like, I find in the United States, we do not have spaces for grief. We don't wanna talk about death. We don't wanna face death. We have a whole country culture that is denying getting old or dying.

And, and this is not just for women. This is, like, everybody across the board. But then ancient cultures like Greece, like Italy, we have, like, so many rituals and things around death. Like, I was shocked when I [00:42:00] Went to my grandf- my grandfather's grave multiple times now. Um, I asked my cousins, like, "How often do you come to the cemetery?"

You know, 'cause they do things at the cemetery, like they clean the graves, they put flowers, they have, like, a little flame, like a candle that's a eternal flame that they make sure is always on. Um,

and they say, "We come every month." And I was like, "That sounds excessive." Like, that to me, right? Like, that sounds like a lot. You're here all the time? They're like, "Yeah, we come all the time. And we talk, and we clean the graves, and we take care of our graves." But, like, in the United States, even in my family, even in Italian-American culture, it's like we maybe go once a year, you know?

Daniel Dissinger: Yeah.

Jennifer Barone: Or, and a lot of family maybe just they don't go at all, or, like, many years go by before they visit. But in Italy, they're, they're going a lot, it seems. And they have, uh, you know, also, like, a Day of the Dead, a Giornata dei Morti. So they call Dia [00:43:00] de, Dia de los Muertos is something that we celebrate a lot in San Francisco, the Mexican culture, so vibrant, beautiful.

But we have similar, uh, Giornata dei Morti in Italy, except it's not as party atmosphere. It's a little more somber. But they do have specific type of flowers that they bring, and they do go, and they bring food, you know, for the ancestors and other things like that, and they clean the graves.

Daniel Dissinger: Hmm.

Jennifer Barone: And so there's a lot of these traditions that, as Italian-Americans, um, I think the younger generations are really, I'm, I'm witnessing, wanting to learn more about these things, more, maybe, uh, you know, reenact them- Mm

as a way, as a somatic way of reconnecting to something that is really important. Like, as human beings, like, we need archetypes. We need, uh, rituals. We need to have things that mark, especially, like, major transitions, life [00:44:00] transitions, like, in our life. Um, we need to either celebrate or have some kind of ritual that's like, "Okay, now we're gonna do this now," you know?

"Now we're gonna become a woman, or we're gonna become a man, or we're gonna become a mother or a father." These are major ... Or we're gonna die. Like, these are major life transitions that are, require the death of an identity and the replacement of a new identity in some respects. Hmm. Um, when we lose somebody that's important to us, or even if we lose a job or lose something that was part of our psychological makeup, it's like we need rituals around that in order to, um- You know, transition into a new phase in the best of ways.

And ancient, I think ancient traditions and cultures really had a lot of that, like that felt like psychological support systems that were community-based sometimes or family-based, and they're useful I [00:45:00] think. Yeah.

Daniel Dissinger: I, I think you're... I'm

I, I'm been, I think, on a slow journey towards like trying to reconnect to those parts of my ancestry because I never had them, right? Like-

Jennifer Barone: Right ...

Daniel Dissinger: especially the choice that my grandparents made to not teach the language to their kids. Like it was this choice that, for better or worse, whatever their choice why they did that is, uh, you know, that's, uh, whatever their choice was, that's fine.

And then some of my relatives on that side actually then changed their names, so like it was very difficult to figure out who's who, right? But I think since-- And I always felt like there was always something like missing, 'cause I was like, "I don't understand like these other things." Like especially, you know, especially in the US, like a couple generations or so in, you're like, all right, being Italian American means XYZ.

Especially in New [00:46:00] York, it's very like there's also a very New York s- like, uh, form of it as well that's very like exaggerated and cartoonish, and people take advantage of. It's really weird. And as I got older, I'm like, "I don't want this anymore." Like there's, there's depth, and I need to figure it out. And

when I met my partner, they were so invested in their culture, and they knew their language and, and so when they started bringing things into my life that we would do, I'm like There's gotta be something that, that there's something else that I, I need to figure out.

And, um, and so, like, the, you know, everything you're talking about, it kinda gives me, you know, it makes... There's a sadness for me because there is- Right ... like, that, that gap. There is that, that, um, there is that void in a way. And because, like, even in Amer- in the, in the West here, in the United States, it's like, I don't...

