



# Talking Leaves: Volume 1, Issue 3

## Autumn Equinox 2012

### Welcome to Yggdrasil

Yggdrasil is a collaborative venture begun by Joe Landwehr and Sara Firman- the culmination of our life experiences; our work as healers, teachers and writers; our soul journeys; our dreams and our quests in nature. We envision Yggdrasil to be a school for visionary contrarians, integrated with a spa retreat for the evolving soul, set within a self-sustaining forest garden community. We are now in the formative stages of this project, working with a small group of dedicated souls to refine and elaborate our vision, and root it in fertile soil.

### Tending the Sacred Wound

*Graywolf*

A major focus of our effort to date has been toward the creation of a curriculum designed to address four primary soul tasks, as outlined on our vision statement (available upon request).

- 1) tending sacred wounds;
- 2) cultivating a deep relationship with a visionary calling;
- 3) inviting dialogue between diverse intelligences; and
- 4) courting the mysteries of the mythopoetic realm.

These four soul tasks are both sequential and concurrent. Certainly it is possible to court the

mythopoetic realm, or converse with helping plants, animals, or other humans, while tending the sacred wound. Or to dialogue with others, or court the mythopoetic realm, while cultivating visionary calling. Indeed, it may be quite helpful and empowering to do so.

Yet there is also a way in which tending the sacred wound is central to everything else we do. For until we have begun to heal ourselves, we are in no position to effectively assist in the healing of the world. To the extent we *are* wounded, whatever vision we espouse will inevitably be distorted by our wounding. It is through tending the sacred wound – consciously and lovingly addressing the most deeply chronic source of pain and suffering in life – that the soul begins moving toward a sense of visionary calling rooted in its own experience, and gains the skill, the knowledge, and the strength of character to heed the calling and root the vision in solid sacred ground.

Similarly, it is only through tending the sacred wound that the soul gains a capacity to enter into non-defensive dialogue with other intelligences. Whenever we attempt to dialogue from a wounded place, we inevitably generate misunderstanding, conflict, and further wounding. As we gain the capacity to approach our own woundedness with compassion, clarity and loving commitment, we gain the capacity to approach others with respect, an open mind and heart, and the possibility of learning from our differences.

Lastly, it is by tending the sacred wound that we are empowered to evoke our most powerful response from the mythopoetic realm. Our deepest wounds tend to be those with a strong unconscious dimension, manifesting physical and psychological symptoms that serve as metaphors with suggestive repercussions in other dimensions of our lives. These metaphors are rooted in the mythopoetic realm, where the gods and goddesses that infuse this life with a hidden dimension of sacred numinosity live. It is when we commit ourselves to our own healing and quest for wholeness with clear intention, that the entire pantheon of deities – each with its own medicine bag of healing resources – makes itself available to us.

Until we address the wounds that reverberate at the core of our soul's journey, and at the core of the world's problems – with as much consciousness, compassion and clarity as we can muster – our wounds will remain a source of pain and suffering. When we focus our attention on them, and tend them with care and reverence, they become sacred – yielding the possibility of authentic visionary calling, genuine co-creative dialogue, and deeply fulfilling intimacy with the mythopoetic realm as the very basis for a world renewed and re-balanced through our vital presence within it.

It is for this reason that tending the sacred wound is the first soul task around which Yggdrasil's curriculum will evolve. Because the word "wound" seems to trigger a strong response in many people, I want to take some time in this issue of Talking Leaves to elaborate what I mean by it.

## The Wound at the Heart of the Broken World

We seem to live in a culture deeply informed by cognitive psychology and New Age teachings that stress hyper-positivity as the solution to all our troubles – where the very idea of wounding is anathema to our personal and collective evolution. If we just change our beliefs – or so the

dominant attitude seems to be – we can change our reality. Anyone with a broad historical perspective, or even an honest assessment of one’s own life, will quickly realize that the actual process of meaningful change is much more complex, and much more difficult than that.

It has been 50 years, for example, since Rachel Carson wrote her courageous landmark book, *Silent Spring*, warning of the dangers of pesticide use. There is no one on the planet who can honestly say they don’t know that excessive use of pesticides is dangerous – not just to human health, but to the vitality of the ecosystem. Yet here we are in 2012, debating whether or not the widely used pesticide 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) – a suspected contributing factor in non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, considered “possibly carcinogenic to humans” by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) – should be allowed an even wider presence in our environment through a genetically modified form of corn being developed by Monsanto.

