



**THE CEATIVE EDGE:
THE WAY OF THE ARTS**

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THOUGHTS ON CREATIVITY (NL 20)

by Donald W. Mathews (cedonald@aol.com)

The Drought

**In the mountains high there is a solid wall.
It's built across the river and holds the water's fall.**

**Open up the floodgate and let the river run.
It sings a mighty chorus when wild torrents come.**

**The valley below is parched, the earth beneath is dry.
All the crops are wilting, soon the people will die.**

**Open up the floodgate and let the river run.
It sings a mighty chorus when wild torrents come.**

**Now dark clouds are forming, feel the breezes roll.
Pray a storm is coming to fill the empty hole.**

**Open up the floodgate and let the river run.
It sings a mighty chorus when wild torrents come.**

**See the lightning flash, hear the thunder's dare.
Feel the wind a blowing, smell the moisture there.**

**Open up the floodgate and let the river run.
It sings a mighty chorus when wild torrents come.**

**Feel the raindrops falling, hear their dancing drum.
Now the heavens are open, let the torrents come.**

**Open up the floodgate and let the river run.
It sings a mighty chorus now that wild torrents come.**

For the last year and a half I have been wrestling with this poem. Now its mysteries work my imagination and give insight into the specific nature of my deeper process—the process of my soul. I feel it is particularly important to look back at difficult areas to see how the process applies to my life. There are three main ideas: *Creative work requires a strong flowing river of feelings and emotions; it requires strong boundaries or a container to harness its energy; and action from the creative flow best comes from inner fullness instead of emptiness.*

Usually it is the mysterious flow of human feelings and emotions behind the six senses focusing attention and triggering motivating actions of the artist. Sometimes following the meandering river of subtle interests leads to fulfillment of dreams. Other times imagination and intuition give the necessary motivating vision for hard work or a difficult journey into new fertile territory. And of course there are the storms of crises.

Some kind of sustaining moisture or emotional energy is always necessary or the mind and resulting actions become parched and dry. Pure intellectual ability is important, but a long emotional drought will eventually kill off tender shoots of creativity. The opposite is also true. The hot sun of intellect is necessary to burn through great emotional clouds that could destroy creative crops by flood. In the long run, a strong psychic dam with its regulating floodgate allows sustaining balance and control over these wild forces in our basic nature. When filled, it nourishes us and all of life from an unlimited source.

Normally the child of about two first consciously encounters other's in an emotional war competing for satisfaction of needs, and then begins to comprehend boundaries. This essential battle of the terrible twos usually tests wills of all concerned. When a nourishing environment is provided, eventually everyone gains new resources with more flexible limits. Many such encounters follow throughout life as our psychic container is reformed, tested and strengthened time and time again. The ultimate strength and flexibility of each human psyche comes from the repeated stress of many challenging encounters until strong physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual qualities are fully available to creatively deal with all life's experiences.

As the result of the scientific revolution, our culture has gone to great lengths to overcome the raging power of emotions and develop calm use of mind. Thus, we have often consciously and unconsciously detached from our wild emotional and spiritual resources, setting aside deeper personal motivations to join in collective work directed by others. As with all forces that cycle, we tend to polarize these energies many times before integrating their opposing forces into a cooperative relationship. In school we build the intellectual container of our mind from collective knowledge and guiding wisdom of the faculty. Later we must find the

family, professional or other interests that emotionally fulfills this newly developed capacity.

What gets lost and often remains unavailable, underdeveloped and unexpressed are deeper personal feelings and emotions that power our secret dreams—soul fulfilling dreams. The ability to use our powerful emotions and associated wild creative instincts takes lots of practice and exploring over the edge beyond known boundaries. It's what is known as “building character,” enough to effectively channel or contain the wild forces of soul. Ultimately, it is the strength of character necessary to birth our wildest creative dreams into reality despite the many obstacles sure to block the way. In my experience, the true nature of these awesome hidden forces are only revealed in the second half of life when we are ready to begin service to the collective with full resources of our soul's work.

