

In A Nutshell

"I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space..."

Wm. Shakespeare

Spring 2006

Crafting It!

by Paul Strashok

I have been, will be and am a writer. I have strong assurance that this is a part and parcel of my calling. Yet, when I look around at the explosion in the writing industry, the vast number of books that are being published, the massive bookstores carrying literally thousands of volumes on every variety of subject (non-fiction and fiction), I sometimes cover in the face of such competition and excess of the written word. In spite of all this, I know I am a word person. I have taken courses where I was asked to visualize, almost on the level of Creative Visualization and have never really encountered a vision, but rather an idea that became my vision. I have also participated in endless relaxation programs that I find boring and encouraging a passivity that only augments the already passive "give-up-itis" of those diagnosed with a mental illness. I know full well, though, especially when I go to a movie or watch television or even look at a photograph, that a picture is worth a thousand words, yet I remain and would still be a word-painter knowing that somewhere along the way there has to be an unloading of all the vain and useless and futile "pictures" that have entered my eye-windows over the years, a cleansing and guarding of the inner man against the flood of the age.

One of the strongest influences in my writing career has been the music, poetry and other works done by the outstanding mystical figure in Canadian literature Leonard Cohen. At one time, when I was going through one of the most excessive spiritual phases of my youth, I had been fasting and praying for about four days. At the end of that time, I found myself sitting on the edge of the bed, singing songs from the first two albums that Mr. Cohen had released (which I had heard years earlier) and weeping with the most intense feelings passing through my whole body. Cohen's songs can be, at times, dark, mysterious, and

almost malevolent, but the content and depth of mystery, the juxtaposition of unique and timeless images, and the consistency of the dreamer's voice open the heart into new horizons, especially when it comes to the romantic heart. And I also know, from his writings, that Cohen is no stranger to the Scriptures, even though he is now a practicing Zen Buddhist.

So as a writer, what shall I write about? This begins the dialogue so prevalent in the writing community about "write what you know" as opposed to "writing what you don't know" - flights of the imagination and I end up with the conclusion that a quantum leap in imagination only takes place for those who have practiced their craft and done their research. Even Tolkein I believe was a Professor of History. So there is that realm that even in imaginative, fantastic or speculative genres of fiction, the writer has some background or special interest in the "hard data" aspects of the work, and the practice of the craft or he or she could not complete the work. I believe that this is true in most non-fiction and especially true in one

(continued page over)

In This Issue:

Crafting It by Paul Strashok.....	front page, 2, 3
Morning Coffee by Terrence Levesque	3
The Writer's Song by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.	4
Responsibility by Oliver Cross	5, 6
Describing Nightmares by Ben Nutall-Smith.....	6, 7
fragments of my love i find by reinhart.....	8, 9
Minute Particulars by A. Feldmár	10, 11
Awakening In Depression by Bob Krzyzewski.....	12, 13
After The Storm by Satya Devi	13
Websites by Byron Fraser	14, 15
Bulletin Board	16
Artwork by reinhart	back cover

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genre that has intrigued and kept my attention both in my youth, and in these latter years, the genre of science fiction.

If I had to write an entire book – these are some of the titles that come to me “The Christian Church’s Role in Dealing with Modern Psychiatry”, “Diary of a Schizophrenic,” “To Ecstasy And Back”, “Individuality and the Corporate Ethic”, “What Price Integrity in the Midst of Chaos”, or “Love Costs All”.

In the fiction genre of sci-fi, I began writing a novel whose story -line came to me in the period of one afternoon. It was actually allegorical to a situation I was in at the time and represented a reaching back for a lost love while I was moving on to a new one. Needless to say, the results were disastrous and the novel was never completed .

And poetry, ah, what can be said about poetry. Modern poetry to me at times is disturbing. I read a quote of Robert Frost, onetime Poet Laureate of the U.S.A. in which he said “writing poetry without rhythm and rhyme is like playing tennis without a net.” I heartily agree, having written many poems that ended up becoming songs (although I’ve written some free verse as well).

I also read a quote from Rilke about “having to write.” Something in you just has to lay the words down whether it be narrative, word-pictures, personal history or sophisticated lies. As to personal history, I now know that there is no therapist or psychiatrist or psychologist that understands me and my illness better than I understand it myself. The chaos and confusion, the ecstasy and the delusion, the tears of deep repentance were unable to be communicated to others at the time. These are all understandable to me now, but will never be communicated without an intense prolonged period of ‘crafting it’ on the word

processor so that feeling, healing and communication should come.

But to tell the story, to weave with words the unimaginable highs and lows of a man who, at one time gave up all hope of ever being so-called ‘well’, ‘whole’, ‘complete’ and succumbed and capitulated to what he had formerly believed to be an evil system; to tell that story would involve the baring of the innermost secrets, thoughts and emotions of the heart.

I was that man, I was the man who believed so strongly that if I had a mental illness, The Almighty God could heal me. That belief and a strong religious ‘ecstatic’ state that carried over from my involvement in Eastern Religion led me into a basic conflict with modern psychiatry because I had no ‘insight’ into my illness. I know, now, that the ‘voices’ that assaulted my

mind were not all authentic expressions of spiritual truth, but rather deceptive voices, on the most part, that led me into confusion. Yet there is authentic spiritual experience embedded in the journey through ‘mental illness’. So not only is it a journey through so-called mental illness, it is a spiritual journey that started long before the illness and is still going on. I once told myself that I could not

*“I was the man
who believed...
the Almighty
God could
heal me.”*

write my story until there had been a complete healing in my life from the diagnosed ‘schizophrenia’, until I had overcome the illness, but now I realize that I must write, in the midst of my situation, compassed about by my trials and tribulations, my weaknesses and my infirmity. I have passed the natural age of 50 (although I feel much more youthful than 50) and the world situation around us is so perilous and daunting that it seems if I don’t tell my story now it will never be told. It is still a journey and it will continue, the over-riding emphasis being that the ‘journey’ is part and parcel of the human condition and the divine experience for which the spirit and soul of humanity innately craves.

