

Here Is New York Quotes

“There are roughly three New Yorks. There is, first, the New York of the man or woman who was born here, who takes the city for granted and accepts its size and its turbulence as natural and inevitable. Second, there is the New York of the commuter — the city that is devoured by locusts each day and spat out each night. Third, there is the New York of the person who was born somewhere else and came to New York in quest of something. Of these three trembling cities the greatest is the last--the city of final destination, the city that is a goal. It is this third city that accounts for New York's high-strung disposition, its poetical deportment, its dedication to the arts, and its incomparable achievements. Commuters give the city its tidal restlessness; natives give it solidity and continuity; but the settlers give it passion.”

– E.B. White, *Here Is New York*

“On any person who desires such queer prizes, New York will bestow the gift of loneliness and the gift of privacy. It is this largess that accounts for the presence within the city's walls of a considerable section of the population; for the residents of Manhattan are to a large extent strangers who have pulled up stakes somewhere and come to town, seeking sanctuary or fulfillment or some greater or lesser grail. The capacity to make such dubious gifts is a mysterious quality of New York. It can destroy an individual, or it can fulfill him, depending a good deal on luck. No one should come to New York to live unless he is willing to be lucky.”

– E.B. White, *Here Is New York*

“A poem compresses much in a small space and adds music, thus heightening its meaning. The city is like poetry: it compresses all life, all races and breeds, into a small island and adds music and the accompaniment of internal engines. The island of Manhattan is without any doubt the greatest human concentrate on earth, the poem whose magic is comprehensible to millions of permanent residents but whose full meaning will always remain elusive.”

– E.B. White, *Here Is New York*

“But the city makes up for its hazards and its deficiencies by supplying its citizens with massive doses of a supplementary vitamin-the sense of belonging to something unique, cosmopolitan, mighty and unparalleled. . . .”

– E.B. White, *Here Is New York*

“By comparison with other less hectic days, the city is uncomfortable and inconvenient; but New Yorkers temperamentally do not crave comfort and convenience- if they did they would live elsewhere.”

– E.B. White, *Here Is New York*

“Walk the Bowery under the El at night and all you feel is a sort of cold guilt. Touched for a dime, you try to drop the coin and not touch the hand, because the hand is dirty; you try to avoid the glance, because the glance accuses. This is not so much personal menace as universal — the cold menace of unresolved human suffering and poverty and the advanced stages of the disease alcoholism.”

– E.B. White, *Here Is New York*

King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine

The central argument of this engaging and readable book is that men have been unjustly denigrated by a society suspicious of masculinity, and that society has therefore been increasingly drained of "the mature masculine," the qualities inherent in fully-developed men. This condition is partly the fault of overzealous feminists, but also partly the fault of men who have failed to mature and are trapped in "boy psychology" or "the immature masculine." In short, these perpetual boys have given men a bad name. But another problem is the lack of rites of passage whereby the immature masculine dies and is reborn as the mature, bringing a male from boyhood to manhood. Men need these rites of passage in order to mature, and the modern world has failed to deliver. I sympathize greatly with all of this.

The most interesting part of the book to me was that detailing the four archetypes that make up the masculine psyche. They are the four men of the title: the King, the archetype of wisdom and rulership; the Warrior, the archetype of aggression and vigor; the Magician, the archetype of knowledge and technical mastery; and the Lover, the archetype of all kinds of connectedness, romantic or otherwise. Each archetype exists in mature and immature forms, and each has "Shadow" forms that are negative aspects of the archetype.

For example, in boyhood a boy might be a Hero, possibly sliding into bullying or cowardice (the opposed "bipolar" Shadow forms), but after a rite of passage bringing him into the mature masculine, the man becomes a Warrior, whose Shadow forms are the sadist and masochist. The King exists first as the Divine Child, who can become a High Chair Tyrant or Weakling Prince, and even as a mature King must avoid the Tyrant and the Weakling. The Precocious Child, whose Shadow forms are the Trickster and the Dummy, matures into the Magician, who may become the Detached Manipulator or the Denying Innocent One. Finally, the Oedipal Child, who may drift between the Mama's Boy and the Dreamer, matures into the Lover, who must avoid becoming the Addicted Lover or the Impotent Lover.

Every man's psyche is composed of all four archetypes and the four relate to and interact with each other in different ways, strengthening and tempering each other to maintain a balance, a mature masculinity. A Warrior who lacks the Lover becomes a sadist, and when the Lover lacks the Warrior he is trampled into the Impotent Lover. This is the real meat of the book, the most fascinating stuff.

The Butterfly's Struggle

A man spent hours watching a butterfly struggling to emerge from its cocoon. It managed to make a small hole, but its body was too large to get through it. After a long struggle, it appeared to be exhausted and remained absolutely still.

The man decided to help the butterfly and, with a pair of scissors, he cut open the cocoon, thus releasing the butterfly. However, the butterfly's body was very small and wrinkled and its wings were all crumpled.

The man continued to watch, hoping that, at any moment, the butterfly would open its wings and fly away. Nothing happened; in fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its brief life dragging around its shrunken body and shrivelled wings, incapable of flight.

What the man – out of kindness and his eagerness to help – had failed to understand was that the tight cocoon and the efforts that the butterfly had to make in order to squeeze out of that tiny hole was Nature's way of training the butterfly and strengthening its wings.

Sometimes, a little extra effort is precisely what prepares us for the next obstacle to be faced. Anyone who refuses to make that effort, or gets the wrong sort of help, is left unprepared to fight the next battle and never manages to fly off to their destiny.

As you go through school and life, keep in mind that struggling is an important part of any growth experience. In fact, it is the struggle that causes you to develop your ability to fly. The greatest gift I can give you is stronger wings...

How to Be a Man

What does it mean to be a man today? How can men consciously express their masculinity without becoming cold or closed-hearted on the one hand... or wimpy and emasculated on the other? What's the most loving way for a conscious man to express himself?

Here are 10 ways to live more consciously as a man:

1. Make real decisions.

A man understands and respects the power of choice. He lives a life of his own creation. He knows that life stagnates when he fails to decide and flourishes when he chooses a clear path.

When a man makes a decision, he opens the door he wants and closes the doors he doesn't want. He locks onto his target like a guided missile. There's no guarantee he'll reach his target, and he knows this, but he doesn't need such guarantees. He simply enjoys the sense of inevitability that comes from pushing the launch button.

A man doesn't require the approval of others. He's willing to follow his heart wherever it leads him. When a man is following his heart-centered path, it's of little consequence if the entire world is against him.

2. Put your relationships second.

A man who claims his #1 commitment in life is his relationship partner (or his family) is either too dishonest or too weak to be trusted. His loyalties are misplaced. A man who values individuals above his own integrity is a wretch, not a free thinker.

A man knows he must commit to something greater than satisfying the needs of a few people. He's not willing to be domesticated, but he is willing to accept the responsibility that comes with greater challenges. He knows that when he shirks that duty, he becomes something less than a man. When others observe that the man is unyieldingly committed to his values and ideals, he gains their trust and respect, even when he cannot gain their direct support. The surest way for a man to lose the respect of others (as well as his self-respect) is to violate his own values.

Life will test the man to see if he's willing to put loyalty to others ahead of loyalty to his principles. The man will be offered many temptations to expose his true loyalties. A man's greatest reward is to live with integrity, and his greatest punishment is what he inflicts upon himself for placing anything above his integrity. Whenever the man sacrifices his integrity, he loses his freedom... and himself as well. He becomes an object of pity.

3. Be willing to fail.

A man is willing to make mistakes. He's willing to be wrong. He'd rather try and fail than do nothing.

A man's self-trust is one of his greatest assets. When he second-guesses himself by worrying about failure, he diminishes himself. An intelligent man considers the prospect of failure, but he doesn't preoccupy himself with pointless worry. He accepts that if a failure outcome occurs, he can deal with it.

A man grows more from failure than he does from success. Success cannot test his resolve in the way that failure can. Success has its challenges, but a man learns more about himself when he takes on challenges that involve risk. When a man plays it safe, his vitality is lost, and he loses his edge.

4. Be confident.

A man speaks and acts with confidence. He owns his attitude.

A man doesn't adopt a confident posture because he knows he'll succeed. He often knows that failure is a likely outcome. But when the odds of success are clearly against him, he still exudes confidence. It isn't because he's ignorant or suffering from denial. It's because he's proving to himself that he has the strength to transcend his self-doubt. This builds his courage and persistence, two of his most valuable allies.

A man is willing to be defeated by the world. He's willing to be taken down by circumstances beyond his control. But he refuses to be overwhelmed by his own self-doubt. He knows that when he stops trusting himself, he is surely lost. He'll surrender to fate when necessary, but he won't surrender to fear.

5. Express love actively.

A man is an active giver of love, not a passive receiver. A man is the first to initiate a conversation, the first to ask for what's needed, and the first to say "I love you." Waiting for someone else to make the first move is unbecoming of him. The universe does not respond positively to his hesitation. Only when he's in motion do the floodgates of abundance open.

Man is the out-breath of source energy. It is his job — his duty — to share his love with the world. He must wean himself from suckling the energy of others and become a vibrant transmitter of energy himself. He must allow that energy to flow from source, through him, and into the world. When he assumes this role, he has no doubt he is living as his true self.

6. Re-channel sex energy.

A man doesn't hide his sexuality. If others shrink from him because he's too masculine, he allows them to have their reaction. There's no need for him to lower his energy just to avoid frightening the timid. A man accepts the consequences of being male; he makes no apologies for his nature.

A man is careful not to allow his energy to get stuck at the level of lust. He re-channels much of his sexual energy into his heart and head, where it can serve his higher values instead of just his animal instincts. (You can do this by visualizing the energy rising, expanding, and eventually flowing throughout your entire body and beyond.)

A man channels his sexual energy into his heart-centered pursuits. He feels such energy pulsing within him, driving him to action. He feels uncomfortable standing still. He allows his sexual energy to explode through his heart, not just his genitals.

7. Face your fears.

For a man, being afraid of something is reason enough to do it. A man's fear is a call to be tested. When a man hides from his fears, he knows he's fallen out of alignment with his true self. He feels weak, depressed, and helpless. No matter how hard he tries to comfort himself and achieve a state of peace, he cannot overcome his inner feeling of dread. Only when facing his fears does a man experience peace.

A man makes a friend of risk. He doesn't run and hide from the tests of fear. He turns toward them and engages them boldly.

A man succeeds or fails. A coward never makes the attempt. Specific outcomes are of less concern to a man than his direction.

A man feels like a man whenever he faces the right way, staring straight into his fears. He feels even more like a man when he advances in the direction of his fears, as if sailing on the winds of an inner scream.

8. Honor the masculinity of other men.

When a man sees a male friend undertaking a new venture that will clearly lead to failure, what does the man do? Does he warn his friend off such a path? No, the man encourages his friend to continue. The man knows it's better for his friend to strike out confidently and learn from the failure experience. The man honors his friend's decision to reach out and make the attempt. The man won't deny his friend the benefits of a failure experience. The man may offer his friend guidance, but he knows his friend must fail repeatedly in order to develop self-trust and courage.

When you see a man at the gym struggling to lift a heavy weight, do you jump in and say, "Here... let me help you with that. Maybe the two of us can lift it together"? No, that would rob him of the growth experience — and probably make a quick enemy of him as well.

