

THE CIRCLE

The Circle Women's Centre

Brescia University College, London Ontario Vol. XIV Issue 1 Fall 2004

Terra Firma. Solid Ground Bedrock: A Document of Change

When we on the Editorial Circle asked ourselves about the bedrock of our lives we all spoke initially of strong foundations. Our bedrock would provide us with a feeling of certainty upon which we could depend in times of uncertainty. It would provide stillness in times of chaos, comfort in times of struggle. We wanted to believe there was something fundamental that did not change that we could return to for strength.

***We stand in the midst of the burning world
Primed to burn with compassionate love and justice,
To turn inward and find holy fire at the core,
To turn outward and see the world that is all
Of one flesh with us...***

-excerpted from "Nishmat" by Marge Piercy
in *The Art of Blessing the Day*. Knopf, 2000


We know that ferocious winds will sometimes blow, and that waves will send our little boats reeling. The bedrock will remain unmoved. But the more we spoke, the more the bedrock was revealed as "a document of change".

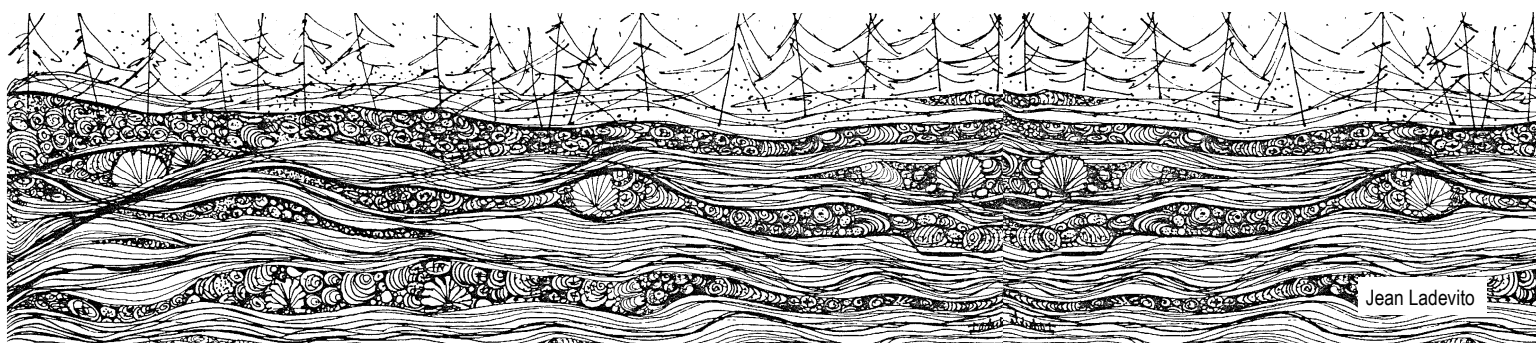
Bedrock is commonly described as solid unweathered rock that lies beneath the surface deposits of soil. We may imagine bedrock as solid, permanent and unchanging, but really it is part of an active cycle of transformation and regeneration, in which the earth is continually shaped and affected by its own forces. Buried deep and surging above ground, bedrock, like that of the Canadian Shield, has taken millennia to attain its current quiet grandeur. In fact the Canadian Shield is the oldest rock on earth, formed 1.2 billion years ago by the cooling of the violent molten magma of the earth's core. What we see tells the earth's ancient story of creation, destruction and regeneration.

The bedrock reveals that our earth has experienced gentle eras and cataclysmic upheavals - with savage impact on life as we know it. Yet within those very layers of our dear bedrock we find the most beautifully metamorphosed gemstones. A transformation enabled by fire and unbearable pressure. Fossils bear silent witness to the changing nature of all things.

Bedrock contains ancient memory in layers put down one upon the next, over millennia. Our lives are adding to the layers and unearthing others - often unexpectedly. Bedrock is the consolidation of experience. This is true of the earth's bedrock and of our spiritual bedrock. The bedrock of each of our lives is formed from the materials of our lives - the people, the events, the experiences, the struggles. These build up our inner spirit, our bedrock. It continues to be formed and is that strong foundation on which we stand.

We are participating in simultaneous discovery and creation of the sacred. Everything changes! Of that alone we can be certain. If trusting change is the bedrock of all things, we remain open to the re-evaluation even our 'core beliefs' - struggling to reconcile faith with human doubt. Our personal bedrock, our inner spirit remains open to change.