Especially [00:47:00] our relationship with death is very, very off-putting, you know? Where, like, it shouldn't be, and there could be so much that can be, that can be gained from celebrating a person's life. And I'm, you know... It's amazing to hear what you're, hear everything you just said. I, I'm almost speechless, and I'm just like, "Why am I even talking right now?"

Jennifer Barone: Because my mind's just wandering. Well, there goes, like, I think Italian Americans have had to, uh, do a lot of work. I think what you're describing is, like, I know I have this loss, uh, and I think there's a loss, uh, a feeling of deep grief and loss and longing in Italian American people because the assimilation process, we lost our culture in one generation.

Like, a lot of other cultures I, I know have done better jobs at, like, holding onto their language and traditions, but there was a lot of shame for Italians when they came here, cultural shame, political shame. And they wanted to immediately become American, [00:48:00] and so they, they, we lost our culture So, and that was very apparent.

And when my grandmother came here, she didn't speak any of the language. She did a lot of the folk traditions, like trying to put a piece of garlic on my dad's neck when he went to, you know, when he went to school, and then he- they made fun of him. Mm-hmm. Like, "What is this garlic around you?" But it's a folk tradition that if you feel ill or you feel sick, like that garlic actually does scientifically boost immunity.

Daniel Dissinger: Mm-hmm.

Jennifer Barone: Anyway, things like that we, you know, kids were made fun of, and so they wanted to quickly become American. And so my father strangely never spoke Italian, never knew it. I never, I never knew it growing

up. And it's like for us to reclaim it one generation later, two generations later, it's like we gotta do so much work to reclaim our cultural heritage.

Like, it's active. It's not passive. It's like you have to really actually go and really excavate yourself. It's [00:49:00] like we are the ruins that need to get excavated. Like, it's not the s- yeah, it's not the stone and this and that, although it is beautiful and wonderful. It's like we are the thing that needs excavating.

Um, and that's why I think going to sacred sites can be ultimately transformative because it's not only about the, the, the physical place. It's about you coming out transformed, you know, and coming out knowing yourself hopefully in a deeper way that you could now bring into your daily life. Like the goal of going on pilgrimage, I believe, like at heart, is that you come back with your life changed, you know, transformed in some way.

And it's like you don't just go back to your daily rituals as status quo. You go back viewing them in a new way and with a new visceral, um, experience of life that's hopefully deeper, richer, more alive, you know? And so we're always, uh, whether we're doing the creative work or even traveling, like [00:50:00] looking to expand our knowledge of self.

Um, and so for Italian Americans, we've gotta really, really work hard, unfortunately, at reclaiming it. But, you know, it's happening. People are starting, like I said, to like reenact the rituals at the sites or go and find their family home, go and learn the language and try to go talk to your cousins. You know, people who are going on these voyages to really, you know, try to consciously reconnect and of course with reverence.

Like, I think there is an aspect of us knowing that we're n- we're a little bit different, right? We are American And when we go back, we're not Italian from Italy, you know?

Daniel Dissinger: Right.

Jennifer Barone: It's very different. But it- so we go back hopefully with respect, with curiosity, with a willingness to listen and learn, and, like, have that humility, uh, to learn, you know?

And not only from the [00:51:00] people, but from the land and the sea and, and even our ancestors and the spirit realm. They want... They have so much they wanna share, um, and they just can't wait for, like, you to be like, "I'm here. I'm

ready. I'm open. I'm listening." Like, they love it. They're gonna start coming to you in dreams and all sorts of

Um, it gets wild, like a wild ride. Mm. But, but the, anyway, the, the sirens, though, so this is, like, something that I'm hoping to bring forward with this book is, like, you know, the sirens in The Odyssey are considered, like, these evil man-eating creatures, but they had a wisdom song, right? Like, so Odysseus, when he sailed through, everyone's ears were plugged, but he wanted to hear the wisdom of the sirens.

And so, you know, they're not, uh, after the story of Odysseus, so the story of the sirens after, um, the passage of Odysseus, the story of Parthenope. So [00:52:00] there's three sirens, but the main one, Parthenope, died, and her body... And this is a legend for the city of Napoli, but her body washed upon the shore. This is, nobody knows this legend unless you live in Naples.

But her body washed upon the shore, and her body, like, became the land, and she became, like, the birth mother of the city of Naples. So before it was called Napoli, which means new city, Naples was called Parthenope, which was the name of the siren, and they used to have coins with her image on them, and they had temples where they would give offerings.

