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*Creative*  
TRANSFORMATION

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*exploring the growing edge of religious life*

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***Creative Transformation...***

takes its name from the belief of process theologians that God's work is always *creative* and always *transformative*; and that wherever *creative transformation* is occurring, God is there. This means that instead of clinging to past formulations of faith and the ways of action that used to work, we are striving to be co-workers with God by seeking new formulations and more effective ways of action.

John B. Cobb, Jr.

# Process & Faith News

by Judy Casanova

Very recently, I heard Winton Marsallis interviewed on the radio. He was asked what got him into music, and he told a story about a man who got the neighborhood children playing instruments. Winton said that this man couldn't read music, so he would sing all the parts in turn—"Drums, you do this; trumpets, this is your part. . . ." Then he would have them all play together—and Winton said they sounded just horrible. Then this man would beam at them and say, "Beautiful, just beautiful. Now *that* was music!" And Winton realized that the old man really *was* hearing the music—even through all their noise.

It seems to me that God is like that wonderful old man. God doesn't shove the musical score at us (all written down), expect us to "get it right," and bring it to humiliating public attention when we don't quite "make it." (We, either individually or corporately as the church, may do this to each other, but God doesn't treat us that way.) Rather God sings us the parts—in sun and wind, the sea and all growing things, loss and pain, the faces around us. Then God has us all play together—and it's usually a pretty discordant mess! But in and through it all, God hears the music. And, realizing that God truly does hear the music in the cacaphony of life, in time, like Winton Marsallis, we also learn to hear and to play the music.

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David Polk has been away in Europe, but is back now and has promised to respond to our proposal for the graded Church School curriculum (in the mail, David?) so that we can make an appeal to individuals and churches to support this work. Meanwhile, we are daily adding to our lists of will-be writers and interested churches.

Thanks to a student internship grant from the William Stegall Foundation, we are adding to our staff. Sung Sohn, a second year divinity student, was born in Korea and has resided in the United States for the past fourteen years. He tells some of his story in his article on p.10.

Don't forget our summer course, A Theology of Belonging, being offered this year at STC, June 7-11. This is an intensive week-long introduction to process theology, to be taught by Drs. Cobb, Beardslee and Breazeale.

We have also planned a party to honor Mary Elizabeth Moore who is leaving STC for the Chandler School of Theology at Emory. The party will be at my home, 691 W. 12th St. in Claremont on June 9. It will be an evening of food, music

and poetry. All friends of Mary Elizabeth and/or process are cordially invited. Do let me know by E-mail ([judy@ctr4process.org](mailto:judy@ctr4process.org)) if you can attend and plan on bringing salad, desert or drinks (wine and grilled salmon will be furnished on the premises).

Last but hardly least, we are forming a Board of Directors for Process and Faith. Initial members are Kathi Breazeale, Patricia Farmer, Paul Lance, Nelson Stringer, Rick Marshall, John Quiring and Nelson Stringer. The idea is to have local people who can meet with us on a regular basis for guidance and support. A partial board met on May 4, to discuss activities and fundraising for the next year. It was a wonderful meeting and Will and I were much encouraged by the ideas and dedication of our new board members.

Nelson Stringer continues to update our web site. Do check it out regularly: [www.ctr4process.org/p&f](http://www.ctr4process.org/p&f)

## ***God is Here***

*Judy Casanova*

*Life is sacred, life is holy, God is here.  
Life is sacred, life is holy, God is here.  
God is present in our hope,  
in our doubt and in our fear,  
as close as our breathing, God is here.*

*For God's kingdom is among us, share the news.  
Yes, God's kingdom is among us, share the news.  
God is present in our work,  
God is present in the pews,  
and the common with the holy God imbues.*

*In the wondrous, in the splendid, God is here.  
In the boring, in the banal, God is here.  
Through the ages, to the present,  
God's voice calls to those who hear  
If we look, we can see God everywhere.*

# Two Pastors Speak of Littleton

THE REAL THING  
Butch Henderson

This past Tuesday, April 20, I went over to Claremont High School to meet with the student planning committee for this year's Baccalaureate Service. I went with some measure of trepidation—not because of the tragedy unfolding at Columbine High School in Littleton. At the time, I was unaware of it. No, I was apprehensive because I didn't know who was on the Claremont High School student committee. The Baccalaureate Service has to be *interfaith*. It has to be sensitive to the religious and cultural diversity among over 500 graduating seniors. Every student and adult participant has to avoid presenting one's own faith as superior to anyone else's. So I was worried that the volunteer committee might be a group of conservative, born-again Christian types who could make my work as coordinator difficult.

I was met by a student committee of five girls, five young women graduating from Claremont High School. I passed around a yellow pad and asked them to give me their names and religious affiliations. Let me read you the results. *Binita Patel, Hindu. Inna Liv, Buddhist. Emile Mitescu, Eastern Orthodox. Juliana Mittino, Roman Catholic, Meghan Beierle-O'Brien, Lutheran.* Then I handed out the guidelines for an interfaith baccalaureate. Their faces beamed with understanding and appreciation. What a moment! I left on a high, thinking to myself, this is **THE REAL THING!**

Driving out of the school parking lot, I turned on the car radio. There was news from another high school. It wasn't about a baccalaureate committee. It was about the *Trenchcoat Mafia*. And you know the rest of the story which has broken our hearts. One student group out to destroy other student groups, athletes and blacks and academics, a microcosm of Kosovo-ethnic-cleansing-and-war on a Colorado high school campus. **SURREAL! UNREAL!**

And all week long, we've heard analysis upon analysis: How could this happen? Why? What caused this? Psychologists, politicians, educators, law enforcement authorities, news commentators,

DON'T JUST WATCH!  
Tari Lennon

Searing images of frantic parents and quivering children in one of America's proud suburban climes burn their way into our souls. Sounds of children screaming, guns popping, chaos erupting in the corridors of an ordinary high school on an ordinary day in an ordinary community stun our brains into uncomprehending silence.

Within minutes of the catastrophe's explosion, crews of reporters, banks of photographers, and a multitude of talking heads descended on Littleton, Colorado, competing with medics, police, forensic specialists, and investigators for space—and we watch.

And the second-guessing and the hind-sighting and the what-iffing, and the should-shoulding begin—and we watch.

Some of us have the human sense to grow nauseous, to cry, to get sick, to sob. And some of us, in our terror and out of the experience of shared devastation, reach out to one another.

In the embrace, for a moment, tentatively, longingly, we wonder—after the shock passes, the grief has turned to anger, the words cease, feelings abate and life goes on—will anything have changed? Will we have come to a moment of national clarity? At last, will we, the nation of optimists, the people of limitless horizons and unbounded possibilities, a country of infinite belief in itself and unbridled trust in the future, will we at long last confess and face the fact of evil?—And will we do more than watch?

Dear Friends, if ever our country needed its spiritual and religious communities, it is now. If there was ever a moment for us to dare to be true to the faith we honor and risk the kind of honesty that Jesus calls us to learn, it is now. If there was ever an opportunity to “change the things we can,” it is now. And the work begins with us. In the days ahead, we will explore together the how. Don't just watch!

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*Henderson, continued from previous page*

religious leaders, parents, all of us have struggles to understand the unthinkable. This preacher does *not* have the answer. We must find the answer together. But in our searching together, I want us to reflect upon one persistently asked question, “**Did these two high school students act alone?**”

I think not. And I’m not talking about who carried the munitions into the school. I’m talking about a larger issue. I think they acted with the support of a society and a culture filled with the structures of prejudice and hate. Structures that taught them how to demonize and destroy the enemy and how to obtain guns and make bombs to do so. And I submit that before these boys were victimizers they were victims. They were the lonely, left-out, ignored-or-made-fun-of ones cowering by their lockers in the school halls. At the bottom of an E-mail sent by one of these boys were these pathetic words: “**Ich bin ein auslander. I’m an outsider.**” I agree that “**It takes a whole village to raise a child.**” But it works both ways. A whole village raised these two boys and others like them.

This is *Good Shepherd Sunday*. The *Fourth Sunday of Easter* is always the *Sunday of the Good Shepherd*. And we’ve heard again the familiar words of the *23rd Psalm*: “**GOD IS MY SHEPHERD. . . THE ONE WHO PREPARES A TABLE FOR ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES. . .**” And the words of Jesus Christ according to the Gospel of John: “**I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. I KNOW MY OWN AND MY OWN KNOW ME.**”

I was well along in preparing a sermon for this morning when all the news broke. As you can see, I’ve changed the script. But not the message of the text. The words of Jesus in the Gospel of John are all about how to tell a *GOOD SHEPHERD* from a *Bad SHEPHERD*, how to know the difference between *a fake, a phony, a forgery* and *THE REAL THING*.

