An Interview with Marion Woodman

by Saphira Linden and Taj Inayat Glantz

Marion Woodman is a Jungian analyst who is internationally known as a teacher, lecturer, and workshop leader. She is the author of numerous books including Addiction to Perfection, Leaving My Father's House, and most recently, Dancing in the Flames: The Dark Goddess in the Transformation of Consciousness.

Saphira: You’ve had a long history with personal work in psychology and in spirituality. What important discoveries have you made and how do you see psychology and spirituality intersecting?

Marion: Well, let’s go on at a time. How do they interface? I have found that behind the personas, some of us live a false self and don’t know it. As we clear away the protections that we have used to avoid our own inner reality, in analysis, that hidden part emerges at the right time.

Not in the beginning, because often, it is so wounded, it could not possibly come out at the beginning. It’s not only wounded by the culture we’re in, but it’s equally wounded by our own ego. When the hidden does manifest, one says, why have you remained in the cellar for you so long? It says clearly to the ego, “You would have killed me.” So as analysis develops you find your own soul. And there is the connector to the religious aspect. The soul is the eternal part of us that lives in the temporal body. Here’s where the huge pain and conflict is.

We are spiritual beings with our huge ideals and here we are living in this cage, our bodies, where we cannot fly into those ideals, without being totally ungrounded and totally unhuman. I think we’re on this earth to allow the soul to mature through human suffering. So for me, the connector between the spiritual and the psychological would be the soul emerging. As the soul emerges and opens more and more to spirit, we are on a religious path. Then come all the questions of the spiritual disciplines.

Saphira: Like what.

Marion: How meditation can take you into the archetypal dimensions. What is love? You quickly find out it’s not the sentimental thing you thought it was. What is one’s soul? The magnificence of the divinity is in its oneness, but to live that is so difficult... with the people we live with... with the countries we’re in. It’s a huge paradox because the more we know that the planet is one country the more we are fragmenting into all the tiny diversities that want their own voice. Here’s where the spiritual discipline comes in—to be able to hold the tension of the opposites without falling into the oppositions. That’s huge in terms of spiritual discipline.

Marion: The more you work with the soul in the body, the more you are aware of the energy body within. The more refined the energy becomes, the more you have to obey the laws of the other reality otherwise you become very ill. Our culture doesn’t know anything about living in that other reality. The medical profession doesn’t know anything about it either. I think the scriptures certainly help us to understand the laws of the subtle body.

Saphira: You’ve written a lot about how dreams reveal what’s going on in the unconscious. How can dreams be used to create a greater understanding of the soul and higher states of consciousness.

Marion: Ahh! You’ve done your homework. Haven’t you Saphira? A huge question. The dream process follows a growth pattern as accurately as a baby grows. It goes on hour by hour. Often when I go into my unconscious to work an analyst’s dream, say at midnight, I tap into the dream I was having when I woke up and it’s still going on. I think that the unconscious world is moving all the time. If it comes to the surface and it is not recognized, it dies. It goes back down and comes back up in a perverted form. But the dreams follow the pattern of growth so long as the ego is strong enough to set up an axis

Continued on page 5.
in which I went into a dark dark cave. There was a hole in the wall with two big books. One was called "The Seven Chronicles of the Western World" and the other book had no writing on it at all. A snake had guided me to this cave. I pick up the "Seven Chronicles"... all the history that I knew, and the snake knocked that book out of my hand. "This other book is the book for you." The snake had a crown, a golden eye and when I looked at the other book, it had the same golden eye on the cover. The eye was alive and very awesome. I shook with terror. I opened the book. There was not a word written. But this eye was pulsing with love. So I knew in the tiniest slice of a fingernail that my task had to do with the eighth eye, and I knew enough about Blake to know about the eighth eye, and I knew that it had to do with bringing that love into reality and what it was in words didn't matter. The reality of that book had to be manifest. Now that's 25 years ago... and I'm just beginning to understand where that guidance was taking me.

More and more I'm understanding what that love is.

Sappho: Powerful example. The harder thing to talk about is higher states, states of bliss, altered states.

Marion: Where do the dreams take me in terms of that? I see the soul as living in the subtle body. The subtle body is the bridge between the body and spirit. These two entities are connected through soul, so that we are one. The image gives us the connector between soul and body. From discoveries in psychoneuroimmunology, they now know the images that come to us do affect the chemistry of our body and the chemistry of our body affects the imagery. So this bridge is unquestionable in the subtle body.

