

Wrinkle Me This, Oh

Wise One



How many wrinkles do you need to have before you become wise? Because all of the wise ones I know are *very* wrinkled: redwood trees, elephants and mother Theresa. It's almost as if the skin is imitating what the brain does in order to increase its storage ability.

The brain learned, in the course of its evolution, to fold itself endlessly in order to optimize its surface area and thus increase its computing capacity. Is that what the skin does? Are wrinkles the way the epidermis folds itself to optimize its surface area and thus increase its wisdom-carrying capacity?

The wisest one of all is Gaia. She is 4.7 billion years of age and she's *full* of wrinkles. Right now, as I sit on my deck, I'm watching as she folds her skin into layers of mountains and valleys. And many times I've felt and heard her rearrange these wrinkles during California earthquakes.

Some parts of Gaia's body are less wrinkled than others. I lived, for 14 years, on the edge of the Baringo Desert in Kenya where her skin is very smooth, apart from the minor corrugations created by singing winds and xylophone-like zephyrs.

Gaia keeps her moodiest moments for her oceans. Sometimes the surface looks as smooth as baby skin. At other times, it's puckered by hundred-foot-high tsunamis that race across her countenance in a burst of anger. Then again, for weeks at a time, she will gently splash foam-tipped wavelets onto her beaches.

Gaia loves to invite children to caress her lakes and ponds by plopping stones. In perfect concentric circles, she sends out messages to all the little critters who live on the waters' perimeters. "Little boy at play, prepare to be rocked to sleep by the lullaby of this wave-making."

Like a very gifted juggler, she will stitch intersecting circles from several stones simultaneously cast by a group of children. And the resulting designs will run the gamut, from ripples that cancel each other out (as if it were matter and anti-matter meeting) to augmenting and amplifying each other, like kids playing Jenga building a tower of blocks.

Sometimes she is Gaia the crone. And sometimes she is Gaia the maiden. In this morning's light, as I look over the Pena Creek valley, I see the sun-bronzed breasts of two mountains straining against the tattered green bra organically woven by patches of Madrona and Manzanita.

Gaia is nubile in nature, in love with life. And today is her birthday. Every day is her birthday. Each morning, at sunrise, she lights another birthday candle. And each evening, at sunset, she blows it out.

"Happy birthday to you,  
Happy birthday to you,  
Happy birthday dear Gaia,  
Happy birthday to you."

Namasté,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Seán".

Tír na nÓg  
August, 2015