

SHE WHO KNOWS

Magazine for Awakening Women

Autumn 2016 | Edition 7

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EMBRACING AUTUMN

HERSTORY:
WOMEN'S HISTORY
IN EDUCATION

SELF LOVE

VINTAGE WOMEN

SACRED MENOPAUSE

RECLAIMING OUR
EMOTIONS

MENSTRUATION AS
SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

WILD HERB WISDOM

LUCY FILCE
~ Featured Artist

**CHILDLESS?
CHILD FREE?
VOICES OF THOSE
WITHOUT CHILDREN**

ISSN: 2397 2939



India Sophia Rose

Mmm, Autumn is in the air and with it that welcome feeling of returning home after Summer adventures. Time to nest, draw close to hearth and home and refocus on what's important in our lives.

In this Autumn edition we touch on the oft sidelined subject and variety of emotions of what it is to be a woman without children. We hear the voices of women exploring the different aspects of this rich topic - sometimes an empowered choice that women make for themselves and other times a choice that life seems to make for us bringing grief, vulnerability and a whole host of other emotions.

We are also inspired to be sharing a selection of articles written on the subject of and by women in the Autumn of their lives, celebrating this as a time of coming to rest in the wisdom gained through life's journey.

So relax, pull on an extra layer and some woolly socks, get cosy and enjoy the read!

With love as always,

Cheryl and Isabella xxx

Keeper of tomorrow's dreams,
Mother of the star-filled night,
Show me how to live my truth
And bring my dreams to light.

Teach me how to use my will,
Living the truth I find within,
Discovering all the parts of me
Where light and shadow blend.

Let me sing the song of future
With concern for what will be,
Upholding all of nature's laws
For creatures, stones and trees.

Jamie Sams



treesisters
women seeding change



She Who Knows Magazine has joined TreeSisters to become part of the growing sisterhood funding the regeneration of the tropics. Check out their website www.treesisters.org for further details of the project.

We welcome articles, art work, poems and stories for consideration for future editions.
Please send them to isabella@shewhoknowsmagazine.com

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WOMAN HOOD

Woman - hood

Woman's cloak

Woman's wood

Wisdom oak

Perspective space

Objective seeing

A vulnerable place

a protective feeling

I feel it now

What i always saw

The respectful vow

Steady, truthful, Raw

Not all women wear

the woman - hood cloak

Not all are sure of what they

have spoke

But all have spinner

fabric and thread

Just listen within

and hear what 'She' said.

By Rubymoon Hilliard (Aged 16)



Rest in Autumn's Abundance

with Isabella Lazlo

India Sophia Rose

Autumn arrives with the scent of decay, a subtle drop in temperature, the nights grow longer and sunset greets us earlier in the evening. It's the time of harvest, when fruits and vegetables are aplenty and weigh heavy on the bows. Seed heads stand tall as the winds dry the seeds for the coming year. Nature is brilliant and the wisdom of her cycles teaches us abundantly if we listen and observe.

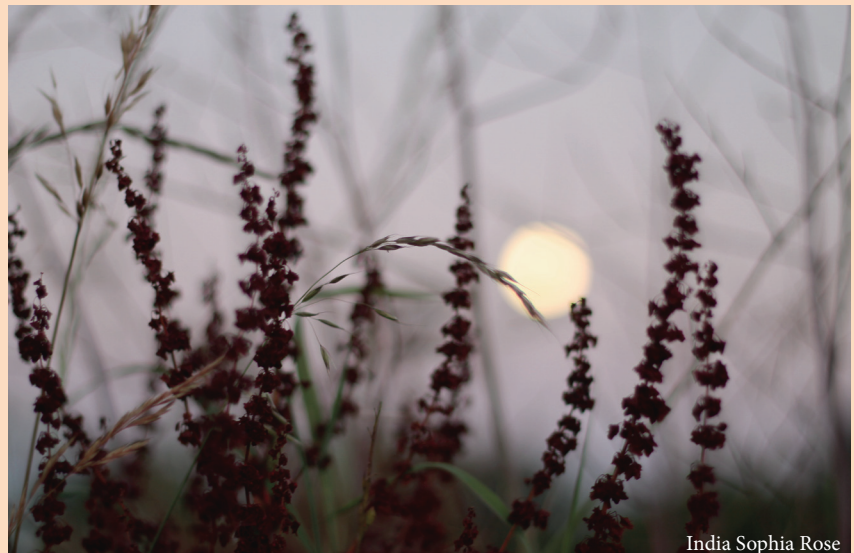
At this time of year I like to fill my stores for the coming winter, I make medicinal honeys and tinctures to feed and nourish my family's immune systems through the colder moons and collect in apples, blackberries and plums from the garden for juicing, crumbles and pies. It's a time of abundance; I am mother with the big Mama Earth, filling cupboards and log piles for the long nights to come, a time to be grateful for all that we have harvested.

The busyness and fullness of Summer is over, our fertile creativity comes to rest and we harvest in the fruits of that creativity. It's a time to draw our gifts back into ourselves, bring expansive projects to completion and focus our energy closer to home in projects that will carry us through winter.

Like the Autumn in a woman's cycle, when we slow down and re-organise in preparation for our bleed and

dreaming time, and in our lives as coming to rest in the true potency of women when we reach the menopause, who we are as a woman. A time to this is a time for stripping away listen deeply to our inner knowing everything that no longer has meaning, and honour our seeing nature.

Autumnal Meditation



India Sophia Rose

As Summer turns to Autumn, take some time to walk out on the land, to take in the colour and sounds and scents of the new season. This will allow your body to align with the Autumnal energy and begin to slow down and loose the layers that are ready to be shed.

As you walk or sit in the natural world reflect and feel your gratitude for where you are in your life, for the food, waters and medicines that the Earth gifts you. Reflect too on the fruits of your own life, remember back to the dark of Winter and the seeds and intentions you may have sown, remember as Spring arrived and you moved into the quickening, the time of action and purpose and then the fullness of Summer, what fruits have emerged through this cycle of your life? As you move towards the time of rest, utilize this time to gather in your harvest, fill your basket with abundance and give thanks for this life.

GRATITUDE AND GRIEF

A Story of (Not) Being A Mother

By Agata Krajewska

I'd like to share with you my story of (not) being a mother. It feels vulnerable and I ask myself: Why? It's one of the very intimate aspects of human life, one of longing, love and surrender, and often out of our control. In our society this theme is, for women, also tied up with a sense of value and belonging. It can become a touchy subject with several sub-themes being shunned. So here I am, wanting to share to break the taboo; one woman's experience, perhaps a mirror to that of others.

It has been a long and winding journey. From falling pregnant too young, too lost and unsupported to follow it through, to consciously communicating with the soul of a child in me and letting it go, to saying yes to the miracle in my womb and then him choosing to leave. I found that these unfulfilled pregnancies were not something I could easily talk about. Regardless of choosing to let the babies grow in me or not, I felt a touch of the miraculous when they arrived and devastation when they were gone. The mother in me mourned an empty belly, my body confused with hormones running high. There followed days of despair, grief, emptiness, all shrouded in shame.

With termination the heaviest burden was the secrecy surrounding it all and a feeling of "badness" for ending up there in the first place and making a "selfish" choice. I also felt the Christian shadow hanging over me and its indignation with the idea that a woman should make a choice regarding her own body.

These were initiatory experiences that I could never acknowledge. The physical pain of induced or natural miscarriage was comparable to the pain of childbirth, yet there was nothing to testify passing through that passage.

It took time for me to make peace with myself and life again, aided by prayer, burial and conversations with the souls of my unborn children. It was a great gift to later meet my three children in a family constellation. Through their representatives, I could look into their eyes, speak unspoken feelings and hold them to my heart. My love flowed, I felt forgiven and the inner conflict dissolved.

After these events the longing to bear a child intensified for me. All my relationship choices in my late twenties/early thirties were governed by it. Then, for no apparent reason, it spontaneously changed. I began to feel the presence of "Divine Mother" with me, especially when I



worked intimately with people. Her love would pour forth, touching my heart along the way, leaving behind a great sense of fulfillment. My creativity opened up like never before, flowing untrammelled, filling me with joy and inspiration. I was birthing projects every month supported by the rhythm of my menstrual cycle. I realized how much of my attention was needed by the young part of me and I committed to her. An increased sense of confidence and capacity followed. The mother in me was expressing herself abundantly and felt welcomed, sometimes gentle and holding, at other times a fierce, protective tigress.

As for actual children in my life, I love being an adopted "Auntie" to them or their teacher and supporter. I am able to give them a very special, fresh attention that I know I wouldn't be able to sustain if they were my own children, in the midst of daily tensions between my needs and theirs. I feel naturally drawn to spend more time with young people in my professional life. I delight at my availability to the little one in me and in my adult clients. We are all in need of healthy mothering!

In relationship with other women, sometimes I've noticed a divide between those who have and haven't had children. There can be envy on either side or simply a vast difference in lifestyles that gets in the way of connection. It needs to be acknowledged. I have been lucky to have a close friend who includes me in her family life and who also, at times, has been very honest about her jealousy of the privileges of my independence. I, in turn, admit to her my longing for family when it arises, when I witness her mothering. That way we see ourselves in each other. We laugh at how our lives seem quite the opposite at times, knowing that they represent embodiments of different possibilities. There is an understanding between us that there is a devoted mother in me and a free spirit in her and they both get their time.

I haven't yet gone through the menopause. I know that there is a degree of unknown until that door is biologically closed. I expect there is more grief to be met and I feel it well up without warning on some days. This is not something to be reasoned away or to simply feel 'fine' about. It's a mystery and a part of my human experience. When I find myself wondering about being childless in my old age, I keep returning to trust in Life and to knowing that my love will flower, however I choose to direct it.

Let's Talk About...

NOT HAVING CHILDREN

Continued...

I am 28 years young and have never wanted children. I am not a bad person; I know perfectly well the difference between right and wrong, I have absolutely nothing against children or those who decide to have them. I am a very proud Auntie to three nieces (and as of the writing of this, almost one nephew!) and I love them to pieces! But being born 15 weeks prematurely brings along many challenges, such as difficulties with concentration and attention. I also have the autism spectrum disorder Asperger Syndrome which is typically characterized by problems in communicating with other people, lack of social skills and problems in being flexible in thoughts and behaviour. Many "Aspies" also lack the figurative filter in the brain that filters out what should and should not make an impression on you, so we receive all the impressions at once: audio, visual, sense, smell, etc. That being said, many Aspies - my best friend included - have children and are great parents! But I know that I don't have it in me to be a good mother. People call me selfish for not having children; I would rather say it's downright rude and disrespectful to a new life to force it into the world when it's not wanted in the first place. And so, I have decided to remain childless. I have a rescue cat who fills the role as a baby PURRfectly fine anyway!

Livnam Kaur

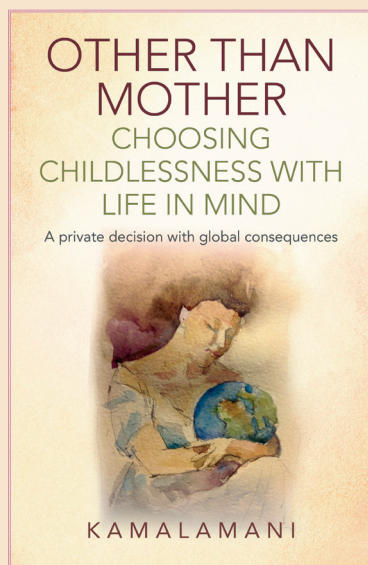
I'm 47 and never had children, never been pregnant despite years of unprotected sex. I know it's not going to happen this time around. I have mixed feelings around this. When I was a child I sensed my mother's frustration with her role as mother and wife, I saw how little power women seemed to have compared to men and I remember strongly deciding not to be a mother or a wife. Like many women in my generation I chose to model myself on a more masculine way of being in the world. Over the years as I chose to rediscover and reclaim my feminine, and as my hormones kicked in I started at around 38yrs to long for a child. For a few years I was crazy with it. Had natural treatments for fertility thought about it all the time. Thought about donors, only went out with men who were open to it, I didn't get pregnant. The craziness has gone now but I carry a deep grief that I will never hold my own child in my arms. I gracefully turn down invitations to birthing blessing ways as a kindness to myself as I realised I spent them grieving on the fringes trying to hide my feelings. Though paradoxically perhaps I have been present at many friends' births and feel happy to support in that way. I see my friends with children, the struggles and the gifts and I accept where I am, knowing that nothing is black and white that neither place is all good or all bad. At a soul level I know I have been a mother before and I will be again....just not this time round. Whether that has been because of chance, or because I've been affected by falling fertility rates or because of the power of a strong intention set at a very young age I cannot say.

Rooh

Other Than Mother by Kamalamani

BOOK REVIEW

by Cheryl Tipple



Although Kamalamani points out in the introduction to *Other Than Mother* that it is primarily a text for those weighing up the pros and cons of deciding whether to have children, I found this book a useful guide to life in general, of living together with all sentient beings, including the Earth herself, in harmony and compassion, helping to create a fairer world and healthier planet. Kamalamani, who decided long ago not to bear children herself for various reasons takes us, sometimes painstakingly, through the minutiae of her decision so that we may be informed of the nuances of making such a choice. As part of the wider view, she also brings into question cultural attitudes towards women in general and seeks to reclaim what are considered 'natural' lifestyle choices, advocating validity and a full and rich existence with or without children. Refreshingly, she talks of the realm of not having children as a positive thing and challenges the notion of Womanhood equalling Motherhood along with a wish for open dialogue between those that are parents and those that aren't, so that the wealth of experience of both can be heard wholeheartedly. She helps us to get to know the 'Worldly Winds', the pains and the pleasures that blow through all of our lives, in a way that graces us with a deeper experience of life on Earth.