Some people pay no attention to their dreams. The wealth of our spiritual and human lives is in those images if we are ever going to be new people, dependent on our own imagery and dependent on our own symptoms, and not projecting our spiritual strength onto a guru or a movie star. Our whole culture tends to project the real strength of the individual onto some

body else, or something else, so we are an addicted society. We project the greatness of our mother that we didn't have onto food. We project our partner that we yearn for, the beloved within, onto a man or a woman and then we get into compulsive relationships. If we project our own energy out we fall in love with that image out there. Our energy is out there instead of in here. If we weren't so lazy we would work with our own inner imagery and say hey, "Here's where the energy is."

Now some people say, "Well, I don't get my dreams." Well, if you gave up your dreams when you were two or three years old because people laughed at you, or because you turned in some other direction, you can't expect the unconscious to put itself in such a vulnerable position as to be laughed at. So the unconscious doesn't manifest its glory.

You begin very slowly. Maybe you get half a line of one little dream. Then the next night you may get a whole line. If you are faithful to the process, eventually you set up a dialogue and every night you get your guidance from the inner world.

Taj: That's beautiful. What's striking me as you speak is your deep love for the dream, for your own dreams, and for this inner process. I couldn't help but wonder who you rely on for your teacher and your teaching; it's obvious as you speak, from the dream.

Marion: I utterly believe that God is the dream-maker.

Taj: I can see that.

Marion: When I say God, I mean God and Goddess. I can't separate those two. For me God is spirit and Goddess is the manifestation in matter of that spirit. So the two go together. I could not live without that connection to the dream worlds. I would not have any idea how to make my decisions. It's the rudder on my ship. The wind in the sails.

Taj: You see a lot of clients and you travel and have lot of access to people's hearts and souls. I wonder if you could say something about the sense of what is happening now, if there is such a thing as reading the health of the world. What are the current issues?

Marion: From the vantage point of the moon, human kind received that glorious picture of our little blue planet swirling in space. There we all are, on that wee thing and then you come closer and closer to it and you find what a violent mess it is. We fight with human beings, we fight with nature, because we are one planet. We know that now. We've never known that before in the history of our evolution. The paradox is despite the diversity we are forced to come closer and closer together; therefore the intimacy is driving us further and further apart. So I would see that as an immense issue.

The other huge question I'm coming up against is the role of women. Women have been working very very hard to come to consciousness. Now, they are their own inner-created masculinity and they are running up against patriarchy. And they are saying, "We are not going to be bludgeoned again." There are assumptions in society that even the most loving men expect to be served. It's an unconscious expectation. And the women say "No. Period. I have done my work. These are my understandings of who I am and I am not accepting this old patriarchal frame of reference."

I'm finding religious women, certainly many nuns, many Islamic women that I work with, are saying, "How are we going to make our men understand who we are?" Do you find that in your group?
Saphira: Ten years ago we started Chrysalis (the Feminine Council of the Sufi Order) and within that process there has been a lot of connecting with women in our organization. They have been able to speak their truth, and surface things that felt abusive to them within the context of our organizational structure. I really feel there has been tremendous healing and purging just because when people are listened to, they hear themselves. So I've personally witnessed a lot of that in the last period of time.

Pty: Saphira accepted the creation of a Goddess candle, and that was a huge thing in the Universal Worship. When these things happen, there truly is a transformation. An ethics committee was created. I just feel like there has been a cleaning up and it's mirroring the general culture in the political realm. It's all surfacing, the sexual abuse, all of it.

Marion: I think 10 years ago many things were going on that were not perceived as abuse. Now we are seeing how unconscious assumptions have undermined men and women. I think the patriarchal stance in terms of power and control has damaged men as much as it's damaged women.

Saphira: That's right and in that vein we have a question for you from Arum O'Kane, who works with a lot of men. He asks, "What do you see as the most-needed piece for men to develop today?"

Marion: I think men who have not been working on themselves don't even know how damaged they are. They are still trying to put on the macho front... coming from a place of power over... trying to control. Whereas underneath that bluff is a little boy. It's so agonizing for them to have to recognize that powerless little fellow. It's the tyrant on one side and the little boy on the other. What's missing is love. Without the capacity to relate, you have a tyrant who is going to abuse and doesn't know he's abusing.

In the same way, he may find himself a little boy, dependent on a mother. So long as women collude with this, they are as much to blame as men, as far as I'm concerned. Women who have done their work on themselves recognize that. Their collusion is keeping men in this situation.

For women, our masculinity is split the same way. We could be tyrants on one side and little boys on the other and just swing from control to powerlessness. When the woman refuses to allow that kind of splitting in her own masculinity, she develops what I call the virgin within. This woman knows her own values because she has worked on them in the images in her own body. She knows her own feeling needs at a muscular level. She is in touch with her body.

