

ART

EDITORIAL

the art of light &

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SURFING THE CREATIVE EDGE WITH YOUTH

WHILE IT IS TRUE that any authentic spiritual path will eventually need to confront and embrace the Great Dance of Opposites, it is perhaps uniquely true of the Artist-Seeker. For she engages in a creative process that specifically lends itself to incorporating the extremes of Light and Dark that pervade human experience, and attempts to integrate both in a holistic vision.

There has been much talk about “the healing power of the creative process” on these pages and elsewhere. And yet in the face of Auschwitz survivor Marian Kolodziej’s story on page 12,

all such talk suddenly begins to sound empty and frivolous, for who among us has had to put the transformational power of art to the test in the extreme way that he has?

But we must not throw away the entire idea of “art as a healing force” simply because it cannot necessarily stand up to the superhuman test of life at Auschwitz. Because those of us nursing less dramatic wounds *can* make significant progress towards wholeness through walking a creative path. And along the Way of the Artist, one is bound to meet both God and Demons, and the skillful practitioner is able to use both as raw material for the transformational process of making art. Except sometimes.



I LEARNED SOMETHING VITAL through performing in musical comedies: when it’s time for the finale, for a foot-stomping, crowd-pleasing, belt-it-out big finish, *it doesn’t matter how one feels*. When the curtain opens, it is truly irrelevant that one’s lover has just walked out, or that one may be on the down side of a mood swing. All personal feelings aside, the actor learns the art of *stepping through* whatever may be occurring in one’s interior, emotional life, and “giving it a hundred percent,” holding nothing back. And invariably, one emerges transformed from such acts of total commitment: whatever was weighing me down in the wings has somehow been cleansed on stage by the rejuvenating energy of the Self fully expressed.



Wild Heart Journal Publisher Eliezer Sobel has been named the winner of the annual Peter Taylor Prize for his novel, *Minyan: Ten Jewish Men in a World That is Heartbroken*. It was selected from 400 entries, and will be published by the University of Tennessee Press next Fall.

dark

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In creativity workshops, I dub this phenomenon “Finale Energy,” and ask participants to temporarily put aside their personal concerns, moods and agendas, and burst forth into song with complete engagement and real enthusiasm—*real*, as distinct from pretending. And everyone can do it, almost as if there is a magic inner switch we can turn on, providing we are willing to let go of our personal dramas and dive into true self-expression.

Often it takes the actual reality of a stage and an audience for us to gather up such willingness. Without that external incentive, it is difficult to utilize this inherent force in daily life. Optimally, and ideally, we would approach each moment of the day as if the curtain was rising on the next show-stopping scene of our lives, demanding the best and most of us, but few among us can sustain such passionate presence all the time.

Yet all of the expressive arts provide a practice ground for such transformation. There is a moment in dance, or painting, or writing when we *step through* the ego and its endless yammerings, into a zone of “flow,” of spontaneous expression that is both restorative and healing. Through continuous repetition of this process—this *practice*—the balance in our being as to who’s running the show gradually shifts; such is the nature of the arts as a healing, spiritual path.

–E.S.

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