

Awakening to the Feminine

A Higher Consciousness Inquiry

By Stephen Busby

When first I am asked to write of 'the feminine' I feel grief, then the longing comes.

I am in a small room overlooking the large lake in Switzerland that forms part of the northern frontier, waiting to see what comes when I write. Eventually, words rise from another place. The longing infills me, and images emerge of dense Scandinavian woodland: sunlight filtered through greenery to spaces of forest-floor that are filled with silence, shadow, imperceptible movement, landscape and light.

The images fade to a beach in the far north of Scotland, where often I walk when in need of vastness and wild weather. Miles of aloneness in an elemental place. Home to seals and seagulls and banks of pebbles which - with the tides twice daily - shift and reinvent the shoreline. The heavier stones are moved by water. I see myself walking slowly, head bent, scanning the stones, seaweed and debris. The minutiae of the beach ecosystems yields to a more timeless presence and gaze. I find myself softening, become less penetrating, in flow with the flux of colours, textures and form. Wonder and discovery swells. The restless spirit of searching that consumes so much outer life fades in intensity. Relaxation in chest and shoulders. Mental activity subsides. Expansion.

I allow in the wailing of the seals on their sandbanks in the distance. I watch the freewheeling of the gulls overhead. The far horizon, sea meeting sky, gleams in the sunlight; patches of cotton-wool cloud blow along in fleeting formations of foreign spaceships. The qualities of this place touch me as abundant, generous, unconditional. Here I come with my demands and expectations and am received, stretched, re-formed.

One day, walking back through the sandy hinterlands between the beach and the village, I am abruptly washed-through with sadness. I sit and allow these movements, which then subside, only to return more ferociously. The waves break and fade inside. I have a sense of sadness creeping back to a space inside from which I have learned to defend myself - through focused attention and barriers built against spontaneous intrusions of feeling. I discern a fear - a threat to the edifice on which man - this man - has founded his life: a way of being rooted in survival, in anticipation of whatever might come from outside, an assumption that change - or the prevention of it - necessitates an effort of will and control.

Sitting amidst the sand and grasses of the dunes, a sense comes of unqualified receptivity. Joy, as well as a hundred other states often suppressed. To receive like this, from the ground, casts the shadows in me into sharper relief. I feel fragmentation, long-learned; how through culture I collude in the denial of our unfathomable wholeness and unlimited connectivity.

Beneath the surface of how I and most of us live, I believe we are called to wholeness: a whispered appeal to a fuller embodiment of soul, of our multidimensional selves, a giving-up of illusory and broken ways of life. A tender longing to be received, to enfold the separated sense of my-self.

The barriers I have built against this embrace feel impregnable - 'unable to be rendered pregnant'. Perhaps they need not be approached so frontally. While my defensive postures are reinforced at cultural and societal levels, simply sitting and settling down here in the low flowing dunes of this hinterland I have a sense of being well held. The marram grasses, the yellow gorse and purple heather, are but tentatively rooted in the sandbanks which are themselves subject to astonishing forces of wind: enough in winter to blow away anything not weighted down with stones in the sheltered courtyard of my house, with its two-feet-thick walls in defence against the weather.

There is an innate fragility to the dunes. The shingle ridges and the sea conceal an entire earlier version of the village that was consumed in the eighteenth century by the waves. The wounded masculine in me is unsure of his place here. He is grateful for shelter in the dips and hollows away from the wind but knows deep down that whatever structures are contrived against the elements will be founded more on hope than on trust, they cannot endure. Sitting here on sand I am asking – hoping, secretly – for permission, rather than opening to a knowing-in-my-bones that this is my place. *What is a man who has no landscape? Nothing but mirrors and tides.*¹ I feel the transience of life through a defence-structure searching for safety. Ever alert, it insists on autonomy, on keeping its appointment, on retreating into its turret or tower - wherever my savings were best invested.

From within this wound my relationship to the windswept hinterland feels functional, transactional and practical, whereas the feminine in me lingers easily amidst the tall resilient grasses and moving sand. She savours the breathe of the wind and the invisible insect life; she experiences herself as integral to the ecosystems from the inside. She is more openly disposed to the strangers who come here, for in one sense she knows there are none. She lights bonfires on the beach without waiting for prior permission, and surrenders to the flames in erotic celebration of the polarities and oppositions that are all enfolded within the mystery and multiplicity - the movement and stillness - of One.

