

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

**ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]

Sacred Earth:
Connecting With Elemental Earth Energies
Through Creative Expression

A thesis presented

by

Catherine Manos

Submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Transpersonal Psychology

Institute of Transpersonal Psychology
Palo Alto, California
July 2002

UMI Number: 1412022

**Copyright 2002 by
Manos, Catherine**

All rights reserved.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 1412022

**Copyright 2003 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

**ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346**

SACRED EARTH

Connecting With Elemental Earth Energies Through Creative Expression

A thesis submitted to the
Institute of Transpersonal Psychology

by
Catherine Manos

Submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Transpersonal Psychology

Approved by:

Charles Fisher
Charles L. Fisher, Ph.D., Faculty Chair

9/30/02
Date

Michael S. Hutton
Michael S. Hutton, Ph.D., Core Faculty

18 Oct 02
Date

Nancy Rowe
Nancy M. Rowe, Ph.D., Faculty Mentor

10/04/02
Date

Copyright

Catherine Manos

2002

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT**Sacred Earth:
Connecting With Elemental Earth Energies
Through Creative Expression**

by

Catherine Manos

This was a single case study of the researcher's personal and transpersonal development through meditative and creative experiences in nature. The question addressed in the research was: If I imagine the Earth is alive and there are elemental earth energies, what is my experience of sacred sites? The study was designed to determine if transpersonal experiences in nature resulted in transpersonal awareness and spiritual growth. The research documented visits to specific sites in nature and the influence on the researcher's transpersonal awareness. The methodology was qualitative using components of an intuitive inquiry design. Personal experiences at ten sites in nature were researched. Meditation was used to attune to and receive intuitive information and insights from the natural environment. Twelve themes were documented within the research experiences:

1. Feeling a sense of oneness and connection with elements of the environment;
2. Increased creativity as a result of being in the natural environment;
3. Connection with elemental earth energies promoting an understanding that the Earth is alive. (Simulacra photographed in creative meditation);
4. Increased feelings of being in the presence of the sacred accompanied by feelings of awe, reverence, wonder and gratitude;
5. Feelings of love, joy, peace and harmony;
6. Increased awareness of healing aspects of nature;
7. Increased sense of responsibility for the Earth;
8. Recognizing the

value of listening with both inner and outer hearing to nature; 9. An inner knowing of being taken care of by nature and trusting that knowledge; 10. Awareness of the feminine energy of the Earth and its relationship with the masculine; 11. Connecting with ancestors of the land; 12. Nature providing a mirror that reflects inner beliefs. The researcher found an increased transpersonal connection to the natural world as well as the enhancement of spiritual growth as a result of the research.

Acknowledgements

When I began this research project I was hoping for personal transformation and spiritual growth. My hopes have been fulfilled in more ways than I could possibly have imagined. My companions on this journey have been supportive and numerous.

I am deeply grateful to the Earth for providing such magnificent sites that set the stage for this journey. I am in awe of the grandeur that I have been allowed to witness. This planet is indeed a magnificent being and I am honored to have such a wonderful companion as I continue my life's path. I specifically want to acknowledge the ten locations chosen for research sites. The experiences at these sites have facilitated my transpersonal growth immeasurably. To the energies of nature, my guides and guardians who have my companions on this journey, I salute you. Let our journey together be long and fruitful.

My awareness of the needs of the planet began with my first visit to the Findhorn Community in Northern Scotland. I am grateful for the appreciation of nature and nature spirits that I have gained from my visits. My interest in photographing nature began in earnest with my first visit to Mont St. Michel. To the "Goddess" spring I found on one of my journeys, I offer my love and a promise to continue the work that I have begun with this study.

My mentor, Dr. Charles Fisher, was a blessing throughout this last year. He has supported me and been an advocate for my process. I appreciate his many hours in reviewing and re-reviewing my chapters as I proceeded to learn more and more about professional writing. He has been a witness to my journey and I value the lessons I have learned from his firmness and compassion.

My gratitude goes to Dr. Nancy Rowe. She is a member of my thesis committee and was my mentor for the first year of study at ITP. I have gained insight through her love of the Earth and creative expression. Her nurturing abilities extend to her students and to the planet.

Dr. Michael Hutton has provided insights into the development of this study. I appreciate his feedback and support. Michael facilitated my first ITP workshop at Sunrise Springs in New Mexico. His support in my process has been invaluable.

I appreciate the writings and advice of Dr. Jill Melnick. Her work has been an inspiration for me. I will never forget her advice to me. When viewing my photography she encouraged me "to never lose my sense of direction." I remember those words every time I take a photograph.

Many thanks to Sharon Allen for answering all of my many questions and for being so responsive to my e-mails. Just knowing she was there was a source of strength.

I have many friends who have been supportive and understanding during this past year. Julie Pelligrino, Dr. Marlene Williams, Mary Joyce Bridget O'Donnell, Rebecca Pellerito-Lucy, Ruth Hines, Yvelise Alfano, and Elizabeth Eagan have always been around to encourage me to continue. Thanks for being there for me with support and love.

Thank you to my family, Mom, James, Jay, Ray, Lucille, LouAnn and Kelly Joe. And to my wonderful nieces and nephews. I hope to be a more active presence in your lives in the near future. Although you don't necessarily understand what I am doing, you love me and support me.

This work is dedicated to the Earth. May we continue to work together as co-creators. May I always be open to your beauty, wisdom, and love.

PRELUDE**BEANNACHT
For Josie**

On the day when the weight
deadens on your shoulders and you
stumble, may the clay dance to
balance you.

And when your eyes freeze behind
the gray window
and the ghost of loss gets in to you,
may a flock of colors, indigo, red,
green
and azure blue
come to awaken in you a meadow
of delight.

When the canvas frays
in the curach of thought
and a stain of ocean
blackens beneath you,
may there come across the waters
a path of yellow moonlight
to bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours, may the clarity
of light be yours,
may the fluency of the ocean be yours,
may the protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so may a slow
wind work these words
of love around you,
an invisible cloak
to mind your life.

John O'Donohue
Dedication to Anam Cara

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
PRELUDE	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER 1, INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of Study	3
Personal Initiation	6
Rationale for Thesis Topic	10
Research Design	11
Personal History	12
CHAPTER 2, LITERATURE REVIEW	25
Indigenous Cultures	26
Hildegard of Bingen	33
Transpersonal Perspectives	34
Ecopsychology	40
Creativity in Nature	45
Elemental Earth Energies	50
Conclusion	56
CHAPTER 3, RESEARCH METHODS	57
Research Design	62
Analysis of the Data	68
Biases and Assumptions	69
Possible Benefits, Limitations and Delimitations	70
CHAPTER 4, FINDINGS OF THE STUDY	72
Site One – Findhorn, Scotland – August 2002	72
Location and Background	72
Cluny College, Research Experience	75
Cluny College, Reflections	81
Findhorn Park, Research Experience	82
Findhorn Park, Reflections	86
Site Two – Iona, Scotland – August 2001	87
Location and Background	87
Research Experience	87
Reflections	96

Site Three – Point Defiance Park, Washington – February 2002	101
Location and Background	101
Research Experience	101
Reflections	107
Site Four – North Ogden, Utah – March 2002	111
Location and Background	111
Research Experience	113
Reflections	118
Site Five – Woods Near Queidersbach, Germany – April 2002	121
Location and Background	121
Research Experience	125
Reflections	132
Site Six – Kindsbach Spring, Germany – April 2002	136
Location and Background	136
Research Experience	136
Reflections	144
Site Seven – Mont St. Michel, France - May 2002	146
Location and Background	146
Research Experience	146
Reflections	154
Site Eight – Rhine River, near Bingen, Germany - May 2002	156
Location and Background	156
Research Experience	156
Reflections	163
Site Nine – Karlstalshulucht, Germany - May 2002	166
Location and Background	166
Research Experience	166
Reflections	175
Site Ten – “Butterfly Valley,” Germany - May 2002	177
Location and Background	177
Research Experience	177
Reflections	184
 CHAPTER 5, SUMMARY, ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS	 187
Summary	187
Overview of Analysis	188
Analysis	189
Conclusions	198
Limitations of the Research	202
Indications for Future Research	203
 REFERENCE LIST	 205

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1 Rock Formation and Spring, Mont St. Michel, France	9
2 Model of Mont St. Michel with Images in Background	10
3 Butterfly – May 2001	22
4 Spirit Woman, Bronze Statue at Post Office in Santa Fe, New Mexico	23
5 Wood Troll and Bird with Hat, Oak Creek Canyon, Sedona, Arizona	24
6 Tree with Twin Trunks, Cluny Vortex, Forres, Scotland	76
7 Christ. Walk, Forres, Scotland	78
8 Chakra Gardens, Cluny College, Forres, Scotland	79
9 Standing Stone at Cluny College, Forres, Scotland	80
10 Watercolor of Scottish Hillside from Cluny Gardens	82
11 Gardens at Findhorn Park – Findhorn, Scotland	84
12 Nature Sanctuary at Findhorn Park, Findhorn, Scotland	85
13 Pink Rose at Findhorn Park, Findhorn, Scotland	85
14 Spring at the Edge of the Sea, Isle of Iona, Scotland	89
15 Sheep and Abbey, Isle of Iona, Scotland	91
16 Sheela-na-Gig, Isle of Iona, Scotland	93
17 Hollow of tree, Isle of Iona, Scotland	94
18 Well of Eternal Youth, Isle of Iona, Scotland	95
19 Guarding the Sheep, Isle of Iona, Scotland	98
20 Watercolor, Iona, Scotland – August. 2001	99

Figure	Page
21 Stream, Point Defiance Park, Washington	103
22 Natural Erosion, Point Defiance Park, Washington	104
23 Hillside, Point Defiance Park, Washington	105
24 Touch Drawing, Reflections, Point Defiance Park, Washington	108
25 Mount Rainier, Above Puget Sound, Point Defiance Park, Washington	109
26 Beneath Ben Lomond's Peak, North Ogden, Utah	112
27 Ice Sculpture, North Ogden, Utah	115
28 Boulder Close Up, North Ogden, Utah	115
29 Rocks, Sagebrush and Sky, North Ogden Pass, Utah	118
30 Touch Drawing, Mountain Goddess	119
31 Litter in Cave with Blue Face?	122
32 Horned God, near Queidersbach, Germany	124
33 Smurf Worm Guardian, near Queidersbach, Germany	127
34 Spring in Forest, near Queidersbach, Germany	128
35 Leaf Village, near Queidersbach, Germany	129
36 Valley, near Queidersbach, Germany	130
37 Touch Drawing, Red Woman	134
38 Kindsbach Stream, Kindsbach, Germany	137
39 Reflections in Kindsbach Stream, Kindsbach, Germany	137
40 Spring, Kindsbach, Germany	139
41 Touch Drawing at Kindsbach Spring, Kindsbach	140
42 Stone Crone, Kindsbach, Germany	142

Figure	Page
43 Cobweb Fairy, Kindsbach, Germany	143
44 Earth Healing Symbol	144
45 Trees and View from Mont St. Michel, France	147
46 Simulacra, Mont St. Michel, France	147
47 Base of Spring, Mont St. Michel, France	149
48 Inquisitive Bird at Mont St. Michel	149
49 Rock Face, Touch Drawing, Mont St. Michel, France	152
50 Feminine Energy, Touch Drawing, Mont St. Michel, France	153
51 Pink Rhododendron blossoms	157
52 Duck and Ducklings on Rhine River	158
53 Turbulence	159
54 Fern at Stream, near Bingen, Germany	162
55 Rapids, near Bingen, Germany	162
56 Touch Drawing, Energetic Earth Motion	165
57 Spring at Karlstalshulucht, Germany	167
58 Towering Trees Above Karlstalshulucht, Germany	167
59 Stream and Bridges at Karlstalshulucht, Germany	169
60 Ferns and Growth at Edge of Stream, Karlstalshulucht, Germany	170
61 Clover and Growth at Edge of Stream, Karlstalshulucht, Germany	170
62 Watercolor at Karlstalshulucht, Germany	173
63 Swirling Spiral Energy of Spring at Karlstalshulucht, Germany	174
64 Tree Stump “Butterfly Valley”	178

Figure	Page
65 New Spring Growth, “Butterfly Valley”	178
66 Butterfly in “Butterfly Valley”	180
67 Stone Bridge at “Butterfly Valley”	182
68 Touch Drawing of “Healing Hands”	183
69 Flowing Mandala	186
70 Fairy Vale, near Hohenecken, Germany	211

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Nobody sees a flower—really—it is so small it takes
time—we haven't time—and to see takes time,
like to have a friend takes time.

- Georgia O'Keeffe

The forest near my home yields a vast array of flora and fauna. Last autumn I went on a search for mushrooms. Local Germans collect mushrooms every autumn. They go out with baskets and bags searching through the dense undergrowth. I, on the other hand, go out with my camera. From fairytales I had learned that a mushroom might be home to an elf or the fairy people. I did my best to avoid stepping on or destroying a precious elfin home; however, I took many photographs of the dwellings. Through this and similar time spent in nature I have developed a love of the natural world that has enhanced my spiritual growth. I sense the Earth as a living being and have gained an awareness of my interconnectedness with the natural world.

I am an artist. I am enamored of the beauty in nature. My aesthetic love of nature has developed into a sense of connection with the natural world. In this project I will be conducting research to explore that connection and to document how it manifests in my creative work, my meditative work, and my spiritual growth.

This thesis explores my personal and transpersonal development through meditative and creative experiences in nature. Transformation can be loosely defined as changing in form. I define spiritual transformation as a change in spirit. As a result of life events, either self-induced through conscious effort or through random circumstances with little or no conscious control, an individual experiences insights that change or

enhance their spiritual beliefs. This could be a small awareness that is incorporated into our life with little effort or it can be of such magnitude that it changes our spiritual nature or beliefs and impacts all aspects of our life. Such an epiphany could have far reaching and long lasting effects on our spiritual awareness. An example of spiritual transformation would be gaining awareness that all of creation, (i.e., animals, plants, humans, and minerals) are connected on a spiritual level and incorporating that awareness into our spiritual practices. As a result of this awareness we then treat other humans, animals, plants, and minerals with respect and unconditional love. Thus as a result of spiritual awareness all aspects of our life are changed in form or transformed.

The question addressed in the research was: If I imagine the Earth is alive and there are elemental earth energies, what is my experience of sacred sites? The research documented visits to specific sites in nature and the influence those experiences had on my transpersonal awareness. Personal experiences in nature have been captured through meditation, intuition, photography, Touch Drawing (Koff-Chapin, 2001), watercolor painting, mandala drawings (Fincher, 1991), story-telling, and creative journaling (Cameron, 1992). Meditative techniques were used to connect to the energy of the site. During the time spent at the research location, a primary focus was on creativity in the natural environment.

Descriptions of the research experiences are presented in narrative form. This will include a description of the location, the meditative processes involved, the experience at the location and a presentation of any creative work that was accomplished during the process. Through this thesis I will share the stories of my interactions and creative experiences in the natural environment.

Krafel (1999) uses storytelling to share his experiences in nature. He describes his life as a “spiral of storytelling between my actions and the world” (p. 186).

Storytelling is an effective tool to share his awakening experiences in nature and his observations of the earth as a living being. Through the use of stories he conveys the wisdom that he has learned through experiences in nature. He relates that the structure of using stories “works because learning springs from specific encounters” (p. 187).

The process of telling stories of my experiences in nature is a part of my personal growth. I have gained an understanding of my connection with the Earth and my conclusions will reflect some of the wisdom that I gained as a result of those experiences.

As a result of the research experiences I feel an increased connection with the earth and an understanding of my role as a co-creator with nature. Working in a co-creative partnership with the Earth, I have had the opportunity to further enhance my knowledge, skills, and personal insights.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This research project will show how creative expression can expose personal lessons learned from being in nature. The Earth is assumed to be a living being. The purpose of this study is to document how spending sacred time in nature has influenced my transpersonal experience. Walsh and Vaughn (1993) write “*Transpersonal experiences* may be defined as experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (*trans*) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, *psyche*, and cosmos” (p. 3). They add that transpersonal experiences “suggest that there are nonphysical realms of existence of enormous scope...existence is seen as multilayered, and the physical universe, so often assumed to be the totality of existence,

now appears as only one of multiple realms” (p. 10). Transpersonal experiences in nature that increase awareness of a multilayered universe can dramatically influence our lives, increasing our sense of well-being, our care and compassion for our fellow humans, and our love and care of the planet.

The transpersonal view sees the personal aspects of self in relation to the importance of personal and transpersonal experiences. It is in the integration of the personal and the transpersonal that an individual gains awareness of their connection to the greater whole. Braud (1998) writes that transpersonal psychology “studies consciousness and unusual states of consciousness; exceptional experiences; trans-egoic development; individuation; and spiritual experiences, growth, and transformation” (p. 37). An increased awareness of our interactions and interconnectedness with the natural world will facilitate our sense of connection to the greater whole, which will reinforce the transpersonal perspective. Braud further defines the parameters of transpersonal psychology. He writes, “transpersonal psychology seeks to delve deeply into the most profound aspects of human experience, such as mystical and unitive experiences, personal transformation, meditative awareness, experiences of wonder and ecstasy, and alternative and expansive states of consciousness” (p. xxi). This thesis explores many of the aforementioned experiences with an emphasis on personal transformation and creative experiences in nature.

A premise for this research is that the Earth is a living organism with which we can develop a connection that can be mutually rewarding. According to the Gaia hypothesis the Earth is seen as a living organism that is continually working to achieve balance and maintain homeostasis.

Lovelock saw Gaia as ‘a complex entity involving the Earth’s biosphere, from whales to viruses and from oaks to algae, atmosphere, oceans, and soil; the totality constituting a feedback or cybernetic system which seeks an optimal physical and chemical environment for life on this planet. (Devereux, et al., 1989, p.147)

By spending time in the natural environment I have established my connection to the Earth and gain an awareness of how I am connected to nature. Metzner (1999) discusses the earth as macrocosm and the individual as microcosm. He uses the age-old maxim “as above, so below” (p. 25). There are qualitative similarities between the earth and the individual in “pattern and function” (p. 26). The planet Earth and the human being, as well as the cosmos are modeled on one another, therefore they co-respond. I have gained an understanding of how I respond to the Earth and have gained awareness of my transpersonal connection to nature.

Another premise of this thesis is that the Earth is sacred. The meaning of the word sacred includes “consecrated, holy” and “to be held in reverence.” (Webster’s Dictionary, 1992). Landstreet (1996) discusses the idea of the earth as sacred, she asserts, “it may be that very concept – the sacred – that has the most potential to motivate people to act” (p. 2). LaChappelle (1988) quotes Derham Giuliani who describes sacred experiences as being similar to, but deeper than meaningful experiences. He writes:

A state that, when activated, gives a special type of meaning to an event. It is a kind of awareness, not obtained by any act of will or logic, of patterns running through everything around us. Each ‘meaningful’ occurrence becomes part of a person’s behavior so that one’s life is changed as these accumulate, one’s life enters a pattern guided by that of everything else. (p. 3)

A sacred connection is deepened by our interaction with and understanding of nature. When it is personified, when the Earth is seen as a living being, the sacred

becomes tangible and as such is respected, cared for, and honored. Through conducting this research I have developed my sacred connection to the Earth.

One of the primary goals of this project is to share my love of the Earth with others. If one person gains an awareness of their connection to the Earth, then I will have accomplished my mission. This thesis affirms my desire to work with the elemental energies of the planet to enable a shift in my personal consciousness. My goal has been to learn how I can better work with nature as a co-creator.

PERSONAL INITIATION

One year ago I could have told you that I enjoyed photography and I loved nature. Today I can say that it was nature itself that alerted me to what I believe to be my life's purpose. In February, 2000 while on a weekend pilgrimage to Mont St. Michel in the Normandy region of France, my awareness shifted. At this time I became aware of a fundamental shift in my consciousness. I not only loved to take photographs of nature, I loved nature. I was also made aware that there are energies present that I do not understand and about which I would like to learn more.

I traveled with a female companion. We arrived late Friday evening in Mont St. Michel. The streets were all but empty. I felt my body relax as I attuned to the energies of the site. I intuited the sacredness and healing energy of the Earth.

Mont St. Michel is an abbey that was built after a monk received a vision from the Archangel Michael telling him to build an abbey on this small hill. The ocean at high tide surrounds the Mont once a month. It has been a site of pilgrimage for hundreds of years. It was not an easy pilgrimage, quicksand at low tide and treacherous waves at high tide made it a very difficult trip. Many pilgrims lost their lives as they sought the healing

or spiritual gifts for which they had come. Mont St. Michel also has a multifarious history. It was the site of a prison. Many prisoners, including political prisoners, were kept in caves carved into the stone beneath the mound.

After a restful night, my companion and I decided to walk around the tiny island. It was low tide and although it is not an easy task to walk in silt up to your ankles, it was possible. We carefully picked our way over stones and through puddles of water and silt. We gradually found our way around the island.

The moment I saw her, I realized I had found a Goddess source. She is a spring in the side of the island. A triangular, slightly indented cave, pointing downward into a small gully filled with rocks, the first and largest stone in the channel of rocks was red as if with menstrual blood. The black rock face was oozing water. It was a spring, sacred and alive with energy. I immediately saw her face, it seemed obvious, two eyes with an indentation where the third eye would be. Her lips are cracked and wrinkling, her nose slightly bulbous, and her chin and forehead pronounced. This felt like the energy of the Black Madonna in the flesh of the Earth. I took several photographs and spent some time in meditation, honoring her ancient wisdom (see Figure 1). She seems to shelter and protect the many faces that are contained within her rock formations. I stood for a moment inside her hollow asking for healing and expressing my gratitude.

I took several pictures with my digital camera. Then my companion and I completed our circle of the island. After cleaning our shoes of gray silt, we visited the Abbey. We both had differing agendas and separated agreeing to meet again in a short while. I spent some time alone in two of the chapels and in the crypts.

Just before leaving the Abbey I entered a very long, large rectangular room with a vaulted ceiling, the Scriptorium. At the end of the room was a large dome shaped window of white cut glass. In front of the window was a backlit model of Mont St. Michel enclosed in glass. I wanted to take a picture, however there were two people viewing the model and I did not want their reflections in the glass. As soon as I could no longer see reflections, including my own, I took the picture and left. My companion was expecting me to meet her and I was late.

I was shocked when I viewed the picture with my computer. There were reflections of a group of people in the glass, within the background of the photo. Some appeared to be looking at me and some did not. The figures are in period dress dating to the 18th or 19th Century. In one case there is a very thin face of a woman transposed on the face of a man and woman. The man is in a beret and the woman is resting her head on his shoulder. On the far left there is a large man, who seems to be wearing an ermine coat (see Figure 2).

It was from this experience that I recognized that I had the potential to take pictures of nature that could reveal energies that were not visible to the naked eye. I began to explore nature with intent to connect through my creativity, in particular through the lens of my digital camera.

I realized later that this experience was an initiation for me. Since that day, I have been more conscious of nature in her many guises and have taken thousands of photographs. I have also become more aware of how deeply connected to nature I am and how it has aided in my personal, professional and spiritual transformational process.



Figure 1. Rock Formation and Spring, Mont St. Michel, France.



Figure 2. Model of Mont St. Michel with Images in Background.

This has been an incredible journey of discovery, surprise, and amazement. I have grown to deepen my love, respect and honor of this great Mother, our Earth.

RATIONALE FOR THESIS TOPIC

My choice of this topic was based on my desire for personal growth and transformation. I have been consciously developing a relationship with the earth for the past several years. This topic has been a way for me to further that relationship and to understand the process by which it is achieved and can be strengthened. The more that I am in nature, the more I care for and respect nature. Creativity is my passion and I love the earth. This research has allowed me to combine both and to share them with others.

It has also been my desire to add to the research on transpersonal experiences in nature using meditation, intuition and creativity as a means of connecting to the Earth. I hope that this project will provide insights that others can use to increase their connectedness with the earth and to achieve deeper connection to Self.

Lastly, by exploring transpersonal relationship with nature using creative expression I am building material with which to be able to provide workshops to help others. This research has laid the groundwork for that dream.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative method has been chosen for this research project. The purpose of using this method is to honor transpersonal and creative experiences as they happen in nature. The primary approach to research is a case study design using components of an intuitive inquiry model. This study was conducted using meditation, intuition, active imagination exercises and creative expression to explore the face of nature as it presents itself through a combination of meditative practices. Photography and other creative expression techniques will be combined with meditative experiences in the natural environment. The subject of this project will be my consciousness and how I am influenced by directly experiencing nature. As such, the means of research will be primarily non-verbal.

Through the use of meditation in nature, intuitive reasoning, and creative expression, this project presents the earth in what I perceive to be her multitudinous faces.

PERSONAL HISTORY

Past experiences in nature, creativity and spirituality are examples of my spiritual growth and transformation process. I have included this section as an aide to the reader and myself in identifying personal biases that could affect the interpretation of the research material. I have also included dream experiences that are indicative of my spiritual process.

The first time that I remember having a psychic experience was in my late twenties. I was living with my grandparents at the time. I had a bedroom set up in a large room in the basement of their home. I was awakened from a light sleep one evening when I felt someone staring at me. I opened my eyes, rose up on my elbow and saw a face peering intently at me. It was the face of an older male. He was looking at me curiously. As I rose up on my elbow I said, "Hello, can I help you?" The face appeared shocked that I had seen him. I reached over to turn on the light and as I did the face faded away into the distance, or so it seemed. For many years I thought this might have been a spirit who was curiously wandering about. I have recently had some other insights. The entity was not bending over the bed. His face was on a level with my face as I was lying down. If he was a ghost, he was a very short one. In preparing to write this section, I was wondering if I would ever see a fairy other than through my creative work. It occurred to me that I have. Not only do I believe that I have seen a fairy, but I have asked to help him. I wonder if we both took that invitation seriously.

In February of 1990 I moved to Germany to begin working for the U.S. Army as a drug and alcohol counselor. At a seminar in August of that year I met a friend who introduced me to Eckankar. This is an eastern based spiritual path that uses

contemplative exercises, dream work and out of body experiences to increase awareness of higher spiritual planes of existence. Its focus is primarily on the top two chakras. In July of 1992, I decided to attend an Eckankar seminar in Paris, France. Sri Harold was going to be there and I would get to hear him talk. I was also excited about being in Paris for the first time. My girlfriend, her six-year-old daughter, and I arrived on Thursday afternoon. We spent a quiet day and that evening took a boat ride on the Seine. The next morning we were preparing to leave the hotel to visit some of the sites. We got into the elevator, pushed the button, and crashed six floors into the basement. The six-year-old had two broken legs and her mother a broken ankle. I had compression fractures of two vertebrae and a broken pelvis. I learned later that the elevator shaft had been built with the wrong type of cement. The elevator mechanism had broken free from the roof of the shaft, crashed onto the top of the elevator and shut down all safety mechanisms.

As I lay in the bottom of the tiny elevator I was in intense pain. It was a tiny space, only large enough for me to lie braced on an arm. I thought that my legs were broken because they hurt so badly. It was excruciatingly hot. I prayed to God and asked why he had forsaken me. What had I done to deserve this? Yet as I lay there I realized that it was a miracle that we had survived. Glass shards were all over the inside of the elevator and we had not been cut. I knew that God had been with us during the accident or we would not have lived.

This accident broke apart my life in reality and metaphorically. It took several months to recover from the physical, emotional, and mental wounds. I slowly stopped studying Eckankar. I used the spiritual skills, information and insights I had received and began opening myself up to other spiritual ideas and practices. I also believe that the

elevator accident was a reawakening of my lower chakras and a call to heal the issues related to the lower chakras that I had been ignoring. It was a graphic and painful reminder. Security, health, and sexuality became important issues in my life. I literally crashed back into my body and my relationship with the Earth.

I also realized that I was ignoring the feminine nature of spiritual practice. I began to study many spiritual paths and have not limited myself to any one tradition. Earth-centered spiritual traditions have a special attraction for me. I feel deeply and directly connected to the Goddess. I feel open to communication with Her when I am in nature. It was through my feelings of connection to Persephone that I was led to further explore my spiritual path and hence led to understand at least a portion of my life's purpose.

I was introduced to the Goddess in 1995 when a friend told me about her personal interests. My friend was Catholic and saw the image of the Goddess in the Madonna. She told me about the book by Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run With The Wolves*. This was the first time I explored Jungian principles and archetypes in depth. I also discovered goddess archetypes through Jean Shinoda Bolen's *Goddesses in Everywoman*. I found that the archetype that I identified with was Persephone. Through working with these archetypes I was able to understand parts of my personality that were limited as well as overextended. Persephone became one of my first guides for transformation. I related my past history with my family and failed relationships to her victim and abduction stage. Bolen (1984) writes:

A Persephone woman's innate receptivity makes her very malleable. If significant people project an image or expectation onto her, she initially does not resist. It is her pattern to be chameleonlike, to 'try on' whatever others expect of her. It is this

quality that predisposes her to be an ‘anima woman’; she unconsciously conforms to what a man wants her to be. (p. 201)

I identified with the role of Persephone as “Queen of the Underworld, the guide for others who visited there” (p. 202, Bolen, 1984). Bolen describes the duties of Persephone:

Persephone the Queen and Guide of the Underworld represents the ability to move back and forth between the ego-based reality of the “real” world and the unconscious or archetypal reality of the psyche. When the Persephone archetype is active, it is possible for a woman to mediate between the two levels and to integrate both into her personality. She may also serve as guide for others who “visit” the underworld in their dreams and fantasies, or may help those who are “abducted” and who lose touch with reality. (pp. 202-203)

Bolen presents the idea that the Persephone woman as a “wounded healer” archetype who has recovered from her own personal wounds and as such she is able to guide others to healing from her personal experience. I would describe myself this way, especially in regards to my methods of counseling clients.

At the same time that I was learning about goddess archetypes and exploring the concept of being a wild woman (Estes, 1992), I decided to visit the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland. The same friend who had introduced me to the concept of the wild woman and hence to archetypes, decided she wanted to visit Findhorn and asked me to come along. Almost everyone who attends any of the on-site workshops at Findhorn must have first attended “Experience Week.” This is a week of working part time in the community, group meetings, classes, outings to the local area, and familiarization with the Findhorn Community. Here is where I was first introduced to the idea of people who communicated with plant devas and nature spirits.

I have visited Findhorn several times since this first week. I have attended a workshop on Healing through Art, Exploring Your Life Purpose, a Christmas program,

and two weeks of “Exploring Community Life.” The life purpose workshop was valuable for giving me insights into what I wanted to do with my life from a spiritual perspective. In the workshop on healing through art, I found one of the loves of my life, which is watercolor painting. I had been avoiding using this medium because I was afraid of it. I could not control it. In this workshop I learned that I didn’t have to. I played with it and was healed in the process.

I have also participated in a spiritual pilgrimage to sacred spots in Scotland in May of 1999. I journeyed through England, visiting Stonehenge, Glastonbury, and Avebury on the way to Scotland. In Scotland we celebrated Beltane at the Foundation with a ritual fire and ceremonies. During this pilgrimage I was able to explore spiritual sites on the Orkneys, on Lewis Island (the Calanish stones) and on the Island of Iona among other spiritual sites.

During the pilgrimage the experience that stands out for me was a visit to the Calanish stones one evening at sunset. In a group of about 12 people, I sat around the stones and was told a story by one of the focalizers. I was sitting on a stone in front of the tallest of the Calanish group and to the left of the speaker. He was telling us the tale of Thomas the Rhymer as he visiting fairyland, fell in love with the Fairy Queen and returned again. At one point in the story he meets the Fairy Queen and goes with her on her white horse (at least that is how I remember it being told). At that point in the story I felt waves of energy coming through me from and into the Earth. The floods of energy and tingling sensations lasted for about a minute. I felt the powerful energy of the stones.

In July of 2001 I returned to Findhorn to take a workshop on developing a working tool to further my life purpose. It was a pleasure to return to nature and to feel my connection with the Earth in a supportive community.

As I was preparing to attend my first Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (ITP) seminar in April of 2000, I had a dream about Neptune, the god of the sea.

I am with Neptune at the bottom of the sea. His feet are planted in concrete as if he were a statue. He intuits that something is happening on the surface world that he wants to see for himself. In a rush of water and waves he springs to the surface with his concrete slab rushing through the water behind him. With a swish he emerges from the sea and plants himself into the ground at the top of a hill, near ancient ruins that are familiar to me from my dream world. Other gods and goddesses follow him, planting themselves in tomb like square containers in double rows down the hill to the right from where I am watching at the top of the hill. (Personal Journal – April 2000)

This dream symbolizes emotional parts of myself, powerful archetypal images that had been held down in the unconscious that are now coming to the surface. There is still some excavation work to do and they are entombed, but they are on the surface and accessible. This also can be seen as parts of my spirit returning, another form of soul retrieval. It was synchronistic that this dream should occur as I began my studies.

In May of 2000 I attended an ITP seminar at Sunrise Springs in Santa Fe, New Mexico. One of the most profound experiences of the seminar was the Sun Dance at San Felipe Pueblo. I was fully prepared by my instructors for the sacredness of this occasion. I spent time meditating in the church, witnessing the initial procession of the dancers, and wandering around the plaza looking for things to buy. As the day progressed and the heat increased I took a break with a friend. We sat together on a step in front of the church. I noticed the painting of three horses in an arc over the front door and was reminded of a dream I had about two years ago. I shared the dream with my friend:

I am in a large, dark warehouse, trying to find a way out. I finally find a door. Upon opening the door I am aware of the bright light outside the warehouse. The door opens upon a small corral, about 20 x 50 feet. Inside the corral are a wild-looking buffalo, a zebra, and a very short giraffe. I look at the animals, and I am afraid, wondering how to get to the gate at the opposite side of the corral. I realize that this is the only door available to me and I do not want to go back into the warehouse. As I stand wondering what to do, from inside the warehouse and to my right rushes a wild black stallion. He is magnificent in his wildness and beauty. He bursts through the corral and out the other side, clearing a path. I am still afraid, the buffalo has a mean look in his eyes. Then, from behind me and to my left, comes a dapple-gray mare. She is a huge horse, my head barely reaches her neck. She encourages me to walk by her side and I realize that she is there to protect me. I can feel her love for me radiating off her body. It is so real it is almost tangible. I know that I am safe, yet a part of me remains afraid of the buffalo. I turn to watch him leering at me. My horse companion assures me that all is well, and encourages me to walk forward, which I do. When we reach the outside of the enclosure, we decide that it is important to write a message across the entrance to the corral warning others of the dangers inside. My companion begins to write a message; however, after only a few letters a woman rushes in from our right, saying that we cannot do that and she shoos us away. We move to the side of the warehouse parallel to the corral and my horse companion writes the message there. I remember only the first letter of the message, an M. (Personal Journal – May 1998)

The next day I felt inspired to look in my book of Runes, to see if this letter is a symbol or a Rune (Blom, 1993). I find the symbol, the letter M, in my Rune book. It is “Ehwaz” or “Movement”. Blom writes, “This Rune’s symbol is the horse, and it signifies the inseparable bond between horse and rider” (p.17). Blom’s interpretation of the Rune fully described what I felt about my spiritual growth at that time:

Ehwaz is a Rune of transit, and movement; transition of physical shifts, new dwelling places, new attitude or new life. It also signifies movement in the sense of improving or bettering any situation. There is about this Rune a sense of gradual development and steady progress, with the accompanying notion of slow growth through numerous shifts and changes. (p. 117)

After I had finished sharing my dream and the insights about the Rune Ehwaz, my friend and I commented on the significance and lifelong work in fully interpreting this dream. We decided to walk around the shopping area once again. Some new shops had been set up and we wanted to see what was available. In the far corner, we found an

African vendor. The first thing we saw as we approached his display were statues of a buffalo, a zebra, and a very short giraffe, arranged exactly as I had seen them in my dream. I returned to the vendor after I had recovered from the shock and bought the three animals. They are a constant reminder of my connection with Spirit, my desire for spiritual growth, obstacles on the path, and the need to trust my intuitive self.

I recognize a Shamanic pattern in my dreaming. There are many dreams that have a particular Shamanic quality in that power animals have visited me. Several animals have taught me lessons in my dreams.

