"In these opening years of the twenty-first century, as the human community experiences a rather difficult situation in its relation with the natural world, we might reflect that a fourfold wisdom is available to guide us into the future: the wisdom of indigenous peoples, the wisdom of women, the wisdom of the classical traditions, and the wisdom of science."

–Thomas Berry

Artwork by Vijali Hamilton, photo by Karil Daniels
Look up at the sky-
The heavens so blue, the sun so radiant,
The clouds so playful, the soaring raptors,
The meadows in bloom, the woodland creatures,
The rivers singing their way to the sea,
Wolf song on the land, whale song in the sea,
Celebration everywhere, wild, riotous,
Immense as a monsoon lifting an ocean of joy
And spilling it down over the Appalachian Landscape,
Drenching us all with a deluge of delight
As we open our arms and rush toward each other,
You and I and all of us,
Moved by that vast compassionate Presence
That brings all things together in intimate Celebration,
Celebration that is the universe itself.

Thomas Berry, from Every Being Has Rights,
Twenty-Third Annual E.F. Schumacher Lectures
Stockbridge, Massachusetts, October 2003

Dear Reader:
Thomas Berry had a knowing of a “vast compassionate Presence” when he stood as a young boy at the edge of the meadow by his home. He would often refer back to his experience of the meadow as he developed his own inner knowing of the wholeness and sacredness of the cosmos. Many of us have had our own “meadow” experience—whether in outer nature or through our inner nature. The wisdom from this experience is what the articles, poetry and art in this Reader exemplify.

Our group came together guided by a strong inner desire to move forward the vision of the Ecozoic through the wisdom of women. As we worked together, we felt this wisdom was indeed about the inner experience of the feminine rather than the outer role of women in our society, although you will find writings on this “outer” topic as well. Our main goal in this offering is to put both men and women in touch with the wisdom of the feminine within themselves and to see this wisdom at work in global transformation and movement towards the Ecozoic. For the past 18 months, each of us brought our compassionate presence, authenticity, receptivity, and discernment to the table, always keeping in mind that we worked for a higher purpose to let the vision emerge and unfold.

In Western culture, it is easy to intellectualize the work of both the Ecozoic and of environmentalism, because we were taught to live in our minds rather than in our bodies. The work of the body and of the feminine is difficult for most of us since it lives in the realm of inner sensing and feeling. But if we do not progress in our inner work, the outer work will languish. It is the feminine consciousness that makes the inner work possible.

We made it a point to ask our authors to include something personal from their experience of the feminine, and we hope that the work presented in this Reader will invite you to explore and sense your own relationship to the feminine as it relates to the Ecozoic. In this spirit, we ask you to consider how feminine wisdom and vast compassionate Presence can deepen your journey towards wholeness and facilitate the outer work for an environmental future that nurtures our relationship to Earth.

This issue will begin with Thomas Berry’s writing on “The Wisdom of Women.” Enjoy the journey!

Wendy Burkland Lombard
Joanna Haymore
Ann Loomis
Nancy Rickard

Thomas Berry coined the term Ecozoic—“Eco” means “House” and “Zoic” means “Life.” Hence, Ecozoic means “House of Life.”
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The Wisdom of Women

By Thomas Berry

The wisdom of women consists not only in their individual contributions but also in their association with men in the nurture and well-being of life in all its forms: cosmological, social, economic, familial, and personal. This wisdom flourished throughout the Neolithic period of Western civilization. Now, after surviving in a suppressed condition throughout the patriarchal history of modern Europe and America, the wisdom of women is re-asserting itself in all phases of human activity.

In its full religious-spiritual expression, the wisdom of women seems to have developed in late Paleolithic times with the concept of the Great Goddess as the primordial source and destiny of the universe. Not a matriarchy, the Great-Goddess culture was a cosmology encompassing the origin and destiny of all existence. In its most complete historical expression in the West, it developed between 8,000 and 3,000 B.C. with the transition from late Paleolithic to Neolithic culture. The more we know about this era the more meaningful it becomes as that period when humans first began to form abiding human communities within permanent village settlements. In the mythic-religious life of the society, the time has special significance in the status occupied by women. Just how this mythic-religious status carried over into the determination of women’s role in the public functioning of the society is not clear.

The patriarchal domination of women characteristic of Western society seems to have begun following the Neolithic age. Eventually women were denied full human status, were at times considered the product of genetic deficiency, were regarded as morally seductive to men, were executed in amazing numbers as possessed by evil spirits, and were systematically excluded from public decision making. It is revealing to look back into Neolithic history and discover that, in this phase of human development, at the very moment of an extraordinary advance in civilization, a female rather than a male divinity ruled the world as its creative origin, its numinous presence, and the meaning and destiny of every mode of being.

This was a period when the mythology of the times and even religious rituals centered on woman as primary archetypal symbol of the cosmological order. Such was the mythic world in which the first permanent villages were established. The new art of cultivation of the land provided a reliable food supply. Animals were domesticated, not only as a source of food, but also for their energy and as a means for transport. The earliest pottery was shaped and the earliest sun-dried bricks. All these accomplishments and many others were attained within the goddess culture of the times.

Although evident in the northeastern Mediterranean basin throughout the late Paleozoic period, the goddess culture found full articulation only in the Neolithic age. At this time, because of the domestication of plants and animals and the settling into permanent villages, the relation of humans with the natural world was profoundly deepened. Historians today, marveling at the historical moment and trying to understand its dynamics, seek answers in the relation of humans to planet Earth.

In their search for explanation, our historical narratives have so far given little attention to the symbolic world in which Neolithic advances in civilization took place. We have presented the period simply in terms of the ever-increasing human capacity to exploit Earth, a process considered the purpose of human existence. Now we begin to understand that the Neolithic was a time when the human community deepened its understanding that there is a single Earth community and a single story of planet Earth binding all its component members. Following that period, some 7,000 years ago, possibly with the coming of Indo-European peoples with their warrior culture and male deities, a sudden change occurred. All the symbols were altered, foremost among them replacement of the goddess culture with male domination over all major expressions of the human. The patriarchal Western world as we know it began to take shape.

After the Neolithic period, women were progressively identified with their role in child-bearing, child care, early education, care of the home, gardening, care of domestic animals, and ministering to the comfort and emotional needs of men. In their relations with men, women were to be either utilitarian or ornamental. Public decision-making in all major fields—religious, political, economic, and educational—became the exclusive role of men. Both in the public life of the community and the private realm of the family, all important affairs were regulated by them. This distorted appropriation by men of all major dimensions of human life produced ever-increasing difficulty.

In the Western civilizational context, exploitation of women is paralleled by exploitation of the natural world. Here, again, men appropriated to themselves, not only the total value and direction of the human, but also the total value and control of Earth. The term androcentrism, a human-male-centered view of the universe, properly describes what happened, not only to the human commu-
nity, but, as well, to the entire Earth community. The assumption by men of their exclusive right to define and manipulate human life and value and to exploit Earth and its resources is one of the basic reasons why Western civilization today founders in a dysfunctional natural as well as a dysfunctional human world.

In America, change in the situation has come about by the initiative of women themselves, beginning with 19th-century social issues. Thereafter, women have increasingly demanded the right to articulate and resolve other concerns at the highest levels of professional activity, often in distinguished 20th century universities. Once feminine competence in intellectual and professional spheres was established, it became possible for women generally to assert themselves throughout the range of human affairs, but especially in educational, political, religious, and economic fields.

Only through these activities of women can the human dimension of life recover its integrity. Neither men nor women have adequate significance if not articulated together within the integral human venture. A difficulty in this endeavor is the English language use of the term “man” to refer to both male and female genders in the human species. Many other languages differentiate their terms for species and gender, as in the Latin term homo for the human species and the term vir for the male gender. But, again, there is a question as to what real effect this differentiation has had on the life situation.

In these years of transition into the 21st century, Western women no longer unresistingly accept exclusion from any phase of the public or private life of the society. However noble in themselves, the roles of child bearing, child rearing, nursing the ill, and home care—roles tending to close women out from the public functioning of the society—will no longer be accepted by them as their only roles.

For a healthy society all the basic areas—religion, governance, economics, education, healing, artistic and literary creativity—must accept women in the full range of their competencies. Among the best examples is that of Marie Curie (1867-1934) who dared enter the field of scientific studies and made discoveries of extraordinary insight. Many women followed her example, succeeding, not only in science, but, as well, in other professional occupations: Maria Montessori in pedagogy, Rachel Carson in bio-chemistry, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict in anthropology, Barbara McClintock in genetics, Hazel Henderson in economics, Marian Anderson in...
song, Martha Graham in dance. The list could be extended indefinitely. In the new field of public media, women have particularly distinguished themselves, whether as writers, artists, or multi-media entertainers. Throughout the spectrum of human activities, women in our time have exercised abilities in a way and to a degree never possible in the more oppressive periods of patriarchal dominion.

Precisely in their critique of limitations involved in the patriarchal structure of social establishments have women been most helpful in shaping a truly human mode of being for both men and women. Their critique reveals to men distortions introduced into the civilizational process when they assumed total control of social, economic, and religious usages and standards, and limited the total meaning of what it means to be human. As a consequence of women’s corrective presence and critical acumen, the integral sense of the “human” is now being recovered.

There is some question of the extent to which the intellectual insights, the sensitivities, the emotional-aesthetic experience of women differ from those of men. A case might be made for considering that it is not a question of more or less, of better or worse, but simply a question of qualitative difference. For, if the capacities of women are identical with those of men, then women would add nothing essential to the vision, judgment, and skills already present in men. Only if women have their own distinctive insights, their own sensitivities, their own emotional-aesthetic experience can they sustain their full identity and their capacity for relating effectively with men in a complete expression of the human mode of being.

The human project cannot function properly under the direction of either men or women in isolation from each other. If the public life of the society is to be truly and optimally human, women must participate as equals in its deliberations and activities. This sharing of gifts and responsibilities is especially important in the various branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial. In religious establishments, too, women need to be present, including administrative and ministerial roles, with corresponding positions of status and authority in law, medicine, education, and the arts, in all the professions. Wherever issues concerning the human community are under consideration, women need to be present.

Thomas Berry has been a scholar, teacher, and visionary for over seventy years and is internationally respected for his contributions in shaping the environmental movement. *Dream of the Earth* (1988), *The Universe Story*, coauthored with Brian Swimme (1992), *The Great Work* (1999), and *Evening Thoughts* (2006) are his major works. In his earlier academic career, he was the director of the Riverdale Center for Religious Research and founder of the History of Religious Program at Fordham University.
Women’s Ways, Creative Balance

By Nancy Rickard

What is Earth asking of women? While the world faces crisis after crisis (cultural, political, military, economic, meteorological), how does the inherent power and wisdom of half of the planet’s humans affect decisions about its future? Thomas Berry muses that the wisdom of women is available to guide us into the future: “The human emerges from the larger universe and discovers itself in this universe…In the wisdom of women it (human emergence) is found in the description of the universe as a mutually nourishing presence of all things with each other...After being excluded from so much of the human world over the centuries, women are revealing the disaster of androcentrism (male-centeredness) to our society for the first time in Western History.”

The New Oxford American Dictionary defines wisdom as “the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment.” What is it that women experience that is not fully appreciated in our world today? The wisdom of women, more correctly—the wisdom of the feminine principle—is presencing itself right now. The feminine principle, found in both men and women, reveals itself in part as compassion, tenderness, deep listening, and mutual support. These essential attributes are beginning to balance the competitiveness and desire for control so prevalent today. Women’s way is to listen, look for alternatives, negotiate, and find common goals to work toward. Feminine wisdom is more capable of appreciating the complexity of a situation and the consequent long-term implications of aggressive actions.

Ken Wilber in Integral Spirituality explains his use of developmental types by following Carol Gilligan’s description of the differences in moral understanding between men and women. Wilber compares women’s moral stages with men’s developmental stages. Both male and female stages progress from what is called stage one, the “me” or egocentric stage; to stage two, the “us” or ethnocentric stage; to stage three, “all of us” or the worldcentric stage. However, in the gradual expansion of moral identity, males and females have different experiences of their voices as they develop.

Male logic, or a man’s voice, tends to be based on terms of autonomy, justice, and rights, whereas women’s logic or voice tends to be based on terms of relationships, care and responsibility. At the 4th and highest stage of moral development, according to Gilligan, the masculine and feminine voices in each of us tend to become integrated. This does not mean that a person at this stage starts to lose the distinctions between masculine and feminine, and hence become a bland, androgynous, asexual being. In fact, masculine and feminine dimensions might become more intensified. But it does mean the individuals start to befriend both the masculine and feminine modes in themselves, even if they characteristically act predominantly from one or the other.

Evaluating one’s masculine and feminine attributes at both the personal (stage one) and cultural levels (stage two) is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the development of appropriate responses.

In modern business practice, the results of evaluating male and female voices are now being recognized. According to Utne Reader, “Business gurus are now touting feminine leadership styles, as they often result in lowering employee turnover and improving creativity and innovation while benefiting the financial bottom line. Of course, one paradox is that some female leaders have simply mimicked ‘masculine’ leadership styles and so perpetuate the status quo. At its best, feminine leadership, which is available to men and women alike, often includes placing a greater value on process. It involves heightened recognition of the value of people’s relationships and contributions. It assigns a high priority to relationships, learning, beauty, flexibility, celebration, collective intelligence, vulnerability, transparency, intuition, and humility.”

A female manager of a major international chemical company noted that she operates in a male-dominated business; however, that company is now acknowledging what is needed for people to work well on teams. She has noticed that those who are promoted from the technical level to management and the managers who are retained after downsizing have the following characteristics: 1) They exhibit more effective listening skills. 2) They keep discussions open longer rather than simply adopting what the leader wants. 3) They tend toward inclusiveness by bringing the quiet team member into a discussion. 4) They have a greater willingness to let others on the team share the limelight. 5) They nourish attitudes valued in that job.

The female manager sees that, in the drive to succeed, the essential sense of competitiveness must be balanced with the ability to listen, clarify, check back with team members in meetings, include all in the discussion, be aware of individual strengths and weaknesses, and assign tasks accordingly. A nurturing presence, the ability
to say “I don’t know,” getting help, and being cooperative means that the goal of developing a superior product is kept instead of allowing the goal to be subverted by posturing and egotism. This manager’s observation is that it has taken women in business some time to develop the networks that support their presence at the managerial level, but that is now happening. Women connect with one another and demonstrate a natural empathy, whereas men generally do not easily demonstrate that ability. It’s important to note that the ingrained ability of women to assist and support one another can be practiced without losing the competitive edge needed for success.

At one point in my career, I served as director of a psychiatric outpatient clinic at an inner-city university hospital. I cherished the relationships with my clients (mostly poor children, adolescents and their families), staff, and clinical students. I was also responsible for maintaining a managerial relationship with the hospital administration. Over the years, the administration became more and more focused on the bottom line—how much money our clinic was producing. I was torn between the satisfaction of aiding the mental health of families and children and the need to simply make more money for the hospital. While recognizing the need for financial solvency, I ultimately resigned in order to work in a situation where the priority was service, not profit. This balance, combining the masculine (profitability) and feminine (care) principles in a healthy way, is at the core of many of the solutions to today’s global problems.

A good example of the masculine and feminine balance is demonstrated by this story about Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia of New York City:

One bitterly cold night in January of 1935, the mayor turned up at a night court that served the poorest ward of the city. LaGuardia dismissed the judge for the evening and took over the bench himself. Within a few minutes, a tattered old woman was brought before him charged with stealing a loaf of bread. She told LaGuardia that her daughter’s husband had deserted her, her daughter was sick, and her two grandchildren were starving. But the shopkeeper, from whom the bread was stolen, refused to drop the charges. “It’s a bad neighborhood, your Honor,” the man told the mayor. “She’s got to be punished to teach other people around here a lesson.”

LaGuardia sighed. He turned to the woman and said, “I’ve got to punish you. The law makes no exceptions—ten dollars or ten days in jail.” But even as he pronounced the sentence, the mayor was already reaching into his pocket. He extracted a bill and tossed it into his famous sombrero saying: “Here is the ten dollar fine which I now remit; and furthermore I am going to fine everyone in this courtroom fifty cents for living in a town where a person has to steal bread so that her grandchildren can eat. Mr. Bailiff, collect the fines and give them to the defendant.”