The male path is filled with obstacles. It typically includes more failures than successes. These obstacles help a man discover what's truly important to him. Through repeated failures a man learns to persist in the pursuit of worthy goals and to abandon goals that are unworthy of him.

A man can handle being knocked down many times. For every physical setback he experiences, he enjoys a spiritual advancement, and that is enough for him.

9. Accept responsibility for your relationships.

A man chooses his friends, lovers, and associates consciously. He actively seeks out the company of people who inspire and challenge him, and he willingly sheds those who hold him back.

A man doesn't blame others for his relationship problems. When a relationship is no longer compatible with his heart-centered path, he initiates the break-up and departs without blame or guilt.

A man holds himself accountable for the relationships he allows into his life. He holds others accountable for their behavior, but he holds himself accountable for his decision to tolerate such behavior.

A man teaches others how to treat him by the relationships he's willing to allow into his life. A man refuses to fill his life with negative or destructive relationships; he knows that's a form of self-abuse.

10. Die well.

A man's great challenge is to develop the inner strength to express his true self. He must learn to share his love with the world without holding back. When a man is satisfied that he's done that, he can make peace with death. But if he fails to do so, death becomes his enemy and haunts him all the days of his life.

A man cannot die well unless he lives well. A man lives well when he accepts his mortality and draws strength from knowing that his physical existence is temporary. When a man faces and accepts the inevitability of death... when he learns to see death as his ally instead of his enemy... he's finally able to express his true self. So a man isn't ready to live until he accepts that he's already dead.

Source: <http://www.stevpavlina.com/blog/2008/05/how-to-be-a-man/>

What Woman Is

Grandmothers know things that have taken a lifetime to earn. They know that women grow out of girls, and that the journey has taken thousands of years. Grandmothers know that girls are sprites, bringing light playfulness to the serious side of our world, and they are emotional antennas, telling what they know, as boys learn to get quiet with their feelings.

Girls grow to womanhood by learning they pulse with the cycles of life. They learn to flow gracefully into the stream of their world, even as they learn to make and guide their own rudder.

Women wrap their arms around life, around their loved ones, around their homes. They bring life into the world and know that they have Mama Bear spirit within, will do whatever it takes to protect their young. Over time they learn that being Mama Bear does not mean self conscious alarm over every step, but is a rambling journey of exploration, fully grounded, finding and giving nourishment, teaching our young how to grow strong and self sufficient. Women nuzzle. Women roar.

Women swaddle babies and guide children, even if they have none of their own.

Women know loss. Women cradle death as well as life, holding dead spirits, dead bodies and missing limbs. We know that to rebirth a soul means to just be nearby sometimes. Silently we care for physical space to show love that reaches into dark souls, and sometimes breathes life back.

We wash bodies with no more spirit and place them gently into the earth for safekeeping, and we reach into the earth for our own strength, seeking the flow of wisdom from our grandmothers and grandfathers. We dig up roots and share them at the family table.

A woman knows that reaching out to sky, or into the world, is a skill we must develop and carry always. There are times we are protected, as children, and times we learn to make our own path, walking long roads to find our ancient sisters, those who birthed babies alone in fields, and who gathered wood alone in the winter to warm themselves, their families.

Once we have struck out on our path, we find that while there are terrifying nights when fierce wind blows away all of our courage, there are also mornings of dew and warming sun to bring us back to life. Sometimes we wait in the dark for small twinkling stars, bits of wisdom within us, tiny light when we need it most. Some call this intuition. Learning to follow those stars, to hold them in our mind day and night, takes discipline and devotion. It is lonely work.

We find our path at times full of "mean girls" and are stronger for withstanding the pressure to give in to our lower selves. We find sustenance in stretching our minds, but also know that our spirits need room to grow into full fledged, full bodied Amazon soul warriors. We find our tribe and build communities out of nothing but meals and stories, trading clothes and hugs.

No matter her size a woman must know that her body is her temple, and that only when she learns to guard her own gates does she begin to know real safety. We love our smile lines and our stretch marks, lines of service, stripes of valor. We shun notions of external beauty and create our own from deep within. This beauty is easily recognized in any face. Women dress well and with attention; first with love and respect for ourselves, then for the enjoyment of others.

Women build their own fortresses, and know who to take in and who to turn away. Men and women of lesser value will come knocking, and discernment is one of her most important tools.

Women find battles in corporate board rooms and in their own homes, in standing on their feet 16 hours a day to serve others, and inside their own minds. Women learn to come to each skirmish with grace, with intelligence well heeled, with determination, with strength of character and with nothing to hide. Once a woman knows how to wield a sword of discernment, and when to make deep cuts, or kill, then she knows when to win at any cost, and when to stand down. She makes the salves that soothe her soul, and heal others, and brings them back to the table of family and community.

A woman knows how to lose, how to win and how to keep going after either outcome.

A woman knows that men are outward facing, hard wired to protect and serve the needs of his family and community, same as her, but very different too. She joins her partner in his work to build a life. She leads him (and others) to build relationships, and follows when he knows the way, and sometimes when he doesn't. She knows the journey is more important than the destination.

But a grown woman will not waste years tending a garden in bad dirt. She admits her mistakes, learns from them, mourns them, and moves on if there isn't good ground to till. A wise woman makes her own ground fertile, soulwork that feeds hundreds if not thousands.

If she digs a hole too deep, she hauls herself out of it. If she needs a rope, she asks for help.

A fully realized woman will spin grace and beauty into the lives of her loved ones, in material things, but more importantly in spiritual realms. A woman knows how to find the best in herself, and how to encourage the best in others. She knits together the lives of many, making those memories that keep us warm, strong and hopeful. She cooks to nourish our bodies and souls, making food into an offering. A woman knows to bless the table, calling down Spirit, and invoking gratitude. She makes sure she is well fed in every way.

Even in the worst storms of life, she keeps a small ember of hope and belief in herself glowing, sometimes so deep down even she forgets. But one day it gets warmer and finally burns hot in her again, shining thru her eyes. Sometimes this process seems divine, and she is comfortable there, in the swirl of mystery and faith and unimaginable grace.

A woman can bring light to every part of her life - she finds that the other side of sorrow and loss is immeasurable and unlimited Joy - and she laughs often in delight at the wonder of it all. Always a Sprite, she creates fun from the mundane, blowing bubbles from dish soap. She works for happiness, and protects it.

Women cherish the pleasures of touch and sensuality. They become more sexual as time goes by and the children no longer need constant tending. Having learned to love themselves, they can fully give themselves to another, without getting lost. With the right partner, they lose self consciousness and send sparks of creation, transcendence and gratitude to the divine.

She becomes a grandmother when she settles completely into herself, sees the mountains and valleys of her life in true measure, and blesses the path of children, women and men who follow her. She knows she can feed them only small pieces of her journey, as they must find their own way. She listens deeply.

Grandmother teaches us to go thru fear, to hold onto our embers and starlights, to forge our own swords. She stands as guide, example and a comfort to show that there is a place of redemption for a life well lived. She holds the visions, of the world and for each of us, seeing us on our path and rightly beautiful. She loves us unconditionally, even when we cannot love ourselves, and knows the value of forgiveness and rest.

Woman knows that life is short, and hard times seem to last forever. And all is well, eventually.

Source: <http://dahlimama18.blogspot.com/2008/05/what-woman-is.html>

How to Be a Woman

Being female comes easily. On day 14 of conception (don't get me started on that math) egg meets sperm. If the sperm carries an "X" chromosome, a female human being develops. As life goes on, hormones and socialization intervene, and this female human transitions from baby to child to teenager to adult. To truly be a woman, with all the magic, mystery and power that title includes, takes more. And it isn't easy.

Figure Out What You Believe In

A woman knows what is important to her. She has figured out her priorities, and she acts from those priorities. Her true core beliefs are very fundamental. They have nothing to do with trends, media influence, peer pressure or convenience. She knows in her heart what she believes to be true about religion, morality, family structure, loyalty, love and friendship. She is not influenced by what is popular with her friends, the ideals of her family or the man in her life.

The process of determining core beliefs is not simple. She has taken the time and energy to consider some fundamental questions, and to become peaceful with her answers. She has made the investment into her own life. A woman has contemplated some very basic questions: What do I really, truly want? What makes me happy? What do I believe is the right thing to do? What is my purpose in this life? How can I make the greatest contribution to the world, and to the people in my life? Without asking these questions, she can't discover the answers. A woman has taken the time to consider the difficult questions, and to make an effort at answering them so that she can be on the right path.

Stand Up For What You Believe In

A woman not only knows what she believes in, but she backs it up. This doesn't require fanfare. It doesn't require being loud or political. It can be done in quiet, everyday ways, or in ostentatious ways, but a woman will not quietly give up something she believes is a fundamental truth to her. A woman lives what she believes. This can be challenging and scary. A woman does it even if it makes her feel alienated and alone. But she always follows what she knows is right, no matter how lonely that path may seem. It can mean making choices and taking actions that are unpopular. But she sticks to her core beliefs and stands up for what she thinks is right. She doesn't back down from confrontation, and she doesn't act from fear or from guilt. When standing up for what she knows is right, she does it boldly, simply and confidently, without guilt or fear.

Own Who You Are

Females struggle against social pressure to conform to an ideal. These pressures can apply to sexuality, values, family, behavior, opinions, work and relationships and myriad other aspects of life. A woman is brave enough to step outside of these idealized preconceptions of who she should be. A woman doesn't doubt her boundaries or her values. She is unconcerned about judgement or criticism from others, and she would never judge or criticize herself as a result of what others think. A woman won't be fooled into believing that being accepted, being perfect, being loved are more important than being true to herself. More importantly, she knows that giving up who she is would never lead her down a good path. A woman is who she is. She doesn't need to be validated or justified. She accepts herself for who she is, and she won't change or hide herself.

Once a woman has figured out what is important to her, she tries to have that. She doesn't necessarily try to have it all, unless that really is what she wants. She keeps her goals and dreams in mind, and works towards them, without getting trapped into outside ideas about what she should want to do or be. To each her own — some women do want it all, and they pursue that. But a woman knows there is strength and power in accepting and pursuing what she does want, and in letting go of what she doesn't.

Women have opinions. Her opinion may be formed by a combination of introspection, thought and discussion with others, and she doesn't give it up on a whim. That's not to say that she can't be reasoned with. She accepts criticism of her ideas and opinions without internalizing them as critiques of herself. But a woman doesn't back down from who she is or what she believes just because it is unpopular or misunderstood. She may be kind in her expression of her position, but she doesn't relinquish it to please others or to make them more comfortable.

Be Beautiful

A woman is beautiful. She believes that she is beautiful and appreciates the amazing power her body holds. Females are so likely to judge themselves against others, and to find themselves flawed in every way. A woman puts this aside and loves, accepts and cares for her amazing, life giving body. A woman knows the unbounded potential of her body and of her soul within it, and she has no time to waste on the details of its implementation. She loves what she is, how she looks and how she feels. She won't demean the awesome power of her body with superficial judgements. She may improve her body for her health or her enjoyment, but it is always for her own benefit, not for the acceptance or approval of others.

A woman is sexy. Her body is made to be creative and enjoyable and a woman neither hides from that nor exploits herself for approval from others. A woman is sexy not because she fits into a certain size of jeans, has breasts of a particular size or wears

provocative clothing. Her sexiness comes from simply accepting, loving and enjoying the powerful, creative, functional and pleasurable nature of her body.

