

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 09 January 2006

SPECIAL ISSUE

Sex

1. Blues For Sex

Sex got a bad rap, sex got knocked
Sex got stuck in a pelvic headlock
Sex got bashed for burning pious hands
So sex went to church and sex went to hell
And sex did cry out for its abandoned lands
And sex did weep for the return of its lovers

Sex took a beating, sex got screwed
Sex ricocheted between prude and crude
Sex got blamed, sex got sent below
Where there's too little light to grow
Just drugged heat and hungry meat
Sex got burdened with romantic demands
Sex got hijacked to desperate lands
Sex got bashed for making ends meet
The basement bulged, the house shook, the judge threw the book
And sex did cry out for love and homeground
And sex did weep for lovers awake and unbound
And sex asks for another hearing, a deeper clearing

The machinery upstairs masquerades as us
The mind shacks up with pornoramic views
See the loneliness too afraid to be alone
Pelvises grinding for promised pie or holier skies
Sex squirms in its cell, doing too much time

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And sex longs to be itself, longs to be freed of lies
A flesh-bright ecstasy of passion and grace
A succulently sacred rapturous loss of face

Sex got smeared, sex got caught up in mind
Sex took on so much that it got left behind
Sex to superconsciousness said someone
And what devout humping, what ambitious friction!
But sexstasy blew its cover in hotbeds of spiritualized greed
Its sublime screwing just another ego-fueled doing
And sex did cry out for everwild love's embrace
And sex did weep for the return of its lovers

2. The Wild Yes of Love-Ravished Lust

Sex got a bad rap, sex got abused
Sex got screwed, sex got confused
Sex asks for naked trust
Intoxicating play and surrender
The wild yes of love-ravished lust
But most of all sex asks for us
Give sex its true soil and sky
Give it permission to stretch and fly
Give it room and reason to flower full
And ride free, free in its wild bloom
Until Joy's more ground than goal
And the Sacred's inside and all around
And we're both a slave to The Beloved
And wondrously, wondrously unbound
Then sex will no longer be sex
But only Ecstasy in the flesh
Bliss-soaked epiphany and cellular thrill
Fluidly electric love deliciously aspill
Gratitude and passion supreme
In unbearably sweet entanglement
Beyond every scheme and dream
Effortlessly swooning together
Both afloat and rooted
In the Holy Wild

An Inside Look at Eroticism

When the erotic becomes neurotic, eroticism arises — an obsessive interest in sexual activity, opportunity, and possibility.

Just about everything that catalyzes or promises sexual stimulation and satisfaction is but an object for eroticism's calculating eye, something to buy shares in, something to package and profitably replicate, something to hot-wire genitalia and mind to, something to exploit.

Eroticism makes an idol out of sexual excitation, thereby bringing about exaggerated attachment to whatever maximizes — or once maximized — such excitation. This intensifies not only our distress, but also our urge for release, especially the release provided by orgasm.

However, this release, whatever its marketing, is neither ecstasy nor liberation, but only brief relief, akin to the sensation felt when an extremely tight pair of shoes is at last removed. Repeatedly putting the shoes back on in order to later have — no, necessitate — a pleasurable release is fundamental to eroticism.

Understandably, eroticism is a popular refuge, given its power to divert our attention from our suffering. Among its attractions is its capacity to discharge tension (what is usually not recognized here is that what's being discharged is not distress itself, but rather only the *branchings* of distress). Eroticism keeps us in heat, neurotically available for sexual activity, just as tightly bound to sexual possibility as anxiety is to threatening possibility.

Eroticism, with our easily-bought cooperation, keeps our sex center open for business, not only as an entertainment complex bulging with steamy distraction and dreamy drama, but also as a psychological garburator and tension-dump.

Eroticism is kept on the burner by our very urge for release from its contractedness and underlying pain. Over and over again, we seek release from our craving to have sex through sex, emptying ourselves of our eroticized craving even as we strengthen and complicate its roots, ever looking for a better pair of tight shoes.

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That is, we crave getting rid of the intensity of sexual desire itself, feeling ourselves unable to tolerate its fleshed-out presence, even as we force-feed it again and again, even as we think it full.

