

Book Reviews

Cosmic Child: Inspired Writings from the Threshold of Birth Selected and Arranged by Eve Olive (Wrightwood Press, 2013; available from WECAN)



When a child is born, what enters the world? Merely a new combination of genetic material, a small package of blood and bone and flesh? Or is there something more behind this wonder, something we cannot see but that yet moves us with its immense and mysterious power?

In our present age, we have gone deeply into that state that William Word-

sworth speaks of as “a sleep and a forgetting,” losing awareness of where we came from into birth and thus forfeiting our birthright, the ability to work consciously with those creative, formative impulses that make earthly existence possible. The privilege of being present at a birth often brings with it a “lighting up” of this awareness again. When my own child was born, I experienced a strong sense of the living force that he brought with him, a force that in fact keeps the world alive. Yet even after such awakenings we can easily be dulled into drowsiness by the cares of daily life. How can we wake up and remember again?

In this small but mighty book, Eve Olive has gathered poetry, prose, prayers and meditations that awaken us to the reality of the world before birth, from those who have not forgotten. There are the voices of poets from many nations and many centuries: Langston Hughes, Rumi, Robert Hamerling, Mary Oliver, Olav Nygaard, Thomas Traherne, Christian Morgenstern, to name only a few. There are words from the religious traditions of the world, which universally find a gateway to the divine in birth. There are anecdotes about many young children (and even some adults) who show awareness of their own origins and of siblings on the way. There is a brief section of prayers, three for parents and one for a child, which can be taken up in daily practice, strengthening the connection between worlds.

The vision that comes to us through these words is not always gentle, painted in soft pastel colors. In birth there is also roughness, upheaval, fear; there is the sadness of mourning something lost in the transition to earthly life, and the knowledge that suffering lies ahead. But throughout this book shines the conviction expressed in Rudolf Steiner’s words: “Life after death—/Life before birth;/Only in knowing both/Do we know eternity.” For expectant parents, for teachers and caregivers, for anyone seeking the creative well-springs of life, this book is truly a gift. Many thanks to Eve Olive for gathering these treasures—the work of three decades—and for offering them to us. ♦

—Lory Widmer

*The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are moving back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.*

RUMI
from *Cosmic Child*