

C Creating Contact & Change in Communities

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Colofon

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Creating Contact & Change in Communities

Tine van Wijk

Cover

'Ogen op Steeltjes'

'Eyes on Flowerstems'

One taste is more than ten times telling.

artwork by Tine van Wijk

design & photo Sebastiaan van Wijk

*Dedicated to Joseph Zinker
who showed me the creative Gestalt way*

*and to the members of the AAGT
who taught me to stay in the heat*

I am grateful

to my family who gives me the feeling I belong

to Joseph Zinker who inspired me on a soul level

to the AAGT members who continue
to create an international Gestalt Community

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Life is a gift. Unwrap it.

Dear Reader,

How are you? Where are you? How do you feel?
What are you longing for? Are you happy?
Do you think I am asking difficult questions?
You do not know what to answer?

Of course you are right. The questions I ask are not easy to answer. It is why I wrote this book.

I realized that I could only find my answers
if I lived life and felt what it is about.

It meant entering risky and exciting adventures.

I am curious, always have been. I am not easy to please.

I have been wondering about life since I was three
and the Nazi's occupied my country.

After the invasion my father came back from the front with
wrecked nerves.

What happened? How was it for him? Why did it happen?

Why do people hurt each other in such a cruel way?

I became angry because no one could answer me.

But I did have my direct line with God.

He did speak with me and told me I should go on living and find
out for myself.

My life has been and still is quite an adventure. Writing gives me
the possibility to share what can be important for you.

In this book you can follow me in my thoughts, ideas, feelings,
fears, in my quest and my search for love. And you are invited to
explore your own dreams, feelings, fears and longings by writing
and connecting with your own wisdom. No one else can do it for
you. Please do not think you have to accomplish a heavy task.

Look at life as a gift. Being alive means having the right to be
happy, the right to love and be loved, specially when life is painful.

If you can connect with your pain, sorrow and anger you can also
connect with your joy and love. Feeling that life hurts is a way to
healing and being able to feel that life is also gentle and generous

if you are willing to receive IT.

My guide in this creative process is Gestalt therapist Joseph Zinker who states:

'The person who dares to create, to break boundaries, not only partakes of a miracle, but also comes to realize that in his/her process of being s/he is a miracle.'

C

Creating Contact and Change

This book is about creating a high C factor:
Creation, Contact, Change, Communication, Commitment,
Chance, Community, Connection, Curiosity, Compassion,
Continuity, Consciousness qualities we cannot develop without
Conflict, Confrontation, Control, Courage and Crisis.

Group

To create the C factor we need the Hot Fires of groups. To become porcelain a pot made of clay needs the hot fire of the oven. Just to stand in the sun is not enough. It is the same for people. To stoke the fires we organize groups like conferences, workshops, love affairs, families, businesses, power struggles, parties, classes, theatre plays, concerts, demonstrations, sport matches, teams. Staying in the heat of the group allows us to grow and become a better human being.

What? How? Why?

A group is a learning community where we can experiment with becoming aware, making contact and change.

We can explore the triangle 'Content-Process-Meaning' by using the words What? How? Why?

Content: WHAT are the facts?

Process: HOW is it to experience this?

Meaning: WHY do we need to experience it?

Higher levels

The steps we will follow in this book are based on the idea that groups are learning communities, where people gather to solve personal and interpersonal problems. We will focus on how

it is to be part of a group coming where we come from in relation to the roles we 'play' in life. How is it to be in the role of a reader, teacher, therapist, trainer, student, presenter, client, writer, artist, mother, father, daughter, son?

What do we need, what is our aim?

How is it to realize that learning implies changing behaviour, not only for the sake of adaptation, of adjustment, but for a movement toward higher levels of awareness and self-actualization.

Why a group?

Without a group people can not function. We are born in a group, we live in groups, no matter how. A group is a unique system, a conglomeration of energies exuded by individual members and interrelated in a systematic pattern. We need it to let the growth take place. As a writer I will guide you from adventure to adventure, from hot fire to hot fire. My curiosity stimulated me to explore the C factor in the various groups. Longing to communicate, create contact, change, commitment and to connect with my inner wisdom in relation to the Other I explored by writing What, How and Why. This kind of writing connects us with our undercurrent: our feelings, intuition, dreams, wisdom, longings, fears, crazy ideas that are not easy to express in a rational way.

Logos and Gnosis

The Greeks have two words for Knowledge: Logos and Gnosis. Logos is what can be learned through education and scientific inquiry. Gnosis is what can be known through intuitive feeling and spiritual or mystical experiences. Logos is rational, objective, logical, expressible in words or numbers.

Gnosis is subjective, non-rational, nonverbal, expressible through images, poetry, metaphor, music and is often un-proveable.

Every sacred experience is subjective: the sense of oneness with the universe, or with the sacred, a timeless moment filled with beauty, spiritual insight and grace is gnosis. The words in this book mostly emerged the gnosis way. They are meant to stimulate you to find your own gnosis path and experience the transformative power of giving your soul a voice.

