



# The Circle

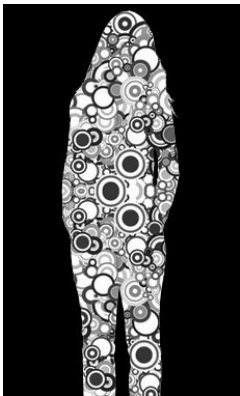
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## Fullfilled or Just Full?

*Taking Stock of our Individual Landscape*

When our Editorial Circle came together to write this reflection focusing on The Circle's theme for 2008-09, *Being a Blessing on the Earth*, it seemed we first needed to discuss how our present human experience contains so many unblessed thoughts and actions not only towards the earth, but towards ourselves. When talk of landfills arose, we had a plethora of disparaging comments on our methods for waste disposal, but moreover, we began to reflect on the word landfill in and of itself. Isn't it an oxymoron of sorts? Isn't the land "full" already? What more does land need other than land to be full? And what are we putting into this land that is being filled? Garbage, waste, unwanted items, junk.

Collectively, this train of thought led us to recognize that so much of our individual selves have become "body-mind-spirit-fills." Hasn't our society, for years, convinced women that we are not "full" or enough exactly the way we are? Haven't we been told to add make-up, scent, hair dye, painful clothing to the landscape of our bodies? Haven't we filled our minds with toxic thoughts of inadequacy and unworthiness? And our souls...the poor dears... instead of exploring freely the extraordinary dimensions of the human spirit, didn't many of our religions fill women with notions of inferiority, wretchedness, suffering and sacrifice? So now, have we become simply full of crap, instead of fulfilled by our own unique and amazing selves?



**BODY.** The landscape of our body had become a host of chemicals, toxins, etc. that have been dumped into and onto us without our knowledge or permission. At the same time, many of us knowingly deposit things into our body that aren't good for us, but either we don't care, are too busy or don't have the energy to change bad habits. The consumption of processed or fast food in North America is epidemic. We are eating in our cars or in front of the television and not even noticing what, or the amount, we are putting in our mouths. What we need to do as individuals and as a culture is sloooooooooo dooooooooooown. Slow

Food International is an organisation that promotes the importance of pleasure associated with food. They believe in enjoying the vast range of recipes and flavours, growers and farmers, rhythms of the seasons and also the varied company we can experience through food. Slowing down our patterns of purchasing, preparing and eating food can lead to providing our bodies with better nourishment, supporting local, organic or sustainable farming and developing closer relationships with family and friends as you share a meal. Three blessings in one!

**MIND.** For many of us our minds have become a dumping ground for fear, negativity, frustration and shame. Through magazines, the internet, email, blogs, radio and a host of other communication options, we have become a jumble of political spin, false or manipulative advertising and toxic opinions. Our minds buzz, buzz, buzz all day. We have become a culture that has lost our ability to hold silence. We have become human doings rather than human beings; and it seems like our "doings" are an exercise in busyness rather than joyful, deliberate actions. In her book *Eat, Love, Pray*, author Elizabeth Gilbert makes an astute observation: that we "have an inability to relax into sheer pleasure. Ours is an entertainment-seeking nation, but not necessarily a pleasure seeking one" (61). In North America we spend billions of dollars to keep our minds filled and our attention occupied, yet we would have a hard time sitting freely (a double entendre there) in contemplative quiet. Gilbert suggests that we take a page from Italian culture and learn the importance of what they term as *il bel far niente* or the beauty of doing nothing. By simply doing nothing for a while, we can become free of life's stresses and hectic pace and learn to enjoy being present with and to ourselves and our surroundings. We can create interior space for our own thoughts to have room to move, develop and evolve.



**SPIRIT.** One of the blessings of the last 30 years or so is the evolution and proliferation of spirituality in many parts of the world. For too long, the human spirit has been hijacked by religious powers to force our compliance and obedience to corrupt spiritual leaders and notions. Women have bore the brunt of patriarchy and misogyny within our religions and cultures and have suffered (and still suffer) by the religiously-sanctioned discriminatory acts of men. Our lives, bodies and souls were deemed second-class, we were blamed for the existence of sin in the world and burned for being healers or midwives. Today, women are demanding change within their churches and faiths, leaving them altogether and/or developing their own rituals full of new symbols, rites and themes that are relevant to our lives. These rituals are helping women to process our present reality and release the energy that builds up from our emotions and experiences. "This is what rituals are for. We do spiritual ceremonies as human beings in order to create a safe resting place for our most complicated feelings of joy or trauma, so that we don't have to haul those feelings around with us forever, weighing us down. We all need such places of ritual safekeeping." (*Eat, Love, Pray*, 187).

We believe the first lesson to being a blessing on the earth, is to become a blessing to yourself.



