Chrysalis

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Newsletter of
The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World

What we look for is no longer the Pax Romana, the peace among humans, but the Pax Gaia, the peace of Earth and every being on the Earth. This is the original and final peace, the peace granted by whatever power it is that brings our world into being.[1]

~ Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts*

Dear Reader

Over the past twelve years, the Center's programs for children have offered a gentle invitation to participate in an intimate conversation with the Earth. Through these conversations, the children come home and are held within a circle of peace. After one of our programs, a sixth grader reflected:

"These words came floating up from the deepest part of the lake in my heart"

Why do you weep? You have much. Or do you not know of the beauty of nature all around? Do you not love and respect it? Feel inside the comfort and calmness of everything around. You are one with all the animals and plants you see, and the ones you don't. Open your eyes to the smallest things' every detail.

The more we behold the natural world in this heart-centered way, the more we realize that it is not here for our aesthetic appreciation, for our recreation, or for our use as a resource to provide comfort. Through our intimate conversations with the natural world, we come to see inwardly that our human activities in the world can be meaningful only when they take place within this circle of peace. This is the antidote that heals the spirit, unifies all that is divided, and through which we transcend the smaller versions of ourselves, both personal and cultural, and enter the peace of Earth.

Silence is our guide and our pathways to Silence are flute music, soulful speaking, creating the circle, stories . . . and, once on the trails, bringing the children into stillness and loving relationship with all that surrounds them. Once established in the child's heart, the child finds this communion everywhere – while waiting for the school bus, while playing in the backyard . . . I and Thou relationships are always available to them.

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[1] Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*, ed. by Mary Evelyn Tucker (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), pp. 138-139.

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We have come to feel that we are providing what is deeply missing and what is sorely missed – moments of deep connection for children that they will hold in their hearts as touchstones for what, as Thomas Berry has said, "is real and worthwhile in life."[2] We are returning them to their essential nature . . . to an abiding respect for the oneness at the heart of life . . . through a work that recognizes the need to nourish the soul as well as the mind.

Through our 2-year "Inner Life of the Child in Nature" program, we have been strengthening the inner capacities of educators to nurture relational ways of knowing in the children. This is a turn away from the externalities of the usual ways of teaching in the culture toward inner ways of knowing that are now coming into their own. This year we have accepted 25 educators into the fifth class of the "Inner Life of the Child in Nature" program. The Center's book, *Only the Sacred: Transforming Education in the Twenty-first Century*, and Center Founder Carolyn Toben's book, *Recovering a Sense of the Sacred: Conversations with Thomas Berry*, will serve as the primary texts for the program this year.

We have reached a new level of maturity in our work that is now led by an Educator Council as the working embodiment of the Center's mission. Council members are all graduates of the Center's Inner Life program who come together in the image of a circle to guide the Center's work going forward.

The Educator Council recognizes the need to adopt a new model for decision-making, one that we hope will sustain the Council's consciousness of the reality of our belonging to the natural world as a sacred community. Therefore, we make it our sacred intention to proceed with a new type of respectful listening, to pause with our questions and hold them without insistence on a specific kind of answer, and wait. This approach embraces our

[2] Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), p. 13.

connection to the larger locus of meaning and fosters a reverence that is expressive of willingness to listen, to hear and attend. Attention, as the mystic Simone Weil reminds us, is a form of prayer, and we feel that our life as a Council should be marked by such reverence.

To that end, we collectively and individually recognize that we are living beings of the natural world and that we share our world with other living beings in a sacred community, and our decisions affect others with whom we share the Earth.

Such an approach, ultimately, depends on our inner preparations for serving on such a Council and our daily engagements with Presence to the natural world. Our work together as a Council flourishes because of these practices of Presence.

In this issue of *Chrysalis*, we bring together four articles by members of the Educator Council that are testimony to these devotions of attention:

"Languages Closer Than Words" by John Shackelton

"Gifts in the Leaves" by Andrew Levitt

"In Grandmother's Presence" by Joanne Rothstein

"Taking a Walk on a Path" by Katherine Ziff

As we move toward the dark days of Winter that invite us to draw into the deep quiet within, we hope that these communions with the natural world bring you into the still circle of "Pax Gaia, the Peace of Earth and every being on Earth."

With warmest regards,

Peggy Whalen-Levitt, Director

Languages Closer Than Words

by

John Shackelton

A knowing lives within us
And we within it,
No words can unriddle.[1]

T WAS A RARE DAY for the Beara Peninsula on the southwest coast of Ireland—the sun shone in a blue sky, no rain. Leaving our rental parked just outside the forest, Ruth and I entered the magical tree world of moss-covered branches and rocks, a canopy of life that hid itself from the bright day to encourage muted greens, forest wild flowers, the moist closeness of ferns, and the damp odor of life conversant with water and rock and the privacy of shade. We trekked along a narrow path margined in foxglove and thick moss and overshadowed by old trees. It felt like Middle Earth, and indeed there were growths of mushrooms the size of Hobbit children and the occasional call of a bird whose voice seemed to echo from another time.

The land inclined upward for over half an hour before we saw daylight in the distance. Eventually, we emerged onto a hill where sheep grazed and a path led to the right along the edge of the forest and upward toward the top of the mountain. We followed that path until, a hundred yards beyond us and darkly silhouetted against the sky, the remains of an ancient stone circle appeared. A tall stone dominated the horizon; from that distance, it looked like a robed Druid with narrow, hooded head, its posture speaking silent authority. In front of it was a smaller stone, low to the ground like a supplicant come to seek wisdom. Perhaps the magic of the old forest lingered in us as we approached the Neolithic stones, for they seemed to hold secrets from an unlettered time when men heard the whispers of ancient oaks and the voices on the wind and sat still enough to feel the settled story of the fire-formed rock, a time when humans revered all the languages of life and even had words in their people talk to address the myriad beings of Earth.

We lingered for a while among the ruins of stone. Near the Druid and his supplicant, someone had left a small ring of flowers and grass woven lovingly and left on the ground to receive gifts of reverence from those hiking the Western Way, a stopping place where walkers could become still and remember who we are—pilgrims of Earth, journeying together, breathing the same air as the trees and our animal cousins.

Ruth wandered over the granite-and-grass escarpment just past the ruins, and I chose a perch on a bluff a hundred yards beyond the Druid stones (as we came to refer to them). After sitting for some time of quiet (except for the call of a passing bird or bleats of a lost lamb), I became still inside, and the unexpected occurred. In the distance off to my left and on the other side of the valley below Cashel Kilty, the place we had reached on our hike, stood a small mountain which the locals called Knockatee (Kawn uh ka TEE). My

[1] Clay Lerner, "Birthright." An unpublished poem used here by permission of the author.

attention was drawn to that mountain, and I became acutely aware of its hidden treasure. No, not minerals or other natural "resources." In the core of my being and throughout my body, I felt the knowing in that mountain. I felt its long story going back to Earth seasons before humankind, perhaps before mammals or any life, and the vast knowing accumulated in the long seasons of its becoming. I felt how we humans missed seeing that accumulated knowing as we searched elsewhere for a knowledge of our own making. I felt sad.