The Editorial Board of **In A Nutshell** welcomes letters, articles, and poetry on mental health issues from you, our readers.

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Many of my Christian fellow-travellers are under the impression that, if you believe in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, you become some sort of spiritual 'Superman', some sort of 'perfect' human being. Such a belief often leads to self-righteousness and entering into judgement against others. Soon after my initial 'conversion' experience, I became such a person, always on an incredible high and judging everyone and everything that didn't meet my standards of Christian 'perfection'. I now find that "mercy rejoices against" (or 'smiles in the face of' [NIV]) judgement". The effect of my judgmental attitude became a reaping of judgement against me as the words of Jesus testify "Judge not that ye be judged, forgive and you shall be forgiven" (or 'release and you shall be released' [NIV]). Another matter that I did not take into consideration was that the zealous nature of my former spiritual pursuits had

carried over into my new-found faith in Jesus Christ the Messiah.

So, how does this ultimately relate to being a writer? What it means and how it relates is that there is a rich treasure of experience to draw from, both spiritual and natural, both human and divine and the dichotomy of illness and spirituality may never be resolved, but one thing I do know is that I will continue the craft, lay down words as stones on a pathway into the future and watch as those words begin to form realities heretofore non-existent, heretofore unknown and unrealized. As I submit this writer's portion for publication, I just want to say that we all have a wealth of experience and hope to draw from, as well as new horizons to discover and pursue. Happy crafting everyone!

Morning Coffee

by Terrence Levesque

I'm in a quiet mood, enjoying the morning sun, I'm having my morning coffee and I'm just waking up. I look outside and check the weather, hoping that it will be a nice day. Then I think of what I have to do today. Our phone has been very quiet these days with not many calls. I suppose people have things to do and cannot be on the phone all day. I do not have a car and so I have to take the bus. It is a good way to get around. I have some time now to relax and to get things in order. I have the odd appointment to keep but that does not stress me out.

Everything is fine with me and I'm in a mellow mood. What is going to happen today? I am at a loss to say. I know that in years passed my life has been stressful and upsetting. It is only now, after something like thirty years, that things are settling down.

It will be Christmas soon, the end of another year and I am going to my Aunt's for New Year's Day. I am sitting at my desk, looking out the window. The sun is out, the sky is clear and blue, and it is the end of November. I am looking forward to the New Year with anticipation and there is a hope in my heart. I am

looking forward to the coming days for I know that I cannot go back from where I came, In a way, I am casting my fate to the wind, not knowing what lies ahead. The world has its problems; they are not mine. I want to go again to walk on the beach by the shore and to once again walk in summer. Clearly, I am older now and a little wiser, I think. I am hoping that good things are just around the corner.

*"In a way, I
am casting my
fate to the
wind."*

There is a wonder about life that intrigues me. It casts a spell on me. I will always feel that majesty that surrounds me. I know that some other people are having a hard time. I hope that eventually, they can come to an understanding about their life as I have in mine. The days seem to be longer now. My pace is much slower. In my own way, I will face up to reality and I will not let the world get me down. I have seen difficult times and I am lucky to be alive. In summing up, may you walk in the light of a new day, may your problems be few, may you carry on with life and never look back, for those days are gone.

The Writer's Song

by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.

"You're a writer; so what's holding you back?" Pete scolds Jonny. "Write that damn book!"

"Nah, I don't think so. I don't have what it takes — at least not right now, and especially not now with this rout of chronic depression I'm stuck in," retorts Jonny. "You don't know what it takes: You have to think up a very large quantity of material — interesting and enough to fill up an entire book."

Silence takes hold amongst the two.

"Well, you can think up material as you go along, can't you?" asks Pete.

"Yeah, but for me, that material is a small minority ... Then you have to arrange the material in cohesive order. And you have to remember, at all times while writing, what so-and-so did and said earlier in the book."

More silence, thick.

"I tell you," Jonny breaks in, "this depression I'm in is a real hindrance."

"How long has it lingered?" queries Pete.

"For some years now, on and off — always somewhere between chronic and tolerable. And it's usually quite inhibiting."

"Well, maybe a large writing project, like a book, would help."

"I can't imagine that," says Jonny, cynically. "One would think that the opposite would be the case."

Jonny then continues: "I tried writing a book not too long ago — a year, maybe. When the idea for the book came into my mind, it seemed like an entire book was there; I was quite exited about it all. But once I started writing it, it got smaller and smaller, until I was lucky that it turned into a small novella. And one that no publication seems to want to use ... I'm reasonably sure that my depression hindered my efforts; the

mental blockage was there, behind my psyche's proverbial scenes."

"But then how do you manage to edit those two newsletters and to write those articles and stories?" queries Pete. "I mean with your mental illness and all."

"I don't know ... It's different," replies Jonny. "The articles and stories are usually quite short. And the editing and layout of the two newsletters, if time is on my side, can actually be relaxing — especially if I have my soothing music playing; plus very few copies of those newsletters are printed which means very few readers are catching my writing and editing blunders."

Pete suggests: "Well, just look at writing a book

— maybe even turning that small novella into a book, after all — as sort of writing a large short story. Take it one step at a time, as you play that relaxing music in the background. And just keep in mind the pleasantries you'll find in editing and laying out your story once it's finished."

"It's an interesting way of looking at it all," Jonny retorts, "but there's always the depression ..."

"Screw the depression!" snaps Pete.

"When the depression comes, deal with it then; try to find a silver lining to everything that you're depressed about."

Then Jonny suggests, "Maybe I'll dial you up whenever I need the positive inspiration at my computer keyboard."