A black panther visited me in a dream on the Saturday before Easter in 1999 and became a gorgeous man. He had sex with me (as my Grandmother, who was lying in bed beside me, observed), then told me that anyone who had sex with him got pregnant and died. I told him that I did not have to worry as I had had a hysterectomy. He said that his power was so strong that even that would not matter. When reviewing Andrews (1993) for the meaning of the black panther, I found:

Of all the panthers, probably the black panther has the greatest mysticism associated with it. It is the symbol of the feminine, the dark mother, the dark of the moon. It is the symbol for the life and power of the night. It is a symbol of the feminine energies manifest upon the earth. It is often a symbol of darkness, death, and rebirth from out of it. There still exists in humanity a primitive fear of the dark and of death. The black panther helps us to understand the dark and death and the inherent powers of them; and thus by acknowledging them, eliminate our fears and learn to use the powers. (p. 296)

I recognize in this dream the pattern of the unconscious emerging and as a result of this new awareness I am transformed. My grandmother passed away on Thanksgiving Day 1994. She was a tremendous influence on my life and loved me unconditionally. I miss her. She had black hair and was a powerful woman. I wonder if the panther in some respects represents her. She was lying in the bed beside me commenting on his

beautiful blue eyes as he had sex with me. She witnessed his transformation into a handsome man. In the dream the sexual act represented a healing process that was meant to impregnate me with the child (new creation) that would kill me and in the process give birth to a new life.

Photography has become a form of active meditation for me. Gross (2001) writes, "Now its clear to me that photography provides an exceptional opportunity to experience being fully alive in the present and attuned to my surroundings. Simply having a camera around my neck enhances my awareness of the moment" (p. 5). The moment I put a camera around my neck I enter an altered state of consciousness. I am alert and responsive to the nuances of the world around me.

As part of my spiritual practice I go for long meditative walks in nature, carrying my camera with me. In the Spring of 2001 I was walking in an open meadow that is a short drive from my home. It was a sunny day and there were only a few people out walking in this secluded area of the forest. A small stream runs through the center of a long thin meadow that is surrounded by forest. I had been walking for a while, taking photographs and breathing in the beauty all around me. I found a small bridge and spent some time in meditation on it. I like to exchange energy with the water. I give it my "bad" energy to help fertilize it and in exchange I receive its "good" energy. This is a Peruvian belief. Our negative energy can be used by nature. The Incan tradition believes that according to the law of sacred reciprocity there must be an exchange. It seems that I am the one who benefits, but then who am I to argue. If the Earth needs my negative energy "hoocha," the Earth can have it.

As I was standing on the bridge a moth flew over me and I thought “that is the spirit of this bridge.” I thought nothing more about it, took a few more photographs and left. I decided to walk back to my car down a gravel road that ran parallel to the stream. About a hundred yards down the road the butterfly flew over me and landed on the road in front of me. Instinctively I held out my arm and she flew to my wrist. I was amazed. I could not believe it. I decided I needed to get a photo of this. I tried to manipulate my camera and just as I was ready to take the picture, the butterfly flew away. I was so upset with myself for being so material and not trying to commune or meditate on what was happening. I walked on down the road. A minute or so later the butterfly returned, flew over me and landed on the road behind me spreading her wings. I took several photos as she posed for me (see Figure 3). This is one of the most memorable experiences that I have had in the natural world and I am deeply grateful.

My photographic work has also included many experiences in which I have photographed what I sense are nature spirits. These photographs are open to interpretation. A photograph taken in Santa Fe, New Mexico at the time of my second ITP seminar in May of 2001 is an example (see Figure 4). A drapery of white light seems to glow around this bronze statue. Natural objects that have the appearance of being alive fascinate me. When in nature I look for simulacra whether in the chance formation of a cloud, a reflection in water, or the roots of a tree (see Figure 5). Simulacra are images in nature that appear to have human or animal qualities.

My spiritual journey has been tremendously rewarding. There have been moments of pain and trauma; however, there have been many more times of pleasure and

happiness. I have made many friends who have influenced me greatly on my journey. I would not trade one experience. I am richer as a result of all of them.



Figure 3. Butterfly – May 2001



Figure 4. Spirit Woman, Bronze Statue at Post Office in Santa Fe, New Mexico



Figure 5. Wood Troll and Bird with Hat, Oak Creek Canyon, Sedona, Arizona

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

O stars, lend us your burning passion.

O silence, give weight to our voice.

We ask for the presence of the spirit of Gaia.

John Seed "Invocations"
Landstreet (1996)

This review of the literature has a focus on research related to increasing a transpersonal connection to the natural world. Sources for the review were obtained from a search of the on-line PsycLIT program, a search of Internet sites, and a review of local library resources. A search was conducted for research projects related to spiritual or paranormal experiences in nature, elemental earth energies, and creative expression in nature. The search revealed limited research sources related to these topics. As a result much of this literature review is focused on other types of publications.

Sources were reviewed for content related to human relationships with nature from a transpersonal perspective. This includes insights into the relationships of indigenous cultures with the Earth; ecopsychology; developing a relationship with the natural environment and exceptional human experiences (EHE's) in nature; creativity as a result of spending time in nature; and establishing and maintaining a co-creative partnership with the energies of the Earth. Sources were reviewed to determine if developing a transpersonal relationship with the Earth manifests in enhanced creativity and spiritual growth.

INDIGENOUS CULTURES

**This earth is my body.
The sky is my body.
The seasons are my body.
The water is my body too.
The world is just as big as my body.
The world is as large as my word.
And the world is as large as my prayers.
Jicarilla Apache Myth (Devereux, et al., 1989, p. 7)**

The connection of indigenous cultures to the land, their respect for nature, the ability to communicate and learn from nature, their relationship with the nature spirits of the land, and spiritual practices that incorporate their beliefs into daily living provide a model for enhancing our transpersonal relationship with the Earth. Indigenous cultures have a relationship with the earth that is missing in modern man. Shepard (1995) explores the history of tribal life. He describes tribal life as being embodied in natural objects, where everyday life was full of spiritual significance, and individual rites of passage were honored in ritual participation. The Alaskan Koyukon tribe believes in a tribal mythology of a “‘Distant Time,’ long ago, when plants, animals and people could change forms, and all were equal” (Swan, 1992, p. 117).

Most indigenous cultures practice traditional tribal rituals of their ancestor’s nature-based traditions. It provides a sense of connectedness because of an emotional and spiritual relationship with nature. These cultures evolved as a result of guidance from the natural world. Ceremonies are conducted to initiate youth into adulthood, for healing, or to celebrate annual, monthly, or historic events in the tribe’s relationship to the natural world (Glendinning, 1994).

The sense of connection and bonding of indigenous cultures with the natural environment was found to be a common theme in the literature. The “difference between

traditional indigenous attitudes and behaviors and those of the industrialized, urbanized societies is that native peoples tend to be earth-bonded, with earth-reverencing cosmologies” (Clinebell, 1996, p. 54). The bonding of indigenous Native Americans to the Earth is emphasized in the literature. Donald Hughes who authored *American Indian Ecology* described nature as an interrelated community, “No person, tribe, or species within the living unity of nature was seen as self-sufficient, human beings possibly least of all. The Indian did not define himself or herself as primarily an autonomous individual, but as a part of a whole” (as cited in Devereux, et al., 1989, p. 12). Humans have alienated themselves from their ancestors and hence from the connection to the land that was a part of their ancestry (Devereux, et al., 1989).

Remembering our connection with the earth enhances the healing process. Clinebell (1996) affirms this aspect in indigenous cultures “healing involved enhancing awareness of the spiritual meaning of our profound interdependence with the whole interdependent community of life” (p. 100).

The Celts were a culture that held nature in reverence. Wolfe (1996) elaborates on the spiritual beliefs of the Celts. “All things, all forces, all aspects, all elements that reflect in Nature are part of the same interwoven flowing pattern in the philosophy of the Celts. All dimensions, seen and unseen are part of a continually shifting cosmology” (p. 16). To the Celts, all aspects of their deities came from the spirits of place and their tribal gods. Wolfe emphasizes the importance of the land “To the Celts, the land is the true sovereign. The land is the mundane reflection or the essential manifestation in which all dimensions meet” (p. 17). He emphasizes nature's healing and forgiving qualities when she is remembered and honored. This is an essential truth in the beliefs of the Celts.

Animism is a belief held by many indigenous cultures. Animism (Metzner, 1999) is a worldview that regards “all life-forms of plants, and animals, as well as the mineral kingdom, the natural landscape, the elements, and the whole Earth itself...as animated by living spirits or soul, by divine or angelic intelligences” (p 33). When discussing vision quest experiences he states that it is possible to communicate and attune oneself to these beings and to sense a feeling of family and kinship with all of nature. Metzner further defines animism as a belief “which sees all life-forms, including animals, plants, rocks, forests, rivers, mountains, fields, seas, winds, as well as sun, moon, stars, and the total cosmos, as pervaded by and interconnected with spiritual energy and intelligence” (p. 108). Personifications of these spiritual intelligences are:

in the ancient vegetation deities, such as Dionysus, the god of the vine; Osiris, the green-skinned river god; and Demeter, the grain goddess—and in folkloric images, such as the Green Man, or Leafy Face.... the Greek Pan and Artemis and the Celtic Cernunnos and in folkloric conceptions of wild men and wild women and the legendary Sasquatch, or Big Foot. (Metzner, 1999, p. 149)

Fox (1991) refers to the Lakota Sioux’s references to “All our relations” (p. 8). He indicates that it includes all things, seen and unseen, to include the galaxies, the animals, the minerals, plant-life, mountains, our children, and their children and their children. He adds “creation is all space, all time—all things past, present and future” (p. 8).

Whiteman and Cooper (2000) conducted a qualitative case study among Cree talley-men in James Bay, Northern Quebec, Canada. The talley-men are land managers who walk trap lines in sub-zero degree weather. The talley-men said they survive because the land teaches them to survive; by listening, they hear the land speaking to them. The

tallemens see the Earth as their teacher. The study affirms that Cree tallemens believe the earth is alive and an active participant in land management.

Hillman writes that indigenous cultures emphasized the importance of “recognizing a subjectivity in animals, plants, wells, springs, trees, and rocks” (Hillman, 1995, p. xxii). He asserts that the peoples of ancient Egypt and Greece and those of contemporary Japan believe in the animation of nature. Hillman insists that the world of psychology needs to wake up to this ancient human truth: without the planet no study or healing is complete. Hunter-gatherer communities saw the natural world as divine. Having an animistic worldview, they saw animals, plants and other natural phenomena as having indwelling Spirits (Landstreet, 1996). In regards to Celtic tradition Landstreet quotes Miranda Green as writing, “Every tree, mountain, rock and spring possessed its own spirit or numen” (p. 6). She further suggests that current practitioners in the Celtic tradition are responding to a call to rediscover how previous cultures maintained a relationship to the land and to incorporate this awareness into their own lives.

Many sources in the literature stress the need to pay attention to the spirit of the land that was practiced by our ancestors and indigenous peoples of the earth (Altman, 1995; Bloom, 1998; Cowan, 1993; Metzner, 1999). Bird-David (1999) conducted a qualitative case study among the Nayaka tribe who reside in the Gir Valley in the Nilgiri region of South India. The members of this tribe call the spirits of the natural world the “devaru.” The devaru are the spirits that live in nature. She related experiences in which the natural world related to the members of the tribes. She reports that to the Nayaka tribe only some natural objects were devaru. They were stones that seemed to come alive, that opened their mouths or interacted with the native in a special way. It was the

native's ability to feel relatedness to the stone, tree, animal or other natural phenomena that became the key issue as to whether a natural object was determined to be a *devaru*. The Nayaka interacted with the *devaru* and obtained guidance from them. This could mean asking how to better grow crops or why the *devaru* had created problems for the tribe or the individual. Bird-David explored the native's feelings of connection with the natural environment of which they were a part and with which they interacted in an ongoing relationship.

Indigenous cultures from many parts of the world share the belief that the earth is alive. The Koyukon tribe from Alaskan has a living relationship with the spirits of the land. For "at least ten thousand years, there is not evidence of any species of animal or plant being forced into extinction by the Koyukons" (Swan 1992, p. 110). Swan also shares the Sufi belief that true learning takes place only when one is in sympathy with the teacher. "If nature is to be the true teacher, you have to get in sympathy with nature so that you can hear the teachings with what the Lummi Indians call the third ear" (p. 26). Armstrong, a Native American member of the Okanogan tribe, affirms the Native American connection to the Earth, to the spirit of the land, and to an ancestral way of life (Armstrong, 1995). Tribal psychology believes in the existence of spirit intelligence "that extends beyond the physical boundaries of material reality" (Swan, 1992, p. 133).

If one knows how to listen, to the mineral kingdom, crystals and rocks are a source of information (Devereux, et al., 1989). Montgomery (1997) also reinforces our connection to the natural world. She recognizes the vibratory quality of the molecular structure of all of life and encourages us to become fully conscious in our participation in life. Swan (1992) quotes Tantanga Mani, a member of the Stoney tribe of Canada:

Did you know that trees can talk? Well, they do. They talk to each other, and they'll talk to you if you listen. Trouble is, white people don't listen. They never learned to listen to the Indians, so I don't suppose they'll listen to the other voices of nature. But I have learned a lot from trees sometimes about the weather, sometimes about animals, sometimes about the Great Spirit!" (p. 24)

By respecting, honoring, and practicing the worldviews and spiritual practices of indigenous cultures, we can heal the Earth and ourselves (Metzner, 1999; Roszak 1998). In indigenous cultures there were people who communicated with nature. They acted as mediators between the spirits of nature and the people in the tribe. They are called shamans whose role was to communicate with and understand the spirits of the land (Bloom, 1998).

Cowan (1993) presents the shamanic archetype. One of the qualities of a shaman includes having "a transformed vision of reality that includes a sense of oneness and interrelatedness of all created things with the power or life-force that pervades the universe" (p. 13). The shaman is a healer and spiritual guide in nature-based cultures. (Glendinning, 1994).

Shamanic practices can "cultivate a more direct psychic, conscious connection with the natural world" (Metzner, 1999, p. 4). Metzner describes the methods of heightening consciousness used in the spiritual practices of indigenous and pre-Christian cultures. These methods are drumming, vision quests, sweat lodges, dancing, singing, fasting and other practices.

Shamans appear to be some of the first humans to understand the resources that reside within the spirit of the Earth and to use these resources to their advantage and to the advantage of their tribe. They saw the Earth as alive and were able to interact with the natural world (Walsh, 1990). Walsh explores the shaman's ability to understand the

resources available as a result of his knowledge of the structure of the universe. In the Shamanic point of view the universe is marked by its interconnectedness. Shamans believe the three worlds (upper-world, middle-world, and under-world) are linked by a central axis and each world interacts with the others. "All parts of this interconnected universe are usually regarded as alive and conscious to some degree" (Walsh, 1990, p. 114). Through the shaman's ability to interact with nature as interconnected and alive, they were able to use this knowledge to aide their tribe.

The ancient Celts had a shamanic philosophy in relationship to the land. Wolfe (1996) describes this philosophy:

The mystical philosophy of the Celts is based on an active interconnection of all realms and life forms, however animate or inanimate they may appear. It is an essentially shamanic philosophy, and one in which the direct power manifest in Nature is activated through humankind.

Humankind, in totemic, shamanic relationship to the land, is able to call forth the elemental energies and powers of animals, plants, rocks, trees, and all other aspects of what we call Nature. To the Celts, Nature is eternally and essentially inseparable from Self. (p. 15)

A shaman's role in traditional cultures is to restore balance between nature and the community. According to Gray, the shamanistic worldview is "that health equals balanced relationships in all living things. When someone is ill, shamanism attempts to restore power to them by putting them back into harmony with all life....It is precisely a shamanistic worldview that is our greatest hope" (Gray, 1995, pp. 173-174).

In tribal cultures a constant awareness of the balance or imbalance between the human culture and nonhuman environment is necessary. Without this awareness a healer is worthless. Abram affirms that "the medicine person's primary allegiance...is not to the human community, but to the earthly web of relations in which that community is

embedded—it is from this that her or his power to alleviate human illness derives” (Abram, 1995, p. 305).

In shamanic traditions there is a belief in spirit helpers who aid the shaman. Walsh (1990) indicates that those who believe in panpsychism will have no problems believing that “helpers, voices, and visions encountered during Shamanic experiences are indeed spirit” (p. 136). A shaman has control over a number of helping spirits, these he may refer to as his helping spirits or his power animals. “Whatever their form, the spirits may assist the shaman in any of four ways: with journeys, by providing strengths and abilities, by teaching, and by possessing the shaman” (p. 121).

As we learn about our ancestors and other indigenous culture’s relationship with the earth we enhance our own connectedness with the planet. Personal and planetary healing and transformation are the ultimate benefits. (Bloom, 1998; Cohen, 1993; Metzner, 1999; T. Roszak, 1995; Roszak, 1998; Stewart, 1992; Swan, 1992; Walsh, 1990).

HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

Hildegard of Bingen was a 12th century Christian mystic who acknowledged a relationship with nature. She saw the flow of the seasons as “sensible and beautiful” (Schipperges, 1997, p. 98), evidence of God’s presence in creation. Hildegard believed that all parts of the whole had their appropriate path or cycle and none should trespass on the other. Hildegard is quoted as writing: Everything that lives “on earth has a fundamental urge to embrace some other in love. All nature is available to humanity and willingly offers people its benefits in loving service” (Schipperges, 1998, p. 95).

Hildegard recognized the relationship of the earth to the individual. Metzner (1999) quotes Hildegard: "God has built the human form according to the structure of the world, of the cosmos, just as an artist creates his vessel according to certain patterns" (p. 59). Metzner relates that Hildegard believed in the language of symbols and images that connect our ordinary awareness with the archetypal patterns of nature. "The metaphor of the soul as the sap of the tree that is the body is one of the nature-based organic analogies that characterize Hildegard's theology and psychology" (p. 60).

Hildegard of Bingen received visions relating to the natural world. She is quoted by Schipperges (1998) as having written, "All elements served human beings voluntarily because they saw that humans possessed life. They cooperated with their enterprises and worked with them, as humans did with them" (p. 95). Hildegard saw the element fire as relating to heat and sight, the element earth relating to firm tissue and upright posture, the element water relating to blood and motion and the element air related to breath and hearing. She believed a human was healthy when all elements were in balance in the earth and in the physical body.

TRANSPERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

Developing a transpersonal awareness in nature enhances our spiritual development. As a result of interactions with the natural environment our sense of wonder, mystery and awe are increased resulting in an awareness of the earth as a sacred, living presence (Andrews, 1993a; Bloom, 1998; Glendinning, 1994; LaChappelle, 1988; Landstreet, 1996; Metzner, 1999; T. Roszak, 1995; Stewart, 1992; Swan, 1992).

There is an emphasis in the literature on our need to reestablish our relationship with the natural world. A transpersonal message is the inherent meaning in nature

spirituality. Nature spirituality is a religion of wilderness preservation (Landstreet, 1996). Landstreet purports that it may be “the sacred” that has the most potential to get people to act, by seeing the Earth as sacred, as in the image of the Mother, humans would treat the Earth as sacred and hence live sacredly in relationship with nature. Real intimate experiences of the sacred are empowering. LaChappelle (1988) references D.H. Lawrence’s definition of sacred “is whenever the relationship between human, land, animals, or plants occurs” (p. 127).

LaChappelle also describes her experience of having discovered a valley with a small pond while climbing down the face of a glacier with her six-year old son. She describes a “heart-stopping hush” (p. 168) that came over them. The hush meant “sacred” to her, and had come before she had the realization that no humans had been at this location before they arrived. She describes the star moss that encircled the pond as being undisturbed by humans or large mammals. She interprets the hush she felt as a relationship with the land itself. The land had nothing to fear, as humans had not previously violated it. LaChappelle claims:

If one is able to stop the merely human reactions in such a place long enough, then one is able to join in the “play”...of the ongoing natural relationships of all the living beings of that place and...this is the sacred. (p. 169)

Bloom (1998) warns, “Disdain for the spirit world is a disdain for the sacred beauty inherent in every aspect of life....recovery of our relationship with the world of spirits is a step forward in our spiritual freedom” (p. 153). Mack offers a transpersonal perspective when he asserts, “a psychology of the environment would be an expanded psychology of relationship, a conversation or experiencing in the deepest parts of our being, of our connection with the Earth as sacred” (Mack, 1995, p. 283). He identifies a

solution for developing a new, effective psychology, “for it must, by virtue of the very nature of the task, include a powerful spiritual element” (p. 283). According to Mack, the problem faced by ecologists is that we have rejected “the language and experience of the sacred, the divine, and the animation of nature. Our psychology is predominantly one of mechanisms, parts, and linear relationship” (p. 284).

Transpersonal experiences in nature may have a psychic component. Public-opinion polls find that seventy-five percent of the population report having had a psychic experience (Swan 1992). These experiences are seen as ways to increase health and our sense of harmony with nature. There are a variety of transpersonal experiences associated with sacred sites in nature, including: bonding with sacred places; feelings of bliss, awe, and wonder; waking visions; interspecies communication and cooperation; vivid dreams; hearing sounds and smelling odors; ancestral-memory recollections; and, a sense of fusion with elements of nature. Many leaders of the ecological movement have a passion and love for nature. Swan believes that this can be traced to “one or both of the following experiences: early positive encounters with nature, usually in the presence of loved adults, and later transcendental moments in natural places that may have had healing value” (Swan, 1992, p. xx). Lloyd, (Walker 1995) addresses the issue of the supernatural not being separate from life. “It is supernatural not in the sense of being unnatural or in being separate from the natural, but in the literal sense of being the largest version of the pattern of the natura” (p. 60).

An individual’s relationship with nature can indicate a psychological interpretation of aspects of the psyche beyond the ego (i.e., the higher Self, the transpersonal witness, the Jungian Self, among others), according to Walsh (1990).

“Practically speaking, this means that people’s interpretations of the phenomena will be largely determined by their personal beliefs, philosophy, and ‘world hypothesis’” (p. 135).

Devereux, et al., (1989) provides insight to the importance of maintaining a transpersonal perspective. They urge us not to exclude “the deeper aspects of wholeness, the mental, psychic and spiritual levels” (p. 87). These levels are part of our heritage and our consciousness. Gaining acceptance for these aspects of ourselves is more difficult than recognizing physical ecological problems. As a culture we dismiss spiritual and psychic awareness as unimportant, occult or untruthful. This makes us blind to “the subtle planetary web that we are part of, it has also closed off vast areas of the inner world of consciousness (Devereux, et al.,1989, p. 87).

Mutual benefits occur as we heal in nature and regain our forgotten connection to the earth. Peace and harmony are added to balanced manifestation as we work in a co-creative partnership with nature (Maclean, 1980; Montgomery, 1997; Wright, 1983, 1987). When we remember what it is like to be connected to our Earth family “from this deep knowing springs a new relationship, a solid partnering in which we strive for each to be all that it can be” (Montgomery, 1997, p. 21).

The research of Dowdall (1998), Mitchell (2000), and Waldron (1997) emphasize the importance of the natural environment in transcendent experiences. Mitchell interviewed Celtic women who had experienced intimate interactions with animals and spirit. She found that the majority of women in her study were profoundly influenced by their relationship with animals and nature and attained an increased sense of compassion and spiritual awareness as a result. Waldron (1997) researched transcendent experiences

by focusing on the noetic quality of the experience. She found that transcendent experiences increased awareness of transpersonal connections to other humans and to nature.

Sacred sites or special places can be locations in the physical world such as Stonehenge or Machu Pichu or they can also be locations where an individual feels a resonance (Devereux, 2000). Sewall (1995) defines resonance as a “Participation...felt by sensations in our bodies and shifts in our hearts” (p. 210).

The locations that have a history of being sacred are stones, caves, water sources, mountains, trees, and the more publicized standing stones. “A church, a mosque, a temple or other developed, sophisticated place of worship found its first realization in the caves, groves, mountains, gorges, rivers, springs and other natural places that spoke of spirituality to our distant forebears” (Devereux, 2000, p. 44).

Devereux, et al., (1989) explores the transpersonal nature of visiting a sacred site:

It often seems as if just by being at an ancient site, especially if it is well-preserved, remote and rarely visited, something is communicated by the Earth to the person by some kind of mental osmosis. This effect – intellectual, aesthetic or intuitive – can be instant or can occur more subtly long after the visit, but once ‘the call of the stones’ is heard...an individual is bound by an irresistible, magnetic pull to ancient sacred places everywhere. It is one particular way the planet has of connecting with us. If this seems an over-poetic way of putting it, it is nevertheless a real phenomenon. (p. 95)

Abram (1995), Mack (1995), and Sewall (1995) all address the importance of recognizing our relationship and oneness with the natural world. Mack asserts “a relational psychology of the Earth would be much broader, including our connectedness to peoples and other creatures all over the planet and with the Earth itself as a living entity” (p. 282). Abram urges humans to reconnect with the natural world, “The cycling of the human back into the larger world ensures that the other forms of experience we

encounter, whether ants, or willow trees, or clouds, are never absolutely alien to ourselves” (p. 312). Sewall asserts:

If we legitimize and practice a relational view, we act in response to a world that reveals forces and vibrancy, one that appears dynamic, and by extension, alive. This practice allows for our own engagement. We may find ourselves being “part of,” or “in relationship with.” (p. 209)

As we renew our sense of relationship and connectedness to the planet we may develop a sense of awe and wonder. Metzner (1999) describes our embeddedness in the ecosystem and our interdependence with all other species. He writes that as we lose our sense of separateness our relationship with nature moves into the foreground and becomes a “...focus of concern. This is the perceptual basis for the new and ancient point of view of the Gaian scientists, philosophers, and artists: it is holistic and inclusive and inevitably accompanied by a sense of wonder and reverence” (Metzner, 1999, p. 42).

Devereux, et al., (1989) reinforces this concept:

The Earth is one pulsing, resonating organism. Viewed in this way, we can see that we do not live on the Earth, but in it. Even when we gaze out at the stars at night we are looking through less dense spheres of the Earth. In fact, we are an aspect or expression of the planet ourselves. (p. 86)

Sewall (1995) offers insight into spiritual practices that can increase awareness of the visible world. Learning to attend to the natural environment is a primary tool for practicing mindfulness. She refers to the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, who describes the first step in a spiritual practice as “the cultivation of a ‘wakeful presence’” (p. 206). This aspect of mindfulness may “bring us spiritually closer to the visible world” (p. 206). We can develop a personal relationship with the visible world by paying attention to metaphor and meaning. The result of our mindfulness “is felt by sensations in our bodies and shifts in our hearts—by a sweet and unmistakable resonance” (p. 210).

ECOPSYCHOLOGY

This section of the literature review is focused on reviewing the nature of the ecological crisis the world faces at this time and methods to heal ourselves and the Earth from a variety of ecopsychological perspectives. The problem presented in all resources is that our Earth is in crisis. Global warming, the thinning ozone layer, deforestation, over-population, extinction of plant and animal species, and pollution are just a few of the multiple problems related to the ecological crisis.

Metzner (1999) presents the Earth crisis succinctly in the introduction to his book *Green Psychology*, he writes:

No one can doubt that we live in a time of unprecedented ecological destruction. The fabric of life on this planet is being degraded at an ever accelerating pace, accompanied by massive loss of animal and plant diversity and escalating threats to human health and well-being....What is unprecedented about the present situation is that it is the actions and technological productions of one species—the human being—that are bringing about this biosphere meltdown. (p. 1)

The crisis that the Earth faces was described by Metzner (1999) as ecoside. He insists “human kind is at war with nature” (p. 42). Williams (1994) expresses her astonishment that all political systems have the same result “that of placing life last among all their preoccupations” (p. 134).

Several authors explored the alienation of humans from nature as a core problem in the plight of the world at this time (Clinebell, 1996; Glendinning, 1994; LaChappelle, 1988; Landstreet, 1996; Metzner, 1999; T. Roszak 1995; B. Roszak, 1995; Swan, 1992). Glendinning (1994) describes the alienation that humans feel from the natural world as a major source of the ecological world problem. She identifies a change from our ancestor’s nomadic lifestyle and domestication as a reason for our disconnection from our past. Swan (1992) emphasizes that the environment problem will be prevented when

people “can change their inner lives to regain the primal linkage with nature that is the root of healthy action” (p. xxv). He further warns that it will require action and listening to voices and feelings that we have been taught are not there.

Clinebell (1996), LaChapelle (1988), Metzner (1999), and Montgomery (1997), stress that our disconnection from nature is a mirror reflection of our disconnection from our personal bodies and instinct. Montgomery (1997) warns, “What we do to nature we do to ourselves” (p. 24). She cautions that the chronic fatigue, burn out, and stress that humans feel is directly related to our depletion of our national resources.

Stewart (1992) maintains that one of our current problems is the attempt of many individuals to rise toward the light, escaping the Earth and leaving the darkness behind. In so doing we have lost our connection with the sacredness of living matter. “The Underworld tradition affirms that universal wisdom and regeneration are not found exclusively in heavenly or ethereal dimensions, but also in the heart of the sacred land, the planet, within Mother Earth” (p. 16). Stewart reminds us of our responsibility to the planet and that transformation is mutually beneficial; as we transform so does our planet.

Glendinning (1994) admonishes that we of the western hemisphere have discontinued a spiritual practice of “praising Creation and in so doing, of aligning ourselves with the continuity of life on Earth. We are called now, as never before, to act upon our understanding of dysfunction and our urge toward wholeness” (p 212).

LaChapelle emphasizes that the fear of the wilderness has been induced by “the centuries long Christian attitude toward wilderness as the abode of the devil” (p. 187). Metzner (1999) relates that according to religious doctrine “pagan deities were either disparaged or demonized. The image of Pan, the goat-bodied nature god of the Greeks,

became the Christian image of the horned and hooved Devil” (p. 110). Swan (1992) and LaChapelle (1988) echo this idea as well. Metzner also explains the alienation from nature as a narcissistic attitude of humans toward the Earth from a Christian perspective:

In the medieval Christian worldview, the divine realm, the *civitas dei* was high above and inaccessible to human beings. By contrast, the natural world of earth and water, animals and plants, flesh and blood, feelings and pleasures of the senses was the corrupted world of the Fall, of sin, and of the Devil, one of whose names was “Lord of this World.”

The idea of a covenantal relationship between a transcendent Creator and the human implies that humans are superior to other beings in the world of nature. Humans were the “chosen people,” chosen over the animals. This story provides a religious justification for the human assumption of superiority that has been with us ever since. (p. 105)

As a response to the environmental crisis ecopsychological healing practices are addressed in many sources. Swan (1992) writes of the special role of being a healer of the Earth. Mack (1995) also emphasizes that a psychology of the environment must include recognizing the importance of our relationship with the Earth; a recognition of the valuable information that can be obtained by “other cultures that may facilitate or interfere with the maintenance of life” (p. 287); that methods of understanding and changing our interactions with the Earth can enliven our relationship with nature; that we need to examine our politics and economics from an ecopsychological point of view; and for the need of psychologists to become “professionally and personally committed and involved outside their offices and laboratories” (p. 287). Clinebell (1996) stresses that “a human survival need...is for ethical values that provide guidelines for behavior that is both personally and socially responsible....A global, multi-religious ecological ethic is a pressing priority today” (p. 94-95).

Ecofeminism has many insights that are related to ecopsychology. B. Roszak

(1995) writes:

The new ecological awareness calls for a renewed positive image of the feminine. Ecofeminism rejects the outmoded dualism of the scientific mode in favor of a sense of unity with all living things, for a worldview that emphasizes process, dynamic change, and the interrelatedness of all things. Ecofeminism and ecopsychology both point the way beyond dualism and its either/or reductionisms. An ecological consciousness sees nature as alive, active, and capable of communicating with us. This insight carries us further to a sense of the sacred within nature. In a feminist spirituality, women are seeking to revive an age-old animist vision: not *mere* matter, but matter imbued with spirit. (p. 295)

She further writes that the feminist approach to ecology requires a new way of attending to matter that requires a different attitude. The masculine scientific approach encourages detached observation and rejects “the kind of engaged attention that could be called love, because then one cannot easily separate oneself from what is being studied” (p. 295).

Clinebell (1996) also recognizes ecofeminism’s message of the interdependence of all things; he writes that one of the goals of ecofeminism “is to challenge the dualism and hierarchies that are deeply entrenched in Western patriarchal thinking and replace them with an awareness that all things are related and interdependent” (p. 116). He also avows that ecologically liberated women are able “to challenge men who suffer from male sexist programming that is both self-damaging and planet-damaging” (p. 81).

Williams (1994) affirms the influence of women when she writes:

As women wedded to wilderness, we must realize that we do carry the wild card, that our individual voices matter and our collective voice can shatter the status quo that for too long has legislated on behalf of power and far too little on behalf of life. (p. 140)

The connection with the Earth that arises through sacred experiences in nature is reported in the literature to be a primary source of healing our split with the natural

environment and increasing our ecological awareness. Swan (1992) relates that as we relax our ego boundaries we are able to obtain “extraordinary harmonies between the inner self and the outer world...Like musical notes, these harmonic pulses create ripples that permeate all of life’s many planes, causing numinous events to occur and new personal understandings to be made” (p. 244). Various authors report that when we begin to understand the spiritual aspects of nature and develop a renewed respect for and sense of the sacred we are open to many experiences. Montgomery (1997) writes that as we heal in nature and regain our forgotten connection to our relatives “we spiral around on our evolutionary path by expanding our relationship into one of equal co-creative partnership, where we work and play together to bring peace, harmony, and balanced manifestation to this planet” (p. 21). She adds that as we remember what it is like to be connected to our Earth family “from this deep knowing springs a new relationship, a solid partnering in which we strive for each to be all that it can be” (p. 21).

Clinebell (1996) acknowledges that a therapeutic process that can aide in helping people heal is to encourage their “healing, creativity-enhancing energies of the natural world” (p. 63). This in turns enhances and encourages “their awareness of the wider meaning, mystery, and power in all this, whatever their religious background” (p. 63). The end result is that people reach out and make contributions to healing the world. Clinebell’s model of psychotherapy is called ecotherapy and has a reciprocal component. He describes ecotherapy as seeking to facilitate a nurturing intimacy with nature. As a result humans value their transcendent capacities and choose to be nurtured by nature, and respond by increased environmental action (Clinebell, 1996).

The reciprocal needs of the individual and the planet are addressed in the literature (Altman, 1995; Clinebell, 1996; Devereux, et al., 1989; Metzner 1999; Roszak 1998). Since we are connected to and a part of the Earth, anything that we do to the body of the Earth, affects our bodies. By attuning to nature and acting on the results of our increased awareness we are able to meet our own needs and the reciprocal needs of the planet. “We are human only in contact and conviviality with what is not human. Only in reciprocity with what is Other do we begin to heal ourselves” (Abram, 1995, p. 315). Roszak (1998) asserts, “Ecopsychology holds that there is a synergistic interplay between planetary and personal well-being” (p. 5). When we are able to attune to our interconnectedness, “responsibility toward self and other become indistinguishable, because each thought and act affects the doer as much as the one done to” (Macy, 1995, p. 258). “An empathy and identity with all that is ideally translates into a radical awareness of interdependence—a recognition that to tread heavily on the Earth is to tread heavily upon one’s self” (Sewall, 1995, p. 203).

CREATIVITY IN NATURE

You are certainly more than your past history or your genetic material. Each morning the phoenix is born again and something fresh arises from the past. The physical world is filled with messages and each person listens and interprets these messages, through her own personal experience.

Betty Roszak (1995, p. 296).

Spending time in nature enhances our creative perceptions and abilities. Several authors indicate an increased relationship with nature results in increased creative abilities and a sense of connection to nature. Transpersonal awareness is also increased as individuals spend more time in nature. (Adams, 1996; Allen, 1995; Ang, 2000; Bloom,

1998; Clinebell, 1996; Devereux, et al., 1989, Devereux, 2000; Dowdall, 1998; Fox, 1991; Glendinning, 1994; Gross, 2001; Kryder, 1994; Loori, 2000; Maclean, 1980; Mitchell, 2000; T. Roszak, 1995; Swan, 1992; Waldron, 1997; Williams, 1994; Wright 1983, 1987).

Clinebell (1996) claims that his personal and clinical experiences indicate unexpected psychological benefits from bonding intimately with nature. He asserts, "It enlivens the dance between the right and left hemispheres of the brain. This playful dance is the essential generator of creativity" (p. 46). As a result of this interaction, creative mental processes are awakened. Clinebell acknowledges a therapeutic process that can aide in helping people heal is to encourage their "healing, creativity-enhancing energies in the natural world" (p. 63). This in turns enhances and encourages our spiritual development and it increases our awareness of the meaning, mystery, and power of nature (Clinebell, 1996).

Maclean (1980) was one of the founders of the Findhorn community in Scotland. The cooperation at Findhorn was based on "the principle that man is a cocreator and his own innate creativity is the best gardener....We were urged to experiment...to add another dimension to our thinking and feeling and to find our answers from within ourselves" (Maclean, 1980, p. 66). The Findhorn gardens are a product of active interaction with nature. Bloom (1998) who has conducted workshops at the Findhorn Foundation asserts that using the imagination gives the opportunity to re-examine our worldview. Bloom encourages an understanding that "this deva dimension is part of the creative matrix of everything that exists" (p. 10). Our creative role is stressed as we are encouraged to increase contact with nature, as such "we are able to intuitively perceive

the more subtle and unseen powers that stand behind material existence. At the same time, we gain a deeper understanding of our own creative potential as participants in the Earth's evolutionary journey" (Altman, 1995, p. 44).