# Being a Blessing on the Earth

Circle Theme 2008-2009

## Stories and tips for inspiring action:

🌍 **Go Mama!** On 28<sup>th</sup> September, the South American republic of Ecuador did what many countries in the world would consider unthinkable. Their citizens (an impressive 64%) voted in favour of a new constitution that grants Ecuador's tropical forests, islands,

rivers and air similar legal rights to those normally granted to humans. In the chapter titled "Rights for Nature," Article 1 states the following: "Nature or *Pachamama* [a Quechua word meaning Mother Earth], where life is reproduced and exists, has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution." In the section immediately following are provisions that encourage legal action against polluters by giving more people legal standing in such cases: "Every person, people, community or nationality will be able to demand the recognitions of rights for nature before the public organisms." [www.indiancountrytoday.com](http://www.indiancountrytoday.com)

🌍 **Act, Bestir Yourself!** CBC and The Hour with George Stroumboulopoulos want to mobilize Canadians to do One Million Acts of Green and show that one small act can make a big difference. Visit their website ([www.onemillionactsofgreen.com](http://www.onemillionactsofgreen.com)) and see how one act from each individual can amass to a million. Become inspired by how simple environmental actions such as switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs, starting a recycling program, or walking to work can create a big impact on the fight against global warming. Each registered act will be entered into the site's green calculator (designed by Green-Nexus) and will determine the impact of those acts on the environment. As of printing time, the site had logged 161, 603 acts of green by Canadian citizens amounting to 9,505,833 kg of greenhouse gases saved from entering our atmosphere.

🌍 **Chicken Out!** Did you know that 98% of eggs sold in Canadian grocery stores are produced by chickens confined to battery cages? A battery cage is a sloped floor wire cage measuring approximately 16 x 18 inches (the size of 2 Circle newsletters placed side-by-side) with 5-7 chickens confined to each cage. In battery cages, there is no space for hens to flap or stretch their wings. Due to the tight conditions, feathers rub against the cages or other birds and chafe off. Vertical space is limited and hens are often unable to stand up fully and raise their heads without hitting the bars of the cage. Also, the birds usually have their beaks cut to control aggressive pecking among cagemates. The solution? Buy certified organic eggs! By doing so, You are allowing chickens to live more natural lives, out of cages, where they can interact with each other, forage and peck for food. Another (and arguably better) option is to use egg substitutes in your recipes and cooking. For more information: [www.chickenout.ca](http://www.chickenout.ca).

🌍 **It's "Snot" Right!** Kimberley-Clark, the producers of Kleenex, Huggies, Cottonelle and other disposable products continue to contribute to the destruction of Canada's ancient Boreal forest by manufacturing their products out of old-growth trees gathered by clear-cutting. Canada's Boreal forest is one of the largest tracts of ancient forest left in the world. (Almost 80 per cent of the Earth's original forests have already been degraded or completely destroyed). Are these ancient forests, so essential in fighting climate change and providing homes to wildlife like caribou, wolves, eagles and bears, worth being flushed down the toilet or thrown away? The solution? 1. Stop buying from Kimberly-Clark (at home or in the office) and purchase products made from recycled fibre. 2. Write to Kimberly-Clark and demand that they immediately cease buying virgin fibre from endangered forest. 3. Learn more at [kleercut.net](http://kleercut.net). 4. Reclaim the handkerchief!

🌍 **Don't Be Idle!** Turn off your engine. It seems like once winter sets in, idling becomes a Canadian past-time. According to Natural Resources Canada, in the winter, Canadians voluntarily idle their vehicles for a combined total of more than 75 million minutes a day. For this day alone, over 2.2 million litres of fuel would be used, producing over five million kilograms of Green House Gasses and equal to the amount of fuel required to drive over 1100 vehicles for a year or to idle one vehicle for 144 years! Many people suffer from the misconception that restarting your car wastes more gas than idling. This may have been true in the old days before engines were equipped with fuel injection and chokes; however, today, if you idle for longer than 10 seconds, you are creating unnecessary emissions while wasting gas and money. Turn off your car at railway crossings and at other times when your car would sit idling: long stop lights, drive-thrus (better yet, get out and go inside), while waiting when picking someone up, etc. And as for the need to "warm-up" your car on those frigid days - one minute is enough to do the job. (<http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/transportation/personal/idling.cfm?attr=8>).

