



# Talking Leaves: Volume 2, Issue 3

## Autumn Equinox 2013

### Welcome to Yggdrasil

Yggdrasil is a collaborative venture of a small circle of co-creative friends – 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 and a forest retreat for souls seeking to reinvent themselves, housed within a self-sustaining eco-village community. We are now in the formative stages of this project, working together to refine and elaborate our vision, and root it in fertile soil.

This newsletter is our way of staying in touch with our extended family of friends and supporters. Please feel free to share this issue of Talking Leaves with anyone who feel might be interested in what we are doing.

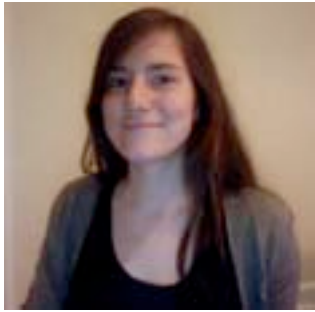
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## Welcome to Our New Talking Council Member – Monica Dixon

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. Our work continues through a series of monthly meetings, scheduled around the New Moon to take advantage of the momentum toward manifestation that is generally available at that point in the lunar cycle.

Since the last issue of *Talking Leaves*, we have been happy to welcome new member Monica Dixon to our Council – whom we would now like to introduce to you. About herself, Monica says:



“I grew up in West Plains, Missouri. After finishing high school I studied at the Kansas City Art Institute, graduating with a bachelors degree of fine arts in 2011. Although I studied in the painting department, rather than using paint, I discovered a preference for using found objects and other non-traditional materials, with which I conducted subjective experiments in color, form, texture, and concept. During a semester abroad in Schwäbisch Hall, Germany, I attended a design school where I studied digital media.

After this experience, it became apparent to me that I feel most satisfied when creating with the use of my hands, tangibly interacting with materials. Around this same time, increased concern for how western culture at large behaves in relation to materiality became a topic of research and contemplation. This, and the growing uneasiness I felt towards the art industry which my education had prepared me for, led me to search for other solutions.

In 2012, while traveling in Europe, I began work-exchanges on organic farms and gardens in Belgium and Ireland. I returned to the United States that summer with the intention of learning more about permaculture and pursuing other interests without the burden of travel visas and language barriers. Earlier this year I attended a permaculture design certification course in Stelle, Illinois.

I now live in Columbia, Missouri, where I continue to make things in a vast array of media. Currently, alpaca fiber is of particular interest.

I was drawn to Yggdrasil through my relationship with Sara and Joe. I met Sara when I was a teenager. Upon our meeting, I was greatly impacted by Sara’s unique way of being, and continue to be to this day. I decided to take part in the forming of Yggdrasil because of a strong resonance with its intentions. I believe in the deep necessity and profundity for a space of healing and guidance away from the distractions of contemporary culture.”



## Talking Council Update

After our initial realization that we weren't going to be able to simply plunk down cash on the barrel head for a physical retreat center in which to root our vision (see Talking Leaves #5), we entered a period of introspection (see Talking Leaves #6), and began quietly working on a website. We envision the website to be a first step toward creating an ongoing presence in cyberspace and a vehicle for greater outreach to eventually include social networking and crowdfunding.

For the past several months, we have been focused on taking our 39-page vision statement and making it more accessible in smaller pieces for viewing on a screen. These efforts have gotten a tremendous boost through the addition of Monica to our team. Her stunning digital art provides the perfect mythopoetic imagery to accompany our words – and will help us to create a more balanced left brain-right brain message – hopefully to eventually include audio and video.

After much discussion and polling of the Talking Council over various options Monica created for us to consider, we chose a logo and banner for our website. Although it will be a while yet before we make our website public, we want to share with you a visual appetizer, hopefully enticing you to stay tuned with the rest of us for the full-course feast.



### The Hanging One

*by Graywolf*

Talking Council discussion around this image centered mostly on whether or not to include the image of the Hanging One as part of our logo and visual statement. Although there was some controversy around the image – and what could be more appropriate in a discussion of visionary contrarians – we eventually reached a consensus that brought us together in a powerful way. We began by talking about the archetype of the Hanged Man, and morphed into a discussion of the Hanging One – “hanging” to acknowledge an ongoing living process, rather than a dead or static state; and “one” to make the image gender-neutral.

The Hanging One is a powerful archetype that appears in many earth-based cultures around the world – inseparable from the World Tree on which s/he hangs. Although divorced from its shamanic roots, the image of Christ hanging on the cross can be understood as a Christian adaptation of this archetype. The Hanging One (or Hanged Man) also appears in the Tarot as the

XII<sup>th</sup> card of the Major Arcana.