And the temples were protective places where, you know, the fishermen would go and pray for the protection of the sirens, so when they were out at sea, when they were fishing to bring food home for their families, that they'd be safe, you know? 'Cause the sea could be a little wild and dangerous out there, um, with storms and winds and things like that.

And so ironically, although in The Odyssey the sirens are [00:53:00] considered, like, man-eating creatures, in actuality, in the ancient history after- The sirens were protective. They were protectors of the people, protectors of the fishermen, protectors of the ports. And so I- when I go in and I reconnect with them in this book, like, that's more the story.

Although there's still, of course, a little danger to them because the sea is dangerous, the land is dangerous, the volcano is dangerous. There is danger, but that danger is an aliveness that you could still connect to and that could bring something into your life. But there i- but really they're protective, um, you know, symbols.

And so after the story of Odysseus, for instance, yeah, people would come and give offerings. And then later on those temples, you know, there's a church now

on top of it with a particular Madonna. And there's one kinda cool Madonna that's, like, off the coast of Sorrento that's actually sunken under the sea.

And then during her feast day, divers go down, and [00:54:00] they put roses and garlands of roses around her under the sea, and then they'll bring up a statue out of the sea, and they'll, you know, bring it on boats and parade it through the town. And so to me, even though the ancient became, mm, you know, into the Christian tradition of the Madonna, it's still somehow connected back to this ancient story of, of the half-bird woman who became a half-fish woman.

So the siren- the sirens in Greek times were half-woman, half-bird in The Odyssey. But around medieval times, they morphed into half-woman, half-fish. And so the i- the symbols of the sirens in modern-day Naples can be either. They could be half-woman, half-bird, or they could be half-woman, half, like, mermaid- Mm

because the, because the sea is also part of their realm, you know? So it depends on how you wanna see it. I couldn't figure out which one I wanted to connect to, so she's got both. She's got-[00:55:00]

Daniel Dissinger: I love the- ... a wing and a fin. I love the cover of your book. Like, and if anyone's just listening to this, go to the Substack and- Yeah ... watch this 'cause you could see, you know, Jennifer's book, and the cover is just gorgeous. And, and I, I'm just myst- I, I, I mean, you- I, I always think of this podcast as my, it's my personal classroom, and I'm literally just listening to you.

I'm just like, I'm having so many emotions. Like, I'm like, "Do I cry now? Do I- " I'm, like, in a... Like, because you're There's just something I feel like, especially I think poetry does this like really well, like as a vessel to allow us to kind of dig in a little deeper because it's such a, it's a creative space that breaks the rules on purpose so that we can possibly go into the places that prose might not be able to go or that something else may not, or research.

Like it's almost [00:56:00] like poetry becomes a space where everything kind of hybridizes in itself to kind of create something that wasn't there or that was lost or to shed light on something and Uh, y- your, your just explanations and everything are just so amazing. I'm... I don't even know what to say. Like, this is the first time I feel like in a podcast where I'm just like, "I don't even know what to say."

I, I mean, I had questions going in, but, like, I'm, I'm like, do, do you have a poem that, um-

Jennifer Barone: Yeah, I think so. Yeah. I think I should read you a poem about... I mean, I feel like there's so many poems in this that could speak to- Just- ... everything we're talking about right now.

Daniel Dissinger: How many poems did you write for this book before sequencing it, basically?

D- or is this all the poems, or did you write-

Jennifer Barone: No ... just more? I, I had so many that, like, well over 100. And so, you know, usually for a poetry book you wanna have somewhere around 50 or so. Mm-hmm. So I had to get rid of at least half, you know? Because there were some that maybe kinda crossed over. So the [00:57:00] editing process for this book was incredibly excruciating, and I wanna give so much credit right now to my editor, Ingrid Keir, who's the editor over at Feather Press Books.

Mm-hmm. Because I couldn't have really done it without her, because it's so close to my heart. It's so close to, like, my heart, this book, that it was very difficult to see, and I really needed a partner, um, who was a- able to help me edit it, um- Mm-hmm ... in that way, you know? So...

Daniel Dissinger: Wow. Did you feel like that was the most time that took?