Even more passed between that mountain and me, and I wanted to write it down so I wouldn't lose any of it. I reached for my pen. I reached underneath my open jacket to my shirt pocket as though such a move were part of my autonomic nervous system. I'm one of those people who always has a pen. Always.

But not that morning. When my hand returned empty, I panicked.

I searched all my pockets. *I mustn't lose this moment. I must record what I've been given to see. I must!* I looked around for Ruth (who never has a pen), but she had disappeared from view. My search had revealed that I had also forgotten my pocket notebook but had in my pants pocket one crumpled-up page from it. So I had something to put words on but nothing to put them there with. *Okay, think.* I remembered that just about any pointy object could be used to make impressions on paper; then later one could shade over the impressions with a soft pencil lead and, *voila!* The words would appear. I had seen this done in detective movies.

All I needed was a hard, pointy object that would fit in my hand. I looked around. To my right, a small piece of granite about an inch and a half by an inch lay near in the shadow of a clump of gorse. I grabbed it and applied its point to my crumpled paper. I don't recall what I tried to write, what specifically had come to me from Knockatee Mountain, because the attempt came to naught. The little rock refused to write. I pressed harder and the paper tore. At that point, I became frustrated and far from inwardly still. I dropped the useless stone and, with my arms behind me, leaned back on my palms and sighed. My left hand felt something hard sticking up from the ground. I turned to see what it was, which turned out to be another small granite stone, an inch of it visible above the earth, but obviously more of it underneath. I pried it loose and held in my hand a narrow stone, about the length of my index finger and of a curiously familiar shape.

I stared at it, trying to recall where I'd seen that outline before. I glanced to my left, at Knockatee, then to my right where the remains of the stone circle stood in the distance below the bluff. Realization dawned. I picked up the stone I had dropped and held up the two stones silhouetted against the soft blue of the sky—the long one in my left hand, the squat one in my right. A skylark began to sing. My inside suddenly settled, became still again. Very still. I was looking at hand-held miniatures of the two Druid stones.

Then all was still, inside and out. No breeze. No lark. No bleat of lost lamb. No agitation over a missing pen. I stared dumbly at the two sets of stones—one palm-sized in my hands and the other life-sized in the distance. Coincidence? Well, yes. Literally, two incidents at the same time. No need to deny the fact of it. The mathematical odds made the event a bit of a stretch, but in the end, that didn't matter.

We had passed through the stillness of the forest, the primal mosses and trees older than any living human and the moist fecundity of undisturbed earth. We had stood before the seven-foot-tall Druid stone and reverenced its ancient presence and felt kinship with the people who had brought it there to make a place where they could be present to what Earth had told them, so that they could remember, not in the languages of script but in the languages of the Web of Life, the languages before predicates, languages wherein only subjects moved about and conversed.

I lowered my hands and looked down at the stones nesting in my open palms. The conversation that followed was wordless but clear as the Irish air after a spring rain. I recognized the concurrent absence of pen and notepad along with the presence of two silent stones rendered in the image of the Druid stones. I felt the wisdom of Earth in Knockatee Mountain calling to ancient knowing within me, wordless memory resident in bones and blood, in organs and muscle tissue, in neurons and dendrites and the gathered complexity of their long evolutionary history and ineffable emergence as repository of hidden treasure living in kinship with the forest mosses and velvet foxglove and sap of oak and flight of lark—and the dark depths of earthen mountain and rock with its story of fire and water and air and sacred emergence of Life.

But those words came later, much later. At the time, the conversation was wordless, an occurrence of what I subsequently learned to call the *sacrament of stillness*. It was communication within the Web-of-Life, not of ideas, not of concepts for explaining, but of Life itself—that familial breath that quickens awareness of kinship and calls us back to our Belonging.

Earthen Language

The land that includes us has its own articulations . . .[2]
David Abram

TOOK THE SMALL GRANITE STONES HOME. In time, I would refer to them as my meditation stones, teachers and reminders (which I often need) of the awareness that comes to us in the stillness, the hearing possible in the Silence—something that perhaps the Druids knew and, long before them, the people who gathered standing stones into circles. Later reflection in the stillness brought recollection of an ancient myth, written long after the stones of stillness had been gathered on Cashel Kilty.

In the book of Genesis, God brings the animals to Adam, "to see what he will name them." Would Adam recognize who stood there? Would he greet each one in stillness and remain so until he became aware of each one's nature, where each belonged in the Web of Life? Or would he assume a place of dominance and label each creature according to its usefulness? The myth doesn't directly tell us which but hints at it in the rest of the story, and subsequent history reveals naming not as a recognition but as a containment, verbal language as control device.

Nevertheless, in the evolution of our humanness, the birth of spoken language was most likely communally oriented and expressive of reverent connection to the Natural World. Then, as we became more "civilized," more internally domesticated, the leverage potential of verbal language moved gradually into the foreground and eventually reduced our linguistic gifts to a means for conceptually containing our surroundings and stretching out our hands to control them. Language shifted from a flowing communication of Life to an instrument for containment, like damming a river to control the power of the water.

When I reached for my pen and notepad, my purpose as cultural heir to language-as-leverage was to take hold of the experience of resonance which awareness of the mountain had brought me, and to relocate it within the boundaries of words. I wanted to name it.

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[2] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, Inc., 1996), p. 267.

I automatically wished to domesticate it, house the experience within the precincts of personal usefulness, as I had been trained to do in "growing up." This, of course, is linguistic control of the process we call *knowing*. I wanted to know. But there was no pen, no notepad, no domestication of the raw and living resonance of being deeply touched, known, by the living Earth. There was no redirecting the communication, no defending myself from its searching.

Early humans had a different consciousness than we have now. Their minds would not have been occupied by abstractions such as fill our minds today—no mental traffic of overdue bills, insurance premiums, meeting agendas, college funds, political pundits competing for mind space, job-market uncertainty, pending divorce proceedings, speeding ticket, concert tickets, credit card balance(s), performance evaluation, final exams, first-day jitters, last-day sorrows, lost-job depression, rush-hour-traffic stress, and numerous other thought patterns that seem to determine their own way, occupying our mental awareness without ever asking us what we actually want in our heads.