The Hanging One represents initiation into the sacred mysteries of other realms and dimensions of being. In indigenous cultures, shamans would ascend the World Tree, hang upside down on it, enter an altered state, and bring back hidden knowledge and healing power with which to serve their community.

Some may find the Hanging One a bit disturbing. This is as it should be, for no one enters this place of deeper alignment with the World Tree, hidden knowledge, and a more mythopoetic sense of self without facing fears, confronting difficult core issues, and challenging oneself on a very deep level of being. Several Talking Council members had a significant experience with the Hanged Man of the Tarot that spoke to its power to change lives.

One associated it with the need “to surrender, and sacrifice my own wishes and desires for something else that was important to me and bigger than me.” Another drew the card after he had just left a marriage and was trying to figure out what he was doing. Someone explained to him that the card was about “liminality” or being in transition. It was a time to “sit tight where you are, let things cook a bit . . . let a little time go by, let some things change a bit, and then take another look.” Another noted that, “this whole business of hanging upside down has always been very powerful for me. Hanging upside down seems to speak to letting go of the ego, and the sense that ‘I can do it. I can figure things out.’ Instead, you’re just kind of hanging there . . . It just really speaks to the experience of not knowing that you go through when you have a major transformation in your life. It just takes you completely out of your head.” Several Talking Council members associated the Hanging One with deep curiosity and mischievous whimsy.

The Hanging One is not just a dead person hanging in a tree. Quite the contrary, the Hanging One is probably more alive than most of us – because s/he has been willing to sacrifice everything for access to the ineffable Truth at the beating heart of Life. It was in this tradition that Odin hung upside down on Yggdrasil and channeled the runes – a magical language depicting a series of initiatory experiences on a path to spiritual rebirth.

It is in the spirit of the Hanging One that our school/retreat at Yggdrasil offers the opportunity for residents and guests to enter an initiation process – to empty out, to enter the sacred space of transition with deep curiosity, to fill with mythopoetic wonder, and then to return as empowered visionary contrarians, recharged with the power to change the world through their alignment with the fruitful mysteries of the World Tree. Indeed, after having tasted of this powerful symbol, it is not hard to imagine hungry souls coming to Yggdrasil to ripen, hanging upside down from the World Tree absorbing and filling with its nectar.

# The Hanging Woman

by Sara Firman

How might the archetype shown in the 12<sup>th</sup> Major Arcana card be considered from a feminine viewpoint? The Motherpeace Tarot, a feminist-inspired deck that was created in the late 1970s, represents most of its figures as female and the cards themselves are round instead of rectangular. In the book accompanying this deck, Vicki Noble says: “The Hanged Man is one of the many traditions that belonged originally to the Goddess and was later taken over by a male god [before that] Artemis, the Hanged One, had a sanctuary in Arcadia in ancient Greece where the cypress was sacred to her and where it still represents resurrection.”

Artemis was the Greek goddess of the wilderness and spent her time roaming mountain forests and uncultivated land. She both hunted and protected panthers and stags. Associated with the moon and a virgin goddess, she was also a guardian of young children and looked after women in childbirth. Artemis fiercely guarded her purity. In one story, she was bathing naked in a secluded pool when Acteon came across her while hunting. Artemis saw him and transformed him into a stag, then set his own dogs upon him. The goddess is clearly a strong and independent woman, unafraid of wild and lonely places.



So, in the Motherpeace deck, the Hanged One is a naked Artemis suspended from her feet not by a rope but by a snake that is coiled around the branch of a swamp cypress. Snake is a “symbol of the Goddess within, or in Hindu religion kundalini,” writes Noble. The connection with yoga is often apparent in the inverted pose of the hanging person for this archetype – it is not a corpse pose but one of balance or transformation. In the Gaian Tarot deck, where the card is simply named Tree, a woman dressed in sky blue and cloud adopts an upside down yogic tree pose. Fall leaves flutter down around her as she hangs there in prayerful contemplation.

The Motherpeace book tells us that: “The Hanged One is a Pisces card – mutable water, ruled by the Fish Goddesses and the planet Neptune of spiritual power.” In some decks, the feminine element of water is more directly represented. For example, in the Herbal Tarot, where the card is named Suspended Person, a peaceful androgenous figure dressed in a green tunic, hangs from the ocean's surface in an underwater forest of kelp. She has been lowered into deep waters, and floats there experiencing the ebb and flow of the oceanic tides, which in turn are related to that other feminine symbol – the moon.



