



**THE CREATIVE EDGE:**  
**THE WAY OF THE ARTS**

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## THE CREATIVE EDGE THOUGHTS ON CREATIVITY (NL 13)

by Donald W. Mathews  
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### **The Joy of Sorrow**

**Oh mystery,  
what is it in my pain  
that gifts my heart with joy?**

**For so long in fear  
I struggled with my feelings,  
to prevent their sharp penetration.**

**But moved by unknown tide  
and blown by invisible wind,  
their waves finally did drown me.**

**In the darkness of that wet grave  
some strange animal was born within me.  
Its deep sounds cleared my troubled soul.**

**Having shed my tears to the oceans  
my sad eyes with playful mirth  
now feel the wild body of life's humor.**

—*Donald W. Mathews*

I sailed the Greek Islands with David Whyte and a small band of souls through the fierce 45 knot Meltami winds last summer to the great sacred island called *Delos* or *Brilliance*, birthplace of the divine twins of light *Apollo* and *Artemis*. Both carry and skillfully use arrows of sudden death. Apollo represents a sun God of manly beauty, poetry, and music who nurtures domesticated life allowing fruit to ripen and is accompanied by the artistic muses and the wisdom of oracles. Harmonious, ordered and balanced, he is the essence of civilization. Artemis on the other hand is an untamed independent feminine wild creature of the forest, a moon Goddess who loves the chase and in a distant way, presides with *Ilithyia* over childbirth and its associated pain. She also loves song, and to dance. Fierce independence with spontaneous response from the heart is her essence.

Either of these archetypal or identifiable patterns of energy may surprise us when we least expect them. They may possess us and create havoc in our lives. When we have the wisdom of experience as a guide, we may invite their

appearance together to support our soul journey. On the surface, these two divine creatures or energies seem as opposite as opposites can get. Masculine and feminine, domesticated and wild, represented by the sun and by the moon, yet the mythological wisdom of the ancient Greeks gives them the closest bond—that of siblings who have shared a womb together. This small poem of mine about the close bond of joy and sorrow has a similar theme and carries the special lightness I feel as divine.

Our adventure in the Cyclades was a trial for each of us. In many ways it was a repeat of the journey of the Greek hero Theseus and his small band of fourteen on their sacrificial voyage to King Minos of Crete where they were to be fed as annual tribute to the Minotaur. However, Theseus consciously entered the dark labyrinth to face and slay the devouring Minotaur. He safely returned using the loving gift of Ariadne's thread.

I have been living with a short poem by the Greek poet *Cavafy* called *Growing in Spirit* presented to me by Al the Captain at the end of the voyage in Crete. In future writing I will share thoughts that have been born by my own contemplation—a period of incubation or darkness as I journey and wrestle with life's energies for my soul nature and purpose. I have learned to hold great respect for these dark incubation periods. This theme of being in darkness with the Minotaur has been described by many in this issue of Letter Box.

More recently, after the Brugh Joy year end conference, I was called to surgery for repair of the three lower discs above the sacrum. For over a year I have been consciously seeking an appropriate healing path for my lower back pain and a psychic passage to new maturity. After Christmas, the path became clear. On January 7, the day after Epiphany, I entered the modern dark labyrinth of anesthesia for two hours of surgery where the high priests of Asclepius successfully performed their scientific miracles. For many friends who joined me in this process and myself, it was a personal and important collective ritual of healing and change—about the bond of opposites and birth of new wisdom giving strength for participation in life.

The ancient meaning of Epiphany is *the revelatory manifestation of a divine being*. The root word means to shine and reveal. Ultimately it marks a time of union of divine spirit and human soul that evokes fiery creative service in the world. I was not aware of the Epiphany season or these meanings until after the new year began and after my mysterious process was already unfolding intuitively. The Epiphany season also evokes themes I would like to share with you in the future.

Since becoming an artist, I have learned to look at all my experiences in several ways, and always with wonder. At one end of the spectrum is a very objective

scientific way grounded in the physical senses. At the other extreme is an intuitive knowing that is best described as mystical, where all life literally connects as my dream and is deeply spiritual.

Today was Inauguration Day. As I listened to the ceremony, I was deeply inspired—a new unifying energy has been born on the earth and all of us are its Godparents. I hear the theme of sacred unity in its voice—spoken well by a new president, a preacher, a poet, and heard clearly in song. We, all peoples, all life, all creation, are inseparably bonded together at some mysterious level and yet at another level, we stand uniquely and creatively alone and different.

In this period of renewal and call to action, each of us must feel and consciously respond to life at both levels. The ultimate task is to respond on the inner and the outer levels to this mystical call for sacred union by searching our personal perceptions for contributions to the collective issues. It is a call for union of opposites and differences in service together with our deepest and most well developed creative action.

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## THE CREATIVE EDGE LETTER BOX (NL 13)

*Pacific Grove, CA:*

In response to a great gathering with Ashley Ramsden, I would like to share this poem, *In a Dark Time* by Theodore Roethke!

