

The Smell of Roses

by Candis Graham

Dans cet article, l'auteure examine sa propre interprétation de la spiritualité.

It is a muggy afternoon in June. I am hot and tired but I make myself stay at my computer, struggling to write in spite of my fatigue and my foggy brain. Behind me is the broad dining-room table of golden oak. Upon it are three objects—a blue and green pottery bowl filled with stones, a navy-blue velvet bag containing a set of Runes, and four roses standing in water in a mason jar. I turn to look at the stones and imagine myself reaching in and scooping them up on the flat palms of my hands.

I remember last week when my girl-friend and I were in Provincetown and the memory makes me smile. Each afternoon we walked along the edge of the Atlantic Ocean and col-

lected these stones. It was my idea, to gather stones. I don't know why I wanted to, but I did and it felt right. I filled my pockets, filled my sun hat, and put the larger ones on the floor of her truck beside my feet.

Two days ago I went to the public library on Rideau Street to return an armful of books. I am reading books of poetry and books about poetry because I am preparing to teach my first day-long poetry workshop. I was feeling rushed that afternoon two days ago, and I was hurrying. I was tempted to simply walk out after leaving my pile of library books on the wooden counter, but I decided to follow my inclination to take a minute or two and wander past the shelf of new books. I immediately saw one I have wanted to read for months, *Spontaneous Healing: How to Discover and Enhance Your Body's Natural Ability to Maintain and Heal Itself* by Andrew Weil.

I borrowed it, feeling delighted with

my find, and went next door to the gigantic Loblaws to buy 24 rolls of toilet paper made from recycled paper. I lugged the huge package of toilet paper around the air-conditioned store and followed another inner sense that told me to go to the flowers and see what happens. I went to that corner of the store and put the package on the floor beside me and stood quietly for a minute or two while I surveyed the selection. Carnations, freesias, roses, daisies. I found I couldn't resist buying a small package of roses. They are cream-coloured with delicate pink edges.

Last year I read, in a book about flower essences, that the rose has attained perfection. That statement delighted me. As we humans struggle to evolve, we can look to the rose as a role model. But what do those sharp thorns mean?

Once I was home again, hot and exhausted, I cut the ends off the roses and put them in water, then sat on the futon sofa with the electric fan facing me and started to read. Dr. Weil suggests an eight-week program to help the reader change her lifestyle. In Week One, under "Mental/Spiritual," he writes, buy some flowers to keep in your home where you can enjoy them. In Week Three he writes buy more flowers.

An hour or two later I felt revived and I went to put the 24 rolls of toilet paper away. That's when I discovered I had bought eight rolls of paper towels. I never use paper towels. I wonder what that's about?

Now, two days later, I remember reaching for the package in Loblaws and noticing the handle was different. It felt sturdier, wider, thicker. I thought, they've redesigned the package. I kept walking. I was thinking about looking at the flowers and wondering what I would find. But if I had been in the present, if I had taken a moment to examine the new strap, I



Pnina Granirer, "Definition of Eden," mixed media on canvas, 4" x 5", 1994.
Collection of Jewish Community Centre, Vancouver.

would have discovered it was an entirely different package—a package of paper towels—and I would have saved myself another trip to that store, which is a place I rarely go.

These days I live in a small cluttered two-bedroom apartment with my girl-friend. I have lived in apartments for most of my life and I am desperate to live in a house. For more than two months I have been searching for a house that we will love and can afford. We are particular and we have very little money. I am often discouraged and disappointed. She keeps saying we will find the house that is meant for us when it is time. I believe what she says, but I am impatient. I want a house now.

Two weeks ago I came home from looking at a half-double on Grosvenor near Sunnyside Avenue and wrote a poem.

Looking for a house

Three small rooms open
into each other ...
living dining cooking/eating.
Grubby plaster walls are painted
off-white and need much attention.

The kitchen counter is mustard
coloured chipped ancient.
The cupboards are old and
cheaply made.

Two glass doors lead to the deck,
but no light pours in
on this sunny day.

Is that why I feel uncertain?

Then, it was my girl-friend's idea, I consulted the Runes. I asked, what about this house business? Should I be looking? Will I find one? I closed my eyes and reached into the navy-blue bag.

The stone I chose is *Hagalax*. *The Book of Runes* by Ralph Blum says, "drawing it indicates a pressing need within the psyche to break free from constricting identification with material reality and to experience the world of archetypal mind." It is true, I am obsessed the material reality of where I live, and I feel constricted, both by this tiny apartment and my

inability to afford a decent house. "When you draw this Rune, expect disruption, for it is the Great Awakener, although the form the awakening takes may vary." Oh great. Disruption in my life. When all I crave is peace and quiet with time to write in a cozy house I share with my girl-friend. "Your own nature is creating what is happening, and you are not without power." Yes, I know, I always have choices and power. But, but. "The universe and your own soul are demanding that you do, indeed, grow." Oh great. I get to grow some more. (In the meantime, I'll keep searching for a house. But I'll try not to feel desperate or frantic about the process.)

I am trying to be a consciously spiritual person, although I have to admit that I am not exactly sure what spirituality is. I know some people attend a formal gathering each week in a place called a church or a synagogue or a mosque. Other people gather outside when the moon is full

to burn candles and chant and speak from their hearts. Being spiritual is more private and personal for me, more internal and quiet, more primitive and sophisticated. It has to do with thoughts and feelings and intuition and energy.

I feel I am being spiritual when I follow the sense within me that tells me to gather stones as I walk along the wet seashore. Tells me to wander past the shelf of new library books. Tells me to buy flowers. Surely I am being spiritual when I believe we will find the house that is meant for us when it is time. When I write a poem about my feelings and experience. When I turn to the Runes to help me understand my life.

And these all just happen to be the very moments when I like myself best.

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Toronto, Canada

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The successful applicant is expected to teach and advise students (in theory, methods, and applications), have a strong or promising scholarly record, have proven ability in linking action and theory and in developing interdisciplinary approaches to environmental issues. A firm background in social theory will be considered an advantage. The candidate should have excellent knowledge in several areas related to research and practice in environmental policy and conservation, and should have demonstrable competence to teach such courses as Environmental Policy, Environmental Thought, Environment and Development, and Biological Conservation.

Applicants should submit a letter discussing their qualifications, research agendas and teaching interests, their CV, the names, addresses (including e-mail) and telephone numbers of at least three references, and a sample of their work to: Chair, Search Committee, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, North York, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3 [Fax: (416) 736-5679; e-mail: fwatson@yorku.ca]. The deadline for receipt of applications is February 14, 1997.

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