A WOMAN'S CYCLE

The Mystical and Unbounded Energy of Autumn

by Cheryl Tipple



Image: *No Worries At All* © Sebastian Pierre
www.sebastianpierre.net

The descent towards my bleed is often accompanied by the creeping in of irritation with anything from work to my partner and other people as I become overwhelmed by all that surrounds me and all that is needing to be done before I can start to rest into my Moontime. I long to be alone and, when I am finally able to make precious and sacred space for myself in the days leading up to the bleed, I find a delicious and exciting energy floods in and fills me with the desire to create anything from a cleaner and tidier home environment, enabling me to let go of things that no longer serve me, or time to walk awhile in fresh air and wide open spaces, to tinkering with inspirations and ideas, crafting words on paper or making works of art. Suddenly I am invigorated, stimulated and empowered as I dance with my passions and pleasures as well as those things which, at other times, can dwell in the realms of apathy and lethargy. Energy levels and eagerness spiral as one, in flow, weaving momentum and stirring the cauldron of creativity in this place of ease and comfort. Should anyone or anything interrupt this flux then a snap or a snarl is inevitable as I guard this cherished arena. Being partners and mothers, working, studying and running homes means that, as women, the space that we carve out for ourselves at this time is hallowed ground, a place to connect with ourselves and brightly burn our inner flames before we surrender to the elements of the next phase.

RECLAIMING THE VOICE OF THE FEMININE

by Caroline Barnes

The truth of who we really are lies waiting within us, longing and yearning for expression. Our history, both collective and personal is buried like long lost treasure waiting to be uncovered. Yet, how often do we have the opportunity to really walk into those deep caverns, those dark caves and express the truth of what is really there? How do we reclaim those parts that we had to leave behind, to forget and disown?

We know we each hold a story and woven amongst our own there also lies a story as old as time. For all the reasons we have come to understand and our history books can testify, the feminine has long been suppressed. The voice of the feminine and the depth of what that really holds in its mystery, magic and remembrance is a potent aspect of that.

I believe on some level we all carry that collective pain within our psyche, no matter how deeply hidden or forgotten. How it plays out within our individuality however, is as varied as our finger print. Yet on occasions, life shows us the way and through the doorway of suffering and discomfort we are presented with moments of insight and understanding that offer the potential for change.

My own path of healing and understanding the deep feminine wound that played out within my own life, made me deeply question my identity as a woman. I explored many roads ultimately leading to a total change of values and way of life. Amongst it all, I heard a call... It was the call of the voice. It asked me to search and to trust, to be brave and courageous. It asked me to travel and find a teacher.

I was moved with a passion hitherto unbeknown to me. This voice I was asked to reclaim was not about

singing or being in tune. It was not about being restrained or held back any longer. I was propelled into a whole other world of expression and authenticity. I had to rediscover how to release all that was in the way of the seed that lay behind all the layers of adaptations, restrictions and patterns of being and behaving. So it was that I remembered the potency, magic and transformative forces held within the voice.

The vibrations of the voice can reveal what is held within the body, beyond the confines and restrictions of words. Sound is a creative force and has the ability to create and change form and structure. When the sound comes from the human voice with the highest of intentions, it creates a potent dynamic healing energy field.

We are being asked to reclaim our voices again and to find the courage to speak up and speak out. And the wisdom of the feminine voice holds a key. It starts within, listening deeply. When we allow ourselves to face the truth on all levels and start to feel again, express again, we simply cannot hide. We come out of numbness and stuckness and are motivated into action. We call ourselves home and fully back to life. Combined with the wisdom and compassion of the heart, the strength of the will and the clarity of thought, life changes. We are no longer operating from projections, polarities and extremes and no matter our gender, male or female, we become more balanced, integrated and whole.

The voice of the feminine calls us to remembrance. Through courage we listen and with faith and deepest compassion, we learn to trust in our deepest expression again.

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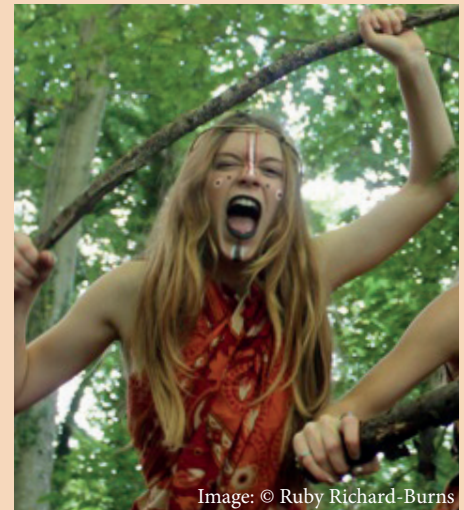


Image: © Ruby Richard-Burns

Huntress, wise woman,
spirit of the wild
Listen, listen, I hear your call.
Huntress, wise woman,
spirit of the wild
Listen, listen, I hear your song.

Fire crackles and burns
Smoke rising high
into the cold night sky
And amongst the burning embers
A figure dances by.

Caught in the gentle glow
Of the crescent moon so high
She stands alone, powerful and strong
And from the depths
A cry.

Eyes seeking truth,
search to the very core
Through wild, untamed, unnamed
places she treads
Through caverns dark and cold
Her heart bares the scars of a
thousand things untold.

Her target in sight,
she swoops and takes flight
Breath caught, eyes wide, her focus
intent, she fires her arrow straight
And there amongst the embers, a
treasure to behold
Is carried up upon the wind
A story to unfold.

(An excerpt from *The Arrow*
by C. Barnes)

MENSTRUATION AS WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL PRACTICE (Part 1)

By Mandy Adams



The Five Chambers of Menstruation © Kate Megeary

values the qualities of 'doing', 'getting on', 'growth' and 'achievement'. These visibly productive qualities are often associated with the masculine.

The second half of our cycle is the *via negativa* or feminine arc of our cycle, our 'inner Autumn' and 'inner Winter'. This is where we learn to be with the undoing of our inner confidence – the fall – so that we can build psychological strength. Here our culture shies away from or visibly shames the qualities of 'being', 'resting', 'liminality', 'dreaming' and 'allowing'. These fertile and nourishing qualities are often associated with the feminine. It is here that we meet our inner critic and our shadow material begins to emerge.

I had spent my life desperately trying to extend my Spring and Summer energies into my Autumn and Winter. Expanding my productive 'doing' and 'organising' self right across my monthly cycle, allowing little or no time for 'being', 'resting' or 'allowing'. Subliminally, I had tried to live up to the tampon advertisements' ideal and, in fact, do more during my Autumn/Winter. "Beat Mother Nature", never allowing myself to "Be with Mother Nature" and, at all costs, remain on an even keel and to certainly not express that I am anything other than 'coping', 'getting on' and, above all, 'busy'.

Menstrual cycle awareness began for me just after I had turned forty. I had charted my cycle in the 25 years of bleeding that I had under my belt. I had worn cloth pads and used a Mooncup. I had watered my plants with my blood. What I had not done was follow the energetic dynamic of my cycle and used it as an opportunity to practice forging a relationship to my self.

I came to learn that each month we are given the opportunity to practice being with the *via positiva* or masculine arc of our cycle. The 'inner Spring' and 'inner Summer' half of our month, which is punctuated by ovulation. Here we are forming and strengthening our sense of self in the world. This half of the cycle had long been the easiest for me to be with and, of course, our culture also strongly

Why is it that we greet each other in this way – 'How you keeping? Busy?' I had been so busy that I was now 40 years old and felt that I had missed the whole point of what my cycle had been patiently waiting to teach me each month. What's more I was also now a mother and frankly didn't have a clue what "busy" really meant up until this point! Now my life was full at every waking moment meeting

the needs of my young sons, my work commitments, my husband and, last of all, myself.

I took it upon myself to practice being with my bleed which meant deepening into my inner Autumn and Winter.

‘The female ‘practice’ or ‘inner yoga’ of cycle awareness practices us. The only doing we do is that of cooperating with the inner movement of our being as it shifts through its different phases, trusting that innate wisdom, being willing to face ourselves in our vulnerability, and above all letting go at menstruation. It is the relational way - the way of the Feminine.’

Alexandra Pope

Inspired by these words of my teacher, I was longing to give myself permission to ‘be’ with myself, and sorely needed it. I was curious to make a relationship with my own feminine nature, but it needed to be a lasting relationship and not the fleeting acquaintance that I had made previously. My inner critic began to emerge, “How can you possibly take a day out of busy family life to ‘be’ with your bleed?” “You’re not even ill, you can’t ask your Mum/Husband to take care of everyone while you do nothing”, “It’s not as if you have any painful symptoms so there’s no valid reason to ‘be’ with your bleed”, “If you were going away on a retreat or holiday that would be different, that would be allowed.”

I needed more to hold onto, I needed more reason to allow myself to let go. It reminded me of giving birth, I needed to know the process that I was allowing so fear did not take me into victimhood and direct me along the path of non-responsibility.

I had learned that by deeply letting go at menstruation it was possible to observe five distinct phases and that each phase worked together with the former in an integrated way. This original concept came from Alexandra Pope and the work that she offers at Red School. The five chambers of menstruation can be defined as:

Stage 1

SEPARATION

This can begin a day or two before bleeding, where naturally our energies are detaching from normal life and travelling to the inner realms of self.

Stage 2

SURRENDER

This is day one of bleeding when we profoundly rest our bodies and can experience the homecoming of soothing, healing and repair.

Stage 3

RENEWAL

This can happen soon after surrender, where if we have sufficiently separated and surrendered we can experience joyful, even ecstatic states due to surges of oxytocin.

Stage 4

AWAKENING

At this stage we can be flooded with insight and guidance about ourselves.

Stage 5

CLARITY

Clear steps become available to us enabling us to move towards them with confidence in the month ahead.

I recognised that these same five stages, albeit over a longer period of time, are what I had already met in order to allow normal birth to happen. During each of my three pregnancies there came a time when I needed to let go of being actively engaged in the world and to separate

myself (as much as I could to allow myself) to come closer to home. As the birth drew nearer I found myself wanting more and more time alone. This, I now understand, was entering the first stage of separation. Then, when each birth began, allowing myself to deeply surrender to the intense experience was my deepest ally. Physically unable to now do, the only possibility at each birth was to truly allow, this was the second stage. Then as each of my sons came into my arms the flood of oxytocin and post birth elation was the third stage of renewal. In the weeks that followed, insight and guidance came through resting as a new family, this was the fourth stage of awakening. When I realized that I had transformed once again from my former self, the clarity and direction that arose as the birth experience was finally integrated and normal life resumed.

I am told that it is the same stages or states of consciousness that we experience throughout our menopausal years. Again, over a longer period of time, we separate from our former self and surrender to the process of menopause and all that it brings up for healing, awareness and integration. Following these stages we meet again with renewal, awakening and clarity as we become the summation of our lives so far and integrate this transformation to begin a new life.

I became ready to dive into my monthly bleed with verve. Could it be that every month I had the potential to face my fears and drop down into that deep resourceful self that I had met at birth? Better still, if I did, there was also the promise of that altered state of heightened consciousness that the flood of oxytocin could bring. Perhaps just like birth my monthly menstruation could be an opportunity to get out of the way and allow the forces of the Feminine to take me on a transformative experience. I went optimistically and gratefully exploring.

www.mandyadams.co.uk
Facebook: Red Tent Cornwall

Let's Talk About...

NOT HAVING CHILDREN

At 29 a gynaecologist coldly informed me that I was infertile, that I'd gone through an early menopause due to the impact of a major accident. In 20 years no one has ever asked me about my childlessness – until now. Not being a mum is such an invisible grief and I grieved a lot in my 30s. Even now the news of a pregnant friend brings tears to my eyes – my joy for them is always bittersweet. Now, older and maybe a bit wiser, I am at peace and appreciate the freedoms of not being a mum. Yet in the past I often felt excluded from the conversations and experiences of my friends, from the joys and sorrows of family life. I love being an 'Auntie' – plus I work as a maths tutor and the kids that come (sometimes for years!) are a joy to me - they seem to flourish in the same loving attention my own childless aunt afforded me.

Janice

The pain of not having a child is immense and extremely isolating in a world where mothers and babies are everywhere and all of my friends have them. Mostly I can't be with them because I am incapable of conversation - I don't want to talk happy families and they don't want to know about the gaping hole in my life. Every month is pure turmoil as I find myself unable to rest in the beauty and grace of my cycle when it is constantly peppered with the stress of pinpointing ovulation and then the inevitable devastation of bleeding. I feel like giving up but then what?

Charlotte

I have known from a young age that motherhood isn't for me. It started when I was given the obligatory dolls to play with but found them rather dull and boring. I much preferred my brother's toy cars and my little case filled with books. While my interest in cars has diminished, my love of books remains to this day. As I got older it was assumed that I would produce grandchildren but I wasn't prepared to go with it unless I was absolutely sure. In the end, I was never keen enough to go through with it. Too many people just go with what's supposed to be normal only to find out it wasn't right for them, but by that point it's too late. Parenthood is considered to be a must by the vast majority who feel this is the only way to lead a meaningful life, but I disagree. There are many ways to make a contribution to society and our beautiful planet which is vastly over-populated which has led to a strain on resources, degradation of ecosystems, vast-scale habitat destruction and, in many cases, the extinction of entire species. Seen from this perspective, parenthood appears as a selfish indulgence rather than a selfless sacrifice.

Sue Routner-Wardley

I am now 51 and only really benefiting recently from more peace and acceptance of my decision to not have children. It's such a personal journey and mine has been fraught with "Should I s?" and fear of a lack of fulfilment, a sad and lonely future, a sitting on the sidelines of life and all that this decision brings. I had an abortion at 18 in an untenable and especially awful situation which I had no regrets about but maybe I would have chosen a child if I hadn't chosen that. I don't think so, but who knows. The thing is I didn't. I did have the deep and profound honour of meeting my soul sister and getting to be godparent to her children, whom I live with. They are a deep and profound blessing in my life for which I could never fully express my gratitude. I am also godparent to other children who are a source of surprise, pride and the blessing of love in my life. Sometimes I think I was insane to miss out on the adventure and love of having my own children but then it never really seemed like a choice in that way. As a child I thought there are so many children without parents or love why would you have your own... now I know why! But I also notice that I didn't adopt. I went to several meetings, had interviews and got so far down the process and then didn't. Sometimes I think it was because I was lazy or scared... I do know that children really do belong to life, and every time I get the honour of being present enough to connect with a child and share time with them it is amazing. I am in awe of mothers, the patience, dedication and sacrifice. I don't think I regret anything. Mine is an unusual life and journey which I'm a bit proud of too!

