

ALCHEMICA SOPHIA





"Magic is believing in yourself, if you can do that, you can make anything happen." — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Welcome to the lineage of Biomancy, rooted in the feminine mysteries of Sophia, and the earth-centric traditions of a living planet within a living cosmos, emanating from a deep mystery. Within the Alchemical traditions of Sophia, there is a pathway of ideas that have been strung across time like a brightly colored prayer flag, ushering us on a pilgrimage to gnosis.

The deeper roots of this Alchemica Sophia lineage are written about in the book *Magdalene Mysteries*, which also encompasses the native European traditions embedded in witch and folk lore, and what was called the Fairy Faith. These teachings are also mirrored in traditions across the world in a global weaving of Sophianic wisdom, from Africa to Tibet, India and China.

Various colleges of initiates have stewarded this lineage across time, including the temple priestesses, the womb shamans, Ophites and gnostics (including Jesus, Magdalene, Simon Magus, Helen, John the Baptist), the oracles of sacred sites (often on volcanic land or springs), the witches and folk magicians, the chantresses, keening women, medicine women of different traditions, the mystery school adepts, the Christian mystics, Cathars, Templars, the medieval alchemists and scientists, and the artists, poets and bards who encoded the forbidden wisdom in music, art, myth, and poetry.

Often there is no linear structure to the way these teachings have been kept and passed along. It is more of a pollination or a spontaneous blooming in which ideas keep regrowing. So even though many different groups of people may be held within the garlanded archway of Alchemica Sophia, it does not

mean their beliefs are always strictly synchronous. Sophia is the foremother of the lineage family tree with many varied and different branches.

In our modern era, the western expression of these mysteries started to emerge again into consciousness after a time of suppression when it had been forced underground for safety. Mystics, philosophers, scientists, doctors and psychologists, such as Carl Jung, Wilhelm Reich, Joseph Campbell, Albert Einstein, Rudolph Steiner, GRS Mead, Margaret Murray, Doreen Valiente, and Marija Gimbutas began to pick up the broken threads again in the 20th century and begin the sacred reweaving of the lineage again.

For our Ancestors science and magic were not separate – they existed on a continuum, and it was understood that a magical and practical reality was entangled and interwoven. These two realities, described as Middle World and Otherworld, quantum physics and Newtonian physics, were complements to each other and were part of the Sacred Balance of all existence, like two sides of a co-joining coin. One reality gave us stability and certainty, and was denser and slower to respond to magic, with a more fixed set of laws. The other reality was more fluid, residing in possibility and potential, where magical effects could happen instantaneously. This balance of possibility and movement with stability and certainty is the force that unites all life.

Alchemica Sophia lineage-weavers respected all aspects of reality in the weave, and had deep knowledge about working with both the denser principles of matter and the possibilities of magic, especially the creative feminine chaos magic that underlies all life, known as Shakti or Anima.

The gnostic lineage that Biomancy draws inspiration from is based on the lineage of the feminine Mystery Schools, that taught about an ensouled world and body (rather than the disembodied philosophies of dualism).

Biomancy sits within this lineage of wisdom and philosophy, bringing its own unique weave and perspective to these traditions. In alchemical traditions it is believed that each generation needs to reweave and reimagine the old stories and teachings, so they can evolve with a living spirit. Biomancy is the co-creation of Azra Bertrand and Seren Bertrand, and is led by Dr Bertrand with his unique blend of spiritual training and scientific

knowledge and study of the bio-mysteries, leading to a practical application of scientific wisdom with bio-magical gnosis and embodied practical magic.

In many ways we are experiencing, and have been for a long time now, a form of biological warfare against the true nature and needs of the human being and the earth as a living being. Biomancy is a reclaiming of knowledge about our true nature so we can awaken our magic.

Because of the patriarchal structures of the last millennia, many of the sacred teachings that were passed down and incanted in feminine lineages are no longer with us, besides the writings of some of the female Christians mystics such as Hildegard von Bingen and Teresa de Ávila.

However, many of the Alchemists and Scientists of the middle ages actively collaborated with those feminine lineages to bring some of the wisdom into safe harbor and guardianship. This became known as the secret stream or the path of the rose, where Sophianic wisdom was encoded in scientific, alchemical and mystical manuscripts by male followers of wisdom.



