

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? ARTISTS' ENQUIRY

ABERYSTWYTH : NOVEMBER 2017

A SEVEN DAY JOURNEY

An invitation.
A process begins -
or a new phase
of an old process that began
inside the struggles
long ago.
Arriving here at the starting line of an expedition
my soul says 'yes' .

*But can my body manage it?
And am I really an artist?*

I travel north
three hundred and fourteen miles.
It feels perfectly right
though I have a sense
of something dying.
I don't know what.

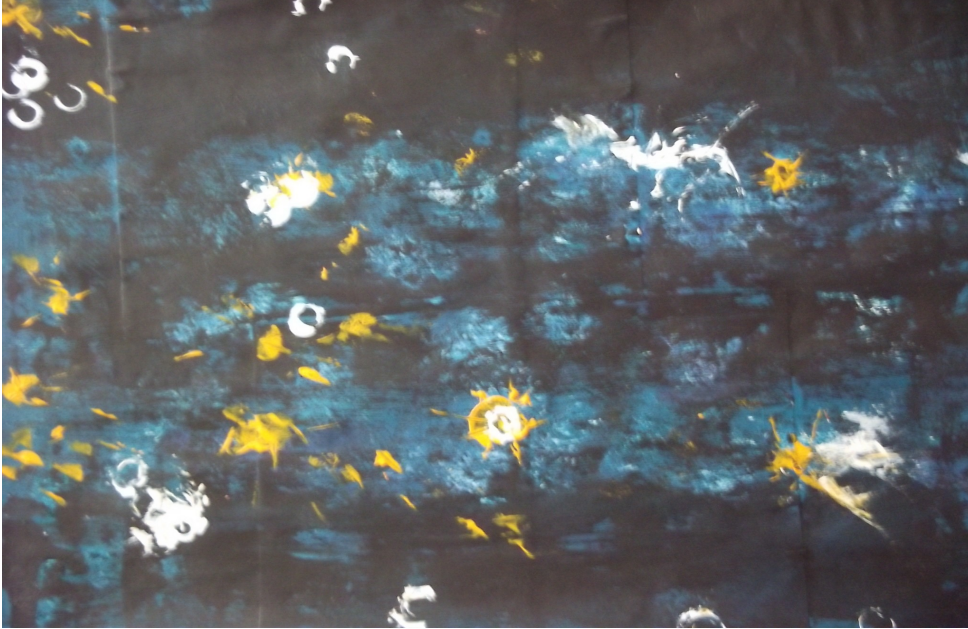
I am carried
into the risky territory
of love
that is capable of holding.

The pilgrimage is taking me
through
a valley
to another place.

I understand this
before I begin.
I have no idea how.
I have no idea
what this other place looks like.

DAY ONE

there are many shades of dark
deeper than night



Here
already,
within hours -
in the blackness.
Messages of gloom
amplified.
It's OVER!
You're BROKEN.
Everything louder,
sharper,
crystal clear.

But it's not new.-
these dumb voices
ranting in my head
increasing in volume
for two years
and more

since my father died,
since my energy began
to drain
away
since I began

to sink
further.
It's the same valley
with the same shadows....

only this time, others wander here - travel – witness - accompany.

* * * *

Going downwards.
Going inwards.
What is your question?
What is your quest?



Photo with permission of my brother PGA

*How can I live my life now?
What do I need in this moment?*

A series of enquiries.
Not just one.
Questions come.
I let them disturb me,
watch them like water
passing,
boulders shifting
beneath its skin
until
something new flows ...



My illness and grief are signposts pointing me to ancient writings in my brain. I follow them like a lost sheep. Magnetic messages from the past combine with the general consensus that women of a certain age are of little value. I am pulled down, right into the heart of this familiar ground. If I was invisible when I was young, it feels worse now.

Unseen

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To be born into the world
would be an end of grief
the beginning of being known
in another dimension.
The end of labour pains,
the learning of a new language,
the language of breath
the language of touch
suffering
in another colour.
Companions honour
the appearing
of a dignified shade,
raw in sunlight,
glistening in darkness,
that nods to every lost child,
says I know where you are,
you are not alone.
Home is this way ...