The conscious awareness of our forebears emerged from close communion with their surroundings. There was little to distract them from the natural ecology in which they moved and breathed. They were much more aware than we are of their place within the Web of Life. They saw deeply, and this required no great searching; the knowing was always with them, immediate to their senses. Before the invention of writing, most of our ancestors held few abstract concepts or words by which to express such ideas, but constantly informing their mental processes were the great icons of nature with all their organic connectedness, including family and village.

David Abram said that early human communities came to know themselves primarily as they were reflected back by the animate landscape. In such direct communion, body perceptions had access to a clear mind, clearer than most of us can even imagine. Thus, people easily perceived the Natural World as their home and themselves as belonging to the local landscape. It was experience of the familial, of expressive subjects rather than useful objects. They obviously did "make use" of elements of their natural surroundings, but did so within a consciousness of kinship, within the cycle of life, death, and renewal in which they participated but which they never dreamt of managing.

All of this relates to how we think about languages. Most of us today are accustomed to thinking of language as human languages. From a position of superiority as the only verbal animal, we label the others as non-language: instinct (animal communication), chemical-mechanical (plants), and competition for energy resources (ecosystems). We easily miss seeing the collective presence of these natural communications as languages within an Intelligence. But our ancient ancestors knew this Intelligence and were conversant in those languages. Even today, some indigenous peoples talk not only to each other but also to the local landscape and all its living beings.

How then did we humans become mono-linguistic? How came we to be tied to words and their concepts? A complete answer would require the whole story of how civilization emerged in its multiple versions and risings and fallings, but perhaps one small historical example from church history will illustrate.

Awareness and Approach

A gracious approach is the key that unlocks the treasures of encounter.[3]
John O'Donohue

HROUGH MOST OF THE MIDDLE AGES, monks practiced what was known as *lectio divina*, divine reading. It did not much resemble what we today would call reading; it was a body-engaged form of listening. The practice was to read the written words of scripture aloud, but to utter them distinctly and mindfully, feeling them in the whole body, thus fully entering into the experience of the words. It was a deep listening which the monks sought to cultivate in order to be present to the divine voice, to *taste* God.

Sometime in the twelfth century, a process of distancing entered into the monasteries. Great schools of theology had been founded and had prospered throughout Europe, and the analytical powers of the mind brought for themselves much honor, so scholarship gained emphasis and its authority eventually domesticated the spiritual life, including prayer. Reading of the scriptures became thoroughly organized by means of categories and methods for imposing ecclesiastical order. This analytical tendency, along with objectifying use of language, continued in the church until, by the sixteenth century, prayer was becoming a means to get things done, especially ecclesiastical projects, and, individually, a means to advance moral development. Prayer became useful; methods of prayer were developed for the service of categories of purposes. By the time the Renaissance was in full bloom, ". . . outer action rather than inner experience came to be the dominant value of religious life, just as it was beginning to dominate all other values of Western civilization."[4] The shift was from the inner desire to taste God (intimate knowledge) to the outer action of serving God, working for God (a relationship of distance). Historically, this movement toward the mono-language of management and away from the inner life and the languages that require listening and stillness has occurred repeatedly.

At Cashel Kilty, within view of ancient stone reverences under the clear Irish sky, I learned to let go of the impulse to seize real seeing for myself, for use, for explanation. To thus take hold for personal use is what one wise Christian monk of the 20th century called "the first dispersal of the soul."[5] To thus seize the experience for myself was my initial desire when I reached for my pen. But the mystery of our earthenness did its work and eventually brought to me what the touch of Earth's knowing "wants" to do.

The whole experience was of intimacy of communion, the language of touching. My work was not to interpret and contain and "learn" it; my work was to receive the stillness. Let the resonant recognition find place in me. My work was not to grasp it as though all depended on my ability to apprehend the event, to comprehend it in the boundaries of my words. My part of the conversation, the human capacity within me to converse with a living mountain, was to be still long enough for this living communication to move within me and do its work. This, I suspect, may be what religious doctrines are reaching for when they refer to grace.

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[3] John O'Donahue, *Divine Beauty* (London: Bantam Books, 2004), p. 30.
[4] Jacob Needleman, *Lost Christianity* (Boston: Element Books, Inc., 1993), pp. 129-130.
[5] Ibid. p. 270.

It was this openness to grace that Medieval monks were learning—to listen, to be still, to be aware. They could experience that awareness in the way that their preliterate ancestors had done, within the communal languages of Life. Many of them did. It would appear that St. Francis of Assisi learned to commune with the Natural World, to wander through the forest in a state of awareness. So, perhaps the chief characteristic of a reverent approach is an awareness that is able to listen, to receive the stillness that brings us into waiting-without-demands.

The Real touches you, perhaps in meditation, perhaps as inner resonance with the landscape or a tree or flowing stream, perhaps something you see in the eyes of another person as you sit over coffee in the city. In your receiving this touch, an insight appears, an image; a depth of recognition opens. You know what is happening because the familiar Voice of your Innermost has spoken before and emerges now from the mystery of your own being, rising into your awareness, not first of all to give you knowledge, but to know you. The touch is intimate, the communion such a wonder that words fail, and you find you have become still. In the stillness, a knowing stirs within you.

A Jewish sage referred to this experience as the Torah of inner whispers.

The Storied Earth

. . . along with the other animals, the stones, the trees, and the clouds, we ourselves are characters within a huge story that is visibly unfolding all around us, participants within the vast imagination, or Dreaming, of the world.[6]

We have forgotten the poise that comes from living in storied relation and reciprocity with the myriad . . . beings that perceptually surround us.[7]

Mythtelling assumes that the stories already exist in nature, waiting to be overheard by humans.[8]

ODAY, STORY IS LARGELY ENTERTAINMENT—beginning, middle, and end with interesting plot and characters (and, in popular movies, explosions). Originally, stories were not escape from the world but affirmations of kinship within the world. The first stories held the rudiments of myth, and the original myths were verbal expressions of the Earth-community conversations overheard by those who were constantly listening. Original myths were stories of relationships among the myriad living beings around us and of our relationship to them. A sacramental participation in the landscape brought to human consciousness understanding of the mental ecology of the local biome. The myths speak of the intelligences of specific places as the spirit of the place, the ecosystem as living Being.

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6 Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*, p. 167.
7 Ibid. p. 270.
8 Sean Kane, *Wisdom of the Mythtellers* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1998), p. 33.

The inner state of the original mythmaker was not one of purposeful probing for knowledge to be used for human purposes. The season of birth of an original myth was a timeless stillness, a place of no demands in which the Innermost of the mythmaker awaited resonance with the Natural World, to receive recognition of specific connections, patterns. The recognition was not abstract-conceptual but sacramental-communal. What the mythmaker saw could not be expressed in propositions, principles for use. No taking notes. Original myth embodied the languages of its origin, the languages of the dance of Life, in the relational imagery of story overheard, brought to the mythmaker in communion with the local ecology. And, like the Torah of inner whispers, the living language of myth awakens our remembering.