This card represents the state of being suspended between one world and the next, between the mundane and mythopoetic. The Hanging Woman is both tethered and free. She is called to sacrifice or suspend her plans in order to make space for something that is yet to be revealed. Neptune is the planet of spirituality, dreams and psychic abilities, and the Hanging One is immersed in these. In one account, the hanging figure is associated with the childlike Fool whose innocence enables her to step fearlessly into the unknown. She settles beneath a tree for nine days, seeking her spiritual self. On the ninth day, she climbs up and adopts a new perspective.

Imagine an image for this card in which a baby hangs from its umbilical cord, turned upside down in the womb so that it can be birthed head first. Relate those nine days to the months of gestation before birth. The waiting, surrendering to a process, trust and inevitable birthing that a pregnant woman experiences is found in this archetype too. It is about a surrender to what is essentially feminine – receptivity and the feelings of the heart. It is a state of retreat but also of gestation and creativity. In the tarot, this inward-focused archetype is balanced by its opposite, the World card which asks us to return to our people and offer the gifts we've given birth to.

## Upcoming Workshops

*Returning the Inner Masculine and Feminine to Sacred Balance*  
September 27 – 30, 2013 in Parthenon, Arkansas



**Still room for 3 more men!**

We live in a culture dominated by the wounded masculine psyche. The wounded masculine is obsessed with competition, achievement, money and power, and has lost a deeper sense of calling to serve community and planet. The wounded feminine is obsessed with appearance, superficial connectivity, and security, and has lost an intuitive Earth-based wisdom and a capacity for compassion and caring. Together we have created a culture torn by war, genocide, ecocide, exploitation, addiction, denial, and out-of-balance behaviors that harm us all.

The purpose of this workshop will be to explore and begin to heal our sacred wounds as men and as women, and to come together to create dialogue and cooperation towards re-balancing the masculine and feminine in ourselves and our culture. This will be a co-ed experiential workshop to include meditation, ritual, ceremony, shamanic journeying, dreamwork, mask-making, authentic movement, and solo time in nature, as well as deep sharing in same sex and mixed gender groups.

The workshop will be co-facilitated by Talking Council members Nia Kalhoff, John Staniloiu, Sara Firman and Joe Landwehr.

The workshop is **FREE**. There will be a modest fee for food and lodging.

For more information or to register, contact Nia Kalhoff at [niakallhof@yahoo.com](mailto:niakallhof@yahoo.com).

*Tracking the Soul*  
November 15 – 18, 2013 in Willow Springs, Missouri



**Still room for 2 more participants!**

Based on Talking Council member Joe Landwehr's book of the same name - **Tracking the Soul With An Astrology of Consciousness**, Tracking the Soul is an experiential workshop, integrating the exquisite spiritual psychology of the seven chakras with the intimately personal, image-based approach to astrology called astropoetics. The workshop brings the provocative theory of the astro-chakra system into real-life application in relation to core issues brought by participants.

Beginning with a timeline of significant events in your life, and then mapping your astrological cycles to it, we gradually work our way toward a story of the particular thread of your soul's journey you are inspired to track. The story then becomes a launching pad for insight and meaningful changes. Said one participant about the process:

*Here, Joe's skills truly came to the fore. He helped us all to see just how unique and valuable our life experiences, as illustrated by our chosen pattern, had been to our souls. Despite the suffering our stories revealed, I think we all felt acknowledged, and honored, in the sharing of them. We gained clues to shifting old patterns.*

Included with this workshop are 3 preparatory lessons, designed to teach the basic astrology necessary to get the most value from the 3-day workshop itself. Each lesson will be customized for each student, based on their current level of familiarity with astrology and the chakra system. Each will include a homework assignment, and a follow-up 90-minute Skype consultation.

**Lesson One** will cover the chakra system, a psycho-spiritual adjunct to astrology, great for understanding how consciousness is being channeled through life experience.

**Lesson Two** will cover basic astrology, as it applies to the chakra system, and specifically as it applies to each student's chart. This lesson will be customized to meet each student at their current level of knowledge.

**Lesson Three** will help each participant identify core issues, determine which issue will be their focus in the workshop, and work out the time frame for tracking the relevant soul story.

The workshop itself will be our opportunity to share these soul stories, and learn from them and from each other. Limited to a small number of people, the workshop provides each participant with ample opportunity to be the loving center of group attention, while allowing plenty of alone time for integration. To supplement our group work, there will be an opportunity for bodywork, individual sessions, and daily yoga classes.