A recent article in the New York Times about art forgery begins with these words: “Fakes are a fact of life in the art world. They slip into even the finest museum collections and auctions and galleries, usually one at a time.” Hollywood’s Samuel Goldwyn had this to say about fakes: “The most important in acting is honesty. Once you’ve learned to fake that, you’re in.”

So there are fake mentors, fakes leading and influencing our youth—whether they are parents or religious groups or websites or gangs or the influence of music and media violence. *Bad SHEPHERDS* are legion. In our Gospel text, Jesus calls them “**THIEVES WHO COME ONLY TO KILL**

**AND DESTROY. . . HIRED HANDS WHO CARE NOTHING FOR THE SHEEP. . .**” We know them by other names: *Klan, Gothics, Militias, etc.* Can you believe the NRA had the gall to cut their planned three-day convention in Denver to only one day “*out of respect*” for the massacre in Littleton?!

What’s the role of the church? We’ve heard so much about “*family values.*” Of course, they’re important. Where were the parents while these boys were making bombs in their garage? But what about *community values*? Could it be that our mission and ministry as a church is to model a community after the *GOOD SHEPHERD, THE REAL THING*, a community in which no one is an outsider, where no one is less than another, where everyone is respected and loved.

There are three marks of such a community in our text from John: (1) The *GOOD SHEPHERD* says, “**MY SHEEP WILL BE SAVED**”—made whole, healthy, embraced. (2) “**THEY WILL GO IN AND OUT**”—freed and accepted to be who they are. (3) “**AND FIND PASTURE**”—be nourished and cared for.

If there’s no other reason for us to be here, to be Claremont United Church of Christ, it’s reason enough to show our children what an *Open and Affirming Christian Community* is all about. A place where no one stands lonely by a locker, where no one is an “*auslander,*” an outsider, where the voices of *Bad SHEPHERDS* never get a hearing because the *GOOD SHEPHERD* speaks so loud and clear. According to John, Jesus says, “**I CAME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE AND HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY. I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. . .**”

That’s *THE REAL THING!*

I submit that [these two high school students] acted with the support of a society and a culture filled with the structures of prejudice and hate. Structures that taught them how to demonize and destroy the enemy and how to obtain guns and make bombs to do so.

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# Marriage After Patriarchy?

Kathlyn A. Breazeale

How do our intimate sexual relationships both reflect and shape our religious and political commitments? What kind of people will we become out of the current public religious movements and public policy decisions regarding marriage? How can the Whiteheadian concept of relationality be helpful in the current marriage debate, a debate that has brought issues of human sexuality to the center of public attention?

The current controversy is but one in U.S. history. One of the reasons the Puritans came to New England was to escape English marriage law that would not allow them to marry in the church of their choice.<sup>1</sup> The controversy surrounding interracial marriages raged for the greater part of the nation's history,<sup>2</sup> until these unions were legalized in 1967. The issue of same-sex marriage was not raised in the courts until 1972, when, in the case of *Baker v. Nelson*, two gay men were denied a marriage license in Minnesota. Wide-spread public attention to this issue was not prominent until 1993 with the Hawaii case of *Baehr v. Lewin*. The intensity and power of the opposition to same-sex marriages is evident in the passage of the Defense of Marriage Act. This Act "was passed by overwhelming margins in both the House and the Senate and was signed into law by President Clinton in September 1996 in the middle of the night" (Sullivan 1997, 201). It specifically defines marriage to be, "only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife," and the word spouse as *only* "a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife." (Sullivan 1997, 203)

The influence of religious belief has been a significant factor in the current marriage controversy. A recent *Newsweek* poll reported that of the Americans surveyed, sixty-seven percent declared that same-sex marriage violated their religious beliefs. Even fifty-six percent of those who favored civil same-sex marriage stated that such marriages violated their religion (Sullivan 1997, xxiv). Furthermore, according to the "Report of the Hawaii Commission on Sexual Orientation and the Law," groups on both sides of the debate in Hawaii appealed to religious beliefs to support their positions (Baird and Rosenbaum 1997, 222, 224).<sup>3</sup>

The popularity of the Promise Keepers movement has focused public attention on this group's interpretation of marriage. The Promise Keeper (PK) concept of

Christian marriage is succinctly stated in promise four: "A Promise Keeper is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values" (Abraham 1997, 57). Expounding on this promise, Pastor Tony Evans, a popular PK speaker, instructs husbands to reclaim their leadership role in their families. Evans writes: "I'm not suggesting that you *ask* for your role back, I'm urging you to *take it back*;" Evans maintains that "God never intended" women to "shoulder the leadership load alone" (Abraham 1997, 106, 107).

Could the PK interpretation of "love, protection, and biblical values" be incorporated into future marriage law? According to a recent survey, one-fourth of all registered U.S. voters are white Protestants, and most Promise Keepers are "white, married Protestants with above-average educations and incomes" (Abraham 1997, 159).<sup>4</sup> Based on these statistics, Ken Abraham, author of the 1997 book *Who Are the Promise Keepers?*, offers this opinion: "It is easy to surmise that Promise Keepers is therefore not only becoming one of the most powerful religious forces in America today, but also rapidly cementing one of the most powerful voting blocks in American politics" (Abraham 1997, 159).

Aware that religious and cultural beliefs have influenced the development of marriage law from the beginning of this nation, and that a history of controversy about marriage in the United States has preceded the current same-sex marriage debate, a thoughtful and clearly reasoned dialogue is needed to engage this debate. How might a process-relational theology of partner relationships offer a response to the current controversy?

The process-relational conception of past, present and future describes how public religious movements and policy decisions regarding marriage influence the kind of people we will become. As Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki has written, "The present holds the past and future together in a dynamism which determines the importance of the past. This dynamism also sets boundaries for what the future might become. (Suchocki 1988b, 10) Our personal and corporate identity is dynamic: just as we are shaped by external influences, so we impact that which is other than ourselves, There is

no entity which enjoys an isolated self-sufficiency of existence.” (End of E, 166, fn3)

Suchocki notes “The world as described by process thought” is both “beautiful” and “dangerous” (Suchocki 1988b, 22). The danger arises from the fact that relationality is an inescapable fact of existence, making us peculiarly vulnerable to each other. Our intimate partner relationships are one of our greatest opportunities both for sin and for redemption, both for advancing or hindering the common good. Sin can be defined as a violation of our interrelatedness that causes harm to another: redemption as creative transformation toward the good that occurs only in community. In proposing how a process-relational theology of partner relationships can enhance our opportunity for redemption through intimacy, I will discuss three issues: power, the concept of God, and the relationality between body and soul.

Marriage has been an unequal power relationship throughout most of Western history with the husband having legal and religious power over his wife. During the Roman period, only upper-class men and women were allowed to marry, and these men had the power of life and death over their wives through the law of *pater familias*.<sup>5</sup> Medieval and Reformation period husbands could exercise their power through the common law “rule of thumb” which gave a husband permission to beat his wife with a stick as long as the stick was no thicker than his thumb.<sup>6</sup> The battered wife had virtually no power to seek redress from either religious or legal authorities. Most Christian leaders held that wives should submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22).<sup>7</sup> Before the law, wives had virtually no identity separate from their husbands until the early decades of this century when women won the right to vote.<sup>8</sup>

Process theologians have argued that the concept of power as dominance over others creates a barrier to love and intimacy. “If power always means the exercising of influence and control, and if receiving always means weakness and a lack of power, then a creative and strong love that comprises a mutual giving and receiving is not possible.” (Loomer 1976, 19) Rita Nakashima Brock builds on Loomer’s work as she describes how the traditional dominate male/subordinate female arrangement exploits both women and men:

While the male seeks to dominate those with less power, he is expected to sacrifice himself to God, country, or company. Hence, while self-sacrifice and martyrdom seem more feminine, being exploited is expected of men for the sake of higher authority. Escape from exploitation must be through attainment of higher authority, a more typically masculine aspiration, or through protection sought from it, a more typically feminine approach. In addition, both male domination and fe-

male dependency require the suppression of the self’s own feelings. (Brock 1991, 32)

Thus as we are socialized to behave according to gender role stereotypes, we must suppress our own feelings, and this suppression creates effective barriers to the genuine intimacy we could experience with each other.