According to the mythtellers, we are part of the living music of the Earth, her dancing story, and our capacity to participate in the music and move among its rhythms was a gift from our animal helpers. Evolutionary biology also tells us that we inherited from our animal forebears, but evolutionary biology does not tell us how to honor this connection nor how to communicate with it, let alone *within* it. Myth, born within the participation of honoring and communicating, speaks a different language than science. The original mythtellers were not trying to conceptually "explain" how the world works, to scientifically contain it for management. Their stories were sacramental in the sense of participatory, acting within the world, not upon it. Those stories, told communally around a fire at night or inside a lodge to young people transitioning to adulthood, were repositories of an ecology of knowing; they held the "parts" of the local Web-of-Life in a living dance of relationships wherein no life was separated from the sacred pattern of familial connection. For our preliterate ancestors, story was the appropriate linguistic vehicle for the communication of understanding—a human language infused with Earth language. Each telling of a story was active participation in the living landscape, knowledge as intimacy.

All this changed with the advent of civilization. Once we built walls to keep the Natural World outside, we made our stories serve political purposes; they became human stories, about humans and human-looking gods, and whatever elements remained from original myth were gathered into the service of the human-centered story. Eventually, over centuries of refinement, that process gave us story-as-entertainment.

Yet many of us today are rediscovering our original languages, finding that we too can hear Earth tell her stories, and they are closer to us than the words in our heads. And sometimes those stories include a mysterious something extra, something the mythtellers hinted at, beyond what is visible.

The Womb of Living Language

I have faith in something that I cannot name, that has no name, that words ruin.
The Changeling of Finnistuath, page 244

The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao
The name that can be named is not the eternal name
The nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth
Tao Te Ching, Chapter 1

If you would hear the Nameless, and will dive
Into the temple-cave of your own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, you
May haply learn the Nameless has a Voice
By which you will abide if you be wise,
As if you knew, though you cannot know.

Alfred Lord Tennyson, "The Ancient Sage," lines 31-36

HAT I LEARNED TO CALL THE SACRAMENT OF STILLNESS lies near the sacred center of the languages of Life. In the Belonging are numerous languages, and they live in our bodies and in the Earth and in Silence. Our awareness of them arises fully only in the stillness, which is a specific expression in the body of that reverence of approach to which John O'Donohue liked to direct our attention. He was fond of reminding us that this stillness is not just absence of movement (indeed, it can happen while we walk or run) but primal presence of our earthenness. He said,

Rather than taking us out of ourselves, nature coaxes us deeper inwards, teaches us to rest in the serenity of our elemental nature. When we go out into nature, clay is returning to clay. We are returning to participate in the stillness of the earth . . .[9]

The stillness is not our own but greater than we. We don't create our own stillness; we learn the intimacy of the stillness as it comes visiting. As the stillness of Earth touches us—the tranquility of a pond, the hush deep within an ancient forest, the beckoning grandeur of a tiny wildflower dressed in purple and gold—not merely as an aesthetic experience but as communion of Life to life, we *recognize* the stillness that has always lived within us. The inner knowing that has never left us resonates to the quiet communion of our Belonging.

John O'Donohue referred to the experience of this stillness, in which we let go of the effort to think through and reach self-directed conclusions, as the "leave-taking of your surface knowing," which often "allows the deeper knowing within you to emerge."[10] This deeper knowing speaks the sacred languages which evoke our forgotten kinship. These languages are non-purposeful; you can't carry an agenda into their conversations. The unbound languages of the Natural World are permeable to our unconscious ecology of perception and to metaphorical expression in story and poetry and art, but not to labeling, definition, purposeful control.

Those who long ago "discovered" the contemplative experience of meditation saw it as freedom from goal-driven motivation, from the ego need to achieve; it was freedom to *be*, and in the stillness, to see. Since meditation became popular in the West, it has been rendered a tool of usefulness, a means to gain certain ends. Busy people use it to calm their nerves so they can function efficiently in high-pressure workplaces where competition and uncertainty create anxieties. This is the same sort of alteration that overtook *lectio divina* and that original myth underwent as it was "civilized" and that has made the Natural World merely aesthetically pleasing or a collection of material resources. Nevertheless, the stillness remains unaltered.

[9] O'Donohue, *Divine Beauty*, p. 22.
[10] Ibid. p. 22.

The oldest and most accessible path to stillness is conversation with the Natural World. There, as we are alone and become deeply aware of a tree that grew before the birth of our great, great grandparents, or feel the silence-as-Presence in the slowly approaching tide, we naturally become still inside because that within us which is of the Web of Life resonates to the presence of our Belonging. Yet there is something more as "nature coaxes us deeper inward."

The sacrament of stillness introduces us to the Silence, that primordial emptiness of intent and openness to possibility that becomes the fertile field for our hearing and seeing. In the Silence, there is an assurance that needs no agenda, no focused intent, no plan nor goal. For many of us (and, I suspect, for the original mythmakers) the Silence seems to be even larger than the Natural World, seems to contain in some inexplicable way all the languages of Earth's stories, perhaps even before Earth told them. The Silence is even further removed from the conceptual than are Earth's conversations. People have turned Earth's stories into explanation, not so with ontological Silence. Even as the Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao, the Silence that can be explained is not the primordial Silence.

> The mystery of the Silence awakens us to the sacred absence of the light contained in words.
> Thus . . . *we awaken to darkness.*[11]

Those who have deeply experienced the Silence say that it awakened them to a sacred Darkness, a sense of Belonging that leaves all ideas and explanations in a far-off and beggarly dimness of light. The place where words dissolve, where explanation is empty, where correctness cannot enter—this place seems to the surface mind very dark in its rejection of words dressed in conceptual light. And dark it is, a darkness that sages of all traditions speak of with reverence. Within the Silence, all the languages of Earth are safe from artificial light. Indeed, we cannot become fluent in those languages until the Silence knows us in the Dark that brings us back to our original selves, to the central altar and place of the Voice.

This Darkness brings its own dawn, offers understanding slowly, over entire seasons of a human life. Wendell Berry speaks to how it is impermeable to the light of explanation and offers a bit of wisdom to all who would enter:

> *To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.*
> *To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,*
> *And find that the dark too blooms and sings*
> *And is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.*[12]

Explanations hold the explained at a distance; today we call this knowledge and communicate in its language. But what if the original mythmakers did understand, and the basis of creation is intimacy? What if participation in the Web-of-Life is the truly authentic conversation for humans? What if the languages in the bodies of plants and animals and humans and ecosystems are the real languages, and our English or French or Russian or Spanish are merely artifacts of history?

