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The Mark

A Publication of The Church of Conscious Harmony ❖ A Contemplative Christian Community



BEING IN TIME



Holy, holy, holy ... the whole earth is filled with God's glory! Isaiah 6:3

ANNUAL AIM: HOLY REMEMBERING

BEING IN TIME BY PETER HAAS

*There is an appointed time for everything ...
God has made everything appropriate to its time,
but has put the timeless into our hearts.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11

Life is simple. Everything happens *for* you, not *to* you.

Everything happens at exactly the right moment, neither too soon nor too late. You don't have to like it – it's just easier if you do.

Byron Katie, *A Thousand Names for Joy*

... greater reality lies above us – not, so to speak, horizontally in the line of passing time, the line of past, present and future, but vertically, on another level.

Maurice Nicoll, *Living Time*

Our focus this month is our experience of being born and living within the context of time. Time is real. It is a factor. It is a dimension, a process, and a condition that all things, whether alive, decaying or inert, participate and live within.

Everything is either born or comes into material existence in time. Everything that is alive, lives and dies in time. Or simply exists, ceases to exist or gets transformed. These markers or thresholds of life are a kind of timeline for each of us. We start. We are in a process. We complete. And for some beings, things, or elements, perhaps there may then be a repeat or recycle.

Thus, the first aspect of time is that it intimately connects us to our lived experience(s) of memory and remembering. We each have a past (been). We each have a future (become). We each have a present (be). This experience of time weaves the living moments of our life into an unfolding narrative, including the first and last pages of our life's book. This is one reason it is useful to know thyself by way of journaling and recollecting one's life and way(s) of being in time: past, present and wishes for the future. The Latin author Seneca quipped, "everything we have belongs to others ... time alone is ours."

By way of illustration, the ancient Greeks conceived of the afterlife as an underground passage with various rivers to pass through. The first river to cross after death was the river *Lethe*, which translates into English as forget. The river of forgetfulness connects with the wiping clear of the mind and soul of its prior memories and life.

Interestingly, the Greek word for truth is *Alethia*, literally not-forgetting, which suggests that truth is a kind of remembering, which we uphold as a certain aspect of Holy Remembering. This also hints at the deep relationship between truth and time, and how they interweave. Sometimes we aren't ready for the truth. And sometimes truths are revealed in progressive ways, not all at once.

Just think: it wasn't until the late 1800s that we understood that germs and bacteria caused diseases! That truth seems self-evident now in hindsight, but for thousands of years of human history, that truth was not understood. What else might we not yet understand? What new insights, revelations, discoveries await us to relieve us of our many plights of being in time? Thus, a second aspect of time is that time and truth go hand-in-hand; so too does time and knowledge, understanding or wisdom.

A third aspect of time is that time and space go hand-in-hand.

Because New York City is not Los Angeles, we can see that space and place are the physical expression of the dimension of time. It takes time to travel from one city to the other (space/distance). But this also shows us that time is relative to speed. Time and space can be emotionally felt when one is in a long-distance relationship or has a child working overseas. A certain quality of longing arises in a long distant relationship, in part because time and space place limitations upon the ways of relating with the beloved. This distance is mediated these days by instant telecommunications, and the miracle of Zoom, Facetime, and the like. We are blessed to live in what I call the Age of Presence, so much so, that I suggest we transform the noun into a verb: we presence to one another.

Perhaps one day we might be able to travel from point A to point B in less time. Or even be present to each other by way of a hologram of light. Perhaps that's what it is like for angels or entities of less materiality and more light; they seem to "time travel" because they are moving faster than anything we might understand or experience. This hints at the quantum world, where a particle can appear instantaneously at one point of the universe and manifest a moment later somewhere else.

A fourth aspect of time is that it is a mystery. When St. Augustine was asked, "What is time?" he replied, "I know well enough what it is, provided nobody asks me! But if I am asked what time is, and try to explain it, I am baffled."

This reminds us that we can't fully understand higher dimensions, such as the dimension of time, but we can feel it and relate to its presence, more or less consciously. Time is one of those realities and dimensions that both aches and thrills the soul and boggles the mind. Time is what so often makes life bittersweet. The poignancy of a joyful moment in blissful love, contrasted to the grief of losing a beloved to death.

