



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

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THE CREATIVE EDGE THOUGHTS ON CREATIVITY (NL 22)

by Donald W. Mathews
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Rustling

**When I am quiet
I hear rustling.
In shadows of my mind
I hear a rustling.**

**Dark butterfly wings
Are rustling--it is my soul.**

**Is it trying to land?
Is it searching for heart's flowering?
Or is it caught again
In some invisible net?**

**No! Like a hound by the hearth
It is circling to soften its rest.**

On a recent weekend, I heard a biblical reference from John 17: 13-19 about the process of *being in the world but not of the world*. This puzzled me at first because I believe we humans desire something different, we desire meaningful activity as members of our society. That is, creating something meaningful originating from our personal experience that is recognized and supported by those around us--supported by our society. *This is being in and of the world*. However, if we violate group norms, we could be shamed or cast out of the social group--we may be hated! This was the context for John's writing in the Gospel about Jesus' followers "...*the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world...*" They were following a different way, responding to new loving ways of behavior closer to the human core, closer to what we call soul and I would call *our creative center*. Thus they were in their society's world but not of it. The important truth hidden in this passage is the existence of a later second stage beyond being in the world and of it.

We all started life helplessly *of the world* because we were totally dependent on the world. Our parents, family and other important members of our culture made up our world and hopefully provided physical and emotional resources necessary to sustain our healthy growth. Beyond very basic survival instincts, we had no

real creative power or center of our own. Our creative center was located in *their* values and dependent on *their* choices. Thus by default, ways of those around us also became our ways, guiding our growing capacity for creative choice, our developing creative center. Cultural patterns for right behavior became our patterns until we were independent enough to make our own choices for action and group identity.

We went through many of these phases, often wrestling with confining issues to develop self or ego resources to be in and of the world. Our groupings of family, religion, profession and society all contributed. A culture provides this important container. But to a large degree, shared values or mores of our society continued to defined our world and its creative limits. Civilization is defined by, and dependent on this first stage of cultural cooperation.

Creative flow comes with a full range of feelings and emotions about our experiences regardless of culture's view point! It includes expression of our joy and unhappiness or dissatisfaction. It comes with vision for a new way. When we have the courage to contemplate and express our most intimate experiences honestly, we become very vulnerable, particularly to those who differ and hold positions of power. We can try to hide, but ultimately, express we must. We are only known by our actions and expressed thoughts and feelings. This is how we come into the world!

At mid-life, reflecting spiritual awakenings with the coming of death, we are ready to shift balance from personal needs and external cultural guidance to a growing internal source for inspiration. It is our Soul seeking the warm hearth of a home. It is a deep desire to contribute to something larger than our narrow personal or cultural needs, something more communal or inclusive, often more for the common good of all life. Knowing what that contribution is for us individually is difficult and a major life task stemming from knowing and accepting ourselves in the most intimate and profound way. We can turn to others again for guidance, but the more difficult choice is to peel away the layers of cultural conditioning and seek our Soul--our own divine creative center to guide us from the very foundation of our psyche. It is to enter the later stage: *not of the world*. Soul is a spiritual word with mysterious meaning normally only deciphered by priest or philosopher. I feel we each must find and take responsibility for nurturing this divine creative resource within us. With Soul's guidance welcomed, we can successfully challenge the issue of death if it hasn't already found us.

Creative expression clearly implies work for it is an activity directed toward production or accomplishment of something originating in the very bowels of our being. This very personal relationship with the fiery source of our inspiration, our true creative center or Soul, brings deepest meaning to our labors! The

foundation principle for creative work is connection to this source or center of one's inspiration and motivation. It must truly be from the depths of our Soul to harness the creative energies of our human experience, of our human potential! We must invite Soul to live in our psychic home. Thus we can join spiritual elders nourishing all life--*we can be in the world but not of the world.*

THE CREATIVE EDGE LETTER BOX (NL 22)

Monterey, CA

BLACK NARCISSUS BOOK



I probably started collecting stuff for this book before I started making artists' books in 1965. The movie version of the novel was made in 1947 and released 1948-49 (dates vary). I'm pretty sure I didn't see it until the 50's or 60's. When I did I was very impressed and searched out the novel. Saturday Review cited the novel for its "atmosphere and intended spell" and that, plus the photography and acting make the film very powerful.

Black Narcissus was written by Rumer Godden and published by the Viking Press in 1939. Rumer Godden was born in England but was taken to India at an early age and most of her work has to do with that area.

The movie starred David Farrar, Deborah Kerr, Jean Simmons and Sabu. It was directed and produced by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger who also did the screenplay. Jack Cardiff was the cinematographer and received an Oscar for best color cinematography 1947.

Basically I wanted the book to recreate in another form the sensual, emotional,

spiritual experiences that faced the women who went as nuns to establish a school and hospital in a palace in the Himalayas. I used silk, paint, printed tissue paper, even scent in the dangling sachet...cut outs of brilliant flowers, exotic butterflies, holy men, dancing girls and palaces.

Carolyn Berry

Fair Oaks, CA

FOR MY FATHER

**If I were a child again,
knees skinned
pockets full
steps unsure**

**I would trip into your
quiet place of knowing**

**And fling myself gleefully
around strong knees
sending fierce hugs,
straight to your heart.**

Carol Mathew-Rogers

Hong Kong

**Life is driftwood draped in black death,
luminous and numinous is the shy mandala.**

From "Good Friday" sculpture images inside a box.

David Anthony Rose

ISP Michigan City, IN

Yes, you can express how to be creative. You might be able to teach it. But much like flying a plane--you might understand the principles of aerodynamics and flight but until you sit in the cockpit you can't really consider yourself a pilot. Being creative is to me a very "Hands On" project. I have met many people who's own volition precludes them from letting loose enough to be creative.

Remember my analogy about the sandwich choices being a kind of creativity? (NL #21) That's the key. I don't believe anyone can be taught to be creative. As a teacher I believe all we can do is to show others how to recognize their own creativity. In this world we are so busy it becomes lost some place. The way we dress, the car we drive, the route we take to work, the manner in which we arrange a desk, the way you mix a cocktail or a salad, etc., etc., etc., are all ways in which we express our individual creativity.

I got the nicest letter from a Creative Edge "Newcomer." It's always a boost to my spirits to receive mail. Especially approving of something I have written or giving me critique. Sometimes it is strange how the balance works, just when you least expect it somehow our creative efforts give something back. Isn't that peculiar? Something born of our labors, a song, writing, picture, poem... something that somehow is instantly gratifying, put away and forgotten, will often pay us back in psychological kudos via a compliment from someone we don't even know who has been touched by it. That's the narcotic of creativity, applause, a smile, that occasional letter or a request for me to play one of my tunes.



Jeffry "Levi" Ford
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San Antonio, TX

Yesterday copy #21 of your Newsletter The Creative Edge: The Way of the Arts arrived... I enjoyed the note regarding my not capturing the raindrops and how Elaine Wing was able to catch the raindrops on film. I wrote that so many years ago that I am unable to remember why I wrote the little verse, except that try as I might to catch the raindrops in my hand, they only puddled into a fragmented treasure, kind of like life.

Our words can be our treasures we leave behind as sort of a map for others to use or avoid in choosing paths to take. When I write, many times it has nothing to do with anything but a burning desire to set words down on paper. When asked to write something, I find it almost impossible. Thus, when I have finished with a poem or an article, etc., I find that I really had very little choice, as it just came out.