In contrast to the concept of power as dominance and control, or unilateral power, Loomer identifies an alternative concept of power as relational. Relational power “is the ability both to produce and to undergo an effect. . . . [it] involves both a giving and a receiving” (Loomer 1976, 17). Similarly, Brock, “We must move away from seeing power as a commodity possessed by a self toward seeing it as the bonds which create and sustain, and are recreated and sustained by relational selves.” (Brock 1991, 34)

In a process-relational theology of partner relationships, both partners are empowered through the practice of relational power. This practice releases each partner from preconceived power roles of dominance or submission. Through both giving and receiving, partners are free to express their authentic feelings, thus creating bonds of mutual empowerment and possibilities for genuine, redemptive intimacy.

In suggesting the concept of redemptive intimacy, I am building on Loomer’s notion of the “true good.” He asserts that the “true good is an emergent from deeply mutual relationships” (Loomer 1976, 19). Loomer argues that even when love for the other motivates one to seek to control the other for the other’s good, the exercise of unilateral power has the limitation of a preconceived good. The preconceived good is a limitation because it “often exemplifies the conscious or unconscious desire to transform the other in one’s own image” (Loomer 1976, 19). If one partner seeks to transform the other in his/her own image, authentic feelings are suppressed and intimacy is blocked. One has sinned against the other by seeking to limit the possibilities for the self that other is becoming and the possibilities for the selves the two can become together. Loomer describes how the possibilities for each partner emerge from the particularities of the partner relationship itself:

A wife is not the occasion whereby a man actualizes husbandly possibilities that reside or subsist wholly within the confines of his enclosed selfhood. The husbandly and wifely possibilities of the respective partners are peculiar to and are created out of that particu-

Our intimate partner relationships are one of our greatest opportunities both for sin and for redemption, both for advancing or hindering the common good.

lar marital relationship in which each helps to create the other. The more deeply mutual and creative the relationship, the wider the range of emergent possibilities for those participating in the relationship. (Loomer 1976, 20-21)

The association of the husband's authority with divine authority has been one of the primary justifications for the traditional power imbalance between husbands and wives. As recently as June 10, 1998, this power imbalance was affirmed by the Southern Baptist Convention with their resolution that: "A wife is to submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ" (Woodward 1998, 69). Proposing an alternative to the traditional concept of power in partner relationships thus necessitates proposing an alternative to the traditional concept of God.

In contrast to the omnipotent, impassible, "unmoved mover" of traditional Christian theology, Whitehead proposes that God's "consequent nature" is determined largely by the actions of the world, "[B]y reason of the relativity of all things, there is a reaction of the world on God. The completion of God's nature into a fullness of physical feeling is derived from the objectification of the world in God." (Whitehead 1978, 345 [1929])

Embracing Whitehead's notion of the consequent nature of God enhances our capacity for intimacy in relationship because this notion of God's relationship

to humans is intimate: we participate in God's becoming complete.<sup>9</sup> History has demonstrated that our human relationships mirror our image of our relationship to God.. When the Whiteheadian notion of God replaces the hierarchical image, power flows from God to creatures *and* from creatures to God. We become co-creators with God and, as such, experience our relationship with God as a creative process, and are encouraged to risk relationships of creative process with a human partners. This creative process includes the practice of relational power, the giving and receiving necessary for honest communication and empathy. Whitehead's description of God's love as both giving and receiving becomes the ultimate model for how we can love each other toward creating genuine intimacy, "What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. By reason of this reciprocal relation, the love

in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world. In this sense, God is the great companion - the fellow-sufferer who understands. (Whitehead 1978, 351)

The association of male with the superior soul and female with the inferior body has been another primary justification for the rule of the husband. These associations from classical Greek philosophy were incorporated into Christian theology and have functioned to devalue both the body and women. This devaluation has been further exacerbated by the Christian association of sin with women, the body, and sexuality.

An alternative to this traditional Greek and Christian hierarchy of male/soul over female/body is found in Whitehead's ontology of relationality between body and soul. Foundational to Whitehead's conception of how body and soul are related is his principle that reality is composed of occasions of experience. As each occasion of experience is coming into being, it has a "physical pole" through which it receives the influence of the past or actuality, and a "mental pole" through which it entertains the possibility of novelty. Both body and soul are composed of occasions that have physical and mental poles, so a simple association of physical with body and mental with soul is not supported by Whitehead's philosophy.

The mental pole of every occasion, cellular or psychic, is the occasion's entertainment of new possibilities. However, the body is organized as to allow one type of occasion, that which constitutes the soul, to be especially affected by novelty and then to transmit that novelty to successive occasions, so that the novelty is cumulative, thus constituting the soul as a "living person." As a result, the soul is the locus of the entertainment of ideas for the whole body. The body depends on the soul as the center for organizing for the human being's perceptions.

Simultaneously, the soul depends on the body. The body provides the most immediate and most influential environment for the soul as the body mediates the contemporary world to the soul through experiences of space and time. The body is organized so that bodily sensations, *feelings*, are "poured" into the ongoing moments of the soul. Thus the occasions of experience which constitute the soul can include more elements of bodily experiences than any other individual part of the body. Yet just as the body includes the soul, the soul includes the body "the body in particular provides the stuff for the personal endurance of the soul." (Whitehead 1968, 162) Whitehead understands the relationship of body and soul as inclusive of each other. Although the soul is not limited to the body, for example, it remembers the past, the body is primary because the soul is constituted by the actual world of experience

Whitehead overturns the traditional hierarchy of superior soul over inferior body, providing clues for developing a theology of partner relationships for the common good.

mediated through the body. In fact, our bodies influence us so much that we experience ourselves as “bodied souls” or “souled bodies.”

Through the body’s perceptions of its surroundings, the body guides the soul; the soul receives both the influence of the past and God’s best possibility for the person at that moment in the given situation. The soul is free within the context of its present to appropriate the past without being bound to the past. In this way the soul guides the body.

Whitehead overturns the traditional hierarchy of superior soul over inferior body, providing clues for developing a theology of partner relationships for the common good. First, the body is not inferior to the soul because both body and soul are constituted by shared experiences in a relationship of reciprocity as body and soul alternately guide each other. The soul is a source of wisdom for the body as the body mediates experiences of the actual world to the soul. Thus, the bodies of both partners should be revered as the body has a primary role in physical and spiritual development.

Second, Whitehead’s position undercuts the traditional association of soul with male and body with female because gender is not assigned to either body or soul. Therefore, the primacy of the body in daily experience is acknowledged for both partners as human beings. Whereas the body is not inferior, and woman is not associated with the body, therefore the wife is not considered to be inferior to her husband. The theological justification for her subordination to him on the basis of her inferiority is repudiated.

In summary, since our personal identity is constituted by our relationships, our intimate partner relationships are one of our greatest opportunities both for sin and for redemption. Partners can experience redemptive intimacy by practicing relational power, thus creating the “true good” that can emerge only in mutual relationships. As we experience the intimacy of co-creating with God by participating in forming the Divine nature, we are encouraged to risk the intimacy of co-creating mutuality with a human partner. Furthermore, Whitehead’s conception of reciprocity between body and soul can negate the traditional associations of male/superior soul ruling over female/inferior body, enabling partners to practice relational power.

To get back to the current marriage debate: in the process world of relationality, my partner and I not only influence the becoming of each other for good or evil, we but also the becoming of our community. Therefore, one factor in determining sanctioned partnerships in our society should be not the gender of the two persons, but rather, the quality of partner relationship that will enable the greatest development of good in the community. As Loomer argued, the “true good” can only

emerge through the practice of relational power in deeply mutual relationships. With relational power as our criterion, we could simultaneously strive toward mutual empowerment in our intimate partnerships and work to change social structures that perpetuate violence and oppression through unilateral power. On the eve of the twenty-first century, we have the opportunity to reconsider one of the most intimate aspects of our lives as we decide what kind of people we will become in the new century that lies before us. It is clear that the continued practice of unilateral power will facilitate the destruction of all of us in our ecologically fragile nuclear age. But, as Loomer writes: “The practice of relational power is an incredibly difficult art to master. This type of power requires the most disciplined kind of mutual encouragement and criticism. The creative openness to this type of relationship involves possibilities of the greatest advance and the greatest risk. (Loomer 1976, 26)

I pray that we will develop the “mutual encouragement and criticism” to risk mutual empowerment both in our homes and in our communities.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> These religious nonconformists opposed Lord Hardwicke’s Act, passed by the English parliament in 1753; this Act declared a marriage void if it was not celebrated in the Church of England. The New England colonies adopted English law primarily as it had existed prior to this act: a public ceremony, either religious or civil, was not required to contract a valid marriage. These unions became known as common-law marriages. In contrast, the English concept of marriage as sacrament performed only by Church of England clergy generally prevailed in the Southern colonies.

