



The Goddess Isis. From Cystalinks.

Catherine Gonick

A Vulture Stands in the Garden

*(Sacred to the goddess Isis, vultures
make excellent mothers.)*

Outside my sliding glass door
a vulture stands in the garden

at the top of stairs that look out
over hills and valley

She takes her time, moves only
her red, bald head to gaze

this way and that, then calmly
raises dark wings to fly

You're not likely to sight
a vulture in your garden unless

something there is dead,
maybe stinking, but here nothing

has died. She is my mother
and we are alive. We eat the dead

no one else wants, what to others
is putrid, disgusting, feared.

My mother takes magnificent care,
protecting and teaching me

how to live. Together we find
and transform unloved rot

that keeps us strong. Our eating
leaves the world cleaner than

we found it. Afterward we clean
ourselves, shoot white liquid shit

down our legs to kill bacteria. Thanks
to us, Pharaoh can rule and live

Catherine Gonick's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Boston Review*, *Forge*, *Jewish Women's Literary Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Sukoon*, and other literary journals. She divides her time between New York and California.