Be Confident

A woman has no concern for how others judge her. She is confident. She does the best that she can every day, and doesn't worry about whether or not she holds up to anyone else's standards. She has determined what is important to her, and she acts from that position at every possibility without fear of the consequences.

A woman is intelligent without being afraid. All women own their intelligence and share it without fear of criticism. Intelligence comes in many forms, and a woman is not cowed by intimidation or arrogance from others. Whether her intelligence is logical or intuitive, artistic or analytical, emotional or scientific (or all of the above) she doesn't fear her intelligence or the reaction of others.

A woman also doesn't take herself too seriously. Everyone makes mistakes. Without mistakes, there is no possibility for learning or growth. A woman doesn't fear her mistakes, nor does she fear judgement or criticism from others. Fear of judgement would make it difficult for her to act in harmony with her true self. It doesn't serve her, and a woman doesn't have time for it. She will apologize if that's what's needed, or laugh at herself. Perfection is not a woman's goal.

Be A Source Of Inspiration For Those Around You

So often, females spend their energy tearing each other down. A woman won't lower herself with this activity. A woman spends her time acting as a beacon of inspiration for the others around her. Even more importantly, she actively helps to bring up those around her. A woman offers her support and encouragement to her peers and to those struggling against things she has transcended. She helps those trying to become real women themselves. There is nothing to be gained by holding another down, but by helping another up, she makes a positive difference in the world. A woman acts towards empowering others and helping them along their own path. Women have a great deal of power. They physically create life. They influence and change their families, communities and the world. They support, care for and nurture those around them. A woman would never use this power for anything but the benefit of all in her world. This power can manifest in nurturing her family, or it can manifest in her community. A woman shares her love, her experience, her strength and her power with those around her. She may raise children, and empower them to own their passion, conviction and strength. She may teach. She may simply lead by example. But she doesn't limit others as a way to further herself. Rather, her strength helps to lift others to higher potentials.

Be A Partner

A woman is a willing, equal partner. She doesn't always have to have things her way, she doesn't always have to be catered to, or pampered. A woman can carry a heavy load, and she is an enthusiastic partner through life's challenges. She doesn't let herself get pushed around or downtrodden, either. A woman embraces her partnership with another as an opportunity to expand upon all that makes her who she is, and she seeks out a partner who will marvel at her. She loves and supports her partner and she accepts the love and support of her partner. Within the partnership, she maintains her own identity, strength and conviction, and she desires a partner who does the same.

Love

A woman loves. She loves her spouse, her children, her family, her friends. A woman can feel love and compassion for strangers she has never known, whether they are in her community or on the other side of the world. Her capacity for love knows no bounds, and her ability to love unconditionally gives those in her life the strength to grow, to succeed and to carry on. A woman loves not in anticipation of a return, but because it is in her nature to do so. She shares the love within her to bring joy to those around her, as well as to herself.

To be a woman takes the willingness and the energy to determine who she is. It takes the courage to stand by her convictions. A woman embraces her humanity — the power, the weakness, the imperfection, and the strength. A woman helps those around her. She loves and nurtures her family, and those around her. She offers support and helps others to grow. To be a woman takes the responsibility to be a full partner in all that life brings. A woman loves.

Source: <http://blog.danandem.com/2008/05/13/how-to-be-a-woman/>

1 Corinthians 13
New International Version

1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.

11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Page 8

... To be human
is to become visible
while carrying
what is hidden
as a gift to others ...

-David Whyte

Page 30 - Archetypes

It's not just we humans who have souls. Everything--a rock, the wind, a song, a moment, a building, or a marriage, as well as the earth itself--has a soul, an essential and unique quality. Even the universe has a soul, and we call that soul "spirit." So, too, humanity as a collective, as a species, has a soul. Certain essential qualities mark humanness in all times and places: certain enduring themes and patterns called the human archetypes.

Each human archetype consists of an identifiable pattern found in every society and, as a potential, within every human being: the Hero, the Wise and Gentle Queen, the Courageous Warrior, the Virtuous Maiden, the Seductress, the Nurturing Mother, the Holy Child, the Young Redeemer, the Rebel, the Tyrant, the Trickster, the Sacred Fool, the Innocent, the Sage, the Crone, the Magician, the King, the Lover. A given individual will resonate more with some patterns than others, or at a certain stage more with one archetype than another, but in any human community each archetype will be found embodied in someone. The human archetypes represent the patterns and possibilities of being human. Without each of them embodied in some way, a human community and its soul are incomplete.

Page 37 - Dagara Boys

Malidoma Somé, an African shaman of the Dagara people, gives us an extreme example of how therapy and soulcraft goals can diverge. When Dagara boys undergo their initiation ordeals, the people of the village realize that a few boys will never return; they literally will not survive. Why would the Dagara be willing to make such an ultimate sacrifice? For the boys who die, this is certainly not a therapeutic experience. Although the Dagara love their children no less than we do, they understand, as the elders of many cultures emphasize, that without vision--without soul embodied in the culturally creative lives of their men and women--the people shall perish. And, to the boys, the small risk of death is preferable to the living death of an uninitiated life. Besides, when we compare Dagara society with our own, we find that an even greater percentage of our teenagers die--through suicide, substance abuse, auto accidents, and gang warfare--in their unsuccessful attempts to initiate themselves.

Page 72 - The Cocoon

But the wild earth is not the only substance with which the Wanderer weaves his cocoon. Other strands might include his solitude, his deeper wounds from childhood, karma from previous lifetimes, his dreams, his mortality, ceremonies, the dark, and his own shadow -- all woven together to form an alchemical cauldron of change.

Page 77 - The Butterfly

Soul-oriented and nature-based societies do not leave the commencement of the wandering time to accident. They provide carefully designed ceremonial opportunities -- cocoons -- for those who are properly prepared. The Australian aborigines, for example, embark on a walkabout as a component of their preparation for adulthood. During his walkabout, the aboriginal youth wanders into the bush alone for several weeks or months, avoiding the company and conversation of other humans. He goes in search of the one place where he belongs, a place that's part of him and where he is part of that place. In finding that place, he finds himself.

Contemporary author and anthropologist Angeles Arriens grew up in the Basque culture of the Pyrenees Mountains along the French-Spanish border. For Basque children raised in the traditional way, there are several stages of cultural and spiritual training in childhood and early adolescence. At age sixteen, some Basque youth undertake a yearlong solo "earth walk," an extended period of wandering. From age fourteen to sixteen, the initiates undergo intensive preparation in all aspects of survival, from the physical to the emotional and spiritual, culminating in the earth walk for those who choose this ordeal of solitude and wandering. If a youth elects to go, she carries with her a blanket or shawl,

woven by her mother, containing 365 warp threads. The Wanderer pulls out one warp thread each day, thereby keeping track of the temporal expanse of her journey as she walks a remote trail from one end of the Pyrenees to the other.

The wandering time is neither easy nor painless. It tests what you are made of. It reveals you to yourself, down to your very marrow. The second cocoon will result in the disintegration of almost everything you know about yourself and the world. The butterfly, of course, understands this.

There are three phases to the butterfly's life cycle: the larva (caterpillar), the pupa or chrysalis (in the cocoon), and the imago (a mature adult, a butterfly). The transformational chrysalis phase is one of the great mysteries of biology. No one knows exactly how the caterpillar changes form in such a dramatic way. But this much is known: inside the caterpillar's body are clusters of cells called, of all things, imaginal buds. *Imaginal* refers to the imago, the adult phase, but it also means "to imagine," and psychologists use the word *imago* to mean an idealized image of a loved one, including the self. The imaginal buds contain the idealized image, the blueprint, for growing a butterfly. While the caterpillar goes about its earth-crawling business, these cells, deep inside, are imagining flight.

The caterpillar's immune system believes these imaginal cells are foreign and tries to destroy them, not unlike the way uninitiated human egos and their egocentric cultures often try to destroy the soul, nature, and the feminine. Its as if the caterpillar doesn't realize its destiny is to become a butterfly. Likewise, the uninitiated ego doesn't realize its destiny is to become an agent for soul. (It's no coincidence the Greek word for butterfly means "soul.") Once in the cocoon, the buds link up, the caterpillar's immune system breaks down, and its body literally disintegrates. The buds then build a butterfly from the fluid contents of the cocoon.

The caterpillar and butterfly are not really opposed to each other; the butterfly is not an alien organism within the caterpillar. They are, in fact, one and the same organism with the same genetic code. The caterpillar is to the butterfly as the uninitiated ego is to the initiated one. The imaginal buds are to the caterpillar as the soul is to the uninitiated ego.

Inside the second cocoon, you come to understand what the butterfly knows: upon forming your cocoon, you prepare to die in order for something new to be born -- and to take flight.

Once wrapped inside the cocoon, you have abandoned your previous life. Only empty branches and sky remain, as in winter when the creative life of the land has gone underground. Relative to the busy surface life of society, this is a fallow time, a time of waiting for spring. It is a time to be modest, as Rilke writes, "like a thing ripened until it is real," until you are prepared to directly encounter your soul at that moment when the Other reaches for you.

Page 86 - Completing Unfinished Business

There is always some remedial work in the second cocoon. No matter how wholesome your childhood and teen years, no matter how loving were your parents and teachers, no matter how much you avoided the major traumas of this human life, there are going to be some spotty areas in your earlier development. There will be some aspects of ego growth -- which is the foundation of your soul path -- that were neglected or glossed over. Now, in the second cocoon, there's both time and need for some catch-up.

You are never done, of course, with the tasks of ego growth. It's a life-long project. Every personality is an unfolding story, a never completed product. Upon reaching a new plateau of development, additional material will appear for you to work on. What is important in the second cocoon, especially at its beginning, is to complete those pieces of old business that otherwise would keep you imprisoned in your former identity.

Unfinished business arises in relation to the developmental tasks of the life stages that precede the second cocoon. For example, the cultivation of emotional skills is an essential task of early adolescence. Your success in later developmental stages depends, in part, upon your emotional foundation. **Do you know how to fully experience, understand, express, and act on your emotions? In a way that respects both yourself and others?** If you have difficulties with any aspects of emotional competence, it would be wise to seek guidance or mentoring through psychotherapy, support groups, relevant workshops, or an emotionally mature friend or family member.

Another example, a task normally completed in a healthy middle childhood, is discovering the enchantment of the natural world and experiencing your full membership in it. Do you need to become more grounded in your relationship to the wild world? If, when you are in nature, you don't experience deep comfort, endless wonder, and an empathic resonance with the natural world, then consider field courses in natural history, guided wilderness journeys, or simply an extended time outdoors in undomesticated settings.

Your own body is also, of course, an aspect of nature, and it is essential to be comfortable in your body, appreciative of it, and competent in caring for it. If you need to improve your relationship to your body, consider courses or coaching in yoga, tai chi, sports, dance, herbology, or nutrition; the services of health care practitioners; or sessions of massage, other bodywork disciplines, or body-centered psychotherapy.

The wilderness of your imagination is another essential dimension of your own human nature. If you don't enjoy a robust relationship with the imaginal, especially your deep imagination -- your dreams, deep imagery, and visionary capacities -- consider courses in dreamwork, imagery journeys, art, dance, music, or creative writing.