With numbing regularity, we tend to eroticize ourselves into a position where we just have to have some sort of release, some sort of orgasmic payoff, some sort of semi-blissful sedation, which only deprives us of the very energy that we need in order to truly investigate the source of our distress.

Eroticism is not much more than a technicolor visceral-mental hookup that keeps sex in the dark, doing time churning out pleasurably consoling sensation in the sweatshops of our conditioning.

Eroticism promises happiness, but real sex begins with happiness.

Real sex is intimate play, spontaneous and fully alive, needing no distress for its intensity, no preconceived or mechanical stimulation for its passion, no fantasy for its ecstasy, no strategy for its depth.

Although sex for conscious lovers may include intense stimulation at times, it is created not through strategic or merely frictional means, but instead arises as an utterly natural byproduct of their love-play. They *already* feel good; they are not expecting sex to make them feel good. They are not suppressing their being and making a goal or grail out of release, for they are already released, already at ease, already in embrace with the heart of their desire, already present in lovingly erotic mutuality, already consciously and willingly consumed by their passion's fire and light.

By reinforcing and overselling the must in lust, eroticism cheapens sexual desire, stripping it of much of its natural spontaneity and expansiveness, injecting it with compensatory fantasy. As such, eroticism is an abuse of imagination.

If we need to fantasize in order to have "good" sex, then we are not truly interested in sex, but rather only in a mind-game whose purpose is to maximize pleasurable release.

Sex does not need the thinking and image-generating mind in order to function, and in fact will not flow fully and freely if thoughts and fantasies are allowed to intrude into and dominate its domain. Probably the only useful use of the mind during sex is that of supporting psychic communion between lovers;

the expansiveness and openness of mind implicit in this is in stark contrast to eroticism, which is but a contraction of mind, a neon theater of dark dramatics, crawling with pornographic abstraction.

But what happens to eroticism when sex is no longer gone to mind? What becomes of eroticism when ecstasy is not the goal, but the foundation? Eroticism then transcends itself, becoming the playful expression of sexual desire, its face that of longing, not a tense or ambitious longing, but a blissful, open-eyed longing, an achingly sweet longing to share our depths through sexplay that is as loving as it is lusty, as subtle as it is succulent, as free of mind as it full of ever-fresh wonder.

The point is not to eradicate eroticism, but to illuminate it, to free it of its desperation and egoic agendas, so that it might outgrow itself, becoming but available energy, cutting new, life-giving channels, reestablishing our embrace with our Eternal Lover.

ETERNITY'S KISS

This silken glide
This succulent ride
This ecstatic dying
This joy beyond trying
This melting mutuality
This wild commonality
This rupturing rapture
This which no words can capture
This pleasure beyond pleasure
This depth none can measure
This is the heartland of bliss
This is Eternity's naked kiss
This, this is the art
That cannot be framed
This is the beauty
That cannot be named
This is the love
That cannot be contained

Pornography Undressed

Pornography is sexually explicit material designed to catalyze and intensify sexual charge in contexts that are not only aesthetically barren, but also devoid of caring and real intimacy.

Pornography is dehumanizing objectification in erotic drag, both depending upon and reinforcing obsessive interest in sexual activity and possibility.

Pornography exploits the craving of those who've learned to distract themselves from their suffering through nonrelational erotic excitation and discharge.

Pornography's pictures tell a story with the scantiest of plots, a story that brings together viewer and viewer in a quickly undressed hotbed of unilluminated lust. Whether or not there's actual sex, everyone gets fucked.

Whatever helps amplify sexual charge is brought into the picture or plot; sometimes this is relatively innocuous, and other times it is darker, uglier, blurring the line between sexuality and violence. Pornography gives lust a bad name.

Pornography doesn't care about who it fucks with, so long as it has their business. Pornography is erotic imagination gone slumming, losing contact with love, art, and ecstasy along the way.