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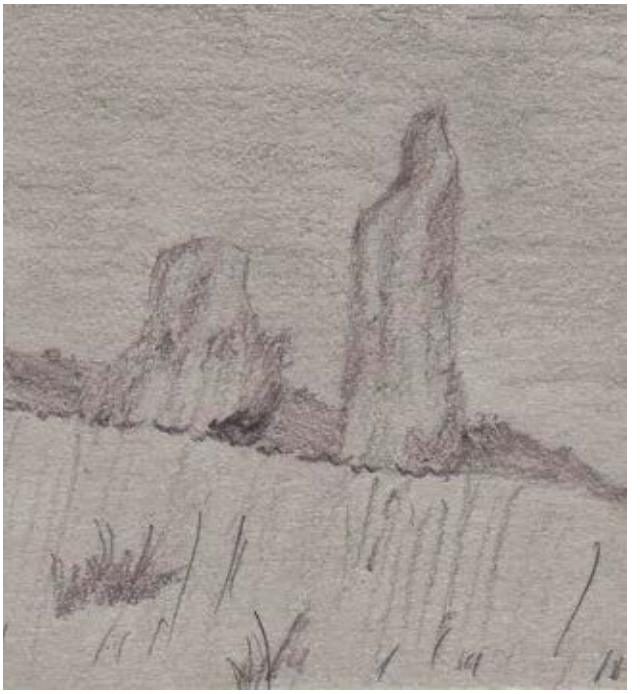
[11] Jacob Needleman, *A Sense of the Cosmos* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1975), p. 4.
[12] Steve Van Matre, *The Earth Speaks* (Warrensville, Ill.: The Institute for Earth Education, 1983), quoted on p. 158.

And beyond those questions, what if the most significant communication not only does not come to us through concepts and principles and labeling and explaining, but is the touch of that ontological reality which must remain Nameless? Yes, and what if the "Nameless has a Voice," and hearing that Voice requires the Silence—communion of the grace to understand, though we "cannot know"?

A far-off mountain in Ireland invited me into communion within the Web-of-Life— invitation to walk in the sacrament of stillness among the trees and flowers and fellow beings of our Belonging and hear Earth tell her stories in languages closer than words. Even now, my meditation stones invite me into the dark origin of living language—the mystery of primordial Silence.



John Shackelton has been an educator for thirty-four years. His twenty-two years of teaching experience have included lower elementary, middle and high school, and college; he has served as head of three alternative schools, most recently Rainbow Mountain Children's School in Asheville, NC. John is semi-retired and currently teaches as a part-time adjunct at AB-Tech Community College in Asheville. He is on the board of an alternative school which emphasizes learning in the natural world, Mountain Sun Community School in Brevard, NC. He also does educator training workshops focused on teaching as a sacred work. He has one published novel, *The Lowly Papers*, a story of Appalachia.

Lettering by Liz Levitt-Bradley, drawing by Ruth Shackelton

Gifts in the Leaves

by

Andrew Levitt

From the Lost and Found of Ordinary Things

I

Somewhere in the street in autumn
when dead leaves spill across the threshold of the house
I lost my hat It was a hat of little quality
the kind you see in bins for Lost and Found
at schools and never is reclaimed
When I discovered it was gone
I made a bid for its recovery
retracing my last strides along the street
To no avail The thing is lost
It lies among the discards
in a season of discarded things
guttered with the fallen and unwanted

II

The neighbor who recovered my lost hat
attached it to the stop sign in his yard with tape
as if to indicate a common thing
is worthy of distinction
I passed it on a run but turned around
and took it home to wash and hang out on the line
It hangs there now suspended with
the golden maple leaves that have not fallen
Like them it has a place and purpose in this autumn
as an index in the Lost and Found
of ordinary things that were abandoned
and retrieved with greater value

To Release Those Times Whose Time Is Done

Leaf by leaf the trees renew themselves
by shedding what is past its season
But we with our long memories
are less resilient when the air grows cold
We wrap ourselves in thin and brittle things
old rags that wouldn't keep a beggar warm in June
We would do better to release
those times whose time is done
before a bitter winter frost and wind
exposes naked flesh and bone

Autumn's Final Rose is Fading

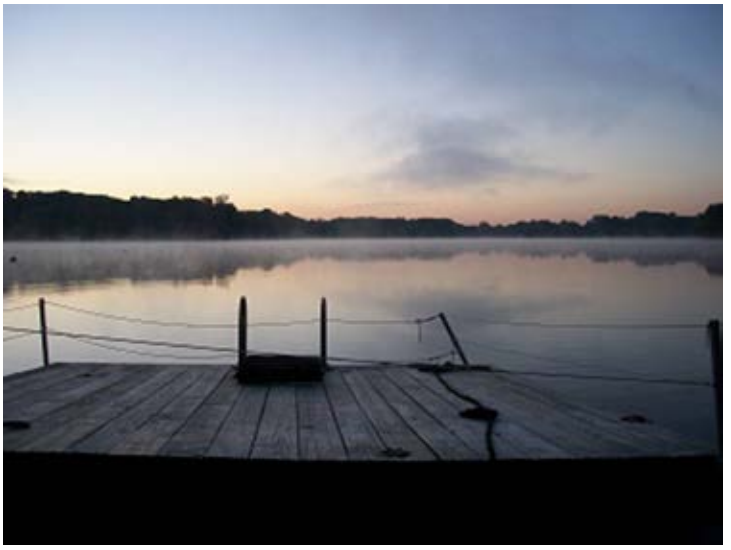
As sweet gum oak and maple limbs explode
across the landscape like a caravan
of fools in motley costume called
to entertain the melancholy king
autumn's final rose is fading
Nature's pink is out of fashion in the fall
though I suppose a rose is never out
of season while it lasts The tenderness
of roses is eternal Like the grace of God
the moment of such gifts is always now

Andrew Levitt holds a BA in English from Yale University and a PhD in Folklore from the University of Pennsylvania. He trained as a mime with Marcel Marceau and with Paul J. Curtis at The American Mime Theatre. In his career life, he has worked with silence and words. He performed and taught mime professionally for over thirty years. He then helped found the high school at the Emerson Waldorf School in Chapel Hill, NC where he taught Humanities and directed theater for seven years. As Dr. Merryandrew, he currently works as a cosmic clown in the Pediatric unit at Moses Cone Memorial Hospital. A nature poet, Andrew lives in Greensboro, NC with his wife, Peggy. In his neighborhood, he is known as the man who walks a big white dog.