Whether my body is burned or lowered down into the mouth of the ground, it is the feminine that will receive me at the end of all things, to listen to my last-ever breath.² Through her embrace of death and finality I am enabled to live more vulnerably, to persist less in denial and misplaced hope. What I then choose to build and invest in will be more imaginatively whole, more reverent and emergent. It will endure differently. Instead of bracing itself against ageing it will be aligned with that which abides through children in generations to come.

Early in the morning I walk along the edge of the tear-shaped tidal bay that opens out two-miles wide behind the beach. At low tide the mud flats here are exposed and the smell from the banks of seaweed is strong. The far side of the bay is shrouded in a mist that hovers over the surface of things and renders the cries of the gulls all the more unearthly. There is no one else out so early. The sound of my boots on the compacted earth of the path echoes around me and I feel vulnerable and heroic in a very large landscape, nervous of what may come at this weekend's workshop. Nervousness runs down my left-hand side and connects with the foggy headache that I awoke with, mirrored in the mist hanging over the water.

The group gathers quietly - a dozen people. We begin the higher consciousness work that has evolved over several years.³ It is a blend of small and large group exercises, dialogue and inner work intended to nourish our sensitivity to the subtle realms of life and simultaneously to explore the impact on us - individually and collectively - of aligning with a strong felt stream or field of consciousness. Forms of healing are a by-product of deeper movements in this work: an effect I have found of our consenting to inquiry, which we define as the practice of exploring questions by feeling into and presencing the unknown spaces beyond or between where we normally converse, relate, speak and act from.

This morning we are practicing mutual witnessing. In this we cultivate focused external observation and simultaneous strong inward self-attention, noticing and sharing whatever arises through subtle sensation or awareness. This can feel like an interior stretching, tending to facilitate intuitive inner movement or insight into whatever theme or question we are inquiring into. Such movements can become more acute as we learn to refrain from any attempt at interpretive understanding or resolution.

I demonstrate one of the practices with a woman who volunteers an inquiry into a sleepiness that overcomes her at unexpected moments, and into a lostness that she feels underpins her daily life. As we sit quietly and open to the quality of the space between us I am aware of my left-hand side again and of tension at the back of my head. I sit in presence opposite her while she reconnects with the sleepiness, which immediately gives way to a feeling of overwhelming grief.

¹ Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, Bloomsbury, 1997, p86.

² Stephen Jenkinson in Tim Wilson's film of his work, *Griefwalker*, 2008, retrieved 26.6.15, streaming at: <http://www.nfb.ca/film/griefwalker>

³ Described at www.stephenbusby.com

As we both allow this, she connects to a belief that 'there is nothing in life that is worthwhile' for her. We track this in slow increments for a while - through further body-sensation, shifts and inner movements, encountering numbness and absence on the way and which, when we pause to presence that too, leads to expansion in her, she reports, and surprise that she's no longer 'in grief.'

When I suggest maintaining a space for grief nevertheless, since I'm still feeling a pervasive sadness, and propose too that we remove the label and simply call it 'an experience' then she feels an upsurge of anger and outrage. Can she also embrace this? Yes, albeit with fear. She feels that witnessing and tracking her own inner experience is taking her to the limits of her language, an abyss inside. Something, she says, is not entirely trustful in her. It was never acceptable to acknowledge and include sadness or anger, and she feels a risk in - and resistance to - opening further to these. While being with the riskiness we also make sure the mistrust is still allowed. In time, this generates a great deal of emotion, inner intensity and heat, and some gestures too which I mirror back to her, acting on an impulse to ask if there is a feeling of an age in her life which also arises. Spontaneously she connects to herself at 3 or 4 years old: the age at which the death of a parent meant she felt unable to ever trust in life again.

We explore 'brokenness' that arises for her, as well as fear that the relational space of this exercise will end and that whatever trust she can feel here will not be available to her again. We identify a kind of inner energetic structure that does not believe trust can ever be maintained. At this point her vision blurs and the tension in my own head further intensifies. We stay with her sense of violation, broken trust, and now deceit. This is difficult to maintain in presence she reports: it's hard to look at me when feeling such a broken place. Are there others in the room whose gaze she could meet? There is another woman: we explore her capacity to relate to this other person while feeling less than trustful, to 'bestow upon others the gift of her mistrust', as I phrase it to her. This formulation proves almost overwhelming as she takes it in, while - nevertheless - able to engage in eye contact with yet more people in her mistrust. This feels, she says, a momentous step in life on many levels.