Did you feel the editing process took

Jennifer Barone: up the bulk of the time? Oh, it took multiple years. Yeah. Yeah, so the, there's a lot of love that has gone in, um, to this book, I, I would say. And, um, it, it was a really challenging one for me. Mm-hmm. Um, absolutely. Yeah. Let me see. I mean, I do quite, have quite a few here that are about, in particular, the sirens.

Um, let me find, uh, like, one I feel like that [00:58:00] could really, uh- Mm-hmm ... get to the heart of what we just discussed. Um-

Daniel Dissinger: I love the fact that, like, there are spaces you can go where they go, "And this is the birthplace of X, Y, Z in these m- in these spaces, these mythological spaces." I remember going to Cyprus and being on this beach, and like, "This is the birthplace of Aphrodite."

Right. "They say Aphrodite's born here, but she was born here." Right. And you're looking at it, and people are there. They're hanging out. So amazing. It's a

beach. And I'm like- ... "I have to go in this water." Like, I have to go in the water. Yes, you absolutely have to. Touch the stone where she was born. And I remember doing that, and I'm like, "This is so amazing," because, look, when I was a child, my dad loved to go to historic spaces and bring me there as kids.

Like, that was our vacation. "We're going to Williamsburg, and here, we're gonna..." Whatever, and that's great. And you know what? I probably would probably be more appreciative now as an adult to go to more, to spaces- ... like that again. But, um, [00:59:00] but when I went there and, like, the connection to also the ocean for me is, like, so huge.

So I was like- There was an energy that I never felt in a space where I was like, "Wow, there's also this whole mythology around it." And-

Jennifer Barone: Yes ...

Daniel Dissinger: the idea of existence and is this real or is this not? And it's just like, does it matter? Who cares? Like, get in there. It's real. Be there. Yeah, because, like- ... you're here.

You're looking at it. Like, it- there's a re- there... And of course it's real. And I, I've never had those types of experiences before. It blew my mind that I was, like, feeling it because I was also in the water itself, and that's like, this is different. Like, this goes beyond just looking at something. And I, I was-

Jennifer Barone: Correct

in the middle. That's that, again, that somatic experience that we were talking about. And again, like, we want to... I think th- where we're moving to, right, as humans is, is to expand our sense of aliveness to an older [01:00:00] dimensional state, which means that mythology and abstract imagery, the way poetry is a lot of abstract, you know, it, it allows us to access something that we would typically categorize as unreal or mystical or mythological or magical, is another way of saying not real.

But make it real. Make it have meaning for us. Make it, feel it in our body, and make it apply to life, you know? Like, I think these, these stories were written in Greek times not to sit on a shelf and, or sit in a museum. They're meant to be alive, you know, and meant to be practices that you could participate in.

Mm. You know? So, all right, so I think I found the, uh... And so we're on our way to re- re- reclaiming that- Mm ... for ourselves in whatever way, shape, or

form creatively we want to, you know? Like- Mm ... I think, I think there's a lot of room for creativity, [01:01:00] meaning that we don't have to do it exactly the way they did, but maybe we find new ways of kind of getting to that same experience.

You know, w- I feel like there's room for us to, to also innovate and be creative around it in a new modern way. Mm-hmm. And so I'm very open to that too. Okay. So how to hear siren songs. Her song, not always melodious, often wild, incoherent. Her moods revealed in moon phases might be deadly, may pierce your organs, but repair what's misunderstood.

Her nature commands, live freely, enter the sea, submerge your eyes and ears, become one with a body of water. Find her, guiding star in the storm, seamstress who threads a new story, baker molding bodies into loaves of [01:02:00] bread, winged mother flies through dimensions and searches for missing soul parts. Her wisdom song emerges from caverns.

Put your ear against a shell, close your eyes, and listen to your blood So, um, there's a, a beautiful statue that I did a painting of, uh, of Parthenope. Parthenope was the siren in the Odyssey, and she died, and she washed up on the shore. But one other type of mythology that a lot of people don't know about is, um, there's a story, a kind of a love story between her and the god Vesuvio.

So Vesuvio is the god that this volcano that destroyed Pompeii is named after. And so there was a love story between her and Vesuvio, and the concept was that

you know, her milk would flow out from her breasts and [01:03:00] calm the fires of Vesuvius. And so that was another protective story where like her breast milk like calms the volcanic fires so that the city would be safe from eruptions. So their, their love story was kind of like, um, another, another protective s- uh, folklore.