In Grandmother's Presence

by

Joanne Rothstein



The Practice

My practice is a simple one: to sit early morning by the lake near my home. The lake, in the midst of a densely populated suburb, collects the water of a seventy square mile watershed and shepherds it, via a connecting river, to the harbor. I call the lake Grandmother. At the lake I focus, with love and attention, on what calls to me there and so much does: pairs of heron in aerial dance with each other, the haunting sound of swans in flight, grandfather fish tugging systematically at weeds growing on the beach ropes, the wind, the shift of a songbird from its loud every day chirp to a melody of rare sweetness, the evergreen amidst the brilliance of fall colored leaves, the wind-ruffled patterns on the water's surface, the smell of rot and decay, the smell of cold – unending abundance. A not-so-solitary, solitary practice.

I approach the lake before the activity of dawn. The darkness makes it easier to settle into the silence. The darkness invites receptivity and is helpful to someone whose sense of sight is quick to spark the mind and the world of manufacture. I sit quietly to behold. The silence itself offers space for this conversation, this deep listening. In the present moment I bring my awareness to the sounds, the smells, the touch, the sights.

There is always someone or something that calls me to go deeper. The communion begins with my senses. These are the portals to the outer world, the portals of connection that take the messages offered in never-ending abundance from the Universe inward. Messages that merge with my heart's ancient memories evoke a recognition and a response: a tear, a laugh, a sigh, a fear, a longing – each a child of my heart to be given back to the world. The birds sing their sweet songs, the fish arch and thrust with power above the water, but we speak with our hearts. Our heart's song is our answering reply to the Divine. So begins an exchange of intimacy, and rounds of unending verse.

The Experience

At the start, I find myself very conscious of the practice. I "behold" the practice itself and describe my experiences as follows.

~Delighting in sights and sounds of early morning at the water's edge.

~Paying attention, noticing so many exquisitely beautiful aspects and noticing heart-wrenching ones.

~Notice while I am beholding, in the course of my loving attention, I am also trying to "capture" these moments. I take what my eyes see and want to find the right word to describe it, the right association to remember it. I watch the clouds and muse over their shapes. I smell an odor and try to discriminate its content. I hear a bird's beautiful melody and want to know its identifying features for future reference. I glimpse a perfect moment of sunrise and want the moment captured with my camera.

~I feel I am veering from being present, that my mind and my ego are taking me off course. Although I delight in these diversions, I am starting to understand the writings of the blind French author Jacques Lusseyran and see that this is a defense of mine, a way of protecting myself. It's safe when I define the experience and hold nature at arm's length.

~I begin to sense as fully as I can, remaining open, receptive and present. No commenting, no editorializing. Nothing more. Thinking in terms of the energetics of it. Staying open allows me to receive vibrations, as Lusseyran describes it, like opening all the channels.[1] So I begin to "listen" inwardly and outwardly. And if I feel an emotion arising, I pay attention to that as well and to how my body responds. I enter into what phenomenologist Robert Sardello refers to as "the inner discipline of disclosing what is present."[2]

~I start to understand that a "proper exchange" applies to listening too. It is a question of balance. I am always more active than passive. Dawn at the beach is a flurry of activity as darkness passes its baton and that suited me fine. I know now that this outward tendency of mine deters deep relationship. I'm practicing being open to receive. It is a very uncomfortable posture for me probably because I feel vulnerable. But it is communion after all and it is these very moments of vulnerability and intimacy that define the experience.

The Experience of Clouds

After closing my eyes for a while I open them to look back at the clouds. There is an immediate recognition of the cloud as a living entity and an acknowledgement in return, the cloud's recognition of me! I experience the sense of being seen on a deep level, touched, bared and embraced. It feels both painful and perfect as I simultaneously experience longing and belonging. It is an instantaneous and familiar knowing. This is not an inert cloud swiftly drifting past but a consciousness I have connected to, have a relationship with. This moment of intimacy opens a floodgate of emotions – feelings of immense joy, gratitude and unworthiness.

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[1] Jacques Lusseyran, *Against the Pollution of the I* (New York: Parabola Books, 1999), pp. 84-90.
[2] Robert Sardello, *Silence* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2008), p. 9.

The Experience of Vapor

In the early morning, light, sky and lake commune together. They often mirror each other, speak to the world in one voice. One morning as I behold their sharp, clear, reflective images an immense thick white vapor silently appears. Moving with some speed it engulfs all that it meets, flowing into the area like some ethereal molten, filling the landscape from heaven to earth. Filling me with fear. Sniffing deeply I struggle to determine if it is smoke and an approaching fire. With each breath I discern the faintest memory of pine. The thickness continues to pour into the area. Facing an absolutely new experience, fear engages my mind with imaginings of toxic gas and impending cyanotic convulsions, even the possible arrival of some queer creature. Grandmother has completely disappeared from sight.

Courage or stupidity, it couldn't be named, but I stay. The animals and birds remain quiet. Just the sound of falling leaves, but it was late November and the trees mostly bare – the sound of swollen rain drops one hears just prior to a downpour, but the downpour never arrives. I settle back in my chair. Still alive. That's a good sign. No foaming from the mouth, no attackers from the thick.

Is this thick fog? My earlier fear dissolves, supplanted now by another, this one very old. It feels like the dread of my seafaring ancestors who experienced this fog under different circumstances. This ancient fear harbored in the port of my cells rushes for release. It leaves me space to be with this rare moistness. The land firmly under my feet, I lift my face toward the mist in welcome. Enveloped now in a cloak of rare beauty, content to be a part of the mystery. Feelings of gratitude lay bare shame and embarrassment as I face my disconnect and grieve that my first responses to this gift of early morn are fear, suspicion and distorted perceptions. But are they not a part of the mystery too?

What do I behold, if not rarefied air and a rare communion of sky and water. Perhaps the clouds so pine for Grandmother that on this occasion they descend secretly in the stillness and dark to touch her. Have I not heard their tears at their joyous reunion? And smelled their perfumed bouquet gathered from the pines they caressed along their quiet journey to this meeting?

The Experience of Heavenly Passage

Sometimes I see the souls. Just when morning's first light begins to color the sky with the palest blue and reflects on the lake's quiet surface. The water's edges smudged to a vague softness. That's the time I see them, when the wind's a mere gentle caress. That's when I see the legions of souls. The procession is endless. Determined hordes of ghostly wisps lean with the wind in the direction of the water's flow. They prepare to leave the sanctuary of the lake, hovering, gliding on her surface. And then, as if responding to some wordless cue, they leap courageously from water to air. In silence, in agony or ecstasy they're torn apart, violently twisting and turning for a moment as they transfigure and then vanish. In this sacred moment water rejoins air, returning to the sky, the Heavenly Father. The legions continue to come. I feel a deep gratitude and honor their courage, feeling at the same time my own fear in embracing transformation. I witness a ritual that has happened since the beginning of time. This air I breathe is an ancient air. My body, an ancient body. This is what I am remembering. And then I notice my own cold breath drift off toward the water, to join the legions. It is our transformation. I behold in silence and joy this holy moment.