Sophia & The Alchemist's Wife

In medieval times the public faces of philosophy, alchemy and Sophianic wisdom were often men. However, their wisdom was drawn from the well of the feminine mysteries. Many of them were secretly pledged to the Goddess Sophia, and many even received instruction from the wise women and witches of their times. This drew on an ancient tradition where the greatest male thinkers, scientists and philosophers all studied with women oracles.

Classic Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Pythagoras studied with priestesses and oracles for years before they were ready to formulate their own theories and ideas. Pythagoras, a famous founder of mathematics, studied for years under the dragon oracle, the Pythia of Delphi.

Feminine mysticism was carried forward in the archetype of 'The Alchemist's Wife'. Many of the great magicians, alchemists and philosophers of the ages owed their wisdom to women. Paracelsus, the founder of modern medicine states he studied with sorceresses to learn their secrets of healing. Sages such as Jesus and Buddha studied in women's mystery colleges.

Like many other magicians, occultists and alchemists, Nicholas Flammel (1330 – 1418) was said to have achieved the 'Great Work' with his wife. Legends said they both achieved immortality together through the 'Elixir of Life.' Sir Isaac Newton, described them in his journal as '*the Caduceus, the Dragons of Flammel*'. In the 17th century *Booke of Hieroglyphical Figures*, Perenelle Flammel was said to have aided in *chrysopoeia*. This meant 'gold making' and referred to transforming base lead into gold. Rather than just a chemistry experiment, this process was a magical *alchemical* transformation of body and consciousness. The first mention of the practice of *chrysopoeia* is attributed to Cleopatra the Alchemist in the 1st century CE, and was later recorded in a 10th – 11th century manuscript. The document features the united serpent-dragon ouroboros containing the words "the all is one".



The earliest alchemists were often women - the first alchemist in history is Mary the Prophetess, who lived in Alexandria sometime between the 1st - 3rd century CE. Mary the Prophetess (also known as Mary the Jewess) had an animist worldview and taught that bodies, souls, spirits, elements, were all full of the animating principle of living intelligence, known as Gaia/Sophia. She believed metals have two different genders and that uniting them birthed new creations. This conjunction of complementary polarities into unity, which lies at the heart of the alchemical process, opened the *Unus Mundus*, the One World, the underlying magic quantum field of reality.

Mary said, “*Join the male and the female and you will find what is sought.*” She also taught about the cosmic generative principle, which was preserved in the *Axiom of Maria*: “Once becomes two, two becomes three, and out of the three comes the one as the fourth.” Mary the Prophetess, from a lineage of Egyptian female alchemical adepts, was a primary influence on Carl Jung and Marie Louise von Franz. For Jung these alchemical teachings were the basis of his ideas on individuation and wholeness – the mystical second birth.

It could also well be that ‘Mary the Jewess’ either refers to Mary Magdalene or one of her disciples. This would make the wisdom lineage of Mary Magdalene and the Mary Priestesses the foundation of Western Alchemy. The alchemical journey of rebirth is essentially feminine bio-mysticism.

Likewise, Cleopatra the Alchemist was also a foundress of western alchemy – operating in Alexandria between 1st - 4th century CE (not to be confused with the earlier Ptolemaic Queen). It is said that the name ‘Cleopatra the Alchemist’ (also listed in alchemical texts as Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt) was not one woman but a pseudonym for a college of women who were practicing alchemy and teaching it to others. In the *Dialogue of Cleopatra and the Philosophers*, an ancient alchemical text, this great female sage meets with male students to share about the natural mysteries, which are in their essence feminine. Her knowledge amazes and terrifies this gathering of male adepts, who have utter respect for her bio-gnosis of Sophia (Wisdom). One of the men goes on to teach Egyptian magic to the rest of the Hellenistic world.

Her vision is based on the feminine mysteries of regeneration, birth and rebirth, rooted in the astounding wisdom of the natural world of earth and cosmos. She likens the work of Alchemy to motherhood, saying that the Great Work is like being a mother who thinks of her child and feeds it.

