



The Circle

Volume XVIII Issue 3 Fall 2009

Re-Turning to the Well

We are all creatures of thirst. Whether it is spiritual, emotional, physical or mental, human beings strive to quench those aching, splendid thirsts of living. From the most intrinsic –the thirst for water, to the more intangible – the thirsts for love or knowledge, or even power or revenge, our lives are spent seeking and partaking of that which satisfies us. Our thirsts define what we deem important, denoting our needs and desires. And as such, they are what lead us to sources that may quench them – to the wells in our lives. They determine what we choose to draw into ourselves and thus what flows through bodies, minds, and spirits.

In May 2010, The Circle will celebrate our 20th anniversary. After a rich discussion about The Circle itself, the year ahead and our journey towards celebrating this anniversary, our Planning Circle chose “Re-Turning to the Well” as our theme for this academic year. We recognized that, for us and for many other women, The Circle is a well in the world; a well of women.

Our excitement over likening ourselves to a well was felt through many layers of meaning. Beginning with the most basic of resemblances...wells are most often circular in shape, their walls made strong through the divine architecture of a circle: a hearty construction. We saw each of our members as a part of The Circle well. Whether through volunteering, participating in our events, taking out a membership or giving a donation, each woman who is a part of our collective shares in holding the space: she is a supportive piece in the wall of our Circle well and empowers our well to exist.

Wells are a conduit through which water is accessed by an individual, a family or a community. It is a liminal space between above and below, betwixt the earth surface and the water to be drawn forth. It is a place where life pours from the ground. We strive for The Circle to be a space, through which women can access the spirit—her spirit and the collective spirit of women.

On our beautiful earth, water is life. It unifies our experience as human beings because of its sheer necessity to us and yet our desire for water could be vastly different at a given time. Like water, The Circle can be also be experienced in extraordinary variety: in a way that is thirst-quenching...

or cleansingor gives moisture to dry but solid earth bed so that new seeds may grow.... or it is fun for frolicking in.... or powerful and at times, dismantles or washes away things that weren't on a solid foundation. At the same time, a well can be a gathering place—a place to talk, to tell stories, to share knowledge, to enjoy one another's company. You may have no present need for water, but for the companionship that the well can provide. Women have a variety of reasons to come to our well

A well that is clean and in good repair is most giving to the community that needs its water. A healthy well gives life to women and as such to her family, community and to the earth. When women don't have access to healthy wells, we become desperately thirsty and wither. Or if a well becomes polluted, contamination sets in and spreads. The Circle strives, through our rituals, our process, our governance and our programs to ensure that our well is safe, deep, sustainable and accessible to as many women as possible.

The element of “re-turning” to our well was to acknowledge The Circle within the spiritual landscape of our present time. We felt that time's spiral dance was wheeling us back around to re-ask some of feminist spirituality's critical questions. Since The Circle's founding almost 20 years ago, our Western civilization has experienced a prolific and radical shift in our exposure to diverse spiritualities. This shift has renegotiated the

content, power and experience of spirituality and religion in our society. As our global world provides access to the wide spectrum of human beliefs, religions, rituals and practices, feminist spirituality does not exist outside of them but between, within and around; it, too, exists in liminal space. It is not a religion unto itself but rather includes in its praxis the asking of every religion or spiritual practice: is there a place for women at its well? Can all of humanity experience sacred equality on the spiritual path being explored or proclaimed?

To be a well for women, The Circle must flow with time and the new elements it brings. By re-turning to our well, we understand that it is not to go back to the beginning, but to continue to spiral, coming full circle. This is not a turning back but an evolution; not a transition but a revolution.





Being a Blessing on the Earth

Stories and tips for inspiring action:

🌍 Just Heavenly! On 11th June 2009, London's own Louise Fagan launched Goodnight Angel Productions. G.A.P. is a not-for-profit organisation that seeks to provide comfort to young children in hospitals by furnishing each pediatric bed with digital music players containing professionally recorded bedtime stories and lullabies. Goodnight Angel is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual initiative. Fundraising and donations will allow for this project to be offered free of charge throughout Canada and the United States in order to ensure that all hospitals have the opportunity to participate, regardless of their financial ability or location.

Louise, who enjoys a successful career in theatre, film and music as a producer/director, shared with *The Circle Newsletter* her inspiration for creating Goodnight Angel: "The idea came about when my children were younger. We were in my big bed (as was typical for our bedtime routine) and I was reading bedtime stories. The discussion came up about how we would read at bedtime if one of them was in the hospital...which flowed into them asking what children do whose parents can't be at the hospital at bedtime."