The following day the New York City newspapers reported that $47.50 was turned over to a bewildered old lady who had stolen a loaf of bread to feed her starving grandchildren, fifty cents of that amount being contributed by the red-faced grocery store owner, while some seventy petty criminals, people with traffic violations, and New York City policemen, each of whom had just paid fifty cents for the privilege of doing so, gave the mayor a standing ovation.

Using the male approach to decision-making, La Guardia followed the rules, applied the law and sentenced her. Then he used his feminine understanding to pay the $10 fine. His next move was to collect $47.50 from all the people in the court. As illustrated by La Guardia, the wisdom of women is the willingness to combine knowledge and experience to serve complex ends through the use of judgment that recognizes the practical contributions of both the feminine and masculine principles.

Nancy Rickard is a retired therapist who specialized in women’s issues. Currently, she leads a small discussion group, volunteers at The Family Violence Prevention Center, leads 12-step retreats with her husband, Bill, teaches meditation, and gardens around her home in Carrboro, NC. She is one of the creative directors for this issue of The Ecozoic Reader. Nancy can be reached at nancy.rickard@earthlink.net.

3 Ibid.
4 Utne Reader Nov-Dec 2005 “Tea with Nina Simons & Nina Utne”
What is the qualitative difference in women’s wisdom that is needed to help both men and women fulfill the Ecozoic vision? This vision is that humans, Earth, and all its life can move into a mutually enhancing relatedness capable of carrying us into a future that we could hope to leave for all Earth’s children. Germane to the dialogue about mutually enhancing relatedness is the question “Why is it essential that we should pay attention to this wisdom coming from the feminine perspective?”

Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, said in his introduction to the 2007 report on The State of the World’s children, “When women are healthy, educated, and free to take the opportunities life affords them, children thrive and countries flourish.”

This report articulates the issue of establishing gender equality, with numerous world-wide studies detailing what happens when women are given these opportunities and the deleterious consequences for the moral, legal, environmental, and economic fabric of nations when women are subjected to living in silence and repression without expression and choice.

In a recent conversation, my attention was called to a book I had read years ago, *Women’s Ways of Knowing* (1986). Its authors researched how women’s ways of knowing differ from men’s ways of knowing regarding truth, reality, and the origins of knowledge.

The first qualitative difference they found was that for women, the “real” or valued lessons in life did not come from academia or work per se, but from relationships involved with work, friends, family, community, and life’s crises and successes. They concluded that the prevailing conception of knowledge and truth that are accepted today have been shaped by a masculine construction of truth and reality, which places a premium on rational and objective thought and stereotypes intuitive, emotional, or personal thinking as primitive or suspect.

The authors of *Women’s Ways of Knowing* say that “Drawing on their own perspectives and visions, men have constructed the prevailing theories, written history, and set values that have become the guiding principles for men and women alike” (p.5). It becomes important, then, to look at how women have found value in themselves and how this affects their contribution to social, economic, religious, and political spheres. They found, after analyzing many interviews with a wide variety of women, that women experience five different relationships to knowledge.

The most basic and conditioned response to knowledge for a woman is to maintain silence, to live in a mindless and voiceless state that leaves her subject to external authority. The 2007 State of the World’s Children reports that women and girls have been left behind and remain voiceless and powerless. They are disproportionately affected by poverty, inequality, and violence. They make up the majority of the world’s poor and illiterate and account for 80% of the civilian casualties during armed conflicts (p. 10).

Women’s second relationship to knowledge is to be receptive, able to receive or reproduce what is given, but not be the source of initiation or creativity. The experience of living with this mindset leaves a woman with confusion, even worrying that developing her own powers would be at the expense of others.3

Third, the relationship is to acknowledge one’s own subjective knowing, derived from intuition, and to view it as personal and private. A woman living in this mindset has begun to awaken to her own inner resources, but cannot yet give voice to them in the outer world.

The fourth is using procedural or objective means for obtaining and communicating knowledge. Women in many parts of the world have made great strides in self awareness and in the academic, political, and business worlds by utilizing this skill in the 20th century.

Fifth and finally, there is a kind of knowing that comes from constructed knowledge. This means widening one’s perspective to view knowledge as contextual and experience driven, valuing not only the intuitive, creative, and subjective mode but also the objective and rational. Thomas Berry calls this kind of knowing qualitative, embodying all three properties of the universe: identity, difference, and unity.

For the successful unfolding of the Ecozoic Era, it is imperative that the voice of the feminine mode of being be encouraged to make its special contribution. For example, women in Iraq are wearing a necklace fashioned after the geographical shape of Iraq. The necklace represents to them a place they call home, where they make a life of goodness for their families and for themselves. It is their silent protest for what has happened to
their lives and their ability to create, as the religious, military, and economic struggle for control and dominance in the region continues. It is a symbol of their desire to have a voice so that the wisdom of unity may prevail instead of the destructiveness of division. It is their symbol of hope, worn over their hearts for a future that includes healing—an Ecozoic future.


3 Summary of Women’s Ways of Knowing. Terry Doyle. Ferris State University Center for Teaching, Learning, and Faculty Development, 2007.

(See Joanna’s bio following her article, Transforming the Tower of Babel, page 36.)
Something’s afoot. Something enormous and hopeful and creative may be emerging throughout the world. Embodying the nurturing principle of the Divine Feminine, an uncoordinated self-organizing “movement” is appearing—without a central leader, international financing, or global agreements. Several key elements—from organizational efforts to higher consciousness to technological innovations—are beginning to coalesce into what may be key events in rescuing the planet and our species.

A shift in consciousness up the cultural spiral, accompanied by the spiritual will to evolve for the sake of the whole, is beginning to emerge. Concurrently, global problems are beginning to be recognized, analyzed, and solved. Forward-thinking persons are showing the way to a more harmonious future. And the miracle is that all of these forces are becoming aware of each other! Perhaps the soul of the world, or the anima mundi as it is sometimes called, is awakening us to our role in following the arc of evolution.

Organizations

United loosely, but cooperatively, many organizations are pursuing the goals of ecological sanity, peace, and justice for all. Paul Hawken’s recently completed research indicates there are between one and two million NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) and NPs (non-profit organizations) devoted to these purposes. His incisive analysis of this generally invisible movement is presented in *Blessed Unrest* by Terry Tempest Williams, a book aptly described as “a manifesto of hope for the 21st century.” This evidence of a groundswell of the feminine energy to nurture, conserve, and rescue being felt throughout the world is a critical element that must co-evolve with a new human consciousness—sooner rather than later—to preserve our planetary presence.

Consciousness Shift

In addition to the manifestation of the sacred feminine evidenced by the more than one million NGOs and NPs researched by Hawken, there is another trend that is equally important. Research and practice in the evolution of individual and cultural consciousness is becoming more evident. *How* will our species move from the current collective consciousness with its emphasis on individual satisfaction and consumerism to a world-centered consciousness with the common good as its goal? *How* will the global will to solve the planet’s ills that the growing network of NGOs and NPs are trying to deal with develop?

Many individuals and organizations are now grappling with this consciousness shift. At the forefront are organizations such as the Institute of Noetic Science (IONS), which conducts original scientific research into consciousness, healing and psychokinesis. The IONS 2007 Shift Report, *Evidence of a World Transforming*, is a marvelous summary of worldview shift as well as a detailed review of personal and institutional transformation. Currently, there is a project led by Lynne McTaggart that is trying to determine whether and to what extent conscious human intention can be collimated to affect physical outcomes. Barbara Max Hubbard has developed an organization around the theme of conscious evolution that is producing accessible DVDs concerning the consciousness shift.

Dr. Don Beck has spent the last three decades developing and applying the wizardry of Spiral Dynamics to solving fundamental cultural problems. Based on the early work of Clare Graves, Beck has laid out the values, structure and processes of cultural development complete with some of the characteristics of the next tier of psychological development of individuals. This schema, Spiral Dynamics Integral, has led to practical conflict resolution successes among stakeholders at various cultural levels in actual cases at the sport team, corporate, and national levels. Beck is now forming Human Emergence Centers here in the United States and worldwide.

Andrew Cohen, publisher of *What is Enlightenment* magazine, is a spiritual leader, author, and philosopher. The major goal of his enlightenment work is to raise the consciousness of individuals beyond personal ego so that they will dedicate themselves to following a future impersonal evolutionary path that is centered on the common good. Cohen and Ken Wilber collaborate regularly to map the path to a higher Integral Life, the next apparent step in the shift of consciousness.

Technology and Finance

Thus far, we have seen evidence of the nurturing will of the planet expressed by the number and variety of NGOs and NPs as well as the forging ahead of many initiatives aimed at raising the consciousness of our species. What’s left? Material and financial means.

Many of the world’s foremost scientists and engineers are acknowledging both a deep understanding of our global problems, as well as recognition that we have
solutions to them at hand. Amory Lovins, physicist, energy expert, and co-founder of the Rocky Mountain Institute, notes that “industry...is clearly moving away from the ‘primitive, reductionistic mindset’ that has been dominant for the past two centuries. A new nature-inspired vision in engineering will lead to the smart design of whole systems for multiple benefits—rather than single systems for single benefits.” In an interview with ODE magazine, he states that “no major scientific breakthroughs are required to meet the challenges humanity faces.”

William McDonough, former Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia, has designed buildings that give off more energy than they use, clean their own wastewater using living systems, and draw crowds because of their beauty. With his partner Michael Braungart, his revolutionary approach to design is chronicled in the book Cradle to Cradle and demonstrated in the DVD entitled The Next Industrial Revolution.

Is this pie-in-the-sky dreaming? Can the planet afford to solve the looming catastrophes caused by poverty, global warming, peak oil, and so forth? Lester Brown, former chief of World Watch and currently president of Earth Policy Institute—a non-profit, interdisciplinary research organization in Washington, D.C.—has published Plan B 2.0, Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble. This comprehensive analysis includes sections on all the key problems of the planet, from stabilizing population to water shortages from climate change to adult literacy. And he has included an estimate of what the additional cost to the world would be to accomplish the needed changes. His estimate of $161 billion is dwarfed by his country-by-country estimate of military expenditures—nearly $1 trillion annually. That is, we are currently spending six times more for the military throughout the world than it would cost to make a major dent in global problems. Even if Brown’s estimate to solve the problems is off by a factor of six, a solution is still in view. When reading Plan B 2.0, you might start with Chapter 13, “Building a New Future,” to gain an overall sense of confidence and hope before plowing through the individual problem-centered chapters and their solutions.

Our lifetime is being presented with a series of one-time possibilities in the creative trajectory of the universe. My interest in grouping hopeful prospects together is to inspire our nurturing and conserving, yet courageous, instincts so that they can be seen alongside the challenges we face. Our personal participation in birthing the new order is our unique birthright. How quickly can we do it? It depends on how quickly we can awaken to the soul of the world and heed Her intent for our evolution.

Bill Rickard is a retired intelligence officer now living in Carrboro, North Carolina. His current interests are tutoring ESL students at the local elementary school, counseling, studying, and writing about the new consciousness. Bill teaches meditation and gives 12-step retreats with his wife, Nancy. He can be reached at bill.rickard@earthlink.net.
Reclaiming the Feminine Field

By Suzanne Scurlock-Durana

Excerpted from her book about living with awareness of universal feminine support

I spent my early years in awe of my father and his wonderful capacity to think and act in a clear, rational way. He was a charismatic speaker and leader, and I believed that his strong, benevolent masculine presence was the ultimate example of how to live. My mother always deferred to his wishes, but I knew I could not emulate her, so I modeled myself after him.

Reflecting back, I did not realize there was any other way to be in the world. Unknowingly, I had rejected the feminine and how it manifests in life. To me, power had to do with one’s capacity to do, direct, set goals and move forward proactively. The process and power of simply being present had never entered my mind. As I look back now, I recognize I was not the only one stricken with this kind of blindness.

Particularly in western cultures, we are taught to think in a masculine, logical and linear way. There is a greater emphasis placed on intellectual processes and less on the feminine emotional softness and fluidity. The loss of our softness and fluidity can often be seen in our rigid posture and linear movements: stiff back, tight muscles, sunken chest, and an armored heart. It may also look like an inability to play, to be spontaneous, to laugh, and to surrender to the flow of life when needed. Our emphasis on rational thinking has robbed us of the juicy fullness that life can hold for us.

In order to trust in the nurturing support of the universe around you, it helps to have some concept of the full spectrum of life energy: the feminine as well as the masculine, the yin as well as the yang. The first principle taught in my work, Healing from the Core: Grounding and Healthy Boundaries, is trusting that life’s challenges will move us beyond our conceptual limitations. These limitations are things we may unconsciously consider to be reality, and they are often set in place long before we could think rationally. Thus we operate as though that’s “just the way it is.”

In my mid-20s, one of my unconscious limitations became clear to me. While reading Frederick Leboyer’s Birth Without Violence, I became aware that I might have experienced trauma at the time of my birth. As I read his words about what a natural healthy birth was meant to be and looked at the photo of a newborn resting peacefully on her mother’s belly, I felt unusually emotional, and I had a deep, uncomfortable sense of pressure in my chest. I felt a vague sense of being disconnected. So I made an appointment to receive some hands-on body therapy to explore and heal whatever was signaling to me from deep inside.

My mother was unconscious for my birth, and I had no contact with her until many hours later. She relates the story with great sadness, because her physician had not told her she would be “knocked out” for the delivery. When she woke up alone, without me, she felt angry and betrayed. That’s all I knew about my birth before the bodywork began.

During the session, my conscious awareness of the mat I was lying on began to get fuzzy. Oddly, I smelled ether. I dimly realized I was probably releasing the ether from the delivery that had gotten into my system from my mother being drugged. I suddenly felt an urgency from deep within to push out through a foggy dark tunnel. Feeling trapped and frustrated, I began to push and cry, unable to muster the strength needed to complete my task. Suddenly I felt a final tugging, and I was out! I felt cool air, and I heard a voice from deep inside me say, “This time you get to do it the way you wanted to—roll over onto your mother’s belly.” With my eyes still closed, I rolled over and felt the soft mat like the belly of my mother cradling and protecting me for the first time.

Then an odd thing happened. Suddenly the mat felt about two miles wide, and I was on the soft, loose belly of a huge and powerful mother. Her vital presence surrounded me. This was different from anything I had previously defined as strength. I was initially overwhelmed by the intensity of the sensations rippling through me. All around me was this huge, palpable softness—there was nothing hard to push against or resist, and yet it felt far more potent than anything I had ever encountered. Her presence stretched for miles! I felt safe. I belonged there. We were totally connected.

In a flash I realized that I had mistakenly believed that the focused thrust of male energy defined power for me. It was the only model I knew. I could not remember ever feeling this wide diffuse kind of energy emanating from anyone, male or female, in my life. Even the successful women I knew used left-brained masculine energy to exercise control in their worlds.

The gently exquisite waves of sensation continued to roll through me. I felt my heart open and overflow with the immensity of this experience. The tears streamed down my face. Then I felt a deep laugh rolling up from my belly—at the foolishness of my misperception all these years. How could I have missed something so huge? I began to laugh and then cry some more. It was a divine dance from tears to laughter and back again.

I have no idea how long it all lasted. When the waves of sensation finally slowed and faded away, I felt...
my body in a whole new way. Never again would I think there was only one way to experience energy and power. What I now call my perceptual lens had been permanently expanded. This experience has had ramifications in every area of my life, and will, I am sure, continue to inform me for the rest of my life.

I began in that moment to trust the other half of my known universe. I hadn’t known until then that I was virtually blind to the profound strength of the feminine face of power, the feminine energy field. As I began to search out this life force, I learned that I could trust what happened as I opened my arms to receive each new encounter. I learned that the universe holds me in an embrace at every moment.

One of the areas that feminine power embodies is the juiciness and connectedness to all of life at a pleasurable, feeling level. It recognizes the power of the bond between a nursing mother and child, the power of love making with your beloved, the power of a long hug with someone else whose heart is open and warm. It recognizes that surrender to the feminine is not something you do at the end of a war that you lose. It is the act of releasing yourself into a larger flow of life force, which actually takes you to a place of more power, more connectedness, not less.

Even though I had this incredible opening, it would be years before I could really call it my own. For example, even after this wonderful epiphany, in the delivery of my firstborn, I was all pumped to “do” the delivery. I had prepared, exercised, planned, and I was ready. I pushed, breathed and did everything I knew to do. What I forgot was that delivering a baby is a process of ultimate surrender to the life forces at work. The preparation and practice was important. But I needed, when the moment arrived, to be able to surrender to my body’s process, to the deep fluid world of birthing. I had not a clue. It took forty-two painful and exhausting hours.