<sup>2</sup> Although Michigan had declared interracial marriages valid in 1883, in 1952 more than half the states still had laws prohibiting miscegenation. While the most common prohibition was against the marriage of whites and African Americans, some states also specified Native Americans, Chinese, Japanese, and Malaysians. Georgia, Louisiana, and Virginia had all-encompassing statutes that simply prohibited whites from marrying anyone but whites (Pilpel and Zavin 1952, 26-28), Virginia, however, wishing, “to recognize as an integral and honored part of the white race the descendants of John Rolfe and Pocahontas;” extended the legal definition of white was to include “persons who have one-sixteenth or less of the blood of the

As we experience the intimacy of co-creating with God by participating in forming the Divine nature, we are encouraged to risk the intimacy of co-creating mutuality with a human partner.

*continued on page 22*

# A New World of Faith

Sung Sohn

During the journey of life, moments of enlightenment occur that cause one to make significant changes in the direction of one's life. "Theology of Belonging," a summer course at Claremont Theological Seminary opened my journey to a new world of faith. It taught me to look at the world differently, to see things through a Whiteheadian frame. This new mode

of thought has guided me to rethink deeply and consider fresh perspectives of who I am, who God is, who Christ is, and how crucial are my relationships with others.

Process thought begins with the importance of the experience of daily events of life. The experiences of new moments flowing into the present become a series of experiences. According to Whitehead, knowledge is gained through through a conscious recognition of certain experiences. Therefore the existence of a human being can be interpreted as a way of recognizing memorable experience that would lead to changeable becoming instead of static being.

Another important element of process thought is relationships. It teaches me that I am not alone in this world. I am connected to others in the world and the world is tied to me. There are no breaks in those ties.

Relational theology helps me to understand that God is not a remote being, supreme in power, a problem solver who controls all domestic and public matters, but the most persuasive, effective and creative love of all. God's love does not control me but persuades me to harmonize with others. The nature of harmony in the complexity of relationships and infinite possibility is God.

God's incarnate presence in the world can be understood through Christ's presence in Christianity. Through him, Christians feel God's presence. His teachings were powerful because, throughout his life,

he put them into action rather than merely preaching abstract theories and concepts. His teachings advocated simplicity and his radical and impractical life challenged the norm of society. Christ's effectiveness is especially strong when people open themselves to him.

This vision has made my faith live in a new way. The journey with God is not always a safe and problem-free track. It is adventurous because God's creative impulse is unpredictable and God is the basic source of unrest in the universe. God is not urging us to lead repetitious lives, but stimulates us to realize new possibilities to increase our enjoyment.

I am a native Korean who has lived in the United States for the past fourteen years. Defining a personal identity is an uneasy process for a Korean American. One of the biggest transitions I had to make when I began to learn English was to change my mindset from "we" to "I." In Korean, personal acts and possessions are referred to by the pronouns "we" and "our." For instance, my father always referred to my mother as "our wife." Personal belongings are mixed with multiple people's belongings. I sometimes experience the emotional death of isolation among the majority of Americans. Process has given me a way to recapture the "we" of my Koreanness.

I am a person involved in many relationships including family, school and church. My existing personality characterizes the dynamics of my relationships with others. My actual presence is constituted of my values, feelings, sense of purpose, and creativity. My past actuality influences my present and my present existence becomes the power of the future. This process of becoming drives me toward being more effective than I presently am. I become me from what we are. My past Koreanness continues to live in my Americanness. I have not abandoned my past identity, but by being set into a new and larger context, these identities are creatively transformed.

Now my American I-ness is being transformed into a Whiteheadian we-ness. According to John Cobb, creative transformation is the essence of growth, and growth is the essence of life. It alters

the existence of a human being can be interpreted as a way of recognizing memorable experience that would lead to changeable becoming instead of static being

my nature without suppressing or destroying my past. To love another is to allow that person's feelings to affect me. The person who has creative love completes God's work by being creatively transformed. Although the ultimate locus of creative transformation is always my personal experience, its effects manifest themselves publicly in my relationship with others. I can apply my relational "we" thinking in ministry, art making, and family caring in all its forms. Christ can be fully effective where I believe in creative transformation, understand it rightly, and open myself to it.

"I" becomes "we" and we are an expression of community in a world which belongs to us and to which we belong. As I change, the world changes in me. What then is my responsibility to the community?

First, I can be a part of creativity. In maintaining our celebration of belonging in community, my creativity must also transform it. As a Korean, I do not throw away my past, nor accept it without innovations, but embrace the possibility of continuous shifts and changes in the formation of a better church. My role is that of co-creator whose imagination and values are keenly aware of the values and symbols of other members. My influence as co-creator increases to the extent that I can relate; to the extent that I can promote the potential of the past in anticipation of the congregations' future. This is not so much a question of analytical intelligence, but of insight into the real consequences of cumulative past victories.

Second, I am part of the hope of the future. The process model itself introduces new elements in constant flow because the becoming of the object itself is the process which can be a future. One element is faith. The realization of a better church environment must be a balanced fusion of spontaneous faith. By faith, love is possible and brings hope. By faith we move away from materialism, determinism, arrogance and controls. The community itself is the vast field of knowledge, information, communications, memory, and co-ordination, creation that grows out of the energy of matter. As long as I actualize full capacity of knowledge for the community then that will be a hope for the community. My role as a Christian is crucial because I am part of our community's creativity and destiny of hope.

The idea of process thought draws me to the adventurous experience of daily events of life. Process thought challenges me to live in a creative way instead of following the conventional way.

Process thought challenges me to celebrate with others in our daily living. In being a part of my faith

community I must transform it. The faith community uses the concepts of symbolic reference, and is capable of achieving a keen awareness of the distant past, the contemporary environment, and the anticipated future of that group. The life I am living is the life I have created. As my immediate past fades away; I am liberated to live the present moment away from my past. My present has a new possibility for the future. The questions are many and there are no simple answers.

Whiteheadian process thought has enlightened me to recognize that daily life is series of artmaking. It taught me how valuable my past is to my present and future, it challenges me to review my faith as well as my identity. Its new perspective helps me to understand how crucial my relationships are and invites me to join with others in an adventurous non-stop inquiry of celebration in the creation of new communal life.

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Relational theology helps me to understand that God is not a remote being, supreme in power, a problem solver who controls all domestic and public matters, but the most persuasive, effective and creative love of all.

*GOD IS A VERB*

by Virginia Hamilton Adair

*Let me be giving, a green stemmed herb,  
Spirit of Living, our infinite verb.*

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*I am a pure or poisonous herb  
that can do honor or disturb  
the vast creations  
of the verb.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Our powers of destruction curb  
Oh, omnipresent, cosmic verb.*



# Poetry

Krista Givens

## METAPHOR

Compare to redemption  
the healing of flesh.  
The fortunate skin-mending truth  
for only beautiful scabbing  
reconstructs new surface  
from gaping wounds.

Who is the Christ that will save my skin?

Once  
surgeons cut me,  
opened my body and inserted metal objects  
stitched me up like an old worn sock  
with green colored thread,  
(later removed painfully, due to infection).  
They left to me a scar named sin.

The sin of vanity  
laid on my body as a reminder of pride  
as a reflection of what might have been  
as a memory of what was.

Then, in a dream, appears the Redeemer.  
Waves his hand over me  
and the sin of vanity and pride is healed.

and I ask him, Gone, is it, my sin?  
or will it return,  
an unwelcome visitor  
prepared to slash my redemption  
and set it to bleeding?

No, he tells me. It is healed,  
never to bleed your story again.  
But somehow, the healing seems  
unfinished.  
Is it never to be mentioned?  
Will I never be held accountable?

and I say  
Are you sure?  
It has been a number of years,  
and my sins have piled up.  
Shall I list them for you,  
or do you know of  
the missteps and misdirections;  
the plague of my  
youth and young-adulthood?

No need to list, he says  
you are healed.

And just as the Redeemer says  
you are healed,  
I am  
and standing  
and walking around  
and dancing.

But once awake  
I forget who the Redeemer was  
and what he said  
and if he visited me at all.

but the bleeding is mended  
and the red-soaked cloths  
lay piled on the floor  
with dried stories of past ache.

and although the open wounds  
of my body are healed  
they rest on my surface as scars  
as Redemption, I think  
a reminder of the process  
a reason for new life  
telling me stories  
of the journey and the journeyer  
the guided  
and the Guide.

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# Power Struggles and the Process Christian

Judith Boice Casanova

If we [Process  
Christians] really do  
have a different  
conception of  
power, what are we  
doing with it?

Power plays are so much a part of our Western mindset that the struggle for control seems built into every relationship, into every event. Yet we “process enlightened ones” are adamant that the only real power is the power that empowers. If we really do have a different conception of power, what are we doing with it?

