

Poetry: The Art of Healing by Terri Glass

Poetry is one of the most holistic art forms for it bridges the trinity of heart, soul and body with human language. It links emotion with the rhythm of the body through cadence and meter and draws from imagery that has been hidden deep within the unconscious. Through this linking, a new discovery or insight can be made. In this state of linking, the soul speaks to you. I call it the place of no space and time, the place of magic.

Gary Snyder, the Pulitzer Prize winning poet stated poetry is a lion because it eats and intensifies natural speech. Consider a form of language that eats and intensifies. Poetry allows the surprising imagery of the unconscious (the complexity of human emotion and memory) to be articulated by the logical structure of speech (the eating). When the unconscious images are brought into the light through imagery, sound and metaphor, transformation can take place. The very meaning of metaphor is linking two unlike objects together, making a new connection. Marion Woodman, a noted psychotherapist, concluded once we become in touch with archetypal imagery, the image moves in, altering the neurotransmitter system and healing can begin.

For me, growing up in a typical dysfunctional 50's household, poetry became my saving grace. Any frustration, anger, or separation I felt I could express in poetry and watch its images transform my feelings into something mysterious and powerful.

I call poetry a soothsayer for when it brings unconscious material to the surface, it often reveals truths the rational mind is not aware of. In my teens I wrote poems I hadn't a clue what they meant until two years had passed and I had time to integrate the message. Still that happens. T.S. Eliot stated the poems he loved the most, he didn't understand. I believe he loved the mystery of poetry.

The poet Stanley Kunitz wrote, " Poetry wants to come out of your wilderness, your deepest Africa. Immerse yourself in your body and find constellations of images that are uniquely yours." What a wonderful image, your deepest Africa, a place that is wild, dangerous and beautiful. By writing poetry, each individual has the opportunity to bridge the unknown wild images of the unconscious to the conscious mind. The logical structure of language becomes constellations for they shed light on what has remained hidden, displaying a unique pattern of sound and images, forever changing us in a surprising way.

Terri Glass is a professional poet and writer who coordinates the California Poets in the Schools program in Marin County and holds workshops nationally for teachers and educators. Please visit her website at www.thefoxpath.net.