By the time I was ready to deliver my second child, I had already flirted with the idea that I could let go when the time came. I spent time sinking into positions, like squatting, that would help my body release and surrender more easily. When labor began in my second delivery, I met my fears and held them in my heart. I went into a deep place of surrender that carried me through the pain. It was a three-hour initiation into the deep feminine. When my son was born, he and I went into a long period of deep peaceful ecstasy as I held him in my arms, and we gazed into each other’s eyes.

That initiation has opened the door for me to be able to recognize the feminine in many more places in my world. It has been there all along, and I had been missing it. As a bodyworker, I can now easily slip into deep connection energetically with my clients and friends, and I can feel the warmth of the heart of a grocery checker and sink into it more easily.

The best part about this capacity is that it does not require any action on my part. It simply requires that I surrender to it and ride the wave of connection, which can sometimes feel wet and juicy, out to its natural end point. With the grocery checker, that means sharing a momentary, warm smile. With a child, it means holding them until they want to get up and play. With my beloved it means a long embrace.

My experience of the feminine field in that bodywork session, being reborn with the nurturing principle guiding me, has led me to develop an entire curriculum for helping others discover this way of knowing themselves and the world. I share this work in the hopes that both men and women can access not only the masculine, rational model, but also derive power and meaning from the feminine sense of nurturing fluidity and connectivity present in every moment.

Suzanne Scullock-Durana, C.M.T. C.S.T.-D., creator of the audio series, Healing From the Core: A Journey Home to Ourselves, has been teaching and mentoring in the area of conscious awareness and its relationship to the healing process for over twenty years. She developed the Healing from the Core curriculum, along with the complementary audio series, based on her years of experience helping fellow healthcare practitioners hold a healing space for themselves as well as developing their own therapeutic presence for clients and patients. Since 1986 she has been an instructor of CranioSacral Therapy and SomatoEmotional Release training with the Upledger Institute, nationally and internationally. She can be reached at www.healingfromthecore.com.
Moving to the Third Age

By Milbre Burch

She feels her body is made of sand,
loosely bundled in silk scarves.
Her breasts and belly shift beneath her own touch or his,
bidden by gravity, eroding always downhill.

She is an enormous dune, centuries after a mountain
lay down to rest in the desert, still hungry enough
to trip up the traveler who takes a false step,
and carry him, smothering, always downhill.

She is a mountainside covered in tons of powdered snow.
The icy crust is thin and the mountain’s grip precarious.
The wrong word spoken too loudly cracks the ice
and sends an avalanche thundering always downhill.

She feels molten, a solid made liquid,
something elemental acted upon by the pressures
of time and gravity, heat and stress,
overflowing and running always downhill.

She is erupting in slow motion,
the oozing mouth of the bearded volcano before the lava cools,
burning hot and transforming, unstoppable,
pushing everything always downhill.

She feels that she is made of water,
moving with a heaviness and torpidity,
monumental in its power and dangerously underestimated,
cascading over a cliffside and pouring always downhill.

Made of loose sand or snow or lava or water,
she is aware of every vibration beneath her inner and outer layers.
Through a sidewalk or a bus bench, a gravel path or a church pew
it builds, pushing up through her body and comes shaking to the surface.

A thousand times more powerful than when it began,
the vibration unleashes something, and who she is still to be
spills over the boundaries of who she was, before she gave into gravity
and became herself without the curse of beauty,
without the confines of her youth.

Internationally known performer, award-winning recording artist, published poet and writer and respected teacher of her craft, Milbre Burch is a
storyteller in every sense of the word. Considered one of the most important voices in the American storytelling revival, she is a Circle of
Excellence Award recipient. Burch weaves gesture and language into personal, literary and traditional stories and dramatic monologues to create a
whole new genre of storytelling. Her “Theatre of the Spoken Word” is both elegant and eloquent. The New York Times praised her “classic wit”;
the San Diego Union-Tribune called her “mesmerizing, like a fine solo dancer.” Milbre Burch can be reached at Kind Crone Productions, P. O.
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Pathway to the Ecozoic
By Carmel Higgins

Ecofeminism as a cultural phenomenon emerged in North America and Europe in the early 1970s. A convergence of ecological and feminist consciousness, it represents a critical effort to understand the relationship between the subjugation of women and the denigration of nature.

My own journey into this most significant movement began with questioning and longing. I questioned my role as wife, mother, and woman in church and society and longed to be and belong. I could not have put my longing into words at the beginning of my quest, but now I know I longed to expand beyond culturally defined roles and to feel at home in the cosmos.

I was born during the Great Depression and grew up in the Roman Catholic tradition. A very spiritual child, I loved my religion: the rituals, burning candles, the smell of incense, the Latin chants, and the sense of a mysterious presence within it all. I married in 1953. My husband, Paul, and I lived in a small suburban bungalow, had five children, and drove the traditional station wagon. Back then, in what I now refer to as the “Father Knows Best” era, I was content to be a housewife—cleaning, baking, and having babies. Life was full and meaningful.

My life changed after my children left the nest and my husband, after a long spell of ill health, developed a malignant brain tumour. It was after his death in 1990 that I began to more deeply question my role as a woman and my identity as a person in my own right; for almost sixty years I had been my father’s daughter, my brother’s sister, my husband’s wife, and mother to my children. Who was I now? And for whom and what should I live and be?

In my search for a new identity and meaning, I immersed myself in feminist literature. I read The Feminine Mystique, by Betty Freidan, The Female Eunuch, by Germaine Greer, and The Second Sex, by Simone de Beauvoir. These books opened my eyes to an oppression I had not been aware of. But it was not until I read the book Beyond God the Father, by Mary Daly, that I began to understand feminism as more than a social, cultural, and political issue; I understood it as a spiritual, theological, and ecological issue—ontological to its roots, an issue dealing with the very nature of ‘being’ both human and divine.

Beyond God the Father is about moving from patriarchal male rule. Since women have internalized patriarchy, and found their “being” within it, moving from this social and religious system, according to Daly, would mean confronting a meaningless void, an abyss. She urges such women to confront the shock of living in freedom with “the courage to be.”

Daly’s solution left me gazing rootless into that “abyss.” I questioned whether such a radical departure from the known would bring me freedom and integrity. Yet my feeling of emptiness, I reasoned, seemed a good place to start. I moved on to reading the works of other feminist theologians.

Sexism and God-talk, by Rosemary Radford Ruether, lifted the veil further by exposing the twisted roots of sexism born and thriving in an artificial soil alienated from nature itself: “In the patriarchal mind-set, a woman’s body is the very symbol of finite nature,” she writes. “The logic that flows from this mind-set demands that both woman and nature must be subdued and controlled.” Ruether showed further how patriarchy, by relegating women to silence, obedience, and the domestic, suppresses their input to culture, their creativity, and their innate bodily wisdom.

Ruether’s insights are stunning; they literally “upset the applecart” for me. I felt betrayed, cheated, and robbed, somehow, of my femininity and my voice. I also realized that despite having been a mother and a wife, I was totally out of touch with my body and my sexuality. In this area of my being, I always felt flawed. After all, was it not the woman, Eve, as my religion taught me, who plucked the primordial apple from the tree in the Garden of Eden?

Theologian Elizabeth A. Johnson, in her book She Who Is, came to my rescue. From her I learned of a positive feminine principle that has been working behind the scenes all along...slowly gathering “her” nuggets of Wisdom. Johnson’s book is magnificent. She showed me that the divine principle is very much alive in our midst, in history, in culture, in the world’s wisdom traditions, and in the daily lives of men and women.

The “She Who Is” of the title surfaces from cracks and fissures to appear on the pages of Holy Scripture; She is present in nature, and in the very plates and tectonic shift of Earth’s crust; She is the birthing, nurturing, and sustaining energy within the cosmos itself; She is God the Mother.

When I was growing up, to imagine God as Mother was unthinkable. For me, God was Father, Son, and brother; never Mother, Daughter, or sister. Johnson’s book moved me beyond God the Father by providing me with new metaphors and imagery.
Johnson claims the ultimate mystery of God is beyond male and female images, beyond naming. To name is to identify and wrap our minds around a mystery that is beyond our comprehension. But if humans are to speak of this mystery at all, then multiple metaphors are needed. And women, if they are to speak of their existential reality as women, need feminine metaphors.

Writing of the mystery of God, Johnson suggests the biblical figure of Wisdom as a symbol of God’s active presence. “This active presence is depicted in the Wisdom books of Scripture as grammatically feminine. It has been named hokmah in Hebrew, sapienta in Latin, and Sophia in Greek.” I learned that these are names for She who has no name.

Following Johnson’s trajectory, I marvelled at the passages in Scripture that extolled the virtues of Sophia: In the Wisdom books I found a God-woman who is more of a verb than a noun or a pronoun.

She makes her presence felt by crying aloud in the street and speaking her words; She calls us to attention, to intelligence, to instruction; She renews and challenges; She has knowledge and insight, creative and redeeming agency is hers; She is a storyteller, homemaker, teacher, judge, social activist, caretaker, craftsperson, liberator, giver, and fountain of life.

She builds a house, prepares food, sets a table, and invites us to feast:

“Come eat of my bread and drink the wine I have mixed” (Prov. 9: 1-6).

“Why, this woman could be anybody,” I mused. “She could be my great-grandmother, an old crone wise and withered, who lived to the ripe old age of one hundred and two! She could be my sister, or my mother who was a strong-willed woman ahead of her time. She could be the woman down the street who runs her own grocery business. She could even be me!”

Wisdom Sophia, it seems, is a multi-talented woman of many colors.

Johnson writes of Mother-Sophia as the generating matrix of the universe from whose womb comes forth into being all that is, and of Jesus-Sophia as the Wisdom of God made flesh. Jesus is not only Mary’s offspring, but he is also Sophia’s prophet and child. He too invites us to a banquet.

Spirit-Sophia is divine becoming, guidance, and sacred presence all in one. She is the transforming energy that animates and pervades Earth as a living flame; She is reality operating through human action, natural phenomenon, and loving relationships; She can be seen bursting forth as a flowering meadow, heard in the sound of the wind, and seen shining in the eyes of a child; She is in the fruit of the fields and in our daily bread; Hers is the call of the wild, the spirit of mountains, and the mind of the Milky Way.

All encompassing, God-Sophia is ancient mystery old and new. Pregnant in time and filled with promise and possibilities, She is the restless urge of Life itself calling us to liberation beyond measure. In Her, women can begin to rise, to shine, and to feel at home in their own footprints.

_She Who Is_ confirmed for me all that is positive about the past while pointing to a better future; a future where women will be respected for their relational values and their innate biological desire to birth, care, and nurture; desires and values that will be channelled, under the guidance of Sophia, toward building a new sustainable culture and toward healing Earth.

In 1998, my feminist and spiritual quest led me to Sophia Center at Holy Names University in Oakland, California. There, through the gifts of a remarkable faculty, feminism, spirituality, and cosmology came full circle for me, blending as one into complementary paths to a new ecological age.
Thomas Berry refers to this new age as the emerging Ecozoic Era, a time when humans, as one species among many, will live in a more mutually enhancing relationship with the whole of creation.

Sophia Center is a Wisdom school. It explores the depths of what it means to be spiritual and human at this moment in history. It explores the wisdom of science, feminine wisdom, the wisdom of indigenous people, and the wisdom of Earth, art, and spirit. Soaked in all this wisdom, and forged and fired in the Universe Story as a new creation story, I acquired a new understanding of who I really am. I was able to get in touch with my own story in relation to the Universe Story and to let go of certain belief patterns in preparation for what Berry calls the “Great Work” of our time.

Ecofeminism, by incorporating ecology, feminism, and spirituality with cosmology, is very much a part of this “Great Work.” The spirituality for this work begins with identification of the Self with Earth and the cosmos; that is, with the realization that we are, literally, and in body, mind, heart, and soul, the journeywork of stars.

Women adapt readily to identification with the larger Self that is the whole. The very dynamic of our lives is intimately connected to the monthly cycle of the moon and to the ebb and flow of tides. We feel the wounds of Earth in our womb of wombs and the death of species in our heart of hearts. The very fertile ground of our “being” rocks in tandem with “All That Is.”

If Sophia Wisdom were to address the challenges of going into a new ecological age by writing a scriptural letter to contemporary women, imagination would have her say:

Dearest Daughters of Earth,

I call you to come to the banquet and to a feast of consciousness. Come out of your culturally imposed shells and go forth into the unknown with flaming hearts, knowing that my wisdom is with you and the creative powers of the Universe are within you. You have been innately empowered with the gift of womanhood and agency by none other than the Universe and creative evolution itself. You and your descendents need no further endorsement.

The creative powers of the Universe are as near to you as the air you breathe, and operative at the tip of your pen, the tip of your tongue, the sound of your voice...as well as in friendship, passion, love making, music making, home making, justice making, and storytelling. In co-operation with the principles of the Universe, all of your works and loving relationships make you participants in the “Great Work” and co-creators of a more sustainable future. So step out and cry out for human and Earth justice!

Go forth, bearing your unique gifts to the table of life. Bring your gifts of intuition, imagination, relationship, birthing, caring, and nurturing to a starving world and a landscape in need of healing. Give birth to your dreams and visions in poetry and prose, in song and dance, and in rituals old and new. Imagine a world filled with promise and prosperity and embody the justice and the cultural changes you seek to create.

I call you, and Earth calls you, to honour “her-story” by celebrating and telling your own. Tell where you have been, what you have seen and heard, and where you wish to go. Celebrate the sacred women that you are...in congruence with the great narrative of our time—the Universe Story.

Sources:
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Carmel Higgins is a resident of Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, and a graduate of Sophia Center at Holy Names University in Oakland California. She is the author of the book Cosmic Fire/Local Sparks: My Journey into the Universe Story. You may contact her at higgins-sc@nb.sympatico.ca.
Wisdom of Eve

By Leslie Moise

She waits in the doorway
robbed only in knowledge:
We are all naked. My body,
yours, only an urn for blood,
bone, spirit. We climb a stair
between life and death. Which
way do we choose? To embrace
our chains: hate, anger—shields
of secret fear. Or do we see,
can we know, do we dare to
question with Eve’s innocent
passion? Will we say, There
is no friend, no enemy, only
light of moon in one sky,
above one earth, one ocean?

Leslie Moise is a poet and novelist currently residing in Louisville, Kentucky. You may contact her at (502) 231-4774.
In the beginning was the Goddess EVOL. She was void, formless, and full of chaos. All of her ideas were in potential in a great black abyss. There were images of bears and turtles and bees, fish and flowers and trees, but she was just too busy to birth them. The Goddess yearned to express herself, but she kept putting it off.

One night, the Goddess EVOL received a wake-up call in the form of a dream. In her dream, a rooster was crowing: “cock-a-doodle-doo, wake-up, it’s now or never, go for it, girl!” This dream was so ripe with creative energy that it shook EVOL to her roots. It was then that she began her rainbow dance.

On the first day, the Goddess EVOL danced forth a bright red, like the color of the rooster in her dream. From her very being, EVOL flooded the redness deep into the core of Earth, and this “Earth Light” illuminated all the images in the Goddess’s womb.

On the second day, EVOL began to sort out the images. She created the moon and the sun, plants and planets, oceans and animals. As she did so, the elemental creatures that lived in the secret places in Earth began to stir, and they filled Earth with a vibrant orange.

On the third day, EVOL told the yellow sun that his fire was needed to bring forth consciousness. “Okay, Sun,” she said, “you have my permission to participate in creation. Let’s see what your fire can do.” The first thing the sun did was to push aside the moon, for he wanted to dominate her soft lunar light. He then brought forth humans, cell phones and computers, trucks and tall buildings—and he began to favor the male over the female.

On the fourth day, EVOL sensed that there was trouble brewing, so she decided to reverse the letters in her name. The Goddess EVOLved into the Goddess LOVE and opened up the human heart. She told humans of her love for all creation, and she asked the sun if he would be her partner in this green fertile dance.

On the fifth day, the sun became angry because he didn’t want to give up his power, so the Goddess decided to disguise herself and take on the form of the moon. She then asked the sun to have a dialogue with her about yin/yang energies. At first the sun didn’t want to cooperate, but when the moon released the power of LOVE, a deep healing blue entered the space between them and the sun agreed to co-create with the Goddess.