MAGIC IS AN OCEAN

**Indigo blue, the sea shines deep
Whitecaps kissing the clouds asleep
Sunrise triggers molten gold
Mirrors stories yet untold.**

**Each person wears a friendly face
Troubles vanish without a trace.
Magic is an ocean cruise
Filling earth with rainbow hues.**

**Like two ships that pass in the night,
Friendships made now, may fade from sight
Happiness may linger on
Mem'ries gleaned from dusk til dawn.**

**Once more wear the indigo blue
Keep my heartfelt treasures in view
Relive the thrill of that day
Til I can again sail away.**

Shirley Smalley Price

Carmel Valley, CA

Black Shoes - You've misplaced us. During the chaos, (River flood) you left us somewhere. Remember when one of us was in Carmel Valley and the other one was in Carmel and how happy you were when we reunited? We were glad also.

Illia - Yes, I'm just settling in again. I have most of my belongings back in Carmel Valley, but a few things like bottles of mustard still rest in my daughter's refrigerator. Why do I collect Mustards?

Black Shoes - Sounds like it spices up life. don't want life to be too bland.

Illia - I bought new mustard for today's workshop. I think I'll leave the old mustard for my daughter.

Black Shoes - What a silly conversation!

Illia - Yes, but it must be going somewhere.

Black Shoes - Do you have an inkling where we might be?

Illia - The last place I can think of is Don Mathews' house. After the poetry session with David Whyte we wore sneakers to point Lobos, and you might be there...

Black Shoes - Call Donald. His wife is probably wondering about size 5 1/2 B black shoes in his hallway.

Illia - I'll do that. Don and I are just friends, but maybe someday I'll leave you in someone else's hallway. Would you wait for me there?

Black Shoes - You bet. We're ready to have fun, dance more, take moonlit walks, to see you step out a bit. Do you remember how to waltz?

Illia - My feet never forget!

Black Shoes - Even if we don't meet again, I can tell that you'll be finding a pair to replace us.

Illia - Is that all right with you?

(continued)

Black Shoes - Sure, we're all cut from the same hide, just a different dye. Underneath (underneath) it's all the same, silver or black, we're all ready for dancing again, in moonlight or sunlight, alone or with another. It's time to celebrate.

Illia - This conversation isn't as silly as it seemed.

Black Shoes - And we're more than meets the eyes.

Illia - I'll dance to that.

P.S. Shoes are now in Carmel Valley, having been retrieved from Don Mathews' hallway.

Illia Thompson

San Jose, CA

Was it creativity, luck and/or coincidence? You decide. The facts are these:

My Wife, Adriana, called one evening from a remote site in Arizona where she was participating in a women's workshop on goddesses as archetypes. I was real curious to know what was going on and why there were no men.

Uncharacteristically for us, we talked for over an hour about who was there and what she was experiencing. Women had come together in this particular gathering to deepen their awareness of, and connection to, the Divine Feminine...

After our conversation, not only were my fears quieted but I had become very supportive of their work...

As I sat in the early morning solitude and silence, my thoughts turned to the conversation I'd had with my wife the night before... "Let's see--right about now they'll be walking the labyrinth as they fast in preparation for the sweat lodge..." I began to imagine their hunger for food and their thirst for spiritual guidance, wisdom and healing. I felt strangely connected to their intention and purpose and began to notice my own longing for the nourishment for which they had structured their day. The next thing I knew I was holding a pen and writing this poem.

POEM FROM A MEDITATION

**I thine eye be single...
If thine eye be single...
If thine eye be single... single in focus**

**Your whole body will be full of light
and energy--
the energy and force that created the universe
this planet and us.**

**The power that moves
and shapes the cycles of nature,
the four seasons, day and night, the rhythms of time
is this energy.
Use this energy to heal and be healed!**

**Let every step you take with intention
connect you to the center
of the earth so you can be filled with
the healing energy as a radiant beam of light
connects us to our mother.**

**Remember
Re-Member the lilies of the field
in all their splendor
as you walk on sacred ground.**

**Do not be “distracted by the profusion”
of light and beauty you see around you.
Appreciate the beauty, but
remember
beauty has many forms.**

**Hold to your center, your “single focus,” and,
remember
we are one. Even when
you walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
fear no evil and...
thy whole body will be full of light.**

Russell Farkouh--in collaboration with his wife, Adriana

Orinda, CA

Here is a poem expressing how my skin has felt during this past year of changes and challenges:

GENIE IN A BOTTLE

**Something is itching
to get outside my skin
I awake in the middle
of the night
to hear it screaming
Clawing
at my inner walls**

**Hold it tight
Don't let the genie escape
this one is a carpenter from hell
Pounds nails from the inside out
An iceman
stalking my spine
with sub zero breath**

Rub three times...

