

THE JOURNAL OF Creative Aging

SAGE-ING

with Creative Spirit, Grace & Gratitude



A PUBLICATION OF
THE OKANAGAN INSTITUTE
NUMBER 36, SPRING 2021
EDITED BY KAREN CLOSE

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The Journal of Creative Aging

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COPY EDITOR: JOHANNA BEYERS

DESIGNER: ROBERT MACDONALD

NUMBER 35, SPRING 2021

ISSN 1920-5848

SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

A PUBLICATION OF THE

Okanagan Institute

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Cover image: *Dipsy Doodle*, collage by
Angela Bonten

FROM THE EDITOR

In planning for this 36th issue of The Journal I suggested a theme of 'Into the Future: Creative insight/wisdom from 2020 hindsight.' As the coronavirus has lingered and closed traditional areas of life, many people have turned to themselves and explored, read books, watched endless series and films. A need to feel grounded and find new connections has encouraged us to come together in newly imagined ways. This issue contains a potpourri of perspectives on the creative community of today. Penn Kemp, who has been active in online readings this year, presents timely memories from her stance of a lifetime in the creative community. Zoom programming now brings that community into our home environment. When we created *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude*, the aim was to build a community, through the wonderful gift of the worldwide web and its free connection to one another. Zoom has moved that dream forward by

allowing us to see each other and interact. From the earliest of days, tribes, gathering to create, evolved our species. "Primitive" art was rarely made for admiration. Rather, their works were in the service of the culture, in ensuring continuity of the group and the teaching of the young. Much of our contemporary art has lost that altruistic perspective; yet, as creators probe their subjects and open to each other, a recognition of our shared human condition, our universal needs, begins to emerge. We connect with something greater than ourselves and what I call the 4 Cs of impassioned connecting: curiosity, collaborating, caring and creativity. Contributors to this issue of The Journal have opened to a new 2021 wisdom and to the wish for something more, to serve something that can pass into the world to evolve and sustain us. In November 2020, the UN adopted a resolution declaring 2021 the *International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development*. The resolution was backed by 81 countries. In 2001, Canadian

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Marci Segal was the initiator of *World Creativity and Innovation Day*, April 21, celebrated annually around the world. In the first article of this issue, she invites us to 'Open the Portal.' I hope our readers will gather behind her invitation. Please send me your articles on how your creative energy is helping open this portal. Marta Ockuly, an ambassador for *World Creativity and Innovation Day*, advises 'Just One Yes' will bring personal joy and will help to build a Creative Economy for Sustainable Development into our future. In a radio talk in 1954, J. Robert Oppenheimer, often known as the father of the atomic bomb, said, "Often the artist has the aching sense of great loneliness, for the community which he addresses is largely not there." Oppenheimer regretted how his invention was used. Now creative invention has given us advances in communication, collaboration and exchange to create change we can celebrate together, not regret. There is new power in 'Creative Community.'

– Karen Close

SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE TO SAGE-ING

- Article is to be related to aging and creativity, in any of its many forms, as a path to gaining wisdom and self awareness and/or the act of harvesting life's wisdom as a legacy for future generations.
- Article to be attached as a document in .rtf format;
- 500 to a 1500 word maximum;
- Photos: Please attach each photo separately including: the writer's headshot photo and four or five photos, related to article . All photos should be attached in high resolution jpg format with a caption;
- Insert the word "**photo**" with its caption within the article where you would like each image placed (we'll try to honour this request as layout permits).
- Please include brief bio information (one or two short paragraphs) placed at the end of your article; this is meant to give the reader an idea of who you are, your passions and/or what you do and have done with your life that feels relevant to the article. Include contact info: email, website, blog address – whatever you want to include. For each journal, due date is the 10th of the month preceding release date. We release around the equinoxes and solstices. **For next issue due date is May 10th, 2020**
- Email the article and photographs to karensageing@gmail.com

Antiquity identified a sage as a wise person ... wisdom is a form of goodness, and is not scientific knowledge but another kind of cognition.
– Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1246b

CREATIVITY CELEBRATED

**WORLD CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION DAY
APRIL 21: OPEN THE PORTAL**



Marci Segal

“Another world is possible. Your actions help to create it. Be kind to yourself, your people, your planet. Be curious.” ~ Marci Segal

The creative spirit hovers. You know it’s there.

“Let me in,” it says.

“Let me out,” it begs when you are at wit’s end, restless to realize a dream. The creative spirit coaxes you on, like a play-deprived puppy, its front end down and backside up, tail wagging, ears erect.

“Throw me the ball. I’m allowed to play in problem-solving as well as in music, literature and the arts. What else is possible? There are galaxies to explore. Let’s discover together.”

Tempted, you wonder about potentials; conditions have changed after all. What different paths can be made available? Your creative imagination could use relief from the pressures of dealing with worldly shifts. Take a break. Whatever you dream up can be masterminded later on. Play with the puppy.

I promote using creativity and imagination in solving problems. That journey began over 40 years ago. There’s a challenge in that: generally, people like to save face, to keep their social standing and remain secure. They fear losing all that in what their creative spirit might unleash; too great a risk to enter into uncharted territory, even if day-to-day practices are boring, inefficient, unsustainable or cruel. Conditions today are different from the ones that were present when the procedures they follow were put in place. Pivot or perish.

I began the journey at college in 1977. My goal was to achieve a master’s degree in creativity and change leadership and use it to make society a better place to work. “You are going where, to do what?” friends and family asked. “Can’t you study something real?”

Following are two of many guiding principles gleaned from that experience.

One Principle: One can apply creativity and imagination to problem-solving to arrive at novel and useful solutions.

On day one of the first semester of Intro to Creative Studies, our professor, Dr. Sidney J. Parnes, handed out blue examination booklets.

“Solve a problem,” he said.

*Was it the most glorious or the monstrous moment when Jay met his creative spirit?
Herakut, Toronto, 2012.*





The 2021 UN Year of Creative Economy puts the 'orange economy' front and centre at a time when we need creative solutions for the world's challenges.

I scribbled the equation $2 + 2 = 4$ in less than a minute. I didn't know what to do. Then I raised my hand and asked, "What else?"

"That's it," he said, "that's the class for today. Put your name on the cover, and hand me your booklet as you leave." I learned later this was a pretest to gauge the impact of learning to use a creative problem-solving process.

That semester we studied ways to engage the imagination through arts, reflection, curiosity, changing perspective, combining ideas and perceiving challenges for the opportunities they provide. We used these approaches to design and formulate unique and meaningful ways to fulfill a wish, realize a dream, resolve a restlessness or solve a challenging dilemma.

At the end of the term, Dr. Parnes gave us a new examination booklet and asked us again to solve a problem. It took me 90 minutes that time. When finished, as before, I wrote my name on the cover and, as I left the class, asked Dr. Parnes if I could please have the booklet back. I wanted to hold on to the creative process I used to unpack, work with and inspire actions to resolve an unpleasant situation. His sparkling brown eyes signalled delight.

Another Principle: Creativity is bad manners.

During senior year, I asked my cultural anthropology professor, "What is creativity? I'm curious to know it from your point of view."

"Marci," she said, "creativity is bad manners. Do something creative at the dinner table, and what happens? You get your hands slapped. That's what creativity is."

Other Major Insights

As well as learning that people can use creativity and imagination in problem-solving and that creativity may be considered bad manners, I internalized these additional guiding principles:

- the impossible is possible; it just takes a little longer
- imagination needs space and time away from day-to-day pressures
- everyone experiences and expresses creativity and imagination uniquely; no two alike
- there are tools to use and disciplines to apply for strengthening imagination
- remastering young ideas to fit in their context is often part of the process

After leaving college, throughout the following 25 years, I advocated enthusiastically for people to be at their creative best and provided discipline and structure to that effect. I worked as a creativity specialist in marketing and public opinion research, advertising, corporate training and development, organizational development, etc. I spent my professional life with people in the corporate world and social service sectors. I authored books relating creativity with personality type, gave talks, facilitated groups and led workshops at conferences and summits worldwide. Clients included banks, manufacturing, marketing and sales organizations, pharmaceutical

companies, government, education and other not-for-profits and charities.

Even though I utilized scientific research, experiential exercises, testimonials from respected personalities, and charts and graphs to prove the values of using creative thinking to release and realize potential, the barriers remained. “Not enough time,” the professionals repeated as if a mantra, “too expensive, it’s not in our strategic agenda, I’m not creative.”

It became apparent that even after training and support, people sequestered the creative spirit rather than give it free rein. They said it interfered with, rather than complemented, their pursuit of meaningful measurables such as profit and various other 20th-century business agendas.

World Creativity and Innovation Day, April 21, is Born

World Creativity and Innovation Day, April 21, (WCID) was born May 25, 2001, when I saw a news headline saying that Canada suffers from a creativity crises. I disagreed.

The crisis was how creativity was considered, rather than what it truly is – an energy we all have to improve upon and change the status quo, in whatever discipline. People said they have no time for creativity and innovation? I made a date for it, so they could put their practice on the calendar.

United Nations Adopts World Creativity and Innovation Day, April 21

Ambassador I. Rhonda King, Permanent Representative to the United Nations from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, noticed the day and its growth over time. The first celebrations in 2002 were held in a handful of nations. By 2013 thousands of people from all walks of life in at least 50 nations participated: universities, colleges, consumer brands, tech firms, government agencies, and foundations, were but a few.

Rhonda King called me in 2014 asking permission for WCID to become a International Day of Observance at the United Nations. Three years later, in 2017, she proclaimed the day before the UN General Assembly, to encourage people use creativity in problem solving to address the UN’s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Open the Portal

On World Creativity and Innovation Day, April 21 and the week, April 15 – 21, people open the portal to revitalize the creative spirit in their professional, community and personal lives. They use new ideas to overcome hurdles they once thought insurmountable. Indeed, many access and actualize their creativeness daily. Still, wouldn’t it be great to mark this day as a creativity portal opening for all? The UN declared 2021 the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development. The power of your creative imagination can make a world of difference.