On the sixth day, the Goddess and the sun held a brainstorming session and came up with a vision. They would extend themselves in order to birth a new expression of peace and balance on Earth. And so it was. The Goddess looked over her new creation with her wise indigo eyes, and she saw that it was very good.

On the seventh day, the Goddess spun lavender strands from the crown of her head and connected the stars in the Milky Way to every part of Earth down to its central core. As a web of white light surrounded Earth and all the cosmos, the Goddess knew her rainbow dance was done. And then she rested.

(Ann’s bio is included at the end of The Inner Banks, page 32.)
A Letter from a Teacher of Young Women

By Randy Senzig

I

n the next room my daughter is preparing to go to sleep with her 2-year-old son—my grandson. As I listen to their nite-nite conversation and the love connections spoken, I float on my memory’s soft blanket back to my own mother when I was that small. I grew up in a home where women were cherished. I knew my mother and grandmother to be kind, smart, fun, warm, nurturing and loving. My dad never put down my mom, especially in front of me. I always saw and felt that they were equal in what they did for me and for each other.

My mother nurtured me. She did without many things so that I would have what a child should have. I felt important because she taught me to be strong, caring, and to have fun. My grandmother was physically strong. I watched her work shoulder-to-shoulder with my grandfather in hard manual labor. But I was also witness to her compassion for others, her unselfishness, and her love for me. Both my mother and grandmother taught me a great respect for all life, compassion for others, self-respect, and, most of all, love. They instilled in me a great respect for women.

As I grew into manhood, I saw that many men did not treat women in the way that I was taught. It always bothered me and made for uncomfortable situations. As I finished college, attended a seminary, worked in the corporate world, owned my own business and became a teacher, I saw that the values my mother had given me didn’t seem to ring true in this new world of adults. Upon college graduation, most women picked nursing and teaching as careers. There were no women at the seminary and no women in management of the companies for which I worked. There were a lot of female teachers but no female principals. At the time I did not think much about it, as I was busy trying to make it to the top of my career field.

I married a smart, attractive, compassionate and motivated woman. She was put down or reassigned because her male bosses perceived her as a threat or as competition for their jobs. I watched her family’s dynamics in which a dominating father subjugated the women to verbal terror to “keep them in their place.” I began to see and think about this unfairness to my wife and to women in general. My mother’s truths began floating out of the deep places of my being. Then I met Thomas Berry.

Thomas Berry states that, “Among the greatest of fears that women have encountered as a consequence of androcentrism is when they are considered the result of a genetic deficiency, are thought of as intellectually deficient.” He further writes, “Women have had a minimal presence, except as needed for service positions . . . were exploited by corporations . . . found professional careers in nursing, teaching . . . and brilliant careers in the performance arts.” Women have been denied the positions in Western Society that would allow them the power to change how we live and relate to Earth. One would think that with the women’s suffrage movement during the earlier part of the 20th century, the women’s movement in the 1970’s for Equal Rights, and the current reproductive choice issues for women that women would have gained an equal footing with men for the opportunity to work in the decision-making arenas of business and government.

But when one looks at the data, a different picture emerges. According to the tenth anniversary census by Catalyst Women.org, only about a dozen women hold the top jobs at Fortune 500 companies. Women hold only 16.4 percent of top management jobs (the figure in Georgia is half that). With limited access to the upper echelons of business, women have less opportunity to compete for the CEO’s job and therefore fewer opportunities to influence the social and environmental decisions of corporations.

For years, the disparity between the number of men and women holding the CEO title was explained by the observation that it would take time for business schools to fill the pipeline with female management candidates. A decade ago, women were already earning nearly half the business degrees awarded in the United States. But in 2005, the number of women moving into top-level executive jobs grew at the slowest rate in ten years, according to Catalyst Women.org. Women are getting the education needed but are being denied the jobs by men in positions of power.

In government, where decisions are made that affect every aspect of our lives, some strides have been made but at the proverbial snail’s pace. According to the US Bureau of the Census, women have been elected to 81 seats in the congress, an increase of 12% since 1979. In statewide elective executive offices and state legislatures, this number is up 24.8% and 22.8% respectively. The seats of power where millions of lives can and will be affected are vastly under-represented by women.

Why are so few women in elected office when at least 50% of the population is female? Shouldn’t the percentages of elected officials more accurately reflect the population in a democracy? Shouldn’t the CEOs of major companies more closely represent the percentages of women customers?
There are religious and elected officials fighting to take away a woman’s right to make her own decisions about her own body and health and return her to second-class citizenship. Women, who deep in their very own DNA understand creation and the need for nurture, have the wisdom to lead us in changing our core values and behavior toward each other and Earth. Yet, they are denied access to positions that could bring about needed changes.

The industries of advertising, music, and pop culture continue to keep women from their equal partnership role in the 21st century. Women continue to be portrayed as objects and mindless works of art. Don’t think, don’t work, just look good. Be Sexy. All one needs to do is look at any advertising. The most effective way to sell a motorcycle is with a bikini clad young woman. Advertising companies are exploiting women with this. It degrades young women. It steals their potential. It robs them of the creativity that they own and that Earth needs. Popular music, such as rap and heavy metal, belittle, humiliate, insult, and demean all women but especially young women of middle and high school years. It teaches them a cultural message about their worth. The music and advertising industry gives males the wrong ideas about the opposite sex, even giving them license to treat females in dominating ways.

Unfortunately, the pop culture continues to suppress women. It drives all of us further away from the healing of the soul in its connection to the planet and to each other. This keeps male and female and Earth from truly becoming connected in a “mutually enhancing way,” as Thomas Berry would say. This suppression drives woman’s inner soul wisdom even further away from Earth.

One Truth that I have come to know is this. Those of us who have made the connection to Earth in a small or large way must share in a common responsibility. That responsibility is to tell our stories so others may begin healing those Earth wounds. Hearing our stories of connection can begin to construct bridges that take the human to a deeper relationship with Earth.

I am a science teacher who has used ecological and environmental curricula in public schools for 27 years. There are things I have observed that intrigue me about young women and their innate wisdom of which Thomas Berry speaks. As I have interacted with young women, I have felt their influence in my teaching. One observation I have made is that in every video I have shown over the years, at least one of my female students has expressed emotion at the sight of a baby—any baby, human or nonhuman. I have commented on that to females on the faculty and I have gotten the same responses. The visuals of babies—any animal babies—seem to bring forth the nurturing instinct carried by the very DNA shared by women.

I believe that this behavioral observation supports the belief that women have a deeper sense of connection to the natural world and creation with a need to nurture both. It is not that males do not possess that interconnection with creation or have the necessary nurturing that creation must have. But males have learned power for the hunt, and that power leads to destructive behavior and attitudes. Males must be given opportunities to learn ways to connect with Earth from their female classmates.

In the academic areas of AP Environmental Science and Biology that I teach, I find that young ladies will out-perform the males in content, creativity, thought, organization and work ethics. They tend to be more prepared for class and more cooperative. The one area that persists as a problem for women students, generally, is that they will not compete with an aggressive male in class discussions. For example, during a class discussion on endangered species, a female was stating her position that Earth would be a lonely place without animals and that the animals also had a right to live. When a male joined the discussion, he stated that there have always been dying animals and that meant more food for us. The young lady, who had previously stated her case with conviction, just stopped talking. The discussion was over for her. Nothing shared, nothing learned about connection. I find that females will just not confront males on the issues at this age. Therefore, I must constantly encourage females to speak up and state their positions. And I redirect the male student to listen for new understanding.

There have been many situations where young women have taught me to change the way in which I teach. Many years ago on an Everglades field trip, there were two female students who, after disembarking the bus, refused to leave the sidewalk for a hike along a trail in the Everglades. They were visibly afraid. After encouraging them to walk on the trail, I asked questions trying to find reasons for this behavior. They told me that they had grown up in an apartment complex in Miami where signs proclaimed, “Do not get on the grass” and the playgrounds were covered with asphalt—so they knew that there were dangers in grass and other natural surfaces.

We got through that and were able to go on the hike together. But I had to change the way that I teach. I began putting more emphasis on the outdoors. I developed a new curriculum that emphasized the local environment with field trips to nature centers and the Everglades to immerse us in Earth. Those girls, who were willing to share their deep fears with me, gave me the insight to begin teaching in a different way.

On one occasion, I was teaching the class about the various forms of pollution. I talked of air, water, soil and noise pollution. I was giving the lecture that every envi-
environmental science teacher gives. Trying to motivate the class to action, I was speaking in an animated way to stimulate interest and excitement. As I looked around the room trying to make eye contact, I saw a zoned out look from many in the class. I stopped. Didn’t they care, I asked? Why weren’t they getting excited about the need to work on these conditions? A young lady in the third row on the left side of the room spoke up and said, “Mr. Senzig, it is all too overwhelming.” That statement hit me like a blast of arctic air. I lost my breath and could not speak. She taught me something very important that day. Something from the deep parts of her wisdom spoke to me to change the message for young people. I had to find a way to give my students hope and a love for Earth. That young woman, who had the courage to speak her wisdom, taught me an important lesson that has changed my professional life.

For example, for years I have had the students form teams that pick different biomes and do the standard oral report. Borrowing from John Seed, we now have a Council of all Beings where the students give their reports but from the perspective of one being that lives in that biome. We begin each day with the room darkened, soft nature music playing, eyes closed, breathing in the oxygen from the trees and giving back CO2. I move through the class waving a large bird’s wings overhead to create a gentle movement of air on which they imagine being carried far away to a land where the animals speak in the ways of Earth. The students become the animal that they choose by making and wearing an animal mask during the presentation. They learn about the animal so that they can become the animal and speak of the biome from its needs and observations. They are awakened to a new sense of being a part of life.

Another observation that has shown me the role of women in the 21st century is the hard physical work of many girls during campus beautification days. They perform tree plantings in the outdoor classroom, while monitoring our bluebird trail and the local stream, and carrying out the heavy and dirty work of our recycling programs. Girls have made these activities successful at our school because of their participation and hard work. They have dug holes for trees in the hard clay. They have moved trailer loads of mulch with shovels. They have been on their hands and knees planting flowers in our courtyard on a Saturday morning. They have cleaned out nests and poop, painted, nailed and driven posts and fastened nesting boxes. They have taken water samples while in the stream where the temperature was so cold that water froze on the instruments. They have collected the plastic bottles and cans covered with syrup and yellow jackets from the recycling barrels. They have sweated, been soaked with water and syrups as they cleaned those barrels. They have carried tons of paper from our building for recycling.

All the while these young women have been dependable, motivated, and cooperative while performing these activities. These observations lead me to believe that young women, even without consciously knowing it, are drawn to Earth. In their most inner being, locked away, there is ancient wisdom. This ancient wisdom is what we need to begin a new relationship with the Universe. This is knowledge carried by the very DNA that creates our form, waiting to be tapped, to flow forth and present the human with the means to discover a new way. Women carry this vessel for us. Isn’t it time that we honor women for this and allow them to share the contents of the vessel?

I believe it is our collective responsibility as teachers and as caring adults to nurture young women while they find their wisdom. And it is equally important that we provide the climate for them to grow in their courage, self worth, and determination. Their wisdom has changed the way I teach. That new voice has taught me to be more sensitive to others. I listen more. I am more open with my students, teaching them by sharing my stories. I have found a new sense of wonder in all that is around me. I have dedicated myself to finding ways to give hope back to my students in their searching for Earth connections.

The wisdom in my mother and grandmother that first taught me about life and relationships seems to now reappear in the lives of my female students. Have I witnessed a Truth of the Universe? Have I been given a glimpse into the future? Have I been privileged to see into the very deep places—the very DNA where the wisdom of the Universe resides? Have I become a better teacher, husband, father, grandfather and man? I believe that my answers are affirmative. But my journey has only started, and those people around me will be able to give better answers to those questions. I believe that when men accept women as truly equal, trickling wisdom will come in through the cracked door and turn into a flowing wisdom through a wide open door. This ancient wisdom of yesterday’s opportunities will help guide us, as Thomas Berry puts it, to reinvent the human for the beginning of the Ecozoic Era.

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The Initiation

By Cheri Bailey

I have crossed the bridge to my Feminine Soul.
I am grounded and standing strongly in my Feminine Power.
I feel my strong, straight, flexible backbone.
My soft-open heart expresses my compassionate nature.
I see a clear vision of my relationships marked by healthy boundaries.

The fear that had manifested in my low back;
the pain of moving forward... is gone.
Standing in my Feminine Power I fear not my future.
The fear that had manifested in my tight, closed chest;
Protection for my wounded, vulnerable heart...is gone.
Standing in my Feminine Power, I fear none.

Standing in my Feminine Power,
My heart is soft-open with complete trust and faith.
I hear my own ancient voice of wisdom.
I trust my authentic Self.

As I stand in my Feminine Power,
Compassion pours forth from my soft-open heart
and I embrace myself with forgiveness.
I forgive also all those I am in relationship with.

All Doubt is gone and my path lies clearly before me.
I know in each moment, in each breath,
Right thought,
Right word,
Right action.

I am following the wisdom of my soul.
I am naming my truth.
I embrace the Sacred Feminine
And through me she has voice, strength, and power.
I have crossed the bridge to my Feminine Soul.

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Listening to the Wisdom of Women

By Julie Purcell

In *The Great Work*, Thomas Berry asserts that “the only acceptable attitude of any mode of being is to recognize that existence is a mutual dependence of diversity of components. The human is a single enterprise that brings together women and men, elders and children, the farmer and the merchant, the foreigner and the native. So, too, Earth is a single enterprise, composed of land and sea, rain and wind, plants and animals and humans, and the whole magnificent universe. Nothing is itself without everything else. The wisdom of women is to join the knowing of the body to that of mind, to join soul to spirit, intuition to reasoning, feeling consciousness to intellectual analysis, intimacy to detachment, subjective presence to objective distance.”

Marion Woodman, Jungian analyst and author, has spent much of the last 25 years of her life attempting to articulate the wisdom of the feminine. Woodman uses the terms “feminine and masculine principles” to differentiate these terms from female and male genders. This perspective understands that women and men both need a balance of the feminine and masculine principles in order to enter fully into the human enterprise.

An image that points to this interdependence of the masculine and feminine is the caduceus with two spiral-ing serpents twining around a central staff, meeting and parting until eventually they merge in the “union of the opposites” or “sacred marriage.” This ancient symbol of healing is still seen in medical settings. It has its roots in the Eastern understanding of the powerful complementary energies Shakti (feminine) and Shiva (masculine).

These energies are within us moving freely up and down our spine (the central staff) through energy centers called “chakras.”

This ancient wisdom acknowledges that both feminine and masculine energies are needed, sometimes to balance, at other times to oppose and differentiate, and at still other times to unite, bringing new creation, new life. When these energies are in harmony, the human being reflects the divine energies of the Universe, or the cosmic “axis mundi.” When they are not in balance, masculine energy is distorted into gross patriarchy, whose energy is the drive behind our destructive activities on Earth.

The corrective is not nearly so simple as to let women be in charge. Woodman notes that women can be just as patriarchal as men. She defines patriarchy as the power principle and the obsession for “power over.” Both women and men need to go through a transformation birthing the new feminine and the new masculine. According to Woodman, the “conscious” feminine has never been birthed in our evolutionary history. To some extent we are all stuck in the patriarchal system that has been operating for over 5,000 years. Woodman refers to these powerful archetypal energies as the Old Mother and the Old Father.

These archetypal forms are within and beyond all of us and have both positive and negative aspects. Woodman cites an example of these old energies at work in the movie “Dead Poet’s Society,” in which the young man is trying to live his own creative life, but his father insists that he give up acting and become a doctor. The mother passively looks on, unable to confront her husband or stand up for her son. Ultimately, the son commits suicide rather than give up his soul. The power principle of prestige, power, fame and fortune often twists us out of the reality of our own souls. At its worst, the Old Father principle can manifest as someone like Hitler.

Words that point to the conscious feminine are presence, process, paradox, receptivity, resonance, reflection, and beingness. “Presence” is a quality of relating from the heart and soul. Two wisdom figures who emphasize presence in their work are Eckhart Tolle in *The Power of Now* and Thich Naht Hahn in his many books on the practice of mindfulness. “Process” is allowing things to happen and letting life go where it wants to go, rather than controlling the outcome. It is valuing the process rather than focusing solely on the goal. “Paradox” is the capacity to accept all of life and to not so quickly judge events as good or bad, realizing some experiences that seem difficult at the time may be seen as positive later on. Paradox implies an acceptance of mystery.