"Well, I actually ..."

But Jonny, hoping to have an available Pete for support when Jonny feels like writing, interrupts: "I'm supposed to screw the depression — remember."

www.mentalhealthconsumer.net/FrankGSterleJr

"...try to find a silver lining to everything you're depressed about."

Quote:

"...love is of a birth as rare...
It was begotten by despair
Upon impossibility."

--Andrew Marvell

Responsibility

by Oliver Cross

“Forget any sounds or touch you knew that did not help you dance.”

—Rumi

To my Mom and Dad: “What’s your rush?”

There is evil in the world, and today much of it is caught up in our institutions. I am struck by the breadth, thoroughness and subtlety of lies—ignorance and laziness—surrounding my own diagnosis: from the truths my parents weren’t interested in and didn’t consider relevant to the doctors upon having me committed for the very first time, to the flimsy arguments doctors used with certainty to practice their craft, to carelessly prepared police reports and medical records, to lawyers shamelessly making agendas...

Intellectualizing aside, here are some of the experiences in my life that hurt me more physically. I was dropped as a baby. Literally. I fell out of my high chair and broke both my collarbones. At a time when most infants are learning to walk, to grasp, to exercise their will and learn to influence the things around them and getting to know what it’s like to get what you want, I was nursing an injury that affected both my posture and my breathing.

I remember my father tied me to my bed when I was eight years old. I was joyously romping around the house and the kitchen making noise, singing and my father wanted quiet.

Music is important to me. Later in life, after finishing high school I studied music post-secondary. It was my first degree. My father was an engineer and wanted me to follow in his footsteps, so he was determined that I would realize my choice was a bad idea. My parents don’t believe in education. When I finished undergraduate studies I wanted to continue school and my parents wouldn’t support me. For a few years I ended up in minimum-wage jobs. That was also the time I was diagnosed schizophrenic.

I was sexually assaulted by an authority figure when I was eleven and repressed the memory until my early twenties. When I started to remember the events related to the assault after a trip to Asia and went through that horribly vulnerable and emotional time, rather than being supportive and understanding my parents couldn’t find a way to be more compassionate or imagine what I might be going through. The issue was ignored, dismissed. That made things worse and I was finally committed. My parents still don’t openly recognize how sexual assault may have changed my life. I remain a black sheep, the odd one in the family. When I was first diagnosed my parents spent far more energy trying to understand what the doctors and nurses were saying about schizophrenia than coming to terms with sexual assault. It was their preference and I knew it at the time.

“...when I found the doctor who’s perhaps done more for me than any other...”

My parents gave me such lousy advice at times. I went back to school anyway to become a teacher. When I became sick early on in the program and ended up in hospital, the faculty was prepared to consider the circumstances and make the arrangements I needed to succeed. My mother looked at me and said, “Oliver, you can’t do this. Everybody knows that.

Quit.” I completed the program and achieved my career goals.

More lousy advice from my parents... when I found the doctor who’s perhaps done more for me than any other in terms of bringing balance to my life, I briefly discussed the idea of his complementary treatment with my mother beforehand. She had some experience administering drugs as a nurse’s aide in a care home. She told me, “Oliver, these things don’t work. No, it’s no good for you. It’ll probably make you worse.” I tried it anyways. I had nothing to lose.

My parents divorced. Both are also now willing to help me buy a place to live but when I ask them if the same offer of money stands if I choose to pursue my

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education further, the response is much more cool. My parents want grandchildren.

When I met the woman I wanted to marry, I would have had to undergo a psychiatric assessment to be with her.

I've suffered a few too many beatings growing up. For me, this has translated into a love of martial arts. When martial arts are practiced well, **no one** gets hurt. Walking away from a fight can be painful and is one of the hardest lessons to learn.

We live in a passive-aggressive society—we live in sanitized times. All kinds of people, from my family to professionals working in systems, dropped the ball again and again when it came to me... so many times I stopped listening.

Originally, there's a close tie between martial arts and

medicine. In fighting, people can be hurt. Having the willingness and ability to help the injured is nothing more than being responsible.

I don't believe that we are asked to give of ourselves in ways that we aren't ready to handle. I was born to dance. When I'm ready, I still want to go back to school.

It's been said that to know something of schizophrenia is to know something of every disease. Being committed is an important experience because it's important to know what's going on in the world and that's part of what's going on.

It took me over 14 years to heal my schizophrenia. What did I learn from my experience? How intensely personal our life experiences are. In some ways we may not care to share them. ■

Describing Nightmares

by Ben Nuttall-Smith

More from "The Chameleon Sings" Trafford Publishing.

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We all have nightmares. Sometimes our worst nightmares relate to that hidden world of childhood trauma.

The happy little people of early childhood:

I can still picture the little people. They were smaller than my sister and I. Though they didn't look like the traditional depictions of fairies with wings, we knew they were fairies. Some were boys; some were girls. They seemed older than we were, ageless in fact. Their clothing was ragged and colourful. They all wore tiny cloth shoes with pointed toes. Some wore hats with small feathers.

The fairies laughed and chatted with us in happy, bright voices. When they sang it was always in a strange language, like nonsense songs. We tried to join in and invariably ended up falling down in fits of the giggles.

Their laughter was high pitched, like Christmas bells. (Occasionally, they flew to the window, maybe to see if grownups were coming.) When they danced around

Naomi and me, we would join in.

They would spin in a circle and disappear in a puff of sparkles. At other times, they shrank and slipped through the crack under the door.

We wanted to go with them to see where they lived. But they never let us do this.

In later years, I saw other little people, mean, sharp teathed beings. In my nightmares they tried to catch me and drag me into the coal cellar.