"Fast forward 10 years (at least!) and here we are. It has been a long journey because my work-family-life demands left me little time to pursue the initiative. But the idea wouldn't go away. Two years ago, with my kids now older and my work introducing me to people who were equally keen on the project, I decided to devote a big portion of my time and most of my resources towards Goodnight Angel. I figured I could realistically give it two years, to obtain a not-for-profit incorporation status in New York State, approach a hospital to pilot the initiative, and begin fundraising. Eighteen months later, Goodnight Angel was launched - and with great enthusiasm!"

"Being able to work in the arts has continually been a gift. But when one has the opportunity for the work to become as much (or more) about a particular message or community or movement, it is so much richer. In many ways it has been very easy to get Goodnight Angel to this point because frankly, it just feels good to work on it. It was very similar to when I worked on *The Vagina Monologues* or when I did *Under An African Sky* at the JLC in support of the Stephen Lewis Foundation... it is an amazing way to spend one's energy and interest: being able to take your passion and find ways to relate it to the larger community."

The Children's Medical Center at Winthrop University Hospital in Mineola, NY has signed on as the first medical facility to participate. According to their Chairman of Pediatrics, Dr. Warren Rosenfeld, "A gentle song and story at bedtime provide enjoyment and comfort for every child but for the child in the hospital, this bedtime experience is even more meaningful. A simple, yet priceless, bedtime gift, a story and a song, will help to lessen the stress and loneliness of a child's hospital stay. We applaud Goodnight Angel Productions for their insight and generosity in making the life of every child they reach better."

If you would like to support Goodnight Angel, contact them at 519-851-0393 or e-mail l.fagan@rogers.com.

🌍 Kleerly, Activism Works! In our Fall 2008 issue, this column featured information on the Greenpeace campaign "Kleercut" that was pressuring Kimberly-Clark, the largest tissue company in the world (Kleenex, Cottonelle, Scott), to end their use of virgin fibre pulp in their products. By using virgin fibre, K-C was contributing to the mass clear-cutting and destruction of Canada's Boreal Forest and ancient forests around the world. Greenpeace employed tactics that included direct meetings with manufacturers, YouTube videos, engaging the media, hanging off buildings, etc. And yet, for all of their organisational creativity "the smartest thing Greenpeace ever did with this campaign was to decentralize and 'let it go.' [They] turned the facts over to activists from around the world. From there it took on a life of it's own."

We are now elated to report that because of people like you, who supported and participated in this campaign, Kimberly-Clark has announced a new policy that places it among industry leaders for sustainability!! K-C worked directly with Greenpeace to draft this new policy which states they will obtain 100 percent of their wood fibre from environmentally responsible sources. By the end of 2011, the company will no longer use any pulp from the Boreal Forest unless it is Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified. The policy also prevents the company from cutting endangered forests, and increases the company's use of FSC-certified pulp and recycled fibre globally. Greenpeace now hopes that Proctor & Gamble (maker of Charmin and Bounty) will follow K-C's lead. For more info: www.greenpeace.ca

🌍 Effective Change! The Girl Effect is an organisation that believes world change can be created, one girl at a time. By investing in adolescent girls, The Girl Effect is the cascading impact of a girls' education on ending poverty and transforming the social, economic and political landscape of developing countries. Here's why investing in girls is important and/or needed:

- When girls & women earn income, they reinvest 90% of it into their families, as compared to only 30-40% for a man
- Only HALF A CENT (!) of every aid dollar for developing nations is earmarked for girls.
- In the developing world, an educated girl marries 4 years later & has 2.2 fewer children
- 70% of the world's 130 million out-of-school youth are girls.
- In developing countries, 1/4 to 1/2 of girls become mothers before 18.
- Child marriage and the view of women's bodies being male property contributes to pregnancy being the worldwide leading cause of death among girls ages 15-19.
- In Nicaragua, 45% of girls with no schooling are married before 18 versus only 16% of their educated counterparts. In Mozambique, it is 60% vs. 10%; in Senegal, 41% vs. 6%.
- For millions of girls, there are no systems to record their birth, their citizenship, or even their identity thus they can not prove their age, protect herself from child marriage, open a bank account, vote or get a job.

The Girls Effect has a wonderful website containing powerful videos, stories and statistics -visit them at www.thegirleffect.org.



On Our Shelves...