A fifth aspect of time is that it is relative, or as Mr. Gurdjieff said, "Time is the unique subjective. Time is always subjective." Albert Einstein, who is famous in part for developing the theory of relativity, winsomely explained his complex theory of relativity with an unforgettable quip: "Put your hand on a hot stove for a minute and it seems like an hour. Sit with a pretty girl for an hour and it seems like a minute."

The relativity or subjectivity of time means that we experience it differently based on multiple factors. For example, to a child in school, a week or month (much less a school year) feels like an eternity

till summer break. In contrast, a week, a month, or even a school year to an adult facing a deadline, might feel that time flies by, as if there isn't enough time to accomplish the task. That's a type of relativity – unique, personal subjectivity.

Let's bring all these aspects of time down to a practical level for our lived spiritual journey. Ilia Delio, during her presentation for The Journey School Oblate retreat last year, said something very profound: “the ‘I’ is the ‘Now’ of God’s creative love.” This gets us to the notion of being present, and the way in which the practice of Self-remembering, and what we are calling Holy Remembering, what Mr. Gurdjieff called, “I here now,” in this moment, as a channel of God’s creative energy and love.

Related to this, Brother David Steindl-Rast reminds us that, “Leisure is not the privilege of those who have time, but rather the virtue of those who give to each instant of life the time it deserves.” Perhaps we can re-phrase it this way: Holy Remembering is not the privilege of those who have time, but the opportunity of those who give each moment of life the attention it deserves.

Now, toward an application:
How are you using your time?
How is the practice of remembering helping you understand your past,

or consciously envision your future so to be present in your here and now?

Where is time just slipping by, perhaps even being wasted?
How are you forgetting that time is a factor, living as if it's always going to be there for you?

The season of lent, which is not Ordinary Time, but Extraordinary Time, is an ideal time to Work and Pray. As Tim Cook, co-founder of The Church of Conscious Harmony, used to say, “Work as if your house is on fire.” Another

way of saying that is the Work aphorism time *is a factor*, or the monastic wisdom saying, *make haste slowly*.

Finally, yes, may we each be here now. But may we also be here now remembering that there is more than just the here and now. There is a there and a then. There is a future, a beyond, and beyond beyond. There is the coming of the new heavens and the new earth, in all its many meanings, and of which no one knows the time, except, as Jesus taught us, our Father in Heaven. ☸

SPIRITUAL COMPANIONING

Spiritual accompanying is a voluntary opportunity for participants in the Journey School and The Church of Conscious Harmony to meet one-on-one with the Minister or the Abbess by phone or on Zoom. The aim of this short-term spiritual guidance is to provide a safe place where one may work with and through interconnected inner dynamics, receive individualized encouragement on your spiritual journey, and wish to deepen one's spiritual maturity in Christ. As Thomas Keating notes: “The best direction aims at enabling or empowering the directee to graduate to the more refined and delicate guidance of the Spirit in all matters. The director becomes a fellow traveler and friend on the journey, and the directee and director speak the truth to each other in love. Speaking just the truth can be too harsh. Speaking the truth in love is mutually sustaining” (Intimacy with God). A typical session would be 45 minutes and the number of sessions would not exceed 7. To explore this further, please contact the church office to schedule. There is no fee. ☸

My Father is still working, and I also am working. John 5:17

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

REMEMBERING LIVING TIME

BY VAN HOISINGTON, JR.

An early memory of my experience attending The Church of Conscious Harmony was learning about The Journey School. I was struck by a couple of attributes of the school. One was the deep level of devotion that was being offered by virtue of the various activities. The other was what appeared to me as the vast amount of time it would take to participate in all the activities. Since that reaction four years ago, I have learned through The Work of Inner Christianity (The Work) of a different sense of time. An idea of time that is eternal within me.