And pornography is not just limited to dying-to-be-fucked centerfolds, "adult" movies, lurid romance novels, and so on, but is the operational strategy of those driven to employ fantasy in their sex life, especially as a means of getting turned on or staying aroused. In binding our sexuality to our minds, overvaluing erotic stimulation, and reducing our partner to a prop in our masturbatory drama, we don't see that we are only fucking ourselves. To truly enjoy sex is then out of reach for us, for we do not enter its domain nakedly present and loving, but come in already addicted to erotic expectations and rituals that originally arose as "solutions" to our suffering.

Teenage boys who are chronically distressed and who have discovered the pleasure and relief that ejaculation provides likely will also find and employ various visuals, both externally (like magazine porn) and internally ("hot" girls

at their school), that amplify their arousal. If fantasy-centered erotic arousal and discharge remains their method for reducing their distress as they leave their teens, and if they do not question nor attempt to dismantle such conditioning (through skillful therapy and/or awakening practices), they will likely retain it through their adult years, even in a loving relationship. They may keep it in the dark, but when it comes to crunch time — as when they want to feel *really* turned on — they'll animate it, perhaps through sexually fantasizing while engaging in sex, or perhaps through viewing porn.

For pornography to no longer be our erotic default, we must reenter, become intimate with, and ultimately heal the very wounding that originally drove us into pornography's domain; in doing so, we liberate our libido from its dark, loveless ruts.

In considering our erotically-harnessed “solutions” for dealing with past difficulties — low self-esteem, family problems, anxiety, and so on — the explicitly sexual details are not so important as the setting, context, and dramatic particulars. Our sexual arousal might, for example, have much to do with simply wanting to be nonjudgmentally noticed by an obviously attentive fantasy partner. Yes, our excitation or “charge” regarding this may manifest sexually in our fantasy, but it is only *secondarily* sexual, its primary impetus being rooted in a longing to be openly loved and seen. This is further fleshed out and given deserving depth by closely examining the supporting props (clothing, furniture, words spoken, etcetera) in our fantasy — the details say much about the original context out of which our fantasy arose, perhaps making possible a reconstruction of previously unintegrated events.

Take a darker example: A man frequents sado-masochistic parlors, getting the most sexual pleasure out of being whipped. In his fantasies he associates sexuality with violence, and is drawn to porn that features this association. Some might think he's just sexually kinky, but what's truer is that he's deeply wounded. Take away the erotic overlay in his fantasies and practices, and what's left is simple violence. It's no big surprise to find out he was severely beaten, literally whipped, by his mother during his boyhood, and that that was the only touch he got from her. Eroticizing his internalized and undealt-with violence simply took the edge off it; stripping it down to its roots makes possible a healing that quickly erodes his interest in sado-masochistic porn and practices.

Another example: A woman, clearly heterosexual, finds that the most erotically alive fantasies for her involve other women. No men are present. She's had

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some sexual encounters with other women, but it just didn't work for her. What's going on in her fantasies is a women-only encounter; take away the erotic dimension, and all that is occurring is a group of women being close to each other. This woman grew up in a home with a violent father and brothers, and found her only comfort, however minimal, in the company of her mother and aunts. Understandably, she has charge with being in a setting that features the safety and warmth of other women, a setting in which she can really relax and let go; the fact that she has eroticized this simply means that it represents something that excites her, and has excited her for a long time.

So our erotic fantasies are tales well worth investigating, tales that reveal much about us. What they dramatize is simply the sexualizing — arising from the excitement — of our longing to be fulfilled, safe, loved, needed, seen, touched, known. The intensity of the pleasure or release that they promise is a marker of the intensity of the pain we are trying to bypass. Some erotic fantasies may be quite complex, but their themes are not; in fact, such complexity might just reflect a need to have many things in order or under control so that the desired outcome can occur, a need that likely has its roots in many things having been out of order or control in our early years.

In seducing ourselves with erotic tension and its mounting expectations, thereby building enough charge to necessitate and perhaps even legitimize some kind of release, we are already doing business with pornography.