Words from Lao-tzu's Tao Te Ching come to mind: “...simplicity, patience, compassion. These three are your greatest treasures.” To build trust and follow your own process really takes a life time. Meanwhile, courage is necessary to embrace dark wild storms of life—sometimes by action and other times with the stillness of a retreat that refills the soul's reservoir. Our maturing continues to cycle with fierce challenges *all the way till death!* When we fully embrace all of life and trust the mysterious way of soul with its unique inner knowing, our spiritual emptiness and longing for meaning will ultimately be filled to overflowing in creative service to life!

THE CREATIVE EDGE LETTER BOX (NL 20)

Orinda, CA

I would like to share two of my more recent poems. The first about the trout because you printed an earlier one where I euphorically eulogized my local reservoir for its beauty and inspiration. This is a slightly different way that inspiration has found a voice at that same glorious spot.

BAITING THE RESERVOIR WITH TROUT

**They start life in small pools.
Webs of cells dividing.
Clear blobs floating in the water.**

**As they grow,
they are scooped into larger pools
to grow to a certain size.**

And so on

**until the day when they are sucked
into tanks.
Into darkness.
Into swimming frenzy.**

**The water sloshes
as the truck pulls out of the hatchery
onto the highway,**

for the long journey.

**The tanker stops.
Silver fingers of fish
slip from cavernous tanks
into the calm waters
of the suburban reservoir.**

**Light
Vastness
Freedom
But no knowledge of the hook.**

The second poem I would like to share reminds me that there are many ways and times that our creative impulses surge to the surface. Listen and they will find you.

THE MEMORIAL SERVICE for Clare

**I sit, hands nervous in my lap.
The hum of soft greeting
fills the meeting room.**

**Wide windows open onto a pond
skimmed with leaves.
Rimmed by bare trees.
Distant hills misty with Fall air.
I sink into memory of Clare
Her long hair tucked at the back
with wisps forever escaping.
Apple rosy cheeks.
"Ah, friend."**

**The ceremony starts.
Books flip open
to words delivered
by competent speakers.
Smiles force
into their voices.**

**I lose the hills,
lose Clare
in the snare of words.
Sit numb.**

**Stumble to my car
after the service.
Clare seems so far away.**

**Tomorrow I will bind a sheaf of flowers,
copper mums and full ripened wheat.
Launch them in the stream that winds
through the park where we walked.**

Sharon Davies

Pacific Grove, CA

Just to stay in touch...I miss coming to the “get togethers.”

IN TO THE LIGHT WE DANCE

**When I am in doubt
I pray
To the wind
To the stars.**

**When I trust
I feel relaxed...
And to myself
I speak
Softly, softly
I speak.
To find out
That I did win.**

**Whether one is
Or one is not
To remain one's self
Slowly, slowly
I see is as
Day and night.**

Fernenda Zevallos

ISP, Michigan City, IN

Prison life is only what you make it out to be. No more, no less.

The key to survival, success, in any environment, is in learning to seize control of variables you can control. Tangible things can be stripped, money, position, caste, etc. However, the mind, what we do with it cannot. I am reminded of a fabulous Russian violinist who was imprisoned for 20 years for treason. On his release he played a full concert at full polish. When the stunned audience asked “How? How after not playing for 20 years is this possible?” He replied, “I practiced each day in my mind. It’s a powerful tool, too precious to waste.” My most skillful weapon is my mind.

The world is still a great place, but my hope is to live in a culture where violence is a stranger and peace is the daily norm... We again are on “Lock-Down” over the killing of a guard—recording is on hold until at least May or June, perhaps longer.

J. (Levi) Ford

c/o DOC #901029 E-W-57 ISP/DOC
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Monterey, CA

Thank you Don, for sending me *The Creative Edge*. I’ve used a couple of the poems in services and feel a contact with people in this area through your generosity. It’s a welcome change from my normal reading.