A lot of men, like women, are finding they have not lived their own inner reality at all. As men do their work, they also are coming out of the head and coming down into the body. This way they recognize the anger and terror that is stored in their bodies. As that is released in a controlled environment, the recognition of the suffering opens the wound to love. All of us have to go through the suffering of the repressed body and therefore the repressed soul because the soul lives in body.

It's that suffering and the recognition of that wound that makes it possible for us to love each other.

As men find that little boy in themselves they can nourish that little fellow into maturity. Women are also having to do that. "Who is this little boy who is running around in my psyche?" He's a golden boy. This one is a new consciousness: the Divine Boy. He's always encouraging the feminine.

This image is of the divine child born of the virgin, not through a human father, but through the spirit. It's not only a Christian image. You see it in many other cultures. The divine spirit touches the soul and out of that union, comes a divine child. People don't realize in the sentimentality of Christmas, which is so pervasive in our culture, that that means new consciousness. Life is 100% changed when that new consciousness comes in. The old questions don't matter. The old answers don't matter. It's over. There's something new.

Huge energy comes up. This little boy is just full of energy and when the feminine connects with him, she also is just full of it. Wow, if I could just live this! You just have to have the courage to keep going because people think you're mad, because you do not fit in. They don't understand when you say, "The red tulip absolutely just burns me up." They say, "She exaggerates."

Without the evolution of consciousness, this whole thing is purposeless and meaningless. That's why whatever it is we are doing to the earth, God won't allow it, here to destroy it, or to destroy ourselves. Something is immense here and it is coming through me. Then you find other people who have this same kind of hope and vision and they are willing to endure whatever suffering and sacrifice is necessary. Because there is huge sacrifice demanded here. You can't move into a new dispensation without huge sacrifice.

Now sometimes something happens that cuts the energy. The world says, "We don't want it."

Meanwhile the person is trying financially and every other way to get the message out—because they are on fire with possibility. After immense confusion and bewilderment—because they couldn't believe their gift was not wanted—they are told in no uncertain terms, "We don't want it." Now from the soul's point of view, that is murder. Then you see illness because where is the energy going to go? The energy instead of being expressed is depressed. Repressed. If it's repressed, your going to have illness.

Taj: Is there some kind of inner capacity that should be called upon at that point?

Marion: It's really important to recognize when that happens, that the timing was wrong. Let the disappointment, bitterness, and the sense of betrayal go. I think there is a time for everything—Chairs—when the divine and the personal come together. But you have to give up the personal desire. This is a clandestine we're talking about now. You just simply have to surrender your ego desire totally and let all the grudges go, let all the hopes, illusions... GO! Pretty hard to do. That's hard stuff.

Taj:
In terms of our personal health sometimes the illness occurs before the forgiveness can get in there. The smash is so total that you are knocked dumb and unconscious, and it's in that numb state that illness can take over. So I say, express, express express, express, at the personal level, not out in public, but in the silence of your own room. Get it out through painting, or whatever your creative work is. Then let go. Live the moment.

It is in the history of the world that that energy is not wanted. Christ was put on a cross and crucified. The world is afraid of new consciousness. Understandably. The corporate world would be destroyed by a spiritual consciousness that really took over. It would be the end of a lot of things. So the patriarchy is going to hold on with its fingernails as long as it can possibly hold on. My sense is there will be some kind of horrific suffering as the environment collapses, as it's bound to if we go on as we're going. I think there will be deeper and deeper suffering and somehow the values are going to be turned around.

You have to move with what is moving from the soul position when the energy of the subtle body is shifting and becoming more and more refined. It requires a different kind of food, a different resting pattern. It's vibrational response to everything is different. If you don't honor that you are going to be sick. The more you honor it, the fiercer the intuition becomes, the more you can communicate in amazing ways. But it is totally grounded.

If the ego fails to receive what is coming through, I think that's death.

Taj: I find that when I work with people, that that is an area that is problematic.

Marion: Everything is brought into question. Everything, even one's financial picture.

Saphira: Let me go back to a second question from Taj. A lot of younger men have difficulty seeing anything positive about the masculine because they feel such a sense of shame about what's been done to women by men. How do you see younger men being able to hold a positive image of the masculine?

Marion: It will help if they can realize that women have done to them exactly what men have done. Now a lot of women hate to hear that, but you can see in their dreams, for example, the German gestapo who is murdering the feminine. Women have a masculinity... and they don't like to admit this. I can see it in relationship to the book The Ravished Bridegroom. Women do not like that book because it faces this very issue. I don't like these men in my dreams who've got no genitals, have a transplanted heart and, are blind, and their hands are cut off. All those images suggest a masculinity that has no standpoint.