There is a sense for the others in the room of an essential threshold being crossed in her: they too are touched and impacted; such themes are universal. It is impossible to presence them without acute awareness of one's own inheritance and fracturing, and there is often the sense of a healing field broad enough to embrace all the generations who have gone before.

Nothing in the practice I have described here was disowned, devalued or diminished. Through relational contact we were able to include and embrace in our inner spaces and in the outer space between us whatever arose. We exercised intense incremental curiosity, were non-invasive and appreciative of whatever was presented. We cultivated intentionless attention, simply 'confirming the reality of the quality of the unfolding experience.'⁴

This approach seems to me to be systemic⁵ in that through refinement and widening of perception we are enabled to tune-in to dimensions of experience beyond surface phenomena, to deeper systems which are suggestive of much larger forces or movements at work. Cultivating a felt-sense like this is an integrative and more feminine way of allowing different kinds of subtle information to arise together. Moreover, to learn to trust again the integral perception of the whole body and to be received there is hugely healing for most of us.

I leave the workshop and walk back along the bay. The mist has long since lifted and I feel clarified: something more in me has been released through the practices today. My own sense of uncertain trust has been touched. I feel the younger versions of myself - the boy in me who was mistreated and wounded - further embraced by a wholeness that he is yet unsure how to own.

Most boys are coerced at an early age into betraying emotion, hiding their heart and feeling centre, denying their feminine birthright, in order to legitimize predominantly masculine qualities. As a result many of us live in fragmented emotional and spiritual worlds, forever at one remove from life's full embrace.

⁴ Johannes Schmidt, *Inner Navigation: Trauma Healing and Constellational Process Work*, Hamburg Aptitude Academy, 2006, p110.
⁵ "Systemic implies that we see what is not obvious, reckon with interconnections that are not altogether explicit, and reach beyond the immediate experience of things. We learn to discern what is not being told, what is not... conspicuous at first sight, but to look at situations in terms of interconnected realities and effects rather than linear, one dimensional cause-effect chains." Johannes Schmidt, op. cit., p132.

Our deep feeling-natures and subtle sensitivities abide in us and are easily reawakened. The felt subtleties of our body-mind system are not so far away, yet cannot be accessed through the strictures of the dominant systems in which most of us are acculturated. We can deepen into interiority through the feeling-sense, opening to physically based sensation, textures of energy, emotions and images. This entails '*switching from wilful output mode to receptive mode, directing our awareness to the parts of us that are naturally drawing our attention, and then connecting with them by feeling them.*'⁶

In the higher consciousness work for men that I practice, in small groups, we no longer work on what previously were framed as 'men's issues'. In these practices we are not seeking to empower ourselves as authentically masculine in opposition to anything else. If we are threatened by sensitivity then this becomes the subject of our inquiry, which often leads to us recognizing the extent of our brokenness, for in us the feminine may be doubly denied.

First there are the layers of cultural and institutional defence that reinforce our unconsciousness, and then there is the embedded shame that can feel intensely personal, triggering strong reactivity. In learning to risk feeling more pain through our centre - the pain of all things, which is what the authentic feminine embrace implies - we tap into a fear that some essential ground in the masculine will be sacrificed. A fear that by receiving more fully we will be exposed to irreversible vulnerability. Behind this lurks a deeper fear: of the feminine force of love, that is far greater than masculine strength. Wherever we struggle to reconcile these two apparent polarities then there - through consciousness - we are opened, expanded, made more inclusive of a fuller spectrum of life. But first we must pause, dip into deeper layers of feeling, presence any effort or resistance, and relate - through our practice spaces - to those others who take turns to represent more receptivity to us than we can consent to in ourselves.

Inviting more consciousness like this can feel edgy and expansive. How much of us is here, actually, available to receive it? In the healing work, we learn to embody and ground higher dimensions of consciousness in our lives, on behalf of the whole human collective. We become more receptive and embracing of a frequency that is, in some sense, recognizably of the feminine, as one of many awakening streams.