Biological Enlightenment – Descending into the Body

Alchemy originated in the Near East and eastern Europe, before moving westward to merge with similar Druidic and Celtic alchemical traditions, to form the Western Alchemy tradition we know of now. It was rooted in worship of Sophia, who was known as the ‘Siren of Philosophers’. Alchemy was at its very core *biomantic* – a spirituality rooted in living biology. Rather than other traditions which transcended the body, earth, nature, cosmos into spiritual realms, alchemy was at its heart a descent into the heart of creation.

This creation was visioned as feminine, and the alchemist’s task was to become a *biomancer* and understand and unite with the mystical matter that Great Mother, *Magna Mater*, had crafted the body, earth and cosmos with.

Alchemists, as physicians, mystics and biomancers, understood that the substance of creation, especially found in women, was the key to enlightenment – the Great Work of becoming embodied in the living light.

The language describing this biomantic awakening was flowered with feminine biological terms. The chemist and alchemy scholar, John Read says that the Great Work was undertaken in a hermetically sealed vessel known as the ‘Philosopher’s Egg’. This container of energy was an alembic or womb. Its purpose was to act an incubator for the gestation of transformation. Magic could only happen inside a circle, container or ‘weave’ – a feminine art. Read describes it, ‘as the chamber...of the pregnant mother who was to bring forth the child’. The alchemical vessel is known as the womb, nest, bed or the garden in which roses bloom. Initiates of alchemy could sign their letters with a symbol of a rose bud, but only masters of the art could use a bloomed rose.

In Basil Valentine’s *L’Azoth des Philosophes*, Sophia is depicted as a crowned, fish-tailed siren, rising from the sea with streams of milk and blood pouring forth from her. Alchemists knew that matter had been born from the mystical deep sea (Mar-ia) of Sophia’s earthly and cosmic womb, which was both a physical and metaphysical creation, entangled in a magical weave. The Great Work was known as a rebirth through the Womb of the Divine.

‘He who wants to enter the divine realm, first must enter his mother’s body, and die herein’. ~ Paracelsus (founder of modern medicine)



The symbols of achieving the great alchemical work – *alchemical embodiment* – the perfect balance of the forces of creation, were pre-historic

feminine representations of the primal energy of the Mother Matrix. They included the twin serpents that moved in a vortex along the spine, known as the caduceus, and the phoenix or dragon, whose lower half was serpent, and whose wings opened majestically to rise upwards merging heaven and earth. Other symbols included the vortex, elemental cross, spiral and labyrinth.



Alchemical Spiral Chakras:
The serpent energy winding up
the spine, merging in the
central spiral of the body.
Alchemical marriage of the
root and crown.

Because of the misogyny of society, this feminine presence was obscured from plain sight. Female symbols were hidden, reversed or demonized.

As this lineage entered the modern age, a remembrance of the feminine bloomed once again into plain sight, as the feminine and feminine consciousness took her proper place of power. This was illustrated by the legacy of Carl Jung, brilliant but a product of a misogynist society, being carried forward by a series of female scholars, such as Marie Louise von Franz, and Jung's wife Emma Jung. He also had a female muse and collaborator, Toni Wolff, herself a brilliant scholar who explored feminine consciousness in her work, '*Structural Forms of the Feminine Psyche*.' In 1916 Jung included the myth of Sophia as the World Soul in his *Black Book*.

The feminine is an energy that is present within all living and created beings, and is the substance that the soul is made of, which generates and unites with its complementary opposite. Our biology is the lost manuscript of Sophia.

Alchemical Lineage Keepers

Dr Azra Bertrand studied in this alchemical lineage of European philosopher-physicians, practicing and training for 4 years with Dr John Pierrakos in Core Energetics, a bioenergetic analysis that was a form of mind-body psychotherapy. Dr Pierrakos was a co-creator, friend and peer of Dr Alexander Lowen, who wrote *The Language of the Body* in 1958, and *Voice of the Body* (2005). Together they co-founded the Bioenergetics Institute in New York, and between them they pioneered the body-mind healing movement that we know today as somatic healing and embodiment.

Within this movement, Dr Pierrakos reintroduced the concept of ‘grounding’ to the medical and healing worlds, proposing that a person was energetically connected to the earth, and that grounding into a bioenergetic connection with earth promoted states of wellbeing, security and emotional cohesion.

