

This reflection is the first of a 2 part series. The second of this series will be in April. These two reflections are meant to serve as seasonal and spiritual bookends. In April we will celebrate emergence. Today we prepare for submergence.

Last week we met the season spiritually. We aligned our spirits with the rhythms of our mother and our mothers; the earth and our lineage. As our hemisphere settled into its decomposition, we welcomed our ancestors and beloved departed into our bodies; our earth.

We found there our descendants as well. We lingered with them all, the ancient and the not-yet, at the threshold of the otherworld and pondered what of them we would carry forward. We became aware that we are the threshold. And then, with gratitude for all they have given us, we bid them adieu.

Sort of.

You see, by becoming aware - of them in us and us in them - by recognizing that their aspects and our aspects are not so dissimilar, it might be that we are now more equipped to follow the course of the season with full awareness into the underworld - the realm our ancestors and dearly departed seem inhabit more appropriately than the material world in which we here typically operate.

They may be our guides and guardian angels as we now cross the threshold into the dark. As the days grow short and shrouded, as the trees bare their limbs, and fields go fallow; as the musky scent of decay at a riverbank has, if you're lucky, become more prominent in your walkabouts, our whole hemisphere, and us with it, enters a period of creative dormancy.

This is true both biologically and spiritually. Biologically it is the season of breakdown and compost. Spiritually is that of the dreamworld, the otherworld, the underworld. To me, there is but little distinction between the spiritual and biological. Being aware of it makes it meaningful.

Before us is the season of mists; the decadent time of the year. That we are aware of it and have prepared for it may prove to be a blessing and may make of this dreaming season an epoch of inspiration. All dreams are mystifying, so changeable and ridiculous. Sometimes they are terrifying, sometimes ecstatic, but always otherworldly. This is true even when the dreams seem so real. Like right now.

Given the strangeness and disorientation that is the very ecology of the otherworld, there may be moments of doubt and fear ahead. Be that as it may, we will not rush for there is no rushing the world. We will neither hurry nor tarry. But abide here knowing it is for reasons larger than us, and an opportunity to come into harmony with those reasons.

And though the road be, at times, muddy and rough and our way unknown to us, we will accord to the spin of our mother, and walk in the aspect of dream in harmony with our planet. For in the fulness of time, and if our time here is well spent, we are promised that the underworld will sprout, the dreamer will awaken, and the other will become us.

But not yet. Not now. We must be dreamers first. It is not, at present, a time for making, but a time for reflecting. What work there is becomes internal. We envision before we build. Dreaming is a necessary part of the cycle. And dreams realized are no longer dreams. Dreams need to incubate and mature and gather, in due course, a body. Our body. In due course.

Materialized too soon, dreams perish. They need to develop in the womb of the season until they are able to survive outside the womb. So let us set aside the need to materialize our every moment and press on into the world where inspiration is born and incubated. For the underworld is also a womb.

It is okay if you are presently perplexed, uncertain, befuddled, or confused. It is, in fact, appropriate. The otherworld is, by its nature, at least a little mystifying. If it is not mystifying, it is not likely the otherworld.

Mystification is important. It is a kind of unmaking. In defying our expectations about how things work - like, say, a sermon or an identity, or a nation - mystification breaks us down, takes us apart a little, and undoes our assumptions. Being mystified, which is to say, having a mystical experience, overwrites our code, undermines our stories, and takes us apart to give us space to transform.

In this, we mirror the earth. We are of the earth. We are the earth. And the half of the earth we occupy in this season is letting go, breaking down, decomposing; returning to its parts, returning to itself. It is a necessary transformation for the furtherance of life. And also the evolution of ideas. And also history. Compost turns death to life.

It is a decomposition that is held in care. Just as we hold one another, the soil is held by the earth as it composts into something capable of fostering life once again, something resurrective and uprising, something transformed. It is a decomposition we will celebrate in ceremony next week during soil communion. So do remember to bring soil as a symbol of what you are decomposing. And bring a dream to plant in that earth.

The underworld, otherworld, dreamworld, rootworld is a world of transformation. It is, in that sense, a chrysalis as well as a womb. It is a time to dissolve and release form, a time to dream and develop and learn, a time of disorientation and metamorphosis, a place where we are led and

held in care by those no longer beholden to time; our ancestors, our descendants and, perhaps in extremis, ourselves.

It is as natural as the spin of the earth. That spin is a vestige of the momentum generated by the forming of our solar system, which itself was already spinning due to the creation of the galaxy and universe. The shifting season is a lineage itself; a line back to the great making; the origin of everything, the primordial patterning that made music out of nothing.

Part of that music was a rest. Part of that patterning was the outward motionless and internal catharsis of a chrysalis. And this cathartic chrysalis, this creative dormancy is not only necessary for an ecosystem, nor only necessary for each of us personally. From time to time it is also necessary for the larger systems made when multiples of the entities I just mentioned come together.

Cathartic chrysalis is sometimes necessary for a nation, for a planet, for a paradigm. I suggest that sometimes is now. I know you feel it. Our nation is in a fit of unmaking. We will build something renewed. But first we must dream it. What will we build?

Our planet convulses and seems to shake its mane like a dog shaking of tics. Let me be clear, we are not the tics. But the systems we have made; systems based on infinite growth with finite resources, are. We will build new systems, new ways of being in relationship with our planet, ways of meaning rather than exploitation. But first we must dream them. What new systems will we build?

Both our nation and our planetary relationships are couched in yet a larger system. Our paradigm. Our world view. Our story of us and all we encounter. This also, and in natural accord with the other two, is experiencing collapse. But like most so-called collapses throughout human history, this one will also obliterate hierarchy and require cooperation. We will craft a new story of who we are, what our purpose is, and how we relate to each other and our world. But first we must dream them. What new paradigm will we birth?

And of course you are included in this great re-making. It is a larger cycle containing the fractal cycle of our individual lives. What in you needs to perish so that you may flourish? What in you needs to be released, to loosen your grasp on your soul? Before you know what you will do, you will need the space to transform. You will need to compost a bit. And then you may dream of how you want to be. What are you dreaming?

Next week we will release and plant in the soil of community. We will begin to dream and walk in rhythm with the cyclical dance of death and rebirth, compost and creation. Let it be a dance. And let us preview our dreams with a song. Please rise in body or spirit.