

CHAOS

Never fear chaos: it is the womb of infinite possibilities. That was the ending of an interview I did a month ago.

Chaos is all around us; we call it Nature. Somehow we have come to fear the richness of Nature, its chaos. The chickens and ducks I wrote about last month need controlling, we think. Modern humans need to feel in control, thinking our control is safer--which means more predictable--than the chaos we do not control in neat straight lines. But is it? Are we really smarter than Nature?

Or, another way of looking at that: How can we be anything but part of Nature -- and can a part be smarter than the whole? If that happens in our body, we call it cancer. A group of cells that cannot be stopped from growing, taking over organs, functions of the whole body. And so, destroying the whole. Needless to say we control, or try to control, the cancer. With nuclear energy and potent chemical poisons, hoping that the power and the poisons kill cancer cells and not kill the whole, the body.

That proves that we are smarter than Nature, doesn't it?

Like, We won the battle and lost the war.

We think of chaos as totally out of control. Unpredictable, and therefore hard to plan for. What kind of shelter can we build if we know that we building on quicksand? What food can we eat when nature constantly changes? But it does not change that fast. And even quicksand has regularities. Someone once explained chaos to me this way. Say, you have made a beautiful table top, inlaid with mother-of-pearl perhaps, or a painting or something carved into the surface. How many legs do I need to support that table top so that it is safe, won't tip over. Well, usually we make tables with four legs, or six, perhaps eight might be better? The fact is, the more legs the steadier the table. It is till possible for the table to tip over, but the more legs you have the less chance for that. So it with chaos, with nature. The more variety there is, the more interaction between different individual plants, trees, animals, species -- the better the balance. Always a dynamic balance, it does not stand still. But when we have many, or even many many kinds of plants and trees and animals, the steadier the balance.

What we do when we control, we simplify a very varied chaos. The simpler we make it, the more fragile the balance. Nature teaches us that, but westerners turn a deaf ear, a blind eye, to the variety of Nature. We prefer a lawn of all the same grass, all 2.3 inches high, not a "weed" in sight. And when one summer it rains more, or less than normal? Or, what if some animal comes along that loves that particular kind of grass above all other grasses. That animal is going to town! All his relatives are called, more and more animals are born to health, strong grass eaters. Then we invent a pesticide that kills that particular kind of grass-eater. Once you start to control chaos, you cannot let go. It gets harder and harder to make that straight line in a reality where straight lines exist only in our minds, not in the real world of nature.

I feed two cats. It is more convenient for me to feed the cats at the same time that I also feed the chickens away from here, because if there are chickens around when the cats eat, the chickens will hang around, try to get cat food. I don't like the idea of chickens eating chicken (part of cat food). But one of the cats refuses to be bound by my time schedule. He comes when he is

hungry, or when it is not raining, or when he happens to be in the neighborhood. I get mad at him but of course it is really my problem, not his. People tell me that cats never over-eat, just keep a dish of cat food out, and the cats will eat what and when they need to. That may be true if there are no chickens around. Chickens eat anything, including their own rotten eggs, I discovered.

Controlling is a full time job, and I now realize it is not my job at all. I am a nurturer, I like to feed people and other animals, and plants. I know full well that if I don't feed them, the animals would find food somewhere else. Plants would grow just as well, maybe faster, and some plants would not survive without my help. But, after a hundred years, when nature has repaired itself, eradicated all our attempts to carve what we think of as dead stuff--in a hundred years it will be a stable, more or less, world of many plants and trees and animals. I probably would not recognize the place! There are days that I try to imagine what this place would look like if we stopped interfering. Not too hard to imagine, because this is the tropics, things grow fast. After five years here I have a fairly good idea what this would look like after. If I lived as I want to live, this place would not look all that different, because I try to take a minimum of control, and when I introduce a new plant, or move a plant, I do it with awareness, sensing where this plant would do well, get along with its neighbors. I know all the plants and trees here. It is not hard to sense whether they are happy or unhappy. My daughter-in-law's words. Every now and then we walk around, slowly, seeing the plants, trees. She will remark, That tree does not look very happy there. Look at those shredded leaves, The dull color of the bark. It's too old too move, but we can find some starts underneath and move them where this kind of tree would be happier.

That is working within the chaos.