DAY TWO

Exhausted.
Little sleep.
I don't struggle against it.
I stay



sitting in our circle
of honesty
and few word,
with tokens
of nature.

A dead leaf
a fear of dying away
grief at the breaking of our world.

A rock
cracked in the centre.
What do I want with this?

*What do I need to let go of?
What do I need to mourn?*

An experiment of movement and sound

lifting and shifting
surprises something light
in me.

* * *

I cannot move
against resistance.

It hurts.
Sadness. *I want to.*
I want to be able to.

Falling. *I can*
do this.
I give in
to my falling.
Permission to collapse
safely, softly.

Then,
flying
from the floor
my voice
cuts through the air.
Rising energy.
Settling.

From here
I radiate.
It takes nothing
at all
except a focus
on being
natural.

TO THE FOREST



I see.....
I see everything
in techni colour.

Mud
rich
vibrant with life.

I hear.....
I hear birdsong
amplified, water giggling,

leaves
sound like soft brushes
on cymbals.



I touch
I touch the deep scars
of a tree



Still.
I can lean on it.
It knows far more than me.

How can I be with the sharpness of breaking?

DAY THREE

[The Buried Moon – H-Net](#) [right click here for the story](#)

Buried moon
lost from the sky
lost to her shining.

here
in the bog
under boulders

mourning
waiting
being.

What are you marking?
Who do you think you are?
What is your essence, your purpose?

Who am I? Who am I?
I am the moon
shouting
but no one hears.

Poetry Space

I learn a poem,
bring it to the listening place.

I perform it
like never before.

They are *my* words.
It is *my* voice.

I take my turn -
fill the space.

Reaching in
beyond ears

I feel the hearts
of seven women

held here
in this moment.

* * * * *

Who am I? Who am I?
I am still
the moon.

Who am I? Who am I?

I am the woman who writes words that honour the wound and speaks them into dark places.

This is who I am. And more

THE BEACH

Today we visit Ynys Las and it's beautiful. We are invited to find stones – one to throw into the sea . One to be kept.



What are you letting go of?

I choose a huge boulder. Too heavy. I know I shouldn't. My body won't like it. Tomorrow I will pay. I can barely lift it. Determination. Pushing myself. I want the boulder to go. I want my life to change – to be different when I get home. Off it goes – sinks. I feel the same.

CAPEL Y CRAIG AT NIGHT

I stand alone
in candlelight
cold
in this holy shell

sing
from the pulpit.
The walls embrace
my sound.

Notes rise
like a swollen tide
and fall
silent.

Choirs of angels
could sing
in exultation
here.

DAY FOUR

Something is happening.....
I am being received !
It's amazing.....
but what does this mean when I get home ?
The Underneath Voice rattles on.
She has a point.
Questions simmer.
I still have chronic fatigue.
I still have sleep apnoea.
Everything is changing.
Nothing is changing.

GOING SOLO

I go on the bus through villages. Hills green, so green, and lambs, even in November.

I am revisiting the capel. The bus stops outside the red doors and I am greeted with warmth and offered drinks. I am given the blankets and cushions I had asked for. Preparing for this day I knew I had to put my body first. Warmth. A few snacks. Layers. Even a mattress and my hot water bottle.

I walk over the threshold into a bare space and try out my voice from the pulpit. I read a poem. Words echo around the walls and floor. I speak and wait....speak and wait until sound comes back to me. There are no listeners only cold bricks. Cold, yes, but somehow welcoming. And I don't feel cold. The building responds as if it is breathing. It's breathing what I have spoken. Living it.

I sing. Last night I sang into candlelight. Today I sing into the stark light of day. It's harsher. Yet I can sense the power of the building to lift and strengthen my voice.



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I read another poem. I wrote it six years ago - a long poem that tells the story of the Buried Moon.