We increase our connection with nature when we are playful. "These acts reflect the harmonics of the nature spirits and deepen the connection" (Bloom, 1998, p. 100). A lighthearted approach is emphasized in understanding our interaction with the world of nature spirits, Andrews (1993) asserts:

Those enchanted worlds still exist because the child within us never dies. The doorways may be more obscure, but we can still seek them out. There are still noble adventures to undertake. There are still trees that speak and caverns that lead to nether realms. There will always be faeries and elves dancing within nature because they will always be dancing within our hearts. (p. 205)

Being involved in some type of creative activity on a regular basis will align us to the energy of elemental earth energies. By aligning with nature spirits through observing specific flowers we align ourselves to "the most creative expressions of Mother Nature herself. You open yourself to creation, joy, growth and sustenance" (Andrews, 1993, p. 141).

Creation Spirituality is a spiritual path centered upon the knowledge that we are creative individuals capable of creativity that leads to compassion. There are four steps that facilitate this process. These four paths are the called the Via Positiva, the Via Negativa, the Via Creativa and the Via Transformativa. Fox (1991) describes what is most important in each of the steps. In Path One he claims "awe and delight matter; in Path Two that darkness, suffering, and letting go matter; in Path Three that creativity and imagination matter; and in Path Four that justice and celebration, which adds up to compassion, matter" (pp. 17-18). Fox emphasizes the apex of the spiritual journey is the

creative path. He asserts that the basic spiritual practice in Creation Spirituality is not asceticism. It is the development of the aesthetic. “Beauty, and our role in co-creating it, lie at the heart of the spiritual journey” (Fox, 1991, p. 21).

Working as co-creators with nature is addressed frequently in the literature (Bloom, 1998; 1995; Ehlers, 2001; Fox 1991; Maclean, 1980; Pogacnik, Wright, 1983, 1987). As we attune to nature and understand the needs of nature we have the potential to manifest personal and planetary healing. Ehlers (2001) points out that due to human’s creative abilities we continually influence the “evolutionary development of humankind, our planet, and all that dwell on it” (p. 142).

Maclean (1980), while working with the devas in cooperation at the Findhorn gardens relates, “They said it was not their work to change patterns, that they work with and within conditions, while man can change conditions” (p. 74). Wright (1983, 1987) stresses our abilities to work as co-creators with nature. She developed the Perelandra Gardens in Virginia as a co-creative partnership with nature.

Ancient cultures used imagination and creativity in relating to the natural environment. Many indigenous cultures worshipped physical formations in the landscape. A type of early sacred place were natural landscape features that had a resemblance of a face, figure, animal or other likeness. Natural formations of this type “allowed an ancient society to see its mythology emblazoned on its territorial topography. This prompted a deep interaction between mind and land, for the very landscape became mythically alive, turning it into a kind of holy script” (Devereux, 2000, p. 30).

The name for this type of natural image is simulacrum:

A simulacrum is the illusory image of a face, castle, animal, human figure or other shape or form seen in the chance configurations of clouds, the coals of a fire, the bark

of a tree, reflections in water, the cracks, crevices and projections of a rock face or other surface.... The glimpsing of simulacra can be dismissed as some natural quirk of human perception, but it goes deeper, beyond the human. ‘The eye is naturally inclined to anthropomorphize,’ John Michell wrote in his perceptive work on the subject (1979), ‘and so too is nature.’ For instance, the markings on the wings of a butterfly might look like eyes to frighten off predators. But where is the mind in nature to create such simulacra? Simulacra are a by-product of a deep reflex in nature, and many ancient peoples used it to see their gods. And we can still see those gods today if we look quietly, carefully, as if through ancient eyes. (Devereux, 2000, p. 31)

The evidence that simulacra have been worshiped by indigenous cultures is addressed in the literature (Allen, 1995; Andrews, 1993; Cowan, 1993; Devereux, 2000; Pogacnik, 1995; T. Roszak, 1995). Sewall describes her idea of handwritten messages being delivered by nature, “Their signatures are patterns in snow, or squawks and screeches, or abstract forms shifting into patterns and symbols, and a sense of the sacred” (Sewall, 1995, p. 215). To Sewall it is through these perceptive shifts that the landscape speaks. Through creative process we become alerted to and observe subtle messages from nature.

Creative techniques can be used to enhance experiences in nature (Ang, 2000; Cameron, 1992; Ehlers, 2001; Fincher, 1991; Gross, 2001; Koff-Chapin, 2001; Kryder, 1994; Loori, 2000). Photography is a medium used to increase connection to and awareness of nature. Gross (2001) claims, “I began to feel that my practice of photography was more than just to create beautiful pictures—it was a way to connect more deeply with the world” (p. 4). He asserts, “Only when one is fully in tune with the ever-changing environment can one harmoniously respond to it” (p. 29).

Photography and other creative methods share the ability “to awaken a boundless, transpersonal universe by such means as generating a breathless moment of eternity,

inducing a deep state of mindfulness, sweeping away the self through a sense of awe, or revealing the constructive nature of reality” (Gross, 2001, p. 58).

Our awareness of the multidimensionality of the world is increasing.

Photography is one technique that has expanded our awareness. “The revelation of these new levels of reality has also demonstrated what the perennial philosophies have proclaimed for centuries: that our ordinary vision is limited, and that our conventional consensus of reality is not the only version of reality” (Gross, 2001, p. 61). Photography and other methods of creative expression are tools that can enhance experiences in nature and aide our transpersonal and spiritual growth.

ELEMENTAL EARTH ENERGIES

Faery Folk

If my humanity I'd loose,
Which seduction would I choose?
The angels' voice eternal in the stars,
Or faery folk, immortal mid the flowers?

The angels sing of boundless light and joy
And spirit's flight to high rebirth,
The faery folk are in the land
And love the sacred earth.

R. J. Stewart (1992, p. 158)

A review of the literature regarding transpersonal experiences in nature revealed several authors who have had transpersonal experiences as a result of working with elemental earth energies (Altman, 1995; Andrews, 1993; Bloom, 1998; Bord, 1997; Devereux, et al., 1989; Doyle, 1922; Ehlers, 2001; Maclean, 1980; Metzner 1999; Pogacnik, 1995; Wright, 1983). Transpersonal experiences with nature spirits included a

sense of oneness and connection with God (Bloom, 1998; Devereux, et al., 1989, 2000; Ehlers, 2001; Krafel, 1999; Maclean, 1980; Pogacnik, 1995; Wright 1983, 1987).

Bloom (1998) shares the story of the explorer Sir Francis Smythe, who climbed Mount Everest. He said “he felt accompanied by a presence on the final stages of his journey....’It was always there to sustain me on my solitary climb up the snow-covered slabs” (p. 6). Artists and mystics have often felt a deep and important relationship with nature spirits.

Elemental energies are usually classified as four types: earth, water, air, and fire. Each type of elemental energy has a specific function in working in the material world (Altman, 1995; Andrews, 1993; Bloom, 1998; Cohen, 1993). “The elementals charge and energize us. They provide the fuel we need to feel alive. They work with every aspect of our being—physical, emotional, mental and spiritual” (Andrews, 1993, p. 33). “It is the deva which through the universe ‘bridges’ the activity into coherent form” (Bloom, 1998, p. 54). Altman (1995) elucidates the duties of the devic realm. He notes, “In essence, nature spirits assist in the fundamental processes of life’s creation and help preserve and protect the integrity and harmony within the area of Earth we know as the biosphere” (p. 15).

Metzner (1999) delves more deeply into historical beliefs about elementals:

According to alchemical philosophers such as Paracelsus, as well as the primal worldview of tribal cultures, the elements are not only the major structural divisions of the organism, both the planetary and the personal, they are also living, intelligent, autonomous, spiritual forces, with modes of expression on many levels. To the ancient seers and philosophers of nature, each element was the field of expression of an intelligent, conscious being, with which the shaman, alchemist, sorcerer, healer, or magician could communicate. The spirits of the elements, like the spirits associated with plants and animals, were sometimes regarded as a collective entity, as in the Paracelsian notion of *elementals*: air elves and faeries, water sylphs and undines, fire salamanders, earth gnomes, and dwarves. (p. 32)

Elementals are described as “the building blocks of nature....They interweave to create and sustain all matter on earth. All four kinds of elementals exist in every aspect of nature and in every person” (Andrews, 1993, p. 33). Altman outlines the mutual benefits derived from learning to commune with nature spirits. Nature spirits can help us to gain access to the healing qualities of nature. They also help us to more fully “align our body, mind, and emotions so that we become more in harmony with both our inner and outer worlds” (Altman, 1995, p.17). He reinforces the concept of sacred reciprocity. We help nature spirits fulfill their tasks of creation, evolution, and integration. It is our unique human gift of creativity that benefits nature. By reestablishing our lost connection with subtle nature beings, we aid in the process of healing both the Earth and ourselves. Altman describes the teachings of deep ecology, “One of the primary laws of deep ecology is that every living thing has a reason for being here, a mission to accomplish, and has been given a special function in the overall scheme of things” (1995, p. 67).

Stewart (1992) also encourages working with elemental earth energies to gain awareness of the wisdom of the Earth. Devas are clear and powerful sources of Earth wisdom and can provide us with new perspectives and alternatives to increase our harmonious interactions with nature. He asserts, “they can be our most powerful ally in educating us to know what the Earth needs and how those needs can best be met” (p. 19). In turn they can aid in our physical healing process and spiritual development by providing insights into our basic needs (Cohen, 1993; Maclean, 1980; Stewart, 1992; Wright, 1983).

Questions arise immediately: Why explore the devic realm? What is the motivation for believing in something that appears so farfetched to the general scientific

and religious worldviews? Walker (1995) addressed these issues as she investigates the belief in and the exploration of the supernatural. “The supernatural functions as a transcendental element. It goes beyond the mechanical, the empirical the quantifiable, the provable, and beyond the immediate and practical” (Walker, 1995, p. 5). She asserts that although we have advanced technologically, there remain elements that are out of our control and that we don’t consciously understand. She declares:

We may feel powerless before the juggernaut of technology, but technology is powerless and perhaps irrelevant when juxtaposed with the supernatural; and beyond it all, humans still have access to their supernatural realms. Some occurrences cannot be explained through logical or scientific thought.

In a way, believing in the supernatural is conceding and submitting to a universe that extends further than human understanding or control or empirical observation, and such belief imbues that universe with possibilities that surpass ordinary human devices. Yet when supernatural powers are tapped or extraordinary events occur, we in some respects are empowered, because then the limitations of any sphere repudiating the magical or the miraculous are outdistanced. We successfully broaden and deepen our world and perhaps open ourselves to a greater reality. In this regard, and in the best senses of the words, belief in the supernatural is primal, is uncontrollable, is subversive. (pp. 5-6)

Belief in the supernatural can act as a balance. It counteracts the feeling of being overrun and out of control that can be a result of our increased reliance on technology. As the general public, we do not understand technology and may feel subjected to as a member of modern society. A belief in the supernatural can benefit society by giving “direction and purpose to individual lives and enhances the experience of living itself” (Walker, 1995, p. 6).

If elemental earth energies exist and can be perceived, why is it that the majority of people are unable to interact with or see these energies? Western beliefs contrast sharply with cultures that believe an environment empty of spiritual presences is considered a sign of sickness. Devereux (2000) explains:

Our perceptions, being psychologically constructed, are subject to the massaging of the signals we receive from the society in which we have grown up and the beliefs, ideas and assumptions with which they are freighted. As Yi-Fu Tuan has succinctly stated: 'Deeply held beliefs affect how one sees.' So when we encounter the perceptions of traditional and ancient people, societies still outside the ever-expanding modern mindset, we experience dissonance. We all too readily find ideas about spirits haunting the land or mythic beings appearing in certain places to be purely superstition. But what this really amounts to is that these alien views do not fit into the mental constructs of reality that rule our perception. (pp. 16-17)

Elemental earth energies can be referred to by various names. Devas, angels, fairies (sometimes spelled faery) and nature spirits are the most common (Altman, 1995; Andrews, 1993; Bloom, 1998; Cowan, 1993; Devereux, et al., 1989; Ehlers 2001; Maclean, 1980; Metzner 1999; Pogacnik 1995; Stewart, 1992). The term deva refers to different types of spirits and living patterns. Altman (1995) writes: "Devas can be defined as forms, images, or expressions through which the essences and energy forces...can be transmitted, or forms through which a specific form of Earth energy or life force can be transmitted for a specific purpose" (p. 4). Devas do not constrain their human companions, "they simply hold the pattern and inspiration.... They attract us to fulfill ourselves" (Bloom, 1998, p. 61). Devas seem to follow an evolutionary path that is parallel to our own (Altman, 1995; Bloom, 1998; Maclean, 1980; Pogacnik, 1995). Bloom (1998) asserts, "As devas evolve they flow continuously through their stream of evolution" (p. 59). "Like us, they choose the Earth as a home where they can live and work, and as the place to gain wisdom and life experience" (Altman, 1995, p. 4).

Walker (1995) suggests that folk systems are important considerations for recognizing the reality of supernatural experiences. Miska asserts, "Belief in the

supernatural or the transcendent is clearly not simply the result of one's experiences. Belief systems provide the a priori interpretations for experience" (Miska, 1995, p. 90).

Many of the Celtic spiritual practices are based on a belief in the existence of nature spirits. "Celtic, Nordic-Germanic, Baltic, and Slavic peoples who inhabited Europe before the Christian era worshiped gods and goddesses and spirits of nature in forest groves and sacred springs, on mountaintops and in great stone circles" (Metzner, 1999, pp. 107-108).

Several authors have addressed the appearance of devas. Devas are perceived "by various human cultures in certain ways to suit a particular culture" (Bloom, 1998, p. 43).

Altman (1995) indicates:

Devas will also appear different according to the individual who observes them, because each of us has a unique perspective on life based on genetics and acquired knowledge or cultural conditions....the deva's form can vary considerably, and can change at will. (p.11)

In regards to how devas are perceived, Pogacnik (1995) suggests:

They can change their appearance to show what is happening inside themselves, which is very different from our human ways. Whatever form we perceive them in, it is either a mirror which reflects our stored archetypal memory of how we imagine them to be, or it derives from the language of pictures used by the elementals themselves to draw our attention to a certain message they want to deliver. They are without any definite form unless we project our archetypal or imagined forms on them. (pp. 77-78)

Authors also offer cautions when working with elemental earth energies. A healthy skepticism is important when working with the faery realm and supernatural events. "With all the psychological and cultural baggage that we carry, it is important to keep an open and self-reflective skeptical mind" (Bloom, 1998, p. 69). Maclean warns, "It is always true that the message, even from the highest levels, is coloured by the person who receives it, by that person's beliefs, vocabulary, sub-conscious, etc" (p. 111).

Altman (1995) cautions that humility acts as a safety net in working with nature spirits. It prevents us from the “very human trait of trying to control nature from a place of ego gratification, or otherwise manipulating nature or other living beings so that they will do our bidding” (1995, p. 79).

As another caution, Devereux, et al., (1989) describes the beliefs of the mystic author A.E. Russell who “felt that artists and poets were insufficiently curious about the source and nature of their images and inspiration, and that psychologists likewise did not sufficiently consider the mechanics and nature of mental imagery” (p. 4).

An awareness of elemental earth energies could enhance our spiritual practices when spending time in nature. A transpersonal perspective would allow for an awareness of all possibilities of multiple realities and insights whether perceived through psychic abilities or through the imagination and expressed creatively.

CONCLUSION

In all of the references cited, there is an awareness of our connection to the Earth and a call to renew our individual relationship with nature. Reconnecting with the source empowers us to make changes in our lives. Those changes may be reflected in added spiritual insights, in physical and psychological healing and in a respect for nature that results in better ecological care. The Earth is seen as a living being that we can interact with on an intimate basis, enhancing our connection to the Earth and our transpersonal awareness. Spiritual growth and transformation are a direct result of our increased sensitivity to the earth.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

The intelligence of nature allows life to sustain and cyclically recreate itself. It provides a language that all can appreciate. And it teaches. It is teaching incessantly. The sounds of the wind in the pines, the forms of the smooth river rocks, the bursting colors of spring and fall, all reveal the truth of our own true nature as well as the nature of the universe itself. Range upon range of endless mountains and bluestone cliffs deliver their profound sermon. Murmuring streams and roaring rivers expound the teachings of formless form day and night. The insentient all hear it. The question is: Do we hear it? When we stop to think about it, we miss it. How then can these teachings be heard? We must 'hear with the eye and see with the ear.'

(John Daido Looi, 2000, p. 10)

Braud (1998) lists three motivations for conducting research. The first is to “learn as much as we can about the world, other people, and ourselves to predict and control”

(p. 53). The second is “to understand the world, in the service of curiosity and wonder”

(p. 54). He continues:

The third motivation for research is to appreciate the world, to delight in the myriad of entities, creatures, and events that a bountiful nature provides. This form of research is also in the service of wonder, but wonder of a slightly different sort—the wonder that accompanies discovery, surprise, delight, and awe. The productions of nature are more like works of art to be appreciated rather than problems to be solved.
(p. 54)

Herein lies my primary motivation for this research. Cultivating the fruits of direct contact with the natural world reveal to me my own wonder of discovery, surprise, delight, and awe.

In order to honor transpersonal and creative experiences in nature, a qualitative research method has been used. The primary approach to the study was components of the intuitive inquiry method. Braud (1998) illuminates the value of qualitative method:

...to learn more about ordinary human experiences and begin to develop new means of disciplined inquiry for exploring some of the more exceptional human experiences that we heretofore have ignored. (p. 36)

One of the reasons for doing qualitative research is to understand experience.

From an integral inquiry perspective several methods can be used in research. A partial list includes phenomenological, heuristic, intuitive, narrative, life stories, case studies, feminist approaches, and the organic approach (Braud & Anderson, 1998). These methods can be expanded to include other forms of knowing. "Examples include accessing and honoring one's tacit knowledge, bodily wisdom, emotions and feelings, intuitions, and direct knowing or paranormal access to otherwise inaccessible information" (p. 257). Findings need not only be expressed in "linear prose but via alternative communication styles such as stories, nonverbal presentations, artwork, poetry, metaphor, myths, or symbolic modes" (p. 257).

Intuitive inquiry as described by Anderson (1998) was chosen as the primary method for the research. This method supports the case study design of this research in that "The researcher positions the inquiry from within her or his unique and personal experience" (p. 34). In integral inquiry it is acknowledged that the researcher contributes her unique experiences and insights to all phases of the research project. Anderson (2000) emphasizes that "...the researcher's experiences, motivations, and inspirations permit the intuitive researcher to see more subtly into the phenomenon being studied and to relate to it in a deeply connected way" (p. 34).

Intuitive inquiry honors the multi-faceted dimensions of human experience (Anderson, 2000). It is through a loving, compassionate approach to the phenomena studied that the material comes alive to our senses. Anderson affirms:

To know others, we must love them first and look at the world from their perspective. To know a phenomenon of experience or of nature, we must love it and become its friend. It is as though what is observed gently yields itself to our knowing. There is no object, no subject, and no intrusion. (p. 31)

Using this model the researcher is not separate from that which is being studied. There is a connection through the researcher's values and compassion for the object of the research. I have chosen this research project based on my love of nature and my desire to learn more about my relationship with the natural world. The intuitive inquiry model supports my unique values and experiences as well as my sense of compassion for nature.

Intuitive inquiry is a model sensitive to the unfolding process of this research design. Intuitive research skills serve three purposes:

(a) to allow the intersubjectivity of researcher, participants and anticipated audience to influence the gradual unfolding of the research inquiry, (b) to assist the researcher in exploring thoroughly the landscape of a particular facet of human experience, and (c) to impart creatively the character of the experience without diminishing it in the telling. (Anderson, 1998, p. 83)

She adds that intuitive inquiry also recommends using "altered states of consciousness, imagination, and intuition as sources of data" (p. 88), in each stage of the research process. She adds that these sources of data are essential to intuitive inquiry. Intuitive inquiry also encourages the use of artwork, writing and other creative techniques in conjunction with more traditional methods of presenting the results. Anderson (2000) defines intuition as not only intuitive insights, they may also include:

...novel thoughts and ideas, together with insights derived from nonrational processes such as dream images, visions, kinesthetic impressions, a felt (or proprioceptive) sense, an inner sense or taste accompanying contemplative practices and prayer, and spontaneous creative expressions in dance, sound, improvisation, writing, and visual art. (pp. 31-32)

Anderson (1998) describes techniques used in intuitive inquiry:

...intuitive inquiry advocates expanded states of intuitive awareness, including but not limited to various altered states of consciousness, active dreaming and dream incubation, mystical vision and audition, intentional imaging, kinesthetic and somatic awareness, and states of consciousness more typically associated with the artistic process than with science, in all phases of the inquiry. (p. 76)

My research design includes connecting with the physical world through meditation and recording non-verbal and creative experiences with the natural world. Photography and other creative expression techniques have been combined with meditative experiences in the natural environment. The primary subject of this project is nature and as such the means of research is primarily non-verbal. Visual images do not require interpretation from our mental faculties. As such, creative expression is an effective tool in communicating non-verbally. We are free to interpret on many levels, including emotional, kinesthetic and mental. Non-verbal communication increases the alternatives for gaining information in a research environment. "Inclusion of the nonverbal, as an additional avenue for knowing, for processing, and for expressing, can greatly increase the yield of any investigation" (Braud, 1994, p.54). Non-verbal communication supports the intuitive inquiry method. The purpose of including non-verbal communication is to relate experiences in such a way that others viewing the creative projects or reading the descriptions can have a similar experience. This process is referred to by Anderson (1998) as sympathetic resonance and is a validation process of the research.

I have chosen the story form to present my personal experiences in nature. Braud and Anderson (1998) report that revisiting experiences by storytelling is a viable research method used in transpersonal research. They write that the use of narrative is pertinent to

research in the field of transpersonal studies. “Our stories form the core and nuances of our personal identities” (p. 23). They add:

For transpersonal researchers, stories about spiritual experiences affect personal and consensual realities to support their validity. In telling our own stories of spiritual experiences and hearing those of others, spiritual experiences seem more vivid, imaginable, and, from the view of consciousness, more likely to occur again. (p. 24)

Braud (1994) confirms my intent for this research design. He states that one cannot but be changed by one’s research. The project itself is an opportunity for personal growth and transformation. We do the work required for the research and “progress in our own personal and spiritual growth and development in the context of conducting research” (Braud, 1998, p. 43).

With this study there are multiple ways of viewing the results. It is likely that no two people will see a creative project or interpret the results of a meditative experience in exactly the same way and in many cases will have different views on what they perceive. I have previously shown the same photograph of nature to several friends. Some individuals will see exactly what I saw as I took the photograph, yet invariably they will often point to something that they see in the photo that I did not notice. Other friends see a pretty picture, but are unable to see any underlying image or theme. Each person who views the photographs or creative projects, will see them from an individual point of view, colored by their own history, their own perceptive abilities and their own needs. In some cases individuals will unconsciously refuse to see what is represented in a photograph, since they are afraid to see. It is possible that acknowledging what a creative project or meditative experience could represent would alter their worldview dramatically and they are not ready for the changes that would entail. This view also would be accepted and honored from the perspective of intuitive inquiry.

At each of the research locations, I performed a ritual to honor the directions of the medicine wheel. The directions are East, South, West, and North. Ralph Metzner (Arrien, 1993) wrote the poem that I have used for the ritual. Arrien (1993) has studied indigenous cultures from various traditions, this ritual is based on her writing.

Working with intuition is a challenge that provides incentive to reach outside of one's boundaries and personal limitations. My intuitive and psychic skills are used as tools in this research to perceive my experience of the natural world.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The first step in this research was to schedule times and locations to be in nature. I selected four local sites and six other locations in the United States, France and Scotland as research locations. This included four forested valleys with natural springs and/or streams in the local area. I traveled to the Normandy region in France to visit Mont St. Michel and to Bingen, Germany to visit the Rhine River. I researched two sites in Scotland, one on the isle of Iona and the other at the Findhorn Foundation. I also conducted research in North Ogden, Utah on Ben Lomond, a mountain in the Wasatch mountain range and at a park located on the sound in Tacoma, Washington. Locations in the natural environment were selected for this research based on availability, easy access and a pristine and spiritual quality to which I felt intuitively drawn. I spent between two and four hours at each of the locations. The time was spent in a variety of meditations to include an opening ritual honor the directions, walking meditations, meditations using active imagination and time spent in creative work. The time spent in walking meditation was also a creative time in which I took photographs of nature to which I felt intuitively drawn to as a result of an inherent quality of the landscape or a sense of awe at the natural

beauty. Although I outlined specific steps to be used at each location, I used my intuition and was open to choosing meditations that felt appropriate at each site.

Step Two was to prepare for the research experience. This process included preparing myself mentally, emotionally and physically for the experience. I conducted a meditation to intuit what I would need to transport to the site. On a mental level I wanted to assure that I had a clear idea of what the ritual, meditative techniques, and creative options that I would use at the research location. On an emotional level I became aware of my purpose, opening my heart to receive impressions and connect with the energies at the site. At the conclusion of the mediation I prepared my supplies, arranged for transportation and assured that the location was accessible.

Step three began by approaching each research site with an attitude of respect. Before I entered each location I performed a ceremony to honor the occasion, to set my intent for the research and to ground and center myself. I performed a ritual to honor the energies of the four directions. I carried a compass with me to find North. Facing each of the four directions, beginning in the East, I recited aloud (or to myself if there were other people present) the following ceremony written by Ralph Metzner (Arrien, 1993):

**Four Elements Medicine Wheel Prayer
Turtle Island West Coast**

**O Great Spirit of the East
Radiance of the rising Sun,
Spirit of new beginnings,
O Grandfather fire,
Great nuclear fire—of the Sun,
Power of life-energy, vital spark,
Power to see far, and to
Imagine with boldness,
Power to purify our senses
Our hearts and our minds.**

We pray that we may be aligned with you,
 So that your powers may flow through us,
 And be expressed by us,
 For the good of this planet Earth,
 And all living beings upon it.

O Great Spirit of the South,
 Protector of the fruitful land,
 And of all green and growing things,
 The noble trees and grasses,
 Grandmother Earth, Soul of Nature,
 Great power of the receptive,
 Of nurturance and endurance,
 Power to grow and bring forth
 Flowers of the Field,
 Fruits of the garden.

We pray that we may be aligned with you,
 So that your powers may flow through us,
 And be expressed by us,
 For the good of this planet Earth,
 And all living beings upon it.

O Great Spirit of the West,
 Spirit of the Great Waters,
 Of rain, rivers, lakes and springs.
 O Grandmother Ocean,
 Deep matrix, womb of all life,
 Power to dissolve boundaries,
 To release holdings,
 Power to taste and to feel,

To cleanse and to heal,
 Great blissful darkness of peace.

We pray that we may be aligned with you,
 So that your powers may flow through us,
 And be expressed by us,
 For the good of this planet Earth,
 And all living beings upon it.

O Great Spirit of the North,
 Invisible Spirit of the Air,
 And of the fresh, cool winds,
 O vast and boundless Grandfather Sky,
 Your living breath animates all life.

**Yours is the power of clarity and strength,
Power to hear the inner sounds,
To sweep out the old patterns,
And to bring change and challenge,
The ecstasy of movement and the dance.**

**We pray that we may be aligned with you,
So that your powers may flow through us,
And be expressed by us,
For the good of this planet Earth,
And all living beings upon it. (p. 133)**

I then began a walking meditation to approach the research site with respect, reverence and attentiveness. I remained alert to stimuli that sparked my intuition. My camera was hung around my neck ready to take photographs of natural phenomena to which I felt intuitively drawn. Part of the purpose of using a walking meditation was to ground my energies at the site. I did this through touch whenever possible. I laid my hand on stones and the trunks of trees and acknowledged my connection to the Earth.

When I had located the specific spot in which I wished to meditate, I settled with my art supplies and writing materials around me. During each research experience, I spent time in a writing meditation. I intuitively attuned to the energies of the site and wrote any insights that occurred. In some circumstances I felt as if I were communicating with the land or a specific element at the site. In other instances I would write poetry that seemed to be inspired by the land.

Another meditation that I used was a sitting meditation. A sitting meditation is “the universal posture used for accessing the human resource of wisdom. In silence, the sitter becomes the fair witness and suspends judgment of the process that is revealed” (Arrien, 1993, p. 118). I used this meditation to listen to my intuition, which guided me to what I needed to do to more fully attune with the site.

I used active imagination (Jung, 1983) as a meditative tool to communicate with the energies at the site. Active imagination is described by Mattoon (1981) as a method used in Jungian analyses to explore unconscious material. She describes the method as resembling passive fantasy with the exception that in active imagination “the ego initiates the process and participates actively” (p. 238). Active imagination can be verbal or nonverbal. It can include artwork or movement. As a verbal method the person “conducts an imaginary conversation with a human or nonhuman figure from the unconscious” (pp. 238-239). I used active imagination at most of the research sites.

During step four I spent time in a creative activity. I used intuition as a guide to select the specific techniques I chose. The creative activity at each site varied according to my perceptions as to what would best convey the experience. Photography was the primary creative activity used in the research. Gross (2001) described his experience of photography that parallels mine:

As I become more experienced, the technical aspects of photography, still important, became less of a preoccupation. Once again I was drawn into the experiential aspects of photography. I began to feel that my practice of photography was more than just to create beautiful pictures—it was a way to connect more deeply with the world. Something would come over me that was difficult to express in words at the time. (p. 4)

Other types of creativity were determined as a result of meditation and intuitive responses to the experience at the site. These creative venues included poetry, watercolor, touch drawing, and mandala painting or drawing. I particularly enjoyed touch drawing as a creative choice (Koff-Chapin, 2001). Touch drawing is performed by rolling a thin layer of ink or oil paint on a non-porous surface. After laying a sheet of thin paper over the surface, fingers are used to draw designs onto the tissue paper.

I allowed the tissue paper to lie on the damp surface for a moment. I would then gently run my hand over the surface and using my fingers develop any patterns that emerged. In this process I felt that I was allowing the energies of the site to merge onto the paper. The goal of the creative experience was to allow my intuition and creativity fully to connect with and express the energies at the site.

Before leaving each research site I performed a closing ritual. I thanked the site for its participation in my research, I honored the invisible and visible helpers that influenced my process, and I asked that I continue to learn from the experience. I faced each of the four directions again, thanking the energies of each direction for being present. I thanked my guides, the Earth, and my inner-self for being fully present and participating in the process. As a parting gesture of good will I picked up litter (in particular plastic and metal), and hummed or sang a song as I left the area.

Step five was a time spent reflecting on the experience at the site. As soon as possible after leaving a site I used a journal to reflect upon and document the experience. At this time I reviewed the creative projects, writing, meditative and other experiences at the research site.

Step six included being alert to changes in attitude, behavior, spiritual awareness or transpersonal insights that might occur in my daily life. I documented these changes in my journal and reflected on their importance as I continued my research at subsequent sites. If there were specific events or synchronicities that triggered changes in perceptions and behaviors they were documented as part of the experience.

Step seven included documenting the research experiences and conducting an analysis of the experiences as they occurred at the individual research sites and a

collective analysis of the research project. Specific creative pieces (photographs, mandalas, water-colors, touch drawings and poetry) were evaluated for content as they related to the other meditative experiences at the research site.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

In intuitive inquiry the researcher uses her “values and assumptions as lenses to begin the interpretative cycles of analyses” (Anderson, 2000, p.32). The same intuitive techniques that are used in the research are used in analysis of the data. “Intuitive inquiry...encourages incorporating intuitive processes and alternative states of consciousness as aspects of the data analysis itself. Examples of using dreamwork, creative expression, meditation practices, direct knowing, symbolic imagery, and various forms of intuition” (Anderson, 1998, p. 92). These techniques have been implemented in the analysis of data collected at each of the research locations. Anderson (1998) writes “In intuitive inquiry, data analysis should accommodate the data that present themselves, rather than being immutably established at the outset of the study” (p. 91). Spontaneity based on intuition is a hallmark of this research.

For this project the analysis of data was a two-fold process. The first part of the process included a presentation of the experiences in nature and the creative expression work that was created as a result of those experiences. Through an analysis of creative work at specific locations and an evaluation of the result of the experiences themselves as well as intuitive insights as a result of those experiences, I evaluated the data for the influence of the experience on my transpersonal awareness.

Some of the creative work will speak for itself. The impact of a work of art cannot be codified or diagnosed for having any particular quality that applies to everyone

at all times. Meditations and the results of each research location are described and I present color, high-quality photographs with descriptions of personal impressions and feelings generated by the creative work.

BIASES AND ASSUMPTIONS

Primary bias in this research comes from personal beliefs and preferences. The photographs and other creative expressions are filtered through my own personal history and belief system. The skills that I have developed in photography, my love of nature and my respect of nature all color my views. I have illuminated some of these biases in my introductory chapter in order that readers are aware, as much as possible, of how my spiritual beliefs influence this work.

The first assumption is that nature is alive. Landstreet (1996) writes about the earth being alive as described by hunter-gatherer communities who see the natural world as divine. Having an animistic worldview, they saw animals, plants and other natural phenomena as having indwelling Spirits. I also have an assumption that there are elemental earth energies and devas. If individuals are attuned to these energies, it will provide insights into healing the Earth and those of us who live on this planet.

Another assumption is that the Earth is in a state of transition and change just as are all living beings that dwell upon it. These changes are subtle at times and at other times are dramatic. Sometimes humans cause them and sometimes not. Our interaction with the Earth can effect our personal transitions and the transition of the Earth. King (1990) helps to clarify that assumption:

If you assume an infinite universe, there is no logical reason why there couldn't be other beings just as physically real to themselves as we are to ourselves who see in the frequency range of ultraviolet, hear in the range of ultrahigh frequency, and touch

in the range of radio waves. For all we know, each of us experiences the others' slight intrusions into our "home ranges" as static. So this physical universe of our perception may be the effect of creative choices of limiting factors on the part of God or our own Higher Selves that enable us to experience life on Earth. (p. 59)

Another assumption is that as humans become aware of the Earth as a living being, as they become aware of the various faces and guises of the planet, and as they begin to embrace her sacredness, they will protect, respect, and honor her, thus creating greater ecological awareness and natural conservation efforts.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS, LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

My own personal transformation as a result of this research will be demonstrated in the analyses. This is both the focus of the research and its foremost outcome. I have experienced the transformative process of this project as I have prepared for and completed the research. I have no doubt that as I fully integrate the process of this thesis into my life that I will continue to transform. My experiences in nature have elicited a sense of awe and respect at the grandeur of the Earth. I have gained an understanding of the immensity of the potential for my connection with nature and have begun a co-creative relationship in healing the Earth and myself.

Another of the possible benefits of this research project is that through viewing this material another person may develop greater understanding of and connection to the Earth.

A limitation of the study is that the study only explores my experiences in nature, my reaction to those experiences and my creative expression experiences as a result of that interaction. Others will have their own experiences in nature, and different interpretations of the natural world. Each individual who views the finished creative

expression projects will have a different interpretation of the creative project based on their own experiences in and perceptions of nature. As addressed in the previous section, it is difficult to quantify this material, in many ways it has a presence and energy of its own that will not be limited by analysis. My biases, prejudices in regard to nature and human interactions, as well as my enthusiasms regarding the project have affected the study.

Another limitation of the study is that a research panel has not verified sympathetic resonance, which is a component of the intuitive inquiry methodology. Every attempt has been made to “present the findings in as many forms or genres as necessary to maximize opportunities for sympathetic resonance to occur” (Anderson, 1998, p. 93). However, this was not a component of this project. This could be addressed as another area for research.

A delimitation of this research is that by using qualitative and subjective methods of collecting data, the generalizability of the results is limited. A further delimitation is that only a few sites were visited. The sites were chosen by the researcher and were not picked randomly.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In this chapter I will present the research findings. Each location is presented in separate sections. First, the location is described and background information is provided. This is followed by the research experience, which is written in narrative style. Each section concludes with reflections on the experience. The only exception is Site One. At this location there were two separate research experiences with reflections following each experience.

SITE ONE

FINDHORN, SCOTLAND – AUGUST 2001

Location and Background

The research at this site was done in a series of two two-hour sessions at different locations at the Findhorn Foundation. The sessions were at Cluny College in Forres, Scotland and at the Findhorn Foundation Park near Findhorn, Scotland. I began each research experience in a meditation asking that my guides be present. I then did a walking meditation and after a period of time sat quietly in a receptive meditative state observing the environment and being open to intuitive insights. I closed each of the sessions with a prayer of thanksgiving.