Memory and recent experience combine in new ways to create our present and future. The past, present and future are actively spiralling together in us. We have roots in the past and hold the seeds of the future - like a Russian nesting doll. Is the tiniest doll the future baby or the great grandmother inside each of us? We are constantly laying down the bedrock of our lives and unearthing it. It is the document we are creating. 





On Our Shelves...

Azar Nafisi
Reading Lolita in Tehran: a Memoir in
Books
New York: RandomHouse, 2003.

"To imagine
is to begin the process that transforms reality."
-bell hooks

For Azar Nafisi this belief becomes the mantra of survival. As a professor of western literature in Iran during the Islamic Revolution, Azar finds herself in an untenable position. The reality of everyday life becomes soul destroying. To cope with the oppression Azar does what other women have done, she forms a women's book group. Gathering together young women of like intellect, but not necessarily of like belief, Azar enters into dangerous territory, for it is her intent to discuss western literature; Nabokov, Fitzgerald, Austen and others. This is in direct violation of the laws of the state and discovery would mean prison, so they meet in secret. Their exploration of western fiction is seen by the state as subversive but for Azar, fiction is the tool that engages the imagination, allows for reflection, gives a

hint of truth. She states: "do not, under any circumstances, belittle a work of fiction by trying to turn it into a carbon copy of real life; what we search for in fiction is not so much reality but the epiphany of truth." (p. 3)

In a world that has become devoid of all colour this secret gathering becomes the place where colour can exist once again. For all the women, this time together in Azar's living room behind closed doors, became "a space of our own". How many of us can attest to the truth of this statement. However, this "safe space" lies outside of everyday reality so the question must be asked, "which of these worlds is more real?" So collectively they decide to: "try to imaginatively articulate these two world and through that process, give shape to our vision and identity."

This is a powerful, if somewhat disjointed read (the narrative is not linear). It attests to the power of literature to stimulate the imagination, and in so doing, allows us to understand ourselves and others more deeply. It also provides a unique and personal glimpse in to life of women in Tehran during and after the Islamic Revolution. A must read for any woman who has experienced the unique joy of discussing literature with other women.

(Reviewed by Susan Getchell)

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is
One-of-a-Kind!

I . W . D . B u t t o n A w a r d 2 0 0 5 !

Sales in November at *More Than Just a Book Sale!*
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\$6.00 each

Looking with New Eyes

Over the summer, my partner, three step-sons and I had the opportunity of motor homing across Canada. The boys had never been off the 401 and I couldn't wait to show them that Canada was so much more than they experience as Southern Ontarians. And so it began, a quest to experience Canada's natural beauty.

As we travelled into Northern Ontario, the stately rock of the Canadian Shield jutted up from the earth; we admired its beautiful veins. On the prairies, we were awed by the big sky and expansive horizon. When we came to the Rockies, we fell in love with their magnificence. Nature was a presence to us, a companion on our journey.

We were also lucky that many of the Canadians we encountered were as wonderful as the scenery. They would ask: "How are you enjoying your trip?" And we would reply: "The land is amazing!" Christian would often add: "Ontario sucks! It's all highway; the air is bad. We have this great river, the Thames, in our city and no one—not even our dog, can safely go near it is so polluted. Ontario sucks!" The uncanny thing was that across the entire country, the response to us, from so many people, "Oh, but you have The Great Lakes!"

Sure we have the lakes, those threatened and polluted waters. I heard their statement over and over again and was led to reflect that Southern Ontario is a place of magnificent beauty. I had grown up on the shores of Lake Huron, playing everyday in the sand, seeing more glorious sunsets than I could count, swimming in the powerful waves that a good wind could bring. When did I start to take all that for granted? When did I stop noticing? When did we all stop noticing?

Lately, we have spent weekends 'at the lake.' I look with new eyes at the awesome power that is held within the waters of that great Lake. I express gratitude for the abundance of fresh water we have and the myriad eco-systems that surrounds and are within the Lakes. I feel blessed to live in this region with its extraordinary landscape.

-K. Milani

Great Lakes Agreements endeavour to protect and conserve the levels and flows of the Great Lakes and their tributary and connecting waters, and the environmental balance of the Great Lakes ecosystem. (A New Agreement was discussed at a Public Hearing in London, September 22 and will soon be implemented. Watch the

Editorial Circle

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The Circle

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Office Hours

Monday - Thursday:
9:30 am - 4 pm
Wednesdays: 6pm- 9pm





Parking at Brescia for Circle Events

Open Circles: Free parking in the large lot at the back of main building only. Come up off Sarnia Road.