Maybe your listening or conflict-resolution skills require some polishing. If so, consider relevant workshops, men's and women's groups, or relationship practices focused upon empathy and communication.

Whatever your weak points are in these areas, this stage of the journey is the best time to fill in the gaps that may otherwise hold you back from -- or compromise the quality of -- your underworld work.

Page 89 - Addictions

1. chemical (caffeine, alcohol, marijuana, etc.)
2. food
3. impersonal sex
4. gambling
5. work
6. shopping
7. screen (Internet, video games, TV, cell phones,

There are many varieties of addiction, but, sooner or later, we each have to address what is the paramount addiction in the Western world: our psychological dependence on the worldview and lifestyle of Western civilization itself. This is the point brilliantly made by eco-psychologist Chellis Glendinning in her book *My Name Is Chellis, and I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization*. **The Western worldview says, in essence, that technological progress is the highest value and that we were born to consume, to endlessly use and discard natural resources, other species, technological gadgets, toys, and often, other people, especially if they are poor or from the Third World. The most highly prized freedom is the right to shop. It's a world of commodities, not entities, and economic expansion is the primary measure of progress. Competition, taking, and hoarding are higher values than cooperation, sharing, and gifting. Profits are valued over people, money over meaning, First-World entitlement over global peace and justice, "us" over "them."** ...

... We are like fish in the sea, unconscious of the cultural waters within which we have come of age.

Page 101 - Authenticity vs. Social Acceptance

As a Wanderer, you must be true to yourself. You cannot continue to follow the crowd. As a teenager, you learn you could act in accordance with or contrary to, your understanding of yourself. Authenticity, you discovered, is a decision and a skill. You learned to distinguish authenticity from deception, and learned about self-deception as well.

When push came to shove, however, you probably treated social acceptance as more essential to your life than authenticity. It was. As you acquired social skills, you needed to fit in with your peers and establish a social identity that worked. Social acceptance was the essential foundation for later development.

Even when you weren't afraid of being rejected, you made some choices on the basis of conformity or group consciousness. You went along with the crowd because it was easier and because, often, you didn't know what you really wanted.

Now, in the second cocoon, you must take up the practice of reversing the priority between acceptance and authenticity. Authenticity and integrity become your foundations for asking the deeper questions of the soul.

Distinguishing authenticity from deception -- at any stage of life -- requires the ability to access and understand your emotions, desires, and values. But the more advanced practice of choosing authenticity over social acceptance requires something more: you must tell yourself and your intimate others the truth, all of it, as deep as you can, especially when it's difficult. What you express is from the heart and intended to serve both yourself and others. You must adopt the practice of making all your actions align with what you know to be emotionally and spiritually true.

A key authenticity practice is to stop pleasing others at the expense of your own integrity. If the important others in your life -- at home, at work, at play, in spiritual community -- need you to be someone you are not (e.g., a carefree confidant, a charmer, a rescuer, a victim, a bad boy, a scholar, a hometown hero, a pleaser, a homeboy, a loser, everybody's mother), you will have to surrender your impulse to keep living your life for them. You will have to relinquish your willingness to make major life decisions just to take care of them emotionally or to win their approval.

You will, in essence, have to learn the difference between shallow and deep loyalty -- doing what another wants or asks versus doing what your heart tells you is best for all concerned, yourself and others. Shallow loyalty is ultimately selfish if your goal is to increase your acceptance or socio-economic security through compliance. It is both selfish and destructive if your goal is to give others what they want despite knowing that the “gift” is harmful. If a parent, for example, wants her grown son to live forever at home (physically or psychologically), it would be emotionally harmful to both the son and the mother for the son to comply. Supporting a person’s weakness, psychopathology, or addiction is always a case of shallow loyalty, otherwise known as enabling, caretaking, or codependency.

Page 116 - Pathways to Soul

For contemporary teenagers, too, developing soulcraft competence is more vital to their personal development than math, science, and business know-how. Most teenagers sense this and most would prefer this knowledge. Most of their teachers, however, don’t have a clue about pathways to soul. Few of us learned these things as teens or in college. Now, in order to initiate ourselves onto our soul paths, we must acquire these tools later in life. Someday, with good fortune, we may have the opportunity to teach these things to our own children and grandchildren.

1. dreamwork
2. deep imagery or active imagination
3. the discovery, fashioning, and use of symbols and sacred objects
4. self-designed ceremony (a means of conversing with the sacred Other)
5. skillful use of hallucinogenic substances within sacred ceremonies
6. symbolic artwork
7. journal work
8. fasting
9. breathwork
10. extreme physical exertion
11. yoga disciplines
12. the way of council
13. trance drumming and rhythms
14. ecstatic trance dancing
15. ceremonial sweats and saunas
16. the enactment of traditional ceremonies, rituals, and nature festivals
17. vision questing
18. understanding and responding to signs and omens in nature
19. talking across the species boundaries (nature dialogues)
20. animal tracking and other methods of sensitive and skillful nature observation
21. the telling, retelling, and study of myths and other sacred stories
22. personal myth work
23. storytelling of one’s own personal journeys
24. sensitive listening and clear reflection upon others’ stories
25. sacred speech and ritual silence
26. soulful music, poetry, and chanting

... The ordinary state of ego consciousness must be temporarily dissolved or radically shifted because the uninitiated ego is the primary obstacle to the conscious experience of soul. The encounter with soul will shake up the everyday personality’s beliefs about self and world. That’s why a conversation with soul is not likely within the defended confines of ordinary consciousness...

... Most un-eldered teenagers in Western society, for example, end up using mind-altering chemicals -- including alcohol -- which, outside a ceremonial context and without spiritual guidance, are unlikely to lead to successful encounters with soul, and may be physically, psychologically, and spiritually harmful. Indeed, many of the soulcraft methods discussed in these pages can be dangerous. Mature guidance and adequate preparation are crucial.

Page 134: Talking Heads song “Once in a Lifetime” about waking up to that other, more real, meaningful, wild world

Page 226 - Sacred Symbols and Objects

Rituals are rooted in deeply meaningful symbols and the sacred objects that embody those symbols. The quester is in conversation with the quadrated circle, the wounded heart, images of the butterfly or dragonfly, the broken stick, the prayer arrow or God's eye, the ancestor's blessing, the parent's ashes, the family's coat of arms, the religious icon, the wedding ring, the medicine bag, the mask, the drum, the sacrificial fire. These symbols arouse the deepest desires of her heart, her greatest griefs and fears, the archetypal possibilities of the collective human unconscious, and her religious and spiritual yearnings. Through numinous power absorbed and emanated, they uncover sacred layers of her humanity. And they effectively awaken suppressed feeling, often provoking a profound healing crisis.

Page 233 - The Art of Solitude

Solitude does not come naturally to many of us. Even when not socializing, most Westerners avoid true solitude through myriad distractions -- TV, the Internet, computer games, newspapers, crossword puzzles, solo sports, busywork. Maybe we're afraid of solitude because it threatens us with boredom or an anxiety that can lead to difficult truths, unfinished emotional business, and the shadow side of our human nature.

Although true solitude -- alert aloneness without diversions -- can be challenging, it is often the necessary gateway to our deepest passions, and the discovery of what we must do to live them. As David Whyte writes,

*... Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet
confinement of your aloneness
to learn*

*anything or anyone
that does not bring you alive*

is too small for you.

The Wanderer learns to look deeply into the face of her aloneness and discover what truly brings her alive and what doesn't. She practices the art of solitude. She spends several hours at a time alone, awake, unoccupied, undistracted by everyday routines, letting what comes come. She works her way up to several days alone. She practices true aloneness, not at home or with her dog, her music, or a boo; just her, unprotected from the immensity of her psyche and the world.

Through the practice of solitude, you, too, will discover the ways you are alienated from yourself and the world. You will come to grips with one of the most profound and implacable facts of the human condition: that in an essential way you are, in fact, alone. You were born alone and will die alone. In solitude you will learn how to live as a mortal human. You will learn to more deeply comfort yourself. You will learn how to move your attention from one place to another, neither avoiding nor indulging in the painful places.

As a Wanderer, you must develop a relationship with your aloneness that is as profound and sacred as any other relationship in your life. You will come to belong to your aloneness as much to any place, job, or community.

Solitudo is Latin for nature. In true solitude, you remember yourself as a part of everything, a part of nature. You rediscover ease, inspiration, belonging, and wisdom in your own company.

Page 236 - Nature as Mirror

Page 254 - Befriending the Dark

The darkness is as obvious a symbol and site for the soul as any. The dark is the unknown, the mystery, the medium that holds the unpredictable -- the possible. It is the best blank screen upon which to project all that is unsolved and unloved in our hearts. We are afraid of the dark simply because we can't see what's there and we naturally assume the worst. When it comes to the dark, "better safe than sorry" turns out to mean "better paranoid and vigilant than murdered." **Most children -- and the children inside us -- are terrified of the dark, especially the dark beneath things, and thus afraid of what might be in the basement or under the bed -- or in the subway.**

The Wanderer knows she's not likely to run across her soul in the broad daylight of the village. If it had been waiting there, she probably would have found it long ago. The dayworld of family and culture is the setting within which her ego has acquired its particular qualities, both its vulnerabilities and strengths, and so her ego has already embraced most of the possibilities that exist there. Now she must look elsewhere. She must sink into deeper, more fertile, darker soil in order to tap her greatest and wildest possibilities.

One practice you might adopt is spending extended periods of time in true physical darkness, outdoors on moonless nights or in caves, with the goal of discovering and retrieving some treasures from the symbolic dark, your personal wilderness. Wendell Berry knows the dark:

*To go in the dark with a light is to know light.
To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight.
And find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,
And is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.*

In befriending the dark, offer your careful attention to everything you hear and feel and smell there, knowing much of what you experience will be “just” your imagination projecting unassimilated elements of your own psyche. You will learn much from what you project. But what you encounter in the dark will also include flesh and blood entities of the night -- owls, bats, deer, raccoons, spiders, mice -- that may be curious about you and even drawn to you. (People of some nature-based cultures say if you regularly encounter raccoons, for example, you might have “raccoon medicine.” On the other hand, you may just have a habit of sitting on raccoon trails in the middle of the night without knowing it.)

The greatest gift of the dark, however, will not be what you find there, but how the dark changes you. Offer yourself to the dark and ask it to initiate you in whatever ways it will, making yourself a gift of the dark as opposed to merely hoping for a gift *from* the dark.

Going into the literal dark serves as a mutually synergistic companion to several other strategies you might employ concurrently for entering the symbolic dark -- dreamwork, for example, or deep imagery journals, work with your sacred wound, with your shadow and projections, or confronting the inevitability of your own death. Each is a way to stretch your limits and become acquainted with yourself on a deeper level, each practice reinforcing and extending what is learned and set in motion by the others.

Rilke, too, learned to appreciate and love the dark:

*You darkness from which I come,
I love you more than all the fires
that fence out the world,
for the fire makes a circle
for everyone
so that no one sees you anymore.*

*But darkness holds it all:
the shape and the flame,
the animal and myself,
how it holds them,
all powers, all sight--*

*and it is possible: its great strength
is breaking into my body.*

I have faith in the night.