The nightmares following trauma:

1. Early teens.

My nights were filled with nightmares of little men with slobbering lips and sharp, pointed teeth. Their breath smelled of sour milk or worse. I flew, but never high enough; my pursuers grabbed my feet and pulled me down.

I dreamed other, not-so-horrific dreams too. In one, I sat naked on a toilet in the middle of a large room. I tried to hide but little men jumped out from hiding places and grabbed me. In another, I sat in my classroom and felt I had to pee. I left the room but couldn't find the toilet. Suddenly, I stood by the

blackboard and started to pee. All the other boys pointed and laughed. Humiliation made me “wake up” and walk to the bathroom.

Part way through, I realized I was still in bed, dreaming. Sometimes I got up several times, only to find I was still in bed, having another dream. I wondered if I’d ever wake up or if I would continue dreaming until I died. Whenever I wet the bed, I lay there shivering, afraid to get up. Bogeymen waited in every dark corner, ready to do terrible, painful things to me. I dared not move.

2. Beaten up and left for dead:

Laughter and more blows from boots and sticks followed. The shouting and violence went on and on. I lost track of it only when I lost consciousness.

The rest is a strange nightmare.

Somewhere in the black of night I heard laughter, bright as polished brass. Then I saw them. Little black boys and girls emerged naked from the woods and danced in a circle around me. They held out their hands to me and called in high, tinkling voices. Then another materialized out of the forest. This boy wore a long, loose-fitting white shirt. He took my hand and led me into the dance, his face oddly familiar.

“Dance, dance,” he called, in singsong fashion.

“I can’t,” I replied. My legs felt moored in oozing mud.

“You used to dance with us ... used to dance ... used to dance ... used to dance.” As the children retreated into the trees, his voice trailed off. The trees glowed as if on fire.

“Please, don’t go.” The more I struggled the more my legs sank deeper into the mud. I thought I would be swallowed up.

Shrill laughter echoed from the flaming forest. The children re-emerged, now albino white, shrouded in white robes. They attacked me with clacking, sharp teeth and pulled at me with hands that morphed into animal claws. I screamed, loud and long.

Suddenly the little people vanished. The forest melted.

I sat up alone, naked and cold, shivering violently. I tried to open my eyes. But they were glued shut.

I must have passed out again.

When I came to – minutes later? hours later? – I vomited, alone, in the blackness. After a while, through eyes puffed almost shut, I saw stars in the sky. I groped around and found my pajama bottoms. When I stood up to put them on, I felt dizzy and blacked out again.

Much later, I awoke to a gray dawn, shivering cold and racked with pain. I expected to see signs of the burnt crosses I had heard so much about. Instead, I saw a garbage dump.

With difficulty, I walked to a dirt road. When I passed a shack, I thought I heard voices. So I knocked on the

door. Nobody answered. I walked on, shivering and crying in pain and fear.

Eventually, a police car drove up and stopped.

3. Nightmares during recovery:

I am standing in a steamy, muddy jungle before a rock wall. In the middle of the wall I see an immense black iron door. Darkness billows out from behind the door. The room on the other side is filled with snakes and scorpions; I hear them hissing in alien tongues. Suddenly the door shrieks, as though in pain; as it slowly opens, a river of bubbling blood oozes out. From this, a large black bird flaps out, dripping blood, and flies menacingly towards me. I turn to run. But I’m slowed down by the mire.

I climb a slippery bank towards a row of twisted houses. I glance through their windows. Inside I see ghostly fat men in long white robes. One of them is my Uncle Sigvard. After whispering to one another about me, they depart from their houses and advance against me, carrying spears and emitting horrible, half gurgling sounds. I leap into the air and try to fly above them. The effort feels like swimming in molasses. I’m caught in silvery webs, spun by huge, grey spiders. While I struggle, native drums beat in the air all about me.

In another nightmare, I’m lost in a large city.

Aimlessly, day and night, I drive through streets choked with traffic. While cars and trucks and buses roar all about me, my car routinely strikes potholes; the experience never fails to be bone shattering. Alongside the streets, I see condominiums that look like barnacles and used car lots with loudspeakers. The loudspeakers call out, “Larry to line one.” I also see shopping plazas, flashing neon signs, Macdonald’s restaurants, KFC restaurants, screaming drunks, and squalling babies. The babies just sit there, on the side of the streets; their parents seem nowhere around.

***THE CHAMELEON SINGS* (350 pages) is a biographical journey spanning 70 + years of Survival and Healing from childhood sexual abuse**

By example, I offer help and hope – to those victims who still thrash about in the dark rooms of their childhood terror.

Publisher’s Web Page <http://www.trafford.com/05-1773>

or you may visit my website: <http://www.bennurtall-smith.ca/>

fragments of my love i find

by reinhart

fragments of my love i find
scattered everywhere
things which once impressed my mind
left traces here and there

the setting sun of the west
dying by degrees
upon a night of sleep and rest
in the morn reborn with ease

the truth that is disguised by beauty
the righteousness of life
the love that is our duty
the love of lust and wife

the world revealed a wonder
the poetry of g-d
the clash of light and thunder
the law exceeding broad

the arrangements of space and form
the rhythm of time and light
the g-ds that we love to adorn
the g-ds that we love to delight

in the heavens i hear and see
the fire within letter and word
the way that i strive to be
the light which the prophet heard

i look to the eyes in the mirror
the bending of pride and knee
i desire to ever draw nearer
to the spirit i hope i shall be

the freedom of darkness and death
the choice between evil and good
the marriage of steel and wood
or getting fucked on crystal meth
or maybe your thing is cocaine
against the shadows of sorrow and pain
as we draw in the living breath
all must cope with anguish and bane
and be cleansed by the falling rain
the sons of abraham noah and seth

i dream echoes of music and song
the female form disrobed by dance
artists who preach to the throng
and seduce us with rhythm and romance