Other Events: Parking pass available on registration for each event. (eg. Fall Workshop)

Book Sale & Ritual of Re-Membering: Free Parking

Working Circles: Passes issued beforehand for each planning session.

Drop-ins: To walk the Labyrinth, pick up and drop offs, short visits – pick up a temporary pass at The Centre, and then park OR use parking meters at the front of the Mother St. James Building (off Western Road).

...and beyond

- ◆ Sundays, 9:00 -10:30 am. "Mindfulness Meditation Group". ? Call Joyce at 471-5624.
- ◆ Fall events at **Spirit of the Earth Centre**. Oct 13-15 Living Movement Workshop; Oct. 21, Fall Equinox celebration; Oct. 24-26 Retreat "Rejuvenation & Purification". and many more. ? 652-0230. e-mail: info@thelivingcentre.com
- ◆ October 7 & 14. – Dorothy Nielsen, Ph.D. "Spiritual Turns of Mid-life" at 830 Waterloo St., 7:30. \$25. ? 434-1177
- ◆ **Medaille Centre** (until Dec.31 only – then new location) "Contemplative Sitting" Wednesdays 7:30am- 8:15. No registration or fee; "Contemplative Dialogue" – a 6 week course Tues. 7:00pm-8:30pm, Sept 21 – Oct.26. with Margo Ritchie, csj, Program Centre, \$40; "Circle of Quiet", Sept, 27 -30, time & flexible hours for personal silence; "Busy Women's Retreat" - 24 hour retreat Oct 15-16, with Kateri Ghesquiere, csj & Marilyn Rosehart, csj. \$65. ? and registration 432-9379. e-mail: medaille@mnsi.net
- ◆ October 20 – Ellen Leonard, csj. "Feminist Voices in Theology" Bessie Labatt Hall, 7:30pm at **King's**, ? 963-1477; email: sglaab@uwo.ca
- ◆ October 21 – Paula Todd . **Brescia's "Breakfast for Bursaries"** at 7:00am-9:00 at Convention Centre, \$60. ? 858-5005; email: Brescia.foundation@uwo.ca
- ◆ October 23rd - "Kreative Yoga 4 Kids @ Heart" Day Retreat: Sat. Oct. 23, 10am-5, \$75, Brantford. Weekend Retreat: Nov. 5, 4pm - Nov. 7 til 2pm, \$395, Port Rowan ? Jane Stockdale (519) 753-8035
- ◆ October 29 – Sallie McFague. "God's Household: Christianity, Economics, and Planetary Living"; Jan 28 – Jim Profit, sj; "God of the Outdoors" at Siegfried Hall, 7:30 at **St. Jerome's U** in Kitchener. Free Lecture/Parking. ? 743-1461, email: dhughes@elcic.ca
- ◆ November 18 & 19. "Woman Killing: Intimate Femicide Prevention Strategies" at Station Park Inn, London. ? only \$15. London Abused Women's Centre 432-2204; email info@lawc.on.ca
- ◆ December 6, the 15th anniversary. "Remembering the Montreal Massacre". Events & action to end violence against women. Join All-City Events. ? 432-8353 x28288 or The Circle Website for schedule
- ◆ **Viriditas: Centre for Creative Spirituality**. At Christ Church, London. Oct. 2 "Gentle Movement" Workshop 10am –noon, \$20; Oct. 23, 1-3pm "Meeting the Dark: Meeting the Black Madonna" \$25; Tuesdays in Nov. 7:30-9:30pm "Wild Women of the Old testament" \$45; Many more weekly programs. ? 438-1171; email: viriditascentre@rogers.com
- ◆ Havelka at King's. Speaker: Jane Vincent-Havelka "Dr. Jaroslav Havelka: Renaissance Man." Fri. 22 Oct., 7:30 pm, Bessie Labatt Hall, **Kings**, free.

Events at the Circle...

Open Circles ...Merici Lounge, Brescia, 7:30 p.m. Members: free admission. Non-members: \$2.00 Everyone Welcome!

- 27 October Re-examining Feminist Spirituality: the bedrock of The Circle
- 24 November Fairy Tales: an expression of our psyches
- 26 January Forming Bedrock: What is the bedrock of your life?