Vanya

Childlessness is on the rise worldwide. Latest estimates suggest that 25 per cent of women in Britain of childbearing age will never have a baby. I am one of these women and when I sit down to reflect on what to say about my choosing a different path than to have children, the first thought that comes into my mind is that it was never a clear conscious choice at any particular moment in time, but it became one. I would like our culture to understand more fully that many women are making choices like this and that it is part of a woman's sovereignty to decide to choose another path, to change her mind later on and to change her mind back again. As with any choice that is made there are usually a number of factors involved. I personally love children. I did a lot of work to get clear whether I was choosing not to have children from a true place of choice, or from a reaction to my own childhood where I became a mother to my younger sister and brother when I was 14 when my mother left home. I have to say that it is both. I prefer to see it that my childhood experience informed the decision I came to make, not from a place of wounding, but from a place of my destiny - I have never felt the painful desire to want a child and not be able to. I am at peace with this part of my life.

Anna

I knew from an early age (about 10 years old) that I really, *really* wanted children although I didn't want them until later on because there was a lot of things I wanted to do first. Years later I met the man who I knew was the one I wanted to have them with. After a few years together we became open to having children but it didn't happen, we didn't conceive and we ended up having IVF treatment, such was my desire to have a child. I came through three unsuccessful rounds of IVF feeling that it was not the way – it was brutal and I didn't want to treat my body and especially my womb like that. It was IVF and all that intervention in my womb that put me so much in touch with her that I was able to finally hear her and she guided me in a way that told me that having IVF wasn't right for me, so I stopped. From then on she totally guided me and I began a deeper relationship with the Feminine through reading books and joining women's circles which helped me so much to create the life that I now have which gets stronger and stronger all the time. I was able to let go of having children in a way that was gentle and natural as the rest of my life unfolded allowing me to just accept what life was for me. My life has *huge* meaning, full of creativity. My life is not about creating children, it's about creating *me* in many ways, about fulfilling my own potential and revelling in my freedom. I am happy without children, really, really happy! I feel like I've birthed myself and it feels really good.

Cheryl

From an early age I thought that one day I would get married and have children. I thought that I would be a good mum and wouldn't do all those things that I couldn't stand that my mother did. Of course I would know better and would do a better job and would have the perfect family. I had it all planned. At the time it never crossed my mind that these thoughts might be the result of some conscious or unconscious conditioning from my family upbringing, society, schooling or media. I didn't succeed in having children or a happy marriage. The years flew by and before I knew it I found myself in the so called 'middle age' and my perspectives and plans changed; the idea of having children was not so appealing any more. I started looking at life a little closer and asked myself questions like "What am I here to do?"; "Is there more to life than this?"; "I want more, but what exactly?" Having lived in a different country has broadened my horizons and views about life and happiness. Having had more than one relationship also gave me a chance to stretch myself beyond my little 'garden' and look further afield. Having done different jobs with varied roles and using different languages also added to my knowledge as a woman and as a citizen of the world. It all helped me to realise that we are all conditioned by so many things in life that actually to know who we are is not that easy, in fact it can be quite tricky. My life became an adventure that wasn't simply an external and geographical journey, but a deeper and intimate voyage into myself. I started understanding that there is more to life than having a family and doing the things that the majority of people do. The most important thing of all was realising that for a woman having children is optional, but giving birth to herself is a must!

Gabriella Guglielminotti Trivel
Flying Inspiration

I was 13 when my cycle began. I was so excited! I felt so grown up. I was becoming a woman. I now had the power to create human life. But that excitement quickly changed as my periods were accompanied by severe pain. At 24, I was diagnosed with endometriosis, which was a causal factor of sexual abuse in my earlier life. Around the same time, I started waking up with panic attacks. This began a horrific journey of medication, rehab centers and surgeries. My eighth surgery was a complete hysterectomy which threw me into immediate menopause. I was devastated that I would never bear my own children. At the time, I just buried the grief and went on with my life. I was caught up in the world of working two jobs and going to school full-time.

In the midst of the chaos, my husband decided to move us to Nebraska. I felt powerless to change his mind or leave him. At 36, I was diagnosed with Severe Delayed Onset Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from the sexual abuse and my mother's attempted suicide when I was a small child. I was having nightly flashbacks and was no longer able to work. But, I did finally have the courage to leave my marriage. For the next 15 years, I visited several therapists and rehab centers to deal with the PTSD and the grief of not having my own family. I would do ok for a while and then my body would try to release the trauma through nightmares and adrenal exhaustion. What I was not aware of, until I began working with a trauma specialist, was that my body remembered the trauma but my mind was too afraid to accept it.

Now, at 51, I AM healing. Due to good therapy, my puppy Arabella, friends, and the hard work of SELF ACCEPTANCE and FORGIVENESS, I know that I will heal completely. Chakra Yoga Therapy, aromatherapy and art have also helped me release the trauma. I no longer doubt my ability to be a good mother because the unconditional love that I have for Arabella shows my capacity to love and trust myself and others. Namaste.

Bella Gina Luciana

Let's Talk About... is a regular feature in this magazine. In each issue we invite your reflections on a different topic relevant to our lives as women. In the Winter edition we will be talking about Pornography and we are inviting both women and men to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences on the topic. To add your voice please send your short contribution to contactus@shewhoknowsmagazine.com

SACRED MENOPAUSE SPIRITUAL AWAKENING OF THE WILD WISE WOMAN

Written & Illustrated by Roslyne Sophia Breillat



wildness, freedom, maturity, integrity, wisdom and power.

She, this Menopausal Muse, is the Alchemist whose mysterious inner journey miraculously fills her body and psyche with a gentle, wise, intuitive knowing that arises from her fathomless womb heart, gifting her the timeless wisdom and healing power to transmute, transform and transcend old emotions, feelings, relationships and thoughts that no longer serve any purpose. Her menopausal transformation shatters the predictability of her monthly flow and the predictability of her daily life, destroying the apparent safety and security of mental and emotional comfort zones that imprison her within an illusory past and future. Menopause asks her to simplify her life so she can live freely within the joy-filled richness of the present moment and spontaneously within the wholeness and holiness of the wise, wild woman. Menopause takes her beyond her Full Moon mothering phase and into the realm of the Dark Moon Goddess, a silent inner place where she merges as Maiden, Mother and Wise Woman or Crone.

A woman's body is innately attuned with the lunar and earthly rhythms of ever-changing seasons, weather patterns and tidal flows, for the cyclic essence of the sacred feminine arises from the womb of the Earth. And yet she currently lives in a linear patriarchal civilisation that suppresses and ignores the wise integrity of her rhythmic cycles and her innate need to live from the subtle depths of their timeless mystery. This patriarchy dishonours the Earth's natural rhythms and the natural rhythms of the feminine, creating fear, doubt, insecurity and unworthiness, and much obsession with botox, collagen injections, facelifts, anti-ageing drugs, fashion, make-up, dangerous diets and over-exercising, thus denying the ancient integrity of the cyclic feminine nature. And so when many women become menopausal, they are frequently fearful, exhausted and

unaware of the wisdom and power this potent spiritual offering bestows.

This intense menopausal awakening can radically shake the foundations a woman clings to as untruthful definitions of femaleness and womanliness. Her menopausal transformation is a sacred portal of profound wisdom, long denied, hidden, denigrated and forgotten by contemporary civilisation, where she is preparing to welcome depths of femaleness, once honoured, revered and lived upon this Earth, and to gather the many gifts menopause can bestow. When she consciously embraces her menopausal journey she embraces a mighty alchemical transformation within her womb, for she is the female custodian stirring the menopausal cauldron of Change, courageously diving into the womb's deep transformational ocean of

The intensity of this menopausal pilgrimage can be tumultuous, awakening a desire for stillness, silence, solitude, peace, for this transformation requires a simple sanctuary, a sacred space for metamorphosing within her healing cocoon, precious moments with Mother Nature and peace-filled hours away from the incessant demands of an outer world that continually seduces her from her inner realm. Menopause is a psycho-spiritual disintegration, a healing gift, a letting go of all that will not enhance the new life of the wise woman. As the shamanic Crone of Indigenous tribal societies, Earth-dwelling communities and peaceful matriarchal civilisations, this Ancient Mother was deeply respected and reverently sought for her wise counsel, for she had experienced and lived many natural cycles of female life. If the contemporary woman openly

and intimately welcomes, embraces and lives the sacred womb power of her menopausal metamorphosis, she becomes She Who Knows, Mother of All, Femina Saga, Elderwoman, Wise Wild Woman, Grand Mother, Heart Mother Crone, Queen of Her Realm, She Who Holds Her Wise Blood Inside, She who is honoured for the wild and intuitive heart wisdom of her sacred womb.

The inner knowing of this wise Elderwoman is not the intellectual knowing of the egoic mind or the material world, but an intuitive knowing arising from the wellspring of her womb consciousness. And yet, our patriarchal civilisation, through dismissing the powerful inner descent into the Elderwoman's wisdom and power, treats this sacred spiritual pilgrimage the same way it treats her sacred menstrual cycle, as a "curse", an unwanted and unwelcome phase of female life, a strange illness needing medication, something wrong needing righting or fixing, something shameful and shame-filled needing to be hidden, annoying bodily symptoms needing suppression, an uncomfortable ailment needing a cure, an inconvenient and unnecessary phase of female life, without meaning, value, purpose or worth. Oh, how far this patriarchal civilisation has strayed from the sacred womb of the feminine and the sacred womb of Mother Earth.

Now is the time for the wise Elderwoman to embrace the eccentric nature of her innate wildness, sip the divine nectar from her holy womb chalice, relearn her ancient herbal wisdom, stir the swirling cauldron of her Ancient Mother, trust the healing nurturance of her medicinal plants, dive deeply into her well of creative inspiration, gather and hold dear all that she has lost, so very long ago, as she once gathered and held dear the tiny seeds of her wise forest trees, now lying in the swirling dust of her ravaged forests. This is her timeless time to remember the deep wisdom she has forgotten, call upon the ancient mysteries she has suppressed, welcome all she has denied, speak the words she has silenced, trust this

inner knowing of her profound womb power, stand up for herself and for all women, courageously speak, live and be the truth, walk freely as a sacred woman upon sacred ground, reunite with the womb of the Earth, simply live, simply love, simply be.

This strong yet gentle Elderwoman, She Who Knows, is a giving sister, mother, grandmother, friend who has many gifts to offer. She is custodian of the Earth and custodian of the Earth's secrets. She lives in humility and gratitude, as wise as the serpent, as gentle as the dove. It is not her true calling to live as if her sacredness has no purpose within the force-fueled momentum of the patriarchal world, but to return to living in sacredness with her beloved Earth Mother, the sacredness of the womb, sacredness of all female cycles, shedding the fear, self-doubt and shame absorbed through separating from the heart of her womb and the womb of the Earth, dwelling joyously within the

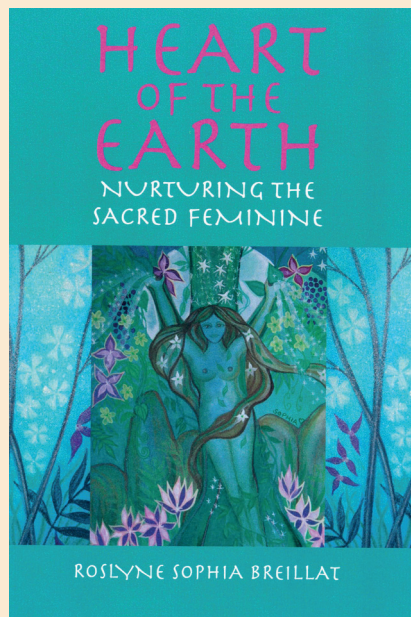
miraculous essence of the wise and sacred feminine's inner calling.

This potent menopausal transition is a holy fire, a sacred rite of passage that relentlessly unravels familiarity, certainty, convenience, predictability and habitual ways of living that easily suppress the precious aliveness of being. Her menopausal journey destroys illusions of the feminine imbibed from the patriarchy, preparing her to bestow her transformational gifts to the world, the Earth, her family, children, community, strangers, lovers, friends, as she releases her past ways, deeply opening to the beauty, simplicity and joy of the present moment, deeply opening to her wisdom within.

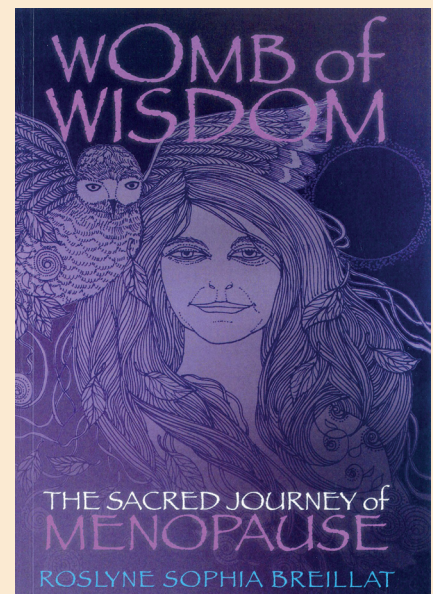
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A woman's love arises from the heart of the Earth. This is her womb place, her true place of belonging, the place of her inherent wildness, her loving tenderness, her gentle wisdom, her female strength, the place where she comes home. This place, her sacred ground, is where she openly, intimately and deeply nurtures the heart of the sacred feminine.



This beautifully illustrated book is an invitation for women to drink deeply from her inner well of wisdom throughout and beyond her menopausal journey. Its potent words and images encourage her to transform culturally imposed ignorance of the sacred feminine as they welcome her into the heart-centred, womb-centred, Earth-centred mystery of the wild, wise woman.

