Threshing Floor Special Issue

This is the seventh annual March “special issue” of the Threshing Floor. We take this opportunity to connect with those who don’t regularly receive the Threshing Floor by mailing it to the Guild’s full mailing list.

Each month, the newsletter may share information about upcoming events, reflections on recent events, short essays exploring new ideas, as well as poetry, stories, photos, and acknowledgements. You can submit an item for an upcoming issue by sending it to the Guild office. The Threshing Floor’s volunteer editors work creatively to include as many contributions as possible each month.

If you know of others who might be interested in what the Guild’s work offers, please share this TF with them.

The Board of Directors

Climate Change Responses and Reflections

The topic of Climate Change has become increasingly prominent for our global consciousness. For this year’s special issue, we invited responses to the topic of Climate Change. Is it a hoax? Crisis? Catastrophe? What are the consequences? Can or must we respond? How? We received the essays, quotes, poems and images included in this issue. We invite you to send your own reflections for possible inclusion in future issues of the Threshing Floor.

Tsunami

By Lisa Yount

Up Wake!
By Hal Childs

Up wake!
Up wake!
Up wake!
Up wake!
Up wake!
and when i am up
global fires freeze
melting ice burns
political apathy terrifies
children cry out
alone i am here now in wonder
awe
at the emptiness of being
Despair

By Faith Mason

“Hopelessness” and its related emotions of dismay and despair are understandably feared but wrongly assumed to be entirely negative and to be avoided whatever the situation.

I was stopped in my tracks by this sentence offered by climate scholar Jem Bendell, in an article, _Deep Adaptation_, about the almost certain extinction of life on earth, in the near term, caused by climate disaster, a bleak prospect indeed, and certainly a cause for despair (source noted below).

A thought came: despair is my longtime companion, and here is an author and thinker who claims that there is a more creative way to respond than just pulling over to the side of the road and waiting for the end to come. Despair has been the only sane response when all previous embodiments of meaning are as dead as empty, molted shells of locusts: the enjoyment of knitting, the warmth of Christmas rituals, and then there are estrangements from long-time friends, and the death of all previously entertained images of god. Despair becomes the only rational, sane response to the state of the world, on many levels. It is an understandable response to an encounter with wilderness, that land with no trails and no maps. At wilderness times, it seems that the only option is to become lost in the desert.

Instead, as Bendell suggests, despair can be a prod to thoughtful consideration, and may have embedded in it a kernel of some new life, a “trigger for a new way of perceiving self and world, with hopelessness and despair being a necessary step in the process.” To condense his ideas considerably, he suggests that a worthwhile goal is to develop new capacities for:

- resilience: the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances so as to survive with valued norms and behaviors.
- relinquishment: letting go of certain assets, norms, behaviors and beliefs.
- restoration: embracing attitudes and approaches in a new way.

We in the Guild, and others with a similar interest in the workings of soul, have long contemplated this question:

- by what values do you make your choices?

This question has new relevance. There are other questions to contemplate, to make room for a new frame for the experience of despair, and offer the beginnings of a little road map:

- how might the prospect of global extinction, and these three capacities, affect our long-held and also new values?
- what choices could we make based on our reassessed values?
- what new ways of perceiving self and world, and new actions, can be born out of despair?
- what is the story soul is telling through these developments?
- what production of soul is being created here?

Much to contemplate, in the presence of despair.


Fire Goddess 3

By Lisa Yount

On Our Own

By Harry Henderson

As modern human beings, our relationship to nature has been like that of a teenager to his or her parents. A teenager discovers, creates, and revels in individuality, exploring opportunities, even taking risks. However, what makes this possible is effectively invisible. There’s little thought for what puts food on the table or a roof overhead. It’s just given—as is the assurance that if real trouble comes along—accident, illness,
maybe getting picked up by the police—the parents will take care of things. The trampoline that launches toward adulthood is also a safety net.

Whatever happens with climate change, we have left that home for good. It is sinking in that nature is no longer “in loco parentis.” Like a youngster who personally sees a corpse for the first time, our species has finally encountered its mortality. And the bills are due and must somehow be paid.

An adult is someone who has learned that consequences cannot be avoided and that the only choice is whether and how to take responsibility. However, with that comes the possibility of entering the world of reality, of being one’s own truth. The question now is whether we as a species are ready and willing to take that step into adulthood.