Am consciously, with awareness, trying to control as little as possible, and instead go with the flow, admiring the chaos of nature that is so obvious here (anywhere I have ever been, of course). I truly love the Wild. It is alive, unpredictable, and yet there are patterns and it is not difficult to learn to be part of these wild patterns. I do not try to learn "laws" of nature, but rather observe its playfulness. The garish feathers of a rooster are not necessary for the survival of the species, I am convinced. They are a whimsy. As the surprising colors of flowers and leaves is a whimsy. The natural world is nothing but a show case of possibilities. The orange of lions may make them blend into a desert, the stripes of a tiger may well be camouflage in a bamboo forest -- but in the snows of Siberia even the toned down stripes do not serve much purpose. And why white chickens? It makes them impossible to miss in the dark of a wood or the open areas of the land here. Why are some animals symmetrical left and right, but there are animals that are symmetrical in five arms. Few plants have a double symmetry, triple or quadruple is more common. We have a palm tree that is symmetrical in three sides. Some flowers have five petals, but occasionally there will be a four- or a six-petaled flower on the same plant. Humans come in all sizes and shapes and colors, with different kinds of hair, different skins, different smells, eyes, nails. But we all interbreed so we are one species, according to our human rules.

Realities.

When we stopped wandering and made ourselves a world we created a new reality. Today that reality has many faces, and it seems that the artificial faces of that reality are more real to people than their neighbors dog barking at night. To many people "the news," the pictures on TV, are the real world. For me that world is often so artificial that I cannot really feel it. Wars, bombings, diplomats posturing, horror and terror. I know "facts" about countries we are warring in. I have seen and continue to see pictures and movies of parts of the world I have flown over. Then it was

real as what we see with our eyes is real. But the news is another kind of reality altogether. I do not doubt that these things are truly happening. And I know that what we are told about these wars is colored, manipulated, censored, minimized and enlarged according to the whims and programs of those who control that digital reality. It is an almost totally man-made reality, created to manipulate (control) us. I can only experience News in my imagination, in my head. Knowing the number of dead does nothing to make me feel even one of those deaths. When I read what Putin has said yesterday, or where he went, or what he is up to, I know in my mind that that is all true probably, but it has no experiential reality for me.

When people visit here I think they often don't see the rich chaos of trees and animals that I see. My world is less real to them than what they saw on TV last night. People seem to feel a phone call with someone living 6000 miles away as real and personal as the cup of coffee they are drinking; maybe more real. How can that be?

I think of Cindy Sheehan, a woman who personally, deeply, felt the impact of a faraway war when her son died. For a while she became the spokesperson for a growing anti-war sentiment in this country. The horror of war is a reality to her. But to most of us that war is not an experience, We know the numbers and also know that those numbers are almost certainly not the "real" numbers. We are told the convoluted realities of how our troops are doing, or not doing. Some of us have learned some of the geography of the war zones. But it is mostly imaginary stuff, it has made very little impact on our lives. Cindy Sheehan had her fifteen minutes of fame, then faded in the background of politics, scandals, murders, and all the news that is not even news any more. Evidently we cannot handle the real reality of Cindy Sheehan, as we cannot deal with the real reality of the environment we are destroying with our way of life.

We have a hard time "believing" in global warming. I have no doubt that is because "the news" does not talk about it much. The news loves disasters, reports endlessly on earth quakes, storms, floods, but never even question whether perhaps these many unusual disasters may have something to do with global warming? Occasionally -- rarely -- we are asked to think about it, or even change our lives in order to, maybe, slow the climate change effect, how can we fit it in the realities of our income and expenses, a mortgage payment that is due, our children in school -- a school that has changed its mission, now with an emphasis on memorizing facts tested by standardized tests (brrr).

What we call the Media, with a capital M--now used singular although it used to be the plural of medium--the Media is spinning a reality in sound, color, and life-like movement that has little to do with the reality of nature. The names of people in shows are as real to us as our children, maybe more so. Nature has become a screen against which we project our imaginary realities (yes, plural). Nature no longer exists as the reality in which we live, of which we are a part.

But some day, that may well be the only reality that is left us. Then we may be utterly unprepared for the chaos of nature.

Hubris it is called. Arrogance. Imagining ourselves so special, so powerful, that we are the lords of the universe--or, at least of the planet. Our imaginary world is more real than the environment that we live on (no longer "in"). If we feel ourselves a part of something it is of a nation (another illusion), a race (illusion), a political party (ultimate illusion). Some of us love nature because flowers and sunsets are beautiful. We love our pets because we have humanized them.