Is it evident in our daily lives? And how do we deal with persons who do not share our enlightened view and are simply out to amass as much power over others (us) as is humanly possible? How can we deal with persons who are more powerful than we are and how can we help our children to survive in what appears, to this adult, to be a very difficult world?

In the movie, *One Best Thing*, a good woman dies of cancer having chosen to live daily shutting her eyes to her husband’s infidelity and shallowness. I am convinced that it does no good to shut our eyes in denial of our experience. But experience is very complex and seldom what we think of as ideal. Can process thinking really help us sort through the murky business of living? In particular, can it help us in this power dilemma? I think so, but only if we are willing to be as honest as we can be, readily admitting that even our honesty is, and will forever remain, partial. Most of us are not ready to admit either how bad or how good things are, both in our personal worlds or in the larger institutional, corporate or global world. We live and move in a cocoon of our own constructions, preferring to think that everything is OK. And like the woman in the movie, we pay the price in our bodies and in our most intimate relationships—in the air we breathe as well as the people we live with and the quality of our lives.

The more we are willing to see, the more complex reality becomes. Surprise! This can be very intimidating, but it can also be very freeing. Sometimes we process people talk as if there were only two kinds of power, the power over another and the power that empowers. While this is a helpful distinction, it can be just one more duality that establishes whether one is in or out. We need a theology that recognizes and affirms both the independence and the interdependence of many dif-

ferent kinds of power—and that teaches us to respect other powers without giving up our own.

At least in California, our children are already navigating in a world in which no one culture dominates. Appeals to the past or to any one past system do not carry much authority. Furthermore, these children need to operate in worlds their parents never even envisioned, let alone controlled. Worth and power are finally crossing racial lines. The internet is another factor in the crumbling away of old hierarchical systems. Not everyone, but more and more people have access to the same information. If knowledge is power, this is one power that is being shared.

Military power is quintessential power-over. We hear daily of NATO’s use of force in the current struggle with Yugoslavia. Even if this use of power is justified is it cost effective? Is this kind of power truly effectual at all? When our misguided children take up guns and blast their way into the news, do we feel guilty as a culture for surrounding them with images of violence? Given the cost of this kind of mentality, it is crucial that we think how we might deal with this problem from another perspective. Can we be powerful without using that power to bash someone weaker into submission? Can we use our power to develop other kinds of power? And if so, what are they and how do we get them? Sometimes, instead of bashing, we are the bashed. How do we then effectively stop the use of power-over?

I have written elsewhere<sup>1</sup> of male power and female power. Although patriarchy has denegated female power for roughly 5000 years, it is my contention that male power grows out of female power. The commonalities generally thought to be feminine—the fertility of the ground, the fertility of the womb, the quality of nurturing; the emotional realities between people, and the health of manufacture or production—are the base for all else of civilization produces. Yet these “feminine” realities depend for their preservation on what is generally thought to be “masculine” institutions—law, government, defense. When governmental structures collapse, the basic realities continue, but life can become fairly “nasty, brutal and short.”

In a similar way, we need to see that human power, both empowerment and power-over, depends on the ever more basic chain of being that extends to

quarks and neutrinos and beyond. For Christians, this means that our very ability to bash our fellows is made possible by the gracious empowerment of God. God, however, gets as well as gives. God is made richer, fuller, by the assimilation of everything that goes on. We, in all the complexity of our lives, add to the life of God.

So how does this help us deal with the use and abuse of power? First, I think it gives us a perspective out of which to recognize our own power. Because God is empowering the whole, God is also empowering us. None of us is without power. We each can, and whether we think we can or not, *do* influence the world around us. This is something every child, woman, and man needs to hear. We (and our children) can move among other powers because we are, in and of ourselves, powers. And no one, not even God or the greatest bully in the world (which just now seems to be the United States), has all power.

Second, we are dependent on each other for our personal and collective well being. This means that each of us has a part in shaping our fellows and are shaped by them. We need a religion that makes this kind of mutuality part of the sacred. So far, Western countries have not dealt with the whole power issue very well. To quote Burton Mack, “We have not been able to imagine a social system capable of adequate constraints on the abuse of power, much less a society in which the exercise of power is rewarded for its programs in support of human well-being.” In what I think is an accurate assessment, he adds, “unfortunately, the Christian gospel does not seem to help.”<sup>2</sup> Part of the trouble is that we are so shaped by our pasts which, if accepted unthinkingly, make us part of the problem and, if thought about, can mire us in shame and anger.

My daughter has just finished reading Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. This is a school book, assigned to the entire racially diverse class by a White teacher. It tells of one African male and his tribe as they confront the power of the White missionary and Western way of life for the first time. My daughter is filled with sadness and anger at the White religion that destroyed not only a Black way of life but individual people. Yet that same Christianity has formed her, and me and every Western individual, believer or not. Racism is built into our culture—as is the urge to teach, to open the eyes, to empower. Right now, in my daughter’s English class, the future is being formed, and everyone in the class—including Chinua Achebe—is forming it. If we are to see God there at all, we must see God as empowering the whole—the arrogant whites, the degraded Africans, the storyteller, the teacher, the individual class members and the past

that each brings to the story. Try praying to that God!

Third, it makes a tremendous difference who and what we back with our little bit of power. Caroline Myss has said repeatedly that the basic issue of our time is the use of personal power. I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to suggest that the primary way that we can use our personal power is by being aware of it. In every relationship, regardless of how unequal it may be, we have some power. My ninety year old neighbor told me that in the depression she and her sisters made their underwear out of the sacks that the chicken feed came in—and they saved the string from the top of the sacks and used it to crochet lace on their underpants so that they would be pretty! A Russian immigrant woman I once knew endured repeated beatings from her war brutalized husband until one day she put a few clothes in two shopping bags, and with her two very small children, walked to a motel and bartered cleaning services for a room. We all remember certain events from our past and use them to create our own identities. The very least we can do is choose what scenes we want to play over and over in the mental video, whose voices repeat in the tape deck of the mind.

What would it mean for a society to adopt the process concept of power? Could we stop trying to impose a future that we envision on others and open ourselves to seeing what the highest and best for all might be in any situation? Often this will mean not doing—not passing on that salacious bit of meanness, not rushing in to help. Sometimes it will mean not joining in—and it is then that we need to know that we are not alone, that we are in relationship with all that is even though we may seem to be standing on the outside. Sometimes we do need to act—to join with others in opposing the unacceptable.

The power struggles going on today are literally killing us and destroying our earth. Let’s claim our power and use it as process Christians to support and empower the common good.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion of male and female power, see *From Sacred Lies to Holy Wisdom*, (Claremont, CA:Pinch, 1998), pp 61-83.

<sup>2</sup> Burton Mack, *The Lost Gospel* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 256.

It makes a tremendous difference what we do with our little bits of power.

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# What Does It Mean to be the Christ?

Douglas Todd

Is Jesus Christ the one Lord and Saviour? It's a question that challenges millions of people, especially those who wonder whether they should be going to church. The question pinpoints a theological dilemma that's become more intense as the globe shrinks and we become more pluralistic, forced to see that truth may come from many sources. Many see the claim that Jesus is the one Lord and Savior, the only person with a claim to divinity, as a stumbling block to Christian faith.

In an era in which many people admire Hindus such as Gandhi and Buddhist monks such as the Dalai Lama, one prominent philosophical theologian who has dealt head-on with the question of whether Christ is the only Lord and Savior is John Cobb, a professor emeritus at the Claremont School of Theology. Cobb was raised by American Christian missionaries in Japan, where he attended a Canadian school. He was a highly devout Christian, the kind of boy who, instead of spending his money on candy, sent it to a mission for lepers in the Sudan.

Cobb was also bright. He ended up at the University of Chicago where, with a handful of young scholars that included Robert Pirsig, who would later write *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, he entered a program through which he was determined to expose himself to all the objections to Christianity produced by the modern world. It must have been some program. It caused Cobb to lose his faith within six months. It also brought on a nervous breakdown in Pirsig.

While Pirsig took decades to recover before writing his famous novel, Cobb was slowly reconstructing a Christology, an understanding of Jesus's religious significance, that would stand up to scrutiny in a pluralistic, multifaith world.

Now ranked among the world's leading Christian thinkers, Cobb is determined to show that televangelists such as Jerry Falwell (who say those who don't believe in Christ will go to hell) have not cornered the market on Christianity. So what does it mean to be the Christ?

The short answer, for Cobb, is that Christ is creative transformation, which is the essence of God. Jesus embodied the idea of creative transformation by being open to all. He hung out with the outcasts of ancient society—low-class women, tax collectors for the Ro-

man occupiers, children—and challenged the social and religious hierarchy. He blended and improved on ideas from Jewish and Greek tradition.