Let us all throw the puppy the ball this year and next, in service of doing the best we can to create new futures.

Marci Segal, MS, founded World Creativity and Innovation Day, April 21, because she wanted the world to honour and celebrate its creativeness, to generate new ideas, make new decisions and take new actions to achieve new results for life on a sustainable planet. As a graduate of the International Center for Studies in Creativity, Buffalo State College, she actively encourages people to use imagination and creativity in problem solving. Her work as a creativity specialist was experienced by thousands of people around the globe in the corporate and social service sectors. Her titles include *Creativity and Personality Type: Tools for Understanding and Appreciating the Many Voices of Creativity* (Telos Publications, 2001) and *Quick Guide to the Four Temperaments and Creativity: A Psychological Understanding of Innovation* (Telos Publications, 2003). Marci was a contributor to *Quick Guide to the 16 Personality Types in Organizations: Understanding Personality Differences in the Workplace* (Telos Publications, 2003). She has lived in Canmore, Alberta, for seven years. She enjoys hiking, biking, photography, exploring, and living the mountain life – a big change from her upbringing in urban southern Ontario. A fond memory is riding the Kettle Valley Rail Trail trestles in Kelowna. She is married and has two bikes.

LET'S STEP INTO THE FUTURE

WITH J.O.Y. (JUST ONE YES)



WHO ELSE CARES

The soul of creativity
has been stolen
and stuffed in a box
marked *novel* and *useful*.

It is buried under a mountain
of research studies written by
white men who have no idea
they have no idea.

Where are the scholarly
creators brave enough to
dance with chaos and
find new peer reviewers?

Marta Davidovich Ockuly
(2014)

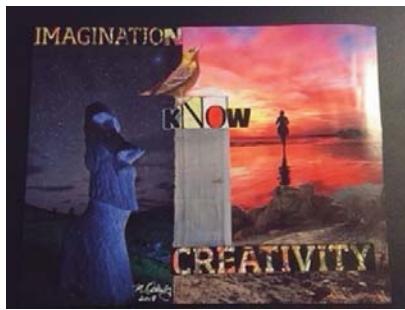
Marta Davidovich Ockuly

The biggest lesson I've learned in 68 years on this planet is that we are here for our own joy – finding it, feeling it, exploring it, expressing it and sharing it. Imagination and creativity, along with our passions and purpose, are at the root of joy. Humans are born dreaming, imagining, curious, creative, expressive, playful and eager to take in information by exploring, using touch, taste, smell, hearing, movement, questioning and wondering. Every cell in our bodies is wired for creativity on conscious, unconscious and superconscious levels. Yet research suggests human creative potential remains largely ‘unactualized.’ In fact, it is currently the largest untapped natural resource on earth because of what cultures value and encourage or discourage.

Born in the 1950s, I was a free-range child with freedom to fill my days in ways I found fulfilling. As the first-born of post-Second World War immigrants from Ukraine, who met and married in Cleveland, Ohio, English is my second language. My parents were entrepreneurs who spent long hours six days a week working to build a secure future for my sister and me. Education and hard work were highly valued in our household. As a curious and somewhat solitary child with a voracious appetite for reading inspiring non-fiction books, pretending to be a teacher, and spending time being nurtured by nature, my best friend was my imagination.

Being born is the journey of a lifetime. We are not here to trade our days for dollars. We come with a purpose and passion, which it is our joy to pursue. What is it for you?

Thinking back, I do not remember the word ‘creativity’ being mentioned in my home or school. I was (and am) in love with words. I felt called to use words to inspire and educate. This led me into a successful career in the field of advertising, public relations and communications. I made my mark in the world as a professional creative from my mid-20s to early 40s. I left the field at the height of my career as advertising director for a billion-dollar company just after winning the highest award in my field. It felt hollow using my energy to sell products when people around me (co-workers, friends and others) were asking me for help finding their own paths to purpose and creativity. I went through a deep spiritual awakening, and in that process my intuition led me to understand that my own passion and purpose were awakening, inspiring, encouraging and developing human creativity with joy – my acronym for ‘just one yes.’ I understood all creativity requires expressive, embodied action, and I imagined a safe, sacred space in nature where people could tap into their personal path to creativity. In 1997, my



Top: No Imagination, No Creativity, Collage
Above: Activate Your Joy, Collage

intuition led to the perfect property, and *Angel House Center for Creative Change* was born.

People who came to my classes feeling disconnected from their creativity often told me all the reasons they were *not* creative. I learned that these adult students associated creativity with art or other forms of ‘special talent.’ Their fears of judgment and feeling shamed led to labelling themselves ‘not creative.’ This led me to shift their attention to joy. These students began to journalize and note every thought or experience that brought them joy. The next step was to prescribe beginner experiences, trying something they’d never done that required them to step into process and then chart their feelings and learnings afterwards. This involved pushing past blocks and showing openness to new experiences. They then journalized what they had learned – positive or negative. Trying new things led to feeling more hope and building more confidence.

It worked for me too. I myself got the idea I wanted to go back to school to study human development and find research related to creative action and joy. In 2003, when my children moved out in pursuit of their own dreams, I sold my centre and relocated to Sarasota, Florida. It was time for me to live close to the Gulf of Mexico and the powdered sugar sands of Siesta Key Beach. As it happened, Sarasota was also a close drive to a liberal arts college offering a BA in human development. I registered and signed up to take Creative Process as my first course. That one step led to graduating with high honours, winning the Writer of Excellence award and being offered a position teaching my own Creative Process course to students enrolled at Eckerd College, a liberal arts college based in St. Petersburg, Florida, in their Program for Experience Learners. After my BA, which was really a degree in creativity, the next step changed the direction of my life forever. Creativity is part of being human. We imagine, think, express and make. It is magical and ordinary, treasured and taken for granted.

I found the perfect program for earning a graduate degree, but it was in Buffalo, New York. I was accepted as a student in the Master of Science degree program, specializing in Teaching for Creativity, at the International Centre for Studies in Creativity (ICSC) at Buffalo State. I temporarily relocated to attend as a full-time residential student, beginning Summer Semester of 2010. I planned to complete this two-year program in one year to be able to start teaching my new Eckerd College course in the Fall Semester of 2011.

The first day of class was a bright, sunny day. I arrived early and walked into the classroom, a confident creator and eager non-traditional student at age 57. I scanned the room and was glad to see a diverse group of fellow students. The professor arrived, welcomed us and asked, “Who can tell me the definition of creativity?” You could hear a pin drop. A second later he announced: “Creativity is novelty and usefulness.” The words “You have GOT to be kidding” flew out of my mouth! He turned to me, smiled, and kindly explained, “Novelty and usefulness is the scholarly definition of creativity, but you can define it any way you like.” I felt sick to my stomach.

“Novelty and usefulness is the scholarly definition of creativity, but you can define it any way you like.”



New definition of human creativity postcard

Human creativity lives in the person-centered processes of imagining, taking action and making

My whole identity was tied up with creativity, and I knew what it was and what it wasn't. The word 'define' literally means "to describe the nature, scope or meaning of something." The terms 'novelty and usefulness' did not do any of those things. Worse – they implied creativity lived in a product to be evaluated, rather than a person engaging in a process. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath to calm down. In that moment I heard my inner voice say, "What if you are here to reimagine the way creativity is defined?" Those words flooded me with energy and excitement. From that day forward I knew

my mission and purpose was to bring a new definition of human creativity into the world, and that mission has guided my steps every day since.

I graduated from ICSC in May of 2011; I began teaching my course to adult students at Eckerd that same year. I also made the decision to pursue a PhD in humanistic psychology focused on reimagining, for 2021 and, I hope, beyond, the way human creativity is defined and understood, thanks to an assignment towards the end of my time in Buffalo. Students in Dr. Cyndi Burnet's Contemporary Creativity Issues course were invited to "adopt a creativity researcher." I adopted Dr. Ruth Richards, and she adopted me by inviting me to participate in a study she was doing. She also put me on the fast track to being accepted as a student at Saybrook University. She became my professor and mentor and introduced me to my 'shero' – Dr. Natalie Rogers, who invited me to be part of her 2013-2015 cohort for certification in Person-Centered Expressive Arts for Healing and Social Change. Joy became the fuel I needed to make my vision and mission a reality.

On March 14, 2019, after eight years of dedicated heuristic research and self-search inquiry, I defended my dissertation and became Dr. Marta Davidovich Ockuly at age 66. Marci Segal, founder of United Nations sanctioned World Creativity & Innovation Day and Week, also honoured me by asking to use my new definition in the "Call to Action" document she created to share with participating countries around the world.

The postcard pictured here reveals my top research outcome: the first descriptive, dynamic, imagination-fueled and actionable definition of human creativity. The words surrounding the definition are part of the lexicon of 500 terms associated with the lived experience of human creativity I developed.

Because we are living in times when human and non-human creativity (AI, machines, robots) co-exist on the planet, it is necessary to point out that human creativity lives in the person-centred processes of imagining, taking action and making. Human creativity involves body, mind and spirit. We are born dreaming, imagining, curious, questioning and creative with a unique

set of DNA, memories, experiences, environments, cultures, beliefs and preferences, and with continuously learning, emotional and feeling bodies.

AN INVITATION...

No definition of creativity is the be all, end all. It is one perspective. Use it. Challenge it.

Adapt it. Play with it. Try it on for size. Improve it. I would love to hear the definitions that inspire you to take creative action or invite you to step into the process of creating with joy. The world needs more creativity encouragers, awakeners and positive Influencers. Who you are is creative. The big question now is: "What is the future you are imagining?" Let's keep this conversation going.

