

ENDING THE BETWEEN T



I remember the first time I read Jeff Brown's 'Apologies to the Divine Feminine'. I remember the absolute flood of tears that poured out of me; cracking open something very deep and very painful, very joyful, a moment of exquisite truth. It was like no man had ever explained so clearly, so poetically, both my own pain about what it has meant to be a woman, and his own pain of being a man, 'a warrior in transition'. It felt like a veil had lifted; it felt like coming home.

His apology has now reverberated around the Internet and the radio waves - stirring up a warm and heartfelt connectivity - and also a surprising amount of discomfort and disagreement from both men and women.

So why did it feel like a veil had been lifted? Actually, it felt more like a muzzle had been loosened. A muzzle which here in Australia it is considered unacceptable to mention the word 'patriarchy' or to talk about women's rights and other old-fashioned ideas. And to have this spoken about by a man...oh yes, how delightful, how validating!

There is something very vulnerable and heart opening about an apology. For many people, men especially, it is a daunting and even shaming thing to do. It opens you up to be laughed at, picked on or ridiculed. Despite that, it is often also the first real step towards reconciliation, and can only be received if the apologisee is perceived to really understand the issues they are apologising for. When we as a nation apologised at long last to the aboriginal people, it signalled a powerful step in the healing process. Did it solve everything, no! But it was a great beginning.

Since reading Jeff Brown's words, I have noticed a ground swell of

similar writings. Of particular note is the 'Conscious Man's Manifesto' and 'The Art of Worshipping Women' by Arjuna Ardagh. The main thrust of these articles is about the re-emergence of the goddess/feminine energy, and what it means to be a man in relationship to that. Could these apologies and manifestos signal the wave of new feminism, or the 'New Egalitarianism', as I call it - a movement to create a bridge of deeper understanding and forgiveness, to end the seeming endless battle between the sexes? It is an interesting conundrum, because as women and men, we are inextricably linked. How we are as women, shapes how men, and vice versa.

Women have been working on empowering themselves ever since feminism began. I suspect because they could see the possibility of some real rewards. They did not necessarily want to be equal, or like men - they just wanted to have the choice to live their lives unfettered by an ideology that believed in playing constant dominator or power games - power over other men, power over women, and power over nature.

Men however have lagged behind in this movement towards dismantling this dominator system. One reason for this may be because it was not as easy to see how dismantling this ideology would be rewarding for them. On the surface it would appear that men have more to lose by embracing egalitarianism.

But no matter how much women step into their feminine energy, unless a greater majority of men are also willing to happily dismantle a system that has disempowered us all, we are left to fly in endless circles, going nowhere. As the poignant Sufi saying goes, 'In order to fly on its journey, the Bird of Peace needs two equally strong wings - one feminine and one masculine.' And to quote one of my favourite

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THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE SEXES

By Frances Amaroux



educators, Robert Kiyosaki, 'Any system that does not allow for the full flowering of each individual, creates a zero-sum game. No-one ends up winning.'

It is interesting that Jeff Brown calls himself a 'warrior in transition' and uses all sorts of war terminology. It occurred to me a few years ago, that we really do not know what a real man is - a man who has not been traumatised by war. The whole construction of masculinity under the dominator/patriarchal system has meant having to compete and fight endless wars and skirmishes, so that most men must surely suffer some level of Post Traumatic Stress? Post Traumatic Stress Disorder causes people to shut down feelings and to have hair-trigger stress responses, which then inevitably affects their relationships. And even if a man has not been to war, he carries the trauma from his forebears in his body and lives it everyday in the competitive work environment; in the constant struggle to prove himself a 'man'.

Jeff writes: 'I apologize for my inability to distinguish relationship from war. Like a warrior in enemy territory, I would sneak in and out of your life in the night, plundering and selfishly taking what I needed, then crawling back to the other side of the abyss with the spoils. I gave little back for fear that I would become vulnerable to attack. I had war on the brain and I could not see the river of love waiting on the other side of the battlefield. I now recognize that love is the antidote for the armoured warrior, but I could not drink the antidote in my driven state.'

And so if buying into the dominator system has traumatised men, 'the collective socialisation of men' as Tony Porter so aptly puts it, women have also been traumatised by the millennia of war

against the feminine - a war against our bodies, our sexuality, our minds and our relationships with men; a war that has undermined our trust in each other and ourselves.

Interestingly, many of us in the west perceive that this war is pretty much over. And yet if we look at the state of relationships, and the divorce statistics and domestic violence and a range of other indicators, it would appear that, though we have made magnificent inroads, there is still a long way to go. To say that the war is over is a little like George Bush toppling Saddam Hussein's statue, only to have the war continue on to this day.

So as we head towards 2012, what a perfect time to change the game forever... for both women and men to put down our swords and shields and look each other in the eye and Avatar-like say, 'I see you!' I see you for all your difference, and all our sameness, and all our magnificence and all our faults. My heart breaks when I feel your pain, and I'm sorry from the depths of my being. I commit to creating a sacred, succulent, conscious relationship with you - a relationship based on egalitarianism, authenticity, transparency and trust - a relationship where we come together, not as two halves that make a whole, but two emerging whole beings ready to create synergy together, ready to co-create a world to which we all want to belong. ❖

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