Rev. Enid Miller

Unity Church of Monterey

Pacific Grove, CA

I've misread the Edge, but thanks for putting out my poem in the last newsletter.

THE BODY

**A finger spreads a smear of glue,
The hand sprinkles glitter on the page.**

Art appears.

**I write with hesitant words,
Struggling for such directness.**

**My pen fights with the body's urge:
Let it write, it screams.**

**Words can't change what
This body knows:**

**Push, move, feel, dance,
Talk with the world and
It will talk back.**

**Now my mind has filled
With words, overflowing**

**Drowning out the clear voice
Of my body's knowing.**

**The body puts down the pen,
And goes on.**

Someone needs this poem:

DOPPING PERSONAL HISTORY: The new you.

**Eat the pain.
Eat the death.
Eat the truth.
Swallow whole morsels of it,
Ingest it, and digest it
Into the veins to your brain.
Let it sink in, and then,
Let it sink out,
Out of your pores,
Carrying out dirt and grease
And filthy lies—lies
You've told yourself for years,
Protecting the fragile shell
Of personal history.
Let the new, other you
Emerge.**

Ian Warder

Pacific Grove, CA

When I read your newsletter, I am reminded of our wonderful connectedness in all our varied solitary ways. The enclosed poem is from my book, *Smoke from my Chimney*.

HOPE

**People that we know and love become
part of us and when they are gone
that part of us is not lost but only
gone from sight. Ever the lonely
feel the presence, the spirit
of the loved and all can recall
how we once moved in their light.
Love never disappears but grows
stronger through the years and gives
us hope in the night. Hope in the night
of our own flight through the years.**

Julie Houy

San Antonio, TX

I am sending you a few of my poems... Some you may like and some not at all.
They are “my” thing and I wanted to share with you.

RAINDROPS

**I came across some raindrops
Falling from the sky,
E'er eluding capture
No matter how I try.**

DON'T LONG FOR YESTERDAY

**I sat in my house today and heard a bird on high
Was it wind in the trees or a reminiscent sigh?
Sometimes I long for the times of a yester year,
Those memories have gone far, yet seem so very near.
How the years fly by, but the treasure lingers on
How many trials and tribulations have come and gone?
Sometimes I wish there was a way to turn the clock back
To my Grandmother's homemade bread cooling on a rack.
To relive the friendships of my school days and such
And to feel my Mother's presence and her gentle touch.
Yes, there are poignant times I wish would come again,
And I'd rearrange my life so I would always win.
But, I realize the heart could not take the strain
Of doing it again; the happiness and the pain.
I guess this it it, there is not another way
The secret is to live and to enjoy every day,
Be it joyful happiness or deepest sorrow,
Then live for the moment; there may ne'er be tomorrow.**

CLOUDS

**Clouds are filled with emotions too,
Gentle and fierce they fill the blue.
They gather, pack and then release.
Will thunder and lightning never cease?
Suddenly peeking through a turquoise sky,
Ermine-capped mountains delight the eye.
The clouds have dispersed, leaving only a few
To frame as a snow filled panorama comes into view.**

Shirley N. Price

Lakeside, CA

Everyone knows that criminal acts need to be dealt with, and hopefully in a way that will prevent those acts from happening again. But the reality of seeing that very little actually comes from treating acts of injustice with more acts of injustice as a way of providing a “better way,” it comes as no surprise that when education, mental health care, employment development, and social services have their budgets cut to build more prisons with the only intention being “punishment,” that we result in the current state of affairs.

I place mementos around me so that daily I will remember those who helped me better understand myself and to keep active whether it be one on one or to what ever group will listen, about taking a more knowledgeable and positive role in the political imprisonment of millions of humans in America. Granted, most of us have done things that we needed correcting. I once thought that the label “Department of Corrections” was established primarily for that. But now I realize that if you abuse any animal (or human) for any length of time, you most likely will end up with a live being with no empathy for self or anything else. My blessing go out to you and all the others that provided me the compassion to see clearly around that path of least resistance.