The Findhorn Foundation is a spiritual community in Northern Scotland near Inverness (Bloom 1998; Maclean, 1980; Pogacnik 1995; Wright, 1983). It was founded by three people who were forced by circumstances to make a living on a barren patch of land in the middle of sand dunes on Findhorn Bay. Through working with nature spirits

and devas of various plants they were able to make the desert blossom and gained the respect of the scientific community and a following of supporters who came to live in the community. The community currently provides an education program that conducts weekly seminars on various topics related to living a spiritual life. A focus of the community is working with nature. The Findhorn Gardens represent a cooperative effort between humans and nature. Cluny College is a hotel located in nearby Forres. Many of the seminars are held at this location. It also has beautiful gardens and a spiritual energy that fosters growth and transformation.

In March of 1995 I visited Findhorn for the first time. It was an amazing experience. I stayed at Cluny College where I met with my group and worked in community for one week. We had several outings to various sites in the community including visits to the Findhorn Gardens, the Moray Firth (the sea at Findhorn Village), and Randolph's Leap, a rugged, forested area near a swiftly flowing river. I found the energy at Findhorn to be transformative. I came with expectations and "wants" and got what I "needed," which is not always a pleasant experience.

My second trip to Findhorn was for two separate one-week workshops, a Life Purpose workshop and a workshop on Healing Through Art. Both of the courses were transformational. The Life Purpose workshop was felt like a week of therapy as it opened up and began to heal past wounds. I intended to take full advantage of every opportunity to heal and I did. The second week helped to integrate the healing into my life through art. I also discovered one of the loves of my life, watercolor painting. It was emotional, free-flowing work with brilliant color. I loved it.

In December 1997, I made my third trip to Findhorn. I spent two weeks attending a seminar called "Living in Community" with small groups of individuals and the week of Christmas with a much larger group. During May of 1999 I went on a spiritual pilgrimage with a group from Findhorn. We spent Beltane at Findhorn and participated in the Beltane celebration. We then traveled to northern Scotland, to the Orkneys and Lewis Island, as well as to the Island of Iona. The experiences that I had at the standing stones and on the islands were powerful, however the human interactions that I had were painful. I was able to integrate this experience into my life and to understand much of what had happened and my own responsibility for it. It is true, at Findhorn you don't usually get what you want, you get what you need. The Findhorn Angel is an angel of transformation.

I decided to visit Findhorn for this research project because of the transformational quality of the environment. I also wanted to learn more about transpersonal connections with nature that I could experience in an environment that reinforced such interactions. Findhorn was founded on a working relationship with the nature spirits and devas of the land. I also wanted to connect my experience at Findhorn with the new understanding I have of the natural environment and Spirit.

I booked a reservation to attend a follow-up Life Purpose Workshop. The goal of this workshop was to develop a working tool that I could bring home with me to use in my daily life, as I worked toward my life purpose.

On most mornings, during the workshop, I woke up early and went for a meditative walk around Cluny college, up to the power point on the hill behind Cluny, into the gardens, and out into the local community and forest area. I loved the walks and

I felt deeply connected to this land and the nature spirits of this area. I sensed the “spirit” of nature around me as I walked.

Cluny College – Research Experience

The first portion of this two-part experience was to visit the area around Cluny College. It was very early one morning as the sun was beginning to rise. As usual, I began the project by meditating quietly asking that my guides be present as I conducted the research. I walked in silent meditation with my camera. My first visit was to the power point behind Cluny College. There is a spiral path that winds up to a clearing on the top of a hill. I walked quietly up the spiraling path. With each step I found myself more relaxed. I stopped along the way to touch the trees and to share energy with them. I placed my hands on the trees and sent healing energy to them.

When I arrived at the top of the hill I felt very relaxed and in a meditative state. I stood at the edge of a circular clearing and in a standing meditation I quietly contemplated the energy of this site. After a period of exchanging energy with the Earth through the soles of my feet I walked to a tree near the clearing (see Figure 6). The tree had two separate trunks that appeared to merge from a common base. I stroked the bark of each side of the twin trunks, told it how grateful I was to be here and thanked it for sharing its energy with me. I then spontaneously kissed the bark of each trunk. I was surprised when dew droplets from the tree fell onto my head and shoulders. I looked up to see that the branches were quivering. I did not feel a wind and did not notice movement in any of the other trees or foliage in the area. It seemed as if the tree had responded to my kisses by quivering. In gratitude I continued my walking meditation.



Figure 6. Tree with Twin Trunks, Cluny Vortex, Forres, Scotland

I proceeded back down the spiral and walked the short way to the Christ Walk (see Figure 7). The Christ Walk is a path that runs through the forested area between the Cluny Hotel and the city of Forres. Someone once saw a vision of Christ hovering above it. I like the quiet peaceful energy of being alone with the trees towering above me; hence, its name. It is a beautiful walk. I spent several minutes on the path until I once again returned to the Cluny Gardens.

The previous day I had rediscovered a garden that I had seen before. It was to that garden that I headed. There were seven round garden plots each planted with flowers representing the color of a chakra. Small white stone paths wound through the center of each circle, back and forth in a snake-like pattern (see Figure 8). As I walked through the colorful flowers representing each chakra I imagined that the energy of the garden was clearing and cleansing my chakras. When I eventually emerged at the other side of the garden I felt refreshed and invigorated.

I walked the path through the lower part of the gardens towards the college and passed by a new addition to the garden, a standing stone. I caught a picture of it with the early morning light forming light patterns around it (see Figure 9). There was a park bench located in front of the standing stone and I decided to spend time in a sitting meditation contemplating the colors of the garden and the texture of the stone. I allowed myself to quietly breathe in the stillness of the garden in the early morning sunlight. I asked that I be connected to the energy of nature at this location. Closing my eyes I imagined the nature spirits of this beautiful garden. Continuing in silence I walked back to the college to prepare for a day of workshop activities.

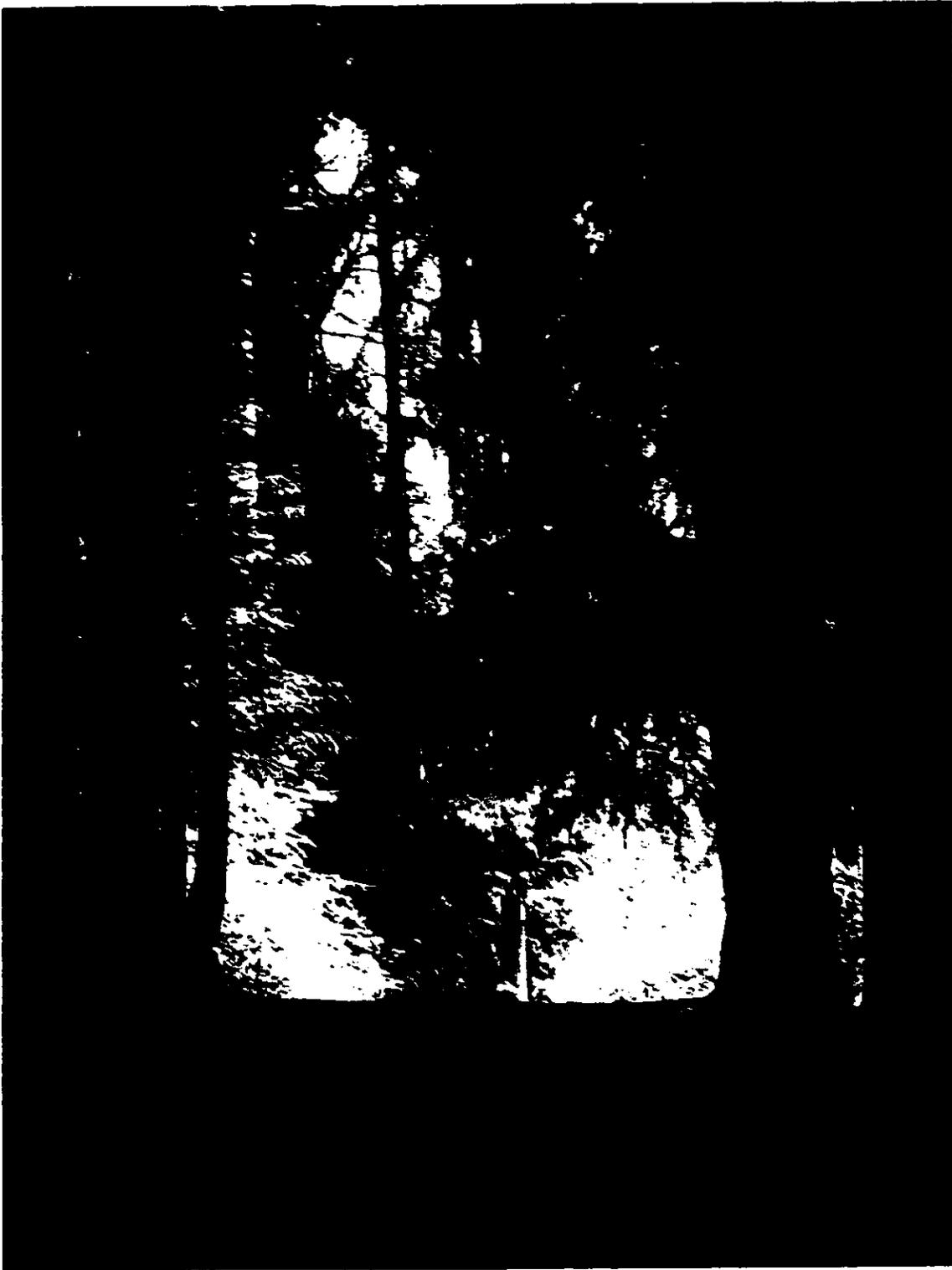


Figure 7. Christ Walk, Forres, Scotland



Figure 8. Chakra Gardens, Cluny College, Forres, Scotland



Figure 9. Standing Stone at Cluny College, Forres, Scotland

Cluny College - Reflections

In this research experience, I wanted to feel the energy of Cluny College with a peaceful, quiet, and receptive attitude. I chose to honor the plants themselves. I paid attention to the trees and the flowers. Using my five senses and my intuition I listened to nature around me. I did not judge or try to decide what nature was trying to tell me. I felt a transpersonal connection through the element of touch. I felt the response of nature as I showed my love, respect and appreciation. The tree (figure 6) had responded to my touch. I felt connected with the tree on an intimate level. It was a spontaneous action to kiss the bark of the tree. I felt dewdrops falling on my shoulders for no apparent reason and the leaves on the tree were shaking. My interpretation was the tree seemed to respond to my spontaneous display of affection.

The beauty of the gardens created an atmosphere of excitement and joy to the meditation. The light reflecting off of my camera lens captured the experience of the sun glinting off of dewdrops on flower petals. There was a sense of freshness in the atmosphere that had a cleansing quality. I felt my thoughts calming as I appreciated the beauty of nature.

In reflecting on this beauty I painted a watercolor of the Scottish landscape from the courtyard of Cluny College (see Figure 10). I noted that this was a peaceful time in which I was able to quiet my natural intellectual processes. I did not want to spoil that by trying to label my experiences of the morning. By not judging the experience I was able to accept with gratitude the serenity I felt in the gardens.



Figure 10. Watercolor. Scottish Hillside from Cluny Gardens.

Findhorn Park – Research Experience

The research experience at The Findhorn Community Park near Findhorn Village, Scotland was similar to the experience at Cluny College. The time was sunset of my last day in Findhorn. While other group members were dancing in the community center, I decided to take a meditative walk around the park. There was a fog coming in from the sea that added a hazy mist to the vegetation. I began this experience once again by attuning to my guides and asking for their presence. I asked that I be allowed to experience the energies of the park in a peaceful and healing way. It had been a busy week with transformative experiences. As I continued the walk I felt calmer and better able to understand the purpose of those experiences as they applied to my spiritual life.

The path from the community center led me to a garden with a small pond. There was a mystical energy as the haze from the nearby sea started to drift into the garden (see Figure 11). I felt myself attuning to the energy of the mystical, drifting fog and continued my meditative walk to another part of the park. A nature sanctuary is set in a quiet area amidst trees and flowers (see Figure 12). There was a dreamy quality about the experience that was created by the softness of the hazy evening light and mist. It felt as if I were alone in a fairytale landscape.

I was thinking about an experience that I had with a member of my seminar group. I wondered at other people who had fulfilled similar roles in my life. I sat inside the nature sanctuary and wrote in my journal as a written meditation:

Sometimes the teachers are not so friendly. They do the destroying so that the new life can spring forth. They are a gift in our lives, honor them and thank them, for they have a hard job. As they destroy, they in turn are destroyed; sometimes they do not have the benefit of a re-birth (at least in this life). There is no understanding the process on an outer level. We contract before this life with others to help us. The help may seem horrific and anything but what we need. Honor the bad times, those hard knocks and difficult people, as they are the tuning forks, the honing tools that fine-tune our experiences on earth. The gift we receive is allowing the growth, awakening to the call and freeing our souls to love. It takes a strong instrument to peel away the outer hard core of our exterior selves so that the soft inner-self can come to the light. The key is to not develop hard shell-like exterior skins. The tools required to break it free would not have to be so sharp and powerful, or the task so unpleasant. The joy comes from knowing that nothing is as serious as it seems. See the love and beauty in the simplest act. Keep the soft outer shell, soft and free of limitations, open to love, play as a child would play, carefree and innocent, free of worries. Your gift is to see that, to recognize the gift and needs of others and to share the healing of soul with them as you continue to grow on your path. (Personal Journal – July 2001)

I received an affirmation of the meaning of these words when I returned to the community center and sat next to a beautiful soft pink rose (see Figure 13). My outer shell must remain flexible and soft as the petals on the rose. Resistance meets resistance and receptiveness yields to receptiveness was the message I received from this beauty.



Figure 11. Gardens at Findhorn Park – Findhorn, Scotland



Figure 12. Nature Sanctuary at Findhorn Park, Findhorn, Scotland



Figure 13. Pink Rose at Findhorn Park, Findhorn, Scotland

Findhorn Park - Reflections

In this research experience I was able to allow the mystical quality of nature to soothe and nurture. Although I was walking in nature I also experienced a sense of drifting through the experience. There was an otherworldly quality to the experience. There was a sense of being in-between worlds. I was a human walking in nature and I was also nature. I was responsive to the sea fog as it created a softness that was in turn reflected in the photographs created during the meditative walk. The hidden quality that was represented by the heavy mist and quiet connected me with a mysterious quality of nature.

The meditative research at the park was as soft, gentle and peaceful as were the petals on the rose (figure 13). I felt a healing presence in nature as I walked. It was as if a quiet gentleness had descended with the fog to nurture and heal. The picture of a rose was a gift of healing from the transformative energies at Findhorn. As I look at the photograph I feel a peaceful energy and remember the connection I felt with the rose. Whenever I look at it I feel the peace, harmony and beauty of the natural world as it heals emotional pain. I remember the lesson that resistance meets with resistance and responsiveness yields to responsiveness. The pink rose beckons me toward gentleness. Its beautiful pink softness reminds me to love unconditionally.

I received a healing as I walked. I was beginning to understand how my hard outer barriers create conflicts that in turn result in my personal growth. Bless those barriers and bless the transformative Findhorn angel.

SITE TWO

IONA SCOTLAND – AUGUST 2001

Location and Background

Iona is a beautiful island off of the coast of Western Scotland. It is accessible only by ferry from the Isle of Mull, Scotland. The cars of residents are all that are allowed on the small island. The energy is very powerful. It is believed that there were at one time over 300 standing stones on this three-mile long by one-mile wide piece of land. It is reported to be the home of fairies and nature spirits. St. Columba spread Christianity from an abbey on this island in the 1st century BC. I had visited Iona once before with a group from Findhorn, in May of 2000, as a part of a pilgrimage. From my previous visit I felt a sense of familiarity with the island. I was returning to renew this connection.

I chose this location because of its beauty, isolation and its association with nature spirits and fairies. I knew this would be an excellent location to research my connection to the natural world and to gain an understanding of my transpersonal relationship with nature. I also know it as a beautiful site and I was looking forward to the creativity that this natural location could evoke. My goal was to explore the island connecting with the spirit of nature that pervades the landscape.

Research Experience

I planned to spend a day exploring the island in a walking meditation. It is a small island with unpaved trails. I wanted to cover as much of the island as possible. I began

the research experience by attuning myself to the land and asking that my spirit guides be with me. I asked that nature spirits accompany me on my journey, as well.

I instinctively walked directly to the ocean. The sea soothes my soul. In quiet contemplation I breathed in the energy of the sea. A large stone on the beach attracted my attention. I picked it up and asked that it absorb all of my anxieties and stress. I then tossed it into the ocean and asked that the seawater absorb and purify the feelings I had placed into the stone. I watched the seabirds fly above the shore chasing each other as they searched for food. It was partially cloudy with a low fog lifting in the distance.

On my first visit to Iona, I had stumbled across a small spring on the edge of the sea. I had been climbing fences and walking through sheep pastures to find my way to a sandy beach. I found a small cove, with danger signs, and eventually noticed the spring. It became a symbol of my connection to the island and the energies of the island at that time. It was my first transpersonal connection to Iona. I wanted to pay my respects as I began my journey. The spring was overgrown with grass and I had difficulty finding it at first. Eventually I found the rock that greeted me (see Figure 14).

The northern half of the island is settled, with paved roads and a few homes. The southern half is sheep trails with a path along the west coast that leads to a marble quarry. I walked along the east coast of the island with the intent of reaching the marble quarry on the south end. I had not brought a map with me but I thought I could follow my instinct and find my way. I walked over bracken and followed a path that I later learned was a trail for sheep. I ended up climbing a 12-foot cliff, struggling over barbed wire fences, and wading through muck up to my ankles. I followed a butterfly for while,

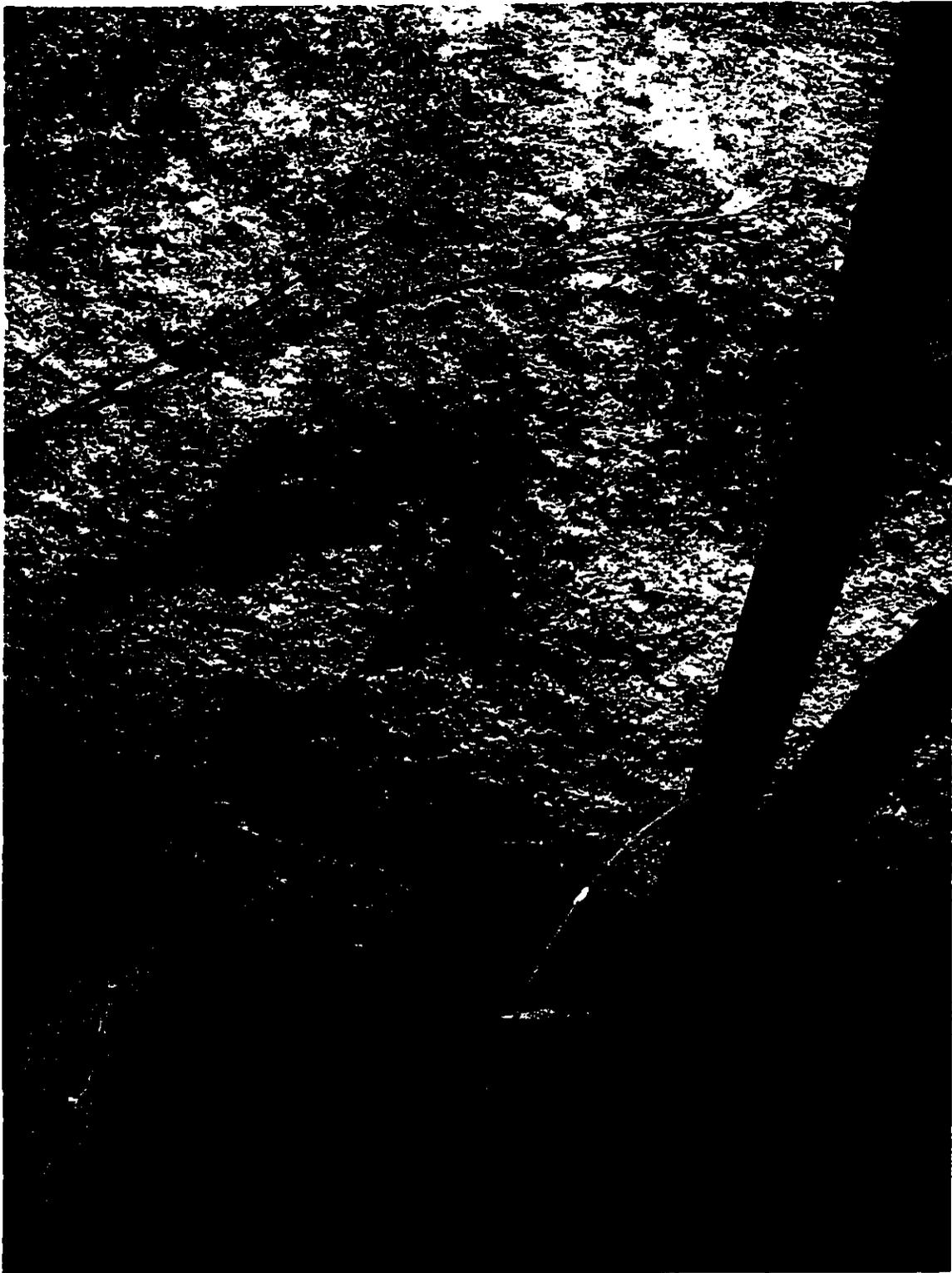


Figure 14. Spring at the Edge of the Sea, Isle of Iona, Scotland

hoping she was leading me on the correct path, because for the most part I saw no path, or when I did I was not sure if it was a sheep trail or a people trail. I was surprised when I came to a beautiful valley. There were paved roads, houses and farms. I did not realize that there was civilization and roads on this end of the island. At first I thought I may have entered an alternate reality and stumbled into fairyland. That butterfly was particularly playful.

Disoriented, I looked at the sun to attempt to regain my sense of direction. It was to my right, which meant I was headed north. Instead of going south as I had planned, I had traveled west and then north. I spent time meditating on the coincidence and contemplating whether I should once again try for the marble quarry. I decided against it. I allowed myself to accept that there was a reason for a deviation in my plans. The change of direction had led me to the "Hill of the Angels." The angel that I found was a sheep who was observing the valley. I took his picture and felt that it captured the energy and spirit of this part of the island (see Figure 15). I realized my guides and the nature spirits of Iona had protected me. I'm not sure that I could have managed many more cliffs.

I decided to rest for a while on the edge of the sea continuing this research experience using active meditation. I imagined myself entering a tunnel and emerging through the other side into a garden. I knew that in this garden I facilitated healing. Within this beautiful garden I helped others to be healed others as I healed myself. I saw a white reflection of an angel in a pond. She was very white and bright. It was a healing spot where miracles occurred. All you had to do was be in the garden and want to be healed. Miracles of healing happened because it was a peaceful, healing environment



Figure 15. Sheep and Abbey, Isle of Iona, Scotland

and there was an intent to heal. This image triggered a fantasy of a garden that I would like to have. I would invite angels and fairies and elementals. I'd have a special wild spot for them. I'd have a couple of statues and flowering herbs and roses and flowers and shrubs and paths and benches. I would meditate in this garden daily. Then I remembered that this garden exists in my inner world and I can visit it every day in mediation. I also realized that by entering this garden through meditation, before a healing process, I could incorporate the energies of nature into my healing.

After several minutes I resumed my walking meditation. I climbed off of the hill, through sheep pastures and past farmhouses to follow the paved road back to the north side of the island. A narrow paved road led past the ruins of a nunnery. There is a

Sheela-na-gig over an opening on the south side of the ruins (see Figure 16). She is a Celtic goddess who is associated with the creative process. Her body seems to symbolize the sacredness of the earth. She was placed on church facades to protect and ward off evil (Gadon, 1989). I touched her and allowed myself to absorb the energy of the stone from which she was carved.

Almost immediately after leaving the ruins of the nunnery, I found a tree with a hollow (see Figure 17). I could imagine the little folk that lived in this tiny hollow. If I gazed closely I could almost see them. I spent time envisioning the life that grew with this small space. I imagined this as a doorway to other realms with flowers and greenery decorating the front door. Perhaps the purpose of the design in the bark above the hollow was to act as a gorgon to ward off evil and protect this tiny home just as the Sheela-na-gig (figure 16) did for the nunnery.

The next phase of my journey was to visit the “Well of Eternal Youth.” It is located on the top of a hill on the north end of the island. I climbed up the steep, slippery slopes. It was not easy going and I rested several times along the way. At each resting place I allowed myself to breathe in the fresh air and to refocus on my journey to connect with and experience nature.

There is a cairn at the summit of the hill and I found it easily. It was more difficult to find the well. I wondered why I was having difficulty finding it and thought that perhaps I had made a mistake. I wandered back and forth following my intuition and the path of the water until I found it (see Figure 18). I found a comfortable spot near the water and allowed my imagination to take me on a journey into its depths. I saw energetic forms beneath the surface. Tiny mermaids and merman floated in the water.



Figure 16. Sheela-na-Gig, Isle of Iona, Scotland



Figure 17. Hollow of tree, Isle of Iona, Scotland



Figure 18. Well of Eternal Youth, Isle of Iona, Scotland

Moss floated around them as they played. The water was alive with plants and energies and healing potential. I splashed water on my face and took deep breaths to refresh myself with its coolness.

I centered and grounded myself and in meditation allowed myself to attune to the energy of this spring. I sensed one of my guides approaching with a smaller figure. My guide introduced me to Annie. I understood that she is to be my guide. She is an elemental. My guide introduced her as “a tremendous vortex of love and light.” She is about the size of a human, an elemental who appears in a form that I can accept. Her energy is tremendous. She floats on a cloud of light and love. I sense her energy as that of a butterfly. She is a very happy, joyful presence. I knew that she was a manifestation of the tool that I had created the week before during the workshop at Findhorn. I was so grateful that she would be a part of my life. I greeted her, asking that I be open to receiving her guidance. It was an affirmation of a knowing I had received in a dream. When the total pattern was in place the object/dream would manifest into reality. The idea of a vortex of loving energy had manifested in a more concrete form that I could relate to on an inner level.

I thanked my guides and Annie for their presence and guidance. It was time to begin to conclude the walking meditation and research experience. Climbing off the hill was more a matter of sliding off the hill in some places. I arrived safely at my hotel. I thanked my spirit guides, Annie, and the nature spirits of Iona for being with me.

Reflections

In reflecting on this experience I spent the evening visiting the abbey of St. Columba. I found a location in which to spend time reflecting on my experiences. It was

in a field next to the abbey near the ruins of an old building. I began to write in my journal and think about the nature spirits of the island. I was thinking of Annie and how the energy of nature manifests in nature. I was looking at the ruins of the old building when I realized that it was looking at me. At least it was in my imagination. I wondered at the synchronicity that this building looked like a profile of a man. Nature was playing with me. This man seemed to have a large portion of nose hair growing from his nostrils. I laughed and took his photograph (see Figure 19).

I took this time to create a watercolor of the sea as I remembered seeing it on my pilgrimage (see Figure 20). I included a goddess image in the distant mountains, an image of a breast of the goddess. I felt myself receiving her nurturing and once again was in tune with the healing energy of the island.

I contemplated my introduction to Annie as a spirit guide. I recognized this as a personal connection with the natural world. My transpersonal goals were actualized in my inner world. I wondered what she meant to me and wrote in my personal journal.

She is my image of light and love and freedom and hope and humility mixed with power and service to the world and myself. It is for soul growth and development and for connection with nature. As I work with this image it is like a cyclone of light bringing energy from the earth up through the chakras into the heart, out the arms and the top of the head. It is love personified in action. It is healing energy direct from the Mother. It is Reiki yet somehow different. It is love, but from the earth Mother, her source being limitless. Her source is channeled from the divine through the pores of her numinous multi-veined blood-filled body. The life-blood of the earth flowing to protect, heal, energize the light-body and physical body of her children. (Personal Journal, August 2002)

The creative pieces from the research epitomize the experience itself. As I review each of the photographs and the watercolor I am struck by the serenity and peace I feel. During this experience I felt a connection with the natural environment. I realized in order to regain the sense of connectedness to nature I felt at the time of the experience,



Figure 19. Guarding the Sheep, Isle of Iona, Scotland



Figure 20. Watercolor, Iona, Scotland – August 2001

I would simply have to look at the creative work, pay attention to my body, and remember.

My goal for this journey was to take pictures of nature, to commune with nature, and to further my spiritual growth. One of the primary lessons I learned from this “pilgrimage” was to trust the process, to allow my intuition to guide me and to go with the flow of Spirit. I felt that nature was my companion as I conducted research on Iona. As I climbed the 12-foot cliff and waded through the bracken I felt protected by nature. I was afraid of falling as I climbed the almost vertical slope. It was as if an invisible hand were keeping me safe.

I also felt a concrete connection when introduced to the elemental energy of Annie. Intuitively I identified her as my guide. This was my first remembered experience of meeting guides in meditation. A spiritual being brought Annie to meet me. Her image seemed to have a concrete quality and have personality. I felt connected to her energetic presence and to her spiritual being. Her energy was my energy. I feel blessed by her presence in my life. I also recognized that this is a development in my spiritual process. I have moved beyond the concrete of my physical self to begin to understand my connection to the transpersonal world of elemental energies in nature. This experience has helped me to realize a transpersonal connection and to develop a working relationship with a specific energy in the natural world.

SITE THREE

POINT DEFIANCE PARK, WASHINGTON – FEBRUARY 2002

Location and Background

The location was Point Defiance Park near Tacoma, Washington. It is on a peninsula in the Puget Sound near Tacoma, Washington. The peninsula is elevated above the shoreline with a steep hill leading down to the water. I had chosen this location because of my love for the ocean and a desire to connect with the sea. At this time the Puget Sound was as close as I could get to a sandy beach on the Northern Pacific Coast and I took advantage of the opportunity. It was a cool late winter day with a slight breeze blowing off of the water. The sun was shining with no hint of rain, which seemed like a miracle for this area at this time of year.

Research Experience

I began this experience by honoring the four directions of East, South, West, and North. I asked for guidance to find a meditation site that would teach me about my transpersonal connection to the earth. With an awareness that I was looking for a location to meditate in, I began a walking meditation. I found a path from the parking area down a steep hill to the edge of the sound. At the base of the path was an open area with a fresh water stream that flowed out of the side of the hill and into the salt water of the sound. It was green and had a tropical appearance. I felt that I had entered a different world than the world of traffic and shopping malls that I had just left (see Figure 21). Although the sun was shining there was a cold wind blowing off of the water and few people were out. I walked along the edge of the water on a paved sidewalk. The tide was

in and was lapping against huge logs of driftwood. I wondered how huge tree trunks had found their way across the harbor onto this rocky shore. As I continued on the path I noticed a sandy area that was covered with several whole tree trunks of driftwood. The wood had a reddish tint and I thought it might be redwood. The sand was firmly packed on this part of the shore. I picked my way through, around and over the driftwood.

Eventually the shore area narrowed as I neared the end of the peninsula. Here the hillside was much steeper, in fact, it was as if cliffs had been eroded away and I saw from whence the driftwood had come. Trees clung precariously to the edge of the cliff. One good storm and the erosion would wash away enough of the root support and these trees would also be swept to the shore as driftwood. There were places in the wall of the cliff that showed the erosion as the waves were beginning to break down and wash away the sand. I noticed a spot where the erosion was already digging holes into the base of the cliff that resembled a small animal (See Figure 22). Vibrant colors were reflected in the moist earth.

I walked to the far end of the peninsula and then began my way back. This time I intended to find a place to meditate. Paying attention to my intuition I noticed an open area that seemed to have an increased energy flowing through it. I looked up at the hill and saw an indentation pointing downward from the top of the hill to the shoreline (see Figure 23). It would be drainage for water running from the hill during rainstorms and it also seemed to be a location where there would be a natural flow of energy. My imagination saw it as a birth canal where an influx of energy passed from the land to the sea. At the base of the V was a piece of driftwood with a flat surface. This location seemed to be what I was looking for. I imagined myself setting at the base of Gaia and



Figure 21. Stream at Point Defiance Park, Washington

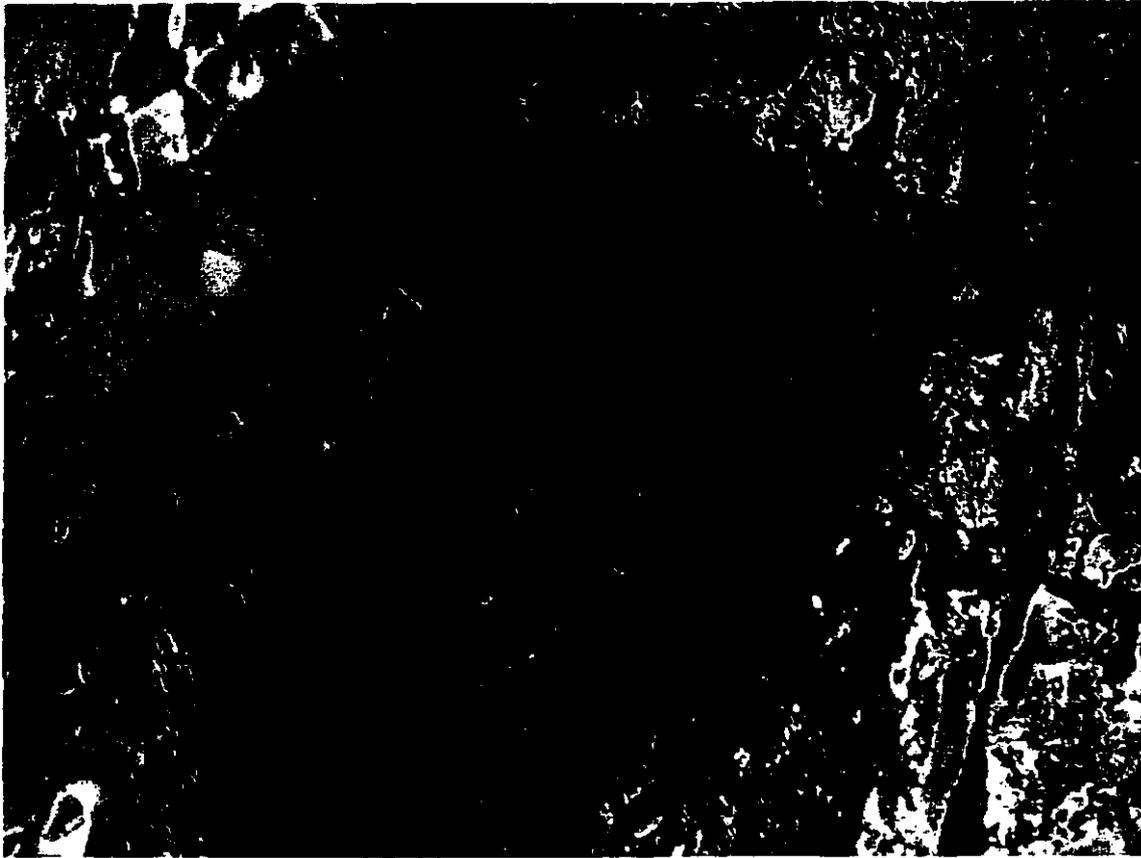


Figure 22. Natural Erosion, Point Defiance Park, Washington

allowing her healing energy to flow through me as I continued my meditation. I sat quietly at the base of the hill and allowed myself to draw in the energy flowing down the hill. I breathed the energy into my body and out again. As I inhaled I allowed the energy to fill my body and on exhaling I released all stress, negativity and toxins that had accumulated in my body.