A Choice of Life or Death
By Nancy and Jack Russell Stone

Writer Barry Lopez has stated, “You can’t have a true democracy built around the goals capitalism espouses.” But capitalism takes its direction from ‘the Lord’ in Gen. 1:26 and 28, granting Man dominion over the nonhuman world sans restrictions, later entitling patriarchy to lead, with such system culminating in the 20th century. Only now do we realize how reckless and destructive it has been.

Humans are so pleased with our ability to develop industries for our comfort, we now move to develop inhuman Artificial Intelligence (AI) to operate the systems, while ‘Real Intelligence’ (RI?) is showing itself more in our youth who protest in their schools and streets. Pay attention! Their movement does not have a single leader; does not require one, Greta Thunberg or Bill McKibben notwithstanding.

Barry Lopez calls us to listen to indigenous peoples who defer to ‘Elders’ rather than an individual heroic figure; i.e., the culture heroes of a community hold the answers to respond to social injustice. Real heroes speak for all of us, not just the elite who may control the so-called ‘economy’.

When we watch a flock of starlings over the vineyards, there’s no leader, no hero. The individual starling doesn’t require a teacher to set the pattern; it follows its own inner voice in the moment to be a part of its community, without having to know how or why it happens. We don’t need a Christ, we only need the spirit of the man, Jesus, which is in all of us. Just set it free. C.G. Jung exposed us to the ancient voices in synchronicity and the collective unconscious. Listen. We don’t know (yet) how that works. We don’t have to, we already have our inner authority. Then, it’s a matter of Choice. (It’s ‘always ours’!)
Aha, You Plague
By Fan Zhou, a new Guild friend in China

The number of patients is increasing. The epidemic is expanding: from Wu Han City to Hubei Province, from China to Asia, to Europe, to North America, ... It is still expanding...

You plague, how many people are cursing you, how many people are fighting against you...

However,
You are just a presenter,
You are just an activator.
You cannot prophecy,
You cannot create anything from nothing.

You activate fleeing, you activate facing;
You activate wisdom, you activate foolishness;
You activate selflessness, you activate selfishness;
You activate separation, and you activate connection;
You activate helplessness, and you activate fight;
You activate hurt, and activate cure,
You activate power, and activate decay;
You activate fear, you activate boldness;
You activate fervency, you activate bridle;
You activate embrace, and you activate rejection;
You activate curse, and you activate blessings;
You activate love, and you activate hatred.
You activate life, and activate death.

Plague, you are just plague,
You bring forth blame, bring forth attack;
bring forth self-righteousness, bring forth insult;
bring forth apathy, bring forth compassion;
Bring forth apathy, bring forth compassion;
Bringing forth evil, bring forth savior;
Bring forth the light and bring forth darkness;
Bringing forth righteousness and unrighteousness!

Plague
You are the servant of Life,
Because without you,
I cannot see how much life I have in myself;

Let me no longer look at you, plague,
Let me turn to my inside;
Let me ask Life,
What’s in me?
What is leading me to the death?
How much of me, is hooked on killing?
How much of me, is hooked on anger?
How much of me, is hooked on desperation?
How much of me, is hooked on helplessness?

Is leading me to the death?
In my spirit, soul, and body,
How much empty space, needs to be filled with life?
How much helplessness, needs to be replaced with strength?
How much anger, needs to be replaced with tender?
How much foolishness, should be replaced with wisdom?
How much greedy, should be replaced with contentment?
How much lust, should be replaced with gratification?
How much self-pity, should be filled with authority?
How much weakness, should be replaced by health?
How much desperation, should be filled with faith?

How much shadow, should be revealed in light?
How much death, should be replaced by life?

Plague, I thank you,
You just push me to life...

Life, I am grateful,
You have been with me, all the time...
Life, please show me,
How much, I should lay aside, to follow you?

So I can smile to the plague?
You're going to feel like hell if you wake up someday and you never wrote the stuff that is tugging on the sleeves of your heart: your stories, memories, visions and songs -- your truth, your version of things -- in your own voice. That's really all you have to offer us, and that's also why you were born. “

– Anne Lamott

The events and experiences of our lives can become something more than just things that have happened to us. By awakening an inner author we will bring out the images, threads, themes, and living ideas that animate us. From this “authority” our stories can be told, flow into an anthology of what it means to be human, and even tap into the deeper currents of soul.

We will explore the value that our stories can have at this time in our lives and in the world and discover our most compelling events and images. We will use writing suggestions, expressive arts, movement, and other processes where you can find the tools that work best for you. There will be ample time for your work and our sharing.