Kevin Lock

Portsmouth, NH

KEEPING WATCH

**In the last light
of a dark December day,
three women united by blood
come together before the fire
to prepare for the birth...
Mother, elder sister, embrace,
enfold, enclose the younger
drink strong tea,
chat softly,
rub her back,
touch her with love and tenderness,
now exult over
great knotted contractions,
rippling in her swollen belly,
comforting,
crooning encouragement,
deep sounds without words...
help her find strength for the long ordeal,
gather strength from each other.**

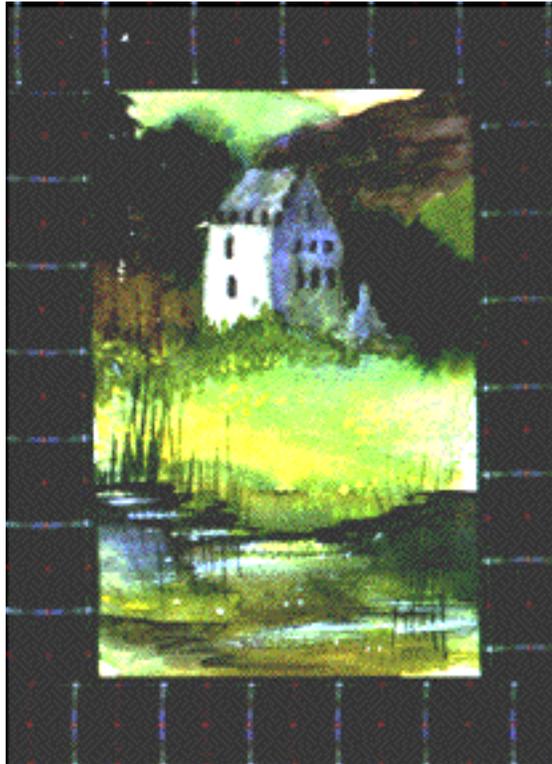
I think this is how it has always been.

**Black shadows in a birthing lodge,
firelight, smoke,
dark shapes move about,
boil water, tend fires,
women take turns walking the WOMAN,
encourage her,
help WOMAN do what she was born to,
share the pain,
the agony, the terror, the joy,
meet the great mystery together.
Fierce women warriors,
working together
with all their primitive power,
keeping watch.**

Anne Dewees

Gourock, Scotland

I enclose a colour laser-photocopy of one of my recent watercolours, which I trim with ribbon. It is an imaginary Scottish landscape and I hope you like it.



Julie Ferguson

Volcano, HI

**one
calls forth the moon
in all its phases**

**sits
a-buddah
across phrases
of
wisdom**

**regards
cautiously
always**

**exits
as snow
or a sudden chill**

**love abides
and does tame
the wild Beasts.**

Greg (Kaluna) West

Columbiana, AL

Poetry is rather a mystery to me. I have never written poetry as I don't think in poetry. Creating a poetic piece is as foreign to me as constructing the Taj Mahal. I am aware in theory, that poetry is a creative expression of an idea, a word painting. I appreciate reading poetry, especially expressed by someone who I know, but I am not a contributor through poetry. This is rather a confession that I have never faced before, but your newsletter wrote "Creative Edge always provides a safe place to practice this art" so I trust you will accept my confession in this spirit. This may release a flood of words in poetic expression that I have heretofore repressed. Isn't life a wonder?