“Receptivity” is to feel and take in while suspending judgment. “Resonance” expresses the capacity to live in the body and to be aware of body signals of connection, of the “yes” of an intuitive center that vibrates when an experience fits with one’s deepest essence. The capacity to “reflect” means to ponder, looking at what happens and sorting out what is important and why. It is “being” as opposed to “doing.” The conscious feminine needs time to slow down, to take time off from busy schedules, and to allow time for relationship and connection.

Woodman describes “soul” in relation to the feminine energy and “spirit” in relation to the masculine energy. Soul is the eternal part of ourselves that is housed in our bodies while we are alive. Spirit is both...
Listening to the Wisdom of Women

within us and beyond us. Woodman explains that we need to be in touch with, communicate with, and express these energies without identifying directly with them. Since the feminine has been lost to consciousness in the West, people get stuck in the archetypal energy of the Old Mother. Woodman suggests that one way this stuck Old Mother energy expresses itself is in the acquisition of things and stuff—consumerism. This archetypal energy has also taken on concrete form in institutions, such as “Mother” Church and Alma “Mater.”

To undo this sense of personal and institutional “stuckness,” a differentiation process must occur in which people connect with their own embodied soul in order to determine what brings their whole body to life. Where is one’s life energy? What are one’s feelings? This needs to continue until one develops a strong sense of “I am” and “This is where I stand.” This self-defining act is needed to overcome the bewitchment of the concretized Goddess of materialism, where people become like stone, “numbing out,” “tuning out,” or following predetermined roles, senseless responsibilities, and culturally mandated “have to’s”—and, in the final stages, slavishly chasing a multitude of addictive substances and activities.

The process of freeing ourselves from the Old Mother and the Old Father is a painful transformation. Before the new sacred inner marriage can take place, we must go into the darkness, the wilderness, the unknown. The new energy comes from dark, wild, untamed places. Woodman sees one of our new tasks as preparing a strong container, our bodies, our matter, in order to open to spirit. Consequently, the energy of the Goddess will be connected to our instincts and our bodies. Woodman asks, “How many of us are strong enough to receive Spirit into our matter and let it change our lives?”

As one is freed of the Old Mother and Old Father energies, new energy will come to the ego so that we can do the necessary hard work. This new energy will draw us to like-minded people so that we can support each other on the journey. Woodman assures us that the unconscious and our dreams are also supporting this growth. The energy of the Divine Feminine comes in dreams to give us a nudge to action or to give us guidance and strength to reclaim our feminine values. She comes to both men and women alike.

In addition to the work of remaking old ideas and institutions, these new energies will release new creativity. Old images that have become rigid and lifeless will receive new life. Traditional forms, such as communion or Eucharist, will take on new meaning. Woodman uses the terms “the redemption of matter” or “the redemption of my body” or “Christ representing Sophia to embody the feminine.” She suggests that incarnation is about the redemption of Matter (Matter being Mother, or the Divine Feminine), and the manifestation of God in Matter, in the body, in Earth.

This is at the core of the new consciousness that is being born out of the sacred marriage of Spirit and Matter. We will know that the sacred marriage has been experienced when our consciousness merges with the flowers, the trees, the rivers, the birds, and the animals. This union of “all in all” leads to heartbreak when we witness the destruction of the planet, and it gives us the strength to work towards healing ourselves and Earth.

Source: “Sitting by the Well,” audio tapes by Marion Woodman, Sounds True Recordings.

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Dan Brown’s popular novel, *The DaVinci Code*, touched a deep chord in the human psyche, making a major contribution to the restoration of the story of the Divine Feminine in history and in the human heart. Hidden for millennia, the story of Mary Magdalene as the Bride of Christ and Mother of Jesus’ child, her womb the Holy Grail, the sacred vessel for Christ’s blood, is now known to millions. Today people are finding the Divine within themselves, choosing spirituality over religion, experience over dogma and doctrine.

In a world where information is instantly and widely available, and intuitive people routinely draw upon the universal field of energy for guidance and healing, our human and spiritual heritage will no longer remain hidden—whether purposely suppressed or lost through time. The Piscean Age of male, hierarchical control is giving way to the Aquarian Age of balance between the masculine and feminine principles. The world awaits a time of harmony, creativity, and peace that comes from this balance.

It is only fitting, then, that Mary Magdalene should become the iconic woman of this emerging age. Labeled a prostitute for centuries by a male hierarchy that denied a sexually active expression of divinity—making Jesus celibate and his mother a perpetual virgin—the Magdalene and her symbolic sister, the Black Madonna, are the first images of the sacred feminine in western culture to be reclaimed with full power given to their roles as wives and mothers.

In Egypt, the world’s most influential, advanced ancient culture, the role of the divine feminine was crucial to the primal story of cosmic order and disorder. When the god Osiris, brother-husband of the goddess Isis, was murdered by his brother, Set, the natural order was thrown into turmoil. To restore order, Isis searched for and reassembled Osiris’ essential body parts long enough to become pregnant, giving birth to the falcon-god, Horus. The same mythic pattern, restoration of divine order by the male and female principles uniting to create new life, is repeated in the story of Mary Magdalene, Jesus, and their child. The figure of the Black Madonna, found in hundreds of churches and cathedrals in France and elsewhere in Europe, is typically a crowned queen seated on a throne, her child on her lap holding the scepter or globe of royal rule. Most often fashioned of dark wood, this representation is modeled on extant statues of Isis and Horus. While priests claim the Black Madonnas represent Mother Mary and Jesus, in France the legends of the people claim otherwise. To many it is Mary Magdalene, the Sacred Feminine, who sits on the throne, her child symbolizing the divine order restored.

In recent years I have seen and felt for myself representations of Mary Magdalene as Divine Bride and Mother. Her presence in the south of France is palpable, powerful, and deeply embedded in the culture. In Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, where Mary Magdalene, Jesus’ mother, aunt, and a dark child, supposedly an Egyptian servant, allegedly landed and remained for a time, the Black Madonna in the church crypt is named “Sarah,” the same name given in Brown’s novel and other sources to Jesus’ and Mary Magdalene’s daughter. I observed two women reverently dressing this Sarah in a new royal blue robe, kissing her cheek and offering prayers of petition to the heart of the feminine divine. While I watched, dozens of people lit candles, kissed the figure, and gazed on her with devotion.

Similar devotion is paid to each Black Madonna. The one in the Lady Chapel in Chartres Cathedral is one of the most beautiful and revered. I felt the strength and power of the loving energy around her, contained within this magnificent monument to Divine Love built by the Knights Templar, guardians for centuries of the Holy Grail, the secret of the Divine Feminine who one day would be restored to her rightful place, the Bride beside the Groom. When restored, the sacred, creative powers continually bless and renew life on Earth and throughout the cosmos. As long as they remain together, balancing their energy and offering it in love to the world, all is well. Rain falls, rivers flow, crops grow, animals and humans give birth—the cycles of creation continue undisturbed. But take away the Divine Mother, and the world becomes a desert wasteland, a violent expression of a domineering male principle. Wholeness and balance can only be restored when she is acknowledged and empowered as Queen and creates with her King new life that re-enchants the world.

As we acknowledge and honor the Divine Feminine, we give power not only to her but also to ourselves, contributing to the restoration of wholeness and well-being on the planet we call home.

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What is Earth asking of women? Let’s vision women as the feminine aspect within each of us, what Thomas Berry refers to as the knowing of the body. Our body is of Earth, composed of the same elements. It contains the cellular memory of our own life as well as all life on Earth.

Within this “blueprint,” there is wholeness. We sense this wholeness in our bodies more often when things feel “not right.” In order to feel “off,” there has to be an “on.” Knowing there is an inner template, we can trust the body to lead us toward “on.”

Our body gives us lots of feedback, most of which we are taught to override. When we reject the body’s signals about physical well-being, we exhaust our reserves and fall ill. When we shut out our feelings, we lose our heart connection and dismiss a vast store of natural wisdom.

I believe that this heart connection is our link to the wisdom of Earth. The heart is the magnetic field which connects us to all other sentient beings. This field is also the vessel which supports the soul. The body informs the soul of Earthly matters. It allows the soul to have an “Earthly experience” so that it can grow.

Just as we are evolving souls of Earth, Earth is an evolving soul of the cosmos. Earth has a “dream,” a potential destiny just as we do. Obviously, these journeys are inextricably linked. Without Earth, we cannot experience physical life. And without human beings, Earth will not have the vital qualities we offer.

How can we deepen our heart connection and thus connect with the heart and soul of Earth? Certainly not by any pursuit that abandons our bodies. There is no other way to heart and soul but through diving into the watery realm of the emotions.

Learning to navigate by feelings is largely uncharted territory. Let’s begin with a useful definition. Consider emotions as the energetic momentum within a feeling. This energy has an intelligent purpose, which is to help us maintain our boundaries. Each emotion carries messages from the inner worlds as well as the energy needed to address whatever brought the emotion forward.

When we ignore our emotions, we literally go off limits. When our boundaries are unclear, confusion reigns. We neglect our personal safety; we get into other people’s business; we take on projects that are not ours; and we lose sight of what desperately needs our individual attention. So many of us who long for a better world exhaust energy and create chaos by doing what we think is best, rather than what we feel in our bodily hearts has our name on it. As a result, many well-intentioned people and entire organizations end up spinning their wheels, or even making things worse.

How can we take advantage of this elemental wisdom and learn what our feelings, the messengers of our heart and soul, are telling us? We can begin by recognizing and working through the upset feelings that arise every day. I’d like to share a process I use for myself and in working with clients who seek help in releasing energy that is blocked in their bodies.

1. Allow yourself to notice that you are feeling stressed, off balance or out of sorts. Locate where the feeling is held in your body.

Feelings first arise as bodily sensations, such as tension in your shoulders, tightness in your jaw or an upset stomach. If it’s not immediately apparent where the feeling is lodged, scan your body with your breath. Where is the breath held back? What feels empty, numb, constricted or sore?

2. Identify the feeling by naming it. Are you angry, afraid or sad? Avoid focusing on the cause or trying to explain the situation away.

3. Use your breath to relax the tension.

Experiment with the breath, breathing in through the heart and out through the solar plexus, or in through the tailbone and out through the top of the head. Work with your breath until you feel more comfortable.

4. Take the time to feel the feeling without judgment. There are no “bad” feelings. Feelings are neutral feedback, giving us information we vitally need. They will escalate until they get your attention. If you feel overwhelmed by what you’re feeling, allow your breath to help you feel safe, breathing rhythmically in and out through your nose.

5. To complete this process, move your body in a way that feels good. Clap your hands, shake out your body, or take a walk—it doesn’t matter. Movement helps the energy bound up in feelings to cycle through.

Once familiar to you, this process usually takes only a minute or two, but there are times when it may take a few days. In the case of deep grief and loss, the feelings come in waves that may last for months. As the poet Rilke noted, “Patience is everything.” By allowing feelings to come and go freely, we can enter a state of deep...
healing, where our hearts soften and undue pain eventually subsides.

By opening our hearts to ourselves, and taking care of our own authentic needs, we gradually become able to open our hearts to the world around us and receive clear feedback. This allows each of us to hear what has our name on it. It also provides the energy needed to take right action. As we model this behavior, others can entrain with us, and we will be empowered to give the same care to Earth, our larger body.

So, what is Earth asking of the feminine? Here is my answer to this “Grail question”: We must embrace the terrifying and awesome beauty of our bodily being and allow it to speak its truth. We must allow the Mystery to unfold as it does, without preconceived ideas. We must listen with our hearts and allow Wisdom to guide us. As men and women who care deeply about Earth, we must have the courage to experience the heart and soul of life. Let us help each other avoid temptations to burn out our physical energies or escape into unembodied mental and spiritual realms. As Gandhi said, “We must be the change we wish to see in the world.”

Resources:

1) For help in naming your feelings, see Emotional Genius: Discovering the Deepest Language of the Soul, by Karla McLaren.
2) To learn more about the wisdom of the heart and many techniques for strengthening emotional equilibrium, go to www.heartmath.org.
3) A remarkable book about the bodily senses is Our Twelve Senses: Wellsprings of the Soul, by Dr. Albert Soesman.
4) To unravel tangled thinking, learn from Byron Katie at www.thework.org.
5) For an inspiring scientific glimpse of our evolutionary potential, see The Biology of Transcendence: A blueprint of the Human Spirit, by Joseph Chilton Pearce.
6) For information about positive entrainment, go to www.resonancer-patterning.com.

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The Fluid Self

By Emilie Conrad

Emilie Conrad thinks about being human in a different way than most people do. For her, reinventing the human at the species level is an everyday experience. She helps people with severe trauma to the spinal cord find new pathways for movement where traditional therapy would say none would be possible. Her body of work illuminates our inherent bio-intelligence through patterns that spiral, arc, curve, and undulate. Her students are invited to discover the wisdom of their own bodies unfettered, alive, and in never-ending fluid form.

Technically speaking, our bodies are not exactly ours. What we call a body is an open-ended experiment, the present result of billions of years of an ongoing universal process that is in constant flux, arranging, re-arranging, and experimenting as new formations come into existence. The continuum of life on land takes place within the galaxy and humans alike.

As human beings, we are an accrual of many life forms that have been shaped by our oceanic origins, still pulsating as the intrinsic world of our organs, our connective tissue, our nerve fiber. Our forms have been designed and redesigned, unendingly adaptive and innovative. We learn to crawl, to stand, to move forward through the savannas, the mountains, the cities, outer space. This stabilized creature called human—what is it? Can we ever know?

The fluid presence in our bodies is our fundamental environment; we are the moving water brought to land. The human body has been spiraled from the vortical tendency of living water, an extension of the primordial ocean, appearing separate but maintaining constant resonance. We are in perpetual resonance with all fluid systems everywhere in the universe, functioning as an undivided whole. I say that this fluid expression resonates with our galaxy in ways that our limited form of development probably can’t know—or doesn’t yet know. As organisms of intelligent life, we may be interacting beyond the familiar levels of our awareness.

When we see a newborn, essentially we are looking at the movement of water made flesh. We are seeing a fluid system meeting the vibrational field of Earth, where an elegant exchange begins to take place. As this exquisite system adjusts to its new atmosphere, a gradual stabilizing occurs. Liquid grasps, eyes focus, experiments are made. The baby rolls, thrusts, jerks, flails … trying out the best possible sequences to ensure survival on Earth.

The very nature of stabilizing impels the fluid system to coalesce, giving the support that is needed to become functional. Fluidity consolidates as new requirements are met. Our oceanic memory pales as the demands of life on land become more immediate. All is forgotten, except for the primordial characteristics of our intrinsic environment: our muscles, bones, and fluids, and the air that moves in and out of us. Humans can be seen as undulating messengers from the stars. Our bodies contain the memories of all that has been—a historical record of the original swirl, residing now in our fingertips.
No matter what anyone says, no matter how many mouths drip with “theories,” we basically have no idea why we have arrived. Some say we are the mistakes of a primordial coupling that took a mutational curve and voila! Here we are—a wandering species.

Spinning through the galaxy, frozen drops of chemical codes plunge into the primordial soup and melt into the heart of this vast coupling. Like the sperm swooning inside the egg, we meet our heated destiny with our frozen spaceships...our iced-up tears...we land, sink, and become one with the Earth.

We (as bodies) parallel the cell as our watery beginnings resonate with a larger field of planetary and universal intelligence functioning in us both locally and non-locally. The layered, interpenetrating complexity of cellular life can be seen as similar to the internalized functioning of a human being.

We are thousands of wave motions that converge to form what is now being called a “body.” Water is the medium of our deliverance. Form travels through us, leaving its bio-morphic imprint. The intelligence of unfolding form is encoded in our system.

When I speak of fluidity, I am also referring to the idea that what we call “body” is not matter but movement. Movement is the fundamental reality. In my view, the “body” is a profound orchestration of many qualities and textures of movement—interpenetrating tones of fertile play waiting to be incubated.

What I see as “body” is the movement of creative flux, waves of fertility. The cosmic play that we carry into this atmosphere still intrinsically pulsates.