"I believe that it is precisely in Jesus that we see the transforming work of Christ most vividly manifest. The scholarship of the last generation has demonstrated that what is distinctive about Jesus's teaching is not so much a particular content as it is the way he challenged and broke open the deep-seated habits in the minds of his listeners," says Cobb.

"The end Jesus sought was neither to leave the listeners shattered nor to replace with a new content all that they had previously believed. It was instead to transform the whole of their understanding and belief through the shock of new recognition."

Cobb says Jesus deserves the title Christ because he acted as a unique conduit for God, who is the source of all creative transformation: all novelty, freedom, beauty, truth and goodness. God, Cobb says, calls all of the universe to creative transformation, to health and wholeness. God lures everything, from the tiniest plant cell to the most complex human mind, to growth. For today's Christians to follow in the transforming path of Christ, Cobb believes they should welcome the chance to learn from scientists, feminists, Buddhists, environmentalists, Muslims—whomever—while at the same time being ready to offer the insights and truth of Christ to others. It may mean coming to realize that religions offer different truths, different goals. For example, Buddhists seek to escape from suffering through enlightenment while Christians strive to serve Christ by improving this earthly realm.

Unlike many Christians, Cobb does not think the truth of Christianity lies in believing that Jesus rose bodily from the dead. Resurrection stories are relatively common in Indian religion, where they suggest only that an individual is holy, not that he is supernaturally superior. Cobb challenges many Christians when he says he doesn't think Jesus was God incarnate. Instead, he says Jesus was a special incarnation of God. God's presence in Jesus seemed to be one with Jesus's very selfhood. Jesus was not perfect, since he was a human, but Jesus embodied God in a uniquely complete man-

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# Where I Trace Your Body: Love in Process

by Catherine Keller

I'm pleased and perplexed by the chance to reflect publicly on—love. I find most autobiographical narratives of “love” unedifying except among friends and family, and don't wish to add my own. Still, I will resist the strong temptation to flee immediately from a topic, which seems to scream for privacy. I will not succumb to the urge, at least not right away, to waft up to the Divine Eros or to march into feminist analysis. I guess I should have something to say. I got married 3 years ago, to a man, both of us in our mid-forties, not married before, with no hope of children but stubborn hopes—of course—for happiness. Were these hopes naive, foolhardy, flawed? Of course. Also they were ironic, pragmatic, compromising, mixed of spontaneous combustion and mid-life odds-and-risk assessment, between two persons who'd suffered too much of love's let-downs already and knew what we needed. Of course. Do they relate to process theology? Of course.

So on the basis of my newfound expertise, I'd like to consider three love-shifts, three axes of radical reorientation of the basis of intimacy. Three millennial mood swings, we might say. But I very much hope they won't swing back—some historical regressions thwart history itself; they sin against the Spirit. For all my disclaimers of personal relevance, I think these love-shifts, which test out in my limited experience, carry awfully, perhaps awesomely, important information for our species' future. I am interested in them here as shifts actually experienced *within* intimate relationships, not just as the historical transition within which particular relationships are taking place. These are (1) the shift from the dominance/subjugation model and the feminist critique thereof, to a postpatriarchal mutuality in which much feminist habit must be unlearned. It provides the context for interpreting two other shifts: (2) that from biological and social necessity to an anxious freedom amidst uncertainty; and (3) that, in Whiteheadian terms, from the primacy of change and novelty, to that of “endurance.”

I

**From revolt to becoming.** In the seventies and eighties of the 20th century, the women's movement,

which had struggled to change the policy and practice of millennia, entered a new stage. It grew a transdisciplinary hermeneutic. It interpreted every perspective, every discipline, as at once personally and politically accountable. It forged entire new discourses for theology and the churches. And the women of the baby boom went to work, for self-satisfaction and freedom as much as for economic necessity—some of them into ordained ministry. If there is such a thing as progress in history, all of this momentum toward gender justice surely counts as an instance of it. (As process thinkers we must admit that even though process is not the same as progress, progress happens; the lure does sometimes get on a roll.) It is the only example of social progress, in fact, that I can never, on pain of self-erasure, deny: for despite all the ambiguity and backlash, there is simply no prior generation in history I as a woman would prefer to have been born into. That may not be saying much. But it is enough to make historical pessimism impossible.

That is as far as my Euro-American, highly privileged feminist triumphalism goes. Like the movement itself, my interests have diversified, fragmented, complexified, matured. We gradually became aware that a rather simplistic narrative had enshrined itself in our vision. The boys against the girls, New Women teaming up to conspire against Old Boys. An apocalyptic dualism gathered force. Prophets such as Mary Daly revealed patriarchy as the original sin: though women also carry the virus, men will for the foreseeable future infect history with their drive to dominate, objectify and (ab)use women—and other

If there is such a thing as progress in history, all of this momentum toward gender justice surely counts as an instance of it. . . . even though process is not the same as progress, progress happens; the lure does sometimes get on a roll.

Somewhere along the line we have been outgrowing our incoherence: learning not to act out our millennial frustrations with the patriarchy against the one fragile male who might be trying, terribly imperfectly, to be a real partner.

others, who would be forced into the feminine role. We basked in bitter and brilliant hope of radical transformation, spitting out like John of Patmos the “lukewarmth” of those who would dilute their feminism with other “issues.” This apocalyptic purity of white feminism did not survive the new apocalypses within the movement: especially of Afro-American

women exposing it as a white sisterhood. But these habits, coated around, as of course they are, with various classist, racist constructions, have tremendous force, and indeed cannot simply be surrendered without endangering the radical force of the movement itself.

Within relationships to men, I think many of us early on were playing double standards. We could practice a forceful feminist rhetoric in public, and in our private relationships to men betray sadly self-dissipating habits of dependency. Then waves of undiluted feminist anger—the rage of ages—would wash over us and threaten the intimacy we craved. It is not surprising that we have come into our own as women somewhat at odds with ourselves—and I mean selves. The Whiteheadian view of the person as a plural social construction certainly has shed light on these multiple, sometimes self-contradictory developments. We have required from males a patient sensitivity to the risky process of our self-creation—as we make new ways of being women, of meaning “woman,” and for some of us, of loving men.

Sometimes those men could not grow with us, and we have undergone painful separations from men who would not love us in our difficult evolution toward freedom, who did not locate within themselves some corresponding yearning for a strong and mutual partnership. Of course what many of us could not handle thinking about was the corresponding vulnerability of the more loveable men. We couldn’t be bothered with “the male ego;” we knew the seductive tricks of “sensitive men,” and no amount of emancipated posturing would undo the power imbalance of millennia. All true enough: I have also been too slow to separate the wheat from the chaff of

men, and paid the price. But with those whom we really wanted to have and to hold, we have needed to learn some kind of care that is neither masochism nor blindness. Their vulnerabilities in the long run do not handle being scapegoated for feminism (surprise).

Somewhere along the line we have been outgrowing our incoherence: learning not to act out our millennial frustrations with the patriarchy against the one fragile male who might be trying, terribly imperfectly, to be a real partner. The social analysis of power should serve to relieve the relationship of the burdens of blame and false expectation, not add to them.

Many of us are working through some version of this shift: from sniffing out the residues of patriarchy upon our partners’ breath, to a more honest con/spiracy, a ‘breathing together’ with them in awareness that we are all complicit in multiple patterns of oppression. That we can let go of our self-righteousness and of our shame. That we are struggling through to a livelier democracy of relations. Here men and women practice Nelle Morton’s “hearing each other to speech.” Why bother to share our bodies with anyone with whom this mutual hearing is impossible—with whom we do not experience trust and curiosity? I feel this hearing flesh as a different body, a different way of embodiment, than I have known otherwise—the cells of the skin feeling like open sensors rather than suspicious boundary. This is not “postfeminist” love (postfeminism will make sense once the world is postpatriarchal, without the looming forces of fundamentalism threatening backlash around every social corner). It is a listening love akin to that suggested by French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray (whose unrecognized affinity to process thought you will notice):

*I am listening to you* is to listen to your words as something unique, irreducible, especially to my own, as something new, as yet unknown. It is to understand and hear them as the manifestation of an intention, of human and spiritual development.... I am listening to you as someone and something I do not know yet... I encourage something unexpected to emerge, some becoming, some growth, some new dawn, perhaps<sup>1</sup>.