What can you expect?

By reading you will learn about your own creative power, your longing to make contact, to connect, to change, to express your commitment, to satisfy your curiosity and you will learn about the magic, the mysteries, the dark sides and the chances groups offer you.

How is it for you?

It is not about achieving, yet in the back of our heads we long to create a work of art like a book, a painting, a stage play, a poem, a song, a film, a photo or whatever work of art we dream of.

In the book you will find numerous guidelines and questions to bring you into motion.

To understand what your life is about you can dance, write, paint, sing or sculpt. Only reading about adventures is not enough, you have to DO something yourself.

Why should you?

To really know why we have to function in a group, we have to sit together to listen, to talk, to breath, to feel, to look and see, we have to learn to trust our intuition and experience the moment we can say ‘AHA, now I know why’, now I feel contact, now I am touched, now I feel commitment, compassion and now I know why we need conflict, confrontation, control and courage.

Now I know why we had to come together and do IT. Now we can enjoy being in the moment together. By communicating we will make contact, express our commitment, take chances, connect with our inner wisdom and each other, satisfy our curiosity, grow and change, create our own communities, become more happy and a better human being, who will be able to make people around us more happy and more aware of how they can do the same. It will be like a snowball that keeps rolling and rolling and will become bigger and more important as long as it is in the movement and as long as there is snow. Once you decide to become part of this ball you will know why we need each other, why we need communities and why we need a high C factor.

Part One

The Foundation

Chapters 1 – 6

the beginning of our life can be complicated
and forces us to learn to

- say Yes to life
- stand on our own feet
- become autonomous
- become who we are instead of the wo/man
we thought we should be

1. Life is a relational adventure

Writing is a perfect way to communicate and make contact.

Making contact

Relationships are vital in our lives, that is why I became a therapist. I sincerely believe that life for human beings is about relating to each other. In general women will agree with me. For men it can be different, because – again in general – men are more focused on goals. This is an interesting and frustrating difference. A lot of misunderstandings between women and men can be understood better if we knew. And if we do not, eternal battles for power can be the result. I chose to become a Gestalt therapist because Gestalt taught me the importance of communicating and making contact. Not a simple thing to do. Commitment is needed.

Willingness to invest time, lots of time. To do this work we have to learn to be in the here and now, otherwise there is no chance of meeting the other.

We have to be willing to communicate and make contact again and again and again. To think or say: I did it yesterday already, why should I do it today, is of no use. Nobody else can do it for us. Of course we are free not to make contact, but the question is if we have the choice to do it or not. If not we become isolated arrogant lonely prisoners.

Games people play

By working for more than twenty years with ongoing groups I learned about games people play to avoid contact. Talking without listening, keeping silent by not talking, complaining about no matter what, crying when we are angry, bullying when we are scared, being nice when we do not feel it and thinking we do not belong to a group because we are different. The moment a group comes together the games start. Looks go to and fro, thoughts and feelings present themselves, vibes will fill the room. Even when no words are spoken, all kinds of things happen. In each head suppositions are formed, in each body fears are raised, irritations and longings are born. The question is what will be expressed?

What we think, what we feel, what we long for, what we are afraid of, what we find irritating?

Time is limited

For a long time I was convinced I would only be noticed when I talked. This is a misunderstanding. The silent ones often have more influence on the group than the talkers, because they are more mysterious and therefore more intriguing. My first aim as a facilitator in a group is always to hear every participant speak. I long to know what people come for. Not that this is possible but nevertheless I like to have an idea, because I am afraid if aggression and fear are held back they can break free at any moment and cannot be dealt with adequately. The problem is that time is often limited, but what I learned as a facilitator is that behind all the games there is the big need for attention. Genuine attention for who we are, that is to say. We don't want to be patronized, dominated, advised, but we do want to be seen and truly heard.

Attention

The text that follows was written in a group where we not only communicated by talking but also by writing. After sharing what kept us busy in our day to day lives, we took time to meditate and found that we all were longing for attention. As a facilitator I always participate in the writing:

‘Attention is the big thing I am deeply longing for and at the same time I am afraid of it.

Attention was scarce in my life. That is to say attention for my soul was not an every day nourishment.

Attention in the form of food, care, clothes, cleanliness was always there. I cherish that, I could not do without. But this big longing for soul attention made me vulnerable and a bit strange in the eyes of grown ups, like my mother who was always laughing so no one would see how unhappy she was.

Attention for my soul I hoped to get from my father, because I knew he could give it if he wanted to. But usually he was busier with his own need for attention and just let me be without bothering. While writing I worry if I am not in the victim role. I don't want to accuse my parents. I want to be responsible for my

own life and my own need for attention without waiting for it from whoever has the goodwill to see me. I realize that taking care of getting the attention I need is almost a fulltime job.