Until the reality of a war, sliding into poverty, sickness without health insurance, hits us, as a son's death hit Cindy Sheehan where the real reality lives.

I wish I could spare you the shock. but I cannot. The reality of an aerial bombardment does not get to us until we are in one. We are so overfed that we cannot imagine hunger. I assure you, hunger is real. I have been hungry; I weighed half of what I weigh now at the end of the second world war, and I am not fat.

Chaos is real, and always has been. Chaos is not to be feared -- it our own man-made reality that should be feared because it is destroying the rich chaos that is All There Is.

Nature shows clearly that chaos can --must be -- a balance, a dynamic balance. A balance that never is quite the same as it was yesterday, but a balance nevertheless.

With our control, our obsession with straight lines, eradicating weeds and "bad" germs, our endless fight to do it our way, we are trying to tame chaos. Folks, it can't be done. That is the real reality. On this planet, in the real reality, chaos cannot be controlled, only enjoyed for the endless options it allows.

Can you feel the difference between talking with a real, live person sitting next to you on a bench, or talking with someone on a cell phone (mobile in other parts of the world)? On that tiny machine that I hold against my ear I hear a familiar voice--if the static is not too bad, and if both of our machines are charged--I am talking to a person I imagine in my head. The woman sitting next to me I can touch, smell. The real world is not two dimensional, it is not a flat screen. It is three, even four and five dimensions that we experience with our bodies, not our brains.

The two-dimensional world of illusion is about to eat us. We have stepped into a never-never land that we pretend to be as real as the coffee pot that is boiling over. But it isn't.

Would wars stop if we did not have news? Who knows. If a tree falls but we are not there, is the tree really falling? That used to be a riddle, a philosophical question. Nature, the real reality of this planet, does not care whether we are aware of the tree falling or not. In nature the tree falls, whether we are there or not. It is not important whether we see one tiny event, what is important is that we accept and live in the chaos that is nature.

We fear chaos because we are told to fear living without rules, laws, control. We fear "anarchy" (although few of us know the true meaning of that word) because it is a bogeyman, fear-some monster in fiction. We reject socialism--not knowing even the first principle of it--because for half a century it has been painted danderous to us in clever propaganda of business moguls who care more for profit than people. We fear because we are reminded daily to "be very afraid." It is rarely explained to us what we should be afraid of, except vague words like "nuclear threat," "cloud over a big city," "we are at war, after all." Who or what are we at war with? With terror, we are told--not even terrorists. War means aggression, force. War on poverty might mean an aggressive effort (force) to eliminate poverty. Needless to say that war was lost before it even started. A war on terror is equally doomed, certainly when the methods we use are as terrorist as the acts of those 19 men against a building and the people in it.

Our bodies are made to react to threats with fight or flee instincts. Fighting and running away require action, muscles, not fear. Fear softens the muscles and nerves. Fear freezes us -- the very thing we should never do when faced with real danger. Fear makes us will-less, cowering victims. That is obviously not how we survived the first many thousands of years of our existence as humans. We must have faced a real enemy with courage and open eyes. Closing our eyes has never yet saved anyone. The fear we are told to have makes us numbers, accepting whatever our leaders tell us is necessary to win an endless war. Wars are never won, they wear themselves out. That is not wishful thinking, it is history.

I see our man-made world sliding farther away from a reality based on experience into a reality

that exists only in our imagination. The wars, the financial system, the growing gap between rich and poor, the talk, it is all illusion and illusion-making.

Not harmless. It is the dreamer who drives his car over the cliff.

We have given the word "wild" a new meaning. Not just wild as in untamed, but uncontrolled, and therefore criminal behavior. One of the writers who has written extensively about another group of aborigines, the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert (they call themselves the San), refers to the wild people he loved as "the untamed." We, of course, are the tamed. The domesticated version of the original humans. Taming has made us mean, as dogs kept on a short leash get mean.

And taming has made us "the masses." In all civilized countries there are the few and the many. The few control the many. In a democracy the many think they choose a few to keep chaos away, in dictatorships the few say they will keep chaos away, including the chaos that might originate in the many.

The river flows. Our fads and fashions always get back to where we live--not where big plans are being made. Now we seem to be in an age of destruction at levels unknown before, while our leaders and those who tell us what the leaders meant to say, are undecided but hopeful that we, humans, will figure it out and make ourselves a better world. Look: dead cars and other junk all around the place; what was once a lawn is now sand and weeds. The garage, now an apartment, is leaning into a hole left by a mishap with a big tractor. Or, look where large swatches of land have been "cleared." Nothing grows there any more except what grows on poor soil because when we imagine we just cleared trees and weeds, in fact we destroyed an ecology. The trees made shade, which encouraged other plants to grow. By scraping the land, as we do here, we scrape away what soil there is, a soil that holds worms and a world of smaller beings that made it possible for plants and trees to grow. It will take a hundred or more years for soil to be slowly made again from fallen leaves and branches, dead animals, small and large. New soil, then laced with plastic shreds, metal odds and ends, and glass, no doubt.

We have lost touch with the earth, think of it as a possession we can do with what we want. Caring for the earth is trouble, often big trouble (expensive). So we let go and clear another acre, hectare, somewhere else. Our control leaves behind a dead chaos, an empty chaos compared to the living chaos of Nature.

Yes, there are exceptions. There are parts of the planet where people have lived for a long time and have maintained blocks of forest, meadows, streams. It takes caution and continuous care to maintain sustainably. The only way to do that is to have a culture that values paying attention, caring, and that values not controlling.

Living sustainably means using what is where I live, eating what grows here, adapting my life to what is available, not wanting more than I can eat, being careful not to waste, and what waste I make I must recycle--as everything in nature cycles through the chaos over and over and over again. That is an entirely different mindset than what we do in our so-called civilization. We do not care what our immediate environment provides, we change nature to conform to some imagination we have of how we want it to be. We bring building materials for a house from halfway around the world. Our food is grown elsewhere and the processed, packaged in double plastic (made from oil). We are not only careless about waste, but waste more than the earth can absorb. Modern man has an extremely powerful, very large footprint. I don't know whether we are violent, selfish, crude, because we are so contemptuous of the chaos of nature, or whether we are afraid of nature and so become violent. Maybe it is the same. We, homo sapiens, do not act sapi-

ent. My dictionary says that Sapiient means "formal wise, or attempting to appear wise," and, in science fiction, it also means "intelligent." In the early 21st century it seems obvious that we are neither wise nor intelligent.

Before we became control freaks, boundaries were natural: rivers, a mountain chain, a copse of trees, a few rocks. Making straight line boundaries that look good on a map are ridiculous almost everywhere in nature. Artificial boundaries are as short-sighted as the walls we build. There are no straight lines in nature. Before our civilization got grandiose we had villages spread as widely as they had to be, with paths or even roads snaking between trees, around rocks, following the meanders of a stream. Our human footprint was almost manageable. No more.

We have become used to a controlled world, straight lines; nature has become the enemy. We decide what plants and animals we tolerate on the planet. Hundreds of species are dubbed weed, which means "not wanted, to be eradicated." We have just about extinguished all big animals we could not tame. And still we are afraid of nature, which we think is chaos, in America called anarchy, the big bogeyman. I think Americans truly believe that without someone to tell us how to live we would immediately regress to murdering savages. We might, I don't know. A nation where "everybody" has at least one gun is a danger to itself. But in my experience during the second world war, without a government life pretty much goes on as it used to. At least for a while.

There may still be islands or places in high mountains where people live the old way, in small sustainable villages. They rule themselves, if there is any ruling to be done. The limits they know are Nature's limits, and they are minimal. It may well be that humans who are used to be controlled would fall apart without control. Not my experience, however.

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The interview I mentioned at the beginning of this story took place over the phone. The interviewer, Joanna, was in Spain, I here on the island called Hawai'i. She has a web site: Futureprimitive.org. For 45 minutes I talked about my double life. On the one hand I live in a western society, have to live with endless do's and don'ts, but here at home I live in a little piece of "wild. After getting to know a small group of aboriginal (wild) people, I cannot get them out of my mind. I try to live as I think they might live here. Now I see our man-made world as an illusion, something that exists in our heads, a package we are making for ourselves, in which the earth, nature, wild animals, are an interesting background, resources of course, something removed from what we consider real. We imagine that only our man-made world is real, the earth a stage we bring to life. But it is exactly the other way 'round, nature is real and our world is illusion. I use "world" for our man-made world of concrete and cars, oil and politics. I use "nature" or "the planet" for where we really live, what we are part of, whether we know it or not.