**Nothing
A quiver
Then ...**

**Its dragon breath torches
the inside of my skin
Bones crunch on bones
It rips my lungs aside
Punches a hole in my heart
Breaches charred skin**

Plunges out

**Streak for the nearest black hole!
Scream every word I never said!
Pull the world behind you!**

TURN ME INSIDE OUT

Sharon Davies

Jacksonville, OR

SAFE AND GREY

**Yesterday I thought about a dog
who forgave me, over and over
and I didn't know how much I loved her
until I held her when we put her to sleep.**

**When people close to me go away
I want to say no big deal. It's life
you know the way the ball bounces
and I lock-up like a dry shaft.**

**I gave my mother part of my heart.
She wanted it all and I escaped
with the part I closed and hid
under lock and key, to this day.**

**I wonder if I picked women
to be with I didn't have to love?
I could pay the bill and walk away
when they failed to pick the lock.**

**It's funny thinking about a lifetime
where it was easier to be with a stranger
for awhile than to take a chance
and unlock the door.**

ANYTHING FOR A LAUGH

**A sight to behold as he tripped
on the edge of the cement sidewalk
and crashed down in front of the library
books and compact disks everywhere.**

**His knuckles, knees and elbows slid
along the rough cement and were bleeding
and people asked if he was all right.**

(continued)

**It is embarrassing to fall when one is old
a giveaway about changing conditions.
He said he was fine and got up
tried not to limp and he hurt.**

**It became funny when he reflected back
to the lead-up events. He got out of his car
loaded up, crossed the grass
next to the side walk and then it happened.**

**Before he fell two young women
walked past with outstanding breasts
framed in tight smooth sweaters
and as they moved away his eyes were trapped
by two absolutely divine pairs of round cheeks
held captive by tight jeans.**

**His mistake was that he kept walking
while the show was on and his feet had no driver
and the rest is history**

and it was worth it.

Clair Killen

Watsonville, CA

I enjoy receiving your publication. You do important work.
Thank You!

Carol Bowie

Monterey, CA

Some work to share--and a drawing of some stones from the stone walls at Tassajara.

BUDDHA ON THE STAIRS AG. NIKOLAOS

**Down crumbled
Wall street
Stairs
Bounced
The
Brown
Stone
Booda
Booda
Boo...da
Day
Move
Head gone
God head
Boo... da!**



Feb.5, 1977

It is entirely possible that upon this day that the sun began and our lives were cast. Down those stairs of crumbled stone on which we mount this bas-relief of life the cosmic thunder again is heard. When the Bodhi-satva lost its head.

Steve (Artis) Brown

Twain Harte, CA

Thank you for speaking to me today... God knows, poetry is a hard gig. I've learned to expect absolutely nothing when I send poems out! But here are some of mine.

IF POETS...

**If short story writers
Are novelists too lazy to fill in the details
Then poets
Must be narcoleptic**

**But if short story writers
Are novelists stripped to the fine bone
Then poets must be the marrow**

**And if short story writers
Are novelists shot forward in time and space
Then poets must be...
Quicksilver.**

WILD GIRL

**While I was up listening to the trees
I heard your mother wish she were childless
While I was under the hedge listening to the cat
I heard my father long for someone not his wife
While I was flat on my back listening to the clouds
I heard the neighbors lose their hope
Then, when I was on my bike listening to the wind
I heard the church lie about all of it**