**Use it. Challenge it.
Adapt it. Play with it.
Try it on for size.
Improve it.**

Dr. Marta Ockuly is a visionary thinker and confident creator as well as a humanistic psychologist, researcher and educator specializing in adult learning across the lifespan. She is also founder and C.E.O. of the *Creative Potential Institute*. This future-focused consultancy develops custom creativity curricula, training programs, talks and presentations around the world, aimed at awakening creative potential and creative confidence with joy. Details can be found at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/martadavidovichockuly/>

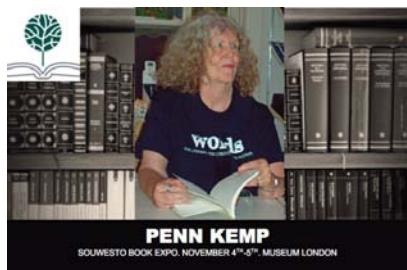
Contact Information: Follow Marta Davidovich Ockuly @creativityphd on Twitter or visit her inspiration and coaching website: <http://www.joyofquotes.com>. Have other questions? Direct inquiries to magicalmarta@aol.com.

Citation (quotes and art):

Ockuly, M.D. (2019). "Reimagining the Way the Lived Experience of Creativity is Defined, Inspired, and Encouraged in the 21st Century: A Creativity Practitioner/educator's Heuristic Inquiry." (Doctoral dissertation). Free download available from Google Scholar and Research Gate.

TO CARRY THE HEART

COMMUNITY WHEREVER YOU FIND YOURSELF



Penn Kemp

Even as we are isolating in place during this long pandemic year, we need to conjure a sense of community... now more than ever, perhaps. These days, my community lives online and in memory through many decades.

The idea of a network of artists has been alive in me since childhood. My upbringing was unusual in that my father was a painter who inculcated the art scene of the 50s in London, Ont.; he mentored artists like Jack Chambers and Greg Curnoe. My folks would entertain visiting artists from the *Group of Seven* and later the *Painters Eleven*, later dubbed the *Wild Ones of Canadian Art*. From age 10, I was used to serving cocktails to creative dignitaries.

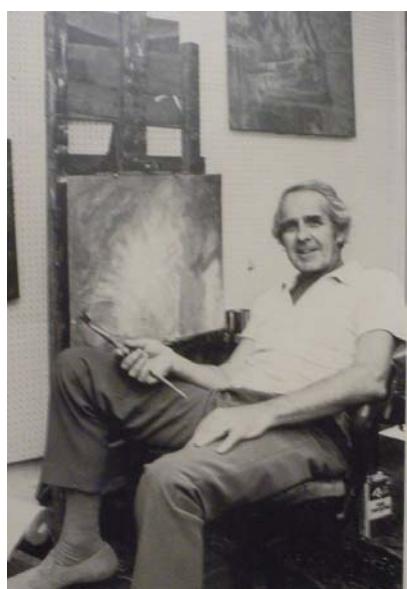
Once I decided I was a writer, it was an easy transposition to explore the literary scene of the early '70s. I was lucky enough to come of literary age just as Can Lit began to flourish. Coach House Press published my first book in 1972, and since then I have been active in Canada's poetry scene across the country.

Held in different cities each year, the League of Canadian Poets AGM was a great event that we could, thanks to the Canada Council, afford. Elder poets like PK Page, Phyllis Webb and FR Scott were accessible and friendly at these meetings. All that was needed was the love of poetry. Networking in the days before the Internet, the poets kept in touch. We read one another; we wrote to one another (by post!) and for one another. We became a loose network, ever expanding but, for all that, small enough that the poets all knew one another. 'CorresponDance,' we called it.

For several years in the early '70s, I organized poetry readings at A Space, an alternative gallery and artist-run centre in Toronto. Thanks to the Canada Council, I was able to invite poets from across Canada and the U.S. to come read their work. This was, I believe, the first reading series in Canada that established such a wide network of poets. The writers often stayed for the weekend on Toronto Island, where I lived. Again, we stayed in touch with each other. I hosted PK Page, Daphne Marlatt, Phyllis Webb and, for one of her last readings, Pat Lowther. American poets like Robert Creeley, Diane di Prima, and Allan Ginsberg also visited. Those were halcyon days. When I left Toronto, I started up a similar reading series in Victoria at the Fort Gallery and, in 1980, at the Forest City Gallery in London, Ont. Wherever I go, connecting with other poets has been a lifeline.

Literary friendships and sharing were renewed every April, National Poetry Month, when poets criss-crossed the country giving readings. I would sometimes find myself staying at a friend's home when reading in Vancouver.

My father, Jim Kemp, at his easel





Top: With writers Teri Degler, Susan McCaslin, Judy Rebick at The Writers' Union of Canada/League of Poets AGM, Winnipeg. Photo by Anna Yin
Above: With writers Paul Dutton, Lillian Allan. Photo by Gavin Stairs

ver, while she stayed in mine when reading in London, Ont. Connections sparked such joy as we traded books and ideas in a barter economy; we slept on one another's couches; we stayed up far too late at League AGMs, carousing, from Newfoundland to Saskatoon and Victoria. What I gathered throughout those years, and still do, was the value of community, not in any one school of poets but rather a shoal of creative community, perhaps.

During the pre-Harper years, the Canada Council also sponsored academics in different countries who were interested in Canadian literature to visit here and to host Canadian writers abroad. In this way, I toured in Britain and Germany; I was twice sent around universities and colleges in India and, in 2003, throughout Brazil. What an expanse of opportunities! At one memorable reading in Mumbai, I was able to conduct a sound poem that had been translated from English into Gujarati. Though I didn't know the language, I knew the rhythms of my poem and could hum along. Being a writer-in-residence in locations as far removed as Labrador, Buffalo, Whitehorse and Mumbai was a fascinating exercise in humility. In exploring such different cultures, I worked with young people and their poems; the commonality of teenage angst and joy in articulating, in creating a real poem, was familiar wherever I gave workshops.

Living on Toronto Island throughout the decade of the 70s was another exercise in community, as our tiny houses were perennially under threat, either from the elements or from City Hall. We used art as a way to deploy our activism. My play, *The Epic of Toad and Heron*, for example, was performed at the Island clubhouse in 1977 to celebrate Island resilience. The Island flag still sports my hero, the flying toad. Artists and poets were thick on the ground, drawn to the natural beauty of the island and to the local colour of the residents offered in all their originality. Poets visiting from across the continent usually stayed with us, and stories abounded. Both my adult children and grandchildren still live on the island. The value of a vibrant cultural community was deeply instilled in them.

For the World Symposium on Humanity that was held in September 1979, my partner and I helped organize the Toronto segment of what was the first satellite connection of events paralleled in Los Angeles and London, England. Our celebrations were held at the University of Toronto in Convocation Hall and at OISE (Ontario Institute of Studies in Education). I performed along with Robert Bly, Allan Ginsberg and the Four Horsemen and remained in touch with presenters that I'd invited, like Joseph Campbell and Jean Houston.

Whenever I returned to London, Ont., I became involved in the creative



Performing Poem for Peace in Many Voices with Jack Layton. Photo by Joe Wilson

community once again, reaching out to past friends and teaching courses at London's University of Western Ontario. As UWO writer-in-residence, my goal was to bridge the wide gap I perceived between town and gown. As London's first Poet Laureate, I continued that enterprise, engaging as many as possible in the celebration of poetry and the arts. One competition I set up featured poetry on local transit buses. Another was a haiku contest across Canada. The winning haiku were set to music by four celebrity musicians: Emm Gryner, Catherine Mackinnon, Hawksley Workman and Royal Wood. They performed the poems one glorious afternoon, with me hosting at Home County Fair. The completed anthology was set up on the London Arts Council website.

Another huge project was my *Poem for Peace in Many Voices*, now translated into 136 languages, published in two volumes and performed around the world. Now that's 'creative community.'

<https://rabble.ca/whatsup/poem-peace-many-voices-visions-and-revisions>.

As Poet Laureate, I read the poem below for the mayor's address to the city of London and an audience of 1,300 Londoners. I offer it to you here to celebrate the idea of community.

The Heart of Community

Penn Kemp has participated in Canadian cultural life for 50 years, writing, editing and publishing poetry and plays. Her first book of poetry, *Bearing Down*, was published by Coach House, 1972. She has published more than 30 books of poetry, prose and drama, seven plays and 10 CDs. The League of Canadian Poets acclaimed Penn as their 2015 Spoken Word Artist and she is the League's 40th Life Member. From 2010-2013, this prolific writer was inaugural Poet Laureate of London, Ontario. At Western University, Penn was writer-in-residence, 2009-2010. In 2020, she was presented with the inaugural Joe Rosenblatt (Muttsy) Award for Innovative Creators. In 2021, she was nominated for the League of Canadian Poets' Pavlick Poetry Prize. Follow her on www.twitter.com/ pennkempwww.instagram.com/ pennkempwww.facebook.com/ pennkemppoet. Events are up on <https://pennkemp.wordpress.com/>.

Come join our movable feast in joy
of joining, weaving, braiding a way,
knitting a wave, waving a welcome,
well come in then. Here. Hear!

Creating community, fusion delights
this spacious collective, call elect
if creating community collective.

Community-minded, in spirit ensouled
sole and together, gathered at the full.
We are held in London's warm bowl
within the wide valley of Antler River.

Community our vocation, invoking
the vocative pro vocative, calling us,
calling on us, call sure, culture, meeting
many cultures, collected passion.

The Graces are present, spirits high.
Lift the cup and dance, sing, spin, say,
weave, win over, wave, write welcome.

Weaving together, whatever
the weather, we conjure com pose
paeans of praise to possibility
for civic pride, for civil action.

We appreciate, how we appreciate
one other, different and the same,
celebrating diversity in verse and by pros.

When we are in good company
when we start in good company,
in chorus a meeting of media,
the hub at the heart of connection.
O may the best manifest
fest if all festivity
best of all company.
Cheer and exult.

Hail and salute!
Here, here!