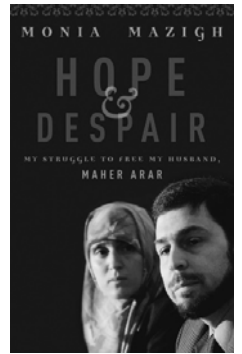
🌍 **Green your Holiday- Yule Love It!** Want to save money and the planet? Here are some ways to green your holiday season: 1. Use LED lights— they last longer and use 80-90% less energy. 2. Use newspaper, recycled calendars, magazines, old posters or reusable bags to wrap gifts. OR make your wrapping a part of the gift by using a scarf, tea towel or throw tied with a fabric ribbon. 3. For the gadget person on your list, buy rechargeable batteries and a charger to reduce the toxic waste ending up in landfills. 4. Do you have a teenager that sleeps until noon? Buy him/her organic sheets! Cotton uses more pesticides, insecticides and chemical fertilizers per unit than any other crop on earth (approx. 1/3 of a pound of chemicals is used for one t-shirt, 3/4 lb. for one pair of jeans). Not only will you be helping the planet, but more importantly, you will help to save the lives of the 20 000 people in developing nations who die each year due to pesticide poisoning, many from cotton farming, according to the WHO.



## On Our Shelves...

### **Hope & Despair: My Struggle to Free My Husband, Maher Arar**

By: Monia Mazigh  
McClelland & Stewart, 2008



In March 2004, The Circle Women's Centre hosted Dr. Monia Mazigh who shared with our Brescia audience her struggle to have her husband (and Canadian citizen), Maher Arar, released from a Syrian prison. Mazigh was catapulted onto the public stage in 2002 when her husband, Maher Arar, was deported to Syria where he was tortured and held without charge for over a year. In *Hope & Despair: My Struggle to Free My Husband, Maher Arar*, Mazigh takes the reader on a journey of her husband's imprisonment, her unknowingness of his situation for quite some time, and her tireless campaign for Arar's release as she sought to bring public awareness to her husband's situation. She tells of her determination to clear Arar's name in the Canadian and American intelligence agencies who had labeled him a terrorist and mobilize Canada's government to take action. This is an inspirational story of one woman's fight for justice and the regaining of rights that had been torn away from her and her family.

#### **Reminder of The Circle's Library Privileges**

The Circle recognizes that women's lives are busier than ever. Therefore, we'd like to remind you that with your membership (\$30.00/year) comes borrowing privileges from The Circle Library that are designed to specifically cater to women's busy schedules. Where else could you find lending times like these?:

Books and Magazines: **2 months**

Videos and DVDs: **1 week**

And if these times just aren't long enough, simply send a request for renewal to the centre by phone or email.\*

\*materials can not be renewed if there is a hold upon the item by another patron.

#### **Other titles new to our shelves:**

##### **Fiction:**

- The Ladies' Lending Library* by Janice Kulyk Keefer
- The Heretic's Daughter* by Kathleen Kent
- The Flying Troutman* by Miriam Toews
- The Wise Woman* by Philippa Gregory

##### **Non-Fiction**

- Stolen Innocence* by Elissa Wall with Lisa Pulitzer
- Radical Amazement* by Judy Cannato
- Turbo Chicks: Talking Young Feminisms* edited by Allyson Mitchell, Lisa Bryn Rundle and Lara Karaian

## Sophia Series Report ...IWIL Lecture with Christina Baldwin & Ann Linnea

Imagine attending a lecture about leadership at a university and then finding yourself, not simply "listening" to two notable speakers, but actually participating in their conversation. This is how Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea shared their experience and insight on leadership with the audience who attended their Sophia Series lecture at Brescia on 15 October 2008. On stage, they sat on large, comfy chairs, shared a pot of tea and had a conversation that examined several characteristics of leadership beginning with "personal passion meeting the needs of the world".

Both Christina and Ann have realised and lived out many of their personal passions over the years. One of their most critical discoveries was that paying close attention to the words and stories surrounding those passions can create a big impact, even when sharing their stories with only a few people. They came to understand that it is those kitchen table conversations, where so many ideas, stories and emotions are expressed, that lead us to awareness, compassion, mutuality and peace. To them, "It's hard to imagine being in a culture without stories;" it would be like navigating in the dark.

According to Christina and Ann, as we journey through life, our memory is the story of what happened and is where meaning resides; it is where lessons can be learned, past consequences evaluated and new paths for the future can be discerned. Story is as a map: we can be guided by the wisdom they contain. This is why they believe it is so important to share

our own stories – so that others can learn, relate or find empowerment in our life's journey. At the same time, for the teller, we learn to stand with our own story and our territory of comfort with ourselves and others expands. Ann and Christina affirm: "we all have amazing stories if we have the courage to tell them."

Christina and Ann believe that the world is at the point where a new story is being created and written. The old stories are no longer serving us and a new story, a story where women's voices are present and heard, is going to help change the world. In sharing her experience of kayaking solo around Lake Superior, Ann told of a particularly scary moment during a storm, when she was unsure of her fate and she found courage in her rage to stay alive. This story seems to represent the energy that is present in so many of us at this juncture in time on our planet. For all of us who are sick of the war, rape, guns, environmental degradation, dictatorship, inequity and greed that has been dominating the world and so much of its' his-story; for those of us who recognize that our earth and the life it holds is on the brink, we have become enraged to stay alive. Women are finding courage in our anger and indignation.