Giving what you need

To give attention is my profession. I am an example of someone who is good at giving what she has missed most herself. Getting attention for me is a matter of honour as I am too proud to just ask for attention, I want to have something to show, to offer.

Attention being the reward that I deserve. I think it is not easy for me to realize that I can be blackmailed into giving attention to little boys disguised as men who suffered and are longing for a mother, so I can relate to them. Longing for a mother I have long thought of as being childish. Who needs a mother who patronises you and always knows better anyway. Attracting attention by doing something like singing a song or doing a little dance was not rewarded in my family. Once in a while on a special occasion yes, but in day to day life you better have acted normally. High marks were praised though. Is that why I decided I better work my ass off to have a place in society, rather than take things more easily and make room for the good mother in me who cuddles, takes care, asks how you are, makes tea and has time to listen.

Even now – now I have become my own mother –

I have to urge this mother in me to take time, sit down and listen to me while we are having tea and eating sweets. But I am learning. By listening to you and to myself here in this group I know this is the main reason for coming together. We can not do it all by ourselves. To give and receive attention we DO need each other, whether we want it or not!

Experiments

If you want to learn more about your own need for attention, take some time just for you, find a safe place, bring paper and a pen, sit down, close your eyes, straighten your back, direct your attention to your breathing and become aware of being in the here and now. Then wonder about the question 'Am I afraid of attention, of love, of intimacy?' and feel how your body reacts. After about seven minutes you open your eyes, take your pen and write whatever wants to be written. Don't worry about mistakes, logic, just keep your hand moving for at least ten minutes. If you want to write more, you can write more. You are

the boss. If - for a moment – you don't have words, just play or draw or doodle to keep your hand in action. If you feel you are ready, read what you have written out loud. Even if you are by yourself. You will notice that hearing your own voice speaking the words you put on paper will touch you somehow.

Writing is a perfect way to communicate. We can take the time to find the words to express our thoughts, feelings, ideas, expectations, hopes.

I as a writer and you as a reader can do the same thing and find out if we can communicate and connect. It is why I long to write and publish those words. I want to express what touches me and hope that you will feel touched. It is about feeling or not feeling. About being moved or not. Like this you will be invited to connect to your own process and write your own small and big life stories.

2. The Five Gestalt Layers

*‘Therapy is also an art. It’s more of an art than it is a science. It takes a lot of intuition and sensitivity and an overall view means something very different from a piecemeal association approach. Being an artist is functioning holistically. And being a good therapist also means that.’ Laura Perls**

Inner truth

When I read this statement by one of the founders of Gestalt therapy I almost cried, it touched me so deeply. It confirms my inner truth that dawned on me when I became a therapist, but I did not dare to say it out loud to colleagues who appear to believe that therapy is a science.

Before I became a therapist I was an editor of illustrated magazines. I loved my job as it was about people and I became dissatisfied when I realized that I was never allowed to speak my own voice. The commercial side of publishing directed us as journalists to write what our bosses thought the readers wanted to read.

And that was not the same as what I longed to share. Becoming more and more frustrated I went on a spiritual journey and found Eastern philosophies such as Hinduism and Zen Buddhism before I found Gestalt. Becoming my own boss by learning to become a Gestalt therapist was my turning point.

War child

My interest in life and human relations started by being the daughter of a veteran of WWII, who disappeared in a psychiatric institute when I was fourteen. If I knew one thing for certain it was that my beautiful, sensitive, intelligent father although he could behave rather outrageously – was NOT crazy, but the society we lived in was. Having experienced war as a child from age three to eight I know that life is serious and death is a reality. I know how cruel people can be, how blind and insensitive. Like my father I am passionately committed to exploring the drive

behind the behaviour of people who have the power. My longing is to communicate and connect also with them. I want to understand why people can frustrate and even kill each other, rather than be considered crazy myself. According to Fritz Perls in Gestalt Therapy Verbatim* the theory of the five layers gives insight into what our undercurrent looks like and is hiding.

The first layer is the cliché layer.

If we meet somebody, we exchange clichés like ‘How are you?’ with cliché answers like ‘Good’ or ‘I am not allowed to complain’. The main aim is to be polite and behave.

In the second layer we play games and roles,

we are the son, the daughter, the husband, the eldest, the youngest, the beautiful girl, the strong man, the intelligent professor. In the roles we play ‘as if’ we are better, weaker, tougher, nicer than we really feel. The good thing about this layer is that we cannot do without it, we need it to function. Here we discover if we rather say Yes or No. If we make ourselves small or big. If we answer the expectations or not. It is a layer we can stay in till the day comes, that we discover that our once successful answers do not work anymore. We lose our job or our loved one or become ill and have to face the confusion of the impasse.

The third layer which is the impasse.

In this layer we feel stuck, lost, confused. We have a phobic attitude and try to avoid suffering. We do not want