Born in Greece, Dr Pierrakos (1921 – 2001), received a Doctor of Medicine at New York State University, and also completed his PhD in Psychiatry in New York. He worked as Assistant Director of the Psychiatric Treatment Center in the US Navy, before going into private practice in 1954. He married Eva Pierrakos in 1971, who had an oracular gift for receiving intuitive messages, mediumship and trance channeling. She wrote the book *The Path to the Real Self* and worked alongside her husband in healing.

Both John Pierrakos and Alexander Lowen studied with Dr Wilhelm Reich, who is considered to be the ‘Godfather’ of modern somatic psychology and embodiment in the western world. They studied with Reich in America, with the thesis that body energy flow also opened the psyche. Reich studied with Dr Sigmund Freud, along with his peer, also a medical doctor and psychiatrist, Dr Carl Jung. Whilst Carl Jung took his work in the direction of the psyche and archetypes, Wilhelm Reich explored how the psyche goes beyond pure consciousness and is also *located in the body*, creating an embodied somatic consciousness that is multidimensional.

“Once we open up to the flow of energy within our body, we can also open up to the flow of energy in the universe.” Wilhelm Reich

Wilhelm Reich was born in the Ukraine (now Hungary) and died in the USA (1887 – 1957). His notable works are: *Character Analysis*, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, *The Function of the Orgasm*, and *The Sexual Revolution*. He advocated for the liberation of life force energy as the primary tool of healing for humanity. After his experiences in wartime Europe, he explored how people with repressed life force energy unconsciously engage with oppression and tyranny. After graduating from Vienna University, he became the deputy director at Sigmund Freud's clinic. He was one of the greatest and most radical thinkers of his time, coining the phrase 'The Sexual Revolution', defining a newly emerging generation, and midwifing a new movement of embodiment activists. In the 1960's, at student uprisings, people graffitied his name as a form of talismanic magic, and threw his book *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* at police. He introduced bodywork into his treatments, and for that was made a pariah in the world of psychoanalysis. His progressive ideas are expressed in his words, '*Sexually awakened women, affirmed and recognized as such, would mean the complete collapse of authoritarian ideology.*'

Later on, he created the term 'orgone' as a word to describe the life force felt in orgasm, but which was actually a creative life force present in all things. He felt this biological energy was what we believed to be 'God' and that the further away from embodiment a person or society was, the more this life energy became mentalized into an abstract, theoretical 'God' of control. This gnosis about a biological creative energy that was what people thought of as 'God' matches in many ways the Hindu concept of Shakti, or the Gnostic idea of Sophia, Zoe (life) or Shekinah. This Goddess energy, which created and is embedded in our biology, is the great weaver of all life. With parallels to Eastern concepts of chi/ki/qi and prana, Dr Reich's work not only influenced an entire generation of European intellectuals, but also spoke to some of the great Eastern Masters of bioenergy work. Sensei Akinobu Kishi, a Shiatsu Master and founder of Seiki (along with Kyoko Kishi) travelled to Europe and was influenced and inspired by the teachings of Wilhelm Reich.

"I know that what you call 'God' really exists, but not in the form you think; God is primal cosmic energy, the love in your body, your integrity, and your perception of the nature in you and outside of you." Wilhelm Reich