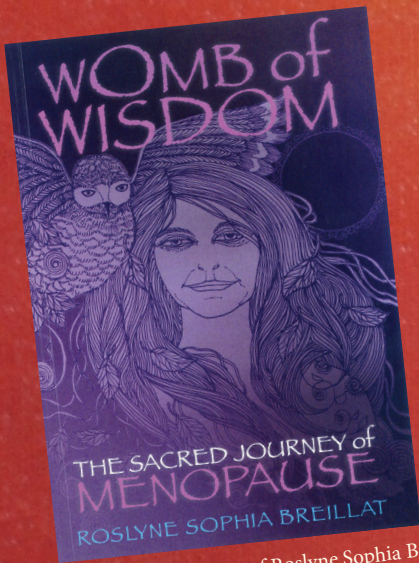
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by Carolyn Hillier - www.seventhousandmiles.co.uk



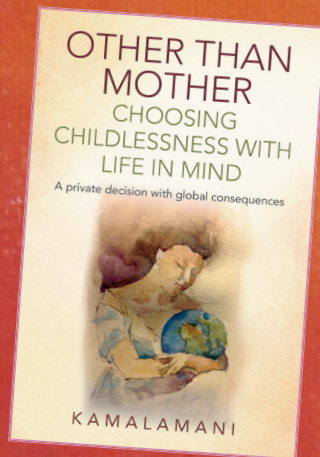
SHE WHO KNOWS

Magazine for Awakening Women

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THE POWER OF THE FLOWER CHILD

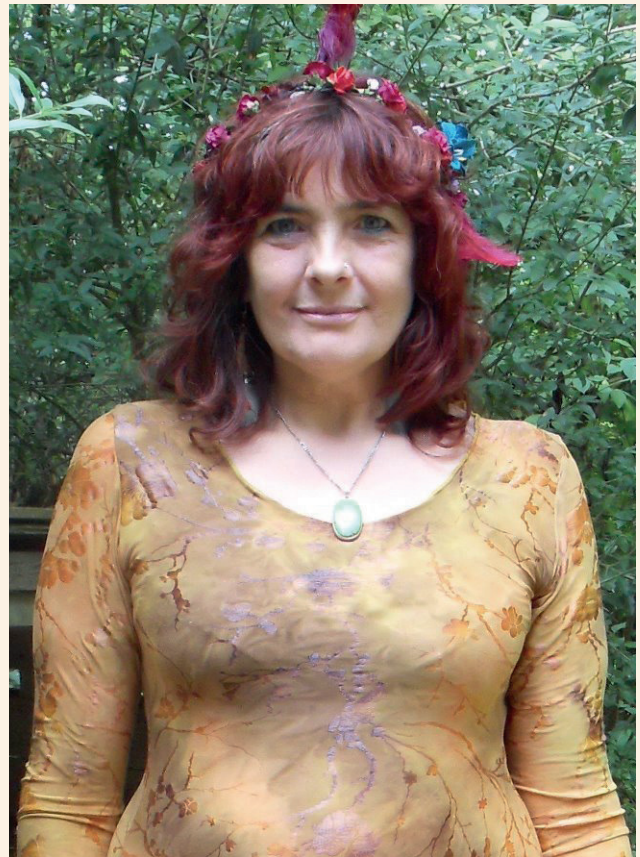
By Edveeje Fairchild of Treesisters

She stands in a grassy meadow surrounded by mountains and forest. Her white cotton dress blows in symphonic harmony with the summer breeze. There are strands of daisies, heather, and morning glory woven into her long flowing – or short cropped - hair. She is the iconic image of “the flower child of the sixties” and no matter how many decades have passed we continue to adore her. In fact, if we are honest, we want to grow up and be just like her.

Why? Because that “hippie flower child of the sixties” (a woman born in the early-fifties through the mid-sixties) was bold, courageous, beautiful and free way before her time. She longed for true partnership with her beloved, she ached to bring her gifts forward on behalf of both her family and the larger world, while championing a wild and unpolluted planet inhabited by a human family who fostered peace rather than war. She represented a paradigm shift in what it was to be a woman in every dimension of life and her message still reverberates through our modern souls. She was onto something prescient, prophetic and magical. And we know it. We know it because we are her spiritual daughters and we stand upon her strong shoulders.

Imagine if this idealistic generation of young women could have already had degrees in higher education, ability to move global wealth, and the political power to influence and change the world so that it might reflect their values, principles, and ideals. These gorgeous and bold women are coming of spiritual age just at the time that humanity and our beloved planet most need them. To paraphrase ancient wisdom, I believe, ‘they have been born for such a time as this.’

The girls who once wore garlands of flowers in their hair, protested the Vietnam war and cultivated small plots of Earth in their movement back to the land are now inheriting the vast majority of the worlds wealth, are educated at the highest levels and sit in positions of power and influence across the land in Western Civilization. They are grandmothers, wise women and crones. They are entrepreneurs, politicians, lawyers, priests, and surgeons. They are women who bear the marks of their idealism; they have the scars (and tattoos) to prove they’ve been there and done that and they are still standing – head held gloriously high – in the ring. But this ring is a ring of love that encompasses us all.



Imagine a world in which these women all stepped forward on behalf of bringing balance back to our planet; on behalf of all life on Earth, the only home we have. At TreeSisters we have imagined what that would look like and we have invited the wise women of our global sisterhood to step forward with their gifts. Together we are creating ways to channel that wisdom on behalf of the rainforests around the world and together we are celebrating the return of the power of the flower child, one woman at a time.

TreeSisters is a worldwide sisterhood committed to bringing forth our gifts on behalf of bringing balance back to our planet. This autumn, the TreeSisters *One Million Trees* campaign invites the co-creativity of women to rise like a tide to catalyse more direct action on behalf of the trees.

We invite you to join us for our upcoming One Million Trees Equinox Launch event and our month-long ‘Re-Wilding the Feminine’ series of online events with pioneering feminine thoughts leaders. You can find out more and take your seat here: www.jointreesisters.com

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VINTAGE WOMEN

By Suzanne Fearnside

The Spring edition of *She Who Knows* contained a piece entitled 'Message from 13 Indigenous Grandmothers'. I subsequently bought the book *Grandmothers Counsel The World*. These women came together from all over the world for the first time in 2004 in 'an alliance of prayer, education and healing for our Mother Earth' committed to passing on their ancestral ways of being to a wounded world.

The words of these thirteen elders carry with them millennia of affirmation and understanding of sustainability and intergenerational relationships. They are respected and revered for their experience of life and acknowledged as an integral part of the Divine Feminine by younger men and women alike. They challenge us as women in our own society to find a new way of 'seeing and being that resonates with the ancient and time proven Earth based traditions and practises of indigenous peoples', or we will not survive. And in the mayhem and violence of this world where money has become the 21st Century divine the words of these women resonate for many of us.

Having recently moved to Totnes I have found it an extraordinary place. It seems filled with old and young

powerful women exploring their creativity, spiritual needs and a continuing love and enjoyment of life in exactly the ways that the Grandmothers are encouraging us to access in ourselves. For me it is an inspirational environment.

As I approach my sixty-fifth birthday I have been reflecting on the concept of older age. As women we are expected to live well into our eighties. In 1900 life expectancy at birth was forty-nine and we exist in an age where many middle aged people have more parents alive than children. Unlike the wise 'Grandmothers' of African-American, Asian and Native American cultures, in our Western society we seem to have little in the way of custom and tradition to guide us.

Robert Frost has written, 'Home is the place that when you have to go there they have to take you in' but for many elderly people, dependant on increasingly expensive or increasingly under resourced care facilities in the public and private sector, out of sight is out of mind and out of mind is out of sight.

Age segregation is normal in our society. We group people by age. Teenagers and old people rarely meet. It's not a healthy situation for any of us to be constantly surrounded by our own peer group. But if a group of people from five to ninety live and interact together, a natural hierarchy of nurturing and teaching will occur. Good for both our societal values and mental health.

We can look to Freud as reinforcing the formative importance of parental



love but, as we get older, that love and nurturing has to work both ways. Nurturing and encouraging love and respect for the old amongst younger generations can only result in benefits for all of us.

The quality of older age for most of us is dependant on our health. Whilst we remain vigorous, our so-called 'retirement' presents us with opportunities that can open a whole new world where unfulfilled potential can be explored and enjoyed. Many of us study, acquire new skills, travel and enjoy the more relaxed attitude to life that accompanies us in older age. Age is not a cage but an open door through which we move into a new and rewarding era of life. In his book, *The Summing Up*, Somerset Maugham mooted that, 'With old age one is free of certain passions. Most people become less sexual, less envious and less competitive.' We understand that life is not an easy journey at any stage and I believe that we become kinder and more compassionate with a life lived than we were when young.

But when our health begins to fail life becomes so much harder for elderly people of whom a significant



and growing number are isolated and alone. And although many of us will live healthy and productive lives well into our seventies or even eighties there will come a point when our faculties begin to fail and we will become dependant on family and society to care for us. But the misery for some of old age can, and frankly is, emphasised by a society that looks only to label us as a burden to the State with nothing to offer anymore.

There are in Europe at this time an increasing amount of housing cooperatives that are intergenerational in nature and can teach us much about the benefits of different age groups living together. These schemes present the opportunity to establish communities that 'promote longer, healthier and more independent aging.' As well as an army of built in baby-sitters and a lot of life experience! These communities go a long way in helping older people to feel less isolated, and vulnerable whilst still having their privacy respected. Privacy that seems a rare commodity in many of our so called care homes.

In Holland there are facilities for older people that offer free or reduced cost accommodation for students where the old and the young eat, sleep and play under the same roof. An organisation called Humanitas offers rent free apartments to students in exchange for thirty hours a month of participation in activities with the elderly people living there permanently. One of the key aspects of these activities is offering company to those who are rendered infirm through illness, thus enabling people to feel more connected with the wider world. Similar schemes are ongoing in America, Spain and France. It's a wonderful idea and a step towards recreating those connections I talked about earlier in this piece.

As an older woman I have felt an increased invisibility imposed upon me as I fall victim to the stereotyping that so often is our fate in Western society. While vintage rocks and retro rolls, older women can find



themselves consigned to being patronised, caricatured and ultimately hidden away.

I am conscious that many male comedians use these stereotypes when talking, or rather, joking about older people. Our world is so based on the superficiality of the purely physical that spiritual enlightenment and wisdom are ignored in favour of cheap comedy about incontinence pads, chairlifts and an inability to cope with any device beyond the first, and now prehistorically hysterical, technologies.

Google older women and the first few sites that pop up are all devoted to attracting men as we enter what is perceived as an increasing state of decrepitude and desperation to hang on to our heterosexual pulling power. Our sagging bodies must be lifted and wrinkles erased as if that is the only value we represent as women.

And so back to the Grandmothers. Women's life expectancy is longer than that of our male peers and it seems has always been so. Since records began a consistent pattern of women faring better than men at every stage of life has been registered. And indeed there are a variety of biological hypotheses bandied about the medical world as explanations for this phenomena.

I believe there is much more to it and that the Divine Feminine, carried deep within all women, points to

the real explanation. Women's cycles governed by the moon and the stars, intuition that links us to the natural rhythms of birth, life and death and our instinct to nurture and protect. As Tenzin Palmo says,

'All of us are archetypal manifestations of this universal female energy. Access is not an energy outside ourselves but an energy within.'

She continues, 'It is our true nature that we are trying to realise. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, you go about the day seeing yourself as Tara and recognising Tara in others. And though you think you are pretending to be Tara, in reality you are Tara pretending to be Mary Smith. And that is the point.'

This power that we all carry within us is realised in many different ways throughout our lives as women. But we live as women in a society still governed by patriarchy and where both men and women are divided from Mother Earth through violence, greed and consumerism. A technocracy where older people suffer a technical knockout when they are considered past their best.

The Grandmothers have said that in severing the roots to the Divine Feminine, humans have cut themselves away from their love and charity for one another. In 21st Century society this is reflected in the way that we treat our older people, allowing them to drift away from us. But we can reclaim our very old age at any point in our lives by nurturing our elders and working in our own social environments towards more fruitful ways of living for all of us.

As the Grandmothers say,

'It is time for the women of the world to own their innate wisdom. With the profoundly loving and sustaining power of the sacred feminine in the very marrow of our bones, women can return the world to the Garden of Eden it was meant to be.'

THE IMPORTANCE OF HERSTORY:

The Value Of Teaching Female History In Schools

By Leia Yaniv

We all know the value of history. If we don't then it is important to perhaps take a moment to think about it. History charts the trajectory of mankind and his greatest successes and failures. Through it we witness the pinnacles of man's most brilliant ideas and learn about atrocities we had never imagined possible. We single out individuals from whom we learn valuable lessons that teach us about the best of human nature, and the worst. We need the mirror of countless generations that have come before us; We need to be able to look at the choices they have made and ask ourselves whether we would have made these same decisions politically, socially and culturally and allow this to inform our choices today. Without History we will struggle to find our belonging in a world which can be significantly confusing to many, and we will lose the ability to discern our movement forward collectively and individually when it comes to questions of science, religion, culture and society.

In her article *Why History Matters*, Penelope Cornfield argues why history is so essential,

'The study of the past is essential for 'rooting' people in time. And why should that matter? The answer is that people who feel themselves to be rootless live rootless lives, often causing a lot of damage to themselves and others in the process.'

When I look back at my own school years I realise that History in school was incredibly gender biased and male orientated with some information on Queens Elizabeth and Victoria thrown in - hardly comparable to the magnificent male omnipotence in all

arenas of Politics and History as is so well documented in school. I had come out of school with no understanding of my gender through time at all. It is depressing then 20 years later to watch my daughter attend History classes at school and to learn that the recent inclusion of the Suffragettes as a mandatory topic has been omitted from



the GCSE curriculum this year, completely destroying what little progress had been made to include the female story in classes. As I was told recently by my daughter's school,

'The original 'How Was British Society changed 1890-1919' unit which reflected on the women's suffrage movement is no longer within our specification.'