If “healing the planet” were a simple matter of changing our beliefs, given sufficient information, we would not be living in the toxic environment that 50 years of willful ignorance has produced.

As with pesticide toxicity, so too with climate change, deforestation, species extinction and loss of biodiversity, unsustainable consumption of natural resources, accelerating population growth, increasing disparity between rich and poor, corporate dominance of political debate, proliferation of nuclear weapons in an age of increasing terrorism, rampant genocide, virulent racism, homophobia, religious intolerance, declining women’s reproductive rights, and too many other serious issues to take in all at once without going completely numb.

At the heart of all these issues – that together make what Talking Council member Brooke Halpin has called “the broken world” – is the wound. We are all wounded in one way or another and to the extent that we live in willful denial or benign neglect of our wounds, we work together unconsciously to create a wounded world. In this place of woundedness, it does not matter how much information we have, or how clever our proposed solutions, or what we profess to believe. Our reality will continue to be a reflection of our woundedness. Until we address these wounds, and work toward healing them, nothing fundamental will change.

## Reclaiming the Wound for a Culture of Positivity

I do not believe that “wound” is a dirty word. I believe that our wounds are a sacred gift and a catalyst to our spiritual growth. Without a wound, there is no need to take a healing journey of the soul. It is the wound that motivates us to reach for healing and spiritual growth, and neither healing nor spiritual growth are possible without it. This is what makes the wound sacred.

Secondly, I do not believe that healing the wound is a matter of making it disappear, or fixing it, or getting over it, and moving on with a wound-free life (if there is such a thing). Instead I see the job to be *tending* the wound or *caring* for it in the sense that Thomas Moore talks about in his book *Care of the Soul* – that is to say, of cultivating a more conscious relationship to it. Tending the sacred wound is not necessarily about making people feel better, although there is nothing wrong with feeling better. Whether we feel better or not, however, and whether or not feeling better

lasts, tending the sacred wound is more importantly a matter of learning how to consciously relate to the wound as a catalyst to a lifelong process of learning and growth that is the soul's journey. Tending the sacred wound is not about wallowing in victimhood, but about becoming more conscious of what you are learning from your wounds that you can then transmute into a visionary gift. As I see it, as long as we're on our soul's journey, this learning process never ends.

In my own life, I can trace my path as a healer directly back to my wounds, and to the journey that was launched to heal them. I have come a long way since the initial wounding, and have learned a great deal. Does this mean I am entirely done with my wounds? No. What it does mean is that I am committed to the process of transmuting my wounds into wisdom and compassion that I can then offer to those who come to me to heal and learn. This in fact, is my spiritual journey. I'm sure the same is true for many of you. That - as I see it - is what we will be doing at Yggdrasil.

## The Wounded Masculine

*I learned there was no such thing as the wild. It is the bedrock reality. It is. We called it wild, because we think that's what it is in relation to us. In relation to it we are the wild ones . . . wild, dumb, unsubtle, barbaric even.* "An Interview With Jorie Graham," [Earthlines: The Culture of Nature](#), Issue 2 August 2012.

In Yggdrasil's vision statement, I talk about three levels of wounding:

- 1) the sense of separation that human beings have from the more-than-human world;
- 2) the individual wounds that we bear in this life, in part from our dysfunctional family, and in part from our dysfunctional culture; and
- 3) "the wounded masculine".

All three of categories of wounds bear further explanation. But since many of you who have responded to the vision statement seem uncomfortable with the term "wounded masculine," I want to take a bit of additional space to clarify what I mean by this category of wound.

First, healing the wounded "masculine" is not about healing wounded "males." It is about healing the imbalance within both men and women that exists because of the imbalance between masculine and feminine - as archetypal principles - in our society.