the naked beauty the naked truth
how i did hunger and thirst for love
when i was young and still uncouth
and free like the turtle dove

rainbows of colour and hue
spilt gasoline on a rainy wet street
it was all so fresh and new
it was all so heavenly sweet

every virgin experience
be an innocent lovely creation
every use of thought and sense
is born of guiltless imagination

i've seen broken bottles of glass
glitter like diamonds and emeralds
sapphire seas and flowers and grass
ruby blossoms blooming ephemeral

all these things have shaped my soul
my heart and my mind
have written the script for the role
that my life has thus defined

all these things have shaped my love
my spirit and my faith
the blessing which come down from above
being g-d's own saving grace

and thus i have become a man
thankful to be free
to discern those things that i can
in the context of my history

so fragments of my love i find
preserved in memory
while lesser things i've left behind
in favour of my humanity
yes fragments of my love i find
revealed in charity
and i strive not to be unkind
in favour of my humanity
yes fragments of my love i find
in favour of my humanity

Minute Particulars

by Andrew Feldmár

I was no more than 9 years old when my best friend, who was perhaps a couple of years older than me, taught me how to untangle the most complicated, hopeless-looking conglomerations of knots that I had ever seen. "If you get impatient, if you hurry, you'll just pull and tug, and will make everything worse, the knot will get tighter, you'll get angry and will fail at the task for certain. On the other hand, if you pay very careful attention, if you study the situation before you do anything, turning the knot round and round, if you remain gentle and persevere, if you work slowly, in the end you will always succeed without fail," he announced knowingly. I would never have remembered these words, had he not followed up with a spectacular demonstration that took several hours of painstaking labor. He was so absorbed in the task that he never looked up, nor spoke, nor answered any questions that I asked him. Until he finished. Then, with a smile, he handed me the unknotted strings, saying, "There!"

I first saw Mary in June of 1997. She seemed sad, angry, tired and sullen. She had attempted suicide several times; she had been hospitalized often, received many courses of electroconvulsive therapy, and had been maintained on a variety of antidepressant and antipsychotic medications. By now (February, 2006), we have met for about 600 sessions, each of them 50 minutes long. The dark and heavy cloud that has weighed her down is just beginning to lift. She is now working, takes no medication, although her stated reluctance to live persists. There are no guarantees for the future, her black mood could return without warning.

Does therapy have to be interminable and arduous? Time-limited, or brief therapies have been advocated and practiced now for many years, by many people. In an age of efficiency, speed, innovation, technical advancement, scientific progress, why meander seemingly aimlessly for years on end, patient and therapist lost in a dark forest without a compass?

What happened during the eight and a half years of therapy? I didn't teach her to play the piano, I

didn't teach her a foreign language, she has earned no black belt in a martial art, she hasn't learned to paint, nor has she mastered welding. We both grew older. We did develop a relationship.

Some feel that the therapeutic relationship is not real, because the patient pays for it. I don't see it that way. Of the 175 climbers who have died on Everest, a third have been Sherpas. Most Sherpas probably have lost a friend or relative to a mountaineering accident. You pay for the services of a Sherpa, yet for the duration of a climb you depend on each other, you share intimate experiences, you get to know each other, you laugh, you cry, you curse, you bless, you despair, you hope in close proximity of each other. How much more real can a relationship get?

The therapeutic relationship is not a symmetrical one, but then neither is the relationship between parent and child.

By and large, both patient and therapist are concerned with the world, inner and outer, of the patient. The patient is the *contained*; the therapist is the *container*. Not often do the roles of *beloved* and *lover* alternate symmetrically in a couple, not often gets the student to be the teacher's teacher.

When is a relationship *not* real? When it is *theatrical* and not *dramatic*. In our culture it takes a great deal of courage to be nobody-but-oneself. When I am unabashedly manifesting my candid and spontaneous being, moved by a given situation, surprising even myself in the heat of the moment, the resultant encounter with the other will be *dramatic*. Improvisation, no scripts, everything is up for grabs, excitement, danger, fast learning. How close can I get to another, without anybody getting hurt?

On the other hand, if I worry about convincingly playing the therapist, so that my patient will be satisfied that she is getting her money's worth, I will be plagued by anxiety, otherwise known as *stage fright*. The actor's worst nightmare is for the audience to see not Hamlet, but the struggling actor attempting, unsuccessfully, to portray Hamlet. Most schools of

*"The
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one..."*

professional psychology, psychiatry, social work, and counseling are truly *acting schools*, where the students are drilled and brainwashed into roles governed by prefabricated scripts of spurious certainty, standardized protocols, and well rehearsed *shoulds*, *oughts* and *ought-nots*. Little wonder then that many professionals are anxious, worried, and soon enough, suffer from *burnout*. It is also well known, that the professional hazard of being a therapist is frequent *depression*. An entire issue of **Voices**, the Journal of the American Academy of Psychotherapists, was devoted to how various therapists coped with their own depression.

Imagine of the sad theater of A coming to see B for therapy, when A's major problem is that he's stuck having to perform a multitude of roles, such as son, husband, father, and employee, having to be on stage almost 24/7, and B is similarly burdened by the many roles she performs tirelessly, one of which is being the therapist. Soon, A will anxiously play the good patient while B will anxiously do her best to play the good therapist. A and B might never meet – off stage.

Professional codes of ethics almost uniformly frown upon what is called *dual or multiple relationships*. What that means is that A and B are not supposed to have any dealings with each other outside of the consulting room. You can glean from the above that this rule is to protect the actors from the embarrassment of not knowing how to improvise or what script to follow should they meet off stage, on the street, or in a bar, god forbid.

Now if A and B can be themselves fully, and without editing themselves for the sake of the other or for the sake of some questionable ideal of so-called professionalism, then who cares where they meet? Their conversation could be just as exciting on a

crowded bus as in the consulting room. They might even experiment with how it would feel to level the playing field between them, should the patient get interested in the world of the therapist.