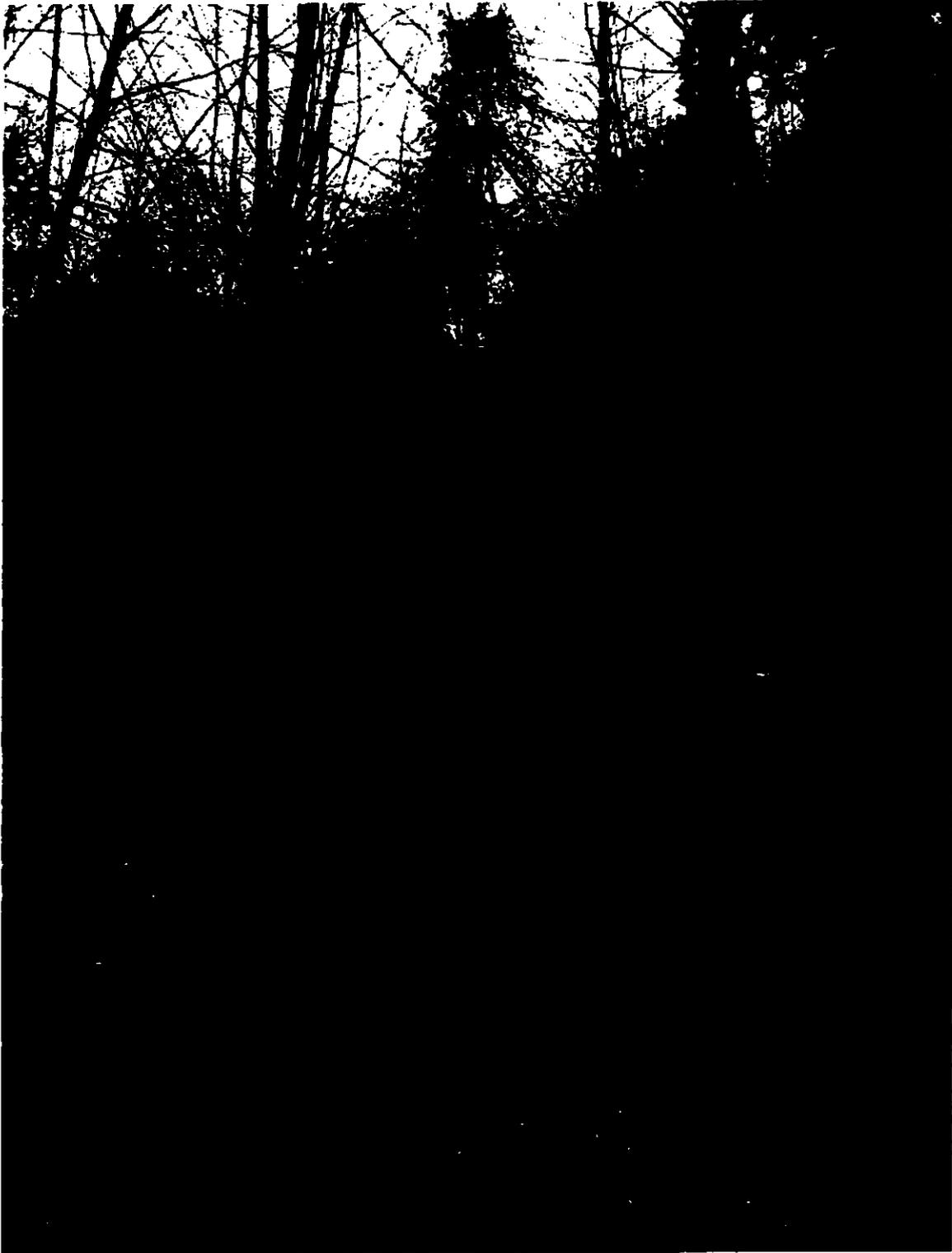


Figure 23. Hillside, Point Defiance Park, Washington

I began with a writing meditation. First I wrote a poem dedicated to Gaia:

GAIA

The Earth Mother responds to your call.
 Be ever present before Her.
 Let your actions reflect your love of Her
 Let your soul reach out to embrace
 The tender leaf,
 The soft porous soul of the Earth
 The hard outer core that protects
 Contains and nurtures
 That powerful inner being
 That is ready to expand
 That is ready to fly.
 Yet hold solid to the reality
 That this is a gentle Earth
 She is tender, She is sweet
 She longs for love and attention
 She remembers the days when humans were new
 When humans respected, loved and honored her.
 When she was treated as the great life giving force that she is.
 A divorce happened, but not of Her choosing
 She, abandoned and alone,
 Reaches out to connect with those who
 Will embrace her as she embraces them
 Let the healing begin.

Sitting in such a powerful feminine energy, I wondered that the Earth is considered female by many indigenous and modern traditions and if by honoring her as female we reject the male. Continuing the meditation I began a to write:

The forced dichotomies/opposites that we perceive are of our own limitations, not the limitations of God/Goddess. Even as I write those two words, I know they do not depict the whole and yet they are the whole. The Sacred Marriage that conceived the universe as a thought was an element of foreplay. A small spark within us ignites the whole of our world, our universe. The creative spirit is contained within each of us and flows from us to create our world, in flowing water-like waves or in flames of passion and power as from the sun, gentle as a light breeze or overpowering and destructive as a tornado or all-inclusive, nurturing and loving as this great grounded Earth on which we live. All in one and One in All (dot inside O). There is no separation only unity. Our perceived separation creates the conflicts that we feel/imagine and react to, which creates more conflicts around us. Within each second of time as we perceive it, exists all that is. Acknowledging this can bring a

life of eternal joy in each second. As we increase our consciousness we will come to know that joy as an eternal manifestation of life. Until then, we practice second by second. There is no getting it right because it has never been wrong. Love is the key and always has been. Love opens doors that fear shuts. Acceptance of ourselves, love of ourselves and acknowledgement that we are love as are all around us. Each plant, stone, particle of sand is a world within itself that has a soul and is love. Recognizing this in others is the first step to transformation of consciousness and a return to the joy we all knew before we perceived ourselves as separate from the One (dot inside O).

I put away my writing tools and began a silent meditation allowing myself to feel the energy at this site. I felt the water as it flowed in from the sea meeting the energy of the land as it flowed from behind me into the water. I realized that there is a sacred marriage between the earth and the sea in this exchange of energy. It is sacred give and take. One was merely a reflection of the other. I created a touch drawing of the energy of the sun on the land as it reflected into the sea. It seemed to be a symbol of the sacred union that I felt (see Figure 24). As I began my journey back to my car I saw the beauty and majesty of Mount Rainier as it towered over the landscape against a backdrop of the deep blue Puget Sound (see Figure 25). I concluded the experience at this site with a walking meditation honoring the energies of the four directions and thanking the energies of the earth, sea, wind and sun for mingling to increase my understanding of the sacred union of the elements.

Reflections

The answer to my wonderings about the absence of the masculine in honoring the Earth seemed to be that it was all an illusion anyway. If everything was contained within the one, then there is no masculine and feminine, there is only the One. I see the image of the O with a dot in the middle as two halves () coming together to great a whole with

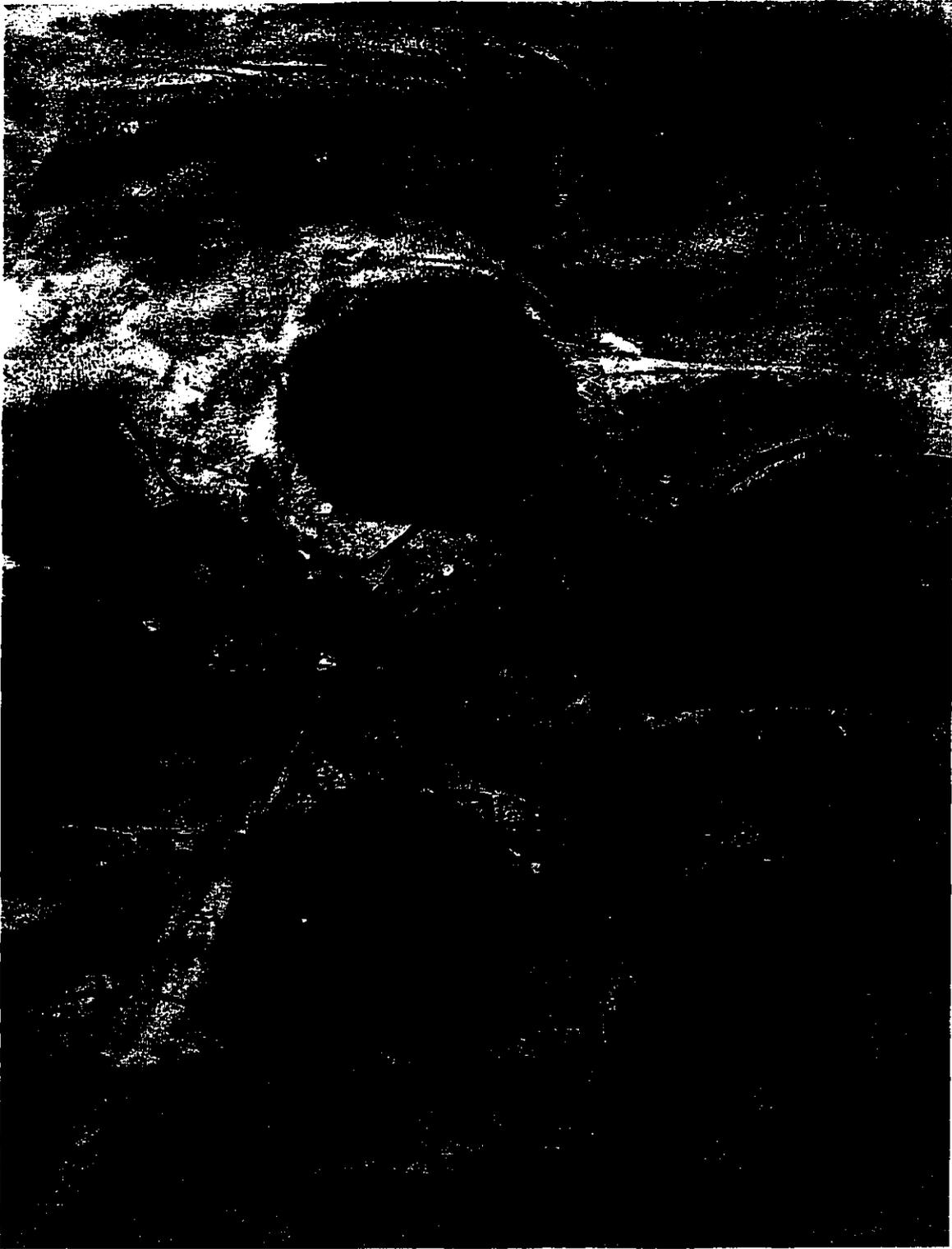


Figure 24. Touch Drawing, Reflections, Point Defiance Park, Washington



Figure 25. Mount Rainier, Above Puget Sound, Point Defiance Park, Washington

myself as the dot in the exact center. I was the heart energy of the sacred union. The connection that I feel with the land, the sea, and other elements of nature are all apart of this great Oneness. I realized that in honoring the feminine I was not negating the masculine as they are two parts of the same whole of which I am included.

The touch drawing seemed to capture the elemental energy of this location (figure 24). In the reflection of the sun into the water or the water into the sun the union of land and sea is epitomized.

The Puget Sound would not be the same without the occasional view of Mount Rainier towering above it. The majesty of this mountain is a reflection of the power of the earth in contrast to the power of the sea (figure 25).

There is a feminine, vaginal quality to the three remaining photographs. It is a reflection of the influx of energy that I perceived at the site as well as my own inward movement to meditate, to heal and to learn. It is becoming apparent to me that nature reflects back to me how I am feeling and my worldviews at the time of the research. It is a mirror of my inner world. My beliefs were creative. As a result of an intuitive insight I realized that it was my perceptions of the separation of masculine and feminine that created the reality. When I viewed the Earth looking only for one aspect, the feminine, that was what I observed. Through changing my beliefs I facilitated a change in my perceptions.

My transpersonal connection to the world is enhanced with understanding the relationship of the masculine to the feminine as reflected in the land, the sea and the exchange of energy within the whole.

SITE FOUR

NORTH OGDEN, UTAH – MARCH 2002

Location and Background

North Ogden, Utah is my native home. It has been the home of my family for many generations. My ancestors were Mormon pioneers who traveled across the plains. They settled in the North Ogden area in the late 1800's. My great-grandparents built a home at the foot of Ben Lomond and Mount Lewis. My family has lived on the same acreage until the present time. I moved from the area in December 1984. I have visited several times but had for the most part cut my roots. There is part of me that has been floundering looking for the connection that I once had in my family home.

Mountains have been my protectors and guardians from the time I was born. I have a special feeling for Ben Lomond (see Figure 26). This mountain is directly north of my home. I have had several dreams about driving up to its steep central peak.

I was concerned recently when I dreamed about visiting a mountain and the mountain being angry with me:

I am at the base of a mountain. I am traveling up the mountain and do not have a good feeling about it. There is snow on the mountain and I pass several people traveling down as I ascend. A bunch of garbage (cans) falls out of the sky and hits me. I come off the mountain feeling bad. Something is not right. I am with a group of male and female companions in my Jeep. We are getting ready to pull out of the parking spot behind a building at the base of the mountain. There are several people in the car with me. All at once a big pile of garbage (cans) comes flying off of the mountain and lands on my car. I know that the garbage is directed at me. The cans tear apart the top of the soft-cover on the Jeep, cutting big holes into it until it is no longer there. I tell my companions about my earlier experience on the mountain. I feel that the mountain is angry with me and is getting even with me because I have left it. I am going my own way. (Personal Journal – July 2001)

Just before I left Germany to fly to the United States I had another dream

about being in Utah. In this dream I am with my family:

In the dream I am with my Dad and Mom in Ogden, Utah. There is a huge expansion bridge located in the foothills of the Wasatch Range left of Ogden Canyon. It crosses over a deep gorge to a very large community of people who live in a valley around a beautiful lake. It is very beautiful, peaceful and happy. The problem I have is overcoming my fear of heights and getting across the bridge to visit it. The bridge is narrow and only allows one car at a time. There is no connection to the earth except at the ends, the strength of the bridge is at the beginning and the end. There is no other way to access this loving community except to drive across the bridge. My Mom and Grandma drive across with my Dad and Grandpa. I will have to drive back. I am afraid of the drive and I do not want to go back across to the real world. Eventually I drive back. It wasn't as scary as I had imagined. While on the other side I had wondered what would happen if a big storm came in and the bridge was knocked down, people would not be able to get out of the valley to commute to work in the city. They would not be able to get off the mountain away from the beautiful lake. I am surprised that I had lived for 30 plus years in Ogden and had never known about this beautiful location. (Personal Journal – February 2002)

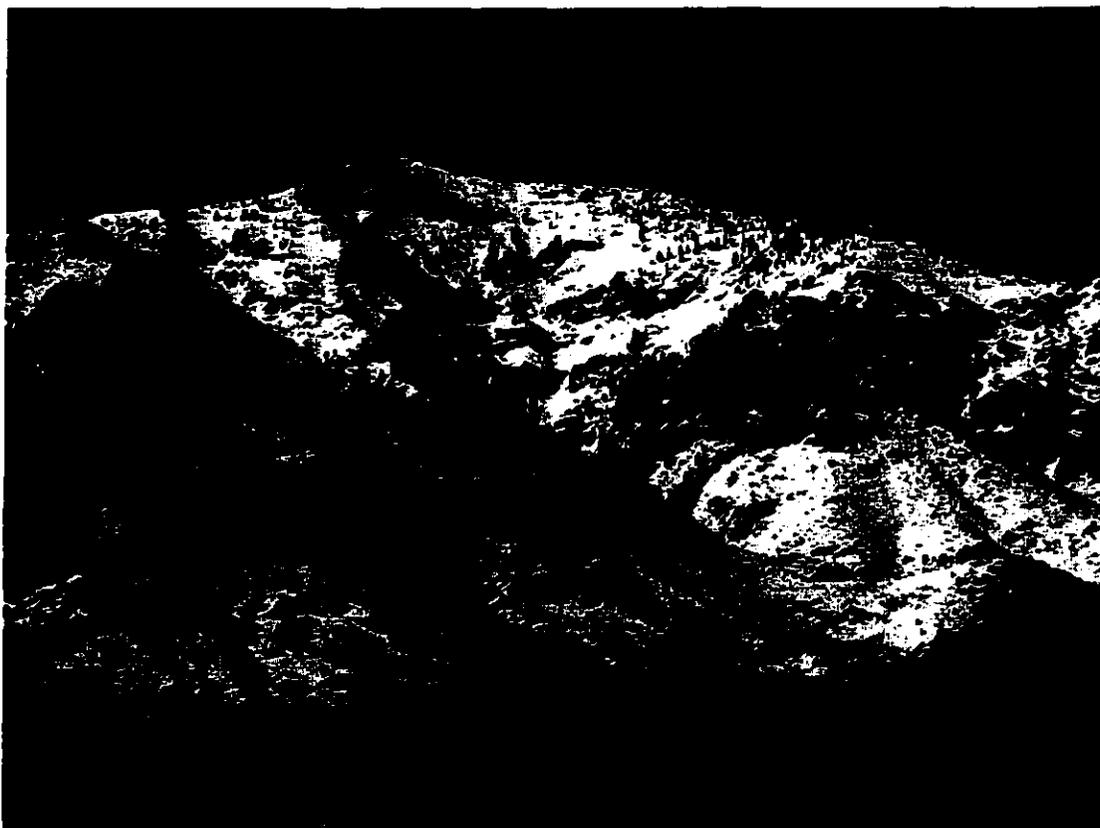


Figure 26. Beneath Ben Lomond Peak, North Ogden, Utah

These dreams express my inner anxiety about leaving home and returning again. It is only recently that I have realized that when I decided not to practice the Mormon faith, I cut ties not only with the Mormon faith but also with my ancestors who were all devout Mormons. In the first dream, my ancestors and my roots were angry with me for abandoning them. The second dream revealed my fear of my spiritual beliefs cutting me off from my roots and family. I learned that I could travel away from home to what I saw as a “beautiful valley with a lake” and return home with my family and ancestors. In fact, I could take them there with me. There need not be a separation between my connection with my ancestors and my spiritual beliefs.

I approached this research aware of the connection that I feel to this land and mountain. I was also deeply aware of my connection to my ancestors and that this was their home.

The location in which I chose to conduct research was in the foothills of Ben Lomond. I was at the base of the central peak. Figure 26 was photographed from the site I had chosen. I invited Ben Lomond to preside over my research.

Research Experience

I began the research experience with a ritual honoring the directions of East, South, West, and North. I had driven my car as far as I could up the dirt roads to the foothills of the mountain. In a walking meditation I began to connect with the energy of the land. I remembered my ancestors who had walked this land before me. I felt a need to speak directly to the mountain. Finding a place to sit I began to write in my journal:

My ancestors are here. Here are my roots. Over there is the property of my ancestors and the home that my Dad built. I feel almost overwhelmed taking in the energy and the presence of these great mountains. Ben Lomond, Mt Lewis, Mt Ogden. What strong protective presences you are. I know you and I thank you for protecting my ancestors, my family, and myself for so many years. I feel that you are a part of me. Your energy flows through my veins. It is my blood.

I wonder at the Indians that used to call this land home. It is high desert country. Who survived here before irrigation? It was only sagebrush before it was irrigated and cultivated. I miss you. Please continue to take care of my family. (Personal Journal – March 4, 2002)

I continued with the walking meditation realizing that I was on hallowed ground. I walked with respect and humility in the presence of this great mountain. It was cool here on the mountain. A cool breeze was blowing and I could see that ice had not melted from the previous evening. There were places where pools of water had frozen over and formed designs (see Figure 27). Continuing my walk I touched the earth and the stones of this mountain, looking at them for the first time. I noticed how they appeared with the sun glinting off quartz and granite (see Figure 26). I had not looked at these stones before. I felt their energies beneath my hand and knew they contained the memory of this land and knew what I did not know. I could imagine images in the face of the rock. Fairy and animal spirits were carved in its face. I wished that I could read them. I wish that I could hear what they have to say. In a writing meditation I wrote:

Sacred Mountain. Mountain that oversaw my conception, my birth, my joys and my sorrows. Mountain that protected me in your mighty shadow. I honor you. You answer: This land is indeed sacred. It is the home of many who have come before and many who will come after. The energies of this land are great. I am the guardian and record keeper of this valley. I protect those who honor me. See before you my domain. Is it not vast? When seas flooded this area they lapped against my stones. I know of the fish, the birds, and the wild animals of the high desert. I know of all. Look to me for answers. Look to me for the questions to ask. My foundations are not unstable they will not fall. Woe to those who fail to honor me, those who have built their homes on my flanks. See the mud I have sent to those who fail to respect my privacy. I am powerful. I am an observer who



Figure 27. Ice Sculpture, North Ogden, Utah

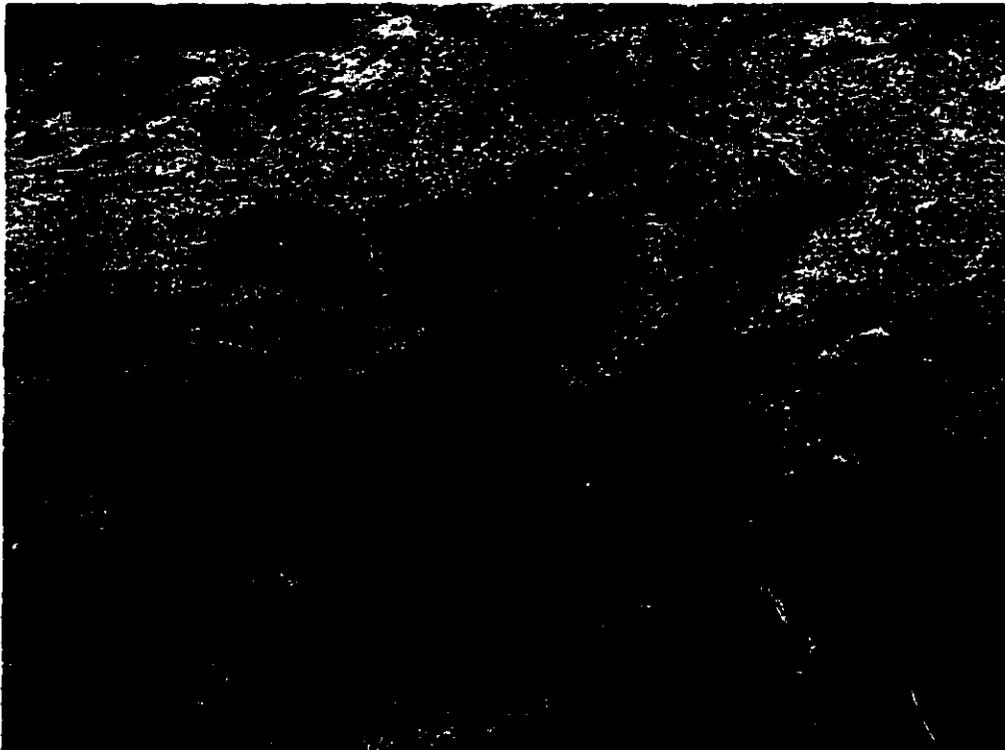


Figure 28. Boulder Close Up, North Ogden, Utah

listens well and remembers. Come to me those of you who wish to know my history. Come to me those of you who wish to know the secrets of life. Come to me those of you who wish to understand stamina and strength. Those are my lessons. I have stood for millennia and will continue to stand long after you are gone. Come to me to learn endurance and fortitude. Humans do not understand. They do not know that with their pollution comes their destruction. But I know, humans will come and humans will go and I will remain. I will remember.

I remember you from long ago. Your ancestors continue to walk my paths. They monitor you and have not forgotten you. You forgot them, but they are patient and know you will someday remember. They have vast knowledge that you can have access to if you will listen. Listen to your intuition. Your ancestors whisper in your ear when you can hear. Be alert to their voices. They are wise. To have endured my rough high desert country they had to develop courage, strength and endurance. They have become strong like the mountains. They have another gift that you have not been open to. They love you deeply. They were present at your birth and they too have shared your joys and sorrows. They have protected you when you were in danger. They are with you wherever you are. Remember them. Honor and respect them. Love them. Be at peace with them. (Personal Journal, March 4, 2002)

In creative meditation I wrote:

The gift of the unknown
Is to be cherished and honored.
Celebrating the emptiness,
Luxuriating in the silence,
Preparing for the journey.
Dreams of castles, kings and queens
Are fulfilled only in the asking.

I continued with a written meditation:

Spiritual growth is a manifestation of life experience. It is a slow, steady process that seems to come in leaps and bounds, however it is the result of all experience accumulated to that point in life. Nothing in the present is disconnected for the past, nor is it from the future. It is experienced in the present. In the now. Today I am born again, born anew to a new me, but the old me, the wise person that I am is close beside me, walking my path, nurturing, counseling, a wise grandmother, loving and honoring her new grandchild. She is not afraid of spoiling her or dropping her, nor is she nervous as a mother with her first born. She knows that children will fall, they will have cuts and bruises and perhaps an emergency room visit or two. She allows her grandchild to play, to romp in the woods, to be a child. Who cares what others think? This is her child and she loves her unconditionally. My grandmother self loves me as my grandmother did, with no reservations. She allows for the mistakes, gently correcting if needed. Forgiving,

forgetting and loving. Most of all loving, always, forever loving. (Personal Journal – March 4, 2002)

From my Grandmother Jensen I have inherited Native American blood. My Great-Grandmother Polly was probably Seneca from the Iroquois Nation. She was born on the north shore of a lake in New Hampshire. I asked to gain awareness of my Native American ancestry as I seek a transpersonal relationship with the earth. I continue to write:

Walk the Path of Beauty. Walk the Path of Love.

The Beauty Path – In Beauty do I walk this path. Beauty surrounds me. I am upheld by the Beauty Way. I am enlivened by the Beauty Way. I am inspired by the Beauty Way. I walk the Path of Beauty.

The Beauty Way is honest, sincere, dedicated to pure, clean living. Beauty in all is recognized, the large and the small, the insect and the bird. It is found in the weed that enlivens a crack in stone and the stone that holds it in a firm embrace until it eventually splits the stone.

I am nature. Nature is me. Nature fills my breast with sustenance that I may feed from the mild of life. My heart opens with love. Tears of joy flow in abundance as gratitude creates more joy and peace in my life. I emerge from my old withered shell to be reborn a shining, new, yet wiser being. Fresh and pink, sparkling wet from the juices of my mother's womb. I cry as the breath of life expands my virgin lungs. As the hymen breaks I renew my vows to serve. I am love. I am love.

There is a time when all are called to partake of the feast of life. The time has come to dine. To open your heart and wrap it firmly around the nurturing energy of Spirit and digest the love, peace and joy that nurtures you. (Personal Journal – March 2002)

I completed my research experience by honoring my connection to the earth. As I was leaving the area I drove my car to the top of North Ogden Pass to overlook the valley in which I was raised. A rocky ridge with sagebrush framed by a brilliant blue sky reminded me of the beauty of this land (see Figure 29). The cloud formations seemed to contain the faces of my ancestors as they watched over me. This is the land of my birth.



Figure 29. Rocks, Sagebrush and Sky, North Ogden Pass, Utah

Reflections

In reflection I realized that there was an element of the sentimental in my experience on Ben Lomond. I had not realized that I missed this area as much as I had. I was also amazed at the amount of creativity and the journal entries that seemed to be flowing out of me while on the mountain. It felt that as I had returned to the land of my ancestors and to my roots that I had found a wealth of creative energy. This creativity appeared to be a link between connection with the earth and the past through my ancestors. I had left home to find new sources of creativity and growth. I had

found them. I was surprised to discover that the source had been beneath my feet all along and had accompanied me on my journeys. I realized that I could return home, if that was my choice, and continue my personal and transpersonal growth. I had opened myself to receive the richness of the earth and the earth was only as far away as my next footstep, my next breath, my next heartbeat. I created a touch drawing to reflect the energy that I felt while on the mountain (see Figure 30).



Figure 30. Touch Drawing, Mountain Goddess

As I finished the drawing I felt a poem also came in the form of a prayer to reflect my transpersonal connection to the elemental energy of the land.

Beautiful energy beings
Flow gently in peace and harmony
Full of potential,
Powerful

**Within their gentle swirls of light is contained the universe.
Angel of Light – Adorn me in your grace
Allow my light to shine
So that all who share my life
Reflect their own inner light**

**Inner being of light and love
Adorn my heart with your calm loving presence
Grant me patience
Allow compassion to flow as blood through open channels
Commencing within and pouring outwardly
In a never ending gift to
All my Earth family.**

This was an experience of connecting with my ancestors through connecting with the earth. I reestablished a relationship with the land and my ancestors that I had neglected and disowned when I moved from the area. I found that the land did not forget, nor did my ancestors. They are always with me no matter where I go. This is an important realization that enhances my transpersonal awareness and spiritual growth.

Through the meditative and creative experiences on the side of Ben Lomond I was able to remember how much I loved Utah. The mountain valleys, the mountains, the changing of the seasons, and the arid, high desert climate were all a part of me as I was a part of them. It was good to come home to my biological family and my earth family. The Earth does not forget and it had not forgotten me. It is also good to know that no matter how long I am away from home I will not forget and not be forgotten.

SITE FIVE

WOODS NEAR QUEIDERSBACH, GERMANY – APRIL 2002

Location and Background

In the summer of 2000 while on a Volksmarch in the area around Queidersbach, Germany I saw a tree that I wanted to photograph. Eventually, the next spring, I drove my Jeep into the forested area to find the tree. I searched and searched but could not find it; however, in my searching I found a beautiful stream with a spring and stopped to take a picture. My digital camera was on telephoto so when I attempted to find the mouth of the stream it was from a very narrow perspective. I saw something interesting in my lens that looked like a face and I snapped a picture. I then widened the lens, found the stream, zoomed in again, and took the picture that I had intended to take. Later, when I returned home I reviewed both of the photos. The first photo was of a small cave-like area with what appeared to be a blue woman looking out. There was litter in front of her and she looked sad (see Figure 31).

I was shocked and awed at the photographs. I had not taken pictures like this before and I did not know what they were. It could be my imagination, but to me the face looked real. At the time I was busy with other preoccupations and did not spend time pursuing what had happened.

Several months later after having studied ecopsychology I remembered the blue women and decided to drive into the forested area and remove the litter. I found the site easily. It was dusk and the valley seemed to be bathed in blue. I felt chills and goose bumps as I walked down a set of stone steps and climbed up a hill to the small cave. I felt

this was sacred space with a strong feminine energy. The shape of the spring was a deep V with water gushing out at the point of the V. The cave was situated above the spring



Figure 31. Litter in Cave with Blue Face?

and would be an ideal place for a worshiper to leave offerings. My imagination soared. I removed several cans and bottles out of the cave, felt proud of myself, took some photos and left. However, as I reviewed the pictures on my computer I noticed that there was still litter in the cave. I knew I had to go back.

Two days after my last visit, I decided to visit the site again at lunchtime to take out the last of the litter. I drove quickly to the site. I felt the same tingles and goose bumps I had felt the last time. I intuited that this was a site sacred to the goddess. I hurriedly pulled out a bit more garbage, took a few more photos and quickly drove out.

But once again, in reviewing the pictures, I realized that there was still more garbage in the cave.

Now it had my attention! I made a plan to walk into the site (about three miles), do a thorough cleaning, perform a ritual and walk out. I took along candles and matches, a glove (just in case there was anything in the cave that did not like human hands), a flashlight (this time I was going to be sure there was not more garbage), a large garbage bag, and my digital camera.

I began the journey at 10:00 on Saturday morning. After entering the forest I was consumed with the beauty and the sights. I found the tree for which I had been looking. There appeared to be a horned God (see Figure 32). I later learned that the Germans have a name for trees that have simulacra. They are called root ghosts.

As I approached the site I felt the familiar tingles, this time much more intensely. I carefully climbed up to the cave and started pulling out garbage. What I thought was just a few cans quickly became a pile of rusted cans, broken bottles, plastic bags and assorted litter. I soon had a large pile of garbage and was very grateful for the leather glove I had brought along. After cleaning away the trash I placed candles, stones, and two roses at the entrance to the cave. I also had brought a Christmas decoration of an angel carrying a heart that I placed out of sight in the back of the cave (a gift for the fairies of the land).

After lighting the candles, I sat on a bench beside a moss-covered table and silently meditated for a few minutes. As I finished the meditation I noticed a coin that was lying on the table beside me. It was a 1992 Portuguese Escudo. I wondered that I had not seen it before now. I felt that it was a gift from the land, a payment for clearing



Figure 32. Horned God, near Queidersbach, Germany

the cave. I accepted the payment by placing it in my pocket. As I was leaving the area a shower of autumn leaves dropped as rain from the branches overhead. I felt that the area was responding to my action saying "Thank You."

Research Experience

I began the research experience with honoring the directions of East, South, West, and North. I began a walking meditation several hundred yards from the spring. I imagined that I was ritually approaching the spring in a spirit of thanksgiving and reverence in order to pay homage to this sacred site. I noticed what looked like a Smurf worm smiling at me from the top of a boulder above the spring (see Figure 33). He was perched on a boulder above the spring and had an inquisitive look as if he was wondering what I was doing.

I approached the spring respectfully climbing down the last few stone steps to the site (see Figure 34). I had not been here for several months. At first the only difference I noted was an abundance of fallen leaves. The flow of the water seemed stagnant from the stream at the foot of the spring. Stones had been placed in the stream blocking the flow of water. Dried leaves had filled in the cracks and this barricade blocked the flow of water. I was also disappointed to see that the bridge crossing the small stream had been vandalized. Two or three slats had been beaten out of the middle, the branches that had been used lay where they had been dropped.

I threw the branches to the side but quickly saw that I could do nothing to repair the broken slats. I could however unblock the flow of water and energy through the site. I removed the rocks and debris. Immediately water gushed by with mud and leaves in tow. I then paid attention to the Goddess Spring itself. The water was not running freely

down the drainage channel from the mouth of the spring. It was also blocked with last autumn's leaves. I soon remedied that, digging with my hands I cleared the path of the water to allow it to flow freely. As I was pulling out handfuls of leaves I grabbed a stone. I felt that it was meant for me to keep, so I set it on a larger rock nearby and continued to work. The energy felt much better when the water was flowing freely from the spring to intersect with the freely flowing stream below it. I asked that this beautiful site be protected from vandalism and felt grateful that I could do something to help. I declared myself as guardian of this sacred site.

Intuitively I knew that part of the research at this site was a working meditation to clean and protect this sacred place. After I had finished the physical clearing, I sat on the bench and performed a spiritual clearing. I imagined a column of bright, white light descending from the sky into the clearing. The white light expanded outward until the entire area was enclosed in bright white light. I asked the overlighting deva of this site and my guides to be with me. I then asked that any negative or impure energy be removed from the area. I felt the energy lighten, as the area seemed to be purified and cleared. I then asked that guardians protect this sacred site from future vandalism and pollution. I made a plan to come back regularly to make sure that the water and energy were flowing freely.

The fallen leaves were by far the most predominant natural objects at the site. I was surprised they were so brilliant after having sat beneath the snow all winter long (see Figure 35). There were lights and energies reflected in their moisture.



Figure 33. Smurf Worm Guardian, near Queidersbach, Germany



Figure 34. Spring in Forest near Queidersbach, Germany



Figure 35. Leaf Village, near Queidersbach, Germany

The spring flowed down a small hill to join a stream that flowed into a small reservoir (see Figure 36) that in turn flowed into other holding ponds until it eventually ended in a large lake. There was a mystical quality to the experience of viewing the stream flowing into the pond and recognizing that it in turn was a source of water for the Gelterswoog, a lake near my home. I felt more connected to the site as a result of understanding the flow of the water and the interconnectedness of this series of streams, spring, ponds and lake.

I sat on the bench I had used on previous occasions for meditation and began to write:



Figure 36. Valley, near Queidersbach, Germany

**Spring of Life,
 From whence flows all design,
 All momentum.
 Your sacred rhythms teach me.
 Your cleansing waters purify my heart,
 Flowing from the Earth
 From the Great Mother
 You bring her blessing to all who will receive.
 From where do you come
 rich crystal clear waters?
 Through which channels have you traveled?
 Through soil and stone rich with mineral
 you have journeyed.
 Oh, what adventures you have had!
 Did Hades dark swords greet the darkness of your journeys?
 Did Persephone's innocent hand direct your path?
 How many Pomegranate seeds were consumed
 that you may once again grace the world
 with your charms?**

In this deep valley the sun does not often shine. It graces the branches of the trees above and through the bright green leaves sends energy into the soil. Even on the brightest day it is as if dusk had permanently retired to this narrow valley home. I wonder who built the stone steps that lead to the picnic table and bench, across the wooden bridge and ascend to the road on the other side. Who designed this space to honor you? So remote, so removed from the mainstream. Only fellow travelers, bicyclists, and seekers find you and only those who seek with a loving giving heart find the truth buried beneath the carpets of leaves. What is the truth? Is it that in giving and honoring the Earth, you in return receive much more than you had given? It is through giving that your heart becomes receptive. It opens and receives from all sources. As you appreciate the beauty in the world and remember your connections to the Earth you are open to receive the gift of love that the Earth has always had for you. You smile! The Earth has always loved you and always will. Why do you think that despite injuries the Earth is so tolerant and has not reacted in Her great displeasure? It is not because She has not been hurt. It is because She remembers. She knows the Source. She recognizes the Source in You and is hoping that someday all will recognize the Source in her. "Remember! Remember!" Her tumbling, rolling waters whisper, "Remember."

This Spring comes from the Source and returns to it as well. Pour your love into its waters and let it carry your message to all corners of the Earth. (Personal Journal, April 13, 2002)

I sat in silent meditation honoring the energies of the water and land around me sending love into the waters of the spring as it flowed into the stream and onward through

holding ponds into a lake. I know that this summer people will be swimming in its waters and sunning on its shores and to the plants and animals that drank of it. I imagined the love flowing from the water to them. Through one act of kindness a miracle of healing can begin.