I read it again – moving and acting it. Up and down. The tone of my voice lifting and falling – me lifting and falling. Stamping. It sounds like a troop of soldiers. There is strength in my legs and feet – volume and rhythm. Pounding. A troop marching to release the moon. The boulder is gone. Then flying. Free. All of the space is mine and I take it. I cheer from the pulpit. I am seen. The moon shines again. Applauding, celebrating....

Suddenly it's too much. I flop onto the mattress. Under the covers with my hat on, with my hottie, I am still - listening to sounds – cars mainly as they rush around in their outside lives.

I stay and stay. Nothing happening except I have given myself permission to be here. There's a sound. Someone creeps into the space. An item they need is taken. My

stillness is disturbed by a wondering....what do they think of me lying here? A touch of shame.

I crawl out and slowly begin to move again. It's almost time.

My host drives me into town for the next phase of my journey. Aberystwyth is disappointing because it's a town and it brings me sharply back into the mundane. My bag is too heavy. Another wave of tiredness sweeps over me. I am not interested in anything except stopping and eating. I look for a café. Too exhausted to trail around, I find somewhere and sit at the table. Two men come over. One is a chef- a large black man who is proud of his menu. It is hard for him to appreciate the complexity of my diet. I settle for poached eggs. The place feels heartless. I listen to my ipod trying to drown out the ordinary – the ordinary and the pulsating hubbub of modern life. It seems like a bad decision to come into town this afternoon. Did I follow my heart? I don't know. I feel I was altogether too tired to have an adventure.

I go back to my room and paint shapes into my art journal using the three colours I have. I don't know what I am painting.

DAYS FIVE AND SIX

6 am
emerging
from the painting. -
a title
'the moon behind bars'



light is coming through

THE NEXT TWO DAYS WE SHARE THE STORIES OF OUR SOLO ADVENTURES

My Themes Summed Up

In dark and light
I fall
I rise
high and low, high and low
flying
collapsing
ricocheting from one
to the other.

Buried
weighed down
lost
in a bog
gathering words -
what it means to be here.
Collecting, honing crystals
of truth.

Hidden
radiant
unheard
proclaiming
invisible
shining
gifts from the heart of pain.
Bridging the gap.

A new enquiry :

How can I collapse softly?

How can I fall safely, land lightly?

How can I move smoothly from the dark to the light, from inside to outside?

DAY SEVEN

TURNING OUTWARDS

After our seven days of ceremony and ritual we conduct our own public event: A Women's Ceremony of Peace and Blessing at Capel Y Craig. It is Remembrance Sunday. Women have been invited to bring water from meaningful places as part of the ceremony.

The seven of us make a framework together and now we offer it. Each one of us contributes something personal, something fitting, something unique.



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And in the sharing of it, it is made perfectly beautiful.

HOMEWARD

HEALING

I brought my longing with me
in a basket of things
all muddled with questions.

I brought my hope,
my desperate determination,
life could not continue in its old patterns.

I brought myself in a heart-shaped bag
for you to see. I opened it up,
held it out for you to know.

I poured it out for something to happen
a kind of operation to manoeuvre
the constructions of me.

*And you saw me
and you heard me
and you held me
and I am exactly the same
and I am deeply transformed*

OUTWORKING

TWO MONTHS ON – JANUARY

When I get home I have a soft landing. It's still bumpy at times though I am learning to live with the bumps in the road - and I am turning corners. I am investing in the woman I am – the writer, offering words from dark places (as well as light ones sometimes!). My health is slowly improving. I am beginning to sleep better and have more energy.

Just before Christmas I signed a publishing contract and am currently working on a new book for traumatised children. The moon is beginning to shine again.

Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart,
and try to love the questions themselves
as if they were locked rooms
or books written in a very foreign language.

Do not search for the answers, which could not be given to you now,
because you would not be able to live them.

And the point is to live everything.

Live the questions now.

Perhaps then, someday far in the future,
you will gradually,
without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.

Rainer Maria Rilke

*Living the breaking
Living the mending ...*

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