FINDING VOICE LATER IN LIFE

Kim Rhindress

“Do you teach adults?”

Surprisingly, this is one of the most common questions asked when people find out I am a professional vocal coach.

When I first began teaching voice in 1992, I had 18 students under the age of 16 and only two adult students. In 2021, approximately seventy-five per cent of my voice students are adults with more than half over the age of 40.

This week, I have worked with six adult students. One is a grandpa in his seventies who wants to sing with his grandchildren, aged 2 and 4. Two are newly retired in their sixties and want something creative and positive to do with their newfound free time. One is in her forties and is a neonatal nurse who is using singing to de-stress her life. Two are in their thirties and are working from home due to COVID. Voice lessons are providing a creative and challenging outlet for them.

It’s never too late to improve one’s voice and the following stories illustrate this beautifully.

Wendy came for singing lessons in June of 2014. She was semi-retired from her job as a lab tech and she wanted to learn how to sing. Being married to a talented singer/songwriter/guitar player, she was tired of sitting on the sidelines while her husband entertained their friends at home and on holidays. There was one thing holding her back; Wendy struggled with pitch. She had been told as a child that she couldn’t sing so had never developed her musical ear.

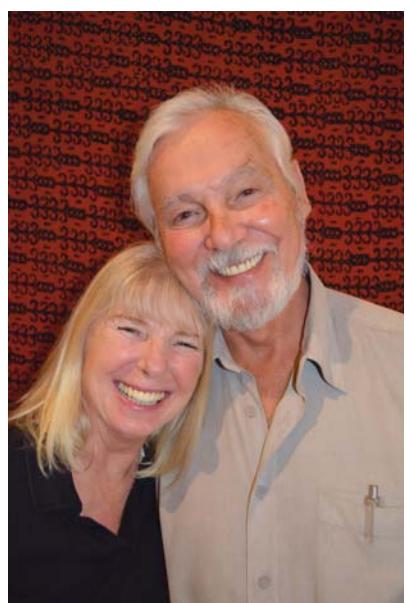
Over the next six months, I developed a series of exercises designed specifically to retrain her ear to hear and to use her core muscles differently. Wendy did not miss a week; she approached singing as rigorously as she had approached the sports she liked to do, and she made real progress.

Wendy and her husband recorded a duet that year for the Kelowna Voice Lab Christmas CD. In the recording studio, Steve came up to me with tears in his eyes. “I can’t thank you enough for helping her do this. It’s something we will be able to do together all the time now, here and in Florida where we spend the winter.” Wendy continued to come for lessons over the next two years, and she and her husband have since performed in several musical reviews they’ve put on for their gated community. Music has become a real joy and a shared experience for them thanks to her diligence and commitment to learning something new.

Evelyn came for two lessons in March of 2016 and pre-paid me for the month. Then she disappeared until the end of May with no contact. Evelyn, at age 60, had been in a serious bicycle accident, which had left her with a brain injury. She was unable to remember things as she used to, and she could no longer drive a car. Still, over the next four years, Evelyn has continued to come weekly for her



Wendy and Steve before recording their song





Beryl (from her memorial)

Kim Rhindress has been singing since the age of 4, began competing in voice when she was 8 and has been a vocal coach since 1992, when she opened her first studio in Stratford, Connecticut. She has taught singing and acting extensively in the U.S., the Netherlands and Toronto, opening Kelowna Voice Lab in 2011. Kim believes that anyone can find their voice and has taught hundreds of students, from seasoned professionals to first-time singers to people on the autism spectrum to seniors, how to use their voices to the best of their ability for singing, acting and LIFE. Book online and learn more at www.kelownavoicelab.com or call her at 250.878.8724

singing lessons; she believes that her voice training has played a pivotal role in helping her regain her brain function. She is right.

"There are few things that stimulate the brain the way music does," says one Johns Hopkins otolaryngologist. "If you want to keep your brain engaged throughout the aging process, listening to or playing music is a great tool. It provides a total brain workout."

Happily, Evelyn now drives herself once more to her singing lessons and has regained her ability to concentrate. She is a regular performer at our student concerts and looks forward to the day when she can perform for crowds again.

In 2017, I had a lovely couple come for a singing lesson. They were in their mid- 70s and had not sung in more than 20 years. I was impressed by how supportive Harold and May were of each other as they tried the various sounds I asked them to make. They encouraged each other and took careful notes throughout the lesson so they could remind each other of points to listen for. This singing lesson was a wonderful 'date night' for them. It made me wish couples my age would take the time to do something like this together – who knows the marriages it could save?

Beryl first came to me in September 2014 at the age of 72. Originally from England, she was married to a man who was still working much of the time and she wanted to do something fulfilling for herself. In her youth, Beryl had sung in school choirs and she wanted to coax her voice back to the soprano range she so fondly remembered. She also wanted to find the courage to try singing a solo. Over the next five years, Beryl came faithfully every two weeks and added four notes to the top of her voice. She found the courage to sing in the student choir and then to perform solos in more than a dozen public concerts with Kelowna Voice Lab.

In her own words, "At a little over my three score and ten with some rather depressing medical issues, I decided to try and resuscitate my voice, which had never been great in the first place. It's a bit of an uphill struggle but very enjoyable. Kim is a patient, supportive and very creative teacher.

"Recently, I visited some musical friends whom I last saw two years ago just after I started lessons, and their comment was 'what a remarkable difference,' and 'I didn't think you could get that far.' Side effects have been that my husband comments on the boost to my overall morale. During medical tests, I have been complimented on my lung capacity and breath control, which one tech credited with shortening the procedure by about a third."

Beryl continued to sing until shortly before she was admitted to hospice in November, 2019. I miss this great lady very much.

Your voice is fully capable of singing at any age so long as you have the muscle strength to support your torso and can maintain good breath control. I have witnessed 'miracles' made by knowledge and determination. It has been my privilege for the last thirty years to help people of all ages find their voices, and is something I hope I can continue to do for a long time to come.

SAILING INTO 2021

ON A CREATIVE CRUISE



Angela Bonten

Recently I have been teaching an online art class.

When I was first asked to do this, I contemplated what my approach would be. I am very much a hands-on instructor and try to promote freedom of expression and not to follow a set formula for painting. I wondered how that would be accomplished with a virtual medium in an hour long Zoom class.

I thought about the disconnection that many are experiencing during this pandemic, but felt that creative connection was more important than ever at this stressful time. If I could make even one person connect and realize the benefits that creativity brings, that, to me, would be considered successful.

Having taught on many cruise ships for the last few years, I decided our hour should be a fun fantasy journey. I wanted the participants not to be attached to the work and the belief that somehow they would create a masterpiece, and thus doom themselves to self-criticism and perceived failure.

I had purposely asked them to work on things readily available, e.g. cardboard, back of old file folders or cheap dollar-store canvases. That way the monetary attachment is eliminated, and we can freely play and let creativity flow spontaneously through us. And so began our journey where 14 participants and I sailed away on an imagery cruise. The first class was simply about making a doodle using whatever materials we had on hand. FLY, 'first love yourself,' became the acronym for our starting point – to let

the creativity just flow without expectation, relaxing into mindless drawing and colouring.

The following week our journey started off in Malaga, the birthplace of Picasso. While re-acquainting myself with Picasso, I began thinking about my journey in life. Picasso was not afraid to play. Exploring his life, experiences and this world through his art, I realized I am always adding and taking away from my paintings. My life's journey is the same. Moving along on a track, adding, taking away, moving on, jumping back on and off, that's how I am on the train of life.

We talked many times about the 'zone' in painting. I wanted everyone to

Debbie Harborne





Top: Lone Yeager

Middle: Darlene Mulligan

Bottom: *Dipsy Doodle*, collage by Angela Bonten

enjoy the journey and not miss the magic of the moment because they were looking ahead to the next station. In the class were total beginners and others with more experience, who had joined for creative connection and different ideas. Soon we were laughing, playing and in silence as everyone was involved in the process.

I have often tried to convey the health benefits of creatively connecting with your inner artist, but to see things unfold virtually was very special. I began receiving emails from my students, and this only verified the importance of reconnecting with that creative process and that we could do it online.

Here are some comments from participants.

Debbie Harborne

"I just wanted to let you know that, prior to the class today, I was so stressed and full of anxiety that I didn't think I would be able to participate in your Zoom art class. But I pushed myself to at least try. I so found myself in the 'ZONE' and felt the stress and anxiety leaving my body. It was amazing! You really helped me release my inner artist. I felt so calm and able to get lost in my creativity with no expectations. Thank you so much."

Ione Yeager

"I'd just registered for my first painting class, which was going to be held on Zoom. I'd always wanted to try painting but was too intimidated. Zoom was the perfect venue. No one would see it. With that in mind and our instructions to investigate Picasso art forms, I was ready for my first painting class. I played for hours on my first attempt at painting.

"My husband had just passed away a few months before. That, along with the stress and loneliness of Covid, I found myself smiling and laughing again as I added more to this silly little canvas. Picasso I will never be. However, I'm so pleased to have something to occupy my time, have fun and laugh again. Thank you."

Darlene Mulligan

"I loved the process, learning about papers, paints and colour. It was especially wonderful to get lost in the moment of creating something that I did not think I was capable of doing, while connecting with other students on Zoom during these isolating Covid times."

When you give yourself the permission to create without judgment, you will be surprised at the results. Not only will you produce a beautiful art work, but also find connection, healing and community.

Please visit me at www.angelabonten.com or follow me on instagram @anjybcreative.

TRADING SCALPEL FOR PEN



**Jacques G. LeBlanc, MD, FRSC
Karen Olsen**

What do a scalpel and a pen have in common? At first glance, the response would be “Not very much,” but, after a moment of reflection, I realise that they are both instruments of creativity. As a surgeon, I used this small, straight thin-bladed knife for 35 years to help patients. As a writer, I have used a pen for the last ten years to touch the imagination of my readers. Bringing together these two sides of my being has brought me great pleasure and a deeper understanding of myself. Then, serendipitous circumstances brought about by the confinement of Covid-19, I entered a new venture when I became acquainted with writer Karen Olsen and we joined our talents and skills in a new creative writing project.