The Experience of Small Bird

My senses are assaulted by the putrid smell of garbage and sewer, an oil slick on the shoreline and wide bands of sludge hovering on the water's surface, lingering heavy and thick. My senses take it in. I'm aware of my anger, my sadness and fear. I'm aware where I hold it in the body. I'm aware how my mind wants to assign blame, wants to initiate action. I try to let it go, feeling how it pulls me away from acceptance. But my senses continue to birth these feelings. My inclination is to distract myself with a more selected embrace of nature but my heart says otherwise. How do I let go my resistance, lay myself bare to this reality and to my mind's fear that there is no coming out of it?

I observe the blue sheen of oil on the beach's edge. Little sparrows hop close by, all in a flutter, pecking for breakfast on the debris beached by the waves. How is it I see misfortune but this delicate being blessing? With an old terry towel I pat up the oil, feeling so much tenderness in this ministration. A dark heron flies silently by. Can I tenderly pat up my sense of violation, hopelessness, powerlessness? How do I wash away the resentment, the outrage, the grief, the fear? Is it even mine? I feel disconnected from Grandmother, mired in my mind and overwhelming emotions. It isn't easy to behold Grandmother. And I don't know how but I know that listening to her, responding to her will be both our salvations. In spite of my mind's attempts, my heart calls me back to be in the present moment, even in all its ugliness.

Day after day returning to the lake, I steel myself for what I expect to see. Yet in the practice of beholding it, the flow of emotions seems to soften my armor and I yield, little by little, to listen to the voice of the earth rather than the voice of the mind. My own heart's voice is asking me simply to trust. Over time I begin to feel the comfort in doing this. It becomes profoundly freeing to trust that my heart will open wide enough to receive the wisdom and guidance of the Universe, to see the situation as the small bird – a gift.

With time, the waters and the beach regain vitality. The scum and oily residue gradually leave, but the foul odor persists and so does my awareness of it. Close to the water's edge from fall to spring a raft is moored. As I go deeper with my observing in the dim early light I occasionally notice different water wave patterns radiating outward from the edge of the raft. One morning when the odor is particularly offensive I catch a glimpse of these waves again and this time, the dark brown head and furry body of a muskrat purposely swimming away from the underside of the raft to the nearby shore. MUSKrat, of course! That's the odor—authentic musk odor! A great joke on me! I have to laugh at myself – how removed from nature am I? It is so amazing to me how one tiny observation can, in a split second, shift one's whole perspective, and subsequently one's relationships. The odor no longer offends me. In fact my heart lightens when I now detect it, because it forecasts a welcomed visit. This hardworking little critter built a nest in one of the empty metal drum underneath the raft – which provides the raft's buoyancy. When the odor disappears with the colder weather, I become attuned to muskrat presence just by the subtle movement of the water by the raft's edges. When the snows come I rarely see one but if I listen very carefully, on occasion, I hear a yawn and a stretch or a quick plop as they enter the water from their hidden nest.

The Understanding

I come to realize that my interaction with the muskrat is a metaphor for that deep listening, for being present to what the world offers, not what I think it should offer. The situation at the lakefront is not a call to attend to environmental advocacy but to attend to exactly what is present to me – muskrat and all. *The true*

nature of things is not revealed by their first appearance.[3] I listened and the Universe responded. Spending mornings in silence and intimacy with the lake and the living world I have learned that to listen deeply, to honor, to give witness, to behold the Divine in the presence of the moment is the purpose of existence. Being and beholding bring us to that place of gratitude, opening the heart to participate fully in life, to offer our own gifts. When the heart is open, imagination and creativity burst forth like the ghostly wisps leaping to rejoin the sky. The heart acknowledges, give thanks, and mirrors the Divine just as the sky mirrors the lake and the bird returns the call. Imagination then celebrates the wonder, the unending beauty and possibilities of the world.

There are times, sitting with the lake, that I long for a particular presence – the fox to once again visit and dance past my chair. There are times when I miss seeing the hooded mergansers bob their heads enticingly toward their partners. But I've come to trust that what presents is exactly what will nourish me. I've come to see my purpose in being present, in listening deeply, in witnessing and in expressing gratitude. It is the beholding (manifesting the longing) that brings the belonging described by John O'Donohue in *Eternal Echoes: Exploring Our Yearning to Belong*. This mutual embrace with the living world is our experience of the sacred. The Iroquois understand the Divine as the summation of all life in the Universe. I believe that to be held in that embrace is all that we ever really long for.

I continue to visit Grandmother and to listen. A beautiful Hopi Indian Prophecy says: *When the Grandmothers speak, the Earth will heal.*

Joanne Rothstein, after an early education catching frogs in her backyard vernal pond, graduated with a degree in biology from the College of New Rochelle and embarked on a 25-year career in medical research. A personal exploration of alternative medicine led to a career shift and a Masters degree in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. She presently maintains an acupuncture practice in the Boston area. Joanne currently works on the Executive Committee for the Sacred Fire Community, an international organization committed to developing deep community for the sake of personal and community well-being and balanced relationship with nature. She brings her creativity, humor and enthusiasm to her work in Welcoming and Gratitude.

[3] Lusseyran, p. 54.

Taking A Walk On A Path

by

Katherine Ziff

"If we have powers of imagination, these are activated by the magic display of color and sound, of form and movement, such as we observe in the clouds of the sky, the trees and bushes and flowers, the waters and the wind, the singing birds, and the movement of the great blue whale through the sea. If we have words with which to speak and think and commune, words for the inner experience of the divine, words for the intimacies of life, if we have words for telling stories to our children, words with which we can sing, it is again because of the impressions we have received from the variety of beings about us."[1]

~ Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*

Photo by Lisa Tate

(The following journal entries are from Katherine's study and practice as a member of CEINW's Inner Life of the Child in Nature class of 2010-2012. She participated as a distance learner and sent the entries to the Center during the Fall of 2011)

[1] Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), p. 11

Athens, Ohio
13 October 2011

I am well into the eighth week of school and fall is here. This morning, at predawn, the sky is mostly filled with clouds but I can see the full moon setting to the west, behind the trees, and a few stars. The hills are black against the indigo sky and a heavy mist fills the Hocking River valley below. We are to have thunderstorms this afternoon. I am glad the leaves are not ready to fall and we will have a good stretch of color over the next few weeks.