Very difficult to talk about, because I have to be in and use the language of the world when talking about nature. There are no words for the grand expanse of what is real, as mystics have said through the ages. Words belong to our illusionary world. Animals do not understand words, but they most certainly understand behavior and intention.

Our illusionary world is in great trouble. It is divorced from the planet, from nature. And then we are surprised and cannot quite believe that our illusionary world is destroying nature. Climate change is only one of the manifestations of our illusionary way of life, there are other signs as well. Scientists agree that it is most likely that the lives we have lived for the past hundred or

more years is "causing" these changes. In truth it does not matter much whether the rapid melting of polar ice is the consequence of our greedy burning of fossil fuels, or perhaps a part of a cycle we had not noticed before. Many places on this planet are going to be warmer, others may become colder, or wetter. The level of the oceans is going up--and many, perhaps most of the enormous cities of our world are at current sea level. I have to be careful how to word these changes: "current level of the oceans" -- no longer "sea level," as if that were fixed. In the chaos that is nature nothing is fixed.

Ancient people knew and accepted that the planet is in constant flux, a dynamic balance. We now know very well what disturbs a natural balance. Modern agriculture does, for instance, agriculture on a grand scale with machines. The machines demand mono-culture (growing one crop on a thousand or more acres or hectares, the plants as close together as the machine dictates. Of course, that, in turn, requires more and more fertilizer, and more and more pesticides. Mono-culture denudes the soil, when we grow one kind of tree, one kind of grain, after a while the soil is depleted. We make neat rows, arrow straight. Machines do all that, machines that use energy we dug from the earth--"ancient sunshine," as Thom Hartmann called it: the energy of the sun absorbed by plants that over many eons became mulch, compressed, and eventually a thick oil, that must be sucked out of the earth, refined for use. The corn, while it is growing, is liberally fertilized with artificial fertilizer, also made from oil, and for good measure doused with chemicals to kill or at least keep away insects and other pests that eat "our" crop. Harvested by still other machines, processed in factories. The land becomes little more than a neutral substance that can no longer grow anything without greater and greater doses of artificial fertilizer and pesticides. Soil that once supported a chaotic mixture of wild plants and animals is dead. This is no secret. We know this all too well, but big corporations continue to practice mono-culture. Machines save the cost of labor. But, at what price!

I'll try another way of saying what our way of life is doing to the natural world. The community of chickens and ducks I described earlier, is getting irritable, I observe. Last year I fed them in one place only, a fairly small area. When I felt it was getting crowded I moved the feeding place to where it is now, an area three or more times larger than the one before. And then I added another feeding place, farther away, supposedly for the chickens who live on the other side of a sort of natural hedge, an area of trees and bushes, tightly packed. The quantity of scratch I feed them now is almost twice what it was last year. And again it is getting crowded. Well, yes, of course. That is how any ecology works. At first there were some chickens here, as there are chickens everywhere on this island. We were here; they were here, We discovered how useful they were (they eat centipedes). We entered into the chicken-land equation. The energy in the original situation was balanced, there were as many chickens as this area of land could support. By introducing food, (energy), it was predictable that we would get either fatter chickens, or more chickens. In this semi-wild situation they do not get fat, but now more chickens can be in the same area. The more I feed them, the more chickens will be here. Twice as much food, twice as many chickens.

It is my control that has caused a population explosion. You know those statistics of the human population growth in the last 200 years. A hundred years ago there were one billion humans on this planet, now there are 6.7 billion. We have obviously pumped up our production of food (and energy) to allow such an increase. The increase may be a consequence of our profligate agriculture, although we think of the new kind of agriculture as a response to more people. It is probably more complicated than that, there are other factors as well. In the ecology that is nature there are

no simple cause and effect relationships. But read this as an illustration of a principle: Man, by entering an existing balanced ecology, by feeding (favoring) one element of the total ecology, the entire ecology is affected.