As men, many of us struggle to settle for within a sense of authentic identity. In these practices we are clarified in our more essential non-gendered Selves, permeable to a quality recognizable neither in terms of the old masculine nor feminine qualities. It is so new and so ancient as to seem of evolutionary intent - once lost, now beginning to be regained, re-incarnated, re-anchored differently within matter, embodied in our own epoch for the first time.

What beckons to us it seems to me is an unfolding experience of wholeness from the inside. Through higher consciousness work and play we experience ourselves as open to - and sometimes unified with - everything inside and out. We may develop a felt-sense of the internal depth of things. Judith Blackstone speaks of a consciousness that is all-pervasive:

*It is experienced (or experiences itself) as vast space, pervading our own form and everything else that we experience, even physical space itself. It is therefore the basis of unity within our own being, our internal wholeness. And it is the basis of the unity of our own being with everything around us. It is an unbroken dimension, a dimension of wholeness and stillness that, when we attune to it, is coexistent with the movement of life.*⁷

This consciousness is less content- and more context-identified. It summons us to a sense of completeness whereby we experience people and things as they actually are, as simply themselves. It is a consciousness that recognizes how things which exist as separately defined or opposed at one level of reality, exist simultaneously in another - co-arising, as a part of a larger whole.⁸

The feminine principle, in its devotion, loves life to the extent that it allows for the potential in us to embrace the whole of reality, to gamble and surrender ourselves there. It is innately world-centric. We can increasingly '*include*

⁶ Dan Emmons, <http://befriendinglife.com/2013/04/24/what-to-do/> retrieved 26.6.15.

⁷ Judith Blackstone, <http://www.realizationcenter.com/excerpt.htm> retrieved 26.6.15.

⁸ Parts of this section are derived from my: *Beyond the Constellation Room: Aspects of a systemic consciousness and its potential impact on our lives at the level of self and society*, 2012, The Knowing Field, 19, pps.63-64.

*everything within our inner reality and may even experience ourselves as everything,*⁹ which would be the ultimate embrace.

In Scotland, the sea, the beach and its hinterlands succour the liminal, littoral spaces in my life: the cracks of light that lead to concealed space in-between. The presence of this moving coastal no-mans-land to which I retreat is iconic and enduring. If I come here with a crisis, a dilemma or a desperate mood – well then some seed, sharp idea or creative heresy will emerge; unlikely projects have birthed here and broken open new ground. Today I sit with my notebook on the sacred stones near the narrow channel through which the sea fills the womb of the bay every day. Through this birthing-channel swim the seals; here pass the pleasure boats; amidst these grasses on this sand have I loved, dreamed, sung, snacked and snoozed. I have been made humble and healed, rendered - despite my resistances - able to receive.

Surrender to and renewal through water is one of our most persistent archetypal inheritances. My eyes shut to the noon sun, images come...

I remember an emotional crossing at the narrow causeway to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, off the Northumbrian Coast (the island is accessible at low tide across the sand and mud flats which carry an ancient pilgrims' path, and was a seventh-century centre of Celtic Christianity). Then a desolate beach across the other side of the country near Liverpool, where a hundred cast-iron sculptures of a man's body stare out over the waves¹⁰ (as the tides ebb and flow the men are revealed and submerged by the sea). There are fifty-one humanoid forms from the same sculptor scattered over a vast million-year-old salt lake wilderness in one of the remotest regions of Australia,¹¹ a project that was conceived after an Aboriginal elder spoke of the Dreamtime story of the Seven Sisters of the Pleiades, who came down to the lake.

These images enter me strongly. As part of my own midlife passage I set off across the deserts of Central Australia, their harshness offset by hidden pools where I was received and blessed by the waters in spectacularly powerful sacred earth-settings. That land for me formed a potent synthesis of the masculine and feminine as two extremes, between which I often lost my way.

Sitting on the shore in northern Scotland, I remember reading of a man who risked a walk along 'the deadliest path in Britain': a footpath off the Essex coast which departs the land and heads straight into - or so it appears - the North Sea:

*"It has earned this reputation by virtue of the disorienting nature of its environment in poor visibility, and near inevitability of death by drowning for anyone still out on the sands when the tide comes in."*¹²

Before a bridge was built, the path was the only access to a coastal island and can only be crossed when the tide withdraws:

"I took my shoes off, and placed them on a stand of eelgrass. For some reason I couldn't overcome my sense of tides as volatile rather than fixed, capricious rather than regulated. What if the tides disobeyed the moon, on this day of all days?"