Calendar of Events...

See our enclosed Events Flyer for Details!

Saturday 16 October

Launching our Theme: "Forming Bedrock"

Tea, Crust & Mantel: The Making of the World

A workshop led by Susan Scott

Merici Lounge, Brescia, 9:15 am- 3:30

Fee: *Circle members*: \$28, *Others*: \$35, *Students*: \$10 Register a.s.a.p. Limited numbers

Saturday 27 November

More Than Just a Book Sale

10 am - 3 pm

Mother St. James Auditorium, Brescia

Books, More Artisans than Ever, Music, Draws, Unique

Holiday Gifts, Ritual Booth & Altar Building

Books to donate? Pick up available -Call The Circle

Monday 6 December

Ritual of Re-Membering

Noon

Mother St. James Auditorium, Brescia

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Wednesday 2 February 2005

the Canadian Premier of the documentary:

Signs out of Time

by **Donna Read & Starhawk**

narrated by Olympia Dukakis

the story of **Marija Gimbutas**

renowned archaeologist and author

of *The Language of the Goddess* and *The Living Goddesses*

Donna will be present to provide background and answer questions after the film.

Donation

Spring 2005

Three Evening Lecture Series - details to be announced

F O R G I N G L I N K S

...this year, inviting stories of newcomers to our Canadian culture.



Lizbeth Hernandez is from Ibague, Colombia. She resides in London with her husband Franco and two children Felipe and Catalina, with whom she shares life and experience as an immigrant.

In Her Own Voice

The movement from one society to another is accompanied by intense feelings of profound loss at leaving their homeland as well as the stress of adapting to a new society. Other women have found their major challenges when they have to interact in a society totally different from the one they come from. Even though being an immigrant woman from a western country, I had to accept and integrate my life with the Canadian culture which is quite different from my own.

As a simple example, handshakes in Canada are firm and brief but not frequent. For many other cultures, handshaking is the customary greeting in business and any other encounter. Colombians tend to take a long time in greetings, as we feel that doing so demonstrates respect and interest for the other person. After the handshake or hug, we typically ask numerous polite questions and go through other trivial topics. Expect inquiries as to your health, your trip, your family, and any friends or associates you have in common. Canadians prefer to keep distance from each other during a conversation and eye contact is another important factor; Colombians stand closer together when conversing than Canadians. Having spent some years in Canada already, I have learned how important it is to share with people who come from different backgrounds.

Living through these new experiences, I have felt afraid of the struggles of daily life. For an immigrant women like me, the daily struggles became exponentially bigger. Having come to Canada without knowing any of the official languages, a simple bank transaction, basic grocery shopping, a simple question or inquiry became a major challenge that many times ended in frustration. When I couldn't understand the question



Grace de Jesus-Silverio / Les Internationales Manitoba

neither would I give the answer. I started taking ESL classes almost two years ago; I also took some courses such as retail course, call centre course, computers and some tourism courses, in order to improve my communication skills. I still have some problems, but I have learned from them that been positive and overcoming my fears, just asking to repeat the information. Now I am accepting the culture and I am proud to be a part of it.

The most important challenge that immigrants would face is to get a job in their professions or trades. I have spent the last two years working to keep my professional skills sharp while I improve my English skills, hoping to be able to share more than ten years of experience with a Canadian company. But not every thing has been cheerless.

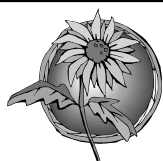
I have found many wonderful people on my way to become a "New Canadian". Great people who work in government programs that have helped me fit in my "New Home". I will keep them in my heart forever. I met them in places like the ESL School, the local resettlement office, in my community resource centre where I have spent my time as a volunteer looking forward to be part of a new society. I have used a wide variety of support and assistance resources to meet the challenges that as a woman I have to face.

During these few years in Canada as an immigrant woman, I have faced challenges, such as learning and becoming more fluent in the English language, adapting to and settling into this new environment, accessing education and training and finding employment. To achieve success it is necessary to count on family and friend's support as well as participate and use the government programs designed to help newcomers.

by Lizbeth Hernandez

presence to all beings

capacity for relatedness



The Editorial Circle sends a heartfelt thank-you to **Loretta Pellizzari** for the creative energy she gave to our newsletter. She has moved on from our circle, but her zesty spirit stays and we are grateful.

All the best, Loretta!