Like any other business, pornography arises to meet consumer needs, and also does what it can to stimulate those needs. Horny capitalism. The advertising industry milks pornographic angles as much as it can, because it's good for business, especially in the hypersexualized setting of contemporary Western culture. If the worst of porn could amp up car sales, we'd probably glimpse some of it, however subtly incorporated, hanging around the shadier outskirts of car ads. This, of course, brings up questions of morality — and capitalism, for the most part, is notoriously amoral — and the inevitable claiming of the high ground by religious zealots at one end of the pornographic spectrum, and by postmodern stay-out-of-my-sex-life apologists for porn at the other end. But neither condemnation nor neurotic tolerance bring us any closer to dealing sanely with pornography. It still burns, and will burn, and burn far and wide, until we stop sexualizing our distress — which means releasing sex from the obligation to make us feel better.

Pornography's fire does not purify, but only inflames and engorges, both

distracting us from our pain and bloating us with such heated urge that we seemingly have to have some sort of relief, or discharge of energy. However, such discharge doesn't rejuvenate or truly ease us, but only sedates us, dulls our edge, leaving us less motivated than ever to getting to the heart of what is driving us to so desperately seek the excitement and payoffs of our pornographic proclivities.

Conventional or typical romance is also pornographic, however much it might appear otherwise. When fantasy-centered sexual anticipation or excitation gets an emotional grip on us, and when we mistake fusion with communion, such romance occurs. It is literally a chestful of lust, radiating in all directions, packed with swooning idealism, deliciously stimulating imagery, and runaway hope, a hope hopelessly enthused about union, true love, and soulmate possibilities (all of which do, of course, occur in mature relationships), a hope nourished and sustained by the dissolution of boundaries. A sweetly narcotic spell of dramatic delusion...

In typical romance — the separative swoon of false oneness — boundaries are not expanded, so as to include the other, but are collapsed, abandoned, forgotten. Eventually, as the passion loses some intensity and doubts creep in and the dream's fabric thins, the lovers start wondering where they went wrong, not seeing that what isn't working in the relationship has been there all along, obscured by the heat of their embrace and the giddy intensity of their fusion. They were but getting it on under artificial light, blindly merging where sensation and idealism meet, abandoning their boundaries instead of stretching them. Nevertheless, even though many of us recognize the folly of such romance, we still tend to support it, acting as if it's still a lovely thing, an essential part of love, when in fact it is not love at all, but only perfumed pornography, marketing a pleasurably consoling dream in which sentimentalized eroticism is mistaken for love, and undiscerning certainty for truth.

And, you may ask, how do we know when we're in the grip of typical romance? We feel swoony, off balance, intoxicated, erotically stoned, marooned from our critical faculties, and are unquestioningly immersed in our cult of two, our perfect little bubble of immunity, happily unaware of the rude pricks of reality that our very situation is attracting. It's a delicious dream, happily feverish and loaded with mystical elements (like boundary dissolution and blissfulness), and therefore not so easy to wake up from, but wake up from it we must, if we are to find and live in real love, the kind of love that makes possible a sexuality that is ecstatically present.

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Pornography is a perversion of our longing to openly and fully express our true sexual capacity, to pulse and stream with sensual and sexual delight, to totally embrace and celebrate our erotic potential.

Pornography is but a calculating child locked in a forgotten room, too lonely to weep, marooned from innocence, compulsively taking the edge off its distress through self-pleasuring erotic rituals, again and again seeking the perfect replication of its most satisfying releases, surrounding itself with whatever does the best job.

There's no point in getting righteous about how terrible pornography is, and nor is there any point in getting liberal or righteously tolerant about it. Merely permitting pornography to speak and exhibit itself, out of some twisted notion of human rights, does no one any good. Yes, pornography's voice must be heard, but not passively. It must be given room to extend itself beyond itself, until its roots are exposed. Allowing this is not the action of the weak or supposedly tolerant, but rather the action of those who know their own pornographic inclinations so intimately that they are no longer under their spell.

Instead of just repressing or indulging in our pornographic leanings, we'd do better by exploring them and journeying to the heart of the pain and disconnection that underlie them. Instead of shaming ourselves for having a pull toward pornography, we can gaze at both it and at our attraction to it with resolute compassion, finding the courage to ask for skilled guidance in this if necessary.