## II

Whiteheadians ought to have some wisdom for us all as we pass through the second love shift: **from socio-anatomical necessity to nervous freedom**. For this subtle listening, this nurture of each other’s open space for becoming is predicated upon a “denatural-

ized” understanding of our sexual bonds. Denaturalization, a term current in poststructuralist feminism and queer theory, does not mean distancing ourselves from our animal bodies, but rather, deconstructing authoritarian appeals to “the natural,” recognizing that whatever has been defined as “natural” sexual behavior is in fact culturally constructed and sanctioned. This is not new for process thinkers—we know that everything, which is natural, is at the same time social, even in the non-human world. So in the human linguistic universe, social sanctions and cultural constructs will of course determine how we experience our “nature.” I don’t want to engage the important tensions between deconstruction and David Griffin’s “constructive postmodernism” in this context. I want to point to the raw drama of the shift in which we are involved as culture and as couples.

For thinking persons, everything that we consider our sexual “nature” is up for grabs—as becomes especially evident in relation to heterosexuality and birth control. For instance, the nature of our heterosexuality, if we grant that bisexuality and homosexuality are viable options for anyone, is no longer just “nature.” We have to admit not knowing where genetics leaves off and environment takes over. A Whiteheadian way of saying this is that we are not “simply located” in our sexual relations to each other. But the **fallacy of simply located sex**, based on the formidable abstractions of traditional “masculine” and “feminine” natures, dies hard. The only justification for the ongoing persecution of gays and lesbians in mainline Christianity (unless it wants to go fundamentalist on the basis of three Bible quotes read anachronistically) lies in the “nature” argument: the strange notion that some people betray their own “natures,” that this anti-nature is more powerful than nature and thus could spread to others, despite their own “natural” heterosexuality. Thus everyone needs to be forced—by society and religion—to act “natural.” That “nature” has no meaning biblically except procreation. So if we justify our heterosexism by its being “natural” and our exclusion of homosexuals from full human giftedness because they are unnatural, this means that our heterosexual privilege is based on procreation. But certainly **any use of birth control as surely and directly thwarts our “nature” as men and women as any homosexual relations**. On this score, the Roman Catholic Church has at least the dignity to be consistent. Protestant heterosexism wants to have its cake and eat it to: to have the right to persecute non-heterosexuals for being unnatural, while sparing itself the inconvenient consequences of that very “nature.”

I offer that argument as an example of a quan-

dary we all share—straight, curved or queer. Sex, for better or for worse, isn’t what it used to be. It used to be experienced as a force of natural necessity, driving toward the procreation that defines our “nature.” It was felt in a dualistic worldview to be dangerous, lustful, animal, and so it was circumscribed by all kinds of social controls. Pleasure was the fringe benefit of procreative sex. But there was no question religiously and then scientifically as to what drove sexual behavior. Now—if we engage in any kind of non-procreative sex—there is no escaping the question.

We probably all believe the species evolved sex as a rewarding incentive to preserve the species. But many of us are making life choices to thwart that drive altogether. I had always wanted to have a child or two, but did not find a suitable partner in time. And by the time I did, not only did it seem late, but selfish, to redirect creative, teaching, relational energies toward immortalizing our genetic code. Soon after my marriage I underwent a tubal ligation, intent on avoiding any more painful assertions of my “choice.” That has been a good choice. Yet there is always the slightly “queer” uncertainty as to what sex is, then. Yes, of course, pleasure and intimacy and an incarnate companionship. I know and am grateful. I’m just saying I sense the subtle undertow of this shift from the biological and social necessities of heterosexual procreativity to a certain sexual indeterminacy.

For me and for many, this gaping range of historically raw, recent freedoms does not discourage monogamy. On the contrary, the committing choices we make seem all the more precious in the face of the uncertainty. Choice in the realm of procreation and of sexual practice exposes us to the deep, impersonal reverberations of our evolution as persons of a species—as impersonal as the bio-social necessities of procre-

Choice in the realm of procreation and of sexual practice exposes us to the deep, impersonal reverberations of our evolution as persons of a species—as impersonal as the bio-social necessities of procreation, but like procreation, open to the cultural transformation, indeed spiritualization, of a holistic humanization.

ation, but like procreation, open to the cultural transformation, indeed spiritualization, of a holistic humanization. At any rate, the freedom from brute necessity does not mean suppressing or overcoming our animality, but rather its honest embrace and therefore integration into the spiritual projects of our lives. This evolution may have nothing more to do with natural selection, and everything to do with social selection—with the practice of choice, that is, of our incarnational calling to make meaning from our flesh.

To outgrow the simpler destiny of our anatomy, we need to heal our nostalgia for “the family.” The

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theologian here cannot help mentioning that Jesus, site of the classic incarnation, had already shattered the ideal of that “family.” Nothing locates us more simply than our family identity; nothing in the social order endows us with a greater illusion of a concrete, dependable identity. Then, like now, the ideal exercised oppressive restrictions upon its own members. But the alternative to simple sexual/familial location is not reaction against family or children, surely, but rather dislocation of delusionary securities and relocation into complex, new configurations of sexuality, family and community.

Even as process thought created a radical new distribution of the incarnation, such that “Christ” could no longer be simply located in one place-time, so the fallacy of simple sexual identity gives way to new zones of incarnation. This is why we must listen so attentively to each other’s becoming: as men and women, as men and men, as women and women. Outgrowing stereotyped gender positions does not mean getting promiscuous. But it does mean learning to recognize aspects of myself in a rich multiplicity of sensuous relations. For instance, it is only through my many friendships with gays and lesbians that I feel most fully, playfully and responsibly myself—myself as an all too straight and monogamous female. Let me repeat that we are not becoming less animal, less fleshly, less carnal, less “natural.” Although we may be deluded into thinking so as we become more like cyborgs and less like fellow mammals through communications technology. And there is no evidence at all—including the divorce rate—that we as a society are becoming sexually less “moral,” if morality re-

fers to the capacity for committed relationships without sexual double standards, abuse and hypocrisy. We may be going through a dramatic metamorphosis to a multiply situated sexuality, to an incarnational complexity. Its satisfactions will not predetermine its literal enactments—celibacy, for example, will be a perfectly rich, subtler, sexuality for some.

Thinking of heterosexual unions, Irigaray, who has found in yoga and even in the Christian symbol of the incarnation a path for men and woman who seek to be “faithful to their gender,” points to the implicit spirituality required for this metamorphosis:

A range of movements and nutritional practices, attentiveness to breath in respiration, respect for the rhythms of the day and night, for the seasons and years as the calendar of the flesh, for the world and for History, the training of the senses for accurate, rewarding and concentrated perception—all these gradually bring the body to rebirth, to give birth to itself, carnally and spiritually, at each moment of every day. [24]

For Whiteheadians, this attunement to the nondualistic self-birth of each moment will not sound like some idealistic overstatement, but rather as what is the case, however dissociated our culture has become from it. The task is the spiritualization, not the transcendence or control, of our flesh. The church as it survives the impending crisis defined as “same sex covenant unions” and “homosexual ordination” may become ready to give space and wisdom for this dramatic opening of incarnation into immanence, intimacy and indeterminacy.

### III

Having after all yielded to some theology, I want to end on a muckier, everyday note. The most difficult shift for love-partners lies perhaps less in these world-historical metamorphoses than in the daily grind. So I want to suggest that in our relationships, we go through a shift that can be characterized in the terms of *Science and the Modern World*, where Whitehead writes of nature in terms of “change,” “endurance,” and “eternity.” The changing, dissolving event-character of reality accounts for the process emphasis upon novelty and creativity. In the category of “change” lies the enchantment of romance, the excitement of “falling in love,” the rush of novelty that a new intimacy injects into a life: the great experience of change, a change perhaps more powerfully felt, spiritually/carnally, in our entirety, than any other. And it is this coveted change which inspires the predictable poetry of flower and flight. Thus D. H. Lawrence’s self-justifying “love is like a flower, it must flower and fade.” Or caught sensi-

tively by Tu Fu in the 8th century, “Her husband, with a vagrant heart/Seeks a new face like a new piece of jade;/And when morning-glories furl at night/And mandarin-ducks lie side by side/All he can see is the smile of the new love,/While the old love weeps unheard.” This is the battle against time and mortality, fought at women’s expense. Our faces have been framed as the fading flowers, to men’s self-immortalizing gaze.

Nonetheless, even when men learn to accept their mortality rather than punish women for it, the transition cannot be ignored: from that phase of a relationship in which love is a rush of novel and appetizing changes. The ideality of love, the attempt to eternalize its object, to freeze the moment of passion, sets up a classical tension between the rush to consummate/consume, the push for immediate gratification, and the wish to capture forever that which is merely immediate. Lawrence got that right: “We’ve made a great mess of love/Since we made an ideal of it.” His solution cannot be called hypocritical: “the moment I even say to a woman: I love you! /My love dies down considerably.” Giving up on the project of committed, enduring love is certainly one coherent strategy. But if we recognize the stereotypes of the love object produced by the attempt to preserve, to embalm, the fleeting moment, if we distinguish the living actuality from the “eternal object,” if we suffer dis/illusionment willingly, do other strategies for love in history begin to emerge?