Rilke understood that our very origin is the darkness. We emerge from the darkness of the womb and, simultaneously, from the darkness of spirit, the Great Mystery. When Rilke writes that the fire fences out the world, I hear “world” as the greater portion of the universe we know little or nothing about. The darkness holds it all and so the Wanderer bravely enters that darkness to discover what is there and what is drawn to him. And the Wanderer, like Rilke, hopes not just to find something but to be changed, to be broken into, bodily. We must learn, like the poet, to have faith in the night.

Page 258 - Living the Questions of the Soul

“Lord, what ails thee?”

“Whom does my soul serve?”

Page 275 - Withdrawing Projections (Transference)

Page 280 - The Art of Soulful Romance

...The easiest way to tell if we are approaching romance egocentrically is to take a radically honest look at our romantic fantasies. In egocentric romance, we have a particular image of the desired relationship even before we fall in love. before we have so much as met our beloved. We enter the relationship as if playing the Dating Game, with a preexisting image of how the other person looks, sounds, what she wears, what his IQ is, what sort of work she does, what his age, race, and religion are -- perhaps even how many children we'll have and where we'll live! **After we meet and begin a relationship, our primary agenda, whether we admit it or not, is to mold the other to that preexisting fantasy.** Truly and deeply getting to know the other is secondary or, in the most egocentric forms of romance, of no interest at all.

...Egocentric love is what makes the egocentric world go round. It is one of the central fantasies upon which our egocentric culture is built. The adolescent dream of romance is celebrated in myriad ways -- in pop music, mainstream movies, advertising, "true romance" novels, in prince and princess fantasies. That is all good fun as far as it goes. A youthful approach to love is not itself the problem; the problem is the rarity of what comes next developmentally: a more mature way of engaging a lover that has a deeper, more spiritual, sustainable, and yes, even sexier set of possibilities, an approach to romance that encourages and supports soulful development.

...James Hollis suggests that both the value and process of soulful romance rest in what he calls *radical conversation*, in which one intends, continuously, to discover more and ever more about oneself and the other. Through such an exchange between two mysteries, one draws nearer to the central mystery of life. Hollis lists three components to such a soul-to-soul encounter:

1. The partners must assume responsibility for their own psychological well-being.
2. They must commit to sharing the world of their own experience without reproaching the Other for past wounds or future expectations. Similarly, they are to endeavor to hear, without feeling defensive, the experience of the Other.
3. They must commit to sustaining such a dialogue over time... Only radical conversation, the full sharing of what it is like to be me while hearing what it is really like to be you, can fulfill the promise of an intimate relationship. One can only engage in radical conversation if one has taken the responsibility for oneself, has some self-awareness, and has the tensile strength to withstand a genuine encounter with the truly Other.

Loving the otherness of the partner is a transcendent event, for one enters the true mystery of relationship in which one is taken to the third place -- not you plus me, but we who are more than ourselves with each other.

Page 291 - Mexican Tree Wedding

...In some villages of the Huichol Indians of Mexico, before a young man or woman is considered ready for marriage, they "wed" a tree for four years. This initiatory rite, undertaken at about age fifteen, rests on the understanding that the chosen tree represents the initiate's own perfect partner, what the Huichols think of as the opposite hidden within. The initiate regularly visits their tree and pours out their longing for "the perfect love." The young woman or man talks to their tree when happy or sad, when scared, angry, or confused; they confide their losses and successes.

Through this relationship with their tree partner, young Huichols enter into the depths of their own psyches, with the tree acting as the screen for projected hopes and fears associated with joining another person. They cultivate this relationship for four years, an appropriate duration for a beginning marriage with the self.

Western people who have visited the Huichols have been astonished to observe the balance and strong presence exhibited by both men and women, whose relational maturity at age twenty would be considered extraordinary by our standards. Their tree-partner practice undoubtedly engenders much of the equanimity observed among the Huichol people. Of course they employ many other spiritual practices, most significantly their age-old peyote ceremonies, which are at the heart of their religious and cosmological universe and continue to inform all of Huichol life.

...Romance places us face-to-face with death in one additional way. The deeper the heart-to-heart connection, the keener the awareness of its inevitable loss, whether through death or other forms of parting. We feel death lingering around the edges of our most intimate conversations. We know we will sooner or later be separated. Therefore, rather than pushing it away or stoically accepting it, we might boldly ask death to become a third party to the romance. **Death**

will then walk with us, bringing us into the presence of every moment. When death whispers that this may be our last chance to touch, the fullness of the now expands and offers the possibility of soul-to-soul contact. Death coaches us in love.

Page 307 - Embracing Your One Wild and Precious Life

...Malidoma Somé tells us what the Dagara elders say to the boys at the beginning of their ordeals of initiation. His phrases “where you come from,” “why you came here,” and “who you really are” correspond to that psychic realm, unique to each individual, that I call soul:

He who does not know where he came from cannot know why he came here and what he came to this place to do. There is no reason to live if you forget what you're here for... You chose to be born within a particular family because that made your purpose easier to fulfill... When you do not know who you are, you follow the knowledge of the wind.

There are details about your identity that you alone will have to discover, and that's why you have come to initiation to go and find out.

... a person who lives in denial of who he really is must have a hard time living, because he would have to invent meaning and purpose from the ground up. No one can tell us who we are or how we must live. That knowledge can be found only within.

Page 314 - The Mystery and Difficulties of Coming to Know the Soul

Unlike other sentient beings, our human psyches are divided into two components: a conscious self (the ego) and a personal unconscious, the latter being much more extensive. This division is the source of the difficulty of coming to know our souls.

Our conscious understanding of self, especially when we are young, is limited. Self-understanding grows and develops as our bodies do, gradually. At birth, there's no consciousness of a self at all. The ego acquires its initial shape during the first four years. As it matures, the ego is capable of understanding more of the total psyche of which it is one small part.

The soul is one aspect of the psyche rarely grasped by young people, no matter how healthy the individual and the cultural environment. It takes a rather mature ego to do this. The young ego, primarily a product of culture and language, is mystified by soul, which is precultural and nonlinguistic.

Furthermore, our soul qualities are usually not honored or encouraged by our families, partly because they can't see those qualities or are afraid of them, and partly because of their own ideas of who we ought to be. Parents and siblings may in fact actively suppress our soul qualities.

In our youth, our self-image is constrained by the traits or roles favored by friends, teachers, and parents, and we attempt to fit ourselves into an acceptable role -- a tough guy or a sweetheart, a leader or a follower, a thinker or an athlete.

Our parents have the most influence on our self-concept, and often family traditions and desires are at odds with the direction of the soul. My parents may want me to be a scholar, a priest, or a comedian, but my destiny is not likely reducible to *any* cultural categories.

Even the healthiest families, those that create a safe and loving environment of self-discovery, unconsciously communicate to the child a host of (mostly positive) messages as to who he is and even some (mostly loving) expectations as to who he should become. This is as it must be; we treat others as having a complementary place in the ongoing drama of our own lives. The unhealthy family actively suppresses and discourages any personal characteristics outside a narrowly defined and codependent range. In either case, the child's plight is like that of the cygnet in the fairy tale. Raised by ducks, he thinks he is one. He just can't understand why he's so ugly. It will be awhile before he discover his true essence, his beauty and destiny as a swan.

In essence, before entering the second cocoon, we tend to become the people others treat us as being. We become human, first, by apprenticing to our family and culture, and only later do we apprentice to our souls.

A second reason soul qualities are not obvious to the young is that the soul speaks a different language. The child's society may speak English or Spanish or Swahili, but the soul, as we have seen, speaks in emotionally-laden, dreamlike images. The young ego is not equipped to translate the soul's language into its own. Indeed, this is challenging for a mature adult, even one who is poetically minded and versed in the language of symbols.

A third reason is that the young ego is too busy with other important things. It has the full-time, critical job of figuring out how to create a good place for itself in the very context into which it was born -- its culture and language. This is a central task of childhood and adolescence.

Our human form of self-consciousness is the greatest obstacle to soul encounter, even though it may be our most defining and significant human attribute. What distinguishes us as humans is that we know that we know -- *Homo sapiens sapiens*, "twice wise" primates. Without egos, we would not have the capacity to be self-reflexively conscious of anything (a capacity, for example, an infant lacks), but we *would* be living the lives of our souls as fully and beautifully as do unself-conscious beings, like infants, deer, or blossoms. Not having egos, there is nothing to get in the way of their embodiment of soul. Our form of consciousness is both our greatest blessing and our greatest curse. It may render soul discovery and embodiment difficult, but then, without it, we wouldn't be able to consciously appreciate and celebrate the miracle and mysteries of existence.

Page 328 - Hazardous Journeys

Ernest Shackleton's heroic journey to the South Pole in 1914 is documented in the film *Endurance*. His ship became trapped in sea ice, preventing him and his men from reaching the Pole, but, remarkably, they survived an entire winter without losing a single man.

To assemble his crew, Shackleton had placed an ad in a London newspaper:

Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success.

-Ernest Shackleton

Five hundred men applied for twenty-eight crew positions despite the promised ordeals and the phrase "safe return doubtful." Maybe this proves how foolhardy men can be; or maybe it indicates a depressed London economy. But more likely it reflects how deeply men -- and women -- long for heroic adventure, and shows to what extremes they will go to find it.

It has been said that in the last several thousand years the most compelling adventure available to men of the "civilized" world has been war. Horrendous as war is, battle experiences often provide an uninitiated man's strongest memories because that's when he feels most alive, most engaged, most uniquely himself, and more bonded (to his fellow soldiers) than he has ever felt with any other humans. His experiences are sharpened and his perceptions heightened far more than in his everyday peacetime life. His fundamental human need for non-ordinary states of consciousness is satisfied. No wonder old soldiers love to recount war stories.

War, although hideous, is engaging to most boys and uninitiated men (as well as many girls and uninitiated women). If psychologically adolescent men don't have war to wage, they might opt for a violence-maximizing or conquest version of, say, hockey, hunting, car racing, mountain climbing, polar expeditions, real estate "development," stock market trading and other forms of gambling, corporate raiding, mining, logging, oil drilling, slave trading, or sexual seduction. In the contemporary world, there is an epidemic attraction, even addiction, to socially sanctioned forms of violence: economic aggression against other people, environmental exploitation, species eradication, dehumanization of women, and self-hatred. As Derrick Jensen documents in *A Language Older Than Words* and *The Culture of Make Believe*, we are members of the most destructive culture ever to exist. What can we do? What are the alternatives to war that far more deeply and effectively satisfy the longing to leap into the perilous abyss?

If we are to survive, we must reinvent cultural practices that satisfy our deep-rooted need for non-ordinary states, interpersonal bonding, and the intensification of both our individuality and our tribal belonging. We must create contemporary forms of sacred pursuits that are at least as engaging, enlivening, and complex as war, and which, more importantly, engender life, thriving communities, healthy natural environment, genuine education, joyful service, soulful maturity, cultural evolution, and love. **We need a better game than war.**

The traditions of nature-based peoples make it abundantly clear that the original, primary, and most sacred pursuit is the underworld journey of initiation and subsequent soul embodiment. In twenty years of guiding contemporary vision quests and soulcraft programs, I have seen that this is still true. I have witnessed thousands of men and women enact underworld journeys that include arduous ordeals-- arduous at last spiritually and emotionally, and often physically as well -- filled with mystery and intrigue, risk and danger. They return with an always-astonishing radiance in their eyes and treasures for their people. Soul initiation results in mature men and women who are capable of peacefully resolving conflicts and who are fully enlivened by a multitude of creative, life-enhancing projects. Whether intending it or not, initiated people become agents for positive cultural change.