Mary got into trouble within a network of relationships. She forgot who she was, what her desires were, she went into hiding, waiting, while she tried to satisfy the demands of others. Underneath the masks that she learned to wear, there was nothing. She felt empty, gone, vacuous. What was most depressing was that nobody even seemed to notice that she was gone.

No one was missing her; no one was looking for her. After a while she felt exhausted by the constant, endless, merciless theater of her life. The only way she could imagine getting off stage was to kill herself. The only act that could reconcile inner and outer reality: the deadness inside would at last become visible for all.

Mary can only find her way back to herself, and then out again into the world through another, this time different, relationship. She cannot just read about it, she cannot just be told about it. She has to experience something she has never had the chance to experience before. She might learn to trust that there is room for her in the world. That she can be missed when she disappears. That someone can wait for her and keep asking, "Can Mary come out and play?" That the other won't toy with her, that the other won't coerce her, won't use her, that the other might actually delight in her as she manifests.

I have been so absorbed in the task of waiting for Mary, for years now, that any sign of life, any stirring that she's about to appear makes the years seem like minutes. It takes as long as it takes. Like unknitting a hopelessly tangled string. ■

"Most schools of professional psychology, psychiatry, social work, and counseling are truly acting schools..."

Quote:

"I wished, by treating Psychology *like* a natural science, to help her to become one."

-- Wm. James

Awakening In Depression

by Bob Krzyzewski

Sifting through memories of my journey through depression, mania and beyond, helps me to focus on what have been the helpful turning points in my recovery. I recall a particular encounter that instilled me with hope and new direction and clarity. This particular entry dates back to the fall of 1999, when I was immobilized by depression, complicated by SAD, and PTSD. Each of these labels seemed to increase the gravity of my situation, but made sense to my mind, in an oblique way, what the inner chaos was about. I had a particular lady friend with whom I had attended some growth-oriented workshops, over a period of several years, mostly earlier in the decade, when I was still productively employed.

She seemed to want to help me, but not know what to do, off hand. One day she called me and told me of a friend, actually a "teacher", whom she was meditating with, to great benefit. She asked if I would be willing to meet him? I replied, "of course", but in my state of mind it seemed vague and nebulous.

When I received her telephone call, I was rather surprised. She offered to pick me up on a particular day, not far away.

The day arrived to find me typically without energy, or purpose. Not noticing very closely where we drove, we parked on a residential street in the West-end, in front of a tall apartment building. We buzzed, and entered a clean apartment, which had a large number of floral arrangements, but little furniture.

I was introduced to a soft-spoken man, with a polite German accent. His name was Eckhart Tolle, which did not ring a bell with me. He said hello warmly, then asked me what my problem was. I glanced at him defensively, taken aback by his directness. He explained matter of factly, "Most people who come to see me have a "problem".

Reasonably assured, I replied "Oh, in that case, I guess you'd say mine is depression, I'm very depressed.." I waited for his response, be it an analysis, criticism, or discussion of the theological perspectives on my situation.

He said easily, "Well I just meditate with people in silence, and see what comes up for them" "Is that OK with you? Margaret tells me you've meditated quite a bit before, so how about 30-40 mins.?"

We sat in a room off to the side, equipped with many cushions, and a timer. And so we began. I swam in a sea of emotions, and wondered if he had the power to read minds. I also felt cared for by this strange fellow. He had a noticeable warmth of presence, but it was non-invasive, almost like the emanation of a plant, or an animal. 40 mins. went by fairly quickly, almost to my disappointment.

He broke the silence without ceremony,

"How is your problem now?"

I was stunned; "What problem?" I stammered rather clumsily. I was speaking honestly here, I had no idea what he was referring to, there was only a deep abiding calm in my mind.

"Precisely", he said. "When the mind abides in it's deep nature, there are no problems.

"Well, what about my depression? It's been with me a long time, you know.

"In the Presence experienced in the now, this is only a surface identification that will dissolve, he said. "I want you to practice this daily", he said encouragingly. "I think you will agree, when you remove the cause, you remove the effect too."

I wasn't exactly sure what he was saying, but I had experienced something dramatic with him, that I did not want to forget. So I have returned to the habit of daily meditation, and yogic stretching and conditioning. I read meditative literature, attend a weekly meditation sitting group, subscribe to a couple of e-mail newsletters, and practice spiritual principles in my daily affairs.

I wish I could state that my depression is a thing of the past but I face it every day, only now it doesn't rule me, and I am no longer immobilized by dark shadows, and collapsed body states. I watch my nutritional intake daily, and take supplements.

Not everybody wishes to undertake such a regimented practice, to remain off medications, I understand. The amount of awareness required to remain in balance is considerable, even formidable, for some of the stressors become more subtle, in the energetic realm. I haven't mentioned them here, but have written of them elsewhere.

*"I was
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Meditation is rather circular, in a way; I meditate to stay off of meds, and stay off of meds to experience a clear meditation. These findings are my own experience; others have different experiences, as outlined elsewhere, for example, the article in the periodical Tricycle: The Buddhist Review (Summer 1999) entitled "Prozac and Enlightened Mind: Can Prozac Help or Hinder Waking Up".

It was rather poignant that after Eckhart Tolle published his book "The Power of Now", which has spent two years on the top of Banyen Books bestseller list, (as well as the New York Times) he has been recognized by the World community as an

"enlightened teacher". He has since given up residence in Vancouver, and travels around the world giving retreats and appearing at Conferences to further the practice of meditation. I was very fortunate to have met this man under such personal conditions, and his encouragement has stayed with me all these years. Check out his web site for yourself, at www.eckhartolle.com where he writes of coming from inner stillness, and features a new book he has recently published entitled A New Earth-Awakening to your Life's Purpose.