Pornography will not cease until we recognize, and recognize more than intellectually, how we create our distress, compassionately turn toward it, and do whatever it takes to catalyze the needed healing. Until then we will crave release from the distress we bring to ourselves, and will repeatedly betray ourselves in both the indulgence and the repression of our desire for such release, drowning our integrity in misguided notions of right and wrong, notions that arise not from our being, but from our conditioning.

Enter sexuality's domain when you are already happy, already unstressed, already loving, and you will not need to invite in your mind and its pornographic offerings, nor turn the lights out...

WHAT THEN SHALL I CALL YOU?

In love's deep swoon
You and I are without name
For we then speak a tongue
Not made of words
It's older than meaning
Before and beyond belief
What then shall I call you?
I know your true name
But for it there's no word
Only this naked knowing
That speaks and sings of you
Through all we are and do

When in details mundane
Sometimes I call you
By your everyday name
But I know it's not the one for you
For I remember your true name
The one that has no words
But only the pure feel of you
The way you turn your head
And so happily lean into me
As we windingly walk hip to hip
Joined right to the core
In the liberating bondage
That intimacy can be
The signature of your being
Written everywhere inside me
Branded into my heart
Even when we're far apart

Letting Go

A DAY OF DEEP HEALING

March 18th, 2006 in Ojai, California

**with Robert Masters
(assisted by Diane Bardwell)**

Real happiness takes root when our longing to be truly free is stronger — or permitted to be more central — than our longing to be distracted from our pain.

In this group we'll face, move toward, and learn to make wise use of our difficulties, through a dynamic, intuitively structured mix of spiritual practices, bodywork, dream exploration, conscious movement, and psychotherapy.

TUITION: \$275. \$100 deposit required.

LOGISTICS: Ojai, California, 10am to 6pm. Limited to 8 participants only (so early registration is recommended).

Diane is an intuitive energy healer and Reiki master, using sound to deepen healing and well-being. She is a songwriter and professional singer, with a gift for accessing the Sacred through sound. See www.dianebardwell.com.

**For more information or to register,
contact diane@dianebardwell.com
or info@robertmasters.com**

RADICAL OPENING

A WEEKEND OF GROUPWORK DEVOTED TO DEEP HEALING & AWAKENING

with Robert Masters

February 18th & 19th, 2006, Edmonton

The Situation:

You've done work on yourself and have opened and benefited (and want to maintain that openness), but find that certain issues keep surfacing again and again — relationship hassles, insecurities, emotional inhibitions, and so on. Now, more than ever, these are in your face (perhaps because you're now ready to fully face them), asking for your undivided attention. And, quite possibly, also for a suitable setting, featuring both cutting-edge guidance and the company of others as committed as you to real healing and awakening.

The Context:

You might think that these issues are blocking your path, but in reality they are part of your path, and need to be treated as such. All you have to do is stop turning away from them, stop trying to rise above them, and make the journey into them, with awareness, compassion, and curiosity. This is not necessarily easy — for if it was, you probably would've already done it — but it can be done, leaving you more whole, more alive and present, more functional in every aspect of your life, allowing you to live a life that is as practical as it is liberating. This healing is what Radical Opening is all about.

Who It's For:

Radical Opening is for those who want to make wise use of their difficulties and who are ready to work through whatever is obstructing their liberation. It is especially suited for those whose longing to be truly free is stronger than their longing to continue distracting themselves from their suffering.

About the Work:

The group will be small and intimate, being limited to 10 participants only, so that there is enough time for everyone to receive in-depth attention. The group will involve therapy (in its focus on personal history), and will also involve much more than therapy, given its integral nature. Deep catharsis, psychodrama, and spiritual breakthroughs will flow in and out of each other during the group, in spontaneously apt ways. All emotions are welcome.

All kinds of issues and concerns — from the deepest trauma to the seeming trivial — will be dealt with, through a dynamic, creative mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices. The atmosphere will be one of deep trust; the group will be a safe place to let go of being safe, providing a crucible not only for personal healing, but also for awakening from all of our entrapping dreams.