Location: Bishop’s Ranch, Healdsburg, CA
Leaders: Faith Mason, Harry Henderson and Lisa Yount (Art Resource)
Cost: $600 plus $50.00 registration fee
Scholarships are available.
Register at https://guildsf.org/online-seminar-registration/
For more information, call Faith Mason 707-599-5962 or Harry Henderson 510-230-7255
There are stories that reside within each of us. Perhaps they come into conversation as an anecdote or are retold around the holiday dinner table. They may be awakened by an image, song or movie character. Often linked to experiences in the past, they seem to carry within them an indelible “truth” about who we are.

What are the stories that have formed our sense of self? How have they influenced us? Who authors our history? Do these stories have their own intention? If so, do those intentions support or stifle the becoming of your true self?

In this seminar we will become our own listeners, allowing the stories to tell their own tales. Welcoming what has become history, we will invite Knowing to unfold itself through reflection, imagining, art, body awareness and sharing. Through this process space may be discovered that allows new and different stories, along with insights to emerge. We listen for answers to the question: Who do I think I am?

In this seminar, we will use discussion, writing/journaling, art expression, play dialogues, music, silence and above all our own experience and self-reflection to explore what life/self has to teach us about the stories we tell about ourself. Participation in any of these activities is voluntary. There will be ample free time to explore, hike, and gather with other participants.

All applicants new to Guild seminars are asked to accompany their application with a letter stating why they wish to attend and any pertinent information about prior study and experience around your spiritual and religious life. No prior experience is needed to attend. You are asked only to bring yourself to a circle of seekers to come to a fuller expression of your own truth.

For a registration form and additional information, please contact Susan Thompson at susanlynnthompson@gmail.com. The cost to attend is $1098. Every participant will receive a $200 scholarship (the cost without scholarship is $1260). A deposit of $500 is due no later than the end of December 2019 and the remainder is due no later than February 1, 2020. Additional scholarships – full or partial are available. SPACE IS LIMITED. Please indicate your interest in a scholarship to both Betty Foster (bettywesfoster@earthlink.net) and Susan Thompson (susanlynnthompson@gmail.com).

Contact: Susan Thompson: susanlynnthompson@gmail.com
Leaders: Hal Childs (PhD, MDiv, MFT) and Patricia Stenger (M.A., LMFT)
Integrity: The Human Side of Soul

June 13 - 21, 2020

A seminar presented by the Guild for Psychological Studies

In this seminar, we will examine the role of integrity and the human person in the historical development of soul and its call to truth. Truth is the intent of soul and our lives are entangled with the desire of truth to become real. When soul grips us, we have a choice: to respond to the call of integrity or not.

The invitation from soul is to lay one’s totality on the line for the sake of truth, in order to find that you are not who you thought you were, but rather an embodiment of truth, seeking to be known and to become real. Staying true to truth is hazardous and dangerous, but leads to profound transformation of us and our world.

We will examine the confrontations of several human characters with the demand of truth. Our exemplars are biblical and historical, including Jacob wrestling with Esau, Job struggling with Yahweh, Francis Bacon advancing science against the cosmology of Medieval Christian Europe, and Carl Jung redefining the scientific rationality of late Modernity after the death of God. These historical figures are our entry point to explore where our lives are confronted by soul, our integrity is on the line, and where, in turn, we shape soul through the process of truth wrestling with truth.

What do truth and integrity demand of us today? The possibility of impending climate catastrophe portends not just the end of metaphysical “Meaning” but also the end of all secular meaning!

Many reasonable and thoughtful people are contemplating the very real possibility that climate change is now on a runaway course, beyond our best interventions to prevent climate catastrophe. Of course, we desperately want to prevent a climate tragedy and social collapse. But, if we cannot prevent the inevitable, is it possible to adapt to a new way of being? Is it possible to allow our identity to undergo an initiation and transformation in the face of utterly new realities? We cannot face the new realities of loss unless we find a way to undergo the transformation of the very basis of consciousness.

Two essays regarding the climate crisis are: "Facing Extinction" by Catherine Ingram (https://www.catherineingram.com/facingextinction/) and "Deep Adaptation" by Jem Bendell (https://www.lifeworth.com/deepadaptation.pdf).

In this seminar, we do not offer any soothing answers, but a willingness to sit with and face uncomfortable truths and explore the implications for integrity. If you are called to explore a new consciousness, welcome.