We can be seen as a fluid unfolding of an innate intelligence. It is the same intelligence that is guiding the sperm and egg, the same intelligence that created the membrane of the first cell that directs stem cells to differentiate, the intelligence that moves galaxies and iguanas. We inhabit a sea of intelligent life beckoning us to enter.

I see our “bodies” formed by the liquid of our first cradle. Our early watery environment shapes and gives us its secret. This is our first home, our “primordial field.” The fluid in our cells is our birthplace, our memory of the creative matrix in which all life is summoned.

Emilie Conrad, founder and director of Continuum Movement, is a visionary whose revolutionary work continues to inspire an international audience of therapists and movement educators from fields such as Rolfing, Physical Therapy, Cranio-Sacral Therapy, Osteopathy, Feldenkrais, Body-Mind Centering, Yoga, Theatre, Dance, and Physical Fitness. This is an excerpt from a chapter in “Life on Land,” published by North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, Ca. Emilie can be reached at her Continuum website: www.continuummovement.com. “Life on Land” can be ordered through Amazon.com.
One spring day
Early in the morning
In the middle of her life
She knew it was time

She opened the front door
With a great deal of fear
A lifetime ago
She had been stoned
And then burned
For the very thing
She was about to do

She stepped out on her front porch
With no clothing or covering of any kind
Sat down on the cool stones
And opened her legs
Revealing the center point
Of earthly pleasure
And the power source of all new birth

As she warmed herself
In the rising sun
Her throat opened as well
And the tone she sounded
Was deep, dark, ancient
And true

People began to pass by
Many never noticed her
Nor could they hear her voice
Their eyes were focused
On their own roads
Others shouted at her
Shaming, degrading, accusing
Threatening to destroy
But she kept her rage in front of her
Her grief alive inside her
And none of them came near

Others were called - drawn to her
They heard her sound from across town
When they saw her sitting there
So open and so brave
They smiled so deeply
Their faces were changed forever

At the end of the day
She was still alive
She stood then in the moonlight
Tears streaming from her eyes
Moistening, strengthening
Her breasts, her belly, her feet

Stronger now
And safe enough
She opened her arms
Her heart wide
She became
A living, breathing prayer

(See Kim Falone’s bio at the end of her poem And She Rises, page 50.)
The Inner Banks

By Ann Loomis

When my husband and I visited North Carolina’s Outer Banks, I was unprepared for the soulful scenes we encountered there: arching bridges over wide expanses of water as we drove the long stretch of highway into Nags Head; the rolling surf with red flags warning us of its wildness; mounds of sand dunes etched with glistening pools of water at Jockey’s Ridge; crape myrtle and magnolia trees blooming in profusion at the elegant Elizabethan Gardens in Manteo.

While all of these scenes took me somewhat by surprise, the lighthouses most captured my imagination that week: Currituck, Lookout, Okracoke, Bodie (pronounced “body”), and Cape Hatteras. Perhaps because Hatteras was the only lighthouse we were allowed to climb, it felt increasingly numinous as the week went on and even appeared in a dream. So as any good Jungian would do upon recognizing a projection, I set out to receive the message that Hatteras was sending.

I began by listing phrases describing Cape Hatteras: 1) red stone foundation; 2) black and white spirals; 3) windows looking out over the water; 4) winding steps leading up to the beacon; 5) a large prism inside the beacon; 6) the panoramic view from the top. This list of descriptive phrases helped me to visualize Cape Hatteras more fully before I moved into the next exercise, a form of amplification.

Amplification is a technique that Carl Jung recommended for dream work, but it can also be used with any symbol or image attracting your attention in the outer world. With amplification, you write the name of the image in the center of the page and then you write associations that come from the image.

Given the natural beauty that greeted me at the Outer Banks, I thought the shape of a flower would be appropriate for this amplification exercise. At the center of the flower, I wrote the phrase, “Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.” Then I wrote associations stemming out from that phrase in the shape of flower petals. Inside the first petal, I wrote “strong foundation.” Inside the second petal, I wrote “dark and light spiraling energy.” Inside the third petal came “house of light,” on the fourth petal “body of light,” and on the fifth petal “beacon of light.” As the petals rapidly unfurled with associations, so did my insights. Aha, I thought. The light represents spirit. The black and white spirals represent feminine and masculine energies rising to the beacon. The beacon represents consciousness. So far, so good!

We left the Outer Banks early the next morning so that I could be back in time for my monthly Jungian study group. The Jungian analyst who led the group liked to include non-verbal exercises, such as drawing, but I usually preferred the time for discussion. That day, however, I eagerly anticipated the time set aside to draw. Even as the analyst was giving instructions on drawing a symbol of the deeper Self, my hand began sketching the brick foundation. I drew a fine image of Cape Hatteras with its black and white lines spiraling upward and its bright beacon lighting the way in the darkness.

But as I allowed myself to receive more images, I began drawing sand dunes and glistening pools of water around Hatteras. Then, almost without my awareness, I began to draw the trees I had admired in the Elizabethan Gardens. As my hand moved lower on the page, roots of the trees began to form on either side of the lighthouse, and then suddenly I felt a rush of energy within me, like one of those wild waves crashing into the rolling surf. I soon realized that my first drawing of Hatteras, with its stone foundation and bright beacon, came from the ego-self. When I added the nature images, the drawing came more from the Eco-Self that lives in the deep waters of the unconscious.

“The power of God reveals itself not only in the realm of spirit, but in the fierce animality of nature both within us and outside us,” Jung writes. Was the stone foundation a defense against receiving messages from the animality of nature? Was I so caught up in my outer experience that I missed the connection to my inner experience?

In our culture, we tend to go straight for spirit, to ascend rather than descend, to value the light over the dark and intellect over instinct. We look up to the Father while we overlook and dismiss the instinctual, watery realm of the Mother. In short, we split spirit and matter. But when we allow ourselves to travel over the bridge of the imagination to our “inner banks,” the lighthouse can be a message about bringing body, soul, and spirit together in a spiral dance with Earth.

Ann Loomis is senior copy editor and one of the creative directors for this issue of The Ecozoic Reader. She has been a writing instructor and consultant for over 25 years. Ann is immediate past president of the C.G. Jung Society of the Triangle and author of Write from the Start, a workbook that explores the link between psychological type and the writing process. Ann and her husband, Bob, live in Chapel Hill, NC. She can be reached at 919-942-8926 and abloomis@bellsouth.net.
One of my greatest pleasures is sitting out on my deck in the early morning, reading the paper, having my first cup of coffee, and listening to the various critters that share our lake and its environs. The lake and surrounding land provide several ecosystems where a host of animals can live. We can see some, but many are only evident by their sounds.

The deep chug-o-rums of the bullfrogs, which can reach a foot or more in length, are comforting sounds from my youth in rural New Jersey. Another lake resident is the half-inch-long southern cricket frogs that live in the marshy area below the spillway. Just stand there awhile and listen: you'll first hear one or two tentative notes, which soon turn into a chorus of raspy clicks sounding something like those little metal party clickers. It's amazing how such a big sound can come from such a small source—a source we'll likely never see.

My wife and I have mentioned now and again how much fun it would be to sleep out on our deck sometime and enjoy the sounds of our wild neighbors (no, not Leslie, Blair, or Kathy!). Anyway, one night we moved to the basement apartment which has a ground level window, opened the window wide, and went to bed. The night was alive with sound—crickets, katydids, frogs, toads, and who knows what else. We were still awake at midnight.

About that time, a family of barred owls began hooting outside our window, and a raccoon came by making its distinctive trilling call. It almost seemed that the owls and raccoon were now sitting outside our window looking in. At that point, we decided enough was enough, closed the window, and finally got to sleep.

We all have wild neighbors we do not know, and getting to know them better is part of the satisfaction of living near our lake.

Bob Loomis is a retired forest plant pathologist and entomologist for the U.S. Forest Service. During his career, he studied how air pollution affects forest vegetation. He is now president of Lake Ellen Homeowners Association as well as an avid tennis player. In his spare time, he enjoys playing the accordion and brewing beer. Bob and his wife, Ann, live in Chapel Hill, NC. You may contact Bob at abloomis@bellsouth.net.
One of woman’s primary roles is to live in and create beauty and to try to lift the culture to a higher level. Beauty is anything that lifts the consciousness out of the ego. When you see a garden full of vibrant colored flowers, your heart sings. When you hear beautiful music, it takes you out of yourself. When you see a beautiful painting, you’re taken right into it. It lifts you up, and your personality soars into another plane of existence. When you are reading poetry or prose and you come to a part that lifts the whole consciousness, you’re experiencing beauty that is literally magic.

Beauty speaks to the heart. The arts and high culture are so important for spiritual consciousness. And without spiritual consciousness, we will not end war or stop the ecological destruction of our Mother Earth or end hunger and cruelty. We need to lift our consciousness to a higher level, and one way we all can do that is through beauty. The artists, musicians, poets, sculptors, playwrights, storytellers and dancers—all the artists are leaders of spirit and culture and bring hope for the world.

The mothers, grandmothers, aunts, teachers who introduce their children to beauty and culture are not only feeding the child’s soul, but they are serving the whole world. The cultural dimension of life is more related to the right brain, to intuition, feeling, and spirit. Women are the guardians of the cultural. And culture is one key to the economic and political decisions we make in our families, communities, government and world.

My own mother understood the importance of beauty and culture. My childhood was full of difficulties, but fortunately, my mother had the soul of an artist and she kept it from being too dark and boring. When I was nine years old, we had the most remarkable Christmas. My mother was fighting cancer, sometimes working as a waitress to keep food on the table and sometimes flat on her back. The utilities were overdue, and finally the gas company disconnected us a few days before Christmas. We had no gas for heat or cooking, but we did have a big fireplace.

So on Christmas Eve night, my mother put on the Nutcracker Suite and made a cheery blaze in the fireplace. She wrapped baking potatoes and corn on the cob in aluminum foil and put them in the coals to bake. All five of us children grabbed colorful pillows and began to dance to the happy music, pretending to be ants on the way to a very special picnic. We had a cozy feast surrounded by the smell of the tree and wood smoke, and after dinner, we drew pictures of what we would give each other if we could. We wrapped them in last year’s Christmas paper and put them under the tree. Then she read us the Christmas story from the Bible so we would remember what Christmas is really about, the birth of Christ who came to teach us to love one another. That was one of the most wonderful Christmases I ever had. Mother used beauty and creativity to lift us to a high level out of the dark depression of poverty.

When we live in a world of beauty, in that heightened consciousness, we are living in the Other World in the midst of this world. We feel the magic and joy of life, and our hearts are more open. Children and animals feel it and are attracted to it. The most important thing in the world next to God consciousness is to live in beauty.

I once read about a sensitive boy who went to a church at Christmas and the flowers and altar were so beautiful that he fainted. And once when I was at my neighbor’s house, I saw the most beautiful sunset, deep rose, purple and indigo, and I was lifted into a place of Oneness. I couldn’t talk and began to cry from the bliss and ecstasy. We have probably all had those kinds of experiences.

How can we women who see violence and sex in movies and on TV, fast food restaurants serving up fat for our children, our sons and daughters going to war, forests ripped out, mountains carved up, and rivers and oceans filled with oil and pollution help to lift all that ugliness to a higher level of beauty?

We begin with our own psycho-spiritual transformation and then guide and influence the children in our lives, as well as the family and the community. But we don’t have the time or luxury to reduce our energies to just our own family and community anymore. Lifting our society as a whole to a new level of culture, consciousness and beauty may be one of our most important roles.

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Petals Separating

by Kate Parrish

dancing all around
breezes, rots
flows, recedes

unseen
unknown

spacious light
ripe with autumn
warm against my skin

this breath
whose name
I do not know

Kate Parrish lives in Longmont, Colorado and can be contacted at katetrees@aol.com.

Photo by Liz Holland
The Tower of Babel story conjures up potent images for those of us who grew up in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the time of the Babel story, all of humankind was said to speak one language. As the story goes, ancestral kinsmen, recent descendants of Noah, said to one another, “Let’s build this tower so it will reach heaven, and give us recognition amongst all our kin.” God, seeing their labor, said, “The people are one... and nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do” (Genesis 11:1-9). They so displeased God that he confounded their ability to speak the same language, and commanded them to scatter across Earth.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, this story has been used as an explanation for why there are different languages and as a morality tale about the consequences of displeasing God. If we look more deeply, however, the Tower of Babel story calls forth a deep vein of angst in our psyche, pulsing with tacit information about the relationship between human culture and the Divine. The men in this story were engaged in planning a great building to reach the heavens, an act of imaginative power with a goal of achieving an authority that opposed or challenged Divine authority.

The role authoritarianism has played in cultural development is vital for us to consider when thinking about women and the Ecozoic vision. Sue Monk Kidd, in *Dance of the Dissident Daughter* (1996), describes her slow and often painful realization that her way of thinking and her way of seeing herself as a woman was defined by her internalization of the cultural bias that sanctioned the authoritarian rule of her husband, father, male colleagues, clergy, and of God. She says, “Living without real inner authority, without access to my deep feminine strength, I carried around a fear of dissension, confrontation, backlash, a fear of not pleasing, not living up to sanctioned models of femininity” (p.29). Kidd, in coming to understand her emergence into her own internal authority, tells about her awakening to a wider perspective: “Disconnected from my feminine soul, I had unknowingly forfeited my power to name sacred reality. I had simply accepted what men had named” (p. 21).

All of us, not just those of us who are women, are creating lives reflecting the schism referenced in the Tower of Babel story. We are confused when we live without authentic inner authority. We are subject to a fundamental fear of failure and the drive to prove ourselves. We are taught that we are fundamentally flawed and that our quest for connection and relationship is overshadowed by a divine pronunciation of confused communication.

Across a huge time frame, perhaps four thousand years, a great deal of human behavior has been modeled after the image of an authoritarian God. This has perpetuated a belief that domination, even aggression, is the most desirable behavior and the most likely to succeed. We have been conditioned to believe that this is the gold standard by which everything else must be measured, and it has affected every aspect of life: government, law, religion, economics, health care, nature, and family relationships. This has created social agreements within cultures, with rigid rules that affect our relationship to each other, Earth, and ourselves. It has placed God or church over man, and man over women, children, animals, and Earth.

Primo Levy, in his autobiography *Survival in Auschwitz*, describes the chilling consequences of power based on absolute authority, evoking the image of the Tower of Babel. The tower in the center of the concentration camp had bricks, and every time he passed this tower he was reminded of the old fable. As he tells it, the concentration camp’s inhabitants came to hate even the bricks in the tower as symbols of the insane dream of those who deemed themselves masters. Those in absolute authority exhibited an utter sense of separation from the humanity and spiritual dignity of their fellow human beings. Levy described the Tower of Babel’s confusion of languages as a curse hanging over them, as he struggled to understand how anyone could isolate their feelings so as to be able to inflict such suffering upon others.

I would like to explore what could be learned if we widen our lens and look at the story of the Tower of Babel from a feminine perspective that supports the concept of making decisions based on inner authority.

In the culture of that era, towers were religious structures, ziggurats, built to foster communication with the Divine. I wondered why God would be so upset with those ancient builders. I saw it as an attempt by those men to create an outward representation for an inner process that is more about sensing, feeling and imagination than about the external action of building a tower. This, to me, was the confusion that so upset God in this story.

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*Transforming the Tower of Babel*

*By Joanna Haymore*
These kinsmen were drawn towards the act of building a tower that would represent their power, dominion, or authority. At its deeper or symbolic levels, the tower represents the dominance of thinking over feeling and the separation of mind from heart, and the confusion about the true power inherent in human imagination.

If we observe today’s busy shopping centers or notice our highways with their advertisements designed to engage our imaginations, we can get a feeling for how we have created a world where we are always grasping for fulfillment from our outer world, much like those kinsmen of old. And we may notice that satisfaction cannot be gained from grasping. The more we grasp, the more we are aware that we don’t have what we need. And the more unsatisfied and bereft we are, the more we grasp. Our interior selves hunger for true connection from within and with one another. We long to be understood and to be satisfied with life.

We can look at the nature of our imagination in our language. If we pay attention, our language reflects two dimensions of experience, an outer one of observation and an inner one of sensation. Consider the word “tree” for a moment and notice what happens in your imagination. Do you begin to go over the kinds of trees you can name, or do you visualize their color and shapes? Does your mind race with its desire to name the colors or how many kinds of trees you know?

