

PROPOSAL TO SPIRITUALITY AND HEALTH

Dear Joan Oliver,

This is a proposal for an article on the “Maginal World,” that fertile zone of meaning and transformation that stretches between the earth’s events and the mindful human response to them.

During a three-day wilderness solo at the foot of Mullaghmore Mountain in western Ireland, Eva discovered that fierce storms, a wind-split tent pole, and her own attempts to cope offered many lessons about how she maintained, repaired, and sometimes simply tried to bandage the architecture of her life. Defying, fighting, and finally balancing on a “NO TRESPASSING” fence erected between a nature preserve and a plot of fiercely-guarded private property, James, a young man who tended to focus on his differences from others (gay, black, a classical musician in the ’hood where hip-hop reigned) saw that finding harmony between two worlds was, in fact, his calling.

Attending simultaneously to what was happening around them and within, Eva and James were exploring the Maginal World, a state of heightened awareness, mystical communication, deep play, and engaged creativity.

The Maginal World itself is not a new metaphysical goal or spiritual modality. It is a term I have coined to define and explore a state of attentive engagement that has intrigued people from Empedocles to modern psychologists for millennia and that I have seen hundreds of people awaken to in the fourteen years that I’ve been leading wilderness rites of passage programs throughout the U.S., in Canada, Britain, and the Sahara Desert.

In an article of about 2,500 words, I’ll define the Maginal World; briefly explore its precedents; describe the mental and physical qualities one experiences while immersed in it; and show how it’s both a frontier we enter and a loose sweater we can button and unbutton at will. A sidebar could include suggestions for how readers can explore the Maginal World on their own.

I’ll interview contemporary spiritual leaders and scholars such as cosmologist Brian Swimme, who has defined ways in which certain universal principles define the energies in all beings, from galaxies to humans; Jungian analyst and author Nancy Qualls-Corbett on synchronicity; Clyde Hall, a Shoshone visionary, who has revived the ancient Naraya trance dance; and Meredith Little, who, with her late husband Steven Foster, introduced the contemporary wilderness rite of passage in the early 1970s. I’ll also tell stories of people like Eva and James whose concepts of their present circumstances, their past, and their relationship to the world have changed as a result of a few simple exercises that show them how to read the connections between themselves and their surroundings.

My most recent article for *Spirituality and Health* was “Creating Beauty in Wounded Places” in the December 2010 issue. I am the author of *The World Is a Waiting Lover: Desire and the Quest for the Beloved* (New World Library, 2005) and many articles that explore the human relationship with nature. I live in rural northeastern Pennsylvania.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely