

Amid Her Unspeakable Beauty,
a Mythic Drama of Allurement and Grace

by Charlene Spretnak

We cannot help but notice that the best of all writers on earth matters are poets at heart and in fact; their treatises are love poems. This passage was excerpted from Spretnak's *The Resurgence of the Real* (Addison-Wesley), a resoundingly forthright critique of the way we live that was named one of the ten best books of its publication year, 1997, by *The Los Angeles Times*. The author of *States of Grace* and other books, Spretnak's work has been essential in the framing of *Green Politics*, the title of a book she co-authored.

As the universe acts, through trillions of micro-events each second, certain possibilities arise. On the Earth, rotating in spun pirouettes while it glides gracefully around the sun, the cosmologic continues to weave novelty and continuity into a web of life processes. Every manifestation of universe life in the Earth community emerges into being in its own way, but none does so in isolation. Animate or inanimate, our relatives are all around us, lighting the night sky, rushing through a river bed, thrusting upward through the Earth's crust. Life forms self-organize, thrive, and dissipate in spans of a microsecond or longer arcs of billions of years.

The story of the universe is a mythic drama of creativity, allurements, relations, and grace. Our species brings to it the capacity for self-reflexive awareness and responsible acts. Reflecting on our dynamic context, from the subatomic to the cosmological, we notice the essential role of creative process, constitutive relationship, and the unitive ground of being.

Our great spiritual traditions, speaking in thousands of languages, have set their sacred stories of ultimate mystery within the grand epic of orbiting planets, changing seasons, eclipses, moon tides, and meteor showers.

In the midst of all this action, in the unspeakable beauty of the Garden Planet, the story of every person unfolds, nestled within the embedding stories of family, clan, community, bioregion, region, nation, continent, planet, and cosmos.

This is a situation that "needs new myths"? Surely not. What we need is attentive engagement, cultivated awareness, and a taste for wisdom.

A first step in recovering our connection with the larger reality is to realize that humans are surrounded not by a collection of objects but a community of subjects. In late 1995 astronomers discovered 50 billion more galaxies than they had known of previously. This cosmological event was widely reported in the news media, in the wake of which I heard three paradigmatic responses. The first was from a modern mentality: So what? The second was from a famous literary scholar of the deconstructionist-postmodern persuasion who felt despondent about our fate as a satellite of a "banal and decentered star," upstaged by the magnitude of the new discovery. I found this reaction terribly sad and utterly hilarious, so I consulted the most insightful cosmologist I know. I asked Brian Swimme, "What's the meaning of the discovery of 50 billion 'new' galaxies in the universe?" Without an instant's hesitation, he declared exuberantly, "We can never be lonely again! We have all these relations we didn't know about!"

Ah, yes.