An initiated adult knows in her bones the nature of the gift she was born to bring to her community. She apprentices to an existing craft, career, art form, or discipline that enables her to embody that gift. Later, she develops never-before-seen forms for carrying that gift to others. Eventually, with good fortune, she joins a council of elders who care for the soul of their community -- by preparing its youth for initiation, mentoring the initiated adults in their soul work, and ensuring that the village maintains a balanced relationship with the more-than-human community.

Krishnamurti: Understanding of the self only arises in relationship, in watching yourself in relationship to people, ideas, and things; to trees, the earth, and the world around you and within you. Relationship is the mirror in which the self is revealed. Without self-knowledge there is no basis for right thought and action.

Nehru: How does one start?

Krishnamurti: Begin where you are. Read every word, every phrase, every paragraph of the mind, as it operates through thought.

Expert Text: History of the Quinceañera as a Rite of Passage

In the Spanish-speaking community, girls are instantly converted into responsible women by the *quinceañera* celebration. Immediately after the Quinceañera, they are considered eligible for more responsibilities such as work, volunteerism, or marriage.

We all pass through certain stages in life. Even if we are all different, we do share some similarities. We celebrate the birth of a child, first birthday, first marriage and to complete the circle of life, we celebrate when you become a parent. As stated in Kalman's book, People celebrate birthdays and reaching adulthood. Each group of people celebrate what is an important custom to them. Some activities may seem "strange" to some of us while yet they envelop best wishes for the special person(s) who serve as the center of attention. (Kalman 1986 p 18)

In Mexico, the fifteenth birthday celebration for girls is unique. This is the most awaited birthday because it is a *Quinceañera*. The word *quinceañera* comes from the Spanish words *quince* for fifteen, and *años* which is years. The fifteenth birthday celebrant begins her journey into adulthood (Kalman 1986 p 40).

In some more traditional families in Mexico, the girl is serenaded by a mariachi band in front of her house the night before her 15th birthday. The next day, the girl has a party at her house, guests visit her and dance. Males take turns dancing with the girl and as customary, the first dance is a waltz danced with her father.

Mary Jo Reilly mentions in her book (Cultures of the world) *Mexico* on page 56 a few paragraphs under lifestyle, rites of passage for childhood and adolescence. The double standard appears and if you are born a female, you are destined to have certain duties/lifestyle. If you are born a male, you are given more independence at an earlier age than the girls. Female children are taught and held responsible for a number of duties. For example, an eight-year-old girl can be seen looking after younger siblings. As long as the girl is single, whether rich or poor, she will remain at her parents' home until marriage. If she does not wed, she ends up taking care of her parents. Women generally married when they were about fifteen years old (Sherrow 1993 p 39).

During the Aztec period, women were treated as second-class citizens, unimportant, and only available for bearing children and obeying their husband. Hence, young females were taught by elder women to learn the skills the girls would need to know for the rest of their lives. Such skills include housework, cooking, and weaving. Most girls married at age sixteen and were considered "experts" in their new position in society. Girls who belonged to wealthy families were sent to either a temple or a school where they would be instructed and trained as priestesses. Young girls married at around age sixteen. It was customary for an older woman to carry the bride on her back while other women lighted the way with torches as they walked over to the groom's house. Then the woman would tie the cloaks together to symbolize the sealing of the marriage. A cloak was a wealth symbol. Cloaks of the poor people were plain while the cloaks of the rich society were lavishly decorated (Odjik 1989, Wood 1992).

Education among the Aztec people was not easy. Perhaps much to our surprise, learning how to dance and play music were vital social skills that a person needed to have (Wood 1992). The Spanish conquered the Aztecs in 1521 and both religious traditions came together. For women, the age of fifteen became a time of decision. Girls had the choice to either devote their life to church or to marry (Lankford 1994 p 12). (It is important to note that the Spanish imposed their religion, Christianity on the Aztecs and destroyed the Aztec religion and lifestyle (Odjik 1989 p 42).

Women are still considered as second-class citizens in Mexico. However, they are the ones who manage best to maintain a family. They pass on their oral traditions to their children. For instance, all of their religious beliefs, legends and customs are shared from one generation to the next (Reilly 1991).

This report has looked briefly at the historical, religious, and societal factors which have contributed to the development of the present-day quinceañeras. The *quinceañera* is a traditional celebration which continues and which is slowly evolving as a reflection of the concerns of present-day Hispanic culture.

As is true of most aspects of Hispanic culture, there is a serious gap in the amount of published information regarding the topic of *quinceañeras*. As such, this gap also provides a challenge and an opportunity to contribute needed data. I hope to continue working towards this goal.

Serrato, Ana Maria -- Dec. 8, 1995

Source: <http://www.geocities.jp/japanliving/quinceaneras.html>

quinceañera

also called quince años

(Spanish “fifteen years celebration”)

Mexican celebration of a girl's 15th birthday, marking her passage from childhood to adulthood. The traditional *quinceañera* is both a religious and a social event that emphasizes the importance of the family and society in the life of young people.

The celebration begins with a mass attended by the girl and her family and godparents. This is followed by a reception, or party, to which friends and relatives are invited. The reception features food, music, and dancing, with the girl accompanied by her “court” of *damas* (“maids of honour”) and *chambelanes* (“chamberlains”). Symbolic actions may include the presentation of a doll to a younger sister, to show that the celebrant is giving up her childhood, and the placement of heeled shoes on her feet, to indicate that she is ready for adulthood. The celebration is generally as elaborate as the means of the family will allow. Although the *quinceañera* observance originally signified that the girl was prepared for marriage, the modern celebration is more likely to signal the beginning of formal dating. Some girls choose a trip abroad rather than a party, and others now choose not to celebrate their 15th birthday in the traditional manner.

The Aztec and Maya also had such rite-of-passage customs, and it is thought that the *quinceañera* may have originated in the Spanish interactions with the indigenous peoples of the area. The celebration is popular in some areas outside Mexico, particularly in parts of the United States with large Mexican American populations.

Source: http://www.britannica.com/hispanic_heritage/article-9389229

Reviving Rites of Passage in America

Pamela B. Nelson

Every ethnic group possesses its own distinct understanding of the life cycle and its own elaborate set of rituals to mark life's stages. For groups in the United States, however, cultural assimilation, intermarriage, modernization, and a national ethos that values innovation and change all have taken their toll on traditional rites of passage. Many of the rituals have been lost entirely, and of those that have survived or have been revived, almost all have changed in practice and meaning. This essay inquires into the ways that traditional rites of passage have evolved in the American context, focusing on traditions for four major life passages: birth, coming of age, marriage and death.

Cultural assimilation, or acculturation, has played a major role in the loss of traditional rites of passage in the United States. On the one hand, Native Americans, African Americans, and immigrants from all continents were often discouraged or prohibited from practicing their own customs. On the other hand, many immigrants themselves eagerly cast aside old-country traditions for ones which reflected mainstream American values. Some members of the younger generations married outside the group and lost both their identity and their traditions. Traditional rites of passage have survived longest in large, cohesive ethnic communities, such as those of the Amish and Hasidic Jews, who have purposely isolated themselves from mainstream American life.

Although assimilation has had a substantial impact, modernization has had the most profound effect of all on the practice of traditional rites of passage in the United States. Most traditional rites were created in stable, non-industrialized societies, paced by seasonal changes and characterized by strong family and community ties. In modern societies those family and community ties have broken down as urbanization has made people increasingly mobile and transient. Similarly, industrialization has moved worklife from home and farm to factory and office. Professionalization has caused duties formerly performed in the home by family members or neighbors to be performed by specialists, such as obstetricians, outside of the home. With time at a premium in modern culture most ritual observances have been shortened, while commercialization has allowed caterers, funeral directors, and other entrepreneurs to sell rites of passage as commodities. Finally, the inroads of scientific rationalism on religious faith have led many people to abandon religious rites or, at least, to consider them less central to their lives. At the same time, modern life has developed powerful new rites of passage to compete with those it is transforming or destroying. For example, getting one's driver's license symbolizes coming of age--usually at sixteen--in a society that places high value on mobility. Extended, compulsory education virtually requires participation in graduations and other ceremonies of transition.

Reviewing the ways that the rituals surrounding birth, coming of age, marriage, and death have changed over time in the United States shows the effects of assimilation and modernization. It also reveals, however, the various ways in which an increasing number of Americans are trying to preserve or revive rites of passage that are both traditional to their ethnic heritage and meaningful in contemporary life.

Birth

Although birth is a biological event, every culture creates rituals practiced before, during, and after birth both to integrate the newborn into society, and to orchestrate the transition of the mother, the father, and other family and community members into their new social roles. In some cases an infant is not considered human until these rites of passage take place.

In America, as birth moved from the home to the hospital traditional customs were lost. Professional doctors were attending the births of most middle-class Americans by the end of the 19th century. Midwives, however continued to deliver half of the babies in large immigrant communities.⁽¹⁾ Midwives as well as the older women of the community helped to maintain, for a time, the birthing traditions of their homelands. In the large Croatian neighborhood of Strawberry Hill in Kansas City, Kansas, midwives delivered babies at home and cared for the mother and child after the birth. Old women would visit the new mother and bring as gifts a chicken, a dozen eggs, a bottle of wine, and a box of crackers, foods considered important to the mother's recovery from childbirth. Such traditions were lost as women increasingly, chose to give birth in the hospital due to its reputation for safety and its use of anesthesia. Hospital routines themselves became rites of passage reflecting a belief system based on the supremacy of science and technology. Today, in fact, with hospital births the standard practice, some newly arrived immigrants believe that home birth is against the law in the United States.⁽²⁾

Nevertheless, a few ethnic traditions survive even in the modern hospital. Some Chinese-American women while in the hospital giving birth, "reject hospital food, pour out cold liquids, have special dishes snuck in by Chinese visitors, and only dampen a towel to pretend having showered" ."(3) Although they trust western medical practitioners to deliver their babies, they feel that American hospitals and doctors "don't care about" laying the foundation for future good health in the mother and child by restoring the balance of yin (female, dark, and cold) and yang (male, bright and hot) in the body of the new mother. According to traditional Chinese beliefs a woman has too much yin after giving birth, so she should eat only warming foods and avoid showering or getting chilled in any way. (See "[Doing the Month](#)" case study)

Generally, the rituals that occur well after the moment of birth, such as *brit milah* (the Jewish circumcision ceremony, or "briss") and baptism, have survived best. These rituals serve to incorporate the infant into the family and wider community and symbolically invest the baby with an identity based on gender, name, religion, and social role. Although in many cultures the mother is ritually reincorporated into the community after a period of seclusion, few such traditions have survived in the United States.

The Jewish circumcision ceremony physically marks a baby boy as a member of the Jewish community and symbolically creates a covenant between God and the child. As American Jews have adopted the cultural value of gender equality, however, Jewish customs that exclude women from religious participation have been challenged. As a result, a new Jewish rite of passage, a covenant-making ceremony for female babies, has become increasingly popular.