Enjoy these and other books in our library collection.
Circle member loan period: 2 months



TRANSFORMING POWER: From the Personal to the Political

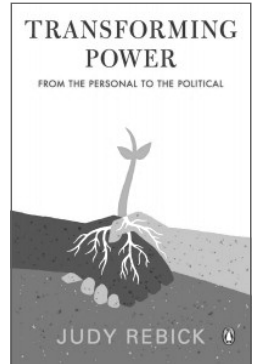
By Judy Rebick

Penguin Books, 2009

Reviewed by Susan Booth

Ubuntu: "I cannot be happy unless everyone in my community has what they need." A wonderful vision, but how do we get there? Locally? Globally? This book is about visionary ideas, ordinary people, and the alternative grassroots practices currently happening around the world that may show us how to make the changes we so desperately want and need in this world. Rebick believes this shift involves not only changing societal structures and oppressive relationships but also changing ourselves. Throughout the book, she reflects on her own personal transformation from a patriarchal type of leader to finding a new way of leading that listens to and encourages other

voices, embodies the heart as well as the mind, and works in true collaboration with others. This book inspires reflection and conversations about how we personally use our own power to influence our world, and about how people everywhere are coming together to share their longings, to imagine what could be, and then working thoughtfully, collaboratively, and courageously to make a better world for all.



The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society

By Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows

The Dial Press 2009

Reviewed by Karen Huiberts

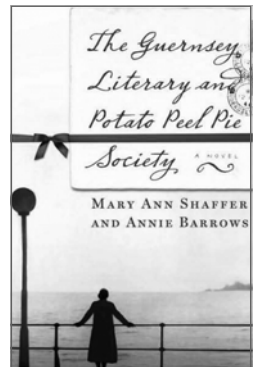
This is the kind of novel that is carried with you long after you've finished. It is a delight to read and is certainly a book-club gem, with so much to talk about.

It is cleverly crafted; the book is a compilation of a series of letters between the residents of a small community on Guernsey Island, occupied during WWII, and a writer in England named Juliet Ashton. It is rich with historical details and characters that simply capture your heart. It is difficult to stop reading!

The book revives the art of letter writing and storytelling. The characters are shaped in their own words, telling their own stories, while brilliantly weaving in the emotions and experiences of the community at the time. *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* achieves what the author had hoped for- "that my book will illuminate my belief that love of art be it poetry, storytelling, painting, sculpture, or music enables people

to transcend any barrier yet devised."

Equally heart-warming is the true story of the novel's authors. Mary Ann Shaffer was a librarian and storyteller. *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, her first and only book, was in the making for over 20 years. She died just before the final publication. When her health was failing, she asked her niece, Annie Barrows, to do the required finishing touches. She knew Annie could finish the book, guided by Mary Ann's gift of storytelling over many years around the family's dinner table. "Suddenly, the rest of the world had a seat at the table where I had been feasting my whole life" says Annie. She already knew the characters and history of the book well and so brought to fruition this labour of love.



Call for submissions for The Circle's 20th anniversary special edition!

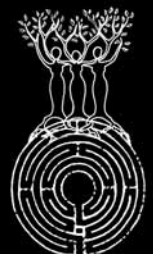
In honour of The Circle's 20th anniversary, we will be producing a special edition of our Circle Newsletter. Please share with us your thoughts, memories, reflections (maximum 150 words) and/or pictures of:

- ★ Your favourite Circle events/memories
- ★ What The Circle has meant to you and your life
- ★ Exploring women, the sacred & ritual
- ★ Your experience volunteering for The Circle
- ★ Why you think it is important for a centre like The Circle to exist.

Please email your writings and/or pictures to circle@uwo.ca OR send them by post to The Circle at Brescia, 1285 Western Road, London, Ont. N6G 1H2. **Deadline: Monday 1st February 2010**

NOTE:

1. All submissions/pictures will become the property of The Circle Women's Centre; 2. The Circle reserves the right to edit submissions before publication. 3. Pictures and writings that do not make it into The Circle newsletter, may be used on a special 20th anniversary page on our website. 4. Digital pictures can be sent in .jpeg or .gif formats.



Thank-you to
Trae Robinson,
Susan Genest,
SophiaHeath,
Chantelle Diachina

Celebrating Maiden,
Mother & Crone
event committee.

Upcoming Events at The Circle...



Open Circle

...ritual, spirituality, activism and the mystical experience of women gathered to reflect on the sacred in our lives.
Last Wednesday of the month, Merici Lounge, Brescia, 7:30 p.m. Members: free, Non-members: \$2. **All Women Welcome!**

- 30 September Finding Our Voice: The Future is Calling Us Forward** - In this time of great change, how do we move our world from what is to what is possible? Join us for a lively exploration of women's leadership circles and how they can engage your spirit, change your life & transform your world. Facilitated by Susan Booth & Elizabeth Zarnoweicki
- 28 October Film & Discussion- Meinrad Craighead: Praying with Images** - View this documentary exploring the lifelong pilgrimage of Meinrad Craighead, her art and her mystical encounters with the Divine Feminine. Discussion facilitated by Joan Clayton.
- 25 November Cosmic Advent** - People of all faiths and nationalities are inaugurating an ecospiritual consciousness into the sacred dimensions of their lives. Mirroring the tradition of Advent, enter into our universe's story and reflect on where we came from, where we are going and who we are becoming. Facilitated by Loretta Pellizzari & Mary Margaret Howard.



iWIL Lecture of The Sophia Series

Sheila Watt-Cloutier

Inuit Arctic Climate Change Activist, Nobel Prize Nominee

Everything is Connected: Environment, Economy, Foreign Policy, Sustainability, Human Rights and Leadership in the 21st Century

Thursday 1 October, 7:30 pm, Brescia Auditorium

Free Parking, Suggested Donation \$20, \$10 - students/seniors



The Circle's Annual Fundraiser

More Than Just a Book Sale

Saturday 28 November, 10 am - 3 pm

Brescia Auditorium. Free Parking.

... a great array of gently used **books**, over **20 local artisans booths**, **live harp music provided by Jennifer White**, **amazing draws** and **free refreshments**. Proceeds support The Circle library, programs & events. Please bringing your own bag! **Books to donate?** Call us at 432-8353 ext. 28288.



A Sophia Series Event

Ritual of Re-Membering

Sunday 6 December, Noon

Brescia Auditorium. Free Parking.

This year we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Montreal Massacre and the gender-based murder of 14 women students. The Ritual of Re-Membering seeks to honour the loss of their young lives and the lives of *all* women that have been lost to gender-based violence. The ritual moves through our grief and sadness into hope and power for transformation and change.



Brigid Festival 2010

Entering the Matrix:

Being Betwixt & Between

with Dr. Mary Condren

Friday 19 February - Sunday 21 February 2010

Registration will open on 31 October 2009. Space is limited.

...and beyond

See The Circle & Brescia's Event Guide Insert for more details & upcoming events!

9 & 23 Sept., 7 & 21 Oct. - Feelings and Fibre's Workshop, using through fibres and knitting -create of a unique, self - designed, pattern-free "Wisdom Wrap" (participants only need be familiar with knit & purl) Masonville Library, 6:45- 8:45 pm, \$70.00. Info: ardath@rogers.com or 51-657-3000.

17 Sept - TAKE BACK THE NIGHT, Victoria Park, Gathering with music & displays @ 6pm, march to begin at 7:30.

20 Sept. - Walk a Mile in Her Shoes. Have the men in your life to walk once around Victoria Park in heels! Fundraiser for Women's Community House. Registration: I am @ Centennial Hall, Walk: noon. Info: 519-642-3003 x2252 or shelterlondon.org

23 Sept. - Buddhism and Your Spiritual Journey with Teresa Bryant, 7pm, Central Library, Stevenson Hunt mtg rm A, free. For info on this event & other meditation retreats & Buddhist Spirituality: www.mosaicretreats.ca, or tlrbryant@uwo.ca

25 Sept., 30 Oct., &/or 27 Nov. - Making Contact Workshop facilitated by Ruth Douthright & Sally Morgan...improvisational dance form where people to come together, interact, learn to speak through the body and find their own dance. Lotus Centre, 7-8:30pm, \$25. Registration/Info: 519-642-2378.

4 Oct. - The Great Returning: Inhabiting our Mother-

World, a workshop with Penn Kemp & Leona Graham, 10am-5:30pm, \$100, 525 Canterbury Rd. Info: 519-434-8555 or penn@pennkemp.ca

7 Oct. - Gaia Grooves...an evening of music & dance to celebrate our earth, especially her waters, 7-9pm, Wolf Performance Hall, Central Library.

18 Oct. - Person's Day Tea & Award- 80th Anniversary Celebration, 2 - 4 pm, Brescia Auditorium, Info: circle@uwo.ca

31 Oct. - The Dragonfly Principle- An experiential workshop exploring the body's function in unfolding spirituality with Mary Hamilton. London Chamber of Commerce; 9:30 to 4:30; \$90.00. Info & Registration call 519-433-2160.

9-12 Dec. - "Perhaps English Isn't Your First Language", McManus Theatre. This WWII story is about a woman who refused to submit to tyranny and walked out of the Ukraine alone. She took on a whole new European identity, which was not revealed until her funeral. This unknown heroine represents powerful female determination, resilience & passion, showing us we can leave horrific situations with only our spirit & our feet to guide us. Written by Joan Clayton & directed by Peter Busby. Tkts: Grand Box Office, (519) 672-8800.