**In a dark time the eye begins to see, and I meet my shadow in  
the deepening shade.  
I hear my echo echoing from the woods. I hear a lord of nature  
weeping to a tree.  
And I live between the heron and the wren, between the beasts  
of the hill and the serpents of the den.  
What is madness but nobility of soul at odds with circumstance?  
The day is on fire and I know the purity of pure despair.  
My shadow, pinned against the sweating wall, that place among  
the rocks: is it a cave or a winding path?  
In a dark time, the edge is what we have.**

*Rick Chelew—Oral Tradition Archives*

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*Black Mountain, NC:*

I can't get to your offerings but I enjoy receiving your newsletter—So send enclosed check to encourage you to keep me on your mailing list.

*Dorothy Inglis*

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*Orinda, CA:*

Tom and I have had a truly transitional month. My Mom died Sept 6 and our daughter was married the 12th here in our garden. Kabril Gibran's *On Joy and Sorrow* certainly spoke for our emotions. It is indeed a solace that "the light of all creation continues on" and I am so grateful for the Creative Edge as a secure place to continue on.

*Connie Hunt*

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*Yorktown, VA:*

I have also devoted my life to encouraging the creative spirit in the students I teach, so its disappointing that your activities happen a whole continent away from me. Are you aware of any similar groups on the East Coast? I'm planning to begin an IONS discussion group in my area to help share new concepts in science and spirit, but I've never encountered a support group for artists before. What a great idea!

My amazing 22 year old daughter Janine lives very much on the creative edge as a writer and performer (read waitress) in scary New York City.  
This is her work:

### **THE MASTER**

**He reminds me of a mountain ram  
braving out the rain  
Perched on stone heights  
dignified**

**...you won't hear him complain...**

**His ram-blood instinct asks not why  
so his ram-blood soul need not reply**

**Instead he'll boldly lift his head  
and face the pelting pain  
of thunderstorm and rain  
with his graceful frame  
held high;**

**complimenting Earth and Sky.**

*Lois Winter*

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*Tenafly, NJ:*

On reading Connie Hunt's poem "Soaring" I was immediately reminded of the poem *Who Am I?* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who was imprisoned and hanged by the Nazi's in 1945. There have been, in my past, dark times when the poem spoke powerfully to me, placid outwardly but inwardly like the bird in the cage. I would like to pass his poem on to Connie. I guess there are many of us who sometimes, for one reason or another, are the bird struggling to be free—

**Who am I?**

**They often tell me I step from my cell's confinement calmly,  
cheerfully, firmly, like a squire from his country house.**

**Who am I?**

**They often tell me I talk to my warders freely and friendly and  
clearly, as though it were mine to command.**

**Who am I?**

**They also tell me I bear the days of misfortune equably,  
smilingly, proudly, like one accustomed to win.**

**Am I then really all that which other men tell of?**

**Or am I only what I know of myself, restless and longing and  
sick: like a bird in a cage, struggling for breath, as though  
hands were compressing my throat, yearning for colors, for  
flowers, for the voices of birds, thirsting for words of  
kindness, for neighborliness, tossing in expectation of great  
events, powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite  
distance, weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,  
faint and ready to say farewell to it all?**

**Who am I? This or the other?**

**Am I one person today, and tomorrow another?**

**Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others, and before myself  
a contemptibly woebegone weakling?**

**Or is something within me still like a beaten army, fleeing in  
disorder from victory already achieved?**

**Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.**

**Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine.**

*Joan Brockelmann*

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*Lansing, NY:*

Wake—to rouse from sleep, a funeral vigil,  
the path left on the sea by a passing boat  
In darkness,  
curled  
tight  
in a knot,  
I survived;  
drifting in the pull of tide on eel-grass  
caught in currents—now fresh, now salt  
sinking in the deep, calm, darkness  
or thrown in the spray of waves high on rock  
to run down again to the sea.

But then—  
keeping to vows I did not know I'd made,  
I found myself on a winding, dusty  
trail punctuated with rabbit dung.  
In this foreign land,  
I followed the path set out by those who went before me,  
through ancient ruins of now forgotten prayers.

Yet,  
when the path became a marble stair,  
I stopped.

I knew.  
each step I took from there  
must be carefully placed.  
I ascended the ancient stair  
choosing each step—  
making each step a new prayer.

Prayers answered on the arms of the wind—  
the wind breathing for me a breath of new life.  
Prayers answered with the sun's fiery heat—  
burning through uncertainty and fear.  
Prayers answered by the sea's buoyant support—  
regret, met and held.  
Prayers answered in the touch of a steady hand  
saying, Trust.  
Prayers become pearls—  
gifts for the journey ended and begun.

I feel the tension between openness and collapse—Wake is a poem I am working on that speaks to the polarity I feel. It is about Delos, collapse and Rilke's The Panther. Drawing from your thoughts in Creative Edge I might say that I am seeking a path through the numbed pain also expressed in Rilke's panther, to peace, beauty, creativity, and light.