Now consider a tree you have sat beneath. Invite yourself to experience for a moment the feelings inside your body as you remember the coolness of its shade, the wind blowing across your face, your back leaning against its firm trunk, the smell or the colors of its leaves, dappled by warm sunshine. And what do you notice as you respond to this way of connecting to a tree? These are different doors of perception, one an outer response and one an inner. Which door do we use more often? Do we not need both to ignite the fullness of our imagination for deepening our capacities for connection and relationship?

I invited my imaginative perception, or the Mundus Imaginalis, to delve more deeply into my inner wisdom. In my imaginative narrative, God might have taken a nurturing stance, rather than an authoritarian one with those ancestors of old, and said to them, “You are missing the point regarding your power to imagine and create. I want you to go wander Earth to see and experience its diversity and its beauty, and let that help you reflect on your own. You will not find that I communicate best with whoever can build the best or biggest or who can make the most powerful name for themselves. You have a confused way of thinking, so I will scramble your speech to reflect your thinking. Now, go wander about a bit. Take some time to diversify and grow up.

The doorway to my mystery lies within you, not in what you can create without. You are powerful, so powerful that whatever you imagine, you can do. Take some time, even thousands of years if need be, and let yourselves discover what it means to access your inner authority to create community within and without. You will find, perhaps, that your identity, your differences, and your commonalities will again emerge.” What would our cultures across the centuries have been like if the story had been told this way?

In 2007, Unicef reported that when women are given equal decision-making power or authority over household resources, not only the health of children and women improved, but also the local economy and the state functioned more prosperously. The reverse is also true. When women are not allowed the authority to make the choices that support themselves and the family, everybody in the larger community of life suffers. How do women know how to make such choices that have the potential to build healthy lives and strong communities? What will happen to our world if we begin to listen to this wisdom?

Bruce Lipton, Ph.D., pioneer in the new science of epigenetics, wrote in the Biology of Belief (2005): “Your beliefs act like filters on a camera . . . and your biology adapts to those beliefs. When we truly recognize that our beliefs are that powerful, we hold the key to free-
dom” (p. 143-144). Thomas Berry tells us that the 20th century, full of innovation in science and in the industrial-military complex, reached the pinnacle of male dominance. Berry asks us, in essence, to change the filter of our beliefs about what it means to be human in order to create healing in the 21st century. Berry, like Lipton, is asking us to change what we imagine about ourselves.

Berry also talks about the infancy stage of development of human culture and religion as a time of isolation and separation and then a turbulent period of adolescence, from which we are hopefully emerging towards the wisdom of maturity. The Ecozoic vision holds this hope for maturation of human culture and religion. Maturity as a species asks that we imagine community and communication, rather than dominance, as our paradigm for life with an Ecozoic purpose.

Both men and women have what we need in our biology to feel inside ourselves, clear our vision, and harness the power of our imaginations to create a world where all life moves forward together. We can choose to face the issues created by centuries of cultures focused on the importance of authority and dominance. We can find within ourselves the fresh perspective that allows the principal core of the feminine: nurturance and feeling spreading into all aspects of life, beginning with how we see our relationship with the Divine.

The inner ripeness of feminine consciousness is now revealing itself as one of the primary touchstones for this wisdom. Women's wisdom is about reclaiming feeling in our bodies and allowing its wisdom to inform our knowing or our consciousness about the Divine and about our relationship with Earth. It is recognition of the gifts of the mind for judgment and discernment, but not used in isolation from the sensations and feelings of the body. It is also about reclaiming our gift of imagination to create connections and relationships that nurture all life.

My own recent dive into reclaiming this imaginative wisdom was a glorious experience that came out of a few days of sanctuary along the coast of southern California. Walking on cliffs high above the beach, I saw the colors of wild flowers at eye level, and shapes and textures in magnificent natural diversity surrounded me. The sound of the ocean was powerful and free, resonant, and crashing on rocks below. The sun varied warm to hot, its breeze keeping me comfortable. Then there came this experience of spaciousness, a freshness of perception of a Presence being taken in though my senses and grounded in my body. This nurturing Intelligence within every cell of my being guiding my action in the world is the creative touchstone for me, upon which all else revolves.

Just as it is told to us in the story of the Tower of Babel, whatever we humans can imagine, we can do. What then, with an Ecozoic awareness arising, shall we imagine?

1 Widening your perceptual lens, one of the Five Principles of Living Life Joyfully, from Healing from the Core: Grounding and Healthy Boundaries, a workshop and audio series developed by Suzanne Scurlock-Durana.
3 *Mundus Imaginalis* by Henry Corbin (1964), a concept derived from Islamic theosophers, describing an order of reality perception, the imaginative consciousness or the cognitive imagination.

Joanna Haymore teaches Healing From the Core: Grounding and Healthy Boundaries, and is an occupational therapist in private practice in Durham, NC. She is also a licensed massage therapist and a Practitioner of Body-Mind Centering. Joanna served as president of the Piedmont Bioregional Institute and as a board member for the Center for Reflection of the Second Law that sponsored conferences in North Carolina focused on the work of Thomas Berry. Joanna is one of the creative directors for this issue of *The Ecozoic Reader*. She can be reached at Joanna-Dave@mindspring.com or at www.healingfromthecore.com.
Primary Revelation

By Sarah Howe

My youngest is what is known in educational circles as a ‘late reader.’ He showed little to no interest in learning to read before the age of ten or eleven.

When I offered periodically to teach him to read or to find him a tutor he declined saying, “Mom, if I wanted to learn to read I could. I’m just not interested right now.”

So I waited and watched what was happening. He spent his first decade rising in the morning and slipping out doors where he roamed and played barefoot in all seasons. He played, climbed trees, built contraptions and puppets. He listened to stories and lived his own stories through dress up and imaginative play. He interacted with others through play.

His life is well grounded in what Thomas Berry refers to as the Primary Revelation.

On the few occasions of his childhood when he was sick, he slowed down enough to study reading. The rest of his first decade of life on Earth, he spent in motion connecting with his body in this world. When he did begin to read I mourned the passing of an era. I rejoiced in the decade he had lived immune to advertisements on the side of the road, free to travel with his own thoughts uninterrupted by the written words that surround our lives. (Can you drive past a street sign without reading it?)

As he grows I welcome his reading as it assists him in negotiating his way through our literate world. And I continue to relish his freedom and comfort with the natural world and his imagination.

Sarah Howe, potter and home school mother of four, lives and works in Durham, NC, with her husband, Randy Best. Her youngest son continues to grow and learn, following his interests in puppetry, music, community, games, and the great outdoors. He assures his mother, “I can read anything I want. I just don’t like to because I am so slow and I’d rather do other things.” Sarah Howe can be reached at sarah@houseofclay.net.
To those of us who like to look at life as a theater, the prospects of good material are many times limited by the perspectives that we see on television and in movies. The dialogues seem to be somewhat incongruent with what we actually witness in real life. As a child, I used to think that there was an existence that was lived in another realm that was really like sit-coms. But in the world of the one-dimensional screen, it seemed that there was something significant missing from the drama. Looking back at it now, I see that what was missing was the stage actor’s relationship with the natural world. Nature was hardly ever mentioned or shown. And if it was mentioned, it was referred to as dirty outside and that there were dangerous elements that we had to be protected from, such as rain (messy and inconvenient), sun (blistering and suffocating) or snow (complete and utter catastrophe).

I grew up in the Pacific Northwest and lived primarily with the “messy and inconvenient.” Now that I am a Southerner, the climate can be an utterly vitriolic subject that much more resembles that sit-com reality. At first I found this humorous but now find it saddening. Our alienation from the elements and Nature has become a cycle that seems to spiral downwards and out of control, ending with Nature as the ultimate threat to our existence. It is like the elephant in the living room; the more we ignore it, the larger the problems become.

Must we live with Nature as a force to be battled against, or can we recapture the perspective of Nature as a source of natural bliss? That largely depends upon how we, as a culture, set our desires for transformation and our ability to use our long-term perspective in service to our imagination.

I like to imagine Earth as a Being with substance (the Earth itself), fluid (the lakes, rivers and oceans), and breath (wind, rain and atmosphere). It has helped me transform my relationship to Mother Nature from hostile threat to a loving embrace. No matter where we live and what the climate is, we can savor each breeze, each handful of soil, each leaf and each rain shower as a backdrop of moments that nurtures our lives.

The movie world outside our doors is wondrously magical, endlessly varied, essential, and life giving. It’s up to us to bring that luscious and sensuous relationship to life.

Susan O’Neil is a student of performance studies at UNC Chapel Hill and an environmental and Green Party activist. She is currently serving on the coordination committee of the Green Party and Citizens for Healthcare Freedom. She enjoys gardening, photography, metaphysics, critters, and being outside. Susan can be reached at susone@gmail.com.
Winter had begun in Cornwall, Vermont. The days were short and cold. The unfriendly air was sharp and penetrating. Apple trees in the orchard left dark and barren shadows Against the deep crusty snow.

Walking through the fields was a chore, Forcing each heavy footstep in and out Of the depths of icy white.

The nights were long and quiet, But the brilliance of the moon and crystal-like stars Splintered through the blackness of the sky.

Occasionally, the show of Northern Lights Pulsed throbbing patterns of color Across the dark backdrop of night As if a gift had been given by some benevolent force, Taking pity on those that would endure the long Vermont winters.

Mornings started with coffee and a cigarette. She sighed as she looked out the large windows With lacy patterns of ice that framed the scenery On the other side of the cold glass.

Her days were not heavily structured. Interludes with friends, part-time work And the daily tasks of winter life That could not be ignored kept her occupied.

The season created confinement. The nights did not. Surrendering the day Her sleep brought more than rest. It delivered the dreams.

Sleep came early and so the journey began.

She was aware of leaving the house. The dark shape of the rooftop wasn’t far below. Effortlessly gliding over the empty treetops The wide grey wings of the female owl Took her across the familiar landscape.

A new reality was quietly being introduced Slowly becoming more familiar. Steadily creating a bond that would reach Past the night and influence the day.

She continued to leave the house And the others sleeping in it. The nocturnal flights were hers. The grey owl, still, with quiet presence Would fly further and further. Familiar boundaries were left behind. The direction always went west. The slow descent over darkened mountain tops, The peaceful clarity of new visions Awakened a deep consciousness in her.

The past was now becoming a new beginning. She was pleased and content with the dreams For a while, she shared them With the man beside her.

And so the days continued…

Morning coffee and cigarettes More dinners with friends More full moon parties More dreams.

She was awake, she was asleep She was listening The realization was clear. Now the journey would be different It would surely lead west.

She left the house once again This time through the front door On foot, with a backpack.

She had vaguely planned a route To the south and then west. The map was helpful but intuition Was to be her guide.

The endless stretches of road filled the days. Sleep felt nomadic Camping along the desolate roads. Hitchhiking.
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The grey owl did not visit
But was not forgotten.

Far ahead mountaintops began to interrupt
The desert landscape.
She felt something familiar
An internal knowledge, a quiet excitement.
She had flown over these mountains
As one with the grey owl.

The lure was undeniable.
Finally, she stopped and walked to the foothills.
She knew she couldn’t stay long
But the need to be here was strong.
Just to absorb this new place,
This old place, was compelling.
Time to go.
There were other paths to follow.

She felt tired and uncomfortable,
But thinking about the dreams
Gave her energy to continue
To Santa Barbara.

The grey owl was beautiful
She was waiting
Silently calling.

The cave was small,
Hidden on a rocky ledge.
She stayed there, fearful at first
With the unfamiliar lizards and other wildlife
That she made herself company to.

Eventually she slept,
A wary sleep
And the grey owl
Returned to her dreams.

She no longer felt
Like a stranger in the new terrain.
After dark she would quietly soar
Leaving the cave,
Exploring the wooded mountains.

Her days were filled with reliving
The evening flights.
Each day was for a purpose
Although simple and uncluttered in events.

Freeing her mind
Opening her heart
She was closing in on the
Journey to the past.

One morning started as the rest.
Walking on and on
She eventually came to the grassy clearing.

The ancient oak tree took center stage.
It knew of her reverence for Earth.
After appreciating its great presence
She looked across the narrow canyon
To the west.

She was no longer in the sunny opening
She was with the image
Of the young woman from another time
Dressed in deerskin and beads
Standing in the distant foothills.
They were sharing the same spirit
Found in an inexplicable moment in time.
The grey owl’s journey had ended.

She wondered how so much
Could be felt with such depth
In such a short amount of time.

She accepted the gift
That could not be questioned
Or fully understood.

She stayed there for a while
Remembering the first dream,
Reliving the following ones
Reflecting on her time
Here in the mountains
With a grateful heart.

Joan Loomis was born 50 years ago in Concord, Massachusetts. As a child, she enjoyed writing poetry and drawing. Alternative interests have influenced her lifestyle and offered a few adventures, good friends and family, and most thankfully, a beautiful daughter, Corinna. She enjoys traveling, writing, gardening, baking, and long walks on the beach. Joan strongly believes in sending affirmations and prayers to those people who have been a positive influence in her life. You may contact Joan at loomisjoan@yahoo.com.
I had finished lunch and sat gazing into the coffee cup I had just drained. My thoughts were on the beauty of the landscape I had traveled through that morning and the miles of open land and sky that lay before me that afternoon . . . more beauty to come. A woman silently appeared to stand near my table, and a shudder of warmth moved through me. I felt her before I saw her. When I looked up into her calm, quiet eyes, I thought how natural it was for her to be there.

She was dressed in soft animal skins adorned with bits of twig, bone, moss and fur. There was the smell of sweet grass and warm earth about her. As she stood before me, I felt the aliveness of her body and the truth of who she was through her silence.

I knew I was in the presence of Love. But in the moment of this recognition, I realized I had suddenly turned away. I had created a distance between us and had begun to imagine this all as if it were a memory . . . as if it were something that had happened in a time ‘before’ rather than ‘now.’

She continued to stand quietly in front of me. As I looked once again, risking the depth of her eyes, a question rose from a wave of anguish in my heart. “Why do I do this?” Through the silence, I heard her reply. “It is because each moment has yet to be recognized as the presence of Love, and devotion to each moment has yet to be recognized as a response of Love.”

As she looked at me with a steady gaze, I realized that in my subtle but constant effort at maneuvering life into familiar, recognizable forms, I had often claimed what I created in my mind to be ‘reality.’ I was doing it now. I was trying to make this imitation of truth stand in place of the aliveness I knew in this moment. I could see that any act that came through this effort was a mere shadow of the vitality I actually felt in her.

With remarkable ease, I then felt myself come into the truth of all she embodied. It was a truth far wider than any I had known before. This was Love experienced in the moment of its fullness . . . a response freely given, not as obligation or a gesture intended to keep myself safe and to keep the world at bay. The deepening silence between us confirmed my realization.

Everything was present in that moment: there was no existence that could even be imagined beyond what created and saturated this living “now.”

It was then that I realized I was not only in the presence of Love, but I, too, was Love.

With this, she was gone. Only a faint hint of sweet grass lingered.

(See Christine Smith’s bio at the end of Embracing the Boundless, page 44.)
Embracing the Boundless

By Christine Smith

The wisdom that finds expression in women reveals itself most naturally through the experience of receptivity.

We are informed by this wisdom, shaped by its clarity and its truth, as we open to it. We find it to be as deep and generous as it is precise and exacting. And we find it speaks to us through both the feminine and the masculine modes of our being.

The capacity to be receptive, along with the desire that opens one to receive, is a defining gesture of feminine consciousness.

Here, we explore the experience of the feminine and the value for us all through its receptivity.

Feminine consciousness is a way of experience known through the cycle of opening, receiving, nurturing and bringing forth and is often marked by meeting the 'luminous darkness' through a depth of the not-yet-known wherever that depth is encountered. Its movement comes through being opened by an “attentive desire”; its rhythm, both circular and evolving, which delivers all in season.

Its way of being comes from the breath and flesh of the moment. Its value is in its devotion to all of life as an expression of Divine Love.

Feminine consciousness desires communion, and that desire in its fullest sense, encompasses a willingness to be revealed through both that to which we are drawn and the desire itself.

The knowing of feminine consciousness comes through experience, felt and sensed. The faith that lives through this way of perception lives as resonant truth to the clarity and purpose of Love.

Feminine consciousness, while the primary mode of experience for women, is not expressed through the lives and hearts of women alone. It is not the sole domain of women. Men also live through various expressions of feminine consciousness just as women experience certain aspects of masculine consciousness in themselves.