Modern Day Alchemists

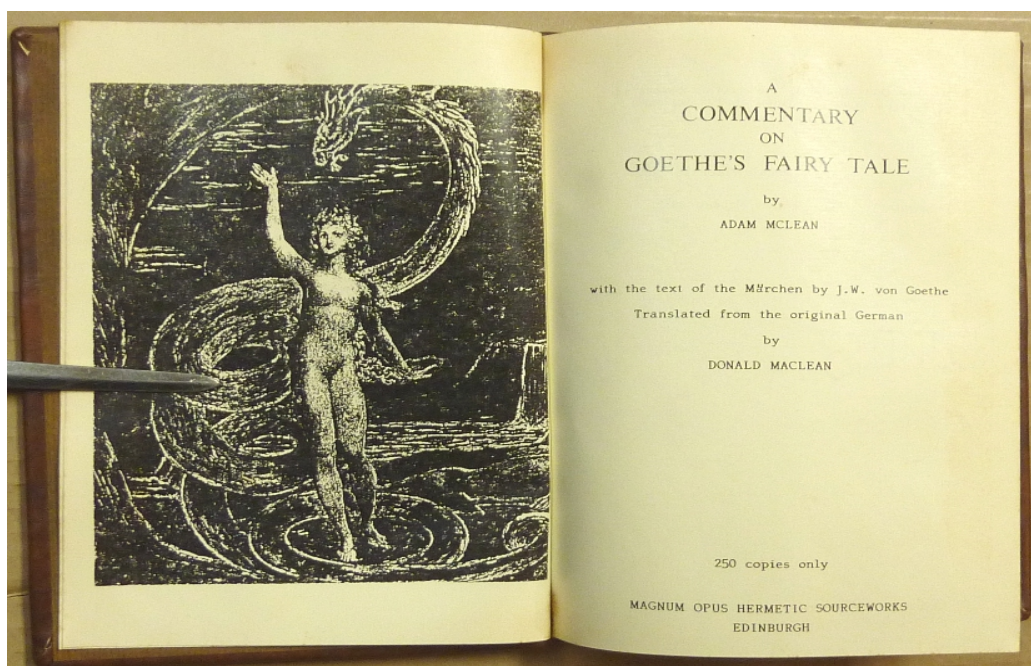
Wilhelm Reich belonged to a group of physician-philosophers who were originally located in central Europe between the tumultuous changes of Europe throughout two world wars and communism. Also included in this loose group of emerging thinkers were Austrian Rudolph Steiner, a proponent of Sophiology and founder of biodynamic farming, and British GRS Mead, a scholar with interests in magic and the occult, and translator of many of the gnostic texts, bringing back the living lineage of Sophia to the masses again.

What united these emerging philosophies, was a common grounding in the alchemical traditions and the practices of the Near Eastern and European Mystery Schools – ancient colleges of learning that combined transformational spiritual work with physical healing.

A common influence of many of these doctors, scholars and philosophers was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 – 1832) who was a famous poet, philosopher, scientist and alchemist of his time. He famously wrote the alchemical text *Faust*, encoding the legacy of Simon Magus and the Gnostic lineage of Sophianic magic. His other works include the *Metamorphosis of Plants* and *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (this was a major influence on the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer).

The most mysterious of Goethe's texts was *The Green Snake (or Serpent) and the Beautiful Lily*, published in 1795. Engaged in intellectual debate and exchange with his peers about how the human soul could become whole and free, Goethe (pronounced *ger-ter*), decided the best way to express this mystical journey of the soul, known as the alchemical 'Great Work' was in a fairytale. Later writers speculated he was also influenced by the famous alchemical text, *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* – a work from the 'Rose Lineage' about the alchemical union of opposites, a subject that Carl Jung later took and evolved in his own work of psychic wholeness.

“Dare to declare who you are. It is not far from the shores of silence to the boundaries of speech. The path is not long, but the way is deep. You must not only walk there, you must be prepared to leap.” – Hildegard von Bingen



For this encoded alchemical fairy tale, Goethe choose the great feminine symbols of the snake and the lily, which from ancient times symbolized the polarities of alchemical embodiment. The fairytale features a ‘Great River’ which is the liminal boundary/passageway between senses and spirit.

These ideas had such a profound effect on later thinkers, that Carl Jung would one day claim that he was the illegitimate heir of Goethe; and Rudolph Steiner, whilst studying for his PhD in philosophy became so obsessed with it, he believed the story possessed the power to transform a reader’s soul – a kind of literary ‘Grail’. He said, ‘This is the new way to Christ.’ He even transformed the fairy tale into a mystery play, bringing its to life.

‘Deep in that cleft, the gold pieces fell, chinking as they went down, awakening, deep within the rock, a green Snake. The green Snake, to her great delight, discovered the gold coins and swallowed them up. Scarcely had she swallowed them, when she felt great delight flood her body. She could feel the metal within her melting, spreading joy throughout her body; her skin began to glow. She was emanating a bright light which allowed her to see all about her. So, slithering down into the deep, she went exploring in a subterranean cavern, she discovered a grand Temple’

Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily, Goethe

This lineage of philosophers, writers and doctors who still influence the ideas of today's emerging spiritual science movements, was rooted in the tradition of the Alchemist – the physician, magician, philosopher archetype that flourished in Europe across the middle ages. These infamous alchemist-physicians include Cornelius Agrippa (a proto-feminist who wrote on the power of the feminine, and who was banished from his home for protecting a witch and declared a heretic), John Dee, astrologer and mage to Queen Elizabeth I and Sir Isaac Newton, the founder of the classical physics still taught today, who was also a mystery school initiate and philosopher.