Be well on your journeys. ■

*"I meditate to
stay off meds,
and stay off
meds to
experience a
clear
meditation"*

After The Storm

by Satya Devi

It is dark, early morning, and as I walk
with Mohandas, I feel no joy for the end of the storm

I still hear them say,
"do not be afraid"
in disembodied doppelganger whispers,

but I know, in
my begging bowl of a heart
that I will go to Church
because I have nowhere else to go
and it is for my own
soul
that I will be praying.

Websites of Interest to Consumers/Survivors/Ex-Mental Patients

(This list is not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive, and has left out many well-known sites that are widely available and easily accessible from local directories. This entire page in separate e-form for easy clickability will be sent upon request from: duhring@shaw.ca — B.F.)

Organizations (General)

www.mind.org.uk www.power2u.org www.mhselfhelp.org www.wnusp.org www.tao.ca/~pact
www.u-kan.co.uk www.mentalhealth.com www.icspp.org www.oikos.org www.icomm.ca/csinfo
www.aapd-dc.org www.mindfreedom.org www.geocities.com www.mdri.org www.breggin.com
www.cvdinfobase.ca/mh-atlas/ www.szasz.com www.antipsychiatry.org www.peoplewho.org
www.walnet.org/llf www.mentalhealth.org.uk www.fsu.edu/~trauma/ip.html www.radpsynet.org
www.contac.org www.buildfreedom.com/ft/psychiatric_survivors.htm www.samhsa.gov
www.nucknfuts.com/index.php www.cam.org www.lino.com/~raiddat <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antipsychiatry> <http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~nstaman/alternatives/OVNVinternational.htm>

Advocacy and Activism

www.mental-health-matters.com/activist.html www.m-power.org www.narpa.org
www.protectionandadvocacy.com www.cchr.org www.popan.org.uk www.advocateweb.com
www.gamian-europe.com www.hri.ca www.hrweb.org www.iahf.com www.benzo.org.uk/prawi.htm
<http://members.aol.com/jimhofw/jimho.htm>

Alternatives

www.talkingcure.com/index.asp www.alternativementalhealth.com www.medsfree.com www.moshersoteria.com www.transtherapy.org www.patchadams.org www.healthfreedommovement.com
www.weglaufhaus.de www.elcollie.com www.stopshrinks.org www.lstpm.org
www.emotiosinbalance.com www.the-bright-side.org/site/thebrightside/ www.doctoryourself.com
www.emotionsanonymous.org www.projectresilience.com www.bu.edu/cpr/rr/alternative/
www.religiousfreedoms.org www.wildestcolts.com <http://stopbadtherapy.com> http://nht_amhl1.blogspot.com <http://essence-euro.org/iasp/> <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/erthworks/nonmain.htm>

Drug Information

www.larsmartensson.com www.drugs-and-medications.com www.drugawareness.org
www.outlookcities.com/psych/ www.canadiandimension.mb.ca/v35/v35_5ab.htm#three www.nmsis.org
www.antidepressantsfacts.com www.socialaudit.org.uk/1.4.html www.chemsense.com
www.prozactruth.com www.quitpaxil.org www.talkingcure.com/archive/drugs.htm www.truehope.com
www.astrocyte-design.com/pseudoscience/index.html <http://members.fortunecity.com/siriusw/Biochemical-Imbalance.htm> <http://groups.msn.com/SIDEEFFECTS> www.benzo.org.uk

Children & Youth

www.voice4kids.org www.aspire.us www.hearmyvoice.org www.ritalindeath.com www.p-a-r.org
www.adhdfraud.org

Tardive Dyskinesia/Dystonia

www.power2u.org/selfhelp/tardive.html www.wemove.org www.dystonia-support.org www.dystonia-foundation.org www.iatrogenic.org/index.html www.breggin.com/tardivedysk.html
www.caromont.org/16036.cfm www.emedicine.com/neuro/topic362.htm www.drugdigest.org/DD/Articles/News/0,10141,513136,00.html www.psyweb.com/Diction/tardived.html www.thebody.com/pinf/phenos.html www.reglan-lawsuit.com www.ninds.nih.gov/healthandmedical/disorders/tardivedoc.htm www.easyweb.easynet.co.uk/simplpsych/tardive.html

Electroshock

www.ect.org www.banshock.org www.idiom.com/~drjohn/review.html <http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/bmj;326/7403/1363>

Bulletin Board

The Self-Help Resource Association of B.C. (SHRA) conducts regular Facilitator Training Workshops for Self-Help and Mutual Aid Support Groups. They also publish a quarterly newsletter and the Directory of Self-Help/Support Groups in Greater Vancouver with approximately 600 listings, many of them dealing with mental health. The latest edition (2004-2005) of the Directory is now available for \$12.00 or \$10.00 at the office if you drop by and pick it up. SHRA is located at Suite 306 – 1212 West Broadway, Van. B.C. V6H 3V1. Tel: 604-733-6186. Fax: 604-730-1015. www.vcn.bc.ca/shra

The Alternative & Integrative Medical Society (AIMS) at UBC publishes the free AIMS Wellness Directory: Lower Mainland Guide to Complementary Health. It contains approximately 250 paid and many unpaid listings dealing with a broad spectrum of mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of healing. For a Directory and/or more info. about the Society, phone 604-822-7604. Fax: 604-822-2495. E-mail info@aims.ubc.ca. Web: www.aims.ubc.ca. AIMS, University of British Columbia, Box 81 – 6138 SUB Boulevard, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z1. Office: B80A Woodward Building, UBC.

Vancouver/Richmond Mental Health Network sponsors many self-help groups including a Women's Circle. Their address is #109 - 96 E. Broadway, Vancouver, B.C., V5T 4N9 and the Co-ordinator of the Network may be reached at 604-733-5570.