The Work observes we are at a particular level of being as we move through time. Our observations of our movement through time come to us through our senses. We can see changes in the seasons, the hands of the clock and feel the

wind blow, and hear cars pass by. We put together a three-dimensional picture of the world around us that moves through a fourth dimension of passing time. The movement through time is what easily occupies our mind. Easily indeed! Those years ago, my thoughts of devotion were all but (thank goodness) swept aside by my sense of the limitedness of time. The Work talks of identifying. I was identified with my belief in the idea of not having enough time. In other words, I thought that idea was me. I relate this even to the language I would use. Instead of running behind schedule, I would phrase it in my mind as “I am” late. Identifying also reaches into the past and the future. I would easily look at things I had done and think “that is who I am” or worry into the future of how I will be perceived. I

have said to myself that I will not be frustrated with people who are late anymore and thought that I was now an improved person. The Work refers to this type of effort as a Life-aim. Life-aims have for me the curious characteristic of being achievable and typically followed by the thought “what next?” I look at what I have accomplished, I may feel good about it, but I do not really feel any different. It is still the same me with another item seemingly checked off my to-do list.

The Work offers that our level of being is like a vertical line intersecting with our horizontal movement through time. Our level of being is with us always. Through non-identifying, self-observing and self-remembering, we can work on our level of being availing ourselves to transformation of our

being. The Work then refers to this effort of transformation as Work-aim. As I have devoted more effort to my Work-aim over the last few years, I have enjoyed those times where I am able to observe different 'I's. I have a sense of being above the horizontal flow of time. This shift to being 'above' time does not cause me to feel disengaged. Rather, I feel even more awareness and interest in observing my inner 'I's. This experience is analogous to becoming the coach of a grade school basketball team. I am keenly aware of all the players and their actions. I love them all dearly, but I am not in the fray. The analogy may even hold through a sense of moving up a ladder from coach to manager to director all with a greater expanse of awareness and insight to what is really happening. My success in maintaining this observational stance rarely lasts long. Soon my 'I's grow to be adolescents who think they know better and clamor to get into the coaching role. The next thing I know, I am looking out through their eyes. I am the experience of whatever 'they' are doing. It is interesting

for me to notice that what causes me to succumb to no longer being the coach is the basking in the sensations. I can really lose myself in the surge I feel of being right or, the more negative version, of making someone else wrong. Negative emotions and negative thinking are powerful in their ability to keep my ability to self-remember at bay.

The Work suggests this vertical gesture, this above and below, is with us always. It is our Time-Body that gives us access to levels of higher being and the awareness that our essential being is timeless or eternal. The idea of eternity being within us is a difficult concept. As I look at my life in 'horizontal time,' I see the past as unchangeable. The Work suggests that my experience of the present moment is tied to my senses. My fingers can only sense the typing in this moment. They cannot go back in time and feel the keyboard, nor can they feel what the keys will do in a few minutes hence. As I mentioned above, my sensations are powerful, which has the effect of making this present moment a visceral experience.

The Work moves on to remind me that my consciousness is not nearly as trapped in the present moment. I can attest that as my mind has wandered extensively in the last couple of sentences. I have wondered about who will read this, to remembering tomorrow's activities and marveling at the spelling of 'consciousness' all while typing.

Yet my consciousness can be changed through effort. Self-remembering is what allows for the ability to feel eternity. When I strive to self-observe and approach this feeling of eternity the past becomes less fixed. It begins to feel like my past travels along with me and responds to changes in my inner development. This feeling is a far cry from my "what next?" thought I described earlier. There is joy in this feeling. That I always have access to self-development is a gift. The Work says this living Time is beyond our ability to sense. It is internal effort. It is my Inner-Work, and it is eternally available to me. As the book of Revelation reminds me, *Behold I have left an open door before you, which no one can close.* (A)

But whenever you pray, go into your inner room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:6

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRACTICE OF CENTERING PRAYER

STILLNESS AND THE BODY

BY SHARON JOHNSON

It is a seemingly simple invitation to practice Centering Prayer in this body, to turn within; however, moving from the outer world to the inner landscape often requires preparation, a vestibule – a way to “get ready.” Tim Cook wisely recommended a period of intentional movement to ready the body for prayer time. The vestibule allows the body to sink into a state of weighted stillness and presence. In yoga practice, it is often referred to as “disposing of the body.” The conscious movement whether walking, yoga, tai chi, dance praise, Gurdjieff Movements, etc. is meant to bring about relaxation of skin, fascia, muscles, organs, and our Central Nervous System in order to give the body a more spacious quality. It sounds simple, yet the ramifications are vast. It is freedom to sit or recline for quiet prayer, borne out of the discipline to stop, listen and be, instead of attending to the ten thousand things to avoid

myself and God. If relationship with God on all levels is what we want:

Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know that I am
Be still and know
Be still
Be

God whispers deep into my heart to trust in the unfathomable, hidden beauty of my being. Once sitting with closed eyes, the opportunity to body-observe and the reality of this body and its atmosphere comes into view. It is a truthful moment and the sensations of the body reveal the true value of the body. “The body acts as a container for transformation.” (Harris, *Jung and Yoga*) Deep listening and response come from realizing the body has much to reveal. Fr. Thomas Keating referred to the body acting as a warehouse of everything that has ever happened to us from womb to present. This is

deep. The body seems to be a silent recorder in the present moment of events. Memories are embedded in the tissues, in the cellular matrix. As I surrender deeply into my spiritual Journey, layers of “this undigested material” are peeled back, bubbled up, melted away, and dissolved or integrated into the system. This purification process happens over time and sometimes repeatedly until all the fragments have been acknowledged, accepted, or released and no longer acting out, blocking energetic flow or stealing Force. In Centering Prayer terminology, it is referred to as “unloading.” In the seasons and moments of unloading, it can feel chaotic; but soon, the calm becomes profound.

Settling into an upright posture, relaxed and well-supported, I sense my feet, legs, buttocks in the chair, the soft, vertical line of the chakras, arms, wrists, hands and fingers appear, the base of the skull lifts, and

continued on page 9

GOD OF MY HEART: MEDITATIONS ON FEASTS AND FASTS

This meditation gives us a glimpse of François Fénelon personal conversation with God. Fénelon was a seventeenth-century French archbishop, controversial theologian and spiritual thinker. As you read his words, you may find yourself challenged to follow Fénelon on his journey, traveling the Royal Way of the Cross. Yet his letters of counsel have inspired generations of Christians.

Lent

Dear God, I have now entered a time of privation and abstinence. But it serves no purpose to fast from food, which nourishes the body, if we do not also fast from everything that serves to nourish the love of self. Divine spouse of souls, give me the inner chasteness, the purity of heart, the separation from every created thing, the soberness that your apostle spoke of—soberness that consists not only of the sparing use of food and drink, but also the cultivation of an earnestly thoughtful character marked by temperance, moderation, and seriousness. When practicing soberness, we use created things only out of necessity. It is a blessed fast when the soul holds all the senses in a state of being deprived of anything that exceeds what is sufficient and necessary. It is a holy abstinence when

the soul's hunger is filled by God's will and never feeds on its own will....

Dear God, let all created things keep silence before me, and let me keep silence before them in this holy season of Lent. Let my soul be fed in silence by fasting from all vain conversation. Let me feed on you alone and on the cross of your son, Jesus.

But must I be in continual fear of breaking this inner fast through consolations that I might enjoy on the outside? No, dear God, you do not want that kind of anguish and worry. Your Spirit is a spirit of love and freedom, not a spirit of fear and servitude. Therefore, I will renounce everything that is not in your order of things for me. I will renounce everything that I experience that diverts me too much from my true purpose. I will renounce everything that people who are leading me to you deem that I must set aside. Finally, I will renounce everything that you yourself will take away from me through the events of your divine providence.

I will peacefully bear all these privations. And here is what I will add to them: in every innocent and necessary conversation, I will cut out what you cause me to feel inwardly

to be nothing other than seeking myself. When I feel myself brought to make some kind of sacrifice over and above that, I will do it cheerfully. Furthermore, dear God, I know that you desire that hearts that love you should keep a wide berth from things of the world.

I will behave with confidence and trust, like a child that plays in its mother's arms. I will rejoice before the Lord. I will do my best to give joy to others. I will pour out my heart without fear in the company of God's children. All I want is forthrightness, freedom from guile, and the joy of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, dear God, keep far away from me that sad and fearful understanding that is always gnawing on itself, that is always holding scales in its hands to weigh the tiniest thing, out of fear of breaking that inner fast! It does you an injustice not to behave simply with you, like a child. That kind of harsh inflexibility is unworthy of your fatherly compassion. You want us to love you alone—that is what is meant by your being a “jealous God.” But when we love you, you allow love to behave freely, and you see quite well what truly comes from love.