**The Panther by Rainer Maria Rilke  
(Translated by Robert Bly in News of the Universe)**

**Jardin des Plantes, Paris**

**From seeing and seeing the seeing has become so exhausted  
it no longer sees anything any more.  
The world is made of bars, a hundred thousand  
bars, and behind the bars, nothing.**

**The lithe swinging of that rhythmical easy stride  
that slowly circles down to a single point  
is like a dance of energy around a hub,  
in which a great will stands stunned and numbed.**

**At times the curtains of the eye lift  
without a sound— then a shape enters,  
slips through the tightened silence of the shoulders,  
reaches the heart and dies.**

I believe that trusting deep longing is the path toward wholeness, but the part of me that identifies with Rilke's panther has numbed all longing. Further that panther sub-personality is a dark aspect of myself for which I have little compassion. A parallel symbol from my dreams (actually a recurrent and disturbing dream) is a child-victim of Nazi brutalization. Caught is the brutal terror of a concentration camp, she curls in on herself to numbness and death. In dream wisdom however it is clear that I am both the resigned victim and the Nazi brutalizer. Neither image is one I am anxious to own or that I have found the compassion to hold.

*Patty Matthews*

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*Berkeley, CA:*

The group I attended at your home was inspiring and helpful and it seemed possible then to be a part of it. But my Carmel house is now up for sale and it seems unlikely that I will be there consistently. If it does become a reality to be there, I will certainly want to try to be a part of the Creative Edge. The newsletter is very welcome meanwhile if you are able to send it.

*Violet Ginsburg*

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*Lytle Creek, CA:*

Here is some of my original poetry called: *Sweet Dreams on the River of Life.*

**All life is sacred  
like the moonbeams  
dancing across the water on the lake.**

**All nature is holy  
like the prairie flowers  
growing in the meadows.**

**All love is hidden  
like the gold in the caves of the hills**

**All errors can be mended  
like the sparrow with a broken wing.**

**All is not lost that can be forgiven  
like the sunshine at sunrise after a cold winter rain.**

**All hope can be gained yours like the  
morning dew on the prairie dust flowers.**

**All dreams can be real  
like the shining light from the morning star**

**All happiness can flow on  
like the river where four bears stand gentle and brave,  
fishing for their dinner**

*Linda Dalton*

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*Federal Way, WA:*

I feel stimulated on many levels by your thoughts and by those who so bravely share their poems. But I also I am made aware each time that I feel isolated and am without the wonderful and nurturing group of searchers that meet at your house and others in Monterey. I remember fondly your warm encouragements and Rogerian acceptance.

On creativity—I have spent some time thinking about the subject and would like to share with you some thoughts. It has been my experience that dreams were the force behind spurts of creativity. These especially vivid dreams in turn were triggered by more or less severe psychological stress.

If we dream to assimilate, to sort out, to problem solve with the help of the Collective Unconscious and if these dreams then spur creative endeavors, it is a continuation of unconscious assimilation a more complete process of sorting out etc., a dialog with the unconscious in real time, if successful. More often however I have felt only directed, without awareness of purpose. We know that some of the most powerful work comes easy, is done as in deep sleep or seems directed by some force other than ourselves.

I give you one of only three poems I ever wrote. Each was written on successive nights after waking from a dream. The image was a still picture, no action except that created by the wind. The horses were not blue.

### **THREE HORSES**

**Three together flank to flank  
windswept manes, pounding stance.  
Muscles, bulges, strengths and fire  
woman reborn in dream attire.**

**Black clouds hiding angry waves  
that steal warm sand tired rivers gave.  
There on the edge of ocean and land  
protective, defiant, unsure they stand.**

**Three horses connected, equal in strength  
holding back tides? defending sand?  
no sound, no sign, no touch I feel  
suspended in motion three me's in a dream.**

*Gabriele Ullian*

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*Yakima, WA:*

A few weeks ago, I penned this letter to you.

**My spirit soars the Mysteries  
and I find myself flying alongside  
my vision of you—  
eating the bread of this world and  
doing the work of that world.  
I welcome you home—  
Your spirit glows with the warmth of the Sun.**

After reflecting upon it for a few days, I realized more clearly what my vision revealed. So I used your letter as my invitation to those near and far. I'll be raising my Process Pole—no longer perceived as a finished Totem Pole—but recognized as my life's sculpture. Project incomplete. Perhaps a symbol of my recognition and acceptance of the Mysteries as my Teacher.

*Leo Figgs*

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Thank you for your letters and creative offerings.

I invite you to look for emerging themes from your own or other's intuitions and creative works. Then, I invite you to comment on how they facilitate your life journey. I look for words and work I feel supports sharing and understanding of the creative process. I will add your address (Regular or E-mail) when you approve.

The Editor  
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