I concluded my meditation by thanking the elements and energies of the directions for being with me. I thanked the devas of this location and my own guides for helping me with my meditative clearing.

As I was on my way out of the valley in my Jeep I realized I had left the stone I had pulled from the stream. I had felt that it was a gift from the site to me. I decided to leave it and if it was there when I came back the next time I would take it. However, I felt a nagging urge to return. I knew on an intuitive level I had to go back and get it. I turned the car around, headed back, and climbed back down the steps to the Goddess Spring wondering about my perfectionistic compulsivity. The first thing I saw as I walked toward where I had laid the stone was my ring. It must have fallen off as I was pulling out leaves. The energies of this site had been taking care of me. By trusting my intuition I heard their calls. Once again gratitude overwhelmed me.

Reflections

I am deeply grateful to this sacred location for reminding me of my duty to the earth. I intuit that as a result of my love of the earth and my proven dedication to this sacred spot that I have been chosen to be a custodian. I realize that transpersonal connections to the earth are two-fold. They involve our initial awareness but they also involve our responsibility. It is a give and take relationship in that I am healed as I heal and vice-versa. I was also grateful for the gratitude that the site showed me. The initial

payment of a Portuguese Escudo was for my care and labor. I was deeply touched that I had been reminded to return for the stone I had been given. My ring was a reminder that nature is taking care of me and was a symbol of the transpersonal connection that I had established with this sacred site.

During the reflective time I chose to do a touch drawing to reattune to the energy of the site. I created "Red Woman" (see Figure 37) while attuning to the energies of the location. Red is the color of blood. The blood of the Earth is the crystal clear water that runs through its inner and outer veins. Red is also a healing color. In this drawing it is mixed with the color brown reminiscent of the soil of the Earth. The blood of the Earth is mixed with the substance of the Earth and in turn this figure was created.

Another healing practice was the written meditation. I could visualize the love and healing energy that was given to the water flowing on downstream, being absorbed by receptive individuals who saw it, swam in it, or spent time near it. I imagined love energy could be absorbed by the animals that drank these waters or the plants that grew from them. This was an act of giving that was inspired by being in nature and the love that I felt for nature. When a transpersonal connection is made with nature, it can be shared indirectly with other living beings who are receptive.

The fallen leaves are like a thick carpet on the ground. They cushion steps and they also are a protective cover for the little creatures who make their home beneath them. No creative project would be complete without attempting to capture the energy that they represent (figure 35). When I was cleaning the litter from the cave last summer I disturbed a frog that had been hiding beneath the leaves. The guardian Smurf figure



Figure 37. Touch Drawing, Red Woman

(figure 34) was a protective presence that to me symbolized my role at this spring. It was also a playful energy that reminded me to have fun and enjoy what I was doing.

The elemental energies at this location have been a factor in my recognition that the earth is a living being. This has been a long-term relationship that will continue on a physical level as long as I live in Germany. It will also continue on a spiritual level as long as I remember my connection to the earth.

SITE SIX

KINDBACH SPRING – APRIL 2002

Location and Background

Kindsbach, Germany is a small village between Landstuhl and Kaiserslautern. It is named after a stream that runs through it. The Stream has its source at a spring that is located above the town at the top of a heavily forested hill. Large boulders frame the mouth of the spring. A friend introduced me to the site on Easter Sunday this year. The beauty of the location and the clear energy that is prevalent immediately struck me. I decided to use it as a research location at that time. I was excited about what I would learn at this location as I had the following dream the week before:

I am with someone at a place in the country, they are telling me that an Elk had just arrived and a group of fairies, some in dress from distant lands. I see the Elk and the fairy folk as the person is describing them. There is a group of 8-12 fairy folk, male and female, tall and slender, dressed in bright “walking/traveling” attire (fairy dress). I guess that they are of the gentry, knowledgeable and ready to observe what is happening. I woke up from the dream by hitting myself in the eye. I had heard an insect buzzing by my face and instinctively hit at it. My intuition told me to pay attention to the dream and that I have companions on my journey. (Personal Journal – April 11, 2002)

I imagined that the little people had joined me on my journey and had come to observe my research.

Research Experience

The research experience began on an early spring afternoon. I began with a ritual honoring the directions of East, South, West, and North. I then began a walking meditation along a path that runs parallel to the stream leading up the side of hill to the spring. It was a beautiful sunny day and I was amazed at the beauty of the new spring



Figure 38. Kindsbach Steam, Kindsbach, Germany



Figure 39. Reflections in Kindsbach Stream, Kindsbach, Germany

foliage and its brilliance in the bright sunlight (see Figure 38). I was so happy that spring was finally here and I could finally see it.

I slowly meandered up the path and climbed down a slippery leaf-covered embankment to reach the mouth of the spring. I took time to reacquaint myself with the layout of the stone and water as it poured into a rapidly flowing stream (see Figure 39). The stream was luminous with the colors of green moss and light blue reflections from the sky. Was it my imagination or did I see faces shining up at me from the water? I splashed my face with water from inside the mouth of the spring and thanked the spirits of this site for being with me. I touched the boulders and honored their presence as guardians for the elemental energies present. I silently asked to learn what this location had to teach me about transpersonal relationships with nature (See Figure 40).

What looked like faces peered at me from the rock formation. The bubbling water had a soothing sound and I felt safe and peaceful in this protected cranny. It was difficult to find a place to sit as the ground sloped steeply down to the streambed. I managed to balance myself on the slope and found a spot to prevent my art supplies from tumbling into the stream. My camera rested on the roots of a tree at my back.

I felt an urge to create and brought out my art supplies. I created several touch drawings. I began with a clean white board as my drawing pad. Small bits of leaf were blown by the breeze onto the board and were captured by the oil paint. I was using tissue paper that was easily whipped around by even the slightest movement. The energy of blue pervaded most of the drawings. A drawing I named "Blue Man" captured the energy that I was feeling at the site (See Figure 41). Once again the theme seemed to be faces and eyes. I intentionally drew the eyes within a white orb, and a trunk-like



Figure 40. Spring, Kindsbach, Germany



Figure 41. Touch Drawing at Kindsbach Spring, Kindsbach

appendage that may be construed to be a neck. Leaves, wind and energy created the background textures and design. Several months ago in meditation I had designed a symbol that I have used in Reiki healing sessions. I felt that this energy was of the Earth and wondered about the significance of Earth energy in relationship to this symbol. As I began a writing meditation I was thinking about the symbol and Earth energy.

Energy from the earth is a source that has been filtered through rich fertile soil. It contains the essence of minerals, crystals, and plants. It contains the essence of which we heal/repair ourselves with on a daily basis from the food we eat, the vitamins and nutrients that we enrich ourselves with. Our bodies are miniature earths, microcosms of the macrocosm from which we came, just as the earth is a microcosm of a universal macrocosm. We can only alienate ourselves from Her to our detriment. She is not a separate being from God, she is God, just as we are. She is not part of the illusion as such. We do not dream Her, we are Her. We are Her arms and legs, her appendages. As we walk, we talk, we communicate, we are the Earth. Thank Spirit, thank the Earth for our existence. She is our essence. She is the creator in league with and a part of the Source. (Personal Journal – April 20, 2002)

I sat in meditation allowing myself to feel the energy of the site and to allow my intuition to guide my next steps. Upon opening my eyes my attention was drawn to a rock formation about the spring. I felt attracted to the stone. It seemed that it was smiling at me (see Figure 42). I felt a sense of joy. She appeared to be an ancient guardian of the spring.

I wondered if there were other guardians present. I looked around me and noticed a tree stump above and behind where I was sitting. I saw the sun glinting on what looked like gossamer fabric. Upon closer examination it proved to be a small cobweb constructed in the remains of the decaying stump (see Figure 43). I could imagine that eyes were looking at me from behind the cobweb. Was it a creative disguise for an elemental energy?

In a creative meditation I wrote two poems inspired by the guardians of the site:



Figure 42. Stone Crone, Kindsbach, Germany

The sound of a bird
 midst branches blown by Spring breezes.
 Winters remnants,
 carpets of crackling brown leaves
 cushion steps.
 A wrinkled smile of age-old wisdom.

I see your smile glimmering
 beneath a blush of deep green moss.
 I hear your laughter as my feet crunch
 through crackling piles of memories
 disguised as leaves from past brilliance.

I promised long ago to return.
 I had forgotten
 You wonder if I remember.
 Have I forgotten the joy we shared?
 What will I do?
 How will I respond?
 With an age-old whispering of love.



Figure 43. Cobweb Fairy, Kindsbach, Germany

**A whisper of fairy dust
caught the remnants of an ancient twig
and became a home for a traveling spider.**

I ended the meditation by thanking the energies of the site and performing a brief closing ritual acknowledging and thanking the energies of spirits of the directions. I walked slowly back down the path to my car with a smile on my face. My face bore youthful smile of age-old wisdom.

Reflections

As a part of my reflection process I intuited the need to do a touch drawing of the Earth symbol I referred to as a part of the reflections for this site (see Figure 42).



Figure 44. Earth Healing Symbol

As a result of the research at this site I was made aware of the tremendous power of the Earth and the healing that is available as a result of working with Earth energies. I was more aware of the elemental energies at this site than I had been at previous locations. Whether it was intuition or imagination or reality, I saw faces everywhere.

The eyes and faces found a way into the interpretations of my drawings. I felt a transpersonal connection to the elements of the earth through the medium of the spring and stone. The water seemed to be a natural conduit for the energy of the land.

The creative work at this site was abundant. I felt the energy of the season as well as the energy of the spring and water around me. New life was bursting from the branches of trees and from the ground beneath the carpet of withered brown leaves. The air was charged with the vibrancy of new beginnings and creativity. The touch drawing of the “Blue Man” was especially potent. I feel that I have been able to reflect more than just blue eyes in a white face. I don’t claim responsibility for the outcome. It was a joint effort between nature and me.

The poems written at the site were dedicated to specific formations of stone or wood. They were a dedication and an act of honoring the energies of the site. I loved the cobweb fairy. I had been looking around the site briefly and noticed her on the trail behind me. She seemed to call to me, “Take my picture! Here I am! Don’t forget me!”

As a result of the meditative experiences, it was easy to understand how ancient peoples had worshipped at sacred springs. My intuition told me that this site was sacred. I felt honored that I had been led to it. In silent meditation I was aware of the energy that surrounded me. There seemed to be concrete manifestations of nature as simulacra everywhere I looked. I sensed that I was more in tune on an intuitive level with the landscape than I had been before this experience. I felt a transpersonal sense of Oneness with the environment through energetic connections, through concrete observations and through the creative process as interacted with nature at this site. As I walked away from the Spring I felt an increase reverence and respect for the healing power of nature.

SITE SEVEN

MONT ST. MICHEL, FRANCE – MAY 2002

Location and Background

Mont St. Michel is a small island off of the Northern French coast in Normandy. It is the second most highly visited tourist location in France. The Archangel Michael was reported to have appeared to a monk and told him to build an abbey on this mound. A local myth associates this island with being the location of the final battle of good and evil between the Archangel Michael and Lucifer. The sea surrounds the island once a month at high tide. Mont St. Michel has long been a site of pilgrimage.

I visited Mont St. Michel for the first time in February 2001. As a result of the experiences at that time my spiritual growth took a tremendous leap. I chose this location for my research to honor the initial experience, which I have described as an initiation. On my first visit I had located a spring on the outer eastern portion of the mound. I wanted to increase my connection to the earth at this site and to explore the reasons for my attraction to what I had initially perceived was a strong feminine energy.

Research Experience

I felt the intensive calming and healing power the previous night as I walked the ramparts above the rock formations and spring that I had come to visit. I woke up feeling refreshed, soothed and nurtured. I was excited to visit a rock formation and spring that I had found on my first visit to Mont St. Michel. I began with a ritual honoring the directions of East, South, West, and North. I then proceeded with a walking meditation around the island. Mont St. Michel is beautiful at this time of year. From some areas of the island all that can be seen is water, silt, and a tiny mound in the distance. I was struck



Figure 45. Trees and View from Mont St. Michel, France

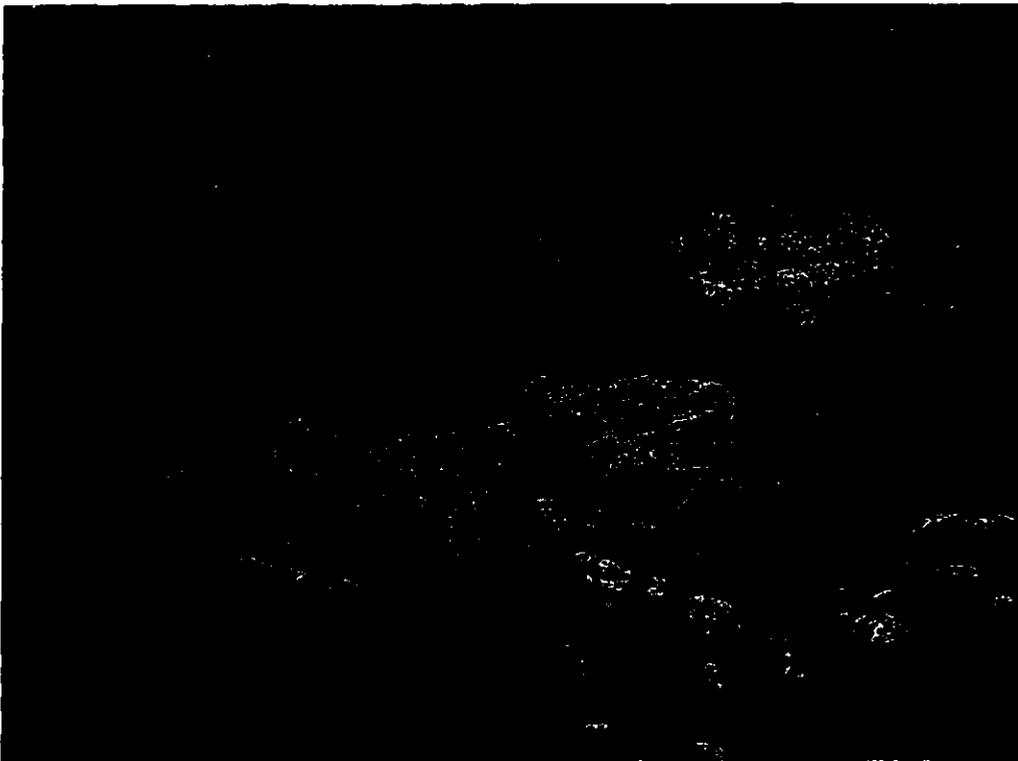


Figure 46. Simulacra, Mont St. Michel, France.

by the way nature seems to protect Mont St. Michel. It is alive with growth in a field of gray (see Figure 45).

As I walked around the mound I found familiar sites from earlier visits. Rock formations appeared to be looking at me as I walked past. Simulacra of sleeping men and Egyptian goddesses seemed to peer out at me from the worn stone (see Figure 46).

I had located what I believe to be a sacred spring, a goddess site, on my first visit to Mont St. Michel (see Figure 1). I was grateful that over the last year she had not changed. I climbed up into her center and found a place to sit. I stacked my paints, journals and camera carefully around me. I began connecting to this site by touching portions of the rock, allowing my hands to memorize the feel of the natural stone. She was moist (see Figure 47). I felt that I could touch her flesh and it would be soft and pliable as is my own. Birds were chirping from the branches of the trees that grow out of the rock and stone above. Small birds flew onto the rocks beside me, finding breadcrumbs that I have thrown to them. One small bird eyed me inquisitively as if questioning why I had come and what my purpose was (see Figure 48). A drop of water regularly dripped from a sharp corner of a stone. I collected a few drops of water in my hand and smoothed them on my face and throat.

In order to attune to the energies of the site, I began with closing my eyes and breathing deeply. Using active imagination I immediately sensed and visualized the presence of a female figure. She was young and beautiful as she approached the spring. Intuitively I knew that she had a message for me, I picked up my pen and began to write:

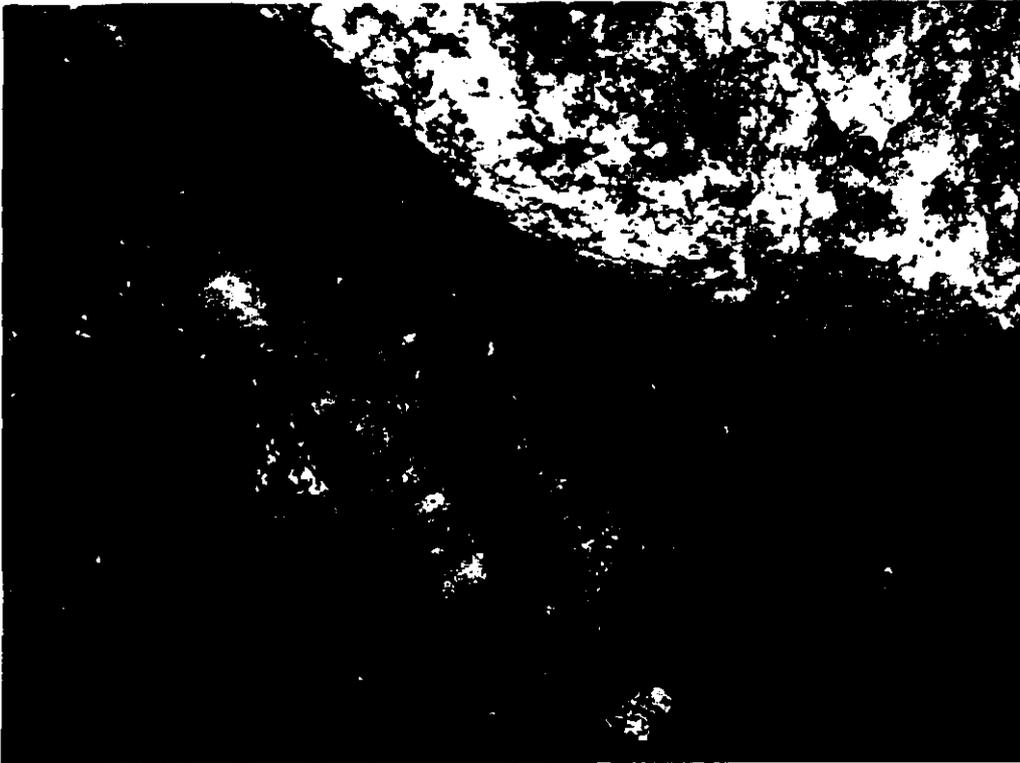


Figure 47. Base of Spring, Mont St. Michel, France



Figure 48. Inquisitive Bird at Mont St. Michel.

I am the Goddess

**My energy flows to all
 Here is the entrance to my sacred womb.
 find me
 return to me
 enter me.
 Let my healing juices comfort, console and refurbish.
 As long as the Earth has existed
 I am energy
 Always existing.
 Never having been born, I never die.
 Before, after, during, I am
 As you have found me
 So too are you found.
 In my presence you experience the now.
 Enter here all who would return in humility and love to their center.
 The core that nurtures in
 humility, love and being.
 Let those who wish to be healed.**

Using active imagination I felt myself enter the womb of the goddess through the base of the spring. I felt myself being sucked into the cavity of her vagina, pushed along by the warm, moist sides of her birth canal and born into a garden. I cleansed myself of after-birth in a waterfall located at the exit. I continued to write:

You have approached the soul of the Earth, a tangible fragment of the all-present energy that is a part of you. I am tangible, just as are you. I am an aspect of the Goddess as are you. Take this energy into the Earth. Heal as you are healed. We stones contain the memory of the Earth. We are the tangible ever-present stability that can be modeled. We hold the planet as it manifests by gravity, heavy and dense we are not going anywhere lest the Earth cough up her boiling center or shake her roots and then we only tumble to our next resting place and wait. We remember. We are memory. This water is a sacred spring from whence comes all design, all cleansing and purification of the emotional body. Ever-changing, ever-forming, ever-moving to contain that which is manifest in form, action, thought and emotion. The birds that fly above drink our sacred waters, even as they eat the crumbs of bread you have provided. Our stream feeds the trees towering off the face of this cliff. They are as alive as the birds and the flies that you hear buzzing around you. They have dropped subtle reminders on your shoulders as you sit here. Small hardened berries from last years crop. The Spring sun warms your heart, blessing you with the fire of action and the desire of being. Blessed sun, he is indeed the father of the planet.

We are the energies of stone, wind, fire and water emergent on the face of the Earth. We want those who can see to know that the Earth sees as well. Our eyes are as numerous as the grains of sand on this planet. What's more each eye has an energy being that has an emotional love center as well, you would call it a heart. The only way to contact us is through your emotional body, through your heart. As you appreciate our beauty you have acknowledged our existence. As you share our beauty, you are sharing our love. Let your heart be full. (Personal Journal, May 4, 2002).

My art supplies were difficult to balance on the stones, however with persistence I was able to set up my touch drawing supplies and to paint. The colors of the rock, green, brown, gold and orange combined to create images. Simulacra appeared in the drawing as if by themselves (see Figure 49). I had initially felt a feminine presence as I began the meditative experience at the site. A woman, representing the energy, appeared in a touch drawing (see Figure 50). In the meditation this energy was approaching the spring. I felt that she might be a guardian of the site. This touch drawing also had energy of its own as it was created. I noticed a triangle at the base of the woman's throat that I interpreted as an elemental presence.

Putting away my art supplies, I sat with my back against the stone and thanked Spirit for allowing me to be here. I loved this spring and I felt loved in return. Aloud I thanked the guardians of this sacred site for allowing me to be here. I glanced at the position of the sun and realized that I had been here much longer than I had intended. The time seemed to flow. I thanked the energies of Mont St. Michel and this precious spring. I continued my journey around the island and completed my meditation by again honoring the energies of the directions.

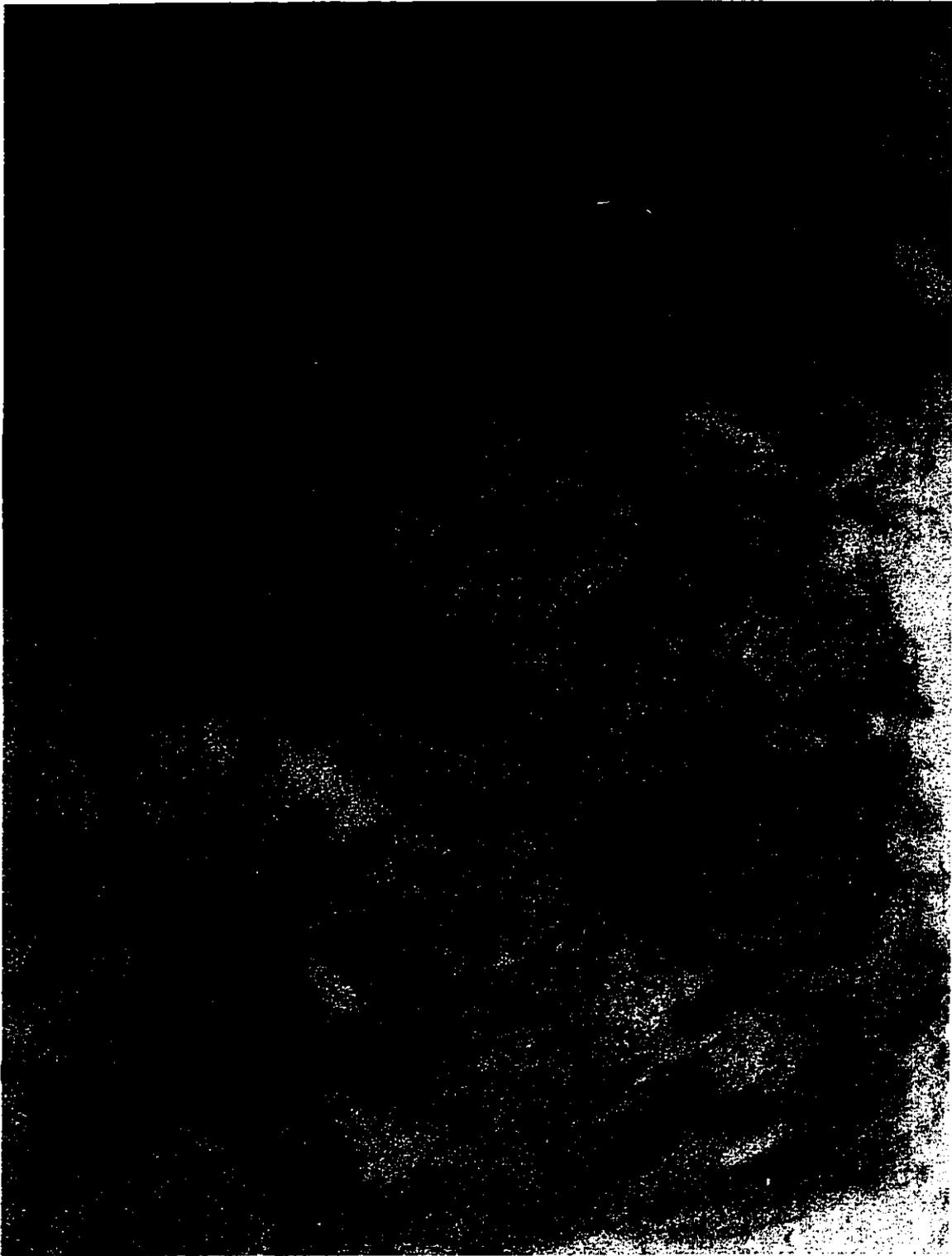


Figure 49. Rock Face, Touch Drawing, Mont St. Michel, France



Figure 50. Feminine Energy, Touch Drawing, Mont St. Michel, France

Reflections

I felt calmer, more centered and grounded and had a greater sense of peace and harmony about me after I concluded the series of meditations and creative experiences at the spring. I knew that I had connected with the elemental earth energies of this site through the meditations. The writing meditation was an effective tool for listening to and communicating with what I perceived to be the energies of the rocks, sun, water and wind. The natural beauty of the rock, the birds and insects, the sun, the occasional drops of water and the wind were all part of the meditation. Through the creative work and written meditation nature itself seemed to participate in the meditation.

This is a sacred site. I knew it from the moment I first saw it. This experience confirmed my knowing. I felt an increased sense of confidence in my spiritual beliefs and my desire to work with the earth as a partner. I was aware that it was through my emotions that I established contact with this site and with the natural world. My love of nature and of beauty allows me to be receptive to the energies of the earth. I sense that the earth knows that I love it and responds.

The creative work reflected the energies of the site. The wet, smooth, flesh-like appearance of the stone as well as the rugged faces of the stone formations reflected the human-like qualities I felt. The tiny bird appeared to be as inquisitive about me as I was about him. When I look at the picture of trees framing the tiny island in a sea of silt, I can feel the cool air and the quiet calmness of Mont St. Michel. Touch drawing was an effective creative method of expressing the energy of the site. As I touched the thin paper to the paint covered board tiny images began to appear before my fingers touched the page. In Figure 49 I simply outlined what I perceived had imprinted itself on the

paper. As I reviewed the woman I had drawn in Figure 50, I felt a connection to her. She seems to reflect an aspect of me. There is a longing in her eyes that I feel in my soul. A sense of sadness, yet openness, is reflected in the depth of her gaze. I feel she is in many ways a self-portrait of my inner longing and desires. I wonder if she is an aspect of my higher Self as well. Perhaps the gaze in her eyes is one of compassion and empathy.

I was left with a feeling of awe and reverence at the magnitude of what I had experienced. I was aware of the sacredness of nature and knew that I loved this sacred spring. I loved Her and would honor and protect Her. That feeling returns as I view the finished creative pieces. I also felt a transpersonal connection to the site through the act of creativity. I can't help but wonder if the feminine presence that I sensed was my own higher Self.

SITE EIGHT

RHINE RIVER NEAR BINGEN, GERMANY - MAY 2002

Location and Background

Since living in Germany I have been in awe of the power and grandeur of the Rhine River. Bingen, Germany is the home of the Christian mystic Hildegard of Bingen. The transpersonal nature of Hildegard's connection to the earth is a model for viewing the earth as a living being that interacts with humans for the reciprocal benefit of both. I chose to visit this area of Germany to research the energies and transpersonal connections that marked Hildegard's work. The Rhine River valley is a highly visited tourist location. My goal was to find a location in nature near the Rhine River and the city of Bingen. I found just such a location about a mile downstream (north) from Bingen. A smaller tributary stream emptied into the Rhine at this location. The stream separated a graveyard and small church and a campground full of campers and tourists.

Research Experience

I began the meditation by performing a ritual honoring the directions of East, South, West, and North. I asked that the spirit keepers of each of the directions be with me. With camera, writing and art supplied in tow I began a walking meditation from the edge of a graveyard to the south of the stream. It was a beautiful, clear day with only a few clouds in the sky. What had at first appeared to be threatening weather was now a pleasant spring day. I was aware of the sun shining, the sounds of birds and the absence of people.

A pink Rhododendron blossom beckoned to me (see Figure 51). Its vibrant color energized me. I felt the color and blossom radiated femininity and strength. I wondered that anyone ever thought that pink was a passive color.

At the Rhine I found a grassy path, damp from recent rains, and followed it. The water flows to the north and I wondered at the difference from the rivers from where I was born that all seemed to flow to the South. I meditated on the significance of this river imagining the commerce that it has allowed to flow on its surface for thousands of years. As I was meditating on the significance of this stream for the people of the area, I caught movement out of the corner of my eye. I quickly picked up my camera and was able to catch a mother mallard with her ducklings. They hurriedly floated away down stream when they found they had been spotted. Each tiny duckling was clinging fast to his/her mother's wake (see Figure 52). I was quickly



Figure 51. Pink Rhododendron blossoms.



Figure 52. Duck and Ducklings on Rhine River

reminded that this mighty river fosters all types of life. I was also moved at the protectiveness and nurturing ability of the mother duck. She was alert to every movement around her. Within a fraction of a second of having seemingly posed for me she and her ducklings were off downstream floating rapidly away with the current. There was turbulence where the small stream met the Rhine (see Figure 53). I was sensitive to the power of this meeting. The energy in the meeting was reflective in the turbulence and images that were created in the current. I walked up the bank of the stream, around campers and trailers and eventually climbed down the banks of the stream and under low-hanging tree branches to find a stone at the edge of the water. I was all but invisible to anyone who was not looking for a person to be hidden at the waters edge. I felt alone with this tributary. The ground was damp and I had to be careful to keep my

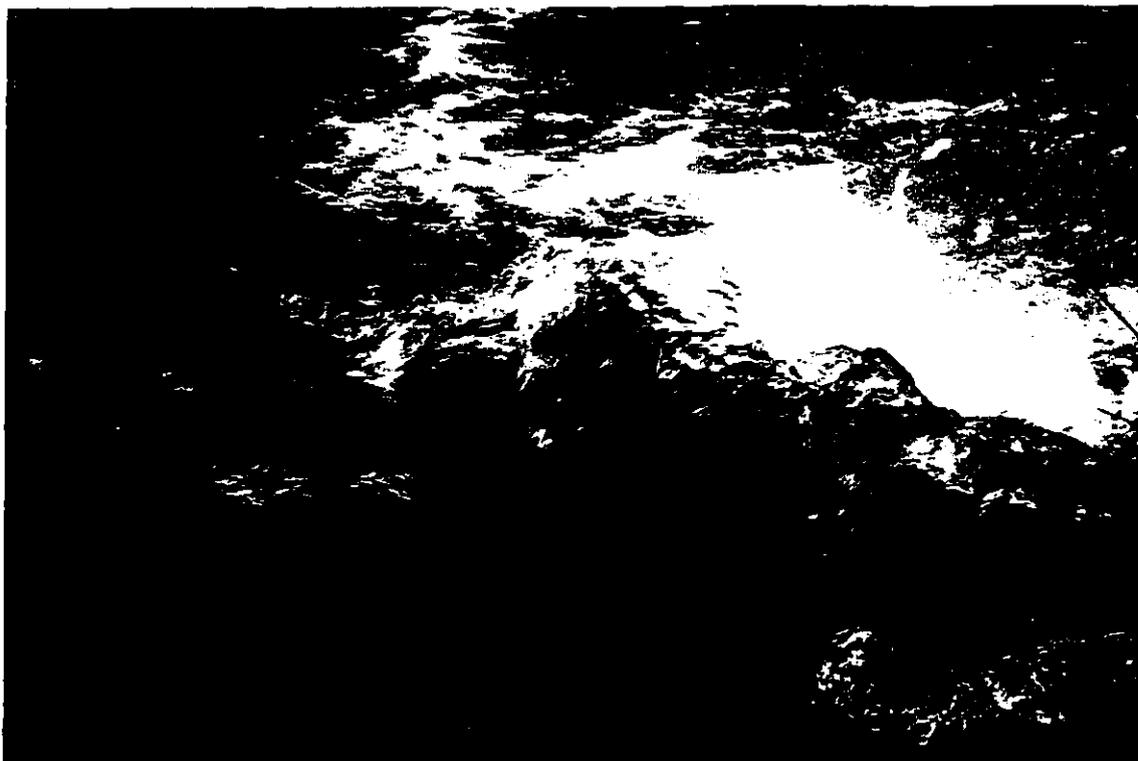


Figure 53. Turbulence

paper supplies and camera from getting wet. I found a stone to sit on and balanced my supplies on the roots of the tree I was sitting beneath. I took a few minutes to breathe in the energy of the running water and to attune to the trees and stones of this small vale. I began a written meditation.

I have found a semi-quiet spot near running water, a stream that empties into the Rhine. I am sitting on a rock facing upstream. My feet ache to soak in the water. Well here goes! Its cold, but it feels good. I'm partially hidden beneath the low-hanging leaves of this tree. Its root system is a table for my camera and keys. I can breathe. The only noises I hear are the chirping of birds, the occasional train whose tracks are about 100 yards from where I sit, and the constant sound of running, splashing water. It is so peaceful. (Personal Journal – May 10, 2002)

Water purify my emotions.
Allow your healing energy to cleanse my aura,
to soothe the inner turbulence, created by anxious thoughts.

Nature accepts me.
It nurtures and heals me.
It guides me to where I need to be.

Using active imagination I conducted a meditation entering a cave and a garden that is sacred to me. I asked that Hildegard of Bingen be with me. When I saw that she was present I asked her how she came to understand the healing properties of nature and establish a transpersonal relationship with the earth. She responded:

By loving nature, by spending time in nature, by appreciating nature, by learning about and understanding the healing properties of plants and by teaching others. I loved my connection to the Earth and I shared that connection with others. Most of all by my faith in God and knowing that there was a divine plan for everything and for everyone included the tiniest of plants. When I was alive I was surrounded by this verdant green and the wonder of this huge river, it was my life. Our village was much smaller than it is now. The full beauty of nature was at my front door. I was far enough away from the voices and power of Rome, that I was respected in my own place of power and I maintained that power by the grace of God. I prayed for guidance and I trusted the answers that I received. I listened to the birds, to animals and to nature. I heard the sound of God in the music of the spheres. I spoke my mind as God would have it. Injustice, uncleanness and ungodliness were my enemies and I battled them without restraint. Nature was my ally, at times my only friend. In the beginning when no one believed me, I retired to these rolling hills, to the gardens along the Rhine and to the river itself. They comforted me, blessed me and taught me their lessons. To listen, to trust, to love, to maintain my cleanliness just as I watched the birds bathing at the rivers edge, just as I watched the cat cleansing himself with his rasping tongue. I taught others to be clean as well. Cleanliness is godliness. I purified my heart with the love of God and the love of nature daily. It was love that sustained me. It was the earth that grounded me. I sought the heavens with my visions. I heard the voice of God. I saw the light of God. I maintained my contact with the land and I taught others, I connected with others.

You ask what I think of transpersonal connections. The word is strange to me. There is no reason to attempt to connect to nature because you are never apart from it; it is always by you, inside you, behind you, above you, below you. Listen to the sounds of nature. Be still in nature and listen. The bird that chirps, the breeze that blows through the branches of these trees, the sun even makes a sound as it crackles on hot earth. Listen, hear, respond, and love. Know that these elements of the earth are inside you. Hear them inside your body, feel them inside your soul, love and honor yourself as you love and honor God. They are God. You are God.

My times were very different from today, but the problems were the same, greediness, hate, envy, anger, fear, despair, and loneliness. I turned to nature to be healed as I turned my soul to God to know his will and to be directed. You, blessed daughter, have always been loved. You are a disciple of Christ just as was I. You are able to carry on my work, my mission on this earth. You are to teach others to love, to honor God, (you also call Her the Goddess), to walk in the path of the Christ and to know your connection to this beautiful earth of which you belong. Yes, you and every other human being are the heart of the earth. You are the hands, eyes, ears, feet

and breathe of the earth, just as she is of you. To those who love, nature returns that love tenfold. Love, love, love. Honor all with love. Respect all with love. Don't let a breath go by without honoring the love that is yours, that is you. (Personal Journal – May 10, 2002)

I read what I had written and felt the love Hildegard spoke of flowing through me. I allowed myself to merge with individual aspects of the location. I felt myself as the stream, the plants at my side, the tree above me, birds chirping in the distance, the rock that I sat on and the earth that supported me. I loved each aspect of the environment and felt loved in return. I allowed the cooling, calming energy of the stream to flow through me, cleaning and purifying as it flowed. I allowed myself to feel connected and grounded with the Earth.