Participants will learn to become more intimate with all that they are — dark and light, high and low, shallow and deep, neurotic and transcendent, dying and undying.

The structuring of the group will not be preset, but instead will arise in accordance with group and individual needs. Each participant will have an opportunity to work, in relevant detail and in sufficient depth, with his or her particular issues, and not necessarily just once in the group.

Location & Time: Edmonton, February 18th and 19th, 10am to 6pm both days.

Tuition: \$695 plus GST. A deposit (nonrefundable after January 20th, 2006) of \$200.00 is required.

To Register, contact info@robertmasters.com. Early registration is advised, as the group will be small, and will probably fill quickly.

FREEDOM THROUGH INTIMACY

A Weekend Intensive For Couples

March 25th & 26th, 2006, in White Rock, BC

with Robert Masters, assisted by Diane Bardwell

Intimate relationship has immense transformational possibility, especially when we approach its difficulties as opportunities instead of as problems. Opportunities for what? To know ourselves more deeply, to love and live more fully, to become intimate with *all* that we are — in short, to be freed from our suffering.

In the liberating bondage of committed intimacy, we enter the One through the two, finding the Beloved in both depth and surface, so that the very details of daily life become a potent awakening path. Freedom through intimacy.

This group is for couples who want a more conscious, loving, and liberating relationship with each other, and are ready to cut through whatever's in the way. Even if you already have a good relationship, consider coming, and taking your relationship from good to great to what it really can be.

Individual work will be given as much emphasis as couple work, using a spontaneously structured approach that creatively mixes psychotherapy, bodywork, dream exploration, spiritual practices, and dyadic deepenings.

Logistics: March 25th & 26th, 2006, 10am to 6pm. Limited to 5 couples.
\$1250 plus GST per couple. \$300 deposit required.

Diane, who is in a deeply committed relationship with Robert, is an intuitive energy healer and Reiki master, using sound to deepen healing and well-being. She is a songwriter and professional singer, with a gift for accessing the Sacred through sound and song. See www.dianebardwell.com.

**For more information or to register, contact:
info@RobertMasters.com**

An opportunity to learn (1) unique and highly effective psychotherapeutic, spiritual, and bodywork skills; and (2) how to combine these in counselling work.

Psychospiritual Counselling Practicum

2006/2007 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

The purpose of this training is to deepen the capacity of participants to effectively counsel others through a dynamic, intuitively structured approach that integrates body, mind, emotion, and spirit.

To this end, the training will blend deep work on oneself and equally deep work with others, in personal, social, and spiritual contexts. Healing will be the primary intention and activity. Approaches that are taught and practised will be held, as much as possible, in a perspective that transcends them.

You'll learn to not rely upon nor necessarily impose structure, but rather to let it naturally arise from your relationship and interaction with those you're counselling. Working this way weans us from the security — the eventually deadening security — of operating from behind a preset structure or methodology, leaving us in a position that requires an appropriately creative response from us. Such creativity keeps us fresh, open, and alert.

A passion for working with others is necessary, but it must be a passion infused with healthy detachment, a passion as free as possible from self-serving agendas or ego-based programs. For example, if we “need” a client to have a particular breakthrough so that we can feel better about ourselves, then we are doing that person a disservice. For this and related reasons, the training will include a thorough investigation of whatever might obstruct each participant's ability to work effectively and cleanly with others.

Throughout the training we will be working with body, mind, emotion, and spirit. Love, integrity, and presence will be the cornerstones of our practice.

The training will take place over 6 three-day weekends, beginning the fourth weekend of June, 2006.

Tuition is \$5300 plus GST. A deposit of \$750 is required.

The training will be limited to 10 participants only, so early registration is recommended.

The training is a prerequisite for further trainings, including 2007's Bodywork Apprenticeship and Advanced Integral Counselling.

Practicum Schedule

June 23-25, 2006

Sept. 15-17, 2006

Nov. 3-5, 2006

Jan. 5-7, 2007

Mar. 2-4, 2007

May 4-6, 2007

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