The writer recounts how, further out into the sea, there is a vast, lost and once-inhabited underwater Mesolithic landscape that once linked the British Isles with continental Europe.¹³ Now all along that coastline, he writes,

"the land is being bitten back by the ocean. Graveyards are shedding their bones and their headstones into the sea. Dwellings that were once miles inland are now cliff-edge, and on the point of abandonment. Anti-aircraft batteries and pillboxes built on cliffs... are slumped on beaches or sunk offshore... coastlines have become ghostlines."

⁹ Thomas Hübl, *A Course in Mystical Principles* (published online description), retrieved 20.12.13, <http://online.thomashuebl.com>

¹⁰ Antony Gormley's art-installation, *Another Place*, Crosby beach, 1997.

¹¹ Antony Gormley's art-installation, *Inside Australia*, Lake Ballard, 2002-2003.

¹² Robert Macfarlane's essays, *The Old Ways*, Penguin, 2013, p59-71.

¹³ Doggerland, inundated circa 5000 BC, as described in Macfarlane op. cit. p70.

On the beach here in Scotland some half-sunken concrete military pillboxes also emerge at low tide, dilapidated relics of defence against sea-war, along with hundreds of anti-tank blocks. I often clamber between them to access the sands. They are part of a long line of defence along the coastline that was intended to slow down a possible German invasion. Nearby, the beaches were used by the Americans and Canadians for training exercises for the D-Day landings launched on 6 June 1944 as the largest seaborne invasion in history.¹⁴

That war is thought to be the deadliest military conflict in history in absolute terms of total dead.¹⁵ Over 60 million people were killed. Estimates of total dead actually range from 50 million to more than 80 million: this higher figure includes deaths from war-related disease and famine. It probably does not include those people within my own family - along with millions of others - who live scarred still by mass killing, numbed to some emotion, as am I.

My grandmother - in her mid-forties - survived the war, only to die soon after it of 'heart disease' or 'blood pressure', according to some accounts 'in mental distress.' Her children were brought up by their widowed father, who forbade them to ever mention their mother's name and was unable to express outwardly any grief. Should this then also be considered a 'war-related death'? Where does war stop? If its inheritance of shock and trauma are passed onto its children's descendants, and if our own feeling-capacity falters and stops short sometimes, blank and uncomprehending, then is this too in remembrance of the dead?

The line of concrete military defences emerges every day from the tide along my far northern coastline. The waves are not weathering them away.

One of my most beloved writers - of German origin - details a meandering walk in England along another eroding coastline - in Essex, and describes the aftermath of a thirteenth century storm-tide when '*no one could tell where the land ended and the sea began.*' A great port there in the Middle Ages began repeatedly rebuilding itself only to get washed out to sea again, until it learned to build itself somewhere else - and still fortifications proved ineffective:

*"[The town] with its towers and many thousand souls, has dissolved into water, sand and thin air."¹⁶
"Swimming off the shingle beach, you can float over invisible streets and buildings: the further out you go, the further back in history you have reached."¹⁷*

Nearby the remains of an ancient forest lie buried on the seabed. I read of a seventeenth century Scot who set sail to explore his own coastline and who knew that:

"one does not need to displace oneself vastly in space in order to find difference... It is a piece of weakness and folly merely to value things because of their distance from the place where we are born."¹⁸

More memories and sea-associations rise up. A writer sets off abroad to attempt to make sense of her life through a story of the consuming presence of the ocean¹⁹:

"One ought to say of its omnipresence, so that all that is not of it appears reduced to a quasi-absence: the coast, the beach, the beings who, along its edge, fear it, contemplate it to the point of drunkenness or meditate before its spectacle... How does one remember the ocean? How does one distinguish the separation of the ocean's edge from that of the Earth? ... The entire maritime landscape becomes this glass that must be broken in order to live."²⁰

¹⁴ It began the liberation of occupied north-western Europe from Nazi-control and contributed to the Allied victory on the Western Front. Nearly 160,000 troops crossed the English Channel to France on D-Day itself, with 875,000 men disembarking by the end of June.