As Jungian Erich Neumann explains it (*The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Princeton University Press, 1954, p. xxii n. 7), "*we use the terms "masculine" and "feminine" . . . not as personal sex-linked characteristics, but as symbolic expressions . . . The symbolism of "masculine" and "feminine" is archetypal and therefore transpersonal . . . In reality every individual is a psychological hybrid . . . [I]t is one of the complications of individual psychology that in all cultures the integrity of the personality is violated when it is identified with either the masculine or the feminine side of the symbolic principle of opposites.*

As archetypal principles, masculine and feminine do not refer to men and women, but rather to psychic attributes possessed in varying degrees by both sexes. We might consider the following list

as a beginning differentiation, reminding ourselves that men can fall on the feminine side of one or more of these measures, while women can fall on the masculine side:

- 1) Masculine is individual - oriented toward self; feminine is communal - oriented toward relationship.
- 2) Masculine is hierarchical and exclusive; feminine is egalitarian and inclusive.
- 3) Masculine is governed by head (intellect and inspiration); feminine is governed by heart (feeling and intuition).
- 4) Masculine is literal and pragmatic; feminine is metaphorical and imaginative.
- 5) Masculine is hot, dry, fast and light; feminine is cool, moist, slow and dark.
- 6) Masculine energy ascends; feminine energy descends.
- 7) Masculine is linear and uniform in its understanding of time; feminine is cyclical and rhythmical.
- 8) Masculine seeks objective truth; feminine seeks subjective understanding.
- 9) Masculine initiates and seeks external manifestation of its internal impulses (product); feminine responds and seeks meaning and quality in its external experiences (process).

And so on. I'm sure you can probably add to this list, and some of you may disagree with these distinctions, but this will hopefully at least give you some idea of what I mean when I talk about masculine or feminine as archetypal principles. When masculine and feminine are in balanced expression within an individual or within the world, then we live a balanced life in a balanced world. It is only when one side or the other dominates, that we have a problem. It is a systemic imbalance of the psyche on the masculine side that I am calling "the wounded masculine."

Yggdrasil's approach to soul is predicated on the understanding that despite the evolution of the feminist worldview, and attendant opportunities for the advancement of women within society, ours is still largely a world dominated by the masculine dimensions of the psyche. To the extent that the masculine is wounded - separated from the more-than-human community by a sense of superiority, and from other humans by the hierarchical systems it creates to maintain its advantage - then the world in which we all live will be compromised accordingly.

The wounded masculine tends to project its wounds into the world onto some external enemy, fighting endless wars rooted in religious intolerance, racism, and other forms of inequality. It uses its intellect and its brute force to dominate and control. It measures its worth in monetary terms and power over others. The wounded masculine is disconnected from the feminine - from its own body and feelings, from the mythopoetic depths, and from any awareness of interconnectedness with the rest of the living world.

Most men, and many father-identified women learn early in life to suppress pain, deny their wounds, and muster herculean strength in moving forward in willful ignorance of them. When this happens, these wounds reverberate unconsciously and leave a legacy of carnage in their wake. The wounded masculine always has a point to prove and it will go to extraordinary lengths to prove it - up to and including the death and destruction of everything it holds dear. Among other consequences of the wounded masculine are:

- 1) A world in which everyone is out for herself, and to hell with everyone else. Individualism trumps what is best for the common good and for the planet.
- 2) A world in which certain humans dominate other humans, and humans dominate the more-than-human world - rife with racism, war, genocide, economic disparity, and ecological disaster.
- 3) A world in which seemingly good ideas have damaging emotional consequences and human wounding is perpetuated and passed on from generation to generation, despite our best intentions.
- 4) A world in which science dominates, and the mythopoetic is marginalized.
- 5) A world in which everything - including humans - becomes a commodity to be bought and sold in a marketplace.
- 6) A world in which productivity is everything and where those who are no longer productive become expendable.
- 7) A world of unbridled progress - where bigger, better and more make an overpopulated world stressing limited resources, and life becomes complex and unsatisfying.
- 8) A world in which quality, integrity, genuine intimacy, and enjoyment are sacrificed on the altar of quantity, speed, efficiency and convenience.
- 9) A world of mindless consumption and endless, meaningless entertainment, with little respect for the lessons of history, the timeless tenets of tradition, or the mythological stories that bind a culture and a people to their spiritual depths.

Indeed, we could go so far as to say that it is this wounded masculine side of the soul that is ruining our world, and the lives of many troubled souls within it. Living in such a world wounds us all, and wounded people perpetuate a wounded world. It is this vicious cycle that Yggdrasil is being created to address.

How? By working with women and men who are tired of living in this imbalanced world, and are ready to disengage, re-imagine their lives, and dedicate their lives to creating a counterforce. It is these people I am calling visionary contrarians, and for whom we are working to build our school and deep forest retreat.