My practice this year in my schools is "taking a walk on a path" with individual children and "noticing" what is outside the window. I have lunch two days a week with a child who benefits greatly from quiet time and, I am discovering, especially time in nature. We have begun taking walks around the school. Our rural school is fortunate to have a paved path with apple trees, milkweed garden and oak trees. She asks to walk quietly so that we might hear the birds and the wind. We often pass an oak tree of medium size where she stops and listens intently to the leaves in the wind. Then, "Mr. Tree (her name) is talking!" she exclaims. On another walk she reflects how one could live under this tree, with just a pallet for a bed and a few shelves. This week she delighted in catching leaves that fell in bursts from Mr. Tree. Standing under him she conceived the idea of creating a Winter Wonderland in December, a place of quiet beauty, within my counseling room. Toward this end she and I have been snipping paper snowflakes to be hung from the ceiling at different heights. She has invited a friend, a boy, to join us on the walks and with the Winter Wonderland work. Whenever I think I have had a long and tiring day I think of what this boy has told of his mother, that she works the night shift in a glass factory an hour away and when she comes home his father holds her hands and gently brushes and picks away the tiny bits of glass stuck there.

Athens, Ohio
19 December 2011

While walking with me outside the school in September, to enjoy the sunshine and birds and apple trees, a child asked to create a peaceful winter nature environment inside the school. She began planning and working in my room and invited a friend, a boy, to help and they snipped snowflakes all fall and most recently painted, on blue poster paper, snowmen and gingerbread houses in a snowy forest. They also fashioned little snowmen from clay and bits of fabric, for an icy lake with a white snowy bank created from lengths of blue satin (they carefully trimmed the frazzled edges) and white muslin that had been given to me for use in our ArtBreak program. From the ceiling we hung dozens of paper snowflakes and my son, a theater electrician, on hearing about the project, installed two small spotlights so that we might turn out the fluorescents, illuminate the flakes, and create beautiful snowflake shadows on the white walls. My job was to help the children bring their vision to form.

The day before we opened the Winter Wonderland I found while hiking many fallen-over dried milkweed stalks, with pods, and bundled these namesakes of the great healer Asclepius into a silver vase along with a bird's nest - this arrangement also created beautiful shadows. The children asked that we play the "Snow" CD made last year by our music teacher of the school's children's choir singing. I chose a song with a simple, heart-centered melody entitled "Northern Lights", about the shining aurora in winter.

Well, the installation was magical, in the words of the children and teachers who toured through last Monday morning. They walked silently, with smiles and wonder at the experience, led by the two children taking turns leading them with beaming mindfulness. Teachers asked to come back later during their breaks to sit and enjoy. I found notes on my desk "this is fantastic", "so peaceful and calm", "this is the happy space in the school!"

Sometimes when we are calm and peaceful we are able to bring to awareness feelings that we guard within our hearts. A few children that day, I believe because of their experience with the Winter Wonderland, were able to touch on feelings of great sadness that they had not been able to express, and we were able to find support for them. The morning was healing for me also, carrying me through the week, because as it happened a good colleague and friend, my fellow elementary school counselor, had died just a few hours earlier, from a long illness.

All of this because of the practice of walking with children outdoors in the schoolyard which I undertook at your encouragement.

Katherine Ziff is an elementary school counselor in the Athens City Schools in the Hocking River Valley of Appalachian Ohio. She has developed for her school a group counseling program for children called ArtBreak which draws upon the restorative, healing nature of studio art. She holds a doctorate in counselor education and is the author of *Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape*. An exhibiting artist, Katherine lives in Athens with her husband Matthew. She recently received the Athens League of Women Voters Barbara Wiseman Award for her work with children and mental health.

About The Center

We live in an historic time of deep disconnect from the earth, our home. The natural world has become polluted and the human diminished. Reduced to a mere physical entity seen only through physical eyes, we "see" the earth and one another as a "collection of objects, not as a communion of subjects," as cultural historian Thomas Berry warns us. And yet, something within us tells us it is also a time of great transformation - a moment of grace if only we can learn to discern the signs.

In the Fall of 2000, a non-profit center was initiated at Timberlake Earth Sanctuary in the foothills of North Carolina that gave evidence of that transformation and hope for the future. From the beginning, the Center created programs through which children participated in a real, living communion with plants and animals and all living things of the earth. These moments of communion were not stories of disconnection from the earth. They were moments of deep bonds of intimacy that exist between children and plants and animals and trees, moments of connection to all living things.

As we created these programs for children, we asked ourselves, "What is this mysterious bond of intimacy that is almost palpable between children and the earth?" And, "How can it be understood in such a way as to offer approaches to educating children that allow them to affirm the feeling that humanity and the natural world are indivisibly one?"

The Center began to explore the implications of this view of the universe as an interdependent whole for the education of children. On the one hand, we were witnessing an increasing estrangement from the natural world in the lives of both teachers and children. On the other hand, we were encouraged by the ways in which teachers and children responded to our programs designed to affirm the interior binding force of the universe that holds all, human and non-human, in a deep bond of intimacy.

In the Fall of 2003, the name of the non-profit was changed to "The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World" to better reflect the focus of our work. We gathered together leading thinkers as adjunct faculty to help develop this new approach to education.

We consistently sought to deepen our consciousness of the earth and our relationship to it, inspired and encouraged at all junctures by the presence of Greensboro native Thomas Berry who was known both nationally and internationally as a cosmologist, eco-theologian, geologian and who we knew at the Center as a dear and personal friend. His books *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Universe Story* (co-authored with Brian Swimme), *The Great Work*, *Evening Thoughts*, and *The Sacred Universe*, affirm both an ancient and a new understanding that human beings and nature are one . . . that we are all part of the one story of the universe itself. Thomas Berry urged us to enter into a truly human intimacy with the earth, and it is to this new mode of human presence to the earth that our programs point.

For a full description of the Center's programs for adults and children, please go to our website at www.beholdnature.org

There is a different way of knowing. The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World is about this other mode of consciousness. What you are doing at the Center is fundamental and deeply important at this time in history. The children of the twenty-first century will determine the fate of this planet. The twentieth century was a century of death and destruction. The twenty-first must be a century of life. The Center is giving children integral experiences, validating experiences to give immediacy to the natural world in the course of their own human development as an emerging consciousness in our time.

~ Thomas Berry

The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World is a leading advocate and model of a view of educational practice in which intuitive, imaginal and contemplative ways of knowing, in all their unifying capacities, are seen as central to the development of a mutually enhancing relationship between the human being and the natural world. Such a view, if practiced at all levels of learning, can begin to change our understanding of the role we play within this life-bearing process we know as "nature."

Through its programs for educators and children, the Center is a national resource ~ a remarkable gestating environment ~ for reflection and practice that is leading to practical outcomes affecting the child, the natural world, and the culture at large.

Please consider becoming a Friend of the Center by making a donation today. All Friends of the Center receive two issues of our newsletter, *Chrysalis*, per year. To donate online, go to our website at www.beholdnature.org or send your check, payable to CEINW, to:

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