Neither the feminine nor the masculine mode of consciousness is itself the source of wisdom but both open us to experience essential to our recognition of wisdom. In their ways of experience and perception, these ways of being and knowing provide the lens through which Divine Wisdom is revealed and realized in all hearts.

All the beauty you can see will deliver you but first you must come truly seeking... and you must know how to receive all that is given.

Mira

These few lines from one of India’s most beloved women poet mystics reflect much of what lives at the heart of feminine consciousness and its way of sensing, perceiving and expressing Divine Wisdom.

The beauty Mira speaks of is not just in surface appearance. She is telling us of the radiant truth which shines from, and through, the heart of the Divine into this world and awakens in us a depth of recognition as it calls us into its own depth. Coming to know beauty through depth is one of the most compelling ways we realize Divine Wisdom. The journey of this experience in each of us brings Wisdom into a tapestry of expression as the Divine and its Love reveal itself through our lives.

If the truth of beauty as a living expression of the Divine and the Love from which it springs is what is sought, we are shown how we must approach. It requires desire and faithfulness to truly experience the Presence of the Divine and all that it offers. Initially we may be drawn through what appears to be our own desire. As we are faithful to that call and we find ourselves willing to be shaped through our response, we discover that what moves and calls us is the power, the passion, and the Love that is the Divine.

The other essential requirement, Mira tells us, is that we “must know how to receive all that is given.” How often in our search, when we seek to possess knowledge as protection, a kind of safety in certainty, does our focus become only what will be gained as outcome. Even imagining we will be changed somehow by the fulfillment of our desire, when we come in this way, we are often not aware of what is required of us to receive.

When we find ourselves faced with what seems to be the ‘cost’ of our desire, how often do we take it as a personal affront and misunderstand that it is not a matter of what we are allowed to have or can simply be given

Mira
because of our goodness. Rather it is whether we know how to truly receive all that is already and always given so freely.

It seems we are asked to come with some awareness of what it means in this human life to embody our capacity to receive the fullness of continuous Divine offering. Rather than searching for our worthiness and goodness to be rewarded, it is how we bring who we are to what is offered and our willingness to be transformed in that exchange that yields what we are seeking . . . to know union with the heart of the Divine.

Often when we are new in our search, we come looking to be given a sense of worth rather than to be ‘altered’ into knowing the beauty and truth of God’s Wisdom and Love. To be ‘delivered’ asks us to come with a sense of being through which we can recognize and receive from the Beingness of God which is God’s very nature. It seems we learn how to receive what is given by coming in recognition of what we already are. Our beingness is certainly affirmed and grown into depth and fullness through the Love we find in this Wisdom but perhaps only as we come bringing the vessel of our creatureliness to receive that which continually creates us.

It can indeed be mystifying when we are met with something we do not understand and did not expect . . . something we perhaps don’t yet know how to value. The disappointment and sorrow in the lack of fulfillment and in the ‘missed’ union can feel overwhelming. However, these experiences can also open in us, mysteriously, a heart-felt and embodied willingness to go further in our search, deeper into life. This is why we are advised to come with the whole of our being to this journey and why such persistence and faithfulness are so vital to ‘truly seeking.’

“I will be safe but not in the way
I intended . . . Love, if I allow it,
will keep me awake, feeding on salt,
the mineral of skin.”

Jane Hilberry
“The Mineral of Skin” from Body Painting

For several years now, I have facilitated year-long groups exploring receptivity as the central experience of feminine consciousness in the path of Divine Love. In our retreats this exploration unfolds through contemplative dialogue, meditation, poetry, story and various forms of creative expression. My experience with these groups has revealed again and again the richness and the complexity that is the receptive.

To appreciate receptivity means bringing ourselves through direct experience to its depth. At its heart, receptivity is about learning to live through being shaped by Love, seasoned and ‘ripened until we are real,’ as Rilke says, into realizing Divine Wisdom within our own hearts. I would like to share some of the qualities and capacities that describe the experience of receptivity through the feminine mode of consciousness and hope these reflections may seed your own contemplation of receptivity.

Mystery and Depth

. . . to meet the powerful and arousing experience of the unknown
through direct experience with no expectation or demand
for understanding or control
. . . opening through inwardness and patience to the fluid stillness
of what is just beginning to become with a willingness to simply “be” and to be informed through that numinous Presence, as we nurture what it intends and how it will take shape.

Paradox and Restraint

. . . to be opened through a heart informed by experience
and inner awareness as the rhythm of life reveals itself beyond how things appear or have always been
. . . to embrace “both/and” rather than aligning to “either/or”
. . . rather than knowing through analysis, the freedom to trust,
through our experience with Love, what is shown to be true
even when that Truth seems to demand more of us than we think ourselves to be.

Permeability and Vulnerability

. . . to allow the unknown to touch us, often opening to life
we have tried to refuse
. . . to “be” vulnerable rather than to “feel” vulnerable
. . . a willing lack of defensiveness that allows an openness
for us to be acted upon by the natural forces so we realize their power, not to be made less, but so we might realize the value of being moved and shaped while sometimes feeling incomplete, unfulfilled
and unable to rise to our ideal of perfection
. . . the deep intimacy of beingness,
open to an exchange of being.
Devotion and Reverence

... seeing things as they are, a willingness to love and live freely within the bounds of natural law while also embodying a reverence for life... from a depth of feeling, faithfully willing to shelter, nourish and sustain with one’s own being, a respect and fidelity to this human existence... valuing and living life in obedient response to Love.

Relatedness and Spaciousness

... the desire to flow into communion, to merge... the desire to bring finite space to the infinity of spaciousness... the desire to bring the reality of body and Earth to the eternally generative movement of Creative Love by emptying to receive through the heart... a way of knowing Divine Wisdom by embracing the boundless.

Somewhere along the way we begin to see that wisdom may have little to do with what we know. It is perhaps more a deep appreciation and a humble gratitude for all we do not know but as well, something that is written into our curious and listening hearts through all we sense, feel and experience. Wisdom then becomes the fruit of what we realize through the informing of our hearts as we willingly open ourselves in this journey of Love.

Ultimately, wisdom comes in knowing that we always have and always will belong to Love. Through the experience of feminine consciousness this means opening ourselves to receive the gift of this Truth and respond through the life we are so generously given, even as the gift remains unfathomable and our part unknown.

When I come to you, it is with all of my life.

I come to you with the whole of my being.

Lalla

For over 30 years, Christine Smith has worked as a therapist, teacher and facilitator with individuals and groups to support the integration of spiritual awareness and psychological insight. From her own experience of meditation and spiritual practice as well as extended solitary retreat, she has taught meditation and led numerous meditation retreats. Currently, she is creating several meditation CDs and leading contemplative retreats. These retreats explore not only the call that brings healers to their work but the vision that often informs that call as they discover what it means to engage the Wisdom of Health in their lives and work. Christine can be contacted at beingaware@core.com.
Artist’s Statement

By Terry Whye

I work with a figurative series of sculpture, springing from the realm of the unconscious, the dream world and my exploration of regenerative themes. One of the most potent archetypes from this world I seek to express in clay is the ancient Great Mother in her many guises. The Diver calls me to plunge headfirst into life, stay willing to explore the murky depths and remember to come up for air, rest, and refreshment. The Medial Dreamer connects the waking to the mystery and considers the process of gestation, rest, and renewal so easily dismissed in the frantic pace of modern life.

The Figure in Free Fall plummets willingly through space and calls attention to the states of joy, trust, and surrender. The Abundant Mother beckons me to honor my body, stay grounded and focus on the cyclic rhythms of the natural world. Seated Goddesses shown singly or in groups arranged in circles are gesturing with their hands, often emphasizing the heart area. The ringed groupings reflect my interest and participation in the power and healing benefits of women’s circles and communities. The heart gesture echoes the actions of prayer, caring and nurturing. The gift these figures have brought into my waking life and artistic practice is to reclaim what is divine in the feminine cycles of life and to restore mindfulness of the interconnectedness of all things.

The figures are sculpted solidly and then hollowed out, a process I find very satisfying. I love to be on the inside of the sculpture. During the reassembly process, I insert into each figure a group of clay beads in shapes that mirror my intention for the piece. The smaller, hand-held pieces can be shaken like rattles to hear their individual voices. The works are made in a variety of clay bodies and fired in different combinations of kilns, including anagama, gas, and electric.

I invite the viewer to recognize themselves and all women in these figures that represent and celebrate the divine aspects of the feminine and the cycles of the natural world.

Sculpture by Terry Whye, photo by Gregory R. Staley

Terry Whye has been making sculpture and pottery for over three decades, the last 26 years from her Maryland studio, Whye Clay Works. WCW is also a teaching studio and she is on the faculty of the Rehoboth Art League in Delaware. Her work has appeared in American Craft, Ceramic Art and Perception, and Ceramic Monthly magazines. Terry is a recipient of an Artist In Education Grant by MD Arts Council and the Louise Chambers Corkran Award for Sculpture. Terry can be reached at twhyecarr.org and (410) 374-9661.
I’m on an endless nameless quest
this is the path I love the best
roaming the Void from east to west
never wanting the journey to rest

I’m on an endless nameless quest
the Mystery pulls me to her breast
She cradles me in emptiness
I melt into her vast caress

I’m on an endless nameless quest
Unknown takes me as permanent guest
She offers me the sky for a nest
she lays my head on the moon’s chest

I’m on an endless nameless quest
steadily knowing less and less
gazing into the eyes of openness
falling in love with nothingness

(See Kate’s bio at the end of Petals Separating, page 35.)
Copperhead Wisdom

By Joanna Haymore

Up through the mud she rises,
Bubbles preceding her ascent,
As her ancient body stirs the deep sediment,
Old mysteries re-birthed in new form.

Her reptilian eyes glide across the surface
Emerging into a pink and orange ophidian dawn.
Her belly unwinds from the mud and opens
Releasing its primordial sound.

She winds around my ankle and my thighs
Spreading the feast into my bones, into my breasts
From her long tryst
Inside Earth, with Eros.

My eye opens, my senses drink
From her bronze encrypted skin,
Water
From the deep feminine stream.

(See Joanna’s bio at the end of her article, Transforming the Tower of Babel, page 36)
And She Rises

By Kim Falone

From Opening Again: Poems and Parables of Transformation

And she rises
She rises up from the earth
Dark, moist and steaming
With grand swaying breasts
And thick full thighs

Her body undulates with pleasure
She smells of dirt and decay
And also of fruit and roses
Her eyes reflect the moon
Her hands are as old as water

Her beauty is too mutable to be seen
Hers is a beauty that must be felt
It spirals up from beneath us
This beauty that includes us

She is rising now
And if we allow it
We will be held
We will be suckled
We will be birthed again and again
By this great and grounding mother

Kim Falone has an extensive background in the healing arts. A licensed bodyworker since 1986, she and her husband, Vince, are the founders of the Center for Relaxation and Healing in Chatham, NJ. They are also the parents of three school-age children. Please visit Kim’s web site: www.kimfalone.com.
Wisdom

By Nan C. Merrill

From Friends of Silence, Vol. XIX, No. 5, Nan C. Merrill, Editor

Wisdom is birthed in silence, rising up from the Mystery of the Unseen, a potential grace dwelling within us. At the same time, Wisdom greets us in our daily lives through nature, sacred spaces, the sages among us, a child at play, our creative work, our angels . . . and all is holy. Wisdom is a seed planted by Love that buds and blooms in those whose hearts are receptive and vulnerable, in those whose minds are quieted in prayer listening for the Voice of Silence. Wonder, humility, beauty, peace are but a few of Wisdom’s fruits.

Artwork by Marston Blow
Artist Biographies:

Charron Andrews is a self-taught artist and physical therapist. A treasure-seeking alley picker from childhood, only in the last five years has she been creating art out of things she finds in the trash, on the ground, beside the road, or otherwise discarded. The pieces range from shrines no bigger than a tangerine crate to rescued and redesigned ironing boards, screen doors, and chests of drawers. Her work reflects a desire to derive meaning from chaos. Much of it is influenced by her Catholic upbringing.

Marston Blow is a potter in Asheville NC’s River Arts District and is the discoverer of the Ceramic Singing Bowl. Her sculptural pottery is just as uncommon and alluring: heavily carved visions of trees, spirals, and dancing figures all reflecting the powerful and sensuous side of life force. She can be reached at ceramicsong@gmail.com or (828) 423-7119.

Wendy Burkland Lombard is Assistant Director for the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World in Whitsett, NC, dedicated to bringing to life a new vision of the relationship between the inner life of the child and the beauty, wonder, and intimacy of the universe. Wendy is a student of Thomas Berry and has served on the Board of the Center for Ecozoic Studies. She has a life-long commitment to bringing nature and earth awareness to the inner life of the spirit and the outer life of service and action. Wendy is one of the creative directors for this issue of The Ecozoic Reader. Wendy can be reached at burkland.wendy@gmail.com.

Vijali Hamilton is a visionary multimedia artist, sculptor, poet, musician, author, and teacher. Over one thousand of her artworks are in museums, public places, and private collections. In 1986 she founded her first World Wheel project, a seven-year spiritual and artistic pilgrimage during which she circled the globe creating monumental stone sculptures and community-based performances in twelve countries. Her book World Wheel, One Woman’s Quest for Peace, is available at her web site: www.vijali.net

Carol Hegedus, the artist/owner of Handmade Tile Studio in Tucson, AZ, specializes in creating decorative mosaic art tiles that are inspired by nature. She is former Program Director and consultant to the Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, MI, and the core of her life work has been about expressing her creative imagination and helping others to reach their creative source of inspiration. Carol can be contacted at carolahgedus@aol.com.

Liz Holland began doing black and white darkroom photography when she was 16. She switched gradually over to color film after several years. Her forte is vibrantly colorful macro nature and industrial photography. The bulk of her pieces are printed directly onto canvas and stretched on deep frames, creating luminous, freestanding photo “paintings.” Liz moved from Quebec, Canada in 2004 and currently resides in Asheville, North Carolina. Her pieces have been displayed in The River Gallery and Adorn Boutique in Asheville and at the Spiral Gallery in Vermont.

About her work Liz states: “I find whimsy and magic in the real world and capture it as it naturally manifests so that others may share in the unbelievable beauty of the world as it truly is.” lizartes@worldmail.com.

Tad Lemery has a passion for photography and capturing the amazing qualities of bugs, birds, plants—almost anything that catches his eye in nature. He is originally from Hudson Falls, NY, and now lives in Cary, NC, with his wife, two cats, and a dog. His photography web site can be found at http://tadaleday.smugmug.com

Terry Whye’s biography is on page 47.

Center for Ecozoic Studies

The purpose of the Center for Ecozoic Studies (CES) is to contribute through education, research and the arts to the realization of the Ecozoic Era. CES emphasizes critical reflection, story and shared dream experience as ways of enabling the creative advance needed to bring into being a new mode of human civilizational presence, and also discerning the practical steps leading toward the Ecozoic. CES is dedicated to the principle that we live in a meaningful, continuously evolving universe. In such a universe, the Ecozoic Era is a process concept—not something to be arrived at, but rather something ever to be created. Its hallmarks are inclusiveness, interdependence, and appreciation; communion, differentiation, and subjectivity; and sensitivity, adaptability, and responsibility. It crucially involves more just and cooperative relationships among humans, as well as transformed relationships of humans with the larger natural world.

Membership and Subscription Information

A subscription to The Ecozoic Reader is a benefit of membership in CES. Membership in CES means a personal commitment to research, education and artistic expression concerning the Ecozoic Era and how to bring it about.

Dues are $25.00 US per year for individuals or families (outside of the USA, Mexico and Canada, add $10.00 US). Sustaining memberships are $125.00 US. (Reduced cost memberships are available for $15.00 US). Sustaining memberships to bring it about.

Membership forms and a description of member benefits may be found at www.ecozoicstudies.org; or contact CES as indicated on the back cover.

Submissions for Publication

We invite you to share with us your thoughts, poetry, art, music, dance, ritual, meditation, story or dream experience of the Ecozoic Era and your insights on how to realize it.

To submit an item for publication, e-mail it to ecozoicstudies@mindspring.com, or mail a printed copy and the electronic file(s) on diskette (formatted for PC) to Center for Ecozoic Studies, 2316 Winnimgton Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27516, USA. Please send your contact information and a brief biography. Publication and copyright guidelines are available at www.ecozoicstudies.org.

Statement of Purpose

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