And then a third story about her, which a lot of people don't know about unless of course you live in Naples, is that the poet Virgil, uh, if you're familiar with Virgil and know a little bit of his history, he was also kind of a magician. He was like a sorcerer. Hmm. And he's buried, uh, in Naples. He was asked, I think, to be buried there, and it's pr- close to the sea.

You could go to the site where he, he, his remains are. But one of the legends is that Virgil was wandering the shore, and he found the siren's body, and there was an egg, 'cause she was half woman, half bird, and he cast a [01:04:00]

magic spell over the siren's egg. And he put it in this glass amphora that is in a castle that sits off the coast of Naples called the Castle of the Egg.

And so there's like a mythology that Virgil- Virgil cast a spell on the siren's egg and that it's still there underneath the castle, kinda in a glass amphora, kinda hanging from the shaft just so if there is an eruption or earthquake, it's not gonna break. Wow. But the, but the magical egg that he cast a spell on, Virgil, is pr- also protective, and it's supposed to be protecting the city from eruptions and earthquakes and, and, uh, things like that.

So the siren have deep mythology beyond the Odyssey, like in the city of Naples and even the university there is called, uh, Parthenopea. And so it's named after the siren, like the, the main university where people study. And the people used to be called Parthenopeans. [01:05:00] Uh, so it was the people are, were actually dedicated, the city was dedicated to the siren and, and the myth.

So, um, it has a lot of real history, real tangible history. And, um, right now, just as I sent this book to print, we sent this book to print, the Naples Archaeological Museum has a massive, um, exhibit right now of all the artifacts, the, the, um- Paintings, sculptures, everything, uh, from the siren myths that are, that are in an exhibition right now at the Naples Archeological Museum, and I would really love to see it, you know.

But some of, some of it I have seen from, like, my travels, and I really wanna share that with people. So I think my next step is to want to do, like, a visual talk where I take some of the artifacts and the stories and, uh, the history that is kind of the [01:06:00] lesser-known history of the sirens, and maybe bring that forward.

Because I feel like people should know about it and know a little bit more about it, 'cause they're not, um ... Like, the myth of the siren that's more, like, uh, popular culture is that the siren is this kind of sultry woman that's meant to eat men or kill men or whatever the case may be. She is- But there's actually way more around her that's protective, um, that's a, a, a spirit of the land and the sea, protector of the people.

And the people that live in the Naples area really do connect with h- with her and have, uh, almost a relationship. I met this man, um, in, when I was in Sorrento. I actually have one of his plates that he does. But this is, like, a plate of the, a man and a woman. It's actually called The Lovers, which I really love.

But he paints these ceramics in Sorrento, and if you could see here is, like, [01:07:00] uh, she's kinda got wings, but she also has a fin. And he, him and his wife, uh, do these beautiful ceramics about the sirens, and they, they say they talk to the sirens all the time. Like, they have a kind of a ... Like the way that we talk to our ancestors and our, you know, family members who've passed, they have a similar kind of experience talking to the sirens, especially when they're painting their, their ceramics and stuff like that.

And it's like they're the entities of the, of the land that they live in, and so it's like they're, again, they're like protective spirits that are kind of around helping them with their lives, helping them navigate, helping them, um, with their work, with their creative work, because they're liminal creatures.

And so, like, this is really happening, like, you know, for the people that live there even to this day.

Daniel Dissinger: Wow. I'm ... Okay. Wow. I'm ... I, I wanna ... Okay. I'm gonna [01:08:00] give you a chance. This has been the most eye-opening and beautiful conversa- I feel like I'm-

Thank you so much. This has been so beautiful. I don't even know what to tha- this has been so great. I want... You know, please tell everyone where they can find your work- Yes. ... and, you know, other things you're doing. I, I ju- seriously, I feel like we could go for three hours- Oh, yeah ... and I could just sit here.

There's so much. I feel like, and if we were in person, forget it, it would be forever. Like it would just be... But this was-

Jennifer Barone: It's so deep. Like, it's so deep- Yeah ... like the topic.

Daniel Dissinger: My God. Yeah, tell everyone about, you know-

Jennifer Barone: Yes ... where

Daniel Dissinger: they can get your book. What your... Yes, please.

Jennifer Barone: Yeah. So Siren Land is, uh, published by Feather Press, and you can go to, um, featherpress, uh, books.wordpress.com.