Therefore, dear God, I will fast from every movement of the will that

is not yours. But I will fast out of love, in the freedom and in the abundance of my heart. How unhappy is the soul that is shrunken and dried up upon itself, that is afraid of everything, and that, because of its fear, has no time to love and to run generously after the divine Bridegroom! How strict is the fast that you cause the soul to undergo, yet without torturing it. Nothing remains in the heart except the beloved, leaving the soul only fainting and ready to expire with love.

This is the great fast, when mortals see their poverty completely exposed, when the slightest vestige of their life in themselves is torn out by the roots. Who can understand that great fast of pure faith? Where is there a soul that has enough courage to accomplish it? What limitless privation that is! What renouncing of ourselves as well as of the most vain things outside ourselves! What faithfulness of a soul that leaves itself behind in order to follow you out of a jealous love, without shrinking back, allowing everything to be taken away from it!

Lord, this is the sacrifice of those who worship you in spirit and truth. It is out of these trials that we become worthy of you.

Go ahead, Lord: make my soul empty, hungry, and fainting. Do with me according to your good pleasure. I will keep silence, I will worship you, and I will keep saying, “Your will be done.” And not mine. You are the only thing that I desire, dear God. ☉

The Complete Fénelon, pages 256-258.

continued from page 7

I feel the fragmented parts gather. I begin to open, to surrender to now as much as I can without tension. As the desert fathers and mothers would suggest praying in silence like a mountain, like a poppy, like an ocean, like a bird (turtle dove), like Mary and like Jesus (Yeshua). I wish to absorb and merge in the silence and spaciousness of God. The quiet echoes through my being. It is Holy Remembering.

Silence makes me present
Silence preserves me
Silence calls me to rest
Silence belongs to eternity
Only a silent heart [and body]
can love truly

Mt. Athos monk

The stillness of the body or moving center facilitates the stillness of the inner landscape and I have maintained an umbrella wish and aims for living from this stillness – I call it still moving. The calm water experienced in the deep well of silence spends in the here and now, where all is the well and all is well. It is the simple awareness of here and now through the sound and experience of the breath. I can be stillness and be a sanctuary. I can wish to be and to become more like Christ. I wish to live and move from this place in all ways.

One translation of “to pray” is to come to rest. As Wayne Muller so poetically states in *Sabbath*,

“We become Sabbath ... We are the emptiness, the day of rest. We become space ... Quietly empty, we become Sabbath, where the sorrows of the world are safely poured and gently dissolve into the unfathomable immensity of rest, and silence.”

The breath is a physical act. So returning ever-so-gently back to the breath is a portable and potent way to live one’s life and an invaluable way to return back to the body in prayer. At best, we are willing participants in the breath allowing the prana (life force) into our being. The breath ebbs and flows like the waves of the ocean and shifts us in innumerable ways. The exhalation allows the release and is really the calming portion of the breath cycle. I am being breathed every moment by God. May I remember.

The deep rest we receive in Centering Prayer drops us into the parasympathetic nervous system of rest, digest and healing, where the Divine Therapist/Surgeon can do the holy work of our transformation. After 26 years of practicing Centering Prayer, my faith is ever-deeper and I have received much tangible healing of lifetime wounds in quiet, miraculous ways. It is simple and lawful and such a gift. May we always simply remember to keep the silence where we all meet as one body. ☉

COMMUNITY PRACTICE MARCH-APRIL

WRITE A SUMMARY OF YOUR LIFE STORY

The months of March and April bring us to a new community practice. We are invited to practice remembering by entering into our time body, using memory to remember and write a part of your life story. You may wish to focus on a particular time or experience. Perhaps, it's a source of joy, or perhaps a source of pain. ☸

