

In Memoriam

Tribute to the Life and Work of Marion Woodman (1928—2018)

Eva Rider

Marion Woodman, renowned and beloved Jungian analyst, visionary, author, teacher, lecturer, mentor and dear friend passed away on July 9, 2018, just a month before her 90th birthday. She left us a brilliant legacy that lives on through her writing, recorded work and in her international network of students, analysts, colleagues, in those who knew her and in many whom she inspired but never met.

Marion Woodman was a visionary and a pioneer. She transported Carl Jung's analytic work into uncharted territory, courageously pushing the boundaries of classical analytic psychology to include psyche/soma integration, eating disorders, addictions and reclaiming feminine consciousness in embodied soul.

Born of Marion's personal struggle with anorexia and later with cancer, ultimately became the portal to her own healing. Throughout her life, she diligently persisted in working with her own images, drawn from her dreams and creative imagination. Through her own attention to her body's nuance, she healed herself against all odds. Through her dedication to her deep soul work, she renewed our understanding of the "feminine" as the animated Soul in both women and in men, long rejected by the Patriarchy.

After a near death experience in India, she had an encounter with the living Black Madonna which transformed her life and her relationship to the emerging feminine consciousness arising out of her body's own wisdom. For Marion, an innate intuitive, the god came through her sensate function, and she was repeatedly driven into deeper encounters with the dark feminine by severe health crises over the course of her life.





Born Marion Boa on August 15, 1928, in Ontario, Canada, she was the daughter of a Canadian Minister and a Scotch-Irish Mother and the youngest child with two older brothers, Bruce and Fraser, both of whom she adored. Throughout her life, the fiery spirit of her Celtic roots merged with the deep poetic wisdom and love of scholarship that she inherited from her father. She was very much a father's daughter. Marion's perfectionism in response to her yearning toward spirit proved to be both her wound and her great gift. Her resulting anorexia

and illness sent her into analysis with beloved Jungian analyst, E.A. Bennet and eventually spurred her own analytic training in Zurich.

Marion described herself as an introvert, but it was not evident upon meeting her. She possessed a childlike charm, and a sense of humor which would arise unbidden out of her intense focused concentration. She was brilliant, impassioned, funny, expressive and playful. She was a remarkable listener, every fiber of her being was focused on the speaker when listening. When she was listening intently to someone, they would feel that they were the only person in the room. This extraordinary "presence" was felt by everyone who encountered her.

By the time I first met Marion, I had been immersed in her work for 16 years. I met her, however, for the first time in 1999 as a student of the dynamic Intensives called BodySoul Rhythms, which she had co-created with dance coach, Mary Hamilton and voice coach Anne Skinner. They were joined by Paula Reeves, Jungian psychologist and together they developed a powerful and lovingly contained teaching program.

In our BodySoul work, Marion inspired us to be present in ourselves and live from our own true standpoint. She wove story with golden strands of metaphor which she ascertained was the bridge between the archetypal and the personal worlds. Our days were filled with play, laughter, tears, grief and joy

were held with deep respect and love. In Marion's world to individuate included reclaiming and living from feeling, intuition, instinct and Soul.

Light in Matter was how Marion perceived the soul's awakening to the animated beauty of the material world. For her, living Spirit lived in the details: in the blossoming of a flower, a sunset, a song, a moment of shared laughter or grief. The Soul in each of us is the feminine mediator between Spirit and Matter. Marion's personal mantra "I am a woman greatly loved and capable of great loving" remains a gentle but powerful reminder to me in the dark moments when the shadow threatens to engulf.

The last time I met with Marion in July of 2015. It was a delightful and unforgettable meeting. With cohort and friend, Barbara Susan Booth we visited Marion in London, Ontario. Despite her dementia, from which she floated in and out, her spirit was vibrant, and she was radiant. We were all joyfully engaged in conversation as we shared precious memories. After one hour as we prepared to leave, fearing that she was tiring and that our parking meter was expiring, she said: "We are not done yet, are we?" and persuaded us to stay. So, we stayed another glorious hour and the parking ticket was well worth it.

Marion was always keenly attuned to current world events and how the collective psyche affected our world. She kept abreast of news and was deeply concerned about politics, our climate crisis, and the destruction of our planet and its creatures.

In this Kairos moment of personal and epoch shifts on our besieged planet, we begin to witness the steady rise of the feminine from the ground up. Today Marion's warnings about the effects of desecrating our bodies and our earth ring truer than ever.

Now more than ever, Marion Woodman's work is an anthem to the rising feminine and the anima mundi, the Soul of the world. If we can to stand in the unknown, hold the tension of paradox and surrender to the possibility that the transcendent third will come through as grace and carry us to new vistas and a return to and ensouled world. In these times of cataclysmic climate change, war, mass migration of humans and animals and the slow collapse of patriarchy.

It seems apt to include this excerpt from T.S. Eliot's "Four Quartets" which Marion returned to often when she was in need of solace while holding that difficult tension of the opposites in dark times:

I said to my soul, be still and wait without hope, for hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love, for love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith, but the faith and the love are all in the waiting. Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought: So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing. (Eliot, 1971, p. 28)

Sweet dreams, dearest Marion. May you ever delight in the dance with your beloved bridegroom.

References

Eliot, T.S. (1971). "East Coker." Four Quartets. Boston, New York: Mariner Books/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 1971



Eva Rider with Marion Woodman
in London, Ontario, July 24, 2015
Photo by Barbara Susan Booth