The seminar process uses a modified Socratic method to guide group discussion. We honor the dignity of each individual to express themselves honestly and move at their own pace. Mutual respect will support us as we engage difficult truths and new perspectives. Our work together will be enriched by the use of non-verbal approaches: meditation, expressive arts, music, body movement and awareness, and silence.

Special Note: All applicants, please include a letter stating your interest in attending this seminar. If you are new to the Guild’s work, please tell us a little about yourself and your psychological and spiritual journey.

Location: Four Springs, Middletown CA
Leaders: Hal Childs, PhD, MFT and Patricia Calcagno Stenger, MA, MFT, including Jennifer Morgan Mansfield, Harry Henderson and Faith Mason.
Fee: $1,645, plus a non-refundable registration fee of $50. Scholarships and payment plans are available.
Contact for more information: Hal Childs, 415-573-2469; halchilds@gmail.com
Register at https://guildsf.org/online-seminar-registration/
Upcoming Seminars

For additional information and to register, please visit the Guild’s web site at www.guildsf.org, or contact the Guild office. Scholarships and payment plans are available for all seminars. The non-refundable registration fee is required at the time of registration.

Fees, Scholarships, Payment Plans

Perhaps the value of stepping into a residential seminar invites you to apply or to tell a friend. You look at arranging your schedule; your heart soars! You look at your budget; your heart sinks. Don’t give up—chances are, there’s a way.

We keep seminar fees as low as possible and offer financial assistance to those who need it. The advertised fee for each seminar is the amount that will cover the cost, based on the expected attendance. Costs include the facility, lodging, meals, materials, and stipends for leaders and staff. Those who can afford the full fee help support the Guild’s ability to continue offering seminars. Anyone who cannot attend due to cost is encouraged to request financial assistance. The Guild does not want cost to be an obstacle to participation and is fortunate to be able to offer scholarships and payment plans.

Scholarships:

To request a scholarship, contact the Guild office. Your request will be forwarded to the staff of the seminar you wish to attend. Because scholarship funds are limited, it’s important to make your request early, and to request the minimum support that you can manage. Scholarships may be combined with payment plans.

Payment Plans:

To arrange a payment plan, please contact the Guild office. With or without a scholarship, you can arrange to pay over time, with the final payment due by the end of the calendar year in which the seminar is attended.

All seminars, and the Guild’s overall operations, are supported by donations. Gracious appreciation is extended to those who support the Guild’s work—through attending seminars, through making tax-deductible contributions, or both!

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Bob Ridder, Administrative Coordinator, is available for all inquiries by phone at (415) 561-2385, or by email at office@guildsf.org.

Send your email address to office@guildsf.org so that we can keep you connected and up-to-date on Guild events. Also be sure that we have your current mailing address so that we are able to send you this yearly edition of the newsletter. Please keep us updated with your address changes.

Mailing Address

Guild for Psychological Studies
P.O. Box 178
Aptos, CA 95001

Guild Website

Visit www.guildsf.org for information about seminars and events, and to register for seminars. The website also has general information about the Guild, past issues of the Threshing Floor, relevant news, and links to resources. If you would like to post information of interest to the Guild community, please email harryhenderson51@gmail.com, our web administrator.

Guild Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/guildsf. If you haven’t yet, please “friend” and “like” us!

Newsletter

To receive 12 issues of The Threshing Floor a year, please contact the Guild office. There is no charge for an e-mail subscription. For a print subscription, please send a check for $25 to the Guild office.

Items for inclusion in the Threshing Floor should be mailed to the Guild Office, Attn. Threshing Floor Editor, or emailed to office@guildsf.org. The deadline for each issue is the 20th of the month. Items received after that date will be published the following month.

Production & Layout Editor: Wilene Chang
Content Editor: Sue Renfrew
Distribution: Bob Ridder

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter (by contributors other than staff and directors) are the writers’ and not necessarily an official position of the Guild.

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Volunteers

There are several people who fill necessary volunteer roles in the Guild. If you would like to be a Guild volunteer, please contact the Guild office at office@guildsf.org and let us know particular volunteer roles that appeal to you. Currently volunteers are members of the editorial staff for the Threshing Floor; members of the Board of Directors; train to serve as seminar coordinator, committee person or cook; provide transportation to/from seminars for attendees; help to catalog or research Guild archive materials; write reviews for Guild books and other publications; etc.

Friends and Members

Friends of the Guild are donors and others interested in receiving Guild information who are not Voting Members. Voting membership requires active participation in some form of leadership or committee role, or other volunteer effort, and the payment of annual dues. Voting members may receive a print subscription to the Threshing Floor upon request.

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