## Talking Council Update

In the first issue of our newsletter, we introduced you to our Talking Council - the circle of souls that will guide Yggdrasil through the early stages of its manifestation process. Given that we are still exploring who we are as individuals and how we function as a group, much of our effort to date has been simply getting to know each other.

In our May meeting, for example, we discussed what we would each personally like to experience were we to come to Yggdrasil as guests or students. In June, we shared our most personally

transformative experiences. In July, we began experimenting with our dreams and the possibility of dreaming together as a group. In August, Joe introduced the group to a simple form of consensus, and we practiced using it to make a simple decision. These sorts of exercises will continue as we build a foundation of mutual trust and respect on which to work together co-creatively.

At the time same time, we have also taken initial steps to build a more practical foundation for the school retreat. In June, we shared research about communities – such as Findhorn, Harbin Hot Springs, The Farm, and the Abode – that might serve as models for the kind of venue we anticipate creating, noting common themes that have contributed to their longevity and success.

We also briefly considered the various options for legal structures. Although more work is needed in this area, we are currently leaning toward a hybrid model – with the school structured as a non-profit, the spa-retreat as a business cooperative, and the community as an egalitarian, permaculture-based land co-op or ecovillage with various levels of residency and ownership. Sara and Joe are currently working on a business plan to present to potential owner-investors of the spa retreat.

It is possible that we will eventually have a local base in the US (probably here in the Ozarks), as well as a more remote retreat center abroad. Joe has begun researching possible locations for the retreat center, and will have more to say about this in future issues of the newsletter.

Most importantly, we have begun putting together a preliminary curriculum menu. At some point, we will likely invite specific teachers to join us, for a workshop, a season, or ongoing involvement. For now, we are starting with the considerable talent and expertise that we already have among us. In our last meeting, we each agreed to apply our creative energies to specifically address one or more of Yggdrasil's four primary soul tasks:

Brooke Halpin will be developing an event, presentation, course and/or more extensive training program revolving around music and art.

Sara Firman will focus on experiences evoked or inspired by water, our fluid nature and aquatic bodywork.

Jack Hebrank will focus on dance, ritual and ceremony, and Harner shamanism.

Nia Kallhof will focus on crystal healing, meditation, and working with the Divine Feminine.

John Staniloiu will focus on sweat lodges, vision quests and Native American ceremonies, and the applicability of exercises culled from various personal growth seminars he has attended.

*Tracking the Soul – Tending the Sacred Wound*  
*October 12-18, 2012*

Joe's initial contribution to Yggdrasil's curriculum will be his **Tracking the Soul** workshop – based on his book of the same name, published in 2007. [Tracking the Soul With an Astrology of Consciousness](#) was written to address the first of Yggdrasil's four main soul tasks: tending the sacred wound, although it was not originally conceived in those terms.

The **Tracking the Soul** workshop teaches participants how to identify sacred wounds, become more acutely aware of efforts to tend those wounds over a lifetime of experience, and develop more conscious strategies for transmuting them into a source of strength, compassion and wisdom. Joe's particular approach to this task integrates the spiritual psychology of the seven chakras with the birthchart, but no prior knowledge of astrology or the chakra system is required to participate.

The workshop will be a collaborative effort, incorporating Talking Council member Nia Kallhoff's expertise with crystal healing (see article below) and daily yoga classes taught by Sara. The workshop will be held at Hearthaven Retreat (here in the Ozarks) – the contemplative community where Nia lives.

The workshop is limited to 12 participants to allow ample space for each person to share their story and receive group attention. There are a few openings left, and we want to invite all of you who are reading this newsletter to join us. The workshop will be both an introduction to Yggdrasil and an opportunity to meet at least some of our Talking Council members. For more information, please go to Joe's web site at [www.astropoetics.com](http://www.astropoetics.com).



## Crystal Resonance Therapy: Dialoguing With the Stone People

*Nia Kallhof*

Working with stones and crystals provides a way to explore our role in the vast Mystery from a very personal yet cosmic perspective. Just as my soul's journey through this lifetime is a reflection of the patterns of the stars and planets at the moment of birth, the unique pattern of mineral and elemental energies of my energy field reflect my individual soul's journey.