Reese Sumner

Birmingham, AL

PUBLISHERS CLEARING HOUSE

**If ever
I should win
the PCH
here are some things
I would love to do—**

**Repair the drippy faucet
in the kitchen sink
Paint the front door blue,
plant some roses
and a strawberry patch
and fix the latch
on the backyard gate.
Then I'd buy
a magic rolling store,
drive it to the mountains
and to the seashore.
I'd feed everyone hungry
along the way
and give the children balloons
and sing them Irish tunes.
I'd search for people
who needed clothes
or a house
to keep out cold.
Maybe a child
who would like a dog
or a cat
or a frog.
I would invite them all
to my magic store
to find on the shelves
their purest wish
A cure for an ache
or a flowered dish.**

(continued)

**With the whole world fed
and clothed
and housed once more,
I'd come back home
through my blue dront door—**

**climb in my bed
and have a good snore,
find a sweet dream
and climb on a star.
Look back to earth
from a far—a far—
enclose everyone
in a loving embrace
if I should ever win
the PCH.**

Betty Callahan Crowe

Pacific Grove, CA

COFFEE HOUSE VISION

**Von Bingen, angel,
sounding across the centuries
in the twilight of the day,
the year,
the millennium,
filling me with vision,**

**Woman, brightness, light,
did you know that you would reach this far,
that you would shimmer in darkness
at the edge of time
a shard of grace,
reminder of eternity?**

TO A CYBERKNIGHT

**You! Armored one, knight!
Your cybersharp sword cuts
fiery shapes in the air.
Pumping heat and force,
you thrust at me
drawing me closer.**

**What if I fall, thighs open - -
forbidden, irresistible, hot - -
under your blade,
And swallow whole your
fierce Galahad desire?**

**Will I find you taste, not of heart,
but of stone,
that your galant grail cup holds,
not soul or holy fire,
but muerte?**

**Your cybersharp sword cuts
fiery shapes in the air!**

DNA

**Spiraling
you watch me
shape bright helixes
in the air.**

**We dance in zazen skies
making Life . . .
forever, erotic
and gone on the breath.**

Barbara Rose Shuler

Beverly Hills, CA



These are two of the paintings I told you about (REQUIEM in process ~ 60" x 60" and 70" x 60"). I am attempting to continue the series—although as I said, these two sprang spontaneously from God knows where.



Eleanore Berman

Jacksonville, OR

SOUL MATE

**I live alone now
and tonight, a gift of age
I discovered Wallace Stegner
and a story about a father
and his son and their war**

**My oldest son came alive for me
and memories of times of held tears**

**I lay next to her
a mile between us
my lids clamped shut
jaw clenched, choked sound**

I couldn't reach out and touch her

**If I could have said two words
they would have been
"Hold me."**

**Tonight I let go
wave after wave of sobs and tears
woven with laughter**

**I reached out and said "hold me"
and my hands caressed my face
moved slowly around my head
shoulders and chest
held me tight**

It felt so good

**Slowly I became quiet
eyes almost dry
breath smooth and slow**

My heart welcoming me home.

IN CONTROL

**I like women
don't know much about them
enjoy being with them
needed one to be a real man.**

**I watched my wife nurse my son
the way she held him
the way she looked at him.**

**She never looked at me that way
never held me that way.**

**I wouldn't reach out either
didn't touch much in our dance.**

**I can let a woman in
if she loves me
really wants me
and needs me a little.**

**I found a few woman like that
who wanted to believe I was the one.**

I don't know how much love I can let in.

Clair Killen

Lovettsvale, VA

We (ad-)venture on, thankgoodness.
Enjoying your newsletter and the variagated poetry.

SIGNATURE

**There is much to cry about
And I do my share.
There's much to bitch about
And I do my share.
(And some of yours too).
There's much to laugh about
And I work at it.**

A POET'S LOT

**I think that I shall never see
A poet as unread as me.**

**A poet who in some-time spare
Writes stuff that lanks the hair.**

**A poet who in full fair truth
Has abilities unused—forsooth:—**

**Parsing, declension and good old spelling
He fails to use, and comes up schmelling.**

**But writing on he doth persist
Whilst friends and family cry, “Desist”.**

Dick Bernhart

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.

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