The workshop will co-facilitated by Talking Council members Sara Firman and Nia Kalhoff.

To listen to an audio interview or watch a video interview about the workshop, go to:

<http://www.astropoetics.com/audio/>

For more information or to register, contact Joe Landwehr at [jlandwehr@astropoetics.com](mailto:jlandwehr@astropoetics.com).



## Courting the Mythopoetic Realm

*by Graywolf*

The school for visionary contrarians envisioned to be a central dimension of the Yggdrasil experience revolves around four primary soul tasks:

1. Tending sacred wounds.
2. Cultivating a visionary calling.
3. Inviting dialogue among diverse intelligences.
4. Courting the mysteries of the mythopoetic realm.

All four of these tasks are intimately intertwined and not actually separate from each other. At various times, however, it is helpful to consider each of them from the perspective of the other. In many ways, the final soul task – courting the mythopoetic realm – underlies the other three, and becomes their crowning culmination.



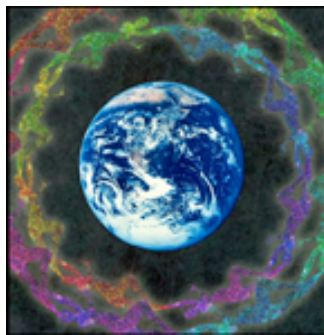
The mythopoetic realm is not something other than this world in which live, but it is this world infused with meaning, magic, and wonder. It is a world populated not just by humans, sequoia trees, sunflowers, wolves, ravens, orca whales, mountains and cumulus clouds, but also by all the gods, goddesses, devas, daimons and guardian spirits inhabiting the world and us as well. It is a world pregnant with possibility for discovery and co-creative interaction.

When we speak about tending a sacred wound and cultivating a visionary calling, we enter into a deeper relationship with ourselves rooted in these mythopoetic dimensions of everyday life. Whoever we are and whatever our journey has been, within the mythopoetic realm our joys and sorrows, our achievements and our ongoing challenges all contribute to a life that is rich and full and deeply satisfying on a soulful level of being. In the mythopoetic realm, we are not separate from each other, nor from any of the other amazing forms – visible and invisible – through which life, intelligence and consciousness express themselves.

As we then enter into dialogue with each other and the diverse intelligences of the more-than-human world, the normal distinctions between individual psyche, nature, and the world of inspired imagination no longer apply. Within the mythopoetic realm, everything is alive; everything has meaning and purpose, and everything is a portal through which something new and unknown is ready to be discovered.

This portal was known to the indigenous peoples of the world, who made no separation between the sacred and the mundane, between human and more-than-human forms of intelligence, and between the realm of the imagination and what we more dogmatically insist is real from a rational perspective. It has also been known throughout the ages by mystics, poets, artists, and composers – all of whom sought to express the ineffable not just in words, but also in imagery, sound, color, and other sensual experience.

It is through the senses, the emotions evoked by sensory experiences, and the imagery that arises spontaneously in considering the available to us that we court the are incomplete, unless they experience of something that lies images are more powerful, since to be filled in by the nuances experiences. Especially powerful that there is more to this reality explanations of it – for such imagine something into being that may or may not already exist.



world through every possible faculty mythopoetic realm. Words alone extend a useful invitation to an beyond the words. In many ways, they tell a story that is open-ended, and the complexities of our own are those images that evoke a sense than can be encompassed by our images extend an invitation to

When the imagination is harnessed to a deep sense of integrity – which takes into account the interdependence of all of Life, and the sacred duty to leave this world a more vibrant place than we found upon our arrival – we court a mythopoetic relationship to the world. Out of this mythopoetic relationship arises a deeper sense of identity – not in any way separate from the complex dance of living beings that fills the cosmos, the human world, and the more-than-human

world with exquisitely choreographed intelligence. To participate in this dance of intelligence, instead of attempting to claim ownership of it, changes everything – and can change the world.

Such at least is the hope and dream we are intending and tending at Yggdrasil. Perhaps you would like to join us.



## Our Invitation to You

If you want to be part of our grand mythopoetic adventure, 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.
- 5) Attend one of our workshops. Join us in our contrarian attempt to engage the dreaming world from our vantage point upside down on the World Tree.

**Yggdrasil is a school for visionary contrarians and a forest retreat for souls reinventing themselves, housed within a self-sustaining eco-village community, now being formed.**

Keep an eye out for the next *Talking Leaves* – Winter Solstice 2013  
Contributions in the spirit of Yggdrasil are welcome by December 14.

