

Book Review

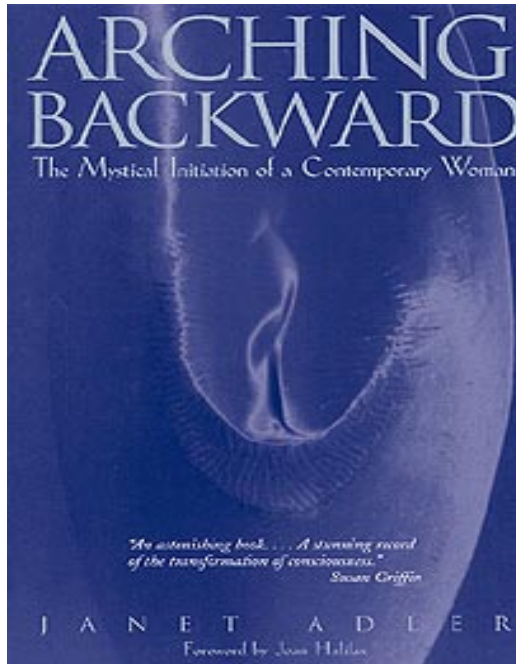
Arching Backward. The Mystical Initiation of a Contemporary Woman

Janet Adler

Inner Traditions International, 1995

ISBN 0-89281-577-9

Available from Amazon: www.amazon.com \$19.95 US



I recently purchased a copy of Arching Backward at a pre-Christmas book sale – not really knowing what to expect but caught by the author’s name and aware of her background, I found it an enthralling read and one that I would like to share with you.....

Janet Adler has a Ph.D in mystical studies, is a dancer, teaches the discipline of Authentic Movement and is the founder and director of The Mary Starks Whitehouse Institute – the first dedicated school to Authentic Movement.

Arching Backward is a vivid and rich story that describes the profoundly moving experience of Janet’s personal initiation and transformation. Whilst it is not a book that describes the process or technique of dance therapy it certainly provides the reader with insight into how Janet personally used the principles of Authentic Movement to literally move her through a deeply challenging situation that spanned a number of years. The reader enjoys insight into an amazing experience of primal energy surfacing in the body, and its physical and emotional impact.

Janet encountered and coped with each of these energetic experiences incorporating them within her

day to day life both as a mother, a partner, and as a movement teacher. The energy experiences begin shortly before Janet had opened the Institute for the in-depth study of Authentic Movement in 1981.

Essentially the writings of the energy experiences are recorded chronologically in a narrative journal style. The impact of this experience on Janet's physical body, her work, and her relationships and on her overall wellbeing is also described.

It would be remiss of me not to comment on Janet's ability to put words to her experience as she uses both narrative and prose to describe each of her experiences. The story is intensely intimate, providing details of this extraordinary journey of transformation in a raw but eloquent style.

Through Janet's vivid recording we obtain insight into the depth of the initiation experience and the emotional and physical torment she endured. With great courage Janet describes the process of the energy and vision as she physically felt them.

"I know that translating the embodiment of these visions into words by tracking the experience is a way of witnessing myself, helping me to stay in a negotiating relationship to the energy rather than to merge with it. I know I am writing sensations vastly beyond accurate description, but my longing to move closer to a truer reflection of my experience is uncompromising."... (Excerpt from the Prologue xiii by J. Adler)

It appears Janet's knowledge of Authentic Movement became a strong vehicle for her to move through and express each energy experience, which she then records immediately in words. She stresses great importance on the movement experience and the role of the witness in enabling the movement process to occur in an authentic fashion.

This is a beautifully written piece. I found it to be a compelling read and recommend it not only to those interested in dance therapy and Authentic Movement, but also for anyone who is interested to better understand the impact of primal energies (or Kundalini or Chi) on the body and self.

Sally Denning

Dance & Movement Therapist

B. Ed., Grad Dip Movement and Dance, Grad. Cert. Dance Therapy, M. Ed.