Coming of Age

In traditional societies, the period marking the transition from childhood to adulthood was relatively brief, occurring over the course of just days or weeks. Sexual identity was a central aspect of most coming-of-age rituals. For girls it established their eligibility for marriage and child-rearing. For boys it initiated them into their responsibilities of supporting a family, and taking on civic and religious duties. These rituals reflected the society's basic beliefs of what it means to be adult.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, however, Americans have treated the transitional period as an entire stage of life called adolescence. Lasting years, adolescence now encompasses physical maturation, sexual initiation, the attainment of educational and vocational experience) possible or actual military service, and the legal entitlement to drive, drink alcohol, and vote. American boys and girls alike share many of the same coming-of-age events, reflecting the modern breakdown of traditional adult gender-role differences.

As the process of growing up has lengthened, the point at which an individual actually becomes an adult has become less clear. In contemporary America, rituals that used to signify the clear and complete passage from childhood to adulthood now function only as one of the many transitions of adolescence. For example, a Jewish- American boy might view his bar mitzvah as an important step toward maturity, but he would hardly consider himself an adult at age thirteen, as he would in traditional Jewish society.

Of all the life-cycle rituals, those that mark coming of age are perhaps the most vulnerable to acculturation. Because teenagers tend to adopt mainstream values, and try to fit in with their peers, ethnic coming-of-age traditions often seem irrelevant or in conflict with other priorities. Recently, Carla Goseyun's traditional Apache Sunrise ceremony conflicted with her selection as an All Star in a Little League baseball tournament. Initially, Carla was extremely reluctant to give up the status she would gain within mainstream society as an All-Star ball player. In the end she went through with the Sunrise ceremony and came to value it in the process.(4) (See "[Sunrise Ceremonial](#)" case study.)

Some coming-of-age rituals are being revived or reinvented as many Americans begin to recognize the value of ritual in marking the entrance into adulthood. One group of Philadelphia African Americans in particular, recognizing the difficulties their children face in a society where racism is still a powerful force, has created a new rite of passage for their teenagers. Called *Unyago* (a Swahili word which refers to tribal ritual), it uses African-inspired ritual to affirm the youngsters' African heritage, and builds their self-confidence through weekend retreats on such topics as leadership, money management, African-American history, and sexuality.

Marriage

Some form of marriage is known to have existed in all human societies. Its traditional function in most of those societies has been to stabilize sexual relations and to unite a man and a woman in order to provide care for the young. in addition,

marriage has linked and allowed for economic exchanges between different kin groups and has served as the primary coming-of-age ritual for women.

Although some Americans, such as those in large ethnic communities and recent immigrants, continue to practice the wedding traditions of their heritage, most do not. They have adopted a standard form drawn from English and other western European traditions, which reflects the modern American ideals of romantic love, individualism, secularism, and consumerism. This is the wedding of the white satin gown, tiered cake, and tossing the bridal bouquet.

When economics and family control, rather than romantic love, characterized the way marriages were made, the bride's dowry and trousseau were essential to the wedding arrangements. Now modernization and the breakdown of the extended family have made weddings less the affair of family and community, and more the affair of the couple. Some girls might still create a hope chest for themselves, but except among the Amish, who have kept their traditional lifestyle, dowry and trousseau traditions rarely are maintained today.

Recently, some Americans have chosen to preserve or restore some of the wedding traditions of their heritage as an affirmation of their ethnic identity and as an antidote to the often impersonal nature of commercial or secular weddings. The wedding of Paul and Susan Binkis serves as an interesting example. Though not Lithuanian American herself, Susan wanted to celebrate her fiancé's heritage with an authentic Lithuanian country wedding. After a great deal of research, the couple developed an afternoon celebration which incorporated all the major traditions. The clothes for both the bride and groom were made to traditional specifications by a Lithuanian-American master weaver. Among the customs practiced were hanging the matchmaker in effigy, and "capping" the bride with the traditional headwrap worn by married women. Some significant departures from tradition reflected modern American customs and values. For example, the wedding lasted one day rather than the traditional three, and although the bride had a trousseau chest full of goods, they were gifts that she gave away to those who had helped with the wedding.

In the past intermarriage tended to result in the loss of ethnic traditions. However, with the rise of ethnic awareness and pride over the past few decades, many couples now create wedding celebrations which highlight and blend their ethnic traditions. Andy and Bopha Skinner celebrated their marriage with a Cambodian ceremony as well as a Baptist church service. The ceremonies were adapted to fit the values and needs of both the bride and the groom. At the Baptist service, which was held in English and Cambodian, Bopha chose to wear a Cambodian-style dress rather than a white gown. At the Cambodian ceremony, the use of alcohol as a ritual medium was minimized to accommodate Andrew's religious objections to it. Also because of their opposition to smoking, the couple gave candy as wedding favors, rather than cigarettes which are given out at most Cambodian weddings.

Death

In most traditional cultures, matters of the other world are at least as important as matters of this world. Actions in this life are influenced by concern for one's fate in the afterlife and for one's relationships with the spirits of the dead. Most traditional funeral and memorial rituals reflected this perspective. They not only moved the deceased individual out of the society of the living and into the afterlife, but they also sustained relationships between the living and the dead. In addition they provided for a period of transition for the living and a means for reincorporating mourners back into the community.

Eighteenth-century Americans generally were guided in life by the fear of going to hell and the hope of reaching heaven. Over time, the rise of scientific understanding, belief in the ability of humans to create progress, declining death rates, and growing doubts about the existence of an afterlife, all led to a dramatic shift in mainstream American culture away from concern for the afterlife and toward a primary focus on this life. In removing death from the home to the hospital and funeral home, in the practice of embalming, in the use of flowers and the elimination of somber trappings at the funeral, and by discouraging displays of grief or mourning Americans sought to affirm earthly existence and to deny death any power over their lives.

Traditional ethnic funeral practices were lost when they conflicted with hospital and funeral industry procedures and with mainstream attitudes toward death. Among Mexican Americans, for instance, loud wailing once was an important custom at the wake, but the practice has been effectively discouraged in the United States by funeral directors who feel that it inappropriately disturbs other clients.⁽⁵⁾ Other ethnic funeral practices can be accommodated more readily within standard funeral procedures. Thus Asian Indians in New Jersey are able to maintain their tradition of cremation by choosing funeral establishments which offer that service.⁽⁶⁾

On the other hand, the New Orleans jazz funeral is an example of how some traditions can survive even though they diverge considerably from the mainstream norm. The joyful music and exuberant dancing which follow the funeral rites reflect African beliefs that death is not the end of life, but a transition into a world in which the spirit continues an active existence. The need to provide elaborate and costly funerals stems from a very real fear that spirits can inflict harm on the living if they feel neglected.

As with other rites of passage, the traditional funeral customs which are most intact today are those of recent immigrants. The funeral practices of Hmong (a people from the mountains of Southeast Asia) refugees reflect their deeply-rooted cultural value of reciprocity. In repayment for all they received While growing up, the children of a deceased Hmong are expected to provide a four- or five-day funeral for hundreds of people. Each child furnishes a ritually slaughtered cow for the funeral feasts, and the deceased parent is buried with the many traditional appliquéd robes and pillows given by the children. The funeral is both a material display of family honor and a matter of reciprocity. Nevertheless, the Hmong have difficulty finding funeral homes that will accommodate their traditions, and it is even harder for them to maintain other values that they consider important. Believing that any intrusion into the body at the time of death causes harm to that person in their next life, the Hmong try to avoid medical procedures which involve inserting needles or tubes into someone who may be about to die, and they completely reject embalming.(7)

Americans are more likely to observe the memorial traditions of their heritage than the funeral traditions. Ukrainian Americans, Chinese Americans, and Mexican Americans among others continue to observe traditional memorial customs. Holding picnics at the grave and leaving wreaths or other items reveal ongoing beliefs in the need to provide for the dead and maintain a relationship with them.

Although many funeral traditions have been lost, Americans of various ethnic backgrounds are beginning to rediscover the healing power of rituals which allow for grieving and a successful transition back to normal life. The creation of the AIDS quilt as a means for mourning and remembering friends and family members who have died from AIDS is an example of growing appreciation of the need for mourning and ritual in death. Similarly, just as roadside memorials mark the sites of highway deaths in Puerto Rico, painted memorials have appeared on the sides of buildings near the sites of accidental or violent deaths of young Puerto Ricans in New York and Philadelphia.(8) Such memorials are a community's response to the increasing violence that their young people suffer and a means by which the tragic deaths will not be forgotten.

It has been said that American society has become de-ritualized, but the forces of assimilation and modernization apparently are giving way to a renewal of some aspects of traditional ethnic ritual. More and more Americans who are attempting to rebuild community and rekindle their own spirituality are discovering that the rites and customs of their heritage can bring meaning to their lives today. Most especially they are beginning to realize the pivotal role that rites of passage can play in both the personal transitions of a lifetime and the communal transitions from generation to generation.

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Source: <http://www2.hsp.org/exhibits/Balch%20exhibits/rites/reviving.html>

Art and Rites of Passage

Jill Leslie McKeever-Furst

In the 1950s, archaeologists discovered a cave at Shanidar in Iraqi Kurdistan. Here, the remains of more than a dozen children and adults were buried, and at least one person—a fully-grown man—was interred with flowers. The fine grains of pollen preserved in the soil around his body indicated that his companions laid him to rest in May or June and searched the surrounding hillsides for the blooming early relatives of hollyhocks, bachelor's buttons, grape hyacinths, woody horsetail. Because most of these plants have, and probably had at the time of his death, medicinal uses, he may have been a medicine man and the healer of his group.

The Shanidar burial does not seem particularly remarkable; many people today and in the recent past adorn bodies and graves with flowers. It is unique, however, because it, and the rite of passage it celebrates, predate modern humans by tens of thousands of years. The man was honored some 60,000 years ago by his fellow Neanderthals.

Art, on the other hand, is a product of *Homo sapiens*. From at least thirty thousand years ago, people have worked and reworked stone, bone, and antler, and some of the resulting objects undoubtedly commemorated alterations in an individual's status or confirmed membership in a community. The ancient, small Mother Goddess figures scattered across Siberia may have represented requests for children, suggesting that our earliest ancestors already had in mind an ideal life cycle in which a person began as child; transformed from careless adolescent to responsible parent, nurturer, and mainstay of the group; evolved to elder and ancient keeper of the group's knowledge; and finally, after death, became an ancestor who watched over his or her living relatives from the otherworld.

It is even possible that the most archaic monumental art—the magnificent larger than life-size paintings of bison and horses in the caves of southern France and northern Spain—was executed by talented boys taken from their families to be transformed into adult men. Judging from recent customs, their period of seclusion must have included intense fasting, frightening isolation, ritual whippings, blood offerings to the spirits, or bodily mutilations. The boys were taught the secret lore of the group, and perhaps they painted, or saw, the impressive figures of the game animals they now would be hunting. The adolescents then returned to the group, not as children but as adults, with the comportment and responsibilities of men. Coming of age to adulthood reinforced their identification with the entire group rather than with their own families because all young men who underwent these trials together were bound in an "age group" as brothers. As our earliest ancestors passed through stages of their lives they may have marked their bodies with tattooing, painting, scarring and removal of small and nonessential body parts. The body itself became an object of art. Today, intricate patterns expressing auspicious wishes for future good fortune are still painted on the hands and feet of Pakistani and Asian Indian brides. (See "[Mehendi Party](#)" case study.) They are joy made visible in highly stylized motifs. As in most traditional societies, the geometric designs are abstractions of objects and ideas that enable the people within the group to read the pattern but convey almost nothing to outsiders. Other alterations of the body, such as circumcision, are more private and permanent. The body is ephemeral, however, so unless a custom continues, we have no way of knowing how often the body itself was the canvas or clay marked by rites of passage.