Our bodies are made up of the same minerals that form the planet Earth. By learning to resonate with the electro-magnetic frequencies of these minerals in stones and crystals we are able to recognize them and experience how these energetic frequencies are functioning within ourselves. We can learn what is happening energetically with our overall flow, with individual chakras, and about any imbalances or blockages. The practice of consciously engaging the energies of a stone or stones to affect change in the physical, emotional and spiritual body is called Crystal Resonance Therapy (CRT).

During a CRT session, starting at the feet and working my way upwards, I energetically assess the



body's field, intuitively select, place and activate stones on the body, and then bring the whole field into resonance with the full spectrum of Light energy for optimal healing and spiritual expansion. In this state of deep peace, it is easily possible to experience your energy body and chakra system, and through guided meditation to find and clear "stuck places." Upon completion of the session, we review the layout of crystals and stones and discuss our experiences. This can often provide greater understanding of where you are on your soul's journey and suggest strategies for further evolution.



## Earth Exchange: Honoring the Bones of Trees

Sara Firman

Trebbe Johnson founder and director of Radical Joy for Hard Times (<http://radicaljoyforhardtimes.org/about/people.html>) invited Yggdrasil to participate in their 2012 Global Earth Exchange on June 23. On behalf of Yggdrasil, Sara and Joe conducted a healing ceremony on 23 June 2012 at Flat Rock Creek in Greenwood forest, creating a Radical Joy Bird using feathers they'd gathered, and including a turkey feather from Nia.

Sara suggests that what Trebbe Johnson has started with her simple idea of [Radical Acts of Joy](#) in Wounded places, parallels our intention with Yggdrasil to fully embrace our interdependence with other living things, including the woundings.

Sara: *"I think these are opportunities to listen to the land in a world that is mostly very focused on doing to the detriment of the joy of being. We want to fix things but sometimes what is needed (as with humans) is to offer our caring presence."*

Sara named our Earth Exchange "Honoring the Bones of Trees," and though this one was a small private ceremony we hope that it will be one of many exchanges we do with the Earth as part of Yggdrasil's ongoing practices. Here is the summary Sara wrote for the Radical Joy website:

*"After a damaging storm and salvage operation, Flat Rock Creek was choked with rejected rocks and looked like a mass graveyard. Though the logs have since been pushed to the creek side so that flood water can flow, and plants are growing back, it still looks sad and will take many years to decompose. As part of our ceremony, we will share extracts from [Flat Rock Journal](#) [by Ken Carey – see a review by Sara at this link] and *The Cooper's Hawk Chronicles* [a quarterly newsletter Joe published in the mid 1980s, in which he interviews Ken Carey], recalling how the forest here was saved from being clearcut and turned into a forest community in 1979. We'll celebrate the resilience and regenerative power of this place."*



## Our Invocation

*Here we gather around the World Tree,  
to root Yggdrasil in our hearts and minds  
preparing to serve those who call on us.*

*Oh Great Tree, marking the crossroads  
the wild threshold at the edge of everything  
grant this Council courage and humility.*

*Wounded and healers of the wounded  
water our hearts, words and deeds with truth  
so Yggdrasil will grow and flourish in our care.*

*Bless all friends who gather here today!*

## Our Invitation to You

If you want to be part of this exciting venture, let us know. We'd love to hear from you at whatever level of involvement you are inspired to want to participate. You can:

- 1) Request and read the 2-page vision summary.
- 2) Share this newsletter or the 2-page vision statement with select friends or acquaintances you sincerely believe will be interested. If you do, please copy your email to us at [joelandwehr@socket.net](mailto:joelandwehr@socket.net) and/or [sara.firman@yahoo.com](mailto:sara.firman@yahoo.com).
- 3) Read the more comprehensive vision statement (39 pages) and share with us your feedback. We ask that you not share the more comprehensive vision statement, but instead refer your friends to the 2-page statement, and let them contact us for more.
- 4) Join the Talking Council. If you resonate at a deep enough level with what we are trying to do, this could be your opportunity to dig more deeply into your own mythopoetic roots, even as you help steward the fruiting of the vine. We meet once a month by Skype for 2 hours each session, and would love to have you join us. We do ask for a one-year commitment.

**Yggdrasil is a school for visionary contrarians, integrated with a spa retreat for the evolving soul, set within a self-sustaining forest garden community.**

Keep an eye out for the next Talking Leaves - Winter Solstice 2012

Contributions in the spirit of Yggdrasil are welcome by December 15.