Women are merely mentioned as silent movers in GCSE History, learning by default how to live in the background of man's greatest achievements. Rosa Parks is mentioned in relation to American civil rights, Boudicca is spoken of in her uprising against the Romans, but the reality of women's lives socially is what girls really need to learn. This is our world because this is what is important to us - while

it might perhaps be important for boys to learn about dominant leaders such as Stalin, it is less important for women. We need to learn about our own natures on the historical stage and in ways which are meaningful to us. Yes, World War I is interesting, and women clubbed together to work the fields but do children ever learn that to have had a child out of wedlock you would have been ostracised by your society? We learn about countless wars and the horrors people experienced but do we ever learn about the rape camps associated with these wars and the countless women who suffered in them? We learn that Jane Austen and the Brontes' era was romantic and life affirming, but have we gone into enough depth to understand the scale of suppression women were going through in relationships, politics and social communities at that time?

This is Female History, and it is our right to learn the truth of it and to stop being swayed into stories of man's nature without any reflection on our own. I see my daughter learn one predominant thing, without an equal concentration of female history in comparison to male history, and that is that man is more important than her. Everything he decides, the battles he wins, the wars he creates, the things he invents are more important and she feels forgotten and not seen throughout history, and if girls are learning this, then boys are learning it too.

Girls who cannot recognise their own subjugation, through history learn to grow up and accept it. If I had learned as a young girl that I was a slave and had been named as such in reference to the so-called "romantic eras" of the Brontes, I would have learned what it looks like and how to never accept it. Whilst we continue to omit parts of women's history from our teaching in favour of men's, we effectively disown half of the human race from a history which is essential to their sense of belonging and importance in the world and their right to say 'no' in it. Girls who do not learn that women are strong, inventive and heroic in many ways and can reflect upon these traits as a part of themselves, can grow up feeling despondent about their strengths. If boys also never grow up to learn about women, it is well documented that they will fear them. Fear thrives on lack of understanding, surely history has taught us this much?

We are told that women's lives are not documented enough to get a clear picture of our past. But when the new National Museum of Women's History in America was recently set up in Virginia, the stream of successful and well documented female pioneers that emerged from this project was astonishing. I watched in awe as I read about more and more women who had done everything man has done, but the stories were more amazing because as they were women, they had to work so much harder to do it. It can



only lead us to believe that women have been calculatedly omitted from History to continuously disorientate women in a world which is controlled by masculine thinking. This shouldn't really be hard to believe given it took the Suffragettes nearly a century to get the vote, but if we had learned this at school we would know the degree to how much we have been excluded, right?

Here in the UK, we need our own National History of Women and we need to take time to teach our girls about women's history if schools won't do it. If we do not learn from history, we recreate the past. If we recreate the past then we create a world without a connection for girls to the roots of their mothers' grandmothers and great-grandmothers' lives and without this they will not have the tools they need to change their futures. Thousands of disenfranchised cultures are ignored in favour of discussions on wars, treaties and politics but we cannot even begin to address those if we have already 'silenced' half of the human race because of their gender. Many people say we don't learn from history, we carry on making the same mistakes over and over again. If only half of us are learning and learning only half 'the story', then is it any wonder this is possible and can only be a recurring truth? Let's change our future by teaching our girls about

their past, and then let's see what men and women can really achieve.



Image: Sylvia Pankhurst, daughter of Emmeline, the founder of the Women's Social and Political Union. Sylvia was also a Suffragette as well as an accomplished Artist and Graphic Designer who worked with William Morris, a Publisher and a Political Campaigner For Human Rights.

Celebrating Women and the seasons of our lives



Daisy Anne Simonis

Caesarean born after 36 hours labour, Daisy made sure that the world sat up and noticed her with her strawberry red hair, red face and very loud screaming! She was born without a 'second skin' and to this day, at 21, still remains very sensitive and attuned to what is going on around her. Schooling was something that she was good at, but preferred being in her own space, reading, being with animals and playing outside. A Steiner education was congruent up until Daisy was 12 where she needed to stretch her wings and achieve. And against all odds, that is what Daisy did very well. A first generation University attendee, Daisy proved to Edge Hill her dedication and determination. The University are printing her name on a plaque that will be on the Business School wall forever for having achieved 70% persistently in the 2nd and 3rd year. She has graduated with a first and she has managed to save money whilst being on a student grant! Next week she starts an amazing job in Oxford, having been chosen above and beyond Oxford Degree Students.

But all of this is irrelevant. Daisy's courage to get through two lots of bullying in University and still be pleasant, yet assertive to her bullies has taken my breath away. The rip-off landlord is another area where Daisy stuck to her guns and supported others. Family circumstances have been abusive to a degree and yet Daisy has always been the first one there when she can support the other.

All of the above proves to me that the calibre of this young woman is astonishing. Yes, she realises that there are areas for her to work with, but her humility is also humbling. She still doesn't know how she achieved what she has! Society will be a better place with Daisy being part of it.

Paula x



Amy Bammel Wilding

Imagine a place where women gathered together to share, witness, heal and bless. A place where mothers gathered together with their daughters, sharing wisdom and support. Where maidens were held and honored, and given a map and compass for the milestones of her life. Where every step of the woman's journey - menarche, motherhood and the elder years - were illuminated with reverence. Imagine this circle of women growing and changing the world, like ripples on a pond. My best friend Amy Bammel Wilding, not only imagined this, but she created it and every day she pours her heart and soul into keeping her vision and passion alive at Red Tent: Louisville, a sacred women's gathering community in Kentucky, USA. Amy believes that when women heal, the world heals. She has dedicated her life to supporting women on their journey toward healing. In addition to her monthly Red Tent women's empowerment circles, Amy also offers a Things We Don't Talk About circle, in which she leads women through an open, healing discussion of deeply personal issues such as abortion, miscarriage, infertility and birth trauma.

Perhaps the most touching to me is Amy's mother-daughter offerings. In 2012, when her daughter Brynn was seven years old, Amy became keenly aware of the lack of positive, powerful, and embodied female archetypes for her daughter and her peers to emulate. Feeling inspired to "be the change" she wished to see in the world, Amy created a mother-daughter circle which she named Goddess Girls. Then, three years later, as Brynn began to take her first steps on the journey toward young womanhood, Amy created Maiden's Journey, which delves deeply into the coming-of-age experience.

Amy is the kind of woman who sees a need in the world, and meets it directly. She is passionate about women's empowerment, especially around the topics of menarche and menstruation. She is willing to step out as a leader, expert, advocate and voice in a field that, for the most part, still remains quite taboo. For that, Amy deserves our celebration and gratitude.

Thanks and love to you, Amy! Goddess speed! Melia x



Image: Andy Murray

Charlotte Oliver

'I live in a wooden roundhouse at Landmatters Permaculture Community in Devon, England. My interest on the land is management of 23 acres of pasture and hedges. I've become very interested in grass and its role in wildlife and the history of this island. I feel a strong ancestral connection through the grasses and the ecology that it maintains. I'm involved with the revived interest in scything, I scythe for about an hour or so nearly every morning. What I love about it is that sometimes first thing in the morning is the only bit of sunlight available all day. I find going out and listening to the countryside waking up totally magical - the sun coming up over the hill, the colours, different birds waking up at different times and lots of creatures feeding early in the morning rummaging around through the grass. It's a really special time and I'm usually out there on my own (in terms of other humans) and it's really peaceful. It's an enormous gift for living on the land. I always really appreciate it whatever the weather.

The aim of the grass management is to increase wild flowers. After 10 years it is now possible to start to see the difference in the diversity of our fields. My interests are broader than just grassland management though. It's also about taking a look at holistic use of the land including animal husbandry – in our case sheep - and getting a much more whole-system approach.

Something has to change in the way we use our land. I came to live on the land because I looked at all the things I was involved in in terms of campaigning and activism and pressure groups and got a bit fed up with the sticking plaster approach and found that at the base of it all, is land. If more people had more access to the land it would have an enormous impact for good. That led me to permaculture and then to living on a hill in the community – it is a form of activism. Land does bind you, you have to make a very conscious choice about other things you want in your life. I find what I do on the land really fulfilling but it doesn't fulfill my activism. I need to design a way of doing more activism on our land.'

Is there a woman in your life that you would like to see celebrated here? We would love to hear about her. Please send your submission to contactus@shewhoknowsmagazine.com



Jo Cox 1974 - 2016

"She met the world with love."

Jo Cox, mother, aid worker, campaigner, MP, friend, daughter, sister, wife, she lived all these roles fully. I am so happy to have met this inspiring woman by writing this.

As a politician she was independent and strong, making firm stands for her belief in a better world and joining forces across parties to make that happen. Wholehearted is a word that comes to mind. She had great empathy. Speaking of refugees she said,

'Those children have been exposed to things no child should ever witness, and I know I would risk life and limb to get my two precious babies out of that hellhole.'

Her energy and determination had given her the opportunity to act on this.

Her husband described her love of constituency work, meeting and helping people,

'She wasn't perfect at all but she just wanted to make the world a better place and to contribute... She just wanted people to be happy and for the world to be a fairer place. Jo believed in a better world and she fought for it every day of her life with an energy, and a zest for life that would exhaust most people. She would have wanted two things above all else to happen now, one that our precious children are bathed in love and two, that we all unite to fight against the hatred that killed her.'

The reaction of her friends and family is also a testament to her. They are carrying on her work and healing and caring for each other. I don't hear hatred or revenge in any of their words. As her sister said to the contrary,

'She was a human being... and she was perfect.'

Lynne Irons x

EXPOSING THE MEDICATION OF THE FEMININE

~ Reclaiming Our Emotionality As A Source Of Power

By Anna Finlayson

I would like to suggest that there is an alarming phenomena occurring in an ever increasing trend - that of the suppression of woman's emotionality, including our female rage. My focus is mainly on the medications known as antidepressants, although other drugs are referred to and, to state my intention clearly, is it not to shame or undermine anyone who has taken or is taking these drugs, but to expose where the Pharmaceutical Industry has a monopoly on not just the definition of what constitutes depression for example, but on how and why doctors prescribe in the way they do and how women and their emotions are deeply misunderstood by the culture we live in.

Antidepressants belong to a type of medication known as psychotropic drugs of which one definition is 'affecting mental activity, behavior, or perception, as a mood-altering drug, as a tranquilizer, sedative, or anti-depressant.' A survey by the women's campaign group Platform 51 found one in three British women had used antidepressants and that 48 per cent of women currently using the drugs have taken them for at least five years. The charity, which commissioned a survey of more than 2,000 adults in England and Wales, said the figures pose 'worrying questions' about the appropriateness of these prescriptions. The Pharmaceutical Industry, or Big Pharma as it is sometimes called, makes on average £600 billion annually - that's over half a trillion dollars.

In America in particular the industry runs rife with its advertising campaigns, with women being exposed to up to 4 TV adverts a day as well as TV

advertises running in hospitals, gyms and in magazines. I was shocked to learn that in a study researching the frequency of pharmaceutical advertising in women's magazines, Oprah Winfrey's magazine *O* came out second and that some of the ads in *O Magazine* were for drugs specifically intended for use by children or the elderly. Some examples of the drugs advertised are for treating depression, but also include 'beauty concerns', including ads for Latisse which treats short eyelashes - short eyelashes?! These ads are deeply manipulative in my opinion because they appeal towards what's known as 'a consumer's desire for 'social psychological enhancement'.' In other words, they exploit a woman's need for acceptance and belonging through culturally misrepresented and distorted ideas of external beauty. Research has shown that two thirds of psychotropic drugs are taken by women - clearly the advertising is working.

Although we do not have explicit advertising of psychotropic drugs in the UK, when we visit the GP or hospital saying that we feel depressed or that something feels wrong, the first thing that we will usually be offered are some form of anti-depressant. No one enquires into the woman's life, how is her family/relationship, how is her health, what is her work life like at the moment? The offering of psychological counselling usually only occurs if it is specifically requested and then there is often a waiting list. Doctors are under pressure to fill a certain amount of their drugs quota and, in many cases, they receive financial rewards for fulfilling that quota.

To give an idea of the enormity of influence that Big Pharma has, in 2012 GlaxoSmithKline, the pharmaceutical giant landed a \$3 billion fine - the largest healthcare fraud settlement in US history - for illegally marketing several drugs including an antidepressant. But in the period covered by the settlement, it made profits of more than \$25 billion in the sales of these drugs. So apart from the heavy manipulation of women through advertisements, doctors and a general cultural paradigm that accepts taking drugs to deal with depression and anxiety as normal, why would women be susceptible to this influence in a way that men are not?

Women are more likely to have suffered childhood sexual abuse, sexual violence or having been sexually objectified. If not resolved emotionally, these can often lead to women internalising their anger and rage due to cultural conditioning. Internalised anger has been known to lead to depression. However, in situations where this may not be the case, a woman may simply be experiencing 'normal' responses to the pressures and injustices of the world and/or natural reactions related to her menstrual cycles. In the words of Psychiatrist Julie Holland in her book *Moody Bitches...*,

'Medical chart reviews consistently show that doctors are more likely to give women psychiatric medications than men, especially women between the ages of 35 and 64. For some women in that age group the symptoms of perimenopause can sound a lot like depression, and tears are common. Crying isn't just about sadness. When we are scared, or frustrated, when

we see injustice, when we are deeply touched by the poignancy of humanity, we cry. And some women cry more easily than others. It doesn't mean we're weak or out of control.'

In the documentary *Big Pharma Big Money*, it is stated by a variety of experts that over 50% of cases of depression can be related to an underlying physical cause such as a viral infection, digestive issues, iron deficiency, pest poisons, food allergies and low thyroid function and that these can all be addressed through naturopathic means.

So is it going too far to say that the upscaling of women taking antidepressants is due to the fact that Big Pharma knows how to exploit the particular needs of women and therefore target their drugs to meet these needs whilst simultaneously pressuring and conditioning doctors and health care practitioners to pedal their drugs? I don't think so. As an example of the exploitative lengths they will go to,

shown in the above documentary, an American university put on a conference for young women about eating disorders - sounds very progressive so far - but the conference was sponsored by a drug company to pitch to the young women the antidepressant drug Zoloft - and no doubt the University received something for hosting the conference in the first place.

There is so much more I could include that I unearthed in my research but I'd like to end with the wise and profound words of Julie Holland again,

'Women's emotionality is a sign of health, not disease; it is a source of power. But we are under constant pressure to restrain our emotional lives. We have been taught to apologize for our tears, to suppress our anger and to fear being called hysterical. The pharmaceutical industry plays on that fear, targeting women in a barrage of advertising on daytime talk shows and in magazines. The new, medicated normal is at odds with women's dy-

namic biology; brain and body chemicals are meant to be in flux. If the serotonin levels of women are constantly artificially high, they are at risk of losing their emotional sensitivity with its natural fluctuations, and modelling a more masculine, static hormonal balance. This emotional blunting encourages women to take on behaviours that are typically approved by men: appearing to be invulnerable, for instance, a stance that might help women move up in male-dominated businesses.'

She goes onto say that what we need is more empathy and compassion - the feeling states so readily available to women - not less. I would add to this that we need more of our joy and our rightful rage, not less. We need our particular feminine emotional radars to be finely tuned to help steer this planet towards the future, towards awareness of what needs to change. We do not need to have our women dumbed down, our emotionality is our power.

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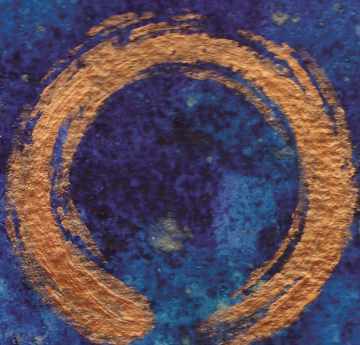
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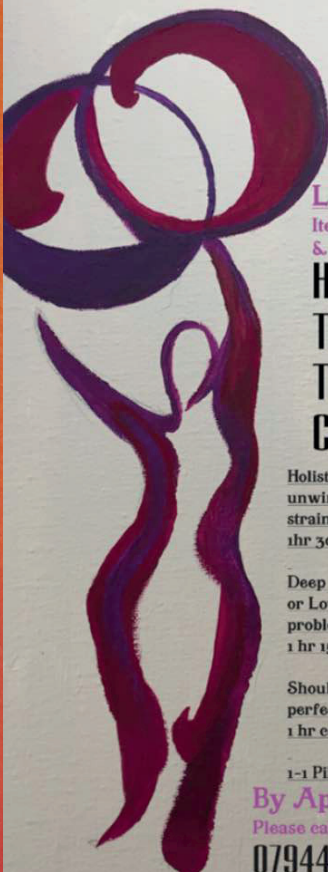


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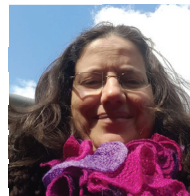
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INTEREST...

Lucy Latchmore reports on current affairs

100 Days of May

Theresa May should use her first 100 days as the UK's second female Prime Minister to show her commitment to gender equality, says the Women's Equality Party which launched its '100 Days of May' campaign on 22 July 2016. Backed by Women's Aid, Women for Refugee Women and IC Change, the campaign sets out what it describes as 'six achievable goals' for May to commit to by the end of her 100th day in office. The goals include equal representation in parliament, compulsory sex and relationship education in schools, universal child care, funding for specialist support services for victims of sexual violence, an end to the detention of female asylum seekers, and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on tackling domestic violence.

Sophie Walker, the Women's Equality Party leader, suggests that May's track record in government gives some reasons to be hopeful that she takes gender equality seriously. During her time as Home Secretary, May passed a law against coercive control in relationships and held a national inquiry into the treatment of domestic violence victims by the police. However, whether these interventions indicate a genuine commitment to improving equality for all women remains to be seen. As Walker points out, May seemed less concerned about the plight of female asylum seekers, refusing to end the detention of pregnant women at Yarl's Wood for example.

The Women's Equality Party has pledged to hold Theresa May to account on each of the six commitments, providing regular updates throughout the 100 days of the campaign.

Extent of female genital mutilation in England revealed

A new report published in July 2016 reveals that thousands of cases of female genital mutilation were reported in England last year – the equivalent of 16 cases per day. Female genital mutilation (FGM) involves cutting off all or part of a woman's genitals for non-medical reasons.

Traditional in some cultures and religions, the practice can leave victims in chronic physical and emotional pain and cause severe complications in pregnancy.

The first of its kind, the research was carried out by the Health and Social Care Information Centre and provides a detailed map of reported cases of FGM across the country, based on data drawn from A&E departments, GP practices and mental health providers.

According to the report, in the year April 2015 to March 2016, 5,702 women and girls across England sought medical help for complications arising from FGM – many during pregnancy. Of those, over half came from London and just over 100 were girls under the age of 18. The vast majority of the women and girls were born in Africa. In most cases the practice had been carried out abroad, although in 18 cases it was reported to have taken place in the UK. The most frequent age at which FGM was carried out was between 5 and 9 years old.

Carrying out FGM or taking a child abroad to have the procedure has been illegal in the UK for 30 years but, to date, no one has ever been prosecuted for the offence.

According to the charity Equality Now, the figures revealed in the report are just the 'tip of the iceberg'. The charity estimates that as many as 137,000 women in the UK may have been victims of FGM and is campaigning for education and social services professionals to do more to protect young girls from the practice.



Image: © PeterCairns/scotlandandbigpicture.com

Devon beavers boost biodiversity

The latest data from the Devon Beaver Trial reveals striking increases in biodiversity at the pilot site near Okehampton, Devon, UK. The Devon Beaver Trial is a unique 'rewilding' project pioneered by the Devon Wildlife Trust to explore the impact of reintroducing beavers into the UK after an absence of 400 years.

The project began in 2011 when the Trust introduced a family of beavers into an enclosed area of land near Okehampton in Devon. Since then, the Trust has been monitoring the effects of the beavers on the biodiversity of the local ecosystem. To do this, the Trust monitored changes in the landscape and in populations of a number of key associated species, such as bats and aquatic insects.

The results were compelling. Between 2012 and 2015, the beavers transformed what was an area of dense scrubland with a single water channel into a patchwork of scrub, pools, dead wood, banks and grassland. Measurements of biodiversity revealed an increase in species richness and density across all population groups monitored, reversals in declining species and a reduction in the dominance of any one species.

The findings of the study provide support to those campaigning to 'rewild' the UK's countryside, by showing some of the benefits that beavers can bring, including improving water quality and biodiversity, as well as preventing flooding.

FOOD

'Tis the season of apples for breakfast, lunch and tea!

SPICY STEWED APPLES AND BLACKBERRIES WITH KEFIR

Per person:

1 apple
1/2 tsp cinnamon
A handful of blackberries
A handful of almonds
A handful of pumpkin seeds
2 tbsp kefir
Squeeze of agave syrup or similar
Water

Chop the apple and stew until soft in water (5-10 mins). Mix in the cinnamon and blackberries just before taking off the heat. Transfer to a serving bowl and top with the kefir, almonds, pumpkin seeds, sweet syrup and a little sprinkle of cinnamon.



CHESTNUT, APPLE AND HAZELNUT BURGERS



1 medium red onion
1" fresh ginger, grated
3 sticks of celery
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp allspice
1 tsp cardamom
2 small apples
100g hazelnuts, roasted
Salt and pepper

Makes 8

Finely chop the onion and celery and saute in a pan with the ginger. Add salt and pepper to taste and a little water. Mix in the spices and finely chopped apples. Kibble the hazelnuts in a blender and add to the pan. Cook for a minute or two adding water or stock to loosen. Leave to cool. Form into burgers with your hands, coating in a light dusting of flour before frying in a pan of shallow oil. Serve immediately.

NUTTY APPLE TART



Serves 8

80g pecan nuts
70g cashew nuts
30g flaxseeds
150g dates
4 small sweet apples
60g raisins
1tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp ground ginger
Syrup of your choice
Juice of a lemon

Place the pecans, cashew, flaxseeds, dates and 2 tbsp water into a blender and whizz into a dough. Spread evenly over the bottom of a lightly greased cake tin. Chop two of the apples and place into the blender with the raisins, cinnamon, ginger, a squeeze or two of syrup and a little water (approx. 2 tbsp). Blend into a paste and smooth over the nut mixture in the cake tin.

Thinly slice the remaining two apples and squeeze the lemon over them making sure that each slice gets a coverage of juice. Decorate the top of the tart in a flower pattern or a spiral and bake in a medium oven (350 degrees celsius) for 30 minutes. When cooked and cooled, lightly glaze the top with more syrup.

HEALING WITH NUTRITION

BY CLAIRE RICHARDS

As the wheel of the year turns from late Summer to Autumn, according to traditional Chinese medicine, we move into the metal element. This is a time of richness that can be seen and felt in the natural world around us. The hedgerows especially are full of riches: nuts, seeds and berries; and the trees are shedding their leaves and returning their richness to the earth below. Here we see nature both letting go and receiving.

The metals from the earth make their way to us in the form of the minerals in the food we eat; and so autumn is a great time of year to consider our mineral intake. It is also harvest time and many vegetables are in season, so there is an abundance of mineral rich foods readily available for us to eat.

Unfortunately the standard modern diet is often mineral deficient. Much farmland has been ill-cared for and today's crops are consequently sub-standard, with a lower nutritional value than the same foods had in the past. The processing of our food is also a problem as much richness is removed and/or lost. As a consequence of this some minerals are now much harder for us to come by and we must take extra care in order to avoid deficiencies.

Problems with weak teeth and bones are common place in modern society. The standard response to this is to focus on increasing the level of calcium in our diet. What is often overlooked here is that calcium works together with magnesium in the body, and that the levels of magnesium in our soil and therefore our food have decreased. Magnesium has become much harder to come by than calcium. To strengthen your teeth and bones, rather than focusing on calcium, look instead to increasing your magnesium intake. Magnesium is present in low levels in most fruits and vegetables, some especially good sources are leafy greens, like spinach, chard or kale; all of which you will find in season in the autumn. Nuts, seeds and beans also contain a good amount too.

Enjoy a mineral rich diet this Autumn. Cook yourself vegetable soups and stews that will nourish your body and warm you as the nights begin to draw in. Connect with the metal element through the minerals in the foods you are eating. Be nourished and strengthened by the earth.

SELF LOVE

By Brigit-Anna McNeill

‘To be beautiful means to be yourself.
You don’t need to be accepted by others. You need to accept yourself.’

Thich Nhat Hahn

Self love is vital, it is crucial to your health, well being and emotional state. It is essential for a happy life and good relationships. What do you think is happening to our bodies and minds if we keep absorbing the harsh criticism we put upon ourselves or take on the distortions others put on us? What do you think happens when we give ourselves daily messages that we are ugly, disgusting, boring, wet, stupid, frigid, not worthy, idiotic, a pain? Then on top of that serve a generous helping of guilt and shame - the stinking cream on the turd.

Well, we become unwell emotionally and physically. Our emotional state is like the soil in which we grow and will, in turn, affect all around us. The link between emotions and health has long been known about, yet our culture does not yet weave this into its institutions. Our healthcare system still focuses at its core on recovery rather than prevention. Our education system still focusses on facts rather than feelings. Diet, emotional wellbeing and environment are seen as fringe issues rather than existing at the very centre of our healthiness. So to embrace self love and the link to our physical health takes a step of courage to swim against the current and possibly break some cultural taboos.

When we don’t love ourselves we won’t feel we deserve to be happy or healthy and our bodies will start to crumble under the weight of it all. Energetically you could say we shift into a lower state whereas higher states would allow us to heal. When we think we don’t deserve to be happy we then will go out of our way to not look after



ourselves by not sleeping properly, using distraction to avoid ourselves, eating badly, seeking approval to our personal detriment, drinking too much, always making ourselves late, making sure no one loves us, not allowing ourselves to shine, bringing others down to feel better about ourselves because we have not yet discovered that when we shine we will be happy to let others shine with us. On top of this, our exterior world will reflect the interior and we will allow ourselves to be abused in every situation, by ourselves and by others.

So to put an end to this cycle of hate start practising self love, and by this I mean loving yourself now, not saving it for when you are perfect, for when you lose weight, find a job, a partner, some new clothes or a fancy hairdo. I mean loving yourself right at this moment. Loving the journey that has brought you here, loving your scars,

your imperfections, your kinky hair, skinny bits, chubby bits, strong bits, weak bits, really loving yourself. You only live this life for a short while so love this wild and precious body and soul.

I also don’t mean just focus your love on the physical body, but on your emotions, they are all valid, let them inform you about your current state and surroundings. Also love your soul, who you are as an individual. A once in a life time happening made you, the only one in the world, a once-in-humanity blend of interests, passions, gifts and quirks. No one can compete with you at being you. You are the best you in the world!

Self love is not about going round saying I love myself and so I don’t care about all the hurts I’m causing along the way. It’s about being gentle with yourself, understanding that you are doing the best you can with the tools you have been given so far. It is understanding that all of life is a journey of self discovery, deaths and births, and sometimes we won’t manage to hold it together perfectly and sometimes we may make a mess and we will feel vulnerable, shaky and scared, and sometimes we will feel strong and fiery but if we can hold ourselves in love and self respect then all these things become easier and we won’t allow ourselves to be abused, walked on, taken advantage of by ourselves or by others.

You will make mistakes but you are not your mistakes. Do not let them define you: learn from them, let them make you humble and strong again but don’t let them eat you alive. Love

yourself through all the hurt and the falls. It's all a balance: love yourself and of course be aware of what parts of you still need to grow. Don't squash those parts and make yourself feel shit about them but just hold yourself with a sense of deep love and affection, pride even, as you watch yourself become aware of all those exciting places where growth can happen.

Deep self love is about being real with yourself and knowing that your true identity is your inner spirit; you are a soul and not just a body. It is realising that you are made out of the same wondrous energy as the plants, the flowers, the earth, the moon, the stars, Buddha, Mary, bears and wolves. It is understanding that perfection is not what's needed to be enough. You really don't have to become a copy of what society, school, parents, so-called friends, colleagues, the media or your partner has put in place for you... In fact our society badly needs us all to become our full potential in order to move out of its same, same rut.