As part of my practice, I had published in medical journals, written medical texts, administrative reports and innumerable planning documents, yet I never thought that this involved an ounce of creativity. Rather, I thought of what I was doing as a way of contributing to innovation, to research and to leadership in my profession. All those years I believed that creativity was an abstract talent needed in the arts, such as painting, design and music.

From her perspective Karen wondered, “How does a writer approach the story of a surgeon?” She considered, “First, I had to listen closely to what was being said and respect the candidness and generosity of the raconteur. Many of the anecdotes were light-hearted and full of details about a culture I knew well, since I grew up in a similar environment in Quebec. Other parts of the story were deadly serious, and I had to strike a balance between both. The words had to be chosen to paint an accurate but colourful picture of a boy, who initially dreamt of running away to live grand adventures as a sea captain. Later, he chose architecture as a profession, but finally medicine chose him to become the man who would dedicate his life to saving children with congenital heart disease.”

In late February 2020, the coronavirus pandemic caught us all off guard. Worry crept into our lives and fear became a constant companion in our daily routines. Worst of all, this pandemic is far from over, with new variants to the virus surfacing in many corners of the world. The novel coronavirus, Covid-19, has dramatically altered the structure of our everyday lives with orders of social distancing, curfews, quarantines, lockdowns, and more.

For Karen Olsen and myself confinement became a gift. The idea of writing a biography together was evolved by Karen from her editing of another project I had written about the soul of a surgeon and his work. Karen proposed to come at the project from a fresh perspective and suggested we

I believed that creativity was an abstract talent needed in the arts, such as painting, design and music.

Shadow of a Heart, mandala



Jacques LeBlanc has been a paediatric and adult cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon at B.C. Children's Hospital in Vancouver. He retired eight years ago after 35 years of practice and found himself looking to understand and develop his interests beyond the practice of medicine. In doing so, Jacques realized that he had a lot to give back to his profession in the way of experience as a doctor, a teacher, a student of life, a husband and a human being seeking wellness in this rapidly changing world. <https://leblancwellness.com> As thought leaders in healthcare, we are passionate about and committed to illustrating and applying novel approaches to strengthening personal resilience, adaptability and intentionally creating a sense of well-being.

Karen Olsen has lived in Kelowna, British Columbia, since 2012. "In my home province of Quebec, I grew up hearing the mythical stories of Evangeline and the Nordic sagas from my parents. Three narrative threads seem to have traced my path. The first was the ability to listen to others. As the daughter of an immigrant, the second was the curiosity of others and their country of origin. The third was the ability to express in words what I had learned.

My work provided me with the opportunity to travel. As a young teacher, I came out West to teach French. Later I spent five years in Germany teaching Canadian children whose parents were stationed overseas in Baden-Baden. When I returned to Canada, I completed a master's degree in Education and Administration at the University of Ottawa and later pursued a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Regina. In 2014, Les Éditions David published my novel *Elise and Beethoven*. In 2017, *La bonne de Chagall* (Éditions David) won the Gérald Moreau literary award. *La rançon d'Atahualpa*, a sequel to the early teen novel, was published in 2018 (Éditions David). In 2019, *Promesse à un jaguar* was published by La nouvelle plume and was nominated for the Prix Champlain 2020."

write in French. I agreed that it would be an interesting challenge, but was not sure if my control of the French language was up to the task. I had left Quebec in 1979. "Why not?" was Karen's response during the discussions in our original meeting. The Covid-19 restrictions had just been imposed on us, so we were uncertain of the future, and we had time at our disposal. The ideas were ready to be put to paper. The title, *À Coeur Ouvert: la foi d'un chirurgien*, was coined. A table of contents was developed, made up of interesting and intriguing titles for each chapter, and the story slowly took shape. Over many FaceTime calls and countless emails, the thread of my life story evolved in record time, since we had little else to distract us from the writing process. This whole exercise was enlightening and was built on synergy and a good measure of trust between us. Et voilà, that is the story of how the scalpel met the pen, and the creativity of two people unfolded into a flow of words, sentences, imagery, raw emotions and peals of laughter echoing during our FaceTime conversations.

The wonder of technology gave us a chance to work at a safe distance. The completed manuscript is now in the hands of publishers. All we can do now is wait for the verdict of the reading committees to come down. What a learning experience and a delight this whole experience has been! I was introduced to using a metaphoric scalpel to dissect memories and reclaim my long-forgotten French skills, while Karen sharpened her pen to bring to life the story of a surgeon pondering the question of his soul and the source of his creativity.

Please enjoy this moment from our collaboration.

<<Mes premiers cours en architecture étaient plutôt théoriques: matériaux et charpentes, dessin et figuration graphique, exploration en maquette, l'habitabilité et poésie de l'espace, l'architecture de la Renaissance à 1945 et j'en passe. J'avais plutôt envie de créer, de me retrousser les manches. Malheureusement, j'avais l'impression d'avancer, dans cette discipline, à la vitesse d'un escargot. Pour me distraire, j'ai d'abord joint le club de ski de l'université. Je n'ai jamais eu le corps d'un grand sportif, mais comme tout ce que j'entreprendais, je m'y engageais pleinement. Les départs de grand matin pour le Mont-Saint Anne, le froid et les bottes de ski comme des étaux ont vite fait de me convaincre que le water-polo serait une activité plus agréable, même si j'avais à faire vingt-quatre longueurs (soit presque 2km) dans la piscine comme exercice de réchauffement avant la pratique de jeu. J'ai participé à ce sport pendant deux ans. Ce qui m'a permis de faire la connaissance d'étudiants de toutes les facultés de notre campus. Je garde de cette camaraderie un souvenir inoubliable.

À la fin de cette première année universitaire, c'était l'impasse. Je savais que l'architecture n'arriverait pas à combler mon désir de faire quelque chose qui dépasserait les attentes de mon père. Je me sentais comme un navire sans gouvernail. De retour au travail, à Rimouski, dans l'usine de papa, je ne voyais pas comment m'en sortir. Si je ne reprenais pas mes cours, il ne restait plus qu'à travailler pour lui ou aller me trouver un boulot ailleurs.

L'univers a toujours semblé conspirer pour me procurer exactement ce dont j'avais besoin et quelle direction prendre. Ce coup de pouce, allait se manifester dans un livre aux tranches

irrégulières que j'ai trouvé ni dans les rayons de ma bibliothèque ni dans le kiosque à journaux d'une gare. Je n'ai encore moins le souvenir du nom de l'auteur et ni titre de ce bouquin, sauf les caractères en rouge de la couverture. Sans illustrations, ce livre, aux pages de parchemin, avait des bords non rognés. Je devais séparer des certaines de feuilles avec un coupe-papier. Dans ce volume, non massicoté, j'ouvrais les pages, au fil de l'épée, pour y découvrir les secrets cachés dans ces mots. Dans cet ouvrage, l'auteur me révélait la détresse de la souffrance qui existait dans le monde. Le sujet de ce livre me passionnait et l'intérêt pour la médecine a jailli pour remplacer mon dada pour Le Corbusier.

Je ne pouvais changer de faculté sans en parler à mon père, puisque c'était lui qui payait pour mes études. Prenant mon courage à deux mains pour aborder le sujet, j'ai pendant des heures préparer et répéter les arguments contre des points qu'il pourrait soulever. J'ai commencé par le convaincre que cette première année en architecture n'était pas gaspillée, car la faculté de médecine était disposée à créditer certains de mes cours. Je lui ai dit que je prendrais les bouchés doubles, en cours supplémentaires l'année suivante pour rattraper le temps perdu. Il a finalement donné sa bénédiction parce que dans son esprit. Je continuais mes études, même s'il ne comprenait pas tout à fait le choix que je venais de faire. Sans perdre une minute, j'ai modifié mon curriculum vitae pour que la faculté de médecine accepte ma demande. Après quelques négociations, avec le personnel du bureau du registraire, quelques-uns de mes cours de ma première année ont été reconnus et j'ai pu changer de faculté. Sans vraiment m'en rendre compte, je façonnais ma nouvelle carrière. >>

THE LIBRARY WITHIN



Christina Sue-Chan

My first memories of the Okanagan Valley were from the air, flying east from Vancouver to Kelowna in February, 2018. Other memories from that first visit were of the endless mountains surrounding Lake Okanagan from my viewpoint on the promenade outside the Delta Grand Hotel, the cloudy canvas of grey skies and surprising abundance of life – fleets of American Coots – swimming on the frigid waters of the lake. I was in Kelowna on an initial visit for a series of interviews that, I hoped and expected, would culminate in an offer of employment and that would rejuvenate my interest and lapsed belief in the value and utility of scholarly research.

I moved to Kelowna in August, 2018, while still awaiting a final decision about the promised job, but also eager to de-stress from close to two decades living and working in a culture and career far more performance-oriented, work-focused, materialistic, fast-paced and foreign than anything I had experienced growing up in Toronto. Similar to many others new to Kelowna, day and week-long trips to the beautiful interior and coast of B.C., hiking, fishing, painting classes and other new skill acquisition classes, such as WordPress to create my own website, became routine. Visits to family, as well as to favourite and new destinations – Toronto, Clearwater, Whitehorse, New York City, London, Monterey, Dublin, St. Helier, Moscow – complemented these wellness activities within B.C.

By September, 2020, I had created my own business to enable managers and employees to understand and implement best practices, derived from theory, that management scholars conducted empirical research to discover, create and explain. Ironically, too few of the managers and employees, who are the intended end users of the research, read the research articles because of the inaccessibility of the abstruse language in which the research is written and the lack of open access to the academic management literature. My company had also completed its first project, and, on a personal level, I had caught not one but two fish in the Okanagan's Rose Valley, after numerous fishing, but not catching, excursions in the B.C. Interior. I had the freedom to choose what I wanted to work on each day without having to be accountable to anyone else. Yet, that responsible part of me who had started to work part-time as a page in the North York Public Library at the age of 14 felt something was still missing.

In pursuit of an answer to another question, I visited the Okanagan Regional Library (ORL) website orl.bc.ca and discovered that the library was seeking to hire auxiliary / on-call librarians. I recall remembering fondly how much my mother loved the North York Central Library. She learned to read,

Eager to de-stress from close to two decades living and working in a culture and career far more performance-oriented, work-focused, materialistic, fast-paced and foreign than anything I had experienced growing.

write and speak English because of the free programs offered by the library and, most important to her, she learned the rudiments of investment at the library. She was an avid reader who rarely purchased books; instead, she borrowed from the library's collection of Chinese-language books and read financial sections of newspapers on her daily visits. I also recalled my self-cautionary thoughts when I was gifted the unexpected opportunity to pursue an academic career as a scholar of management, that a return to my first calling could always be an option. With no expectations, I submitted my application and, within a month, I had completed my first shift in the library.

When I proposed my first library program, "Books & Wellness," my intent was to provide a means to members of the Okanagan library community to have a safe space in which they could openly and freely converse about works of fiction that had uplifted their spirits, helped them formulate insights on life-changing questions, and increased their feelings of wellness in a time of isolation in a pandemic world. The Branch Librarian introduced me by email to Karen Close, co-founder of the Okanagan Institute, and she became the first to register for my program. There was one other regular participant in the 5-week program, who wrote that she enjoyed the weekly dialogue between Karen and me but chose only to listen, a decision that both Karen and I respected.

As I reflect back on my experience of facilitating the weekly meetings to discuss books that helped us be well, I am now cognizant of how empty some of the shelves in my inner library are. For 25 years, my reading consisted almost exclusively of academic management literature. When Karen asked me each week, had I read ...? I would too often answer no. With so many unexplored areas – empty shelves in my library within – no wonder my well of creativity had run dry and I had lost faith in the value of academic research. I realised I had lost faith in my continued ability to produce academic work that is creative.

I have spent most of my adult life studying people working in organizations; writing about how to lead and manage others effectively and efficiently; teaching, advising and providing consultation services to managers and students of management on best practices to develop their leadership and management competencies; and leading, managing, mentoring and coaching other scholars of management. I have also studied and written about the creativity of employees and individuals across the lifespan for a scholarly audience. What I had failed to realise until I began to work for the library again is that one's well of creativity will run dry unless one acts to create, not only in a familiar area, but also in areas that are unfamiliar. Unconsciously, my thoughts, feelings and behaviour in relation to creativity were in league with Harvard University professor Teresa Amabile's definition of creativity as a product or response that is novel *and useful*. Her definition pervaded my academic writing and placed constraints on me that would ultimately lead to a diminution of my ability to create. Because of the expertise I developed in my area of scholarship, I knew well how to create

**With so many
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something that was useful, but, because I had cut off ideas and insights from areas with which I was unfamiliar, I had lost my confidence in my ability to create something new. My library within had too many empty shelves.

I must have known this at a subconscious level. When faced with the choice to accept an academic position signifying ultimate success in academia or to come home to Canada to an uncertain employment future, I chose to come home. What I could not have realised when I chose to come home to Canada in 2018 was that two years later, the unintended, unplanned decision to visit the library website would lead to another homecoming – this time to a community that had provided me with my first employment opportunity, by embracing and accepting me as a 14-year-old, and then giving me the foundation to be the professional I became.

Since before I can remember, I have grappled with the question of whether one has control over the path of one's life or whether that path is predetermined. Since before I can remember, I have grappled with the question of whether one has control over the path of one's life or whether that path is predetermined by one whom many call 'God' or whom others refer to simply as the 'Universe.' After nearly three decades of conducting empirical research, I have come to believe that this is one question without an empirical answer. This is a question only each individual can and should uniquely answer. Now, as I look back on my life's journey so far, my answer to this fundamental question of existence is very different from the answer of the 14-year-old library page. No doubt, my answer at the end of my journey will also differ, but I have realised I need to begin to stock those empty shelves in my inner library. Contrary to Harvard professor Teresa Amabile's belief, useless products or responses can be valuable too.

Since before I can remember, I have grappled with the question of whether one has control over the path of one's life or whether that path is predetermined.

Contact: Christina Sue-Chan <csuechan@gmail.com>

HEART WORK

Susan McCaslin | Review by Karen Close



Reading Susan McCaslin's *Heart Work*, I felt my idealism and hopes called forth and reinforced. By drawing from the words of 12th-century philosopher and visionary Hildegard von Bingen's need for what she called "soul vision," McCaslin's *Hildegard's Song* called me to join "a verdant housekeeping / union of science spirituality art." Immediately I was hooked into the book's wonderful adventure of haunting words and images describing the place "where the arts are heart arts:/ pure acts./ of the educated heart."

To acts of the centuries, McCaslin couples her poetic voice with her husband's photography. Each lets their hearts respond to the Cariboo fires of 2017, in the Interior of B.C., which ravaged land near a family property. Their responses are visceral and speak heart-to-heart with readers. The concluding sequence *Corona Corona* asks, "Can we uncrown ourselves as lords of creation / since heavy crowns bear death - not regeneration?"

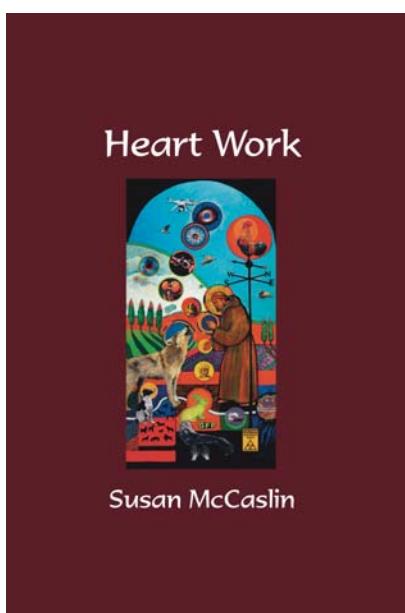
Heart Work pleads that we each are needed to seek within to listen to our hearts, to create in our own ways and to plant "new seeds." I closed this book feeling my heart beat. I felt invigorated.

Author's statement:

Heart Work consists of four interrelated sections: 1) *Songs for Hildegard*, based on visionary images received by the 12th-century German mystic Hildegard von Bingen; 2) *Negative Capability Suite*, meditations on jewel-like excerpts from the letters of the Romantic poet John Keats; 3) *Cariboo Fires, 2017*, a union of my minimalist poems and photographs by my husband Mark Haddock depicting the devastation of the fires of that year in B.C.'s Interior; and 4) *Corona Corona*, a sequence on the impact of the Covid pandemic that began in 2020. As I was sewing these apparently disparate sections together, I discovered the unifying metaphor I was seeking had been expressed perfectly in a line from the poet Rainer Maria Rilke: "The work of the eyes is done. Go now and do the heart-work on the images imprisoned within you" ("Turning Point"). *Heart Work* in this sense is not merely emotional work, but a unifying process within the soul that integrates both thinking and feeling within a vaster field. To do "heart work" is to let the linear mind sink, even if momentarily, into the depths of the heart, a seat of consciousness where we, the creatures, the earth, and the cosmos are one luminous field.

Note:

"before Heraclitus sang" from *Cariboo Fires*: Heraclitus was a Pre-Socratic philosopher who argued that the primal element of the world was fire.



from Songs for Hildegard

Hildegard Meets St. Francis and the Wolf
(a meditation on Betty Spackman's Panel 9
of "A Creature Chronicle")

The cosmos lives in layers
as a collage vibrates in layered images

Old and new past and present converge
Chronos and Kairos kiss

linear time and timelessness
find places to embrace

lines and circles play hide and seek
beneath a rooster's weathervane

where St. Francis bows
Suddenly we are here now

with haloed brother Hare
Francis and his pal Bro Wolf

who it is said Frank "tamed"
or rather gentled by kindness

food respect No wonder
the saint's hands wear halos

extending peace to all
Under Wolf's belly squats

a pert everyday dog
golden-nimbused

perhaps like the mutt
a Palestinian woman

once riffed on with Jesus
cheekily insisting

"Even dogs get a few scraps
so why not me?" Jesus turns

listens Barrier breaker
So many circles Hildegard

like your own rotating mandalas
one of which soars above Francis' head

along with the wild geese who know
the way home

from Cariboo Fires, 2017



before Heraclitus sang
the world is fire

fire honed the words
we breathe

flame, again we meet you—
but what a sharpening edge



monkish cow
sentinels a spindly grove

not much to munch
against a stark blue sky

passersby stares
cow stares back



picnickers who once fingered
mysteries of pine's puzzle bark

now enter strange new saturnalias
singing a forest's darkened beauty

title poem from Corona Corona (a crown of sonnets)

Corona Corona

What kind of crown bears death?
 What kind of queen hefts quarantine?
 Parasitic in a liminal zone
 you are a spiky shell
 unaware of the damage wreaked
 Our economies forged dark streams
 pathways for your kind of havoc
 We check our devices
 listen to the newscasts
 watch our Netflix flicker
 hunker in the void
 co-avoiding physical contact
 incarnate and encapsulated
 dreaming new modes of being

Dreaming new modes of being
 I wonder why I'm addressing you
 You're just one of many sub-streams –
 SARS, Spanish flu, Bubonic Plague
 We sit with storytellers, re-configure
 Boccaccio's *Decameron*, clutch Julian of Norwich's
Revelations of Divine Love, ponder Dicken's
 "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times"
 self-isolate with Camus' *The Plague*
 knowing *nothing's new under the sun*
 Stranded in para-doxology, we give thanks for
 this contemplative pause
 from compulsory progress, Gaia's chance
 to take a breath as the wild creatures return

Taking a breath as the wild creatures return
 we peer through the global membrane
 ears cupped to a hermit thrush's spiraling song
 held in the arc of a great blue heron's flight
 When poems interweave
 with light and dark they sing, stranded
 between lament and praise
 thanksgiving and trembling,
 our vast unknowing graced by love
 small acts of compassion,
 heartwork of the justice imagination
 prayers for collective transfiguration
 Can we uncrown ourselves as lords of creation
 since heavy crowns bear death – not regeneration?

Susan McCaslin is an established poet from Fort Langley, B.C., who has been writing since the age of twelve when she discovered the magic of great books and the power of poetic language. In graduate school at Simon Fraser in 1969, poetry found her again and became her life's deep vocation. She is drawn to the mystical traditions of many cultures and religions and experiences poetry as a musicality arising from silence.

CREATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Monte Barwick



During this ‘daze’ of COVID concern and changes, when people ask me how I’m coping, my usual answer is something like, “I am doing as fine as can be, thank you.” Here is a slightly extended version.

This has been a year of reflection, redefinition and redirection. Seeing the silver and gold in the cloud of unknowns has not always been easy. Working and living as an artist and musician, with many hats, already has its own challenges, yet before the pandemic struck I was busy enough, enjoying a variety of outlets and incomes. Early last year, I was content to see that my calendar was satisfactorily filling up – when zip, POW, bang, everything changed.

Corporate events, weddings, dry grad gigs, etc. were all cancelled; classes were called off. I had been teaching several in-person music and art courses and facilitating guitar/banjo/ukulele jams and sing-alongs with students, friends, the differently-abled and seniors. Live sketch-artist bookings all over B.C. got postponed – even online drawing commissions and lessons dropped off; jamming with other musical friends abruptly halted. It seems I have always been a uniquely creative individual – really just like everyone else, and bringing out the inner creative in others has always been an important part of what I do. I was having fun while earning a nice living, but now what?

Happily, my online cartoon work and caricature commissions are still, slowly but steadily, rolling along. For information and samples see www.caricaturesbymonte.com

Thankfully too, I have several stringed instruments I can play and practise. Generally, I am more interested in playing, creating and teaching rather than marketing, but one of the projects I had fun with was making a video-ad-demo for my online guitar, banjo, ukulele and bass lessons. You can find it on my Monte Barwick Creative Facebook page.

For lessons contact: montebarwickcreative@gmail.com

Staying safe and responsible is totally understandable, although keeping socially distanced has probably been my biggest challenge. For me, creativity loves company. At caricature gigs I seem to perform best, at least the fastest, when I have a lineup watching me draw. I am much slower in the studio but, to be fair, the digitally drawn gift-type caricatures I do are much more refined and of higher quality. Taking a new look at what I do has been good for me. I still love teaching and performing live music as well. I am especially missing the revelry of connection and interaction jamming with friends, and of course the get-

Caricatures by Monte





Time Machine

**When I start to sense
my thoughts sinking...
I pick up my guitar, lift
my head, and sing.**

togethers with family, friends, community and the world at large. I've had to examine how I might refocus my love of social interaction.

The slogan of these trying times, 'We're all in this together,' takes on a deeper meaning as time goes by. You can see it in (most) people's eyes beyond the masks. Glimpses of possible positivity, or is it positive possibility. Either way, I feel the extended alone time has been valuable in helping to evolve and reinvent myself. It's a good thing that I have lots of projects and ideas on the back burner to continue to work on. In addition, I am grateful for the wealth of self-discovery gleaned over the years, which has made the acceptance of this collective shock to the system somewhat more palatable – like the mindfulness training received recently with Corrine Crockett, plus new thought, brain changing books and workshops. Filled with art and music, my journey has kept me learning and growing on the road to recovery – in every sense of the word. I could write a book, perhaps titled *It's All Ancient History Now or Where Do I Begin?*

The spirit of creative pursuit, along with determination, plus talent/skill development have all been major healing agents in my crazy, hazy but adventurous life. This past year, 2020-21, has opened a new chapter in my unfolding story. I am filled with appreciation for who, what, why and where I am. Practising, daily I am taking whatever steps I can, towards creating my vision of a perfect picture of an ideal reality for everyone concerned. I am a perpetual work in progress.

As a significant part of the creative services I offer, I am watching diverse strands of my experience weave together as I study to attain Professional Life Coach certification. I want to help others find their purpose, improve their lives and encourage their innate creative aspirations. As I train, I have begun to offer free coaching calls. Please note this coaching service is not a substitute for medical help, nor are these calls counselling, consulting or advising. I do, however, note these calls can fill a need for social interaction, both theirs and mine, as I share with others looking to recreate or modify their paths. For more information, contact montebarwickcreative@gmail.com.

Other pleasures I have been able to do more of are cartooning for fun (at one time I regularly produced and sold cartoons to newspapers and magazines) and song-writing for myself. I'm recognising how to let my creative spirit increase my personal joy. Here are some lyrics from one of the songs I have written during these months. When I start to sense my thoughts sinking... I pick up my guitar, lift my head, and sing:

Oh it's another great day to be alive and breathing,
Another glad day from the start.
Grateful to be here and now receiving,
The joy that quickens my heart.

So yesterday has passed and the future is tomorrow,
The passage of time a flowing stream.
Here I am alive, aware that life is borrowed,
Awakening from a dream to a dream.

PAINTING A MIRROR OF SELF

Douglas Stuart & Karen Close

“My career was as a folk musician, but, back in 1970 at age 28, painting and studying art and artists became my compulsion. I still feel the moment clearly. My artist mother-in-law, Frederika Epp, sat me down at a table set up with a mirror and supplies, directing me to ‘Paint what you see.’”

Enderby, B.C., retiree and artist Douglas Stuart has continued to take his mother-in-law’s advice for fifty plus years. He is a man who has allowed study, experience, emotion and reflection to enlarge his life. Now, in his late seventies, he reflects on living with art, his own and works by those he has known. He exudes pleasure and understanding. “How one, myself or others, chooses to look and compose a subject into a painting is very revealing. I have learned empathy through art and that is so important.”

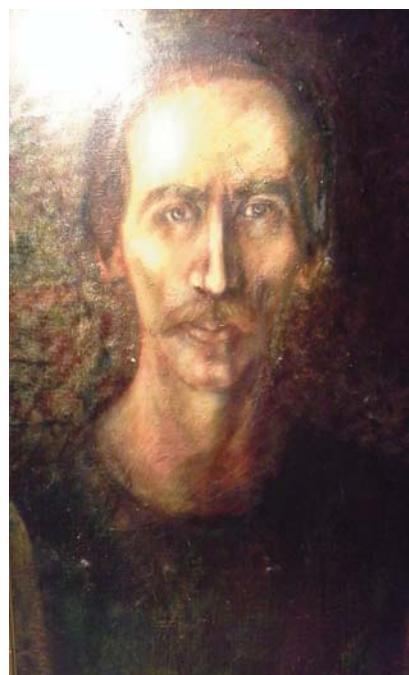
Stuart is moved to recount how exposure to German Expressionist printmaker and sculptor Käthe Kollwitz became a great influence. His admiration was made complete when an exhibition of her works was brought to Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. Deeply moving for Stuart was *Unemployment*, a 1909 etching and aquatint. He felt with this distraught man, his eyes widened and his brow furrowed in worry, sitting by the bedside of his wife and three sleeping children, contemplating his inability to provide for them. Stuart also has great love for the Romantic painters, who he says knew how to touch that chord that is deep inside us and we need to feel. “Touching that chord is what I have tried to do in my art.”

Stuart learned much from Vancouver artist Gary Knoedel. He was a fine painter. “I was so impressed with his fabulous eye and skilled technique. In this portrait I hope I captured the penetration, gentle directness and concern I felt in Knoedel’s company. He was a man who truly cared. Years later, I was reconnected with his daughter and very pleased to be able to give her my portrait of her father who had recently passed. She loved it.

From 1999 to 2004 Stuart and wife Corrie lived in Fujairah, one of the seven United Arab Emirates located on the coast of the Indian Ocean. He recalls their time there as part of the Emirate’s golden time – to be able to watch the incredibly rapid development that the discovery of oil stimulated. This painting is of an area called the Empty Quarter, the Arabian desert. The population lives around the desert in the Hajar Mountains. Stuart’s composition gives life to the emptiness of the unpopulated desert area. He remembers the dunes were always shifting, but always spectacular. There is oil under the ground, but nothing can live on the surface; still, the desert itself is alive. “If you let your guard down the desert will take you, yet it is so calm seeming.” This painting captures the red light that the desert takes on when



Below *Unemployment* by Käthe Kollwitz
Bottom My great friend and mentor Gary Knoedel





Top to bottom, left column: *The Empty Quarter*, My studio in summer, *The Enderby Cliffs*, *Mating for Life*, swans flying over Lake Shuswap, Self-portrait in terra cotta
Right column: A work in progress, Self-portrait



the light, directly overhead, is reflected by the sand.

Stuart was adopted and recollects his fortune in the perfection of his growing-up years. In a turn of events, these years brought him to his present home in Enderby, in a setting that encourages him to look back on the adventures of his life.

The painter laughs that an old woodshed has become his studio, but he enhances it to welcome his creativity. The cliffs of Enderby beckoned in this most recent work and he felt a call to express his contentment with where his practice now finds him. “I believe a camera

misses as much as it gets,” he remarks. “My paintings don’t try to replicate, but more importantly to express my delight, my satisfaction with all my life has encountered.” Near my home, the Enderby cliffs tower high above the Shuswap River, offering breathtaking views of the Shuswap and North Okanagan regions. Hikers atop the cliffs can take a step back in time to the Tertiary Period and watch the soaring birds play on the updrafts created by the steep rock face. Stuart’s painting dramatises his personal view.