Women's rage is fuelling the radical need for change. We are collectively reexamining and redefining priorities that have for too long been out of whack. And like Ann and Christina said "when women are in a group, the energy is like Porsches revving in neutral." And we are ready shift into drive!

# 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!**

26 November  
28 January  
25 February

Planting Your Dreams  
Tooting Your Own Horn: Giving Yourself Bragging Rights  
Herstory is Our Story



## More Than Just a Book Sale

**Saturday 29 November, 10am-3pm**

Brescia Auditorium. Free Parking. Come and enjoy the warm, rich atmosphere unique to this Circle Fundraiser. There will be 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 consider bringing your own bag!  
**Books to donate?** Call us at 432-8353 ext. 28288.



## Yule Celebration

**Saturday 20 December, 5.30 pm, \$20.00**

**In collaboration w/ WISE WOMAN EVENTS**

Celebrate this year's Winter Solstice with a ritual organised by Wise Woman Events. All proceeds are being donated to The Circle. The ritual will begin at 5.30 pm with a reception to follow at 7:00 pm. Music will be provided by Jocelyn Drainie. Tickets available at The Circle. Space is limited so get your tickets early! Brescia Auditorium, Free Parking.



## Ritual of Re-Membering

**Thursday 6 December, Noon**

Brescia Auditorium. Free Parking. The Sophia Series. On December 6th, 1989 a young man, enraged by the number of women in the School of Engineering, entered L'École Polytechnique and massacred 14 women students. This event awoke many Canadians to the reality of violence against women in our society. 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.



## Brigit Festival

**Sacred Soulmith, Elementary Healer with Dr. Mary Condren**

**6-8 February 2009, Registration now open!**

See brochure or web for details: [www.brescia.uwo.ca/brigit.htm](http://www.brescia.uwo.ca/brigit.htm)



## Monia Mazigh

**The Rest of HERstory**

**Thursday 5 March 2009, 7.30 pm**

[www.brescia.uwo.ca/sophia](http://www.brescia.uwo.ca/sophia)

**Please note that all Circle and Brescia events are Fragrance Free. Thank-you!**

*...and beyond*

Stained Glass Classes & Saturday Workshops - Lynette Richards at Rose Window Stained Glass, [www.rose-window.com](http://www.rose-window.com) or 519-673-4976.

11 & 18 November - Chat with Women Travellers. A 2-part series giving you the opportunity to discuss women specific travel with two experienced world travellers. Novack's Bookstore, 211 King St, 7pm, \$15 for both evenings, registration required, refreshments included. To register: 519-434-2282 or [info@novacks.com](mailto:info@novacks.com)

21 November - Achieving Deep and Rapid Reductions in Fossil Fuel CO2 Emissions Lecture, 3:00pm - 4:30pm Social Science Centre Rm 2333, UWO, Info: 519-661-21118 or [aweis@uwo.ca](mailto:aweis@uwo.ca).

27-29 November - Brownstone B: Big, Bold & Beautiful... a funny & inspiring musical about 5 multigenerational women living in one brownstone and how their lives interact and affect one another. SAFL Fundraiser. Aeolian Hall, \$25/adults or \$15/students & seniors. 8pm (also 2pm matinee on Sat.). Tkts: 519-672-7950.

29-30 November - Visions and ReVisions: How to Invoke the Muses, hosted by Synergy-In-Motion and Penn Kemp, 2-5pm both days, 62 Askin Street. Cost: \$120 or \$90 for under or

self-employed, seniors & students. Info: 519-690-1479

Saturday 6 December- The Ebony Ball: A Black & White Affair, hosted by The Congress of Black Women-London Chapter, 7pm, Mocha Shrine Temple, 468 Colborne St., \$40, Music by Carribean Pepperpot & Black Lion. Info: 519-659-2173 or or 519-471-2099, or [ebonyball2008@yahoo.ca](mailto:ebonyball2008@yahoo.ca)

Deadline: 15 January 2009 - Call for Submissions: **What Made You a Feminist?** Marguerite Andersen is a member of a working group of women who are gathering stories of the second wave feminist movement in Canada. They seek autobiographical texts for a book in English for publication in 2010. Consider writing an autobiographical text of 750-1200 words which would tell readers how you came to feminism. Here are some questions which may help you in making your decision:

What prompted you to begin living and working as a feminist?  
Was there a precise turning point in your life? Who inspired you?  
What joyous, painful, funny or other experiences did you have?  
What transformations took place? What new skills did you acquire? How were people around you reacting to your new self?

Info: (416) 361-5070. Submissions should be sent to: [marguerite.andersen@sympatico.ca](mailto:marguerite.andersen@sympatico.ca).