

## Dreaming a Bigger Dream

Belvie Rooks

*Every creature is a book about God and is a word of God.*  
—Meister Eckhart

Thomas Berry with great insight and wisdom reminds us that, “Our fulfillment is not in our isolated human grandeur, but in our intimacy with the larger Earth community, for this is also the larger dimensions of our being. Our human destiny is integral with the destiny of the Earth.”

How does one grasp, let alone give meaning, language and voice to those experiences that provide, as Berry suggests, insights into the “the larger dimensions of our being” as a way of understanding and honoring our “intimacy with the larger Earth community?” The ability to inhabit and understand the world from that place requires—in the context of this culture—a profound shift in consciousness. Sometimes, though, the most surprising teachers show up and the momentary “parting of the veil” can be both magical and mysterious.

On a recent early morning walk, I found myself stopping frequently and marveling at the majesty and beauty of the San Francisco Bay. After a while I noticed that at every stop there was a young white crane nearby. Because I had been lost in thought it took several stops before I realized that at each stop—it was the same white crane. Just to be sure, I walked quickly ahead and stopped suddenly; after a few seconds, my new friend arrived and perched on a nearby bench.

Glancing around, I realized there were no other cranes visible. Ironically, a few weeks earlier, I had seen a 50 year-old photograph of this same estuary in which there appeared to be hundreds of cranes—a whole community of cranes. I stood glancing around at: the noisy freeway nearby, the retirement development that had not been there 50 years ago, the asphalt walking “trail” that had become such an important part of my morning ritual, the profusion of overhead electrical wires and the danger signs warning about a recent sewage spill.

I had, of course, seen all of this before, but it was as if I was now seeing it for the very first time—and seeing it from my small companion’s perspective. From that perspective, the view was a heartbreaking one. As the sense of desolation and loss and heartbreak deepened I closed my eyes and eased onto the bench next to my new friend. As I sat with closed eyes, the image that emerged and refused to go away was one that is by now seared into our collective consciousness: the heartbreaking image of the mother polar bear and her cub struggling to find footing on a shrinking Arctic ice float; trying desperately, it seems, to make sense of the fact that their habitat has disappeared. Culturally the image has become a haunting one as we individually and collectively are forced to bear silent witness to a moment of heartbreaking intimacy.

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I opened my eyes and the white crane was not only still there but her head was cocked slightly to one side observing me intently. I stared deeply into her dark sad eyes and wondered if the sadness that I saw there was just my imagination and human projection. She held my gaze and slowly the eyes were clearly recognizable. They were the beseeching gaze of the homeless man on the corner the day before; the fleeting gaze of an elderly bag lady; the forlorn stare of an emaciated mother in the refugee camp, helplessly cradling her sick child; the sad haunting eyes of a caged gorilla.

Thomas Berry drags us kicking and screaming into the awareness that the very concept of division and separation is evidence of false perception of reality and one that we sometimes get lost in.

Before my new friend flew away our eyes again locked and it was as if she spoke directly to the very depths of my soul, "Now that you know, will you tell my story too?" Thank you for showing up! I promise to remember!

Perhaps every creature is also a messenger from God.

Thank You, Thomas Berry!