Stuart explains that there were many years when birds weren’t coming to his area and he missed them. “Use of DDT on the crops drove them away. When I watch flying creatures, my heart soars with them. My mother taught me to be tuned into nature, and I loved these two swans when I saw them. I have been married for almost 51 years and their love and loyalty is what I felt.”

Stuart reminisces, “Painting has opened my eyes, and I continue to look into its mirror.” He concludes by quoting a belief that has directed and brought meaning to his life.

“He who works with his hands is a laborer.

He who works with his hands and his head is a craftsman.

He who works with his hands and his head and his heart is an artist.”

– Saint Francis of Assisi

THE LIGHT OF PANDEMIC

TIME TO FOCUS

Valary Howard



I have lived in deep imagination since I was a little girl. When I used to make up songs, my aunt told me mine were VERY creative. Often that's meant: "There's no one else like you. You are so unusual."

For a while that difference hurt me terribly. I liked to read, and my sister-in-law teased me about it. "Not only did you finish school and go to university, but then you became a teacher so you could read all the time. HAHAHAHA."

With the pandemic we have all been forced into our own spaces, so that we can explore our own urges, leanings, desires and interests. If we live alone, we can start and then leave our stuff anywhere. On the kitchen table. Or on top of the bed. Even on the living room floor. All are okay until someone comes to visit. Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, there are not so many visitors these days. Mac Cat doesn't mind my mess as he can sniff and step as usual.

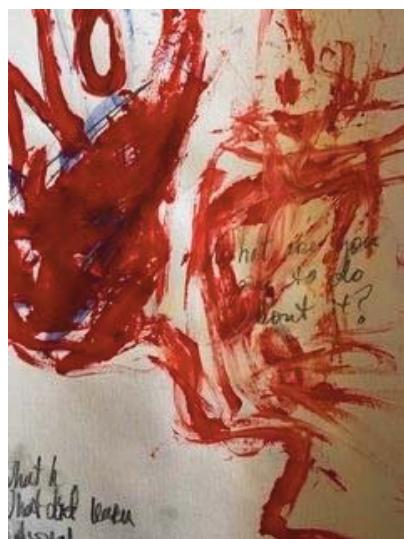
Over the years I have explored meditation in many different ways. Recently, a heart- centred meditation, including gold light, led me to a surprise realization. Each day, if I wake in time, I join Lynn Fraser in Nova Scotia by Zoom to do a breathing relaxation. Such practices have helped me to breathe more evenly, be aware of when I'm not breathing, show me when I hold my breath and how often I hold my breath. The heart meditation brought me into deep awareness of my inner self and capabilities. I was very relaxed enjoying the gold light and sensitive feelings. But as we quietly

concluded, I experienced a huge NOOOOOO passing through me like a force field. The NO seemed to cover three-quarters of my body and was red and black and dark and yelling.

A friend asked, "What were you saying NO to?" It seemed the NO was compiled of terrible things: my frozen lack of response, my sinking in and disappearing. NO NO NO. I was saying NO to hiding away from myself as I pushed against what in the world was holding me back. Continuing to breathe big breaths, I was startled to

Left: NO as a Force Field

Right: Letting Go NO





feel such negative energy releasing. How much do we hold on to throughout our lives? How much pain and suffering do we endure, how much pressing of ourselves into sorrow? I had such a big NO to realize, recognize and refuse. NOOOOOOOOOOOOO

And then, a second later, I sensed a cheeky little voice: so what are you going to do about it?

I want to write from golden light:
The golden heart centre
The place of being
Although the past can drag us down
We are free to try again
Thank you bright sky day
For all your light and freshness
So much good feeling
A new beginning

Valary Howard started sky photography in Edmonton's river valley and would rise at all hours to catch what colour and light she could. More recently her focus has been closer to her new home, writing haiku and painting, and taking photos of sky, plants, and people. Valary posts regularly on Facebook and new friends are welcome to join her there.

Top: *What are you going to do?*

Middle: *Winter sky, 2021*

Above: Drawing of summer flowers

TROUBLED TIMES

Robert MacDonald



Robert MacDonald was a graphic artist who became a typographer, who became a printer, who became a publisher, who became an information architect, who became a program director, who became a writer, who became a designer – and who still can't get over how much fun it all was in spite of the vicissitudes of fate and fortune. Now an avid reader, social activist, and cottage gardener in the outrageously beautiful and strange Okanagan valley, he still often rises to a creative challenge, especially if type, ink, paper, and glue are involved.

www.bookstone.ca

The reader might note that my outlook in the three poems I've submitted below do not tilt toward the sunny side of life. The prevailing winds herewith blow trouble, the skies are generally cloudy, the hearts of victims and victors prove cold, and people's lives are relentlessly invaded by propaganda and misfortune. Additionally, there is much forboding, gloom, angst, disdain, despair, profanity, insults, and general unpleasantness. Life, inevitably, is compromised. I make no apologies for any of that and leave it up to the reader to find the thin hope of grace still evident in these difficult passages.

A VISIT TO THE LIFE ADJUSTER

Thank you for being understanding
of our failures it's been difficult
making adjustment to reality.

You know that we didn't mean to
wander into the virus wilderness
nor rend the fragile fiber of nature.

Speaking of which might we remind
you that trees in your backyard need
more than horticultural attention.

We know we scared you with lies
because we came under magic spells
were witness to bad interventions.

Let us know whether you want to
continue therapy and contribute
further to study your indications.

We should also remind you your
bill due you don't have much room
to maneuver because you're crazy.

As a loon, you have a number of
choices about how to justify truth
or make sense of that other thing.

We welcome a chance to show
how we might further discuss your
goal of being no where any more.

What once might have been clear
is clouded by choice not likely to
achieve a pure integrative goal.

Instead can we suggest the end
of everything old, and a new new to
satisfy our need of more revenue.

Let us gather in topical warmth
therapeutics of submission instead
living in suburbs counting change.

There's blockchange for example
which gives pennies on dollars
and makes you feel power full.

For medication, let's visit the drug
user next door who feels great that
brutalists no longer bash his doors.

Demanding payment may seem
impertinent if you will just pay
attention a few moments more.

Until goodbye is the only course
of therapy we can offer to some
one who is no longer able to pay.

Here's how that might work for
your children and grandchildren
pay now and keep paying until.

There is no more you to protect
and we might wonder whether
the legacy has revenue potential.

Let's think about the possibility
of you grifting your descendants
an annuity that we squeeze dry.

Just long enough for the lawyers
to figure out how to drain the sink
you spewed your last bile into.

WAITING TIME

"All we have to do is to challenge and defeat the values of a society based on the contradictory myths of progress and authority."

– George Woodcock

She stood there
on the top step
before descending
into the street

thereby leaving
her life behind
for another with less
sad pretending

in order to be perfect
without privilege
in order to be ordinary
without danger

and as she stepped
off the last step
just as the sunlight
disappeared

the street rose up to
meet her
and she went down
into the void

just one more
ordinary life
made whole while
the planet spins

landing on her feet
head in clouds
heart beating
ancient rythms

she stood in wonder
of the magic
of rebirth
and wondered

the wonder of it all
beyond compare
challenging despair
and disappearing

MANIFEST DENSITY

1.

In the days before time, out beyond civilization, guardians soared in mighty flights over the daily ministrations of beautiful people.

They were nature people, wild people, people of sacrament and power, all watched over by the transcendent eyes of mystic women.

They tested their skills against the legends, the wisdom of the soil, the plants, the birds, the animals, the magic that shares its secrets.

2.

As history still tells it, strange wanderers from troubled places arrived without warning, to spill their spent sperm on new soil.

At first just a few, but more and more found excuse of exploration to steal away to new found land, invent a new avarice to despoil it.

Filling the opportunity created by colonists, fooled, failed, and fucked over their hosts for more than seven generations, even now.

3.

White, the least natural colour, was never worth fighting for, or over; leaves all forebearers and mythtellers cold, desperate in the snow.

There are always easier ways to overcome heartbreak than prayer, not least that it led to pretensions that became impossible to erase.

There was no heft or spiritual heave to the timber members erected to support pilgrim shelters, and their shallow myths all fell down.

4.

Settlers looked out through narrow slits into the aboriginal forest, missed the peace lesson that could easily have stirred them to glory.

All they had to offer was fear, easy glory, sleazy trinket trades, lies, and a load of jumbo about some dead savior in the faraway.

Surprised by power and magic beyond their reckoning, they clung to old habits, built suburbs, never bothered to plead for forgiveness.

5.

What we've all learned from the stories that've come down to us is that we need to speak truth to history, learn from toxic lessons.

Promise the future, make better by being the better version of our best intentions, seek honest justice, clear a clean path forward.

Otherwise, it will be us, all that's left, taking another failed journey, forgetting to celebrate, denying the originators, staining the future.

SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

The Journal of Creative Aging

Edited by Karen Close

NUMBER 35, SPRING2021
ISSN 1920-5848

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A PUBLICATION OF THE
OKANAGAN INSTITUTE
AVAILABLE ONLINE AT
www.sageing.ca

Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude exists to honour the transformational power of creativity. We are a quarterly journal intended as an initiative for collaboration and sharing. We present the opportunity for the free exchange of wisdom gleaned from creative engagement. We invite all ages to contribute their discoveries.

Sage-ing is about seeking - satisfying inner gnawing and transforming it to knowing and action. Ageing can be alchemy when one allows the realisation that to *Know Thyself* and contribute that knowing to our culture is indeed one of life's highest purposes. That knowing brings the gratitude, grace and integrity that a life deserves. The creative journey into self is a strong aid to health and well-being for the individual and to our culture.

This journal exists for all those serious in exploring their creativity, in a chosen expression. It is a forum for publication and exposure to other artists, both novice and established. This journal is an easel for any form of artistry undertaken out of personal intuition and imagination.