I ended the meditation by taking photographs of the stream (see Figures 54 and 55). Figure 54 seemed to capture the healing energy that I felt at the site. The deep green color and the flowing lines swayed gently in the breeze. The energies I felt are also reflected in the water. The streambed is clearly visible beneath the flowing water. Figure 55 is expressive of the sound of the water. It was not a gentle sound. It was deep and rich with resonance. It muffled the extraneous sounds of automobiles and people. Of itself it seemed to create boundaries for the experience. It was a subtle sound barrier that allowed me to meditate in peace and to connect more fully with the energies of this sight. In closure I thanked Hildegard, Spirit and nature for the multiple lessons I had received. I concluded the research experience by thanking the energies and ancestors of the directions. In a state of deep gratitude I climbed out from beneath the branches of the tree, and walked back to my car.

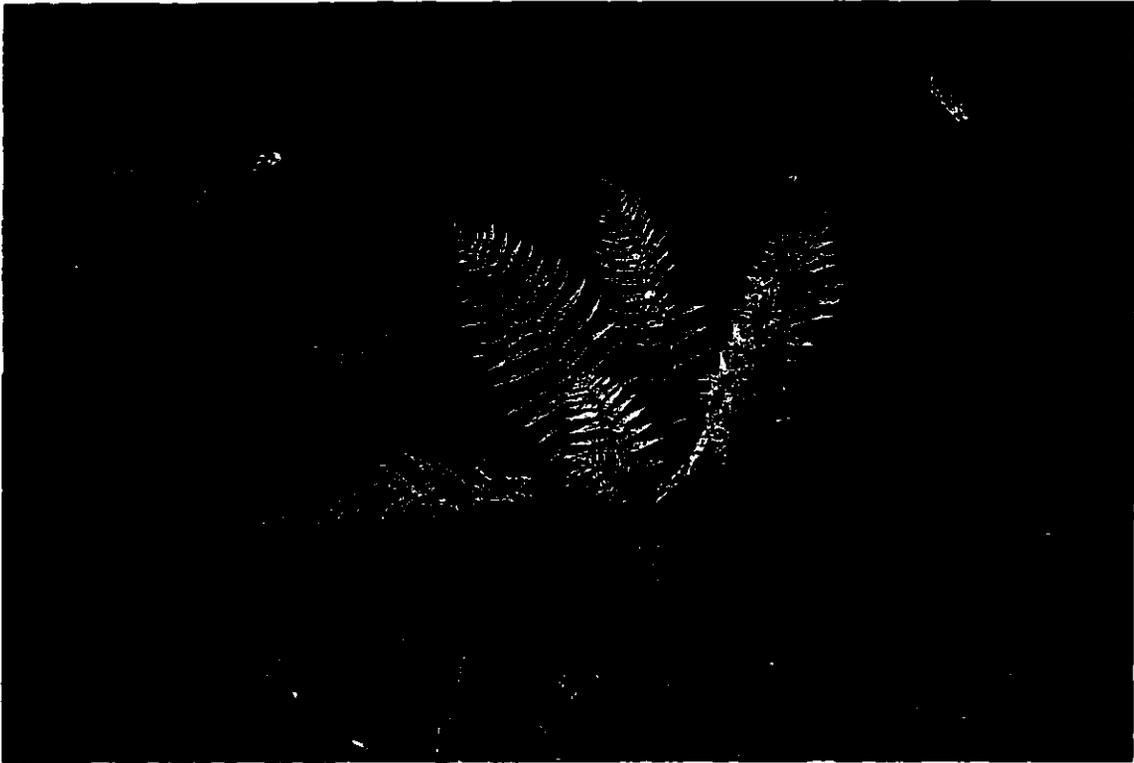


Figure 54. Fern at Stream, near Bingen, Germany.



Figure 55. Rapids near Bingen, Germany.

Reflections

I felt drawn to the banks of this small stream. As I drove my car over the bridge above the stream I intuited at once that I needed to stop. I had a sense of homecoming and welcoming. I was struck by the calming sensation of being by the water as well as the healing energy of the trees and the fertile life that is nourished by it. There was a strong feminine energy present. The pink Rhododendron (figure 48) reflected a vibrant pink power that was clearly feminine, beautiful and full of power. I felt my love of beauty and nature blossom even as the full blossoms caught the light of the sun. The mallard and her ducklings were a reminder that this is a time of new-birth (figure 49). A cleansing of the past is required. Reframing and purification of the past is a process that precedes new birth. Her duties as a mother and protectress were clearly evident, again reinforcing the feminine principle. As I reflected on this experience I felt humbled that I had been allowed to find this beautiful stream. I felt that through active imagination I had gained insights into Hildegard's connection with nature. It was easy to imagine how Hildegard came up with her concept of "greenness" as I sat next to a beautiful fern and beneath the branches of the trees and foliage that lined the stream. I learned that love and appreciation are two of the main ingredients for successfully connecting to the Earth. I was also aware that I had that love and appreciation of nature. I gained insight into my own transpersonal connection to the Earth as I experienced the love that Hildegard described. Another important aspect that was emphasized in the written meditation was to listen to nature. Through our sense of hearing a transpersonal connection is established. I felt that connection as I sat by the stream listening to the water. It was the sound of the water that fostered the connection I felt. A transpersonal connection with

the Earth was established as I wrote about the transpersonal connection I intuited Hildegard of Bingen had with the Earth.

I was also aware of the energetic quality of the water and earth at this site. In reflection I decided to use touch drawing to create an image of the energy that I felt at the site (see Figure 56). I wondered that green was missing in this painting. Then I realized the healing energy is present in the energetic motion of the spirals and the color of the earth. Fertile brown earth is the building block for the healing energy of “greenness.” It also pleased me that a little elemental earth energy was peering out from behind all of the activity. It did not surprise me because I intuit that the elemental energies and the energetic healing motion are synonymous.

As I wrote the poetry I was facilitated in connecting with the healing and cleansing energies of the stream and aided in releasing my anxieties, stress and doubt into the current. The photographs of the stream and ferns (figures 54 & 55) reflected the free flowing, healing energy of the site. The turbulence of the waves created as one body of water meets another (figure 53) and the movement as the water tumbled over rocks (figure 55) were also images capturing the energy present in this movement and were visual presentations of the sound that I experienced.



Figure 56. Touch Drawing, Energetic Earth Motion

SITE NINE

KARLSTALSCHLUCHT, GERMANY – MAY 2002

Location and Background

I chose the Karlstalschlucht as a site for research because of its beauty. I visit this site on a regular basis. Whenever I need a dose of beauty and healing natural energy it is my first choice. It is a beautiful valley a few miles from my home. A narrow stream runs through a deep valley. Tall, thin pines form canopies high overhead. The trees have to grow tall to reach the sun from the depths of this deep valley. Huge boulders line the sides, either forced from the ground by seismic action or I imagine, deposited by giants, building homes for the little folk who live in this glen. That is the feeling that pervades this cool, green gorge. The sound of running water and twittering birds pervade and drown any noises from the other world. One can easily go back into ancient memory in this site and reconnect with the landscape before it became cluttered with technology. Here it is easy to remember that once man interacted freely with nature and respected all of the Earth. It is very easy to connect to the cleansing flow that permeates this glen. I was eager to conduct research at this site because I feel healed and energized every time I visit. From the moment I enter this valley I feel empowered.

Research Experience

Upon arriving at the location I conducted a ritual honoring the directions of East, South, West, and North. I began with a walking meditation, my art supplies in a bag under one arm and my camera around my neck. I immediately felt a sense of gratitude and I felt myself relax. By observing the flow of the water I found that one of the pools



Figure 57. Spring at Karlstalschlucht.



Figure 58. Towering Trees Above Karlstalshulucht

was actually a spring (See Figure 57). Water bubbles up from underground and spread in waves over the surface of a small pool. Bright green moss reflects the pure vibrancy and energy of the spring. The trees that tower overhead were brilliant with their new green foliage (see Figure 58). Walking underneath this roof of movement was soothing and calming. I felt tension leave my body as I continued to walk.

I followed the path to the stream that winds along the floor of this valley. The movement of the water was cleansing. Standing on top of one of the wooden bridges (see Figure 59) I imagined pulling energy from the water into me through the base of my spine and allowing that clear, clean, sparkling water to purify my emotional body. Then I released the energy of the water down through the base of my spine, allowing all the toxins that have been in my energy body to be released into the stream and to become purified once again as the water tumbled over rocks downstream. I gave away my grief and anxieties and allowed them all to be washed away. This is a purification process that left me feeling cleansed and released of negativity.

Continuing my meditative walk, I listened to the water, to the birds, to the wind as it blew through the branches above me and to my intuition. I talked to the trees as I walked up the path. I communed with the clover and growth that lines the side of the stream (see Figures 60 and 61).

A few minutes later I found a flat rock that was near the waters edge and sat. Here is where I planned to conduct my meditation. I began by spending time in silence allowing my focus to sink into the energy of the earth beneath me. Using active imagination I imagined my energy going deep into the earth. I felt spiraling coils of roots around me and the deep rich energy of the earth. I moved my focus to the air around me

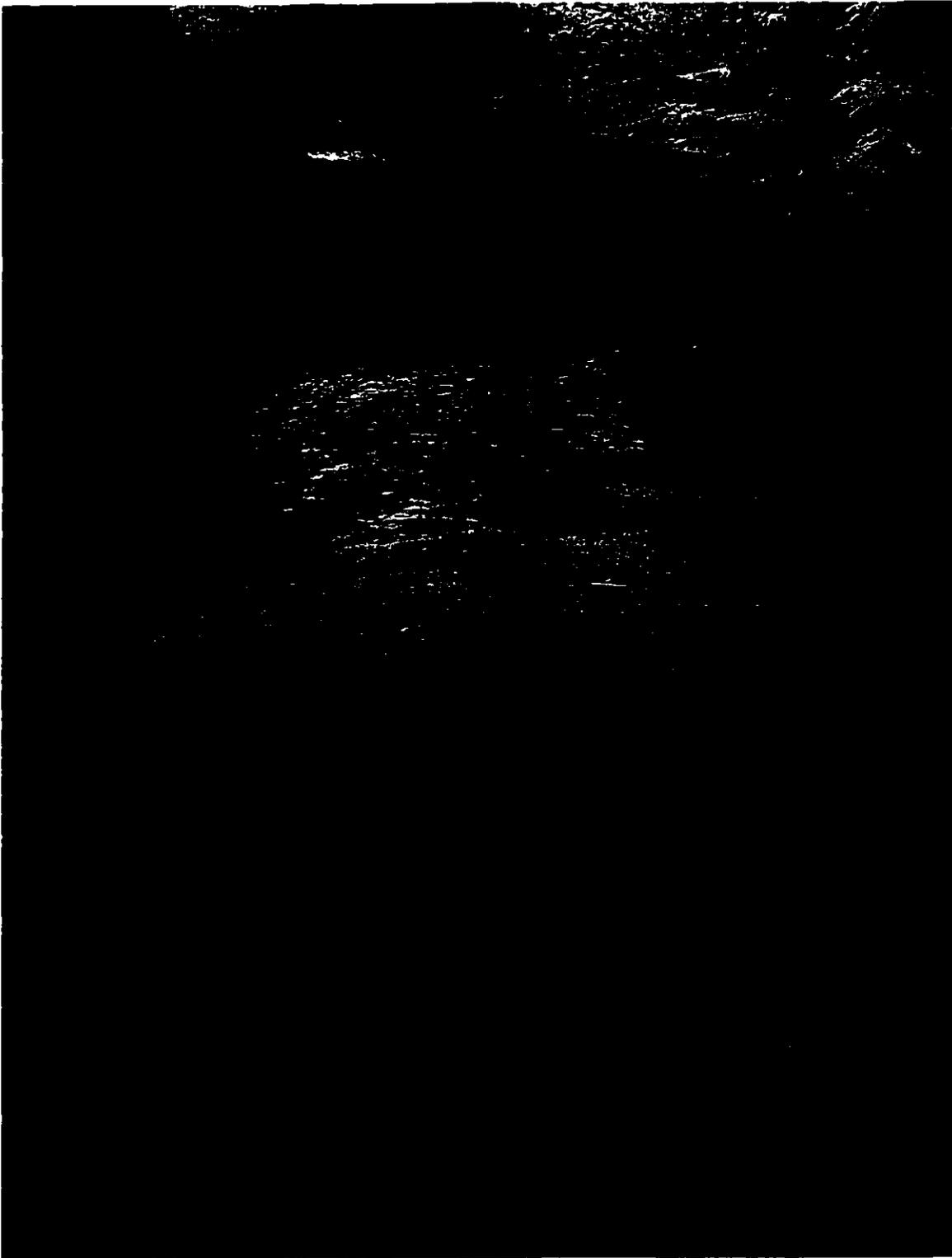


Figure 59. Stream and Bridges at Karlstalshulucht, Germany



Figure 60. Ferns and Growth at Edge of Stream, Karlstalshulucht, Germany



Figure 61. Clover and Growth at Edge of Stream, Karlstalshulucht, Germany

and imagined sending love in the form of light into the energy. It seemed that in a flash of brilliant light the entire valley was full of white light. I knew that it has to be a clean energy for the light to have moved so rapidly and to be so brilliant. I saw the stream carrying all toxins out of the valley keeping it clean and pure. I imagined the trees and rocks smiling around me. All of nature seemed to be alive and happy to see me.

I began a written meditation:

Our bodies are children of the earth that are vehicles for the divine spark. Her divine spark ignites ours. God/Goddess manifest on this plane. The earth creates a healing force/power that is filtered through the blood (soil and water) of the Earth. It is light energy that connects us with this planet. It, like us, is not the ultimate source, but a channel, a vehicle for the Divine Spirit to flow. Her source is limitless and as such our sources are limitless. It is Reiki and it contains her life-blood. It is the life-blood of the Goddess. It is all one there is no separation. Just a different tap, a fountain that flows from earth to sky, having been filled from the divine. It flows skyward and then returns to the Earth. It is an ever-flowing circuit of love and light. We turn off the fountain in our lives when we stop the flow, block it with our thoughts, our prejudices, our old past traumas that are reinforced as we perceive ourselves as victims or any misperceptions other than that we are divine children from a divine source that deserve to have all our needs fulfilled from the source of that light and love. Abundance is not an illusion it is a truth that we block with our fears and doubts. The benefit of living in light and love is the knowledge that all is as it is, as it is supposed to be, that we are the creators of our own reality, our own lives. We affect every living creature and that means everything we can see on our outer vision and sense on our inner vision. The earth/spirit/all earthly and spiritual manifestations are affected by our thoughts, by our actions or lack of actions. Fear creates more fear and love creates more love. Fear is inclusive it pulls in, detracts, contracts makes our worlds smaller. Love expands, widens, and embraces all that is in the glowing smile of divine grace, acceptance and knowing. A wisdom that acknowledges that it is all true, that it is all created as we see it and believe it to be. The ultimate truth is that we are not and never have been separate from the source of all that love and light and wisdom. We are the source, as we open to it and allow the flow of light and love to dance and sparkle in harmony through our physical and spiritual bodies, we allow divine guidance to lead us to where we want to be, whether we realize the desire or not. Our only true "want, desire or need" is to return to the source, to once again be whole, to recognize that there are no boundaries between us and the source, to undo the belief in a separation. There can never be a separation of spirituality and physicality. How can you separate the breath from the flow of blood in our bodies, they are inextricably linked. As we believe, we act. As we act, we believe. Our actions speak louder than our pulpits. Act from a place of love, allowing the fountain of grace, love and light to flow, serving and loving from the source. As you give so

shall you receive magnified by the grace of Gods/Goddess' love. (Personal Journal, May 11, 2002)

I then pulled out my paints and began to watercolor. I wanted the fluid healing energy of this stream to be reflected through the medium of watercolor (see Figure 62). Watercolor seemed like a perfect medium for reflecting the emotional, clearing, and healing energy of Karistalshulucht. I also created a touch drawing of the energy that I sensed at the spring at the entrance to the valley. The spiraling energy seemed to be best reflected in the healing presence of this blue lady (see figure 63). As I created these pieces I lost myself in the energy of the stream. I felt immersed in its beauty. It did indeed feel alive. Through the act of creativity I became one with the stream, the air, the trees shimmering above me and the stone on which I sat. The beauty of this incredible site immersed itself into my being. My soul felt full and expansive. I thought of what I had written, that love expands and fear contracts. As I feel love for nature and allow nature to love me, I in turn expand and grow in wisdom and clarity, thus enhancing my own inner beauty. How could it be any other way?

I continued the meditation experience as I walked out of the valley past the clover, ferns, bridges and spring. As I walked I thought about the act of creation in nature. It seemed to be that when I created in nature that I did not create alone. I shared my authorship with the energies of nature that surrounded me. My pen, my brush, and my fingers became tools that facilitated a co-creation with the elements of the natural world.

I concluded the research experience by thanking the energies of the site for their healing and by acknowledging the spirits and ancestors of the directions. A quiet state of reflection accompanied me for the remainder of the day.



Figure 62. Watercolor at Karlstalshulucht, Germany



Figure 63. Swirling Spiral Energy of Spring at Karlstalshulucht, Germany

REFLECTIONS

In reviewing this research experience I was filled with a sense of gratitude. I felt that I had connected to the energy of the Earth. I was made aware of the profound message of our oneness with nature and the illusion that is created by our believing we are separate. I felt a transpersonal connection to this valley and the elements that composed it. I realized that boundaries between self and other weaken and are dissolved in the act of creativity. At times there was no sense of separation between me (the creator) and (the creation.) I imagine that is how God/Goddess would feel. The water seemed to flow through my body, to be my body. The plants responded to my touch. The Earth seemed to breathe as I breathed. An invisible hand guided my brush, imprinting a message upon the paper I thought was in my control.

I was also deeply touched by the watercolor painting (figure 59). I enjoyed playing with the colors and the flow of the water on the paper in conjunction with the flow of the stream at my feet. The water I used for the watercolor was the water from the stream, thus the energy from the stream helped to create an image of itself. The touch drawing reflected the pervading healing, loving quality of Spirit that I felt during the written meditation. It also portrays the swirling energy that I felt at the spring as I began this research experience.

A quality of purity and peace was reflected in the photographs. The sense of awe and wonder I felt seemed to have communicated itself to the creative act. This is a beautiful valley and all of the photographs reflect that beauty. The trees, ferns and clover are individuals existing in harmony with the stream, the woods, the sky and the Earth. That sense of harmony is conveyed in the creative pieces.

I felt my transpersonal connection to nature increased through the act of creativity beyond what I have experienced at other locations. Through the act of creativity I became the creator and recognized my oneness with the creation and the source of the creative inspiration. I felt a sense of awe and reverence in the act of creativity in nature.

I felt the sacredness of the Earth beneath my feet. It was as if I was in a great cathedral and the hand of God/Goddess had drawn huge frescos across the sky. Boulders lined the stream instead of pews. The organ music was the melodious rhythm of the stream as it tumbled gently over fallen logs and moss covered boulders. I don't imagine that heaven could be much more beautiful than this. I felt my love flowing outward to embrace the Earth as I was embraced in return.

SITE TEN

BUTTERFLY VALLEY – MAY 2002

Location and Background

The location of this research experience is a valley just above the Karlstalshulucht near my home in Germany. This is my favorite location for meditation. I found it originally when I was looking for a quiet place to walk and meditate. There is a tiny stream that runs through the center of a meadow surrounded by steep, densely forested hillsides. It is very green and lush. In this valley I had a butterfly land on my wrist and stay for several minutes until I scared him away trying to take a picture. The next time I returned to the valley I saw another butterfly on the same small stretch of dirt road and took its picture. I wondered if I would meet a butterfly on this trip as well. Intuitively I felt that I needed to understand the message that the butterfly had for me and planned to attempt to communicate with the spirit of the butterfly at the site.

Research Experience

I began this meditative research by conducting a ritual honoring the directions of East, South, West, and North. I continued with a walking meditation as I traveled the dirt road into the valley. I have rarely been here when I have seen other people. During this research experience there were no other people present. I felt a sense of peace and calmness almost immediately as I began walking. I noticed that the forestmeister had cut down a tree at the beginning of the road. The stump looked like a guardian with his entourage of new spring growth (see Figures 64 and 65).

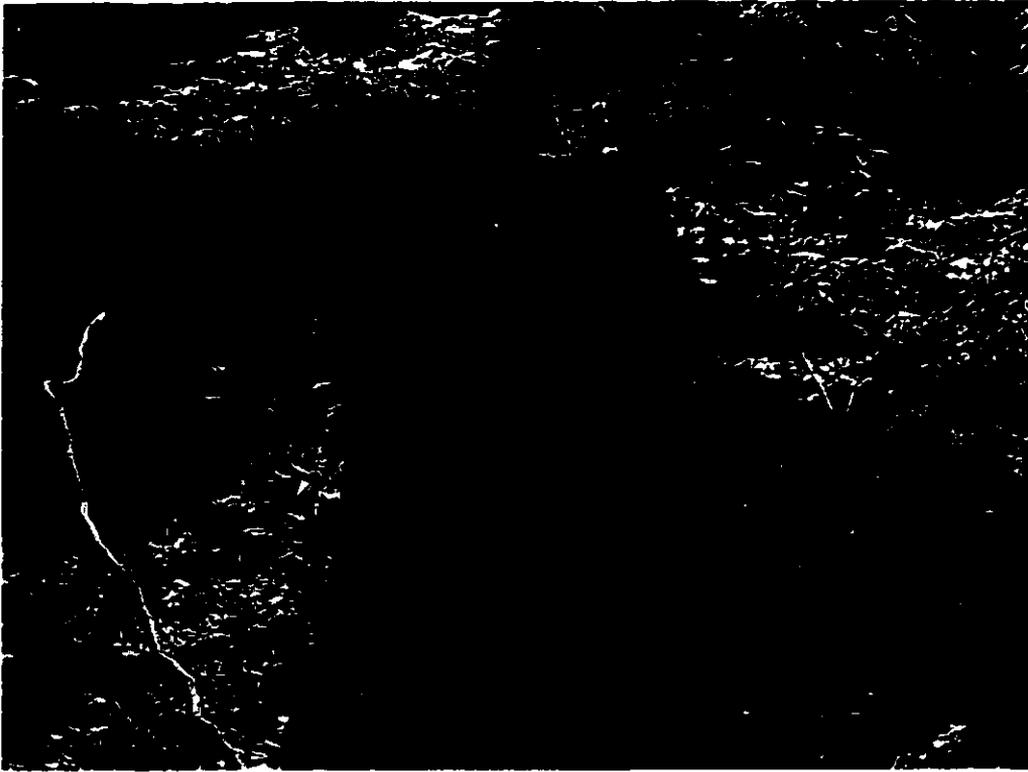


Figure 64. Tree stump, “Butterfly Valley”

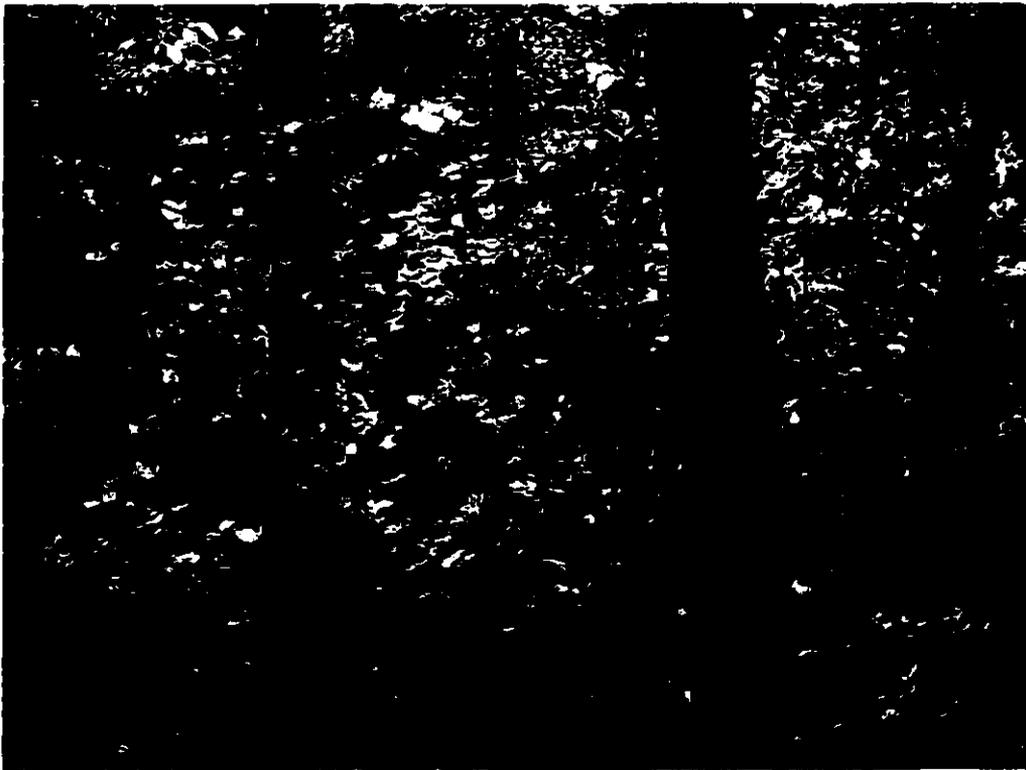


Figure 65. New Spring Growth, “Butterfly Valley”

I felt a desire to sing a song to the nature spirits of this site. I felt a light-hearted full-filled energy around me. As the birds serenaded me, so I serenaded them. I sang, "Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high...." and continued until I got to the part that I knew they liked, "If happy little bluebirds fly above the rainbow, why oh why, can't I?" With that question in mind I continued by walk up the valley. In some ways I felt as if I was over the rainbow. The sky was blue above me with dark rain clouds in the distance. I could hear distant thunder as I walked.

Almost immediately I met a butterfly. He is probably a descendant of the one I had met at almost the same spot last year. This one was a younger and healthier version of the one that landed on my wrist. Its wings were fresh and full and had not yet been beaten by the wind. Four eyes looks out at me from its fresh wings (see Figure 66). This time I was not missing my chance. Last year I had scared the other butterfly away as I attempted to take a picture. I sat in the middle of the road by the butterfly and attempted to commune with him. I watched as the butterfly opened his wings and then closes them in stages until they are touching one another.

I imagined that the butterfly spoke to me. He said and I wrote:

Take a lesson from me about when to open your wings to the sun and when to close down, to fold inward and allow the beauty of your inner life to flourish. My beauty is not lost because the sun does not shine on my wings. You think that I spread my wings because I am not afraid of you. It is the opposite. I spread my wings to ward off danger. See my four eyes staring at you. Are you not alert, aware, even wary in their presence. I close my wings and protect their beauty when I feel safe. When I have nothing to fear. As you sit there, you notice that I have closed my wings and am still. Learn when to show the true strength of your beauty and power and when to withdraw. Retreating does not mean losing. It means regaining strength. Know when to turn that beauty inward to love and nurture yourself. (Personal Journal, May 11, 2002)



Figure 66. Butterfly in Butterfly Valley

I moved on to continue my meditative walk up the valley. A few yards beyond the road is a stone bridge (see Figure 67). This is the location that I have chosen to use for meditation. I settled myself comfortably and began to relax. Using active imagination I imagine myself connecting with the energy of the small stream as it flows beneath me. I imagine my beginnings in the mountains above springing from a rock in the side of the mountain. I imagine small tributaries feeding me as I move down the valley and grow. I see a pond filled with cool water, insects float above my surface and there is a splash and ripples as a fish jumps up for a snack. I see my water flowing over the edge of a small waterfall splashing as it hits the earth and finds a new beginning. I meander past giant boulders and megalith pines whose roots have connected to the supply of water that I provide. I bounce over rocks and playfully continue down the valley until I reach a stone bridge. A human is watching me as I flow by. She sends energy into me and I allow her to absorb some of mine. I leave her behind, flowing through long green grasses and weeds, into a small dark gorge, and into a large pool of water, this one surrounded by trees whose limbs brush against my surface. I am peaceful for a while absorbing the energies of the sun as it reflects off my surface. Eventually, lazily I move across the pond, eventually picking up momentum until I am whooshing into a dark tunnel into another irrigation pond and then out into the fields, soaking into the rich fertile soil, mixing with the nutrients in the earth as roots form and new plants begin to grow. I see tiny insects eating the leaves of the plants. Deer find their way across the road into the fields to graze on the new spring growth and drink my waters. Some of my water evaporates and rises up in the sky to form clouds.



Figure 67. Stone Bridge at “Butterfly Valley”

I open my eyes to see huge clouds forming off the horizon and to hear the sound of thunder as it draws near. I see streaks of gray falling from clouds up the valley and realize that it is raining and refilling the springs and sources that supply the tiny stream that feeds the valley below me. The cycle of nature continues and with active imagination I have become apart of it.

The sky remains blue above where I am sitting. I decide to take a chance and continue with some creative work. I complete a touch drawing of the nurturing energy that I sense at this site (see Figure 68). I feel playful as I draw. I wonder what it would be like if my hand drew my hand. So I draw it. A star finds its way over the chakra on



Figure 68. Touch Drawing of “Healing Hands”

the palm of the hand. Here is the source of my healing energy. The moon is a symbol of intuition and the feminine. It governs my healing practice as well.

As another clap of thunder drew closer I decided to end the meditative experience at "Butterfly Valley." I felt grateful that I had been honored with another visit with my special butterfly messenger. I felt in awe of the power in nature. I thanked the spirits and guides of the four directions for being present.

Reflections

I was very happy to see my butterfly messenger again. This must be a breeding ground for this particular species. This butterfly would fly towards my hair on occasion and I wondered if it might be attracted to my red-hair, which is a similar color to its reddish wings. This time I was not missing my chance and took time to meditate with the butterfly. I was glad there was no one else in the valley to see me sitting in the middle of the dirt road writing on my notepad. The message seemed to be that all was not as it first appears. When I thought the butterfly was receptive to me, he was in fact baring his fangs in the form of eyes on his wings. As he got familiar with me he sat comfortably with wings closed. There was also a message about self care of love that I recognized as a familiar theme. My transpersonal awareness is enhanced through the interactions with this small insect. The butterfly symbolizes transformation. It is a symbol of rebirth and opening after a time of forced withdrawal and incubation. I feel blessed as a result of our interactions. I felt that the butterfly's continued presence was an affirmation of my purpose for visiting this valley and conducting research. These experiences leave me filled with a sense of awe at the wonder of nature. I intuit that I am making a direct connection with a specific energy in this valley. It is a tangible connection to an Earth

energy manifested in the form of a beautiful butterfly with a simulacrum of an eye of each wing. As if a mighty hand descended from the sky and said, “Look here! Pay attention! What you believe is real! I love you!”

The active imagination meditation provided a tool to make a transpersonal connection with the elements of the valley. I could sense the power of the stream as it nurtured and fed the entire valley and the creatures of the land on its journey from its origins. I sensed a playful energy and a knowing of its purpose. The recycling of the water made it difficult to know where it began. There was no clear beginning. As the storm clouds gathered I was reminded that the rain was recycled moisture from the evaporation process.

The touch drawing reflected the healing energy that I felt at this site and the sense of empowerment that I gained through the experience. It was also indicative of the playful energy that was present during the experience. As a part of the reflective experience I decided to draw a mandala to understand my connection with this valley on a creative level (see Figure 69). This artwork captures the essence of the energy I felt during the active imagination experience. It appears to combine all elements into an integrated whole.

The guardian stump and foliage at the beginning of the valley reflect the beauty and humor that I intuitively feel at this site. There is a sense of playfulness that is inherent in the landscape. Nature likes to play at this spot. The animal face that peers from the stone on the bridge is another indication of the playfulness of nature. There seems to be a cross-eyed cat peering from the forehead (figure 67). As a note, foresters have built what look like elfin homes out of the trunks of trees in an enclosed area next to

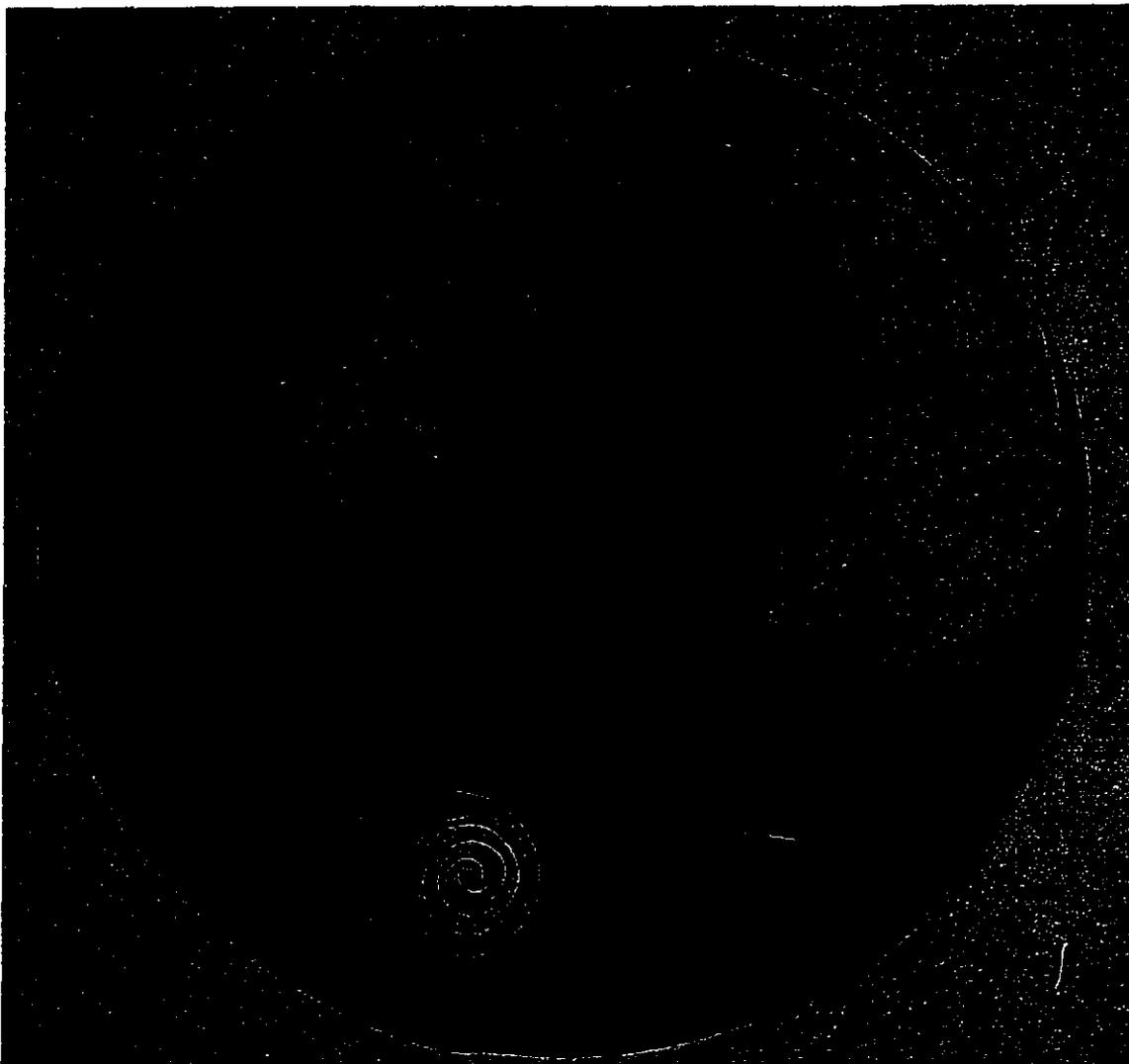


Figure 69. Flowing Mandala

the stone bridge. It appears someone else has contacted the same energy of playfulness that I feel.

This was the last of my research experiences and it seemed fitting that the butterfly energy that had accompanied me on my journey, should also be here as I begin the conclusion of this phase of my process. I am deeply grateful.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, ANALYSIS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Perfect Yin is stern and frigid;
 Perfect Yang is bright and glittering.
 The sternness and frigidity come forth from
 heaven, the brightness and glitter emerge
 from the earth; the two mingle, penetrate
 come together, harmonize,
 and all things are born therefrom.