Self love is about embracing who YOU are. Being courageous enough to show your true and authentic self to the world and starting to care less about what other people will think. Letting yourself make a life that feels right for you, in your heart and gut rather than staying in a life others expect you to live.

Are you ready to say yes to yourself? Do you think you deserve happiness? Because that's what it comes down to.

Here are some things that help on the journey to self love:

Get honest with yourself and learn to communicate with your emotions.

Do you remember that little child in you? Do you remember that 5 year old full of dreams and ideas? How did she get squashed? Can you revisit those parts of you that need love, that have been forgotten and abandoned on the dusty road and then hold them in love?

Start to recognise the distractions you use to not feel. Watching TV, always needing noise, shopping, eating unhealthy foods, drinking too much alcohol, etc.

Take time to journal. Sometimes the mind can feel like a tangle of knots that becomes too confusing to even start to unravel. Writing can help to untie the knots and the thoughts can start to flow like clear threads rebuilding a tapestry. Only write for yourself, no one else, and it doesn't matter if you don't know what to write, just start, it may surprise you what will come out.

Spend time focusing inward daily. Begin with five minutes of meditation and five minutes of journaling each morning.

Follow your golden thread. What is it that really lights you up? What is it that keeps whispering to you? Something that isn't about seeking approval from others but which will make you shine from the inside out. It could be learning a language, learning to make fires, planting trees, learning a new trade, dancing, singing, making art. Whatever it may be try and take baby steps towards it, stop calling these things dreams and start turning them into plans.

Remember gratitude. Appreciate the gift of life, your talents and brilliance. The amazing world around you, the animals, the air you breathe, the beating heart in your amazing body, the lungs that help you breathe and the feet that will take you to all sorts of places. Love your imperfectly perfect self.

Listen and let yourself be guided by your intuition. All answers come from within. Look for signs and pay attention to your gut feelings. Whether it's about a person, a place or a decision. When you learn to love yourself you will instinctively protect yourself and hear the voice of intuition more and more. Keep asking yourself "how does this feel?"

Do what nourishes, nurtures, honours and respects you. Don't take part in things that don't match with your instincts. Don't allow toxic people in your life. Love everyone, but be discerning on who you allow into your life.

Learn forgiveness. Fully accepting that a negative circumstance has occurred and relinquishing negative feelings surrounding the event can be learned and can lead us to experience better mental, emotional and physical health. "To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you."

Learn from your mistakes and go forward. Always ask, "What's the learning?"

Take yourself out into nature - this is where we are from, we are nature and this place is the most kind and inspiring place to heal, to think and to come back to one's self.

Imagine what your life would look like if you believed in your worth. When we give ourselves time to heal and take time for ourselves it isn't selfish, it's necessary. Without taking this time how can we truly be there for our partner, children, friends and our home, the planet?

So come on, let's get real, let's stop beating ourselves up with the guilt and shame stick. Understand that you may have been treated unfairly and that's not on! You may have been given messages all your life that you're not good enough or perhaps you have seen one too many magazines that told you you needed to be prettier and so you have gone and hidden in shame. Well enough is enough! Stop playing the victim and allowing these things to beat you. You weren't born to be hiding in misery but to be wonderfully you in all your shining and amazing untamed glory.

www.brigittannamcneill.com

WILD WOM

With Brigit-AL

LADY'S MANTLE

Scientific name:
Alchemilla Vulgaris

Common names:
*Women's Herb, Lion's Foot,
Bear Paw, Little Magic One,
Little Alchemist*

Family:
Roseceae (Rose)



Lady's Mantle has a beautifully rounded leaf that is waterproof and holds drops of dew like orbs over her folded crevices and jagged edges long after the dew has dried up everywhere else. I love to go out in the mornings and find a patch of Lady's Mantle and drink from all the leaves. I once heard a well-known herbalist say, 'The dew wasn't dew but water created by the plant itself.'

As an Oil ~

Lady's Mantle has a real affinity with the breasts and oil made from the plant will work to bring joy back to hardworking breasts.

These droplets, along with the waterproof skin on the leaf, have been considered for many years to hold tremendous magic and it was these droplets that drew ancient alchemists to Lady's Mantle, giving rise to the name *Alchemilla*, the little alchemist or the little magical one. Alchemists would collect these drops that are believed to hold a potent medicine and use them for their magical creations.

Made into a balm or fresh poultice, this plant is wonderful for wounds and skin, especially when inflammation is an issue. Its main use though is as a women's herb, helping women in all stages of life.

So, next time you see this magical plant, have a little sip of her nectar and a feel of her soft skin.

LAN WISDOM

Anna McNeill

As a Tea ~

Lady's Mantle is often used as a fertility herb - taking the tincture alongside the tea for at least three months to boost fertility.

It also works well for premenstrual tension, period pain and mixes beautifully with lemon balm for added calm.

Taken in the last three months of pregnancy along with raspberry leaf will help strengthen the uterus and will lessen the chances of haemorrhaging during childbirth due to its astringent qualities.

After pregnancy it will help strengthen and tone and will really help women who show signs of post natal depression by gently restoring life force and vitality.

It also aids women by relieving menopausal symptoms.

A gorgeous tea for strengthening and toning the uterus and helping with cases of prolapse if taken daily:

1 part Lady's Mantle leaves
1 part Raspberry leaves
1 part Rose buds or petals

Steep for 30 minutes, add honey if desired.

Another way in which I like to add herbs into my life is by making vinegars. Vinegar is a wonderful substance that really extracts the minerals from the plants. I fill a jar with the herbs leaving a couple of inches of space from the top, then add cider vinegar, filling it to the top. Don't put a metal lid on the jar as the vinegar will destroy it. Instead, put some muslin over the top. Check for air bubbles every day and make sure no plant matter is sticking above the vinegar as this can cause mould. Leave for 4-6 weeks.

This is a wonderful way in which to connect to the land, easily put wild foods into your diet and help your physical state. I make all sorts of herb vinegars that help me through the Winter, just a teaspoon a day is sometimes all you need and you can add it to dressings, hair treatments and so on.

Wild Blessings xx



For foraging days with Brigit visit
www.sharphamtrust.org or www.brigittannamcneill.com

Images: © Brigit-Anna McNeill



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Angharad Varda
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Mohika Kroll shares knowledge and wisdom for tending your garden in Autumn...

This is the time of the Autumn Equinox, when day and night are equal length, and light and dark are in balance. We feel the arrival of the new season, the weather shifts, the daylight hours dwindle and the Earth's energy starts to settle, reminding us that it will soon be time to rest. In the veg garden, there is much to celebrate, this being the time of harvest festivals when we offer our deep gratitude to Mother Earth for her nourishment throughout the year.

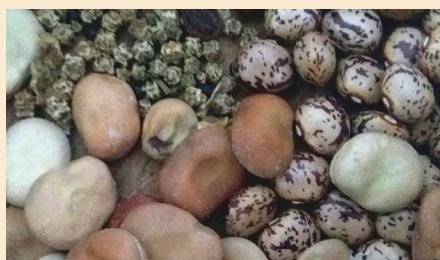


If you've been growing squashes, your garden will be aglow in their rich yellow and orange colours. Start exposing them to the sun by removing any leaves that shade them, and support fruits off the wet ground on mats. Check for the signs of ripeness - firm skins and dry stems and keep an eye out for frosts. The skins need curing before fruits will store well - when they are mature, cut them with a long bit of stem attached and keep in full sun for 2 weeks, until the skins are hard. Then store in a dry and airy place at 10°C and enjoy the taste of Summer sunshine all through the Winter.

Most of us will have at least a few green tomatoes left at the end of the season. If you are not a big fan of green tomato chutney, then there are still ways to encourage them to ripen. Cut the whole plant off at ground level, strip

off all the remaining leaves off and hang upside down indoors. You can also pick trusses or single fruit and keep them in a box, with a few ripe bananas beside them - the ethylene gas they give off encourages ripening.

In Hindi, seed is 'bija' or 'containment of life'. Vandana Shiva says 'Seed is created to renew, to multiply, to be shared and to spread. Seed is life itself.' With the huge threat to seed sovereignty from multinational corporations, we must do all we can to protect and honour it, and by saving our own we retain seed diversity, resilience and common stewardship, and keep our connection to our ancestors for whom this was a sacred activity. If you are new to seed saving, then starting with French or Runner beans is a nice, easy introduction. Make sure that your variety is open pollinated and not an F1, which will not grow true to type. Let the pods mature fully on the plant until they start to yellow and dry out, then spread out somewhere out of the rain with a good airflow until the pods are fully dry and brittle. Shell out the beans and dry further until they are hard, then store in an airtight container. They will last around 3 years.



For something more adventurous, tomato seeds are fun to save, and a great way of reducing next year's seed costs. Most modern varieties of tomato are self pollinating, and will not cross (but again check you are not saving



from an F1). To collect the seed, allow your tomatoes to ripen fully. Then collect a few of each variety that you want to save seed from. Slice them in half across the middle of the fruit, and squeeze the seeds and juice into a jar. You then need to ferment this mixture for a few days - this removes the jelly-like coating on each seed and also kills off many diseases that can be carried on the seeds. To do this put the jar of seeds and juice in a reasonably warm place for 3 days, stirring the mixture twice a day. After 3 days, add plenty of water to the jar and stir well. The good seeds should sink to the bottom of the jar. Gently pour off the top layer of mould and any seeds that float. Then empty the good seeds into a sieve and wash them thoroughly under running water. Shake off as much water as possible and tip the sieve out onto a plate. Dry somewhere warm but not too hot, and out of direct sunlight. Once they are completely dry, rub them off the plate and store in a cool dry place where they should keep well for at least 4 years.

Take time now to contemplate all the abundance in your garden, repaying you for all your dedication during the year. Sweetcorn containing juicy cobs, kale of different textures and hues (Cavolo Nero, Red Russian, Redbor varieties), sweet bulb fennel, deep green and crinkly savoy and earthy turnips. Let us gather with friends and family and share joyfully in these gifts, preparing ourselves for the journey into the dark of winter.

RECONCEIVING

by Kamalamani



“You’ll make someone a lovely wife and mother, you know.” I’m sure my neighbour’s comment was meant as a compliment. I remember my body’s inner recoil, “You must be joking!” Fortunately I managed to not blurt this aloud - or maybe I should have done? Perhaps I was too polite a teenager. Even though I had warmly anticipated motherhood from quite a young age it seemed that my body was starting to make other plans.

In my late teens and early twenties I had a mantra that I would have children “by the time I’m 30”. My 30th birthday came and went; no children, a full and satisfying life, including being with a man with whom I would have happily parented - we are now happily aunt and uncle instead. A dream confirmed that I wouldn’t be having children, which came to me the night after meeting up with my oldest friend Vicky, with her sharing the

exciting news of her first pregnancy. The dream showed me our diverging paths and how I wouldn’t become a mother - even though we remain firm friends. That liberating dream threw me into new terrain, given that I had always assumed I would become a mother. It was a relief, too, after years of ‘umming’ and ‘ahhing’; talking to anyone who would listen - parents and nonparents alike - about motherhood and other-hood.

The same day I scoured the web for a book to buy. I wanted to read about other women who had made the decision not to have children, perhaps, like me, with that decision touching upon faith and ecological and environmental considerations. I couldn’t find the book I was looking for, so I decided I would have to write it. The seed was sown. 14 years later and *Other Than Mother: Choosing Childlessness With Life In Mind* has finally come to fruition, published by Earth Books in April.

When I remembered my “by the time I’m 30” mantra in the process of researching *Other Than Mother...* I remembered a favourite television series from the 1990s: *Northern Exposure*. This originally ran on CBS in the USA and was screened here in the UK on Channel 4. It was a drama series based upon the lives and events of the inhabitants of a small, remote Alaskan community, surrounded by the flora and fauna of the wilderness.

In an episode entitled *The Letter* (series six, episode four), Maggie O’Connell, one of the main characters, re-reads a letter on her 30th birthday which she wrote to herself as a 15-year-old. In reading the letter she realises just

how different her life is to how she envisioned it, encouraging her to re-examine her life against the ideals of her 15-year-old self. At that point she, too, is without child. At the risk of being a plot spoiler, 15-year-old Maggie shows up, and the 15 and 30-year-old versions of Maggie reconcile their respective hopes and dreams. Perhaps this episode of *Northern Exposure* had more of an impact upon my choosing childlessness than I have realised until now. I was in my late teens when I first watched it, full of plans, and extremely fond of Maggie's character. Struck by my own inner mantra of having children "by the time I'm 30" and remembering this particular episode of *Northern Exposure*, I felt compelled to write my own letter, a poignant exercise, and one I would recommend if you are being haunted by younger voices finding fault in the reality of your life now.

Over the past 14 years I have been fortunate enough to have read and been told the stories of those with child, and those without child, due to happenstance, choice, and circumstance. Rather like the way we neglect sharing the death stories of our loved ones in this culture this is an area which is tragically unexplored. There are so few contexts in which we can talk about our reproductive hopes, fears, despair, without being judged or stereotyped.

When I first started researching this area there was very little written on the subject, apart from by academics and late 1970s and early 1980s feminists. I was fortunate in the early days of my researching to come across the work of women authors like Mardy Ireland with her call to 'reconceive womanhood', the first writer known to me who had thought carefully about the motivations of women without children, pointing out that womanhood should not be seen as synonymous with motherhood.