¹⁵ Donald Somerville, *The Illustrated History of World War Two*, 2011.

¹⁶ WG Sebald's essay-travelogue, *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt - An English Pilgrimage (The Rings of Saturn)*, Harvill, 1998, pps.157-159.

¹⁷ Macfarlane op. cit. p73.

¹⁸ Macfarlane op. cit. p78.

¹⁹ Marie Darrieussecq's novel, *Le mal de mer (Breathing Underwater - UK, Undercurrents - US)*, P.O.L,1999.

²⁰ *Le Monde*, 19 March 1999, and *Les Inrockuptibles*, 17 March 1999.

I recall watching a woman waiting on a French beach for a partner and a marriage that will never be restored to her, after he fails to return from a swim.²¹ In denial she leaves and continues to live at home as they always had done, anticipating that she will soon see him alive just as he had been on the beach, before swimming out. And a man who is bound up within his predominantly scientific worldview loses his son to a lake where the ice proves too thin, despite his calculations.²² Another man leaves his mortally injured lover lying in the Saharan *Cave of Swimmers*,²³ where rock art depicts people swimming eons ago (an ancient lake is buried beneath the desert). Elsewhere a married couple are killed and lie undiscovered on a remote beach.²⁴ This novel draws heavily and in detail on the process of bodily decomposition, cell by cell, over six days in the sea air:

"[they] were surrendered to the weather and the earth, but were still a man and wife, quietly resting; flesh on flesh; dead, but not departed yet."

In the film *Solaris*²⁵ a man journeys to the furthest reaches of outer space only to discover there, in the form of an ocean, a super-consciousness that responds to attempts at communication by confronting the man with his most painful and repressed thoughts and memories, which are made manifest. The ocean seems to be a sentient, rational being, but is other than anything else encountered and reveals nothing of its own nature.

The secrets in our own seas: that in their depths they elude, invite and intrigue us, seem to reflect the ubiquity of the consciousness that surrounds and pervades us. Just as we make of deep waters a repository for our most unnameable fears, and a representation through our myths of the darkest parts of our psyche, the seas also symbolize the end of our seeking. And in this end, a promise of infinite redemption and rebirth. To seek the divine source can remove us from the very receptivity that allows more of the divine to flower in us. To cease my seeking is to return to my Self. The more I deepen into a feminine receiving, the more my searching is sated, and the less likely the essence of which I partake will need to be reborn.

At the end of *Solaris* the man seems to surrender to and become the ocean, just as many of us are drawn to surrender to a consciousness we cannot know entirely. We trust that in our receiving we will be revealed: that the true extent of our potentials and wholeness will become transparent to us. In doing so, we are extending the frontiers of consciousness itself.

The lead actress in a remake of *Solaris*²⁶ suddenly lost her husband to heart failure, and continued to write letters to him describing how she and their children were coping with their loss. These letters and diary entries formed the basis of her book *"After You: Letters of Love, and Loss, to a Husband and Father."*²⁷ At the end of the filmed remake, as the ocean on *Solaris* consumes the spaceship, the actress's final words to her on-screen-husband imply that they have transcended the conventional meaning of life and death and that *"Everything we have done is forgiven. Everything."*

The higher frequencies of consciousness available through the practices that I have been exploring seem to signal a new stage in the human evolutionary endeavour. To cultivate profound receptivity means to listen to and come into resonance with ever more subtle realms of life. It means to become a more clarified vessel capable of embodying an evolutionary update, of holding more of the fuller spectrum of life's potential which, in many ways, we have yet to begin to tap into. The unfolding human drama of our age requires this. We will increasingly be called to become more responsible and wholly-responsive as embodied beings. Thomas Hübl articulates this imperative:

*Humanity is literally crying out for new developments that enable us to work through our individual and cultural traumas. If we do not succeed in this, the traumas that have not been integrated will force us to repeat the corresponding traumatic experiences again and again. This principle applies to the further development of the world as well as to the individual journey of healing.*²⁸

²¹ François Ozon's film, *Sous le sable (Under The Sand)*, 2000.

²² Krzysztof Kieslowski's film, *Decalogue 1*, 1988.

²³ Michael Ondaatje's novel, *The English Patient*, Bloomsbury, 1992.

²⁴ Jim Crace's novel, *Being Dead*, Viking, 1999.