SERMON SERIES LORD, WHEN I FORGET, HELP ME REMEMBER

March 5

Remembering when at my worst

March 12

Remembering when at my best

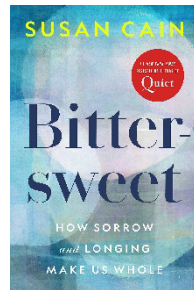
March 19

Remembering when feeling lost

March 26

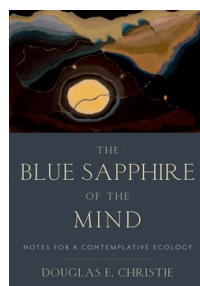
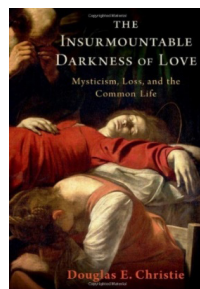
Remembering when feeling sick
and afraid of dying

COMMUNITY READING JANUARY-APRIL



Our first of three community readings for this year is Susan Cain's masterful book, *Bittersweet*. Cain explores the power of human longing, especially as it relates to all the aspects of our life that have been touched by sadness, loss and grief. As we do our inner Work, these places can become fruitful wounds. In a culture that celebrates instant gratification, there is wisdom in the gift of Holy Longing that helps us remember what is *truly* meaningful in a lifetime of complex choices and diverse possibilities. In April, we'll have a community discussion on *Bittersweet*. ☸

BOOK LOOK DEEP WISDOM FOR LENT



Douglas E. Christie may be one of the most important scholars of contemplative and monastic spirituality of this generation. Christie serves as professor in the Theological Studies Department at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. His books are essential reading for anyone interested in deepening their knowledge and understanding of the contemplative and monastic streams within the long-enduring Christian tradition(s). His most recent book, *The Insurmountable Darkness of Love: Mysticism, Loss and the Common Life*, is a masterpiece of introspective spiritual autobiography that also teaches the wisdom of the contemplative monastic tradition in very accessible ways.

Christie's prior book, *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind*, is a treasure chest of wisdom integrating contemplative practices and nature. Enjoy! ☸

MARCH CALENDAR

For more details, visit consciousharmony.com or call 512-347-9673

SPECIAL EVENTS

Half-Day Online Centering Prayer Retreat
March 8 1-4pm Register online

8-Day Lenten Centering Prayer Retreat
“Falling into the Hands of God” with Fr. Carl Arico
March 10-17 at Cedarbrake \$995 Full, wait list only
Please contact 512-347-9673 or officemgr@consciousharmony.org

Introduction to the Work - online
Wednesdays March 15- April 19 6-7:30pm CT
Register online

One-Day Sacred Sounds Retreat
led by Billie Woods
March 25 9am-4pm \$25 Register online

MONTHLY

Caritas Donations
1st Sundays
Bring non-perishables to CCH or donate to caritasofaustin.org

WEEKLY

Sundays
†Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina 8-9am
†Worship Service 10-11:30am
❖Youth Program (preK-12) 10-11:30am

Wednesdays
❖Contemplative Lunch noon-1pm

Thursdays
*The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm

DAILY

†Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am
*Centering Prayer 6pm

*Please join these services, groups, and classes via online video options.
Contact the website for accessible links and more information.
†In person and online ❖In-person only at CCH



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Christ in Silence, Odilon Redon

*Jesus, looking at him,
loved him and said to him,
You are lacking in one thing.
Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor
and you will have treasure in heaven;
then come, follow me.'*

Mark 10:21

LENT

The love of Christ manifested itself in His sheer vulnerability. ...
This sheer vulnerability made Him wide open both to suffering and to joy. ...

If there had been no possibility of betrayal,
there could have been no Eucharist.

If the disciples were to be admitted to His intimate friendship,
there could only be loneliness and disappointment
when they all abandoned Him and fled.

Only in the heart of one with boundless readiness to forgive
could there have been the pain of Peter's triple denial,
and afterwards the joy of reinstating him as chief of the apostles.

If Jesus were to hear a word of repentance from the good thief,
He had to listen to the mockery of the bad thief.

If Jesus were to receive the consoling sympathy of the women of Jerusalem,
He had to endure the hatred and contempt
of those who took pleasure in His death.

If it had not been possible for Him to experience abandonment
by the Father, there could not have been an infinite depth
to His total gift of Himself to the Father. ...

Vulnerability means to be hurt over and over again
without seeking to love less, but more.

Thomas Keating, *The Heart of the World*