And you thought I wasn't paying attention

**Why is it
That outsiders always have insight
But insiders never have oversight?**

UNTITLED

**This is a song for smart young white men
Who don't like their bosses at all
It's for underpaid middle managers
Whose wives bring them lunch and whisper
About the most recent necessity they can't afford
And this is a song for slightly overweight white women
Who can't fit into most of their wardrobe
But can't afford a new one
Because they just spent all the money they'd saved
Over a three-month period
On some silly auteur hairdresser who destroyed their looks**

**This is a song about the constant sadnesses
Of a people unconnected to the earth
Who see so much pain and chaos on the news
And who try to feel for the homeless
But whose minds are cluttered and overwhelmed
By all the pointless, unending details and stresses
Of turning the thankless crank
And not having a telethon
Or a quilt
For their unimportant in the face of the decay all around them
But still
Very real
Pain.**

ALL RIGHT!

**As a child I despised orange,
Hated its intensity, didn't want it near me
Hid in the soothing coolness of blue
Got my colors done; no blue
But orange, red-orange, orange-brown, peach, melon, apricot!
After a while I swallowed my pride...
All right! I look good in orange!**

**As a teenage I despised scientists; scientists and college boys
Wrote anti-science fiction, huge morality plays
About their cold, emotionless lives
At 26, slammed into college
After dinking out what life was like without it
Graduated Valedictorian with a degree in...
All right! Science!**

**As an adult I despised poetry; Poetry and advertising
Both equally excruciating, embarrassing ways to promote a
viewpoint
Now, I make a living in...
All right! Advertising!
And moonlight as a poet
Knowing all this, what do I now dare to despise?**

Karla McLaren

Santa Paula, CA

Even tho' he is "he" and I am "she"--and I cannot have his vision--the two poems by Conrad Levasseur struck a chord in my heart. I feel what he means because I am meaning that too.

Jenille Cox Hardy

Portsmouth, NH

Just a note to let you know how much I am enjoying the newsletter of the Creative Edge. I am sorry that I can't be there for more of those great workshops. I miss those lovely week-end retreats in your living room.

HERSELF, EARLIER

**Warmed a penny
in her hand,
pressed it to her wrist,
the same spot
where she tested the warmth
of her baby's bottle
by shaking a few drops of milk
on the blue veins,
perfect... 98.6 degrees.**

**Tossed a penny
into the Roman hot springs at Bath
for good luck,
watched it disappear
in the murky depths,**

**Remembering how Dad
would rescue a penny,
from the railroad tracks,
pressed wafer thin
after the B & M ran over it,**

**Which reminded her of
the old lead bank
on brother David's bureau...
put a penny in the monkey's mouth,
press the lever,
the monkey sprang up
dropped the coin
in the organ grinder's hat,**

**And grandson Trevor's penny bank,
where he put his dreams,**

**Now, floated her own vision...
dancing grandmothers
placed
copper chrysanthemums
on (death's) closed lids.**

Clearwater, FL

Enclosed is a poem I recently completed. It's a new area of creativity for me...

SPELUNKER'S LESSONS

**If you are ever lucky enough
to find a spiral cave--
One that circles around and around
as it descends to the
center of the earth--
Screw your courage up
and follow your nose!**

**Although the cave is but a metaphor
for the journey made by your soul,
you'll learn a few things
as a preview for the longer trip.
Safely make your way through
by hugging the cracks and crevices
in the shadows of the winding walls,
just as the pitfalls in your life
are made easier to climb in and out of
by hugging the shadows in your self.**

**While in the still point at the center
fear not the roof's caving in.
If the pathway truly spirals
you'll ascent back up
and around and around
to another level again--
and all this while
the center holds strong.
Later, when the fears reappear,
having doubled-back
when you weren't looking,
you'll know the pattern well--
the one of moving up,
and around,
and out of its way.**

(continued)

**You noticed that walking in and out
covers the same terrain?
Not unlike life's excursions to and fro,
the only difference being
a vast change in perspective
having been made by the simple act
of walking through, and not around,
your center point of being.**

CaroleAnn Lovin

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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