Named after Vincent van Gough's homeopathic doctor, Paul Gachet, **Gallery Gachet** works to provide a safe, borderless place of artistic expression. It strives to be a place of healing and a center of artistic excellence. Founded in 1994 we provide opportunities to exhibit, perform, publish and sell work and to offer a place for support and community. We aim to use the canvas of the outside world to educate and demystify the public on issues related to mental health and abuse.

Websites of Interest to Consumers/Survivors/Ex-Mental Patients (continued from previous page)

Forced Treatment

www.freedom-center.org www.namisc.org/newsletters/August01/MindAid.htm www.hri/doccentre/docs/gosden.shtml www.garynull.com/issues/Psych/Index.htm www.psychlaws.org www.kqed.org/w/hope/involuntarytreatment.html

Mental Health Law

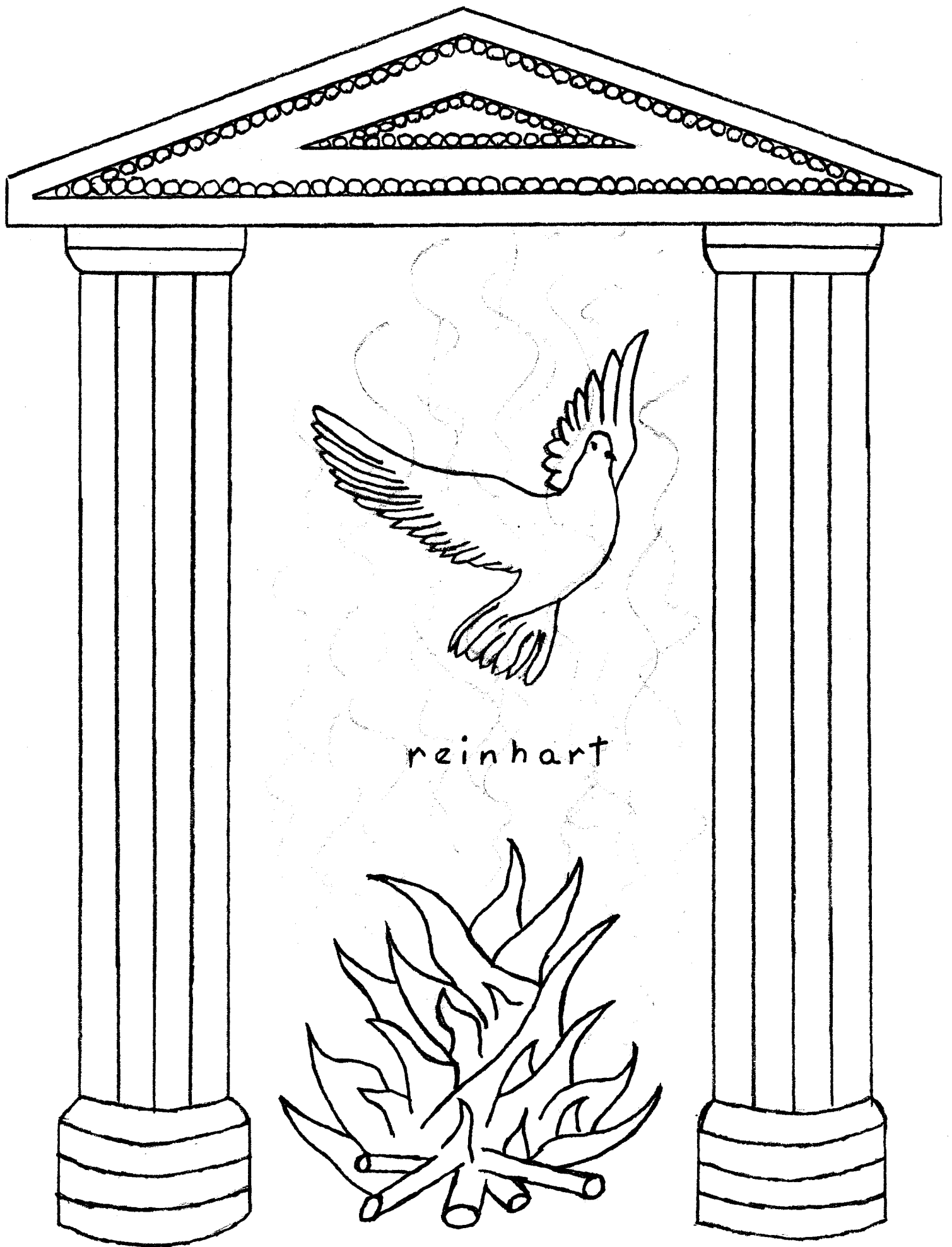
www.bazelon.org www.ac.wvu.edu/~knecht/law.htm www.psych.org/public_info/insanity.cfm www.forensic-psych.com/pubs/pubADment.html www.psychlaws.org www.imhl.com www.ialmh.org www.justiceseekers.com www.safe-trak.com/main/competency1.htm www.abanet.org/disability/sites.html www.experts.com www.expertpages.com/psychiatry-psychology.htm www.psych.org/advocacy-policy/leg_res/apa_testimony/testimonysub-crimeposted91800.cfm www.ilppp.virginia.edu/ www.law.cornell.edu/topics/mental_health.html www.helpforparents.net/LegalResources/1LegalResources.htm

History of Mental Health Care

www.psychiatricurvivorsarchives.com www.webcom.com/thrive/schizo/kdarch.html www.cwu.edu/~warren/addenda.html www.epub.org.br/cm/n02/historia/psicocirg_i.htm

Online Publications

www.mentalmagazine.co.uk <http://members.aol.com/asylumpub> <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~expert/psychnews/>



reinhart