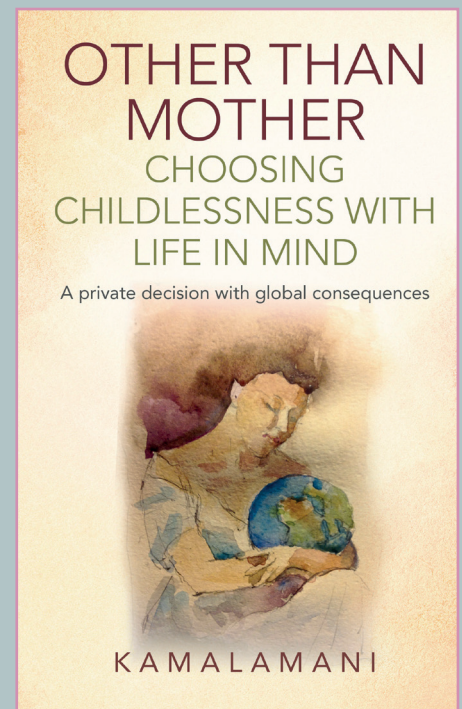
There has been much more written in the past decade or so, with a mini-explosion in books about childlessness. The themes I am keen

to address, in addition to exploring the rise in childlessness, gender, identity, and relevant Buddhist teachings which I've found helpful over the years, are ecological and environmental in nature. I'm not the first person to do this, although, in recent decades, thinking about the decision of whether or not to create with the Earth and other-than-human life in mind seems to have become less popular - perhaps because baby-making is seen as just a private decision, when, in fact, it's a private decision with public consequences.

In graduating from college in California in 1969, Stephanie Mills delivered a college graduation speech entitled *The Future is a Cruel Hoax*, which catapulted her into the national spotlight. The year before, Paul Ehrlich's bestselling book *The Population Bomb* had been published by Ballantine Books. Mills had been moved deeply by its message that we humans are facing a future of war, strife and famine - victims of our own reproductive success, and exploiting Earth's finite resources. Mills announced to her classmates: 'I am terribly saddened by the fact that the most humane thing for me to do is to have no children at all.'

Stephanie kindly agreed to write the Foreword for *Other than Mother* and I'm glad to have continued a tradition in which we pay attention to other-than-human life, as we do our best in deciding what to do with our own lives. In the past 40 years Stephanie has been an ecological activist, author, and lecturer and is now a Fellow of the US's Post Carbon Institute. Her recent advice to those considering whether or not to have children - via a YouTube video recorded for the Post Carbon Institute - is to: 'Search your conscience and follow your heart.'

My life in the past 14 years, researching and writing *Other than Mother*, as well as my first book *Meditating With Character* has, I realise now, been about reconceiving life. How to live a creative life without becoming a mother, a nurturing one without



actually producing an earthling. Part III of *Other than Mother* is called *New Horizons And Baby-Sized Projects* and explores life beyond deciding not to have children. I'm well into that phase myself and increasingly interested in how those of us without children for whatever reason are making an important contribution in creating a new culture of role models, rites of passage, and networks, rather than our childlessness being seen as pitiable or deviant.

In ending, I move full circle in again bringing to mind my neighbour's comment about making someone a lovely wife and mother. I don't want to be defined primarily as a wife or mother. Come to that, as much as I value my intimate relationships, I don't want my life to be about making something for someone else in a fixed sense, committed though I am to my friends, family and partner. I feel as committed to being an ambassador for the Earth, drawing attention to the equal importance of other-than-human life on Earth. I want to be free to express, create and nurture beyond motherhood and I long for the day when we embrace different reproductive choices and respect those differences.

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ARTS

Lucy Filce ~ Visionary Portrait Painter, Wanderer and Finder of Natural Treasures

My most recent body of work, *I Am You, You Are Me*, has taken me on quite a journey painting nine First Nations people that came to me during sweat lodges, breath work and meditation. Over the last six years I have been regularly taking part in a Native Canadian sweat lodge ceremony here in the UK. Our community is blessed to have an elder who was a Sun Dance leader on the Blood Reservation in Alberta, Canada, who came to the UK to bring us the teachings of his Blackfoot lineage of elders.

The name of the series of paintings, *I Am You, You Are Me*, was known to me from the moment I saw the first painting. I didn't really understand it at the time but as paint pressed against the canvas and more faces appeared from the apparent nothingness, I became more and more in tune with a feeling of oneness. When I sit with them I understand how we are all connected and 'We are one' and this is the purpose of the body of work. There are nine paintings because the number nine is the sacred number of completion.

The paintings have taught me so much and they are still leading my life into growth and development. They are round because life is circular and so is the nature of existence as we originate from and return to the source. With help from my father I was able to construct large driftwood frames and lash circular canvases to the centre to get the wonderfully organic and sculptural frames for my circular paintings. I paint portraits because I feel that they reveal the inner soul of the onlooker, what we see in the eyes



of the painting is often what is within us. Having spent many years with the paintings I have grown with them in my understanding but I still find some of them challenging. When I look at them they reflect back to me my feelings in that moment; I perceive that the person in the painting is happy or that they are "angry" with me when it is just my inner environment reflecting back to me. I find that the more I show the body of work, the more I see people being attracted to a certain person on the canvas. I see how the paintings reflect something deep in them that they truly understand or paradoxically, something deep in them that they do not understand. The paintings are a mirror for us and our own development, we project our "stuff" onto them the same way we do with the people, things and situations in our life. Confronting the paintings is like confronting yourself. People often ask me, 'Are these YOUR paintings?' and my usual response is, 'No, they are OUR paintings.'

The series is about Unity: I am you, you are me. As most of the paintings were visioned in the sweat lodge they are highly influenced by the teachings of the medicine wheel. When exhibited, the first painting sits in the centre of the space (the centre of the medicine wheel) and the other eight paintings sit in a circle around it. North opposite South, East opposite West, Masculine opposite Feminine and Duality opposite Unity. The first painting in the series, *Chu'si* acts like a gateway into the circle, an opening from which the others follow. The following four paintings represent the directions with their corresponding elements: *Addoette* (North, Earth), *Mapiya* (East, Air), *Kajika* (South, Fire) and *Satinka* (West, Water). The following two paintings are the divine feminine (*Anpaytoo*, Mother Earth) and the divine masculine (*Etu*, Father Sky). From this comes The Ancestors with their teachings about duality consciousness and the final painting is a unified being, an androgynous, harmonious being teaching me about unity consciousness. I am still learning from these paintings every day and the more I sit with them and meditate with them I understand their purpose for connecting us to Unity Consciousness. When we experience the nine paintings in a circle we are taken on a journey through 'entry', to the directions, to a connection with the earth, a connection with spirit, a realisation of duality and an eventual coming home to unity; a place of harmony, balance and completion. I have travelled with the paintings to the four directions of North, East, South and West (Scotland, Cambridge,



Adoette



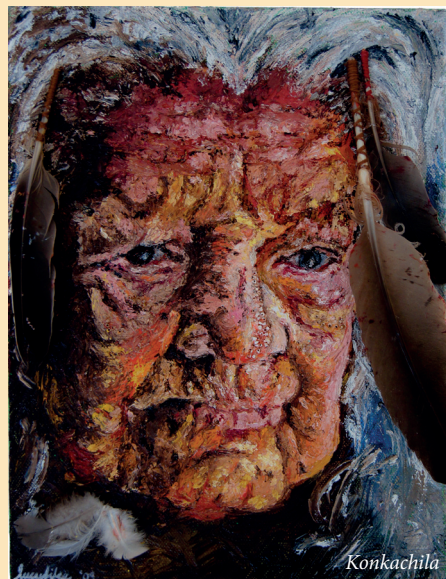
Anpaytoo



Mapiya

Dartmoor and Somerset). As yet I have not exhibited the paintings in the middle of the country but as I live in Birmingham that is only a matter of time! When I show the work I also hold the space to teach a meditation on the paintings. This can be a specific, deep meditation on one particular painting or it can be a meditation on harmony, unity and relatedness which encompasses all the paintings. To really understand the paintings we need to feel them as well as see them.

I have been thinking greatly about writing a book about the whole journey of creating the paintings which will include full colour images, a description of the three year journey creating the paintings from start to finish and a concise explanation of each. As most of this is scribbled in copious sketch books and scraps of paper it may take quite a lot of compiling but eventually the tribe will be found there.



Konkachila



The Ancestors

I am you and you are me
Universal living duality

I see you and you see me
Disguised separation, think it be

I am she and you are he
Mirrored perception, freedom key

I am he and you are she
Forget the 'I, unity 'we'

I am you and you are me
Merge duality, oneness free.

I am currently working on a new painting project which is a series of five human representations of the elements. The image on the front cover of the magazine is the element of Earth in human form; she has the green skin of the grasses, tree trunks for hair and her totem animal/insect is the spider - the ancient, ancestral Grandmother weaver of knowledge. The next four paintings are the human representations of Water, Fire, Air and Ether. We as humans contain within our bodies the five elements so we are directly related to nature. The project of the five elements brings together humans in elemental form and represents the diverse races and sexes thus reinforcing the 'We are one' theme. All of the paintings have words that came to me as I was creating them which have been woven into poems. I leave you with *The Ancestors* poem - contemplate them gazing into each other's eyes knowing no separation, beginning to understand that we are all related.



The Bear Medicine Society

www.lucyfilce.com



The Scorhill Sisters By Jan Felmingham

WOMB SONG

My womb is a tomb of dead things
I am pregnant, I am full of past baby unmourned, deformed, defecating, masticating -
small, big, fat, thin, girls, boys, begin to form - tall, short, all these foetuses came to nought
too late, my fate.

My womb silent tomb, speak to me, talk to me
come! take one long walk with me
to the place where woman's womb is red and fruity,
whole and clean, creating babies to be seen.

My womb is not a tomb! - creative impulses rise and expand
come, give me foetuses that choose to land
and swell and grow well...

... arise! arrive into life,
force through tunnel
arrive, arise, realise your birth, your life, your birth - right.

My womb *was* a tomb of dead things - the doctors said that I was barren
but I was FULL of past creative failures -
mine, yours, ours, theirs, my mothers, your mother's,
her mother's and her mother's mother before her -

I give up the ghost
I give up
the ghosts
most have not been mine to carry so silently,
darkly entombed
in my womb

Jan Felmingham

Dedicated to all women who wanted to be mothers, but are not.

Love's Vigilance

The kokako calls out
"Arora, I love you".
Come closer waking one,
Know with me
the Oneness we are born to.
Touch my hands,
see inside my heart.
I bring the ointment,
the sap, the lichen,
the nectar of the vine.
This sacred wood is
not bound to one tribe,
but entangled to all
You could never fall too far
for me to catch you,
nor ever be too dirty
bring your wound to me.
I'll bathe you in
the waters that flow
from you through all we see

The bird calls out
"Matako, we are one".
Come closer waking one,
As you cry, the ache is mine,
your joy is my necessity.
Touch my hands,
walk inside my heart
Feel me as my breath winds
through your forest dark.
Excavate your truth buried,
deep within your marrow,
Lay down inside my grove.
In loves' vigilance I follow
Bring your blessed regret,
your mess, your mask,
your dirty hands
and feet to me.
I'll bathe you in
the waters that flow
from you through all we see

Come closer waking one
touch my hands and
be inside my heart.
Come closer...I am you



Painting and poem by Brigidina
www.brigidina.com

OUR STORIES

This Spiralling Life

by Emma Davies

Two women sit together, a spiral drawn in the sand between them. Offerings are laid out.... many coloured candles, oils, herbs.... The moon is full, the night warm. Under the bright moonlight, high mountains loom as they sit beside a still lake. The quiet moon is reflected off the glassy surface. The land feels poised, waiting for something. This is the land of sleeping dragons. The old ones call this place 'the navel of the world'.

It is wild... sacred.

Two women, girl-woman and mid-woman, breathe deeply as they share the power of this moment of connection. Girl-woman looks across at mid-woman remembering her long journey here, travelling far, following a deep yearning, a longing, a knowing. Remembering how deeply her belly stirred as the wooden boat carrying her drifted across the waters and she glimpsed pyramid temples above trees. Remembering her belly stirring again, the brief moment she met mid-woman on the forest path. A moment of recognition, of heart connection, knowing she would look for her again. The whispering words which told of a forest woman and her forest house, took her along the wooded path, spirit lion by her side. A path which led to a welcoming smile, a smile which had known she would come, known they had something to share.

Girl-woman questing for who she is... Fierce, strong, warrior girl, following her thunder to her true path, to her medicine. Her blood is new, full and strong. She runs free, embracing all life brings to her. Grandmother moon lights up her black hair and soft skin. Looking at mid-woman she sees the power and clarity of a woman who is her natural, authentic self.

Mid-woman, she who is... Strong, wise, walking her true path, embodying her medicine. Wildwoman dancing to her own rhythm and to the rhythm of the Earthmother. She offers her last wise blood to the land. Her deepening connection to spirit shows as her hair turns silver. Looking at girl-woman she remembers her own journey through the life spiral, as she walked the red path of woman. This little sister reminds her of her own journey to womanhood. Images of her life flash in her mind. She closes her eyes in gratitude for the many lessons it has brought her. Remembering being girl-woman, she wonders how different her life might have been had women gathered around her, shared their stories with her.



So she begins...

With a fire. Candles, offerings and oils built on the spiral between them. Once lit, mid-woman drums, singing the story of her life to girl-woman. Her story, from first blood to last blood. As she gathers the wisdom of her last blood, she weaves the threads of her story. It becomes the rich tapestry of her womb bundle. As she shares her story with girl-woman, the power in her belly grows stronger. Firelight flickers in girl-woman's eyes, mid-woman knows that she too has felt the power in her song, words reaching across, touching a deep part of her soul, awakening her. Girl-woman feels the awakening. As her truth whispers on the edge of her being, she grasps the song in her own heart. Through the firelight, girl-woman sees in mid-woman the road ahead. The journey of woman from first blood. A journey of wildness, belonging, purpose, service, connection. Ready to cross this threshold, she whispers into the fire...

"I am woman becoming."

Mid-woman sees in girl-woman the road past. The right and wrong turns she took which led her back to herself. Life now brings clarity and peace. Ready to cross this threshold, she whispers into the fire...

"I am deepening woman."

Her drum falls silent, the fire wanes. They paint each other with ochre for the beauty they see in each other... As woman becoming journeys on, out into the world, deepening woman journeys in, even deeper into herself.

And the spiral of life turns...

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