Chuang-tzu

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to show that a sacred relationship with the Earth is a transpersonal experience. The question addressed was: If I imagine that the Earth is alive and there are elemental earth energies, what is my experience of sacred sites? I created an opening for the experience with this intention. Using qualitative methodology, a single case study was conducted with components of an intuitive inquiry model as the basis for research. Meditative exercises, intuition, and creative expression were used to explore specific sites in nature. Meditative exercises included active imagination, writing meditation, walking meditation, and sitting meditation (Arrien, 1993). Paying attention and listening on a physical and intuitive level augmented the process. Paying attention “may...bring us spiritually closer to the visual world” (Sewall, 1995, p. 206). Through the use of meditation in nature, intuitive reasoning, and creative expression, I have become acquainted with the Earth and some of her multitudinous faces and as such have increased my transpersonal connection with nature.

Creativity can be a direct manifestation of the healing process, therefore creative expression was a primary research tool. Creative works have been presented in chapter

four of this document. The artwork displays in visual form the transpersonal connection manifested through meditative experiences in the natural environment.

OVERVIEW OF ANALYSIS

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this project. Qualitative research helps us to understand experience. Through this method, I was able to research experiences in nature and gain understanding of transpersonal connections with the Earth. The primary approach to the study was the intuitive inquiry method (Anderson, 1998).

Findings have been expressed in narrative style using story telling, artwork, and poetry that support the research method. Active imagination, intuition, and psychic skills were used as sources of data. The intuitive inquiry process has also been used to analyze the data collected during the research. Intuitive inquiry is a flexible model for data analysis. “In intuitive inquiry, data analysis should accommodate the data that present themselves, rather than being immutably established at the outset of the study” (Anderson, 1998, p. 91). Intuitive processes and alternative states of consciousness are also part of the data analysis process using the intuitive inquiry model (Anderson, 1998). The values and assumptions of the researcher are an important part of the analysis process and in intuitive inquiry are the lenses through which the data is viewed (Anderson, 2000). I have described many of my values and assumptions in the introductory chapter of this document.

Transpersonal experiences in nature were expected as a result of the research. Spiritual growth and transformation were also expected as an outcome of the process. I felt creativity would be enhanced at the research locations. I was receptive to interaction with elemental earth energies and taking photographs of elements of nature that appeared

to be animal or human (simulacra). Another expectation was that I would discover aspects of the natural environment that would support my beliefs that the Earth is a living being. I hoped to enhance my ability to heal myself as a result of my increased connection with nature. From previous experiences in nature I felt I would experience increased feelings of peace, unconditional love, gratitude, and feelings of awe and wonder as I attuned to the Earth.

ANALYSIS

Themes that emerged from the research far exceeded my original expectations. I also experienced an increased sense of knowing, feelings of increased responsibility for the natural environment, a sense of trust and being taken care of by the natural environment, experiences in which nature served as a mirror for examining dynamics of self, and an increased knowledge of the need to listen to nature with both inner and outer ears. Another theme was the feminine component of the natural environment and a connection to our ancestors and the ancestors of the location.

There appeared to be a specific theme for the transpersonal experience at each location. At site one the theme was appreciation of the beauty of nature, healing and transformation in a natural environment. At site two the theme was interactions with nature that brought about a sense of protection and being guided. Trust of nature was a manifestation of this experience. Site three provided insights into the illusion of separateness between the masculine and feminine components of the landscape. Nature provided a mirror to allow me to see aspects of my inner self. At site four the theme was a reconnection to the land of my birth and my ancestors. Although healing was not mentioned directly, it is what occurred as a result of this research experience. The split

between my past and present was bridged as a connection was made through the Earth. Site five provided the feelings of responsibility for the Earth. I sensed an interaction with nature at this site, wherein I felt elements of the environment communicated with me. The theme of site six was the healing power of the Earth. Once again the theme of oneness and the illusion of being separate from nature was experienced. The overall theme at site seven was a reverence at the sacredness of the Earth and an affirmation of my spiritual beliefs and my life purpose. Site eight's theme was to listen to the Earth. Oneness with nature and Spirit was addressed as a predominant theme as well. The feminine nurturing energy of the Earth was another theme at this site. The theme at site nine was once again the illusion of separation from nature. Creativity increased my transpersonal awareness. Site ten provided a sense of joy and love in nature. Here I learned that nature likes to play. Experiences with a butterfly at this site have provided a concrete example of a transpersonal connection with the natural world.

The experiences that occurred during the research have been placed in categories in the order of that theme which occurred most frequently to that, which occurred least frequently. The themes and the number of sites at which this theme presented itself are listed below, followed by a deeper analysis of each theme:

1. Feeling a sense of oneness and connection with elements of the environment. – 10
2. Creativity increased as a result of being in the natural environment. – 10
3. Connection with elemental earth energies promoting an understanding that the Earth was alive. Simulacra photographed in creative meditation. – 10
4. Increased feelings of being in the presence of the sacred accompanied by feelings of awe, reverence, wonder and gratitude. – 10
5. Feelings of love, joy, peace and harmony. – 10

6. **Healing aspects of nature. – 8**
7. **Increased sense of responsibility for the Earth. – 7**
8. **Recognizing the need to listen with both inner and outer hearing to nature. – 5**
9. **An inner knowing that I was being taken care of by nature and trusting that knowledge. – 3**
10. **Awareness of the feminine energy of the Earth and its relationship with the masculine. – 2**
11. **Connecting with personal and locational ancestors of the land. – 2**
12. **Nature providing a mirror that reflects inner beliefs. – 1**

1. **Feeling a sense of oneness and connection with elements of the environment.**

As a result of feeling a sense of oneness and connection with the elements of the environment I felt a sense of the sacred. First came the sense of connection followed by the feeling that I was in the presence of the sacred. I felt a connection with nature at all of the sites. At site nine I received a message about the lack of separation between nature and us and that we are the Source just as is nature. The sense of connection was facilitated by touch and listening attentively to nature. Through the act of creative expression I was able to connect with the elemental earth energies that were present at many of the site. I also recognized my connection to the created and hence to the Creative Source through creativity. At site two it was through meeting an elemental Earth energy in meditation. I also felt a sense of connection in feeling protected and taken care of by nature. I had a sense of Oneness wherein I was contained within the One at most of the locations. At site four I connected with my ancestors through the act of creativity. It was at site seven that I experienced my most profound sense of connection to a specific location. I have named her my “Goddess Spring.” I continue to feel deeply

connected to her. Through active imagination I connected with the elemental Earth energies at this location.

2. Creativity increased as a result of being in the natural environment. Without exception, this theme occurred at each of the research locations and affirmed my original expectations. The beauty of the locations inspired me to photograph the elements of nature from a new perspective. I used light to enhance the spiritual quality of the experience. The photographic experience enhanced my meditative process. I was more alert to subtleties in the environment. Creativity was also enhanced by the dynamics of the landscape. Responding to feminine energy I took photographs and created a touch drawing that reflected feminine energy. At all sites, I was aware of the creativity that was generated as a result of my connection with the Earth. At the family home of my ancestors (site # 4) there was an increased amount of creative output. Creative energy seemed abundant and linked to the connection I felt between the Earth and my ancestors. It was the desire to photograph a tree and the subsequent photograph of the blue-woman that led me to experience site five from a transpersonal perspective. This creative aspect helped me to understand the joy that is inherent in nature.

Energy I felt at the source of a stream and the energy of the location augmented the creative process. The touch drawing of "The Blue Man" seemed to be a joint effort by nature and me. At each site the energies of the location were reflected in the creative work. Touch drawing at site seven was a creation of the energies of the site as much as my hands. Images emerged before my hands had touched the paper. Creativity at site eight was facilitated by the feminine energy that was present as well as by the healing and cleansing energies of the stream and river. The creative works reflected the emotional

content of the transpersonal connection at this location. Through the act of creating I recognized myself as the creator and as such recognized my connection with the Source of all creative activity. This touched the essence of my transpersonal experiences with this research. The beauty of the natural environment and the creativity that sprung from that reflected the humor and joy inherent in nature. My experience with butterflies at site ten allowed my creative imagination to expand beyond any of the other experiences.

3. Connection with elemental earth energies promoting an understanding that the Earth was alive. Simulacra photographed in creative meditation. Without exception I experienced a feeling of connection with the elemental earth energies at each site. This was either through intuition, direct knowing, interaction through meditation, direct interaction or creative expression. I interacted with nature at many of the sites by talking to trees and connecting with elemental energies using active imagination. The meditative experience at site two in which I was introduced to my guide “Annie” felt concrete and affected my transpersonal awareness. Her presence felt real to me and enhanced my feeling of being connected to an element of the natural world. I perceived the experience at site five as an indication of the existence of elemental Earth energies and their interaction with me. I was intuitively led to the site and as a result I performed a service for the energies at the location. I was rewarded with a coin and with the return of a ring I had lost. I found a variety of simulacra at each location.

4. Increased feelings of being in the presence of the sacred accompanied by feelings of awe, reverence, wonder and gratitude. This was an experience at each of the ten sites without exception. There were seven locations in which I felt this as a predominant theme of the research. These were accompanied by intense feelings of awe,

reverence, wonder and deep gratitude. There was a predominant theme in that I was attracted to sources of water. Water bubbling from the Earth appeared to heighten my feelings of contact with the sacredness of the location. It was through interacting with energies at the specific sites that I experienced increased feelings of the sacredness of nature. Whether it is a spring (sites #2,5,6,7, & 9), to which I am intuitively drawn, or a butterfly (site #10) or an elemental Earth energy (site #2) I met in meditation.

5. Feelings of love, joy, peace and harmony. As a result of transpersonal experiences at each of the sites I felt increased feelings of love. Upon entering nature I was aware of a sense of peace and harmony without exception. I felt joy through a sense of gratitude at each site; however, at sites five and ten I was made aware that nature has a sense of humor.

6. Healing aspects of nature. I was aware of the healing aspects of nature at eight of the ten sites. I gained a respect for the healing power of nature. Being receptive to nature with intent, being attentive and acceptance were the keys to the healing process. I felt that aspects of my psyche had been healed as a result of the interactions with nature. At site two I was given information in meditation to include using nature as part of a healing practice. Healing was experienced through a reconnection with my ancestors and the land of my birth (site #4). At site four I intuited that by sending love into the waters of the spring it healed those with whom it came in contact. I felt energized, empowered, relaxed, and cleansed after the meditative experiences.

7. Increased sense of responsibility for the Earth. It was at seven of the locations that I felt an increased need to be responsible to the Earth. I was aware of my responsibility to the land and my ancestors. I feel that I have been given the task of

custodian of site five as long as I live in Germany. I became aware of my responsibility to clear away others garbage and to allow love to flow from this sacred site. I became aware of my desire to work with the Earth as a co-creator. I was also aware of my responsibility to the Earth as I learned of my connection to the Earth and the sense of oneness that was explored at many of the sites.

8. Recognizing the need to listen with both inner and outer hearing to nature.

Listening and paying attention on inner and outer levels was a theme at five of the ten sites. I experienced a need to listen to nature and pay attention to what the Earth was telling me on an inner level. The land asked me to pay attention in a written meditation at site four. Sound is important and it is healing. It is a source of connection to the Earth.

9. A knowing that I was being taken care of by nature and trusting that knowledge. This was a theme of three sites in particular. At site two, while lost and wandering on the island of Iona, Scotland, I felt that I was being taken care of by nature and trusted that I would be safe. I was physically given a sign that I was taken care of at site five when I intuitively knew I had to return to get a stone and found a ring I had lost while clearing the stream of debris. The ring was lying on the ground in front of the stone. The “Goddess Spring” at Mont St. Michel (site #7) has been an inspiration for my spiritual path and life purpose.

10. Awareness of the feminine energy of the Earth and its relationship with the masculine. This was a theme at two sites. At site three I was aware of an exchange of energy between the sea and the land that represented the give and take of the Sacred Marriage of masculine and feminine. I was struck by the feminine power of the land through the creative work and through the written meditation that expressed the views of

Hildegard of Bingen (site #8). Her message was about nurturing through connection with the healing powers of the Earth. Feminine power and abilities through nurturing and love were reinforced by her words.

11. Connecting with personal and locational ancestors of the land. This was a theme at two of the sites. I was able to connect with my personal ancestors and the land of my birth at site four. At site eight I contacted with an ancestor of the land in the energy I associated with Hildegard of Bingen.

12. Nature providing a mirror that reflects inner beliefs. At site three I saw that nature could provide a mirror for my understanding of my inner worlds. As I believed at an inner level it was manifested as an outer manifestation. Either that or my interpretations of it were a product of my inner beliefs. As a result of an intuitive insight I realized that it was my perceptions of the separation of masculine and feminine that created the reality. When I viewed the Earth looking only for one aspect, the feminine, that was what I observed. Through changing my beliefs I facilitated a change in my perceptions.

There is the possibility that there are could be alternate interpretations of the data. Wish-fulfillment or projection could be a reality. I could have created the experience as a result of my expectations and belief system. I had set the intent to become aware of elemental earth energies and I did. Whether or not this was a product of my imagination cannot be determined. My creativity was enhanced as a result of the research. There is a possibility that as my creativity soared so did my imagination. As my expectations increased, I saw what I had intended to see. To prove whether this was a paranormal

experience or my imagination was not the intent of this research. It is an area that might be explored in subsequent research.

At each succeeding site I experienced an increased awareness of my connection with nature. I experienced a deeper sense of bonding with aspects of nature as the research progressed. I also began to feel a deeper sense of love and appreciation for elements in nature. I was particularly drawn to the water element and felt a sense of healing when I attuned to its energies. As I review the choice of sites I realize that most were conspicuous because of the water element. Sites two, five, six, seven, and nine had natural springs; sites five, six, eight, nine, and ten were located near rivers or streams; sites one, two and three were at or near oceans; site one had the watery element of fog; and site four was conspicuous for its absence of water, the water element at this site was a small frozen puddle on a high desert mountain. As I completed the analysis of this project I recognized that I feel a deep connection and compassion for the element of water.

My compassion and desire to be a caretaker for the planet increased with each successive site. I was aware of the destruction of the elements of the Earth as I watched the news or drove to work. At site seven I became obsessed with litter at the site and returned several times to assure that a small cave was clear of litter. I found myself feeling responsible for the Earth and climbing to locations I would not have imagined myself climbing to as I cleared up a piece of litter. On my walks I began to carry a bag with me to have a place to store old cans and pieces of plastic that I found.

The cumulative effects of the experience were increased feelings of reverence and respect for the Earth. I felt humbled by the majesty of this beautiful land. I also found

myself to be more appreciative of places on the Earth that I had avoided because I thought they were boring or not pretty. I began to recognize the natural beauty in all types of landscapes.

CONCLUSIONS

This was a single case study of one person's interactions and connection with nature over a relatively brief time-span. My spiritual awareness was enhanced as a result of the research and I felt an increased transpersonal connection to the natural world. I became more aware of my interactions and interconnectedness with the natural world; this enhanced my original assumption that the Earth is alive. I discovered that with increased contact with nature my transpersonal awareness was facilitated. This experience supports transpersonal researchers who report that experiences in the natural world are normal and can contribute to an overall sense of well-being (Braud, 1999; Braud & Anderson, 1998; Dowdall, 1998; Waldron 1997). This study also supports the assertions made by authors and researchers that there is a potential for spiritual growth and transformation as a result of spending time in nature (Abram, 1995; Adams, 1996; Anderson, 1998; Armstrong, 1995; Braud 1994, 1998; Clinebell, 1996; Devereux, et al., 1989; Dowdall, 1998; Glendinning, 1994; Harper, 1996; Hillman, 1995; Krafel, 1999; LaChappelle, 1988; Landstreet, 1996; Loori, 2000; Maclean, 1980; Metzner, 1999; Mitchell, 2000; Palmer, 1999; Roszak, B., 1995, Roszak, T., 1995; Sewall, 1995; Swan, 1992; Valle & Mohs (1998); Waldron, 1997; White (1998); Williams, 1994; and Wright, 1983, 1987).

By spending time in contemplation and meditation in nature I have increased my awareness of the Earth as a living energy. I have in turn increased my love and

appreciation of the natural environment. This has resulted in a heightened respect of the natural world. Transpersonal experiences during this study have increased my sense of connectedness with the Earth. Experiences in nature have increased my sense of awe, wonder and reverence for nature. The natural environment “puts us back in touch with the magic of life and the enlivening sparkle that goes with it. The wonder of it all brings a wholesome respect and reverence for all life. When felt deeply, all becomes sacred” (Harper, 1996, p.216).

Contemplative time spent in the natural environment increased my transpersonal awareness of and connection to the Earth and the energies of the Earth. Those energies can be referred to as elemental, relating to the elements of earth, air, fire and water. Through my experiences in nature I have increased my awareness of nature and my sense of awe and wonder at the power and beauty of nature. This has resulted in the development of a relationship with the Earth, based on love, respect and mutual healing. This process has facilitated my personal growth. I have gained insights into various aspects of my life that has improved my relationship with Spirit, my family, my peers, and myself.

It is my love of beauty and artistic preferences that led me to explore and attempt to understand the energies of the natural world. As my exploration of the natural world increased so did my love, respect, and awe. My love of nature combined with my artistic love of beauty and form were the reason this research was chosen. As a result of this process I have progressed spiritually and increased my transpersonal awareness of the natural world. Braud (1998) beautifully affirms my personal goals for this research. “There is undeniable evidence that recognizing, owning, honoring, and sharing personal

experiences, especially an individual's more unusual or previously, unvoiced experiences, are beneficial to physical health and psychological well-being" (pp. 43-44).

As a result of this study I have expanded my spiritual awareness and as such, it has had a very positive effect on my life. I have gained awareness of the limitlessness of my connection to the Earth. I have developed a sense of kinship with specific locations on the Earth. As a result of interactions with nature I have extended my love of nature to include a love of the Earth as a whole. Insights have been gained into the transpersonal connections I have with specific aspects of nature and the Earth as a planet. I am more aware of the needs of the earth and have changed personal behaviors to reflect my desire to help the earth. I talk to others about the need to take care of our planet, I have increased my recycling efforts, and I attempt to purchase environmentally safe products. I pick up litter when I am in the natural environment and have appointed myself as caretaker of specific sites. Personal growth and transformation have been a direct result of this interaction. I identify spiritual transformation as a change in spirit, as a result of spiritual awareness many aspects of my life have been changed.

This study has enhanced my spiritual growth. As a result of research in nature I have developed a spiritual practice that includes creativity and time spent in nature in meditation. My love of nature has expanded to include a love of the Earth. I have come to realize a sense of oneness with the Earth. This has expanded to include a sense of oneness with other humans. My behaviors have changed to more fully reflect my spiritual beliefs. This has been a major benefit as a result of this project.

As a result of this research I have become more aware of my personal relationship with nature on many levels. As documented above, my transpersonal

connection with nature was fostered by time spent in meditation in a natural environment. Spending time in nature has increased my awareness of the needs of the planet and my love of the Earth. Becoming aware of the sacredness of the natural world has increased my sense of protectiveness of that world. As we, the citizens of this great planet, become more aware of our sacred connection to the Earth and the sacredness of nature, we will in turn become more protective of the environment. My findings and sentiments echo the writings of Cohen (1996):

Imagine a group of citizens, picnic baskets in hand, walking into a cathedral and chopping up the pews for firewood, roasting hot dogs on the holy candles, strewing litter throughout the sacred areas, carving graffiti, firing bullets and throwing hatchets into the columns, excreting in the holy water before washing their dishes in it, and then telling the Archbishop to clean up the mess. No citizen would do this, because the very nature of sacred places awakens senses that prevent this from happening. Even in war, we seldom bomb enemy cathedrals. People who treasure their natural senses develop a similar reverence for wilderness. Wilderness becomes sacred, their cathedral, their spirituality, and they actively protect it. (p. 155)

As a result of an increased respect for nature, environmental pollution and desecration would halt. Wars would cease. There would be no question of dropping bombs on enemy territory, as that would harm the Earth. Our love for the Earth could ultimately lead to a transpersonal connection with the Earth that would facilitate an increased sense of oneness with all of creation. How can one destroy what is in actuality oneself?

As creativity is increased through time spent in nature, it would manifest in increased creativity in all areas of life. That could include beautiful pieces of artwork reflecting the peace and beauty of the natural world. It could also increase our creative problem solving abilities. To our improved ability to problem solve, add our love of the Earth and “all our relations” that is enhanced by transpersonal awareness. Personal

growth and planetary well-being would only be limited by our imaginations. This could ultimately lead us to return to belief systems that were held by our ancestors, wherein, “spirituality is not separate or above nature—the spiritual is the natural” (Metzner, 1999, p. 107).

LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

This study has been limited to my experiences in nature, my reaction to those experiences and my creative expression experiences as a result of that interaction. Each individual who views the finished creative expression projects will have a different interpretation of the creative project based on their own experiences in and perceptions of nature. My biases, prejudices in regard to nature and human interactions as well as my enthusiasms regarding the project have affected the study. Braud and Anderson (1998) address the biases of the researcher as a weakness of the intuitive inquiry method: “Using intuition and alternative states of consciousness in research is especially subject to the biases and prejudices of the researcher and therefore requires verification from independent researchers” (p. 259). My primary bias that has the potential to affect the study is my assumption and expectation that the Earth is a living being and that there are elemental earth energies. If I create my own reality, my beliefs could influence the results of the research and influence what is occurring at the research site as well as my perceptions of the research results. It is possible that the results are a reflection of my own inner world and projections or wish-fulfillment.

Sympathetic resonance is used as a validation tool for the intuitive inquiry method. The intent of this research was to foster sympathetic resonance in that others had a similar experience as they read the results; however, this was not a component of

the research process. A panel was not included to verify if sympathetic resonance occurred.

INDICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Creativity has been the hallmark of this study. Creativity not only in the resultant artwork and photography, creativity in the design of the project and the research methods used at the individual sites. This research supports the theories of Braud (1994, 1998), Anderson (1998), Valle and Mohs (1998) and White (1998). I am hopeful that it will provide a model for continued creative studies in which others can increase their spiritual growth and gain transpersonal awareness of their connection to nature.

Research could be conducted to determine if others have similar experiences in nature. Do biases of other researchers match my experiences in nature? Further research could provide a better idea of the cumulative effect of specific experiences in nature. This would provide an overall picture of the effects of bias and expectations on research in the physical environment.

Another area of research could be the impact of expectations and intent on the results obtained in intuitive research. Do we create our own reality based on our expectations and desires?

Sympathetic resonance could be tested to determine if by following the guidelines of this research project, others resonated with researched experiences in nature. The intuitive inquiry model could be followed more explicitly to validate the research. Anderson, (2000) writes that “The principle of sympathetic resonance introduces resonance as a validation procedure for the researcher’s particular intuitive insights and syntheses” (p. 33).

There is a potential for this process to be applied on a much larger level to increase the personal connection of individuals to the planet and then to groups as they participate with nature. It would be interesting to conduct research exploring the experiences of group workshops in nature. Studies could be accomplished to determine if group interactions in a natural environment lead to transpersonal connections to the natural environment and to other individuals in the group. Would being in nature enhance cohesiveness and facilitate the group process?

Creative work in nature could be explored for design and content as another type of study. Questions that could be addressed are: Does creative work in nature reflect personal and spiritual growth and development? Does creative work in nature reflect transpersonal awareness when that awareness is facilitated by individual and group design?

Another area that could be explored is healing in nature. A study of individuals healing from emotional or physical trauma could be conducted to determine if healing is a benefit derived from being in nature. Questions to be addressed would be: Does creativity in nature facilitate the healing process? Do transpersonal connections to the natural environment facilitate the healing process?

REFERENCES

- Abram, D. (1995). The ecology of magic. In T. Roszak, M.A. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 301-315). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Adams, C. (Ed.) (1996). *The soul unearthed: Celebrating wildness and personal renewal through nature*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Allen, P. B. (1995). *Art is a way of knowing: A guide to self-knowledge and spiritual fulfillment through creativity*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Altman, N. (1995). *The deva handbook: How to work with nature's subtle energies*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books.
- Anderson, R. (1998). Intuitive inquiry: A transpersonal approach. In W. G. Braud, & R. Anderson (Eds.), *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience* (pp. 69-94). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Anderson, R. (2000). Intuitive inquiry: Interpreting objective and subjective data. *Revision*, 22, pp. 31-39
- Andrews, T. (1993). *Enchantment of the faerie realm: Communicate with nature spirits & elementals*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications.
- Andrews, T. (1997). *Animal-speak: The spiritual & magical powers of creatures great & small*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications.
- Ang, T. (2000). *Tao of photography: Unlock your creativity using the wisdom of the East*. New York: Amphoto Books.
- Armstrong J. (1995). Keepers of the earth. In T. Roszak, M.A. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, healing the mind* (pp. 316-324). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Arrien, A. (1993). *The four-fold way: Walking the paths of the warrior, teacher, healer and visionary*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Bird-David, N. (1999) Animism revisited: Personhood, environment and relational epistemology. *Current Anthropology*, 40, S67-S91.
- Bloom, W. (1998). *Working with angles, fairies & nature spirits*. London: Piatkus.
- Blum, R. (1982). *The book of runes*. London: Headline Book Publishing

- Bolen, J. S. (1984). *Goddesses in everywoman: A new psychology of women*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Bord, J. (1997). *Fairies: Real encounters with little people*. London: Michael O'Mara Books Limited.
- Braud, W. G. (1994). *Toward an integral methodology for transpersonal studies*. Unpublished paper in progress. Institute for Transpersonal Psychology: Palo Alto, CA.
- Braud, W. G. (1998). Integral inquiry: Complementary ways of knowing, being and expression. In W. G. Braud, & R. Anderson (Eds.), *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience* (pp. 35-68). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Braud, W. G. & Anderson R.(Eds.) (1998). *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cameron, J. (1992). *The artist's way: A spiritual path to higher creativity*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Perigee Books
- Clinebell, H. (1996). *Ecotherapy: Healing ourselves, healing the Earth*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Cohen, M. J. (1996). Wilderness Revisited: The twilight's last gleaming. In C. Adams, (Ed.), *The soul unearthed: Celebrating wildness and personal renewal through nature*. (pp. 152-156). New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Cowan, T. (1993). *Fire in the head: Shamanism and the Celtic spirit*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco.
- Devereux, P., Steele J. & Kubrin, D. (1989). *Earthmind: Communicating with the living world of Gaia*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books.
- Devereux, P. (2000). *The sacred place: The ancient origin of holy and mystical sites*. London: Cassell & Co.
- Dowdall, S. (1998). *Roots of the spirit: Interrelationships among ecological action and attitudes, nature-related exceptional human experiences, spirituality, and well-being*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA.
- Doyle, A. C. (1922). *The coming of the fairies*. London: Pavilion Books Limited.

- Ehlers, S. M. (2001). *Beyond the visible: An artist's exploration of spirit*. Spicer MN: Near Water Press.
- Estes, C. P. (1992). *Women who run with the wolves: Myths and stories of the wild woman archetype*. New York: Ballantine Books
- Fincher, S. F. (1991). *Creating mandalas: For insight, healing, and self-expression*. Boston: Shambhala Publications Inc.
- Fox, M. (1991). *Creation spirituality: Liberating gifts for the peoples of the Earth*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Gadon, E. W. (1989). *The once and future goddess: A sweeping visual chronicle of the sacred female and her reemergence in the cultural mythology of our time*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Glendinning, C. (1994). *My name is Chellis & I'm in recovery from western civilization*. Boston: Shambhala Publications Inc.
- Gray, L. (1995). Shamanic Counseling and Ecopsychology. In T. Roszak, M.A. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 172-182). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Gross, P. L. & Shapiro, S. I. (2001). *Tao of photography: Seeing beyond seeing*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.
- Harner, M. J. (1990). *The way of the Shaman*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Harper, S. (1996). Mystery, humility and the wild. In C. Adams, (Ed.), *The soul unearthed: Celebrating wildness and personal renewal through nature*. (pp. 214-216). New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Hillman, J. (1995). A psyche the size of the earth: A psychological foreword. In T. Roszak, M.A. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. xvii –xxiii). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Hodson, G. (1952). *The kingdom of the gods*. Adyar, India: Vasanta Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1963). *Memories, dreams, reflections*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- King, S. K. (1990). *Urban shaman: A handbook for personal and planetary transformation based on the Hawaiian way of the adventurer*. New York: Fireside.
- Koff-Chapin, D. (2001). *The touch drawing facilitator workbook*. Langley, WA: The Center for Touch Drawing.

- Krafel, P. (1999). *Seeing nature: Deliberate encounters with the visible world*. White River junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company.
- Kryder, R. P. (1994). *Sacred ground to sacred space: Visionary ecology, perennial wisdom, environmental ritual and art*. Santa Fe, NM: Bear and Company.
- LaChappelle, D. (1988). *Sacred land, sacred sex: Rapture of the deep, concerning deep ecology and celebrating Life*. Durango, CO: Kivaki Press.
- LaChappelle, D. (1988). *The rapture of the deep: Concerning deep ecology and celebrating life*. Silverton, CO: Finn Hill Arts.
- Landstreet, L. (1996). *The soul of nature: The meaning of ecological spirituality*. Retrieved July 31, 2001, from (<http://www.wildideas.net>).
- Loori, J. D. (2000). *Making love with light: Contemplating nature with words and photographs*. Mount Tremper, NY: Dharma Communications
- Maclean, D. (1980). *To hear the angels sing: An odyssey of co-creation with the devic kingdom*. Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press.
- Mack J. E. (1995). The politics of species arrogance. In T. Roszak, M.A. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 279-287). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Macy, J. (1995). Working through environmental despair. In T. Roszak, M.A. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 240-259). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Mattoon, M. A. (1981). *Jungian psychology in perspective*. New York: The Free Press.
- Metzner, R. (1999). *Green psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press.
- Miska, M. (1995). Aftermath of a failed séance: The functions of skepticism in a traditional society. In B. Walker, (Ed.), *Out of the ordinary: Folklore & the supernatural* (pp. 90-106). Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press.
- Mitchell, C. F. (2000). *Women and Nature: Connection to animals and spirit experienced by Celtic-Irish women*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA.
- Montgomery, P. (1997). *Partner Earth: Restoring our sacred relationship with nature*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books.
- O'Donohue, J. (1997). *Anam cara: A book of Celtic wisdom*. New York: Harper Collins.

- Palmer, G.T. (1999). *Disclosure and assimilation of exceptional human experiences: Meaningful, transformative and spiritual aspects*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA.
- Pogacnik, M. (1995). *Nature spirits & elemental beings: Working with the intelligence in nature*. Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Press.
- Roszak, T. (1995). Where psyche meets gaia. In T. Roszak, M.A. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 1-21). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Roszak, B. (1995). The spirit of the goddess. In T. Roszak, M.A. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 288-300). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Roszak, T., Gomes, M.A. & Kanner, A. D. (Eds.) (1995). *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Roszak, T. (1998). *Ecopsychology: Eight principles*. Retrieved Aug 28, 2001 from (<http://ecopsychology.athabascau.ca>).
- Schipperges, H. (1998). *The world of Hildegard of Bingen: Her life, times and vision* (J. Cumming, Trans.). Tunbridge Wells, Kent, Great Britain: Burns & Oates. (Original work published 1997).
- Sewall, L. (1995). The skill of ecological perception. In T. Roszak, M.A. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 201-215). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Shepard P. (1995). Nature and Madness. In T. Roszak, M.A. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 21-40). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Stewart, R. J. (1992). *Earth light: The ancient path to transformation, rediscovering the wisdom of Celtic and faery lore*. Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books Limited.
- Swan, J. A. (1992). *Nature as teacher and healer: How to reawaken your connection with nature*. New York: Villard Books.
- Valle, R. & Mohs, M. (1998). Transpersonal awareness in phenomenological inquiry: Philosophy, reflections and recent research. In W. G. Braud, & R. Anderson (Eds.), *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience* (pp. 95-113). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Waldron, J. L. (1997). *The timeless moment: A study of transcendent experience through A focus on the nature and integration of the noetic quality of the experience*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA.
- Walker, B., (Ed.) (1995). *Out of the ordinary: Folklore & the supernatural*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press.
- Walsh, R. (1996). Developmental and evolutionary synthesis in the recent writings of Ken Wilber. *Revision*, 18, 9-18.
- Walsh, R. (1990). *The spirit of shamanism*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc.
- Walsh, R. & Vaughan, F., (Ed.), (1993). *Paths beyond ego: The transpersonal vision*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- White, R. A., (1998). Becoming more human as we work: The reflexive role of exceptional human experience. In W. G. Braud, & R Anderson (Eds.), *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience* (pp. 128-145). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Whiteman, G. & Cooper, W. H. (2000). Ecological embeddedness *Academy of Management Journal*, 43, 1265-1282.
- Williams, T. T. (1994). *An unspoken hunger: Stories from the field*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Wolfe, A. (1996). *Elemental power: Celtic faerie craft & druidic magic*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications.
- Wright, M. S. (1983). *Behaving as if the God in all life mattered*. Warrenton, VA: Perelandra, Ltd.
- Wright, M. S. (1987). *Perelandra garden workbook: A complete guide to gardening with nature intelligences*. Warrenton, VA: Perelandra, Ltd.

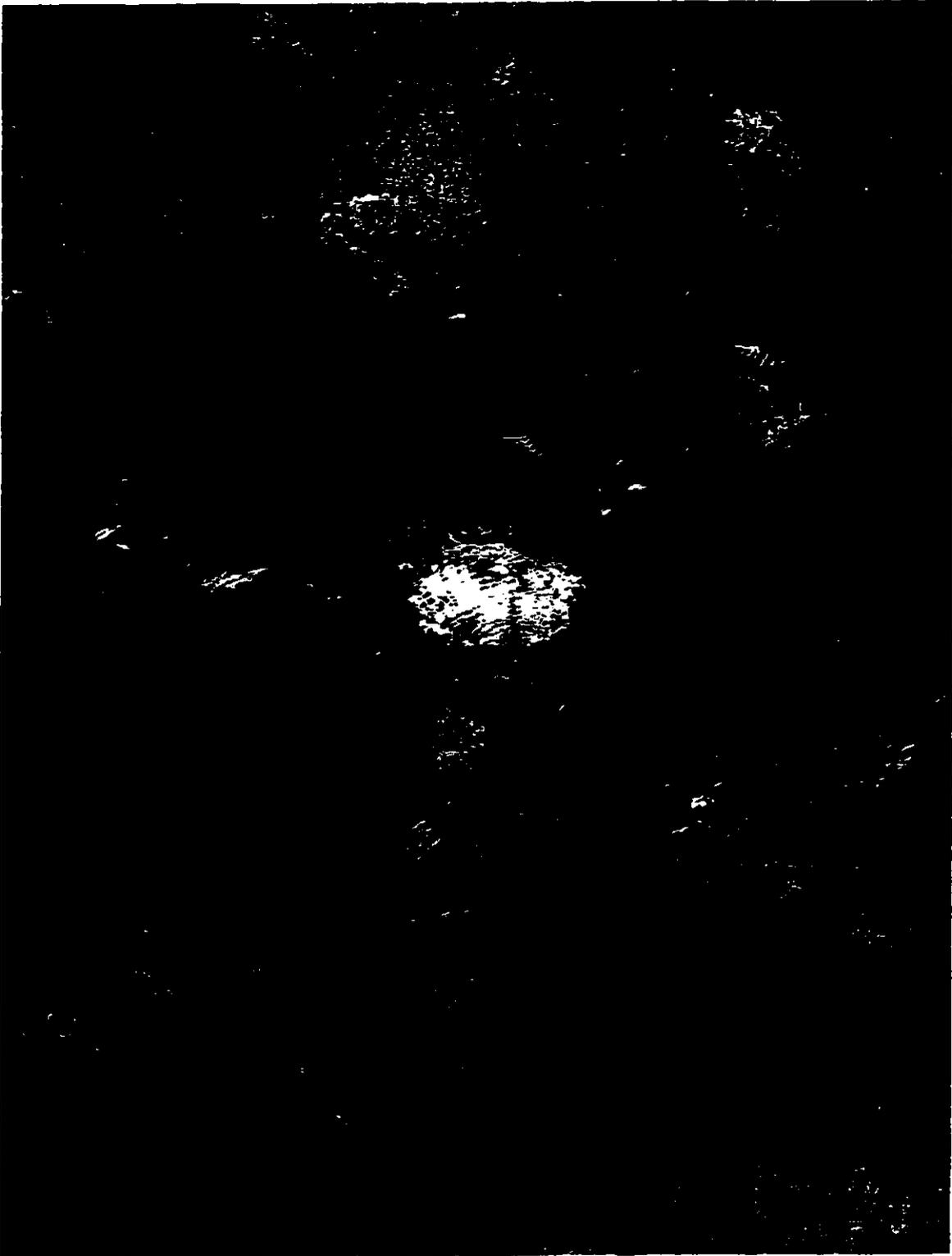


Figure 69. Faery Vale, near Hohenecken, Germany.