Cornelius Agrippa wrote a book called, *On the Nobility and Excellence of the Feminine Sex*, a philosophical work that aimed at proving the superiority of women, drawing from the ideas of Kabbalah, rooted in the Shekinah.

‘Natural Magick is that which, considering the strength and force of natural and celestial beings, brings into the open the hidden and concealed powers of nature.’ Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (1486 – 1535)

Biomancy Philosophy & Lineage

“The moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred... Unforeseen incidents, meetings, and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way.” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Biomancy is dedicated to this living lineage of wisdom, devoted to Sophia, which evolves and re-emerges to meet the needs of its time and to find new words for ancient ideas. Biomancy includes ecomancy and astromancy.

Dr Azra Bertrand is dedicated to courting this living wisdom of Sophia, entangled in a participatory co-weaving of earth, including all her creatures and beings and the cosmos. This conscious great weave of creation is the source of the greatest gift - our embodied magic. He places a feminine philosophy, ecology and cosmology as the centerpiece of the work of Biomancy, a feminine essence which includes all genders and expressions within its weave.

He is particularly interested in merging the magic of soma and psyche, so we can access the brilliance and potential of the invisible imaginal realms with the psychic somatic power of the body, in a new cosmic mythos. By uniting body and soul, the body becomes an imaginarium for the dreams of God.

This is alchemical embodiment. As Carl Jung himself acknowledged, ‘The difference between the psyche and body is artificial...in reality, there is nothing but a living body. That is the fact; and psyche is as much a living body, as body is living psyche. It is just the same.’

This European lineage has particular significance for Dr Bertrand, as one of his great maternal ancestors was Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland (1762 – 1836), a German physician, writer and philosopher who was a friend to, and personal physician of, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Christoph Hufeland studied medicine and was educated at Weimar, where his father held the office of court physician to the grand duchess. He was interested in many esoteric subjects, including Chinese Alchemy and the spiritual science of longevity. He was also an early supporter of naturopathy and homeopathy, and proposed the vital life force that Reich also believed in.

His most widely translated book was *Macrobiotics: The Art of Prolonging Life*, which later influenced George Ohsawa, founder of modern macrobiotics (whose legacy, by happy coincidence, Dr Bertrand studied at the Institute of Macrobiotics, creating an accidental lineage ‘loop’.)

This fascination with the possibility of *biomagic* seems to run through his ancestral bloodline, and has been a lifelong fascination and dedication.

Dr Bertrand also undertook a four-year apprenticeship with a physician who practiced darkfield microscopy, a modern form of blood divination – where a person’s wellbeing is divined in their blood. Blood magic was a core principle of our ancestors who knew that ‘the blood is the life’.

Along with his co-creatrix, Seren Bertrand, he believes this lineage is ready to rebirth, like a beautiful green snake shedding its skin, evolving to channel the beauty and joy of the feminine mystery. Many of the old texts are dull

and dense, and lack that vital spark of aliveness. At its heart, Biomancy is not a subject to study in libraries, but to live and embody shining energy.

It's about *magic*. The incredible potential for love, life, wild creativity that lives within all of us. Biomancy is alchemy *rooted into the future* – birthed directly through the magic of embodiment and the shimmering possibility of creating a new way on earth that speaks to the modern world. Biomancy is a living stream of practice, connection and wisdom, to reenchant our disconnection and separation from the flow of life, so we can come home.

The Holy Longing

Tell a wise person or else keep silent
for those who do not understand
will mock it right away.
I praise what is truly alive
what longs to be burned to death.
In the calm waters of the love nights
where you were begotten, where you have begotten
a strange feeling creeps over you
as you watch the silent candle burning.
Now you are no longer caught
in the obsession with darkness
and a desire for higher lovemaking
sweeps you upwards.
Distance does not make you falter,
now, arriving in magic, flying
and finally insane for the light
you are the butterfly, and you are gone.
And so long as you have not experienced
this: to die and so to grow
you are only a troubled guest
on the dark earth.

~ Johann von Wolfgang Goethe,
Translated by Robert Bly and David Whyte