I’m hopeful. I think they pertain to Whitehead’s homely concept of “endurance.” It gets articulated in his famous chapter on “The Romantic Reaction.” He was thinking of mountains rather than marriages. But the analogy will do. Intimacy seems to break down routinely in the transition from the wonderful “change” that the relationship imports into an individual life—to its new function as “endurance.” The new thing of our love becomes what confronts us most persistently in daily life. This is a gradual but vast redirection of energies, and no matter how fresh, how zestful, how respectfully postpatriarchal both partners try to remain in themselves and in relation, there is bound to be some sharp sense of loss in the shift. Soon all sorts of irritations make themselves prominent—the zone of enchantment becomes pock-marked with annoying sounds and smells, aggressions and lapses. Bigger, almost unspeakable shadows of disappointment—Is this person so little like what I imagined? Will I be able to tolerate the let-down?—loom in the daily atmosphere. Can intimacy survive stability?

How can Whiteheadian “endurance” help? Not, certainly, as a stoic concept of joyless acceptance or

static givenness. Perhaps, however, as an activity that cannot be measured by abstract eternities or by fleeting novelties. Rather, endurance according to Whitehead is the effect of transition itself: of the passage of one event to another in its very transitoriness. Endurance in all creaturely life is the result of “value”: what I am for myself I also become for you, and the way you value my intrinsic value and I value that valuing of me becomes part of my valuing of you in your value for yourself. Such “endurance” is not a flat sameness, a dispiriting redundancy, but a rhythmic activity conceived through “the poetic view of nature” in its interfusing presences. But here is what we need for relationships: **“Value is the outcome of limitation.”** No bland decree to accept each other’s limitations, to compromise (as though there were ever any option). Rather: “the endurance of things has its significance in the self-retention of that which imposes itself as a definite attainment for its own sake.” The mountain of our shared life accumulates its staying power from this mutual retention of significances—from our remembering of each other’s attainments, cherishing and protecting the open space in which such attainment continually becomes. And this is precisely not about perfection: “That which endures is limited, obstructive, intolerant, infecting its environment with its own aspects.” That sure sounds like *our* daily life together!

But it is not self-sufficient. The aspects of all things enter into its very nature. It is only itself as drawing together into its own limitation the larger whole in which it finds itself.<sup>2</sup>

So for all the obstructive irritations, the disillusioning limitations, this is the mystery: in the non-self-sufficiency, in the mutual vulnerability of our interdependence, we become aware that “the aspects of all things enter”—into my relationship to this other. He is never so glorious, sensitive, brilliant, successful, charming, energetic, patient, courtly, poetic, supportive, witty as I might have projected. Nor am I,

for all the obstructive irritations, the disillusioning limitations, this is the mystery: in the non-self-sufficiency, in the mutual vulnerability of our interdependence, we become aware that “the aspects of all things enter”—into my relationship to this other.

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**Breazeale, continued from page 9**

American Indian and have no other non-Caucasic blood” (cited in *U.S. Reports* 1968, 5n). “Arizona, apparently concerned with the possibility of having the ranges overrun by turbaned riders, prohibits the marriage of whites with Hindus” (Pilpel and Zavin 1952, 27).

3. As stated in section one of the Report, the purpose of the Commission as convened by the Legislature was to “address some of the issues that have arisen in the case of *Baehr v. Lewin*” (cited in Baird and Rosenbaum 1997, 211).

4. This survey was conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press and reported in the August 1996 issue of *The Progressive* (Abraham 1997, 159, 209n).

5. For a discussion of *pater familias*, see Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 150-151. Only those few women who became Vestal Virgins were automatically exempt from the power of the *pater familias*.

6. For a discussion of the practice of the “Rule of Thumb,” see Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1899* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 326.

7. The relationship between the Christian tradition and violence against wives is cogently described by Rosemary Radford Ruether in her article, “The Western Religious Tradition and Violence Against Women in the Home,” in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 31-41.

8. In the nineteenth century, Western married women’s civil status was non-existent in English common law, and they were treated as minors according to the Napoleonic Code. See Barbara Corrado Pope, “Angels in the Devil’s Workshop: Leisured and Charitable Women in Nineteenth-Century England and France,” in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 309.

9. [This block contains a large amount of illegible text, possibly a scan artifact or a placeholder.]

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**Keller, continued from page 9**

as I imagined myself briefly in his eyes. But between us it is all there—the universe. In the very limitation of this (no longer new) intimacy, in its obstructive, mounded persistence, lies the classic answer to the fallacy of simple location: in the way “everything is everywhere at all times. For every location involves an aspect of itself in every location.” Translated into the folds of intimate life: we might not need to keep seeking the new face, or weeping for the old one. The new and the old, the other and the same, fold themselves into this enduring bond, continually. And specifically, in this everywhere-made-somewhere, in its stubborn particularity, the sparkle of stars, the blue of the morning glory, reenter not as mere transient delight, but as endlessly refracted presences, captured from this point of view which is ours together and only. Of course then one does not need a lover or a life-partner to enjoy this iridescent plentitude: we have moved after all from necessity to indeterminacy. But if we are pursuing such a commitment, its mountainous weight might shift into more sustainable balance. If a relationship does not need to be everything for me, then it can after all offer its own everything. Here’s a love poem romantic in every sense, yet which seems to me mature in the cosmological erotics of

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# Book Reviews

**Susan L. Nelson, *Healing the Broken Heart: Sin, Alienation, and Grace*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1997. vii+139 pp. \$14.99. Reviewed by William A. Beardslee.**

Our language about sin and grace has come to be so abstract that it no longer speaks to many both within and outside of the church. Susan Nelson well knows this barrier to understanding, and she sees as well that it will not do simply to restate the old language. Profound as it was (and is) in addressing our condition, the theology of sin and grace missed something. People who speak for those who have little power have helped us see this; they know how repressive much of the older theology of sin can be to those who are told not to assert themselves; and another line of insight comes from the better grasp we have today of our psychological makeup. What the older theology missed comes to expression in her subtitle (above) in the “alienation.”

Not everything that is destructive can rightly be called “sin,” which can be seen as “refusal” of the gift of life. But the tradition has overlooked the destructive effects, not of refusal, but of being refused. Our inability to trust arises as much from our having been refused or rejected as from the “proud refusal” which is the classic portrait of sin. The resulting “broken heart” (a term taken from Rita Nakashima Brock) is presented with penetrating spiritual and psychological perceptiveness. One of Nelson’s major strengths is that she recognizes that these two moves, refusal and the alienation that springs from being refused, are profoundly interwoven. She also sees that many destructive patterns are also, however frustrated, tactics of survival.

But this reviewer has been setting forth abstract ideas! Nelson’s book is full of stories, often very moving ones, many of them drawn from her own life and experience, and they disclose the cry and the need for healing in the midst of the fragility and messiness of life. These narratives are her principal way of cutting through the abstractness of so much theology, and they are skilfully chosen and told (read them). Her main focus is on healing and deliverance from alienation and brokenness. She makes clear the

deep interplay between knowing that one is accepted and the hard work of learning another way of being. This narrative mode also opens the way to bring in the richness of the Christian tradition (at the center here, the cross) while casting new light upon it. Though it comes to light in many ways, the dynamic of healing in this tragic and fragile world is the God who is creative, sustaining, and redeeming love.

How good it is to see a process perspective deeply interwoven with the varied contributions of other vital newer and older theologies (including Augustine, Calvin, and Kierkegaard!) but also especially feminist writers, and to encounter the substance of theology as well in a rich spectrum of cultural expressions, from popular music to recent fiction.

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*Keller, continued from page 22*

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endurance:

Here, where I trace your body with my hand,  
Love’s presence has no end;  
For these, your arms that hold me,  
are the world’s.  
In us, the continents, clouds and oceans meet  
Our arbitrary selves, extensive with the night,  
Lost, in the heart’s worship, and the body’s sleep.  
Kathleen Raine<sup>3</sup>

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## Notes

1. Luce Irigaray, *I Love To You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, tr. A. Martin, New York & London: Routledge, 1996. p 117.
2. A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, New York: The Free Press, (1925), 1967. p 94.
3. For most of the poetic references, cf. *Art & Love: An Illustrated Anthology of Love Poetry*, ed. Kate Farrell, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990.

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