Objects, rather than the body, have been used as more permanent reminders of life changes. The physical things used in rites of passages are armatures of memory; the stories of births, marriages, and deaths are woven around them. Despite their diversity, these objects share common features. Generally part of religious experience; they are made within a community setting, and not simply for their private meanings. Often, they are classified as folk, or popular, art produced for the common people rather than fine arts executed for aristocratic patrons. Increasingly, they are mass-produced. Finally, they have become intimately associated with keeping or recreating an ethnic identity.

Objects made for rites of passage are primarily tied to religion because the life cycle traditionally is celebrated in the context of belief. Individual lives follow an ideal pattern of behavior lying at the core of the religion. The lives of the leader or founder of a religious tradition and his or her family often form the model for its followers. Usually that model calls for the presentation of a child to a deity or to ancestral spirits in emulation of the founder of the religion at its beginning. In Christianity a child's baptism recapitulates the biblical baptism of Christ. In Buddhism the life of Buddha is the ideal so that a male child is introduced to monastic life for a brief time by having his head shaved and wearing the saffron-colored robes of a priest. In the Akan religion of Ghana an infant is presented to the gods and the ancestors during the [traditional naming ceremony](#).

For Catholics the life of the Virgin forms an important pattern for feminine rites of passage. The *quinceañera* celebrating a Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Mexican-American girl's fifteenth birthday, for example, traditionally has marked her entrance into womanhood. (See "[Quinceañera](#)" case study.) Although it is now a primarily secular and social rather than religious ceremony, it still includes a segment in a church, where the young woman is crowned by her mother or a friend. The girl

dresses in a white formal and wears a cloak. Just as at her first communion at age seven, she wears special frilly white clothing derived from artistic depictions of the clothing and crown worn by the Virgin Mary for her coronation in heaven. Among the most common objects created for rites of passage are grave goods given by the living to the dead to aid them in the next world. Many people believe that unless they provide the dead with items of sufficient quality or quantity, the spirit might return to harass the living. Elaborate artificial floral wreaths called *coronas* are made by Mexican-American women each year to honor and comfort their dead on All Souls Day. (See "[Day of the Dead](#)" case study.) In many cultures special clothing sets apart surviving relatives from the rest of society while they grieve, and rites of passage enable them to channel their grief during stressful times or even may grant them permission to feel and express otherwise prohibited emotions.

Rites of passage affirm membership in a community. When an individual life conforms to a group's primordial pattern, or proto-life story, the person shares a common experience with neighbors and with everyone who has gone before and who will come after him or her. The rites that determine status and position within most communities do not make much difference to other ethnic groups or the surrounding society. For example, ritual circumcision is crucial to incorporating a male child into Judaism although the society at large may practice the same procedure for medical reasons. Many implements made for this ceremonial practice thus are not simply medical instruments, but are finely wrought in precious materials. Because Jewish tradition bars depictions of the human form, the embellishment of ritual items for circumcision often consists of delicately engraved, painted, or woven inscriptions of biblical texts or good wishes for the child.

Community feeling during rites of passage is reinforced by wearing similar clothing or by using the same objects. The elegantly simple *tallit*, or prayer shawl, traditionally worn by a boy, at his *Bar Mitzvah* is like the one worn by all adult Jewish men and links members of the community in faith and ritual action. In many ethnic communities in America, clothing and paraphernalia for rites of passage are the last cultural elements to be lost. People might dress in modern clothing in their everyday lives, but they are often brought into the community, confirmed, married, or buried with some traditional piece of clothing or object if at all possible. Items designed for rites of passage embody human identity in the most profound sense: before a person establishes his or her individuality, he or she comes into the world as a member of a family and cultural community which uses ritual objects to anchor the individual to his or her past.

The use of communally owned objects in rites of passage also affirms solidarity, and in many ethnic communities, rites of passage are celebrated with borrowed paraphernalia. Byzantine Catholic and Eastern Orthodox couples are married under the very same icons which were held over their great-grandparents. The torah pointer used by a Jewish boy or girl at his or her *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is owned by the synagogue and used for many generations.

Giving gifts and receiving special tokens or party favors during rites of passage signal the community's acceptance of the validity of the ritual. The Jordan almond favors that are traditional among Greek and Italian Americans originated in the Mediterranean region at the time of the Roman Empire. Puerto Ricans distribute *caplas*, favors made with ribbons, feathers, and plastic novelties, at baptisms, *quinceañeras* and weddings.

Items crafted by family or community members validate the rite of passage. Special wedding clothing or items for a trousseau show the skill of their maker and enhance the prestige of a family in which the women are known to be good embroiderers, seamstresses or bead workers. The woman who receives such hand-crafted apparel marches into the next stage of life with confidence, while those same items give their makers and other members of the community, a stake in the outcome of the ceremony.

The objects made within a community for rites of passage constitute a living tradition of folk arts. Often they derive from fine arts once commissioned by aristocratic patrons. Photographs of the dead, for example, grew out of the ancient Roman practice of making portraits of deceased rather than living relatives. The Roman aristocracy also commissioned sculptured portraits on gravestones, a custom that has continued in some 20th-century Italian-American communities. Commemorative portraits were revived in Renaissance Italy during the fifteenth century, and were popular in Europe and America into the nineteenth century, when photography took over the function of the more costly art of painting. The increasing popularity of photography during the second half of the nineteenth century meant that portraits—including those of the dead—were much cheaper and hence available to humbler and poorer people. Photography democratized the death portrait, just as it made portraits of the living more common. Almost every high school student now has a portrait made for graduation, as it no longer is the prerogative only of kings, counts or dukes to commission a likeness.

Conversely, the fine and folk arts sometimes depict the customs associated with rites of passage. The Croatian-American folk painting "Visiting the Newborn" records how neighbors traditionally visited the birthing room to bring gifts of food. From the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, paintings by European artists often attributed the same practice to neighbors who visited Saint Anne when she gave birth to the Virgin Mary.

Objects celebrating rites of passage frequently are mass-produced because they serve not the rich but the common person. Tibetan refugees living in California can buy inexpensive religious prints of the "Wheel of Existence" pulled from

large wood blocks which were brought to this country from Tibet. The subject is the soul's passage from death to the afterlife and its subsequent rebirth in different realms and bodies. Printed in a single color, the image is a poor man's version of the *tanka*, an elaborate and delicate religious painting, chased with gold and mounted on strips of brilliant, imported Indian silk. Each *tanka* was a unique work made by monks, to be used in temple rituals and in meditation. The costly *tanka* shares its symbolism with the less expensive wood block print. Traditionally, humble people have bought the prints, hung them in their houses, folded and worn them in amulets, or sewn them into their clothing for protection against evil spirits, and sometimes they even have hand-colored them to give them the beauty of their more expensive counterparts.

In the United States during the nineteenth century, objects for rites of passage were increasingly mass-produced as populations shifted from farms to manufacturing centers. People in smaller communities continued to make much of what they needed, but for working people in urban centers, manufactured objects and printed materials such as the lively, lithographed Jewish "Stages of Life" cards were treasured items that were carefully displayed and preserved.

Today, traditional items may be made of less expensive synthetic materials. Japanese wedding cups made of plastic rather than lacquered wood are an excellent example of this substitution. On the other hand, people of the late twentieth century often prefer handmade things, which have now become more costly and rarer just as manufactured goods were more difficult to obtain in the last century.

Perhaps the best example of changes in attitudes about machine versus hand-made goods can be seen in the *fracturs* associated with Pennsylvania Germans. Early *fracturs* often were hand painted by local teachers, who supplemented their incomes by producing elegantly lettered and fancifully embellished wedding and birth announcements. As printed reproductions became common in the nineteenth century, *fracturs* often were purchased with standard introductory texts and blank spaces for entering the names of the significant participants. Purchasers of the printed *fracturs* then had them embellished further with color tints and additional painted figures. Today, the form is experiencing a lively revival, in elegant and beautiful hand-painted and lettered modern examples. The custom has traveled outside the Pennsylvania-German ethnic group as the appreciation of hand-crafting and traditional folk art has grown, and as the prices of original *fracturs* at antique shows and auctions have soared. The revival of handmade *ketubot* (Jewish marriage contracts) has followed something of the same pattern although the art has remained within the Jewish community.

Finally, objects for rites of passage are more than devices for maintaining family folklore that confirms the cycle of life. They are visible signs of people's desires to maintain ethnic identity and to mark the stages in their lives in a time-honored fashion. The buckskin dresses worn at Apache Sunrise ceremonies are still made in traditional form, although sometimes incorporating non-traditional motifs. They are complete with dangles and the intricate, lacy colored beads worn by the Apache and Mojave of Arizona, Nevada, and western California. The Sunrise Ceremony which commemorates the coming of age of a young woman also celebrates the ancient Apache custom of counting descent through the mother's line.

Traditional items also have been used for recreating rituals and retrieving a sense of ethnic continuity and heritage. *Kente* cloth, for example, is included in many African-American rituals, including a "coming-of-age" ceremony celebrated recently in Philadelphia. (See "[Unyago](#)" case study.) Woven in both vertical and horizontal bands by the Ashante people of Ghana, some patterns of *kente* cloth traditionally were reserved for the upper classes or the king. The patterns themselves had names which often commemorated great events in the past, or referred to the ruler's power to discover fraud or deceit. One weave was dubbed "liar's cloth" because the monarch wore it when speaking with people known to be less than truthful. The cloth was a clear reminder that they were known to the king by reputation and that their words would be carefully scrutinized to determine their veracity. In the United States the cloth no longer is used in its original context, but its use helps to reconstruct ethnicity and to link African-Americans to the great artistic and social traditions of their past. As long as people marry, bear children, age, and die, they will commemorate these life changes in rites of passage. The rituals themselves may change dramatically over time, but they continue to address needs that have endured for as long as sixty thousand years. Ritual objects validate the ceremonies, and are tangible reminders of who we have been, who we are and who we may be.

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Source: <http://www2.hsp.org/exhibits/Balch%20exhibits/rites/art.html>

- 1) Men's lives are as much governed by restrictive role expectations as are the lives of women.
- 2) Men's lives are essentially governed by fear.
- 3) The power of the feminine is immerse in the psychic economy of men.
- 4) Men collude in a conspiracy of silence whose aim is to suppress their emotional truth.
- 5) Because men must leave the Mother, and transcend the mother complex, wounding is necessary.
- 6) Men's lives are violent because their souls have been violated.
- 7) Every man carries a deep longing for his father and for his tribal fathers.
- 8) If men are to heal, they must activate within what they did not receive from without.

Antonio Machado

*Caminante, son tus huellas
el camino, y nada más;
caminante, no hay camino,
se hace camino al andar.
Al andar se hace camino,
y al volver la vista atrás
se ve la senda que nunca
se ha de volver a pisar.
Caminante, no hay camino,
sino estelas en la mar.*

- Wanderer, your footsteps are
- the road, and nothing more;
- wanderer, there is no road,
- the road is made by walking.
- By walking one makes the road,
- and upon glancing back
- one sees the path
- that will never be trod again.
- Wanderer, there is no road—
- Only foam in the sea.