You can also go to my website jenniferbarone.wordpress.com. If you're local to the San Francisco, uh, Bay Area, you could go to [01:09:00] Telegraph Hill

Books, which is in the beautiful North Beach, and buy a copy there. Um, so those are the places right now. And then I'm going to be- I've been invited to, uh, give a presentation.

I'm gonna be on a panel talk as part of Litquake, which is the big literary festival that happens here in October, and I'm gonna be on a panel talking about pleasure. There are some poems in here that do cover that topic because of our ecstatic culture. Oh, absolutely. Ancient culture. And if you go into the history of Pompeii, you will for sure know, like, the ecstatic culture that existed in Pompeii.

It was a pleasure city, so a lot of these, like, cities around the bay were, like, pleasure towns, you know? And, uh, very ecstatic culture. Um, so I'm gonna be talking on the topic of pleasure with a few other authors as part of Litquake in October. But you can find... And then I'm gonna be also featuring at Literary Speakeasy in September at Martini's and maybe some other events, but you could find [01:10:00] that all on my website.

Daniel Dissinger: That's awesome. Yeah, and all the links- Yeah ... will be in the show notes. Definitely go there, and if you're in the San Francisco area, definitely check these places out. And, you know, I'm- it's just been such an, a pleasure and an honor to have you on the podcast and just to listen to you speak about this.

I've, you know, usually i- I like to sit and listen, and you have given me so much on this. Uh, so I just wanna thank you and acknowledge that I, this has been such an amazing time for me. I'm- Excellent ... and your book is so beautiful, and I wanna, cannot wait to read it. Um, and read Jennifer's other books, too, like especially Saporoso, which I, I'm enjoy- Yeah

I enjoy so much. It's such a beautiful book, too. That is so, it's so good. That is such a good book, too, and, and just, yeah, I think this is just a call for people to, if you want to [01:11:00] reclaim parts of your ancestry- Yeah ... that you feel like are missing, you could do that, and it's there for you, and, you know, you don't have to just follow a one-dimensional aspect of who you are, and you can put these rituals and these things back in your life, and it really, I think, enriches the experience of your life.

And-

Jennifer Barone: Yeah ...

Daniel Dissinger: thank you so much. I'm, thank you. And everyone, please- Ooh, thank you for having

Jennifer Barone: me.

Daniel Dissinger: Ugh. No, it is... I, I, this has b- this project, this podcast has been going for, like, six years, and, and I feel like it's been, every time I do something with a, an ama- an amazing guest, it's just been an amazing experience, and it just grows and grows.

And I've met so many awesome people from all over the world that I'm just like, never would've happened if I didn't do this. And, you know, going to that crazy event that I loved- ... at Typewriters Anonymous. Shout out, Philip. Like, he's just, cannot wait to do something with him, too. But, um, yeah, I'm, it, it's just, I am almost, [01:12:00] I'm basically speechless.

I, I have m- I mean, people are probably like, "What is he rambling about?" I, I, there's so many emotions I'm having at this point, but thank you so much. And everyone, please follow, subscribe, you know. Check us out on, uh, Instagram, writingremixpodcast, and al- And Substack. And Substack, yeah. I think it's writingremixpod on Instagram.

I don't know. It's there. The, it'll be the link. And then also, yes, please subscribe on, on Substack, 'cause there's gonna be some pieces of writing I'm gonna be doing soon, coming out. But also, because WordPress is, is very weird with their memory, I have to migrate pretty much almost everything to Substack, so that's where things are gonna be coming out a lot more.

But it's also really cool, 'cause you get to watch the episodes as well. So please subscribe to Substack, and please, uh, support the pod with that and share it. And I'm looking forward to hopefully doing another episode with you, Jennifer. I would love to do something else. It would just be such a pleasure.

Um-

Jennifer Barone: Yeah, and I'm hoping to do, like, a writing workshop, and [01:13:00] who knows? Maybe I'll one day- Mm ... take people there and do some writing, uh, on the, you know, in the place. So I'm hoping to do that one day in the future, too.

Daniel Dissinger: Oh my God, that would be so great. Uh, that would be so... I, I would have to go. I would have to Yes, yes.

I would, I would, this is, I have to do this. Um- Yes ... but yeah, everyone, thank you so much for listening, and I'll see you on the next episode.

Jennifer Barone: Thank you, Daniel.