²⁵ Andrei Tarkovsky's film, *Solaris*, 1972.

²⁶ Steven Soderbergh's film, *Solaris*, 2002.

²⁷ Natascha McElhone, 2010.

²⁸ Thomas Hübl, posting on Thomas Hübl's page, Facebook, 18.1.15.

Our journey entails learning to anchor the higher frequencies, to ground them in matter. Can I become subtle enough, present enough, awake enough, to host what life is seeking to offer me energetically, emotionally and materially through the body, to feel the presence of the vaster dimensions of Self: that which meets my material needs in each movement of breath? Can I include too those regions of numbness and inherited pain? Can I feel there even where feeling is interrupted, dislocated, where I default to defence, and can I love here too?

I am learning that entirely new masculine qualities are available. These may merge in equilibrium with the feminine pathway that is awakening in many of us, manifesting as new subtle energies within the nervous system, where all the shock that we have inherited and unknowingly perpetuate is enfolded. This is the next stage in the emerging feminine principle: the *Shekinah*, the maternal force that embraces duality into unified Oneness. If we catch a whispered responsibility to follow this call then we will cultivate relational fluidity and will learn - and model to others - that there are ways other than forcing, other frequencies of will. We will receive the mystery and complexity of things instead of seeking to confine them. We will learn to live in receptive mode, where '*actions organically follow energetic impulses, and our capacity to follow rather than control life expands.*'²⁹

Many of these new qualities seem to me intrinsically feminine in nature. Their implications are yet so unknown that at a cultural level they are experienced as threatening by men and women. As individuals we may feel this threat deep within, as if we are beginning to touch and expose an existentially unsafe place: "*When we become adept at embodiment practices we start to notice the ancient question 'am I safe?' in our very tissue.*"³⁰ There is a great deal to begin to touch, to enter into relationship and resonance with, to consciously presence, and thereby to heal.

Anyone working through higher consciousness at systemic levels will be struck by at least two things. First, the massive reservoir of trauma - much of it gender-based - that is continually transmitted trans-generationally as well as through layers of cultural and institutional defence. This translates as absence in most of us to some degree, and a sense of alienation within ourselves as a result of having unconsciously separated from the feeling centre.

Secondly, we become aware of our immense capacity to come into contact – through consciousness – with wherever we are fragmented. We discover there are capacities and skills available to us that, once we begin to activate, cultivate and embody them, are nothing other than our birthright. Practicing inquiry here enables a quality of relational contact inside and between us that can, sometimes spontaneously, result in releasing energy that has long been bound up in suffering; energy that will otherwise continue to be passed on and maintained within the human blueprint. The awakening feminine principle is alert to activation practices; it awaits our consent.

In Switzerland I slip quietly into the lake. Within moments my concerns and preoccupations dissolve in the vastness of the water. Its calm mirror-surface stretches, blue-green and immense, into the distance. My limbs, moving steadily, take me further out. This is Lake Constance (the *Bodensee*). Set amid rolling forested hills, it is the only area in Europe where no borders exist, because there is no agreement as to where the borders lie between Switzerland, Germany and Austria. Here, where I swim, humankind's territorial structures are subverted. Yet in Europe every day people die while attempting to cross its borders, many of them in the sea. They are fleeing from geopolitical crises that directly result from Europe's colonial wars, which are mine and yours.

Not far away, the waters of the Rhine merge with those of this lake, very close to a tiny island with its labyrinth and ancient monastery, home to five Franciscan monks. I have sat in the little white chapel there, listened to the singing of women, and felt the Earth-power-place upon which the altar was built.

Since an early experience of near-drowning I have avoided swimming further than the point at which my feet find refuge on the floor. Each time I swim further there is more fear to feel. The lake stretches out before me, its surface supreme and imperturbable, the floor now far beneath my feet. In the distance a pair of immaculate swans glide by. A large pleasure boat sends ripples that take an age to reach me. When eventually they come I savour their effect: my body bobs up and down in the water, heavy yet weightless. The ripples subside. The silence and solitude deepen.

²⁹ Dan Emmons, *Feeling one's way forward*, <http://befriendinglife.com/2013/04/24/what-to-do/> retrieved 26.6.15.

³⁰ Kai Ehrhardt, *Living Body Principles*, 2012, The Psychotherapist, 52, pps.15-17.