Men Are From Earth,

And So Are Women

Marion Woodman *On The Inner Marriage Of The True Masculine And The True Feminine*

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I'd never danced in church before I took a workshop with Marion Woodman. Being in the chapel of New York City's Union Theological Seminary was a sort of homecoming for me: five years earlier I had stridden down the middle aisle of that chapel with a newly minted master of divinity degree in my hand. Now a series of seemingly disconnected incidents had brought me back, as if by design, to attend Woodman's workshop. The psychologist Carl Jung might have chalked it all up to "synchronicity" — a meaningful link between otherwise unrelated events. Woodman, a Jungian analyst herself, would no doubt agree.

I'd attended the seminary to learn about both God and myself, and I had learned much, but something was missing from my education. The Protestant Christian tradition pays little attention to the body. In contrast, Woodman's work focuses intensely on the body — its pains, its pleasures, and its profound wisdom — as a means of personal growth and spiritual development. And for Woodman, the way to access the treasure buried in the body is through dance, meditation, and dream imagery.

So there I was in Union's chapel, wending my way through the group of a hundred or so other dancers, only three of whom were men. Later Woodman asked each participant to act out in a dance a particularly meaningful dream image. I picked the sea, and I lay on my back on the slate floor and moved in slow undulations — a bit self-consciously at first — mimicking waves. It brought me back to my childhood on Long Island Sound and was a welcome respite from my demanding job and responsibilities. It also awakened in me the simple joy of being alive. In Bone: Dying into Life *(Penguin), about her battle with uterine cancer, Woodman describes an incident in which she says dance saved her life. I was beginning to understand how.*

Woodman has spent much of her thirty-year career as an analyst helping people overcome their addictions. She herself once struggled with severe anorexia and believes analysis provides people with the means to free themselves from constraints within and without. The books she has authored or coauthored — there are eleven of them, including Addiction to Perfection, The Pregnant Virgin, The Ravaged Bridegroom *(all Inner City Books), and* Dancing in the Flames *(Shambhala) — are filled with Jungian symbolism, Greek mythology, and lines from Shakespeare, William Blake, T.S. Eliot, and other literary giants. She uses these reference points to explore what it means — and what it takes — to be true to ourselves in a world that wants us to be someone we are not. "Most people in analysis are there because nobody has had time to see them or hear them," Woodman says. "They've spent their lives trying to please somebody else, so they've never found their own values."*

The foundation of Jungian analysis is the concept of archetypes, which are images or patterns of behavior that are deeply embedded in the human psyche. Archetypes appear in tribal lore, myths, esoteric teachings, and fairy tales throughout the centuries — and, as products of the unconscious, continue to inform who we are and affect how we behave today. "That people should succumb to these eternal images is entirely normal; in fact it is what these images are for," Jung writes.

Born in 1928, Woodman spent the first twenty-one years of her career as a teacher of high-school English and drama in Ontario, Canada, where she was born and raised and still lives. In 1968, while she was traveling in India, a debilitating illness brought her to a crisis and changed her relationship to her body and her Western culture. In the early 1970s, she and her husband, Ross Woodman, moved to London, England, where he studied at London University. It was there that she met E.A. Bennet, a Jungian analyst who transformed her life.

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She writes about Bennet in her book Conscious Femininity *(Inner City): "He could put me in touch with my feelings when I, who was so smart and rational, couldn't feel anything. He would just sit there and feel for me until I got the message. Tears would start to run down my face, not because I was sad, but because — I was picking up my own feeling from him." In 1974, guided by her dreams, she enrolled in the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich, Switzerland. While there she explored her eating disorder, out of which came her first book,* The Owl Was a Baker's Daughter *(Inner City). Now seventy-eight, Woodman has sold more than half a million books, and a foundation has been created in her honor.*

My interest in Woodman's work goes back fourteen years, to when I read her 1992 book Leaving My Father's House: A Jour-