Thinking that the supply of oil is unlimited we created a civilization based on the endlessly available energy from oil, Now it turns out that not only is the amount of oil available with present techniques limited, but our burning oil is poisoning the atmosphere, which in turn is melting ice at the poles, which is raising the level of all oceans, and so on. Not only are we depleting the earth and using energy to destroy the earth, but so far we have been almost totally unaware and uncaring what consequences our interfering into the planetary ecology is having. We forgot, or ignored, that we share this planet with all other life on this planet. The United States, with probably less than 4% of the world's population, is responsible for at least 25% (one quart) of the carbon dioxide that is one of the main poisons spewed in the air by our oil and coal burning energy factories. And what is even stranger, we think that is right. We have and are changing the face of the planet. We change the flow of rivers, dry up swamps, move mountains, build endless roads, cover many square miles of land with concrete. We dig up (or suck up) riches from the earth, but it has not occurred to us that we must give something back. No, we take more. We take measureless amounts of wood growing in forests, denuding the earth. "Desertification" it is called. First thin soil, then a desert. Original man was very careful to put back about as much as he took, never taking more than he could eat, never eradicating a plant he needed tomorrow. Ancient man knew he was part of the whole.

We use more of the earth than we give back, more even than we can use. We throw away more than the earth can absorb of our poisonous wastes. We live on credit, but do not think about how to pay back. By taking infinitely more than we are putting back in, we make the earth poorer (extinction of species). The more varied an ecology is, the more sustainable. Simple equation. By impoverishing the whole, we make it more fragile, less able to restore a balance.

What makes a healthy ecology, a healthy earth, or a healthy body, is a chaos of many varieties of life forms, in a dynamic balance. Dynamic, because nature is constantly changing, the balance is shifting as well,

Chaos means we have no control but, let's face it, we do not control very well. Do we control our environment because we cannot control ourselves? Not very smart!

The United Nations issued a very strongly worded warning that Global Warming, and all its effects, is rapidly approaching a point of no return. We had better organize all our politics to deal with the environment, or we won't have a livable environment in the not far future. When I read that I thought about governments, at every level making more and more laws, that would require more and more enforcers. More control. I am convinced that does not work. We must accept chaos, stop controlling the environment. What we must learn we must learn one by one. We must change how we think, what we consider real -- our wasteful way of living or living as part of a whole. We must rediscover living as part of the earth. As a body has the capacity to heal itself, an ecology has a way to balance itself. We know that polluted lakes can be healed. It is done by listening to nature, not to fight it. Usually healing is helped by adding life forms that, for instance, can neutralize a poison. What is needed is to control people from polluting through careless, unaware living.

Our news, so-called, hardly mentions important issues other than politics. Hard to believe that there is anything bigger than politics? How about survival. As a species, I mean--in the real

world of nature individual survival, which we think so important, plays no role. The aboriginal and indigenous people I knew, or have read about, lived a very different reality. To them, the world around them, the rocks, sand, water, animals, plants, trees, were all one familiar, known whole, of which we were just a tiny insignificant part. Humans, animals, plants, rocks, are related in a rich chaos of natural abundance. Ecologists think that also. What is important is the connections, everything related to everything else. As Native Americans say, All my relations.

It is a great gift to experience that feeling of immersion into the environment around me, the sounds, the rocks, the wildness of plants and animals, the wind, rain, fierce sunshine, dark--I am a part of all of that. I am no different from the trees I love. The same molecules, the same chemicals. The oxygen plants make I breathe in. Now I can think in terms of the connections, the paths between. The many, the warm, abundant chaos of All.

The hard part is shifting realities. I wish you could share my reality, or, rather, I wish you could see the difference between a natural (for want of a better word) reality and the illusionary reality most of us live in. The two realities are very clear to me, and dangerously different.

In front of me, through the window, the amazing orchid that blooms year 'round, making a new leaf and a new flower about every three months; the clump of flowers a strange kind of red. Through the window it seems a tender kind of red. Not the brazen red of the hibiscus that show behind it in a wilderness of many greens. Nor the lacquered red of anthurium. When I go outside and look at the orchid up close the blooms seem to have an almost invisible, but sensed, veil. The inside of an abalone comes to mind, that same shimmering, shifting overlay I see also on the orchid flower. The orchid is very real, I can touch it. I know its history: I bought the plant years ago when it was small for a dollar at the market. I stuck it on the bark of the tree, put moss on the roots, an old piece of string holding the moss in place, which moisturized and kept the orchid in place until the roots had attached themselves to the tree, running under the bark for many feet up and down the tree--evidently not interfering with the circulation of the tree. The moss too has made a home on the bark, is still spreading. And a fern has found a place in the moss.

I know the orchid is happy. I followed some inner knowing that placed the orchid just there. Not control, but sensitive to what I felt about the little plant and the minor chaos of the tree in that place, its sunshine and shade, the plants around it, lizards running up and down the tree, two different kinds of vines climbing on its branches. Rich chaos!