Anyway I think we, men and women, have to honor the fact that centuries of our so-called culture has been a massacre of the feminine and women have been working on it longer than men have been working on it. But the men need to recognize, first of all, that their own masculinity has got to heal. And their own masculinity has got to face the patriarchy inside. For a man to have to deal with the patriarchy in himself and try to find at-onement with the father that massacred him... that's immense! That's pain.

I think we're coming round to something.

Saphira: I do too. What I thought

Marion: So the whole creative world is part of this higher consciousness. When I use the word higher, I could be talking about the deepest darkest shadow in the psyche because you have to think in terms of a double helix when you are working with the unconscious. Often you are going deep into suffering. As you move into the deepest darkness, that's where you find the light. So higher doesn't mean abandoning our humanity. Higher means in many ways going into the profoundest depths of despair. And that's the light.

Taj: You were talking about the ego structure being strong enough to receive the emergence of the unconscious... and I'm wondering, is the unconscious something that is separate from the conscious?

Marion: In a person like the Buddha, or Christ or Mohammed, the light of consciousness would have permeated to the depths where they are essentially one. For example, Christ in the very last hours of his life moved from "Let this cup pass from me" to "Thy Will be done." Now that's an immense step that every one of us has to go through ultimately, but it was a huge transition there.

It's astonishing how synchronicity becomes a part of everyday life. That suggests unconsciousness and consciousness are coming closer and closer together. Often people dream what happens the next day when they are in that synchronistic state. The conscious and the ego and the whole archetypal dimension are coming more and more together so you perceive what you did not perceive before.

Taj: How would the dreams reflect that change?

Marion: They become much simpler and more forceful, often one voice, one image. Totally concentrated, focused. The message absolutely clear as to which way to go or what has to be sacrificed at this point. Then, maybe you have one big dream that gives you a new image of what's happening.

Saphira: Can you give us an example from your own life?

Marion: In my illness the images that have come to me have been clear, focused, carrying immense energy. Praying to Sophia, when I went to the radiation, for a shield so I wouldn't be burned by the radiation. On the table itself there was a purple shield right over my body. I found out afterwards that ultraviolet light is the most possible shield against too much radiation. It was so simple, so absolute, and the energy resonated right in the cells of the deepest parts of my body so that I felt protected in my cells.

What I'm trying to convey here is the sense of the reality in the resonance of the image. I just knew it was, for me, true. No question.

Taj: Is the image itself the energetic field, or is the face of it, or is the image the reality?

Marion: All of that is true. I've said the image is the language of the soul. As I sleep an energy starts to move in my body. That energy takes on an image and that's the dream. The energy has a form that the imagination can relate to. If you take the time in consciousness to really allow that form to come through in painting, for example you suddenly get very excited. You are connecting to the imagery that was released into the picture in dream. The picture in the dream is a picture of your spirit condition. You can get into the resonance of the image through drawing it, through dancing it, through singing it, through writing a poem about it. Here's where psychology is so closely connected to the creative arts and so closely connected to the divine
in its creative power because as Blake says "in one moment of the pulsation of the artery the poet's work is done." By this he means if you are fully concentrated the image just blasts open your consciousness. That's it! It's like blasting an atom and releasing the energy from matter.

My healing process has been through imagery. I have worked as creatively as possible with the medical profession and I know I wouldn't be sitting here if it weren't for them. I've worked equally creatively with alternative medicines, with my homeopath, and I have worked with prayer, meditation and visualization. Through receiving the immense love of the many people who have prayed for me, I've really practiced opening the antenna of my subtle body as wide as possible to receive that love and it has been palpable in my body. I have believed Jung’s concept of the archetypal image having the power to heal and that anything else is a bandaid.

I have really worked on trying to access the energy of the archetypal image. Often four or five days would go by and I wouldn't really access it at all. Then suddenly I would feel the energy pouring through from the archetypal depth. So my healing journey has taken me into profound fear because you can’t face death without fear, no matter how great the faith. What is it to be just suddenly not there? Physical suffering puts you in a totally different place.

There are two or three things that I've learned and one was the difference between healing and curing. I learned I had to distinguish between curing and which would keep me alive physically and healing which would bring my soul to wholeness even if I died. There is a difference.

The other thing I’ve learned is the toughness of love, the capacity to enter into a process and experience the divine love that comes through human beings and through the divinity within. That’s been my greatest lesson. Another is to let go, and let go.

The third would be living in the moment because I have no idea what tomorrow’s going to bring and my whole perception now is focused on looking at a flower, looking at you and the smile in your eyes. It’s so freeing, I can’t tell you. No responsibility, no sense of duty. I’ll do my best and beyond that I can’t do anything.

Saphira: That's great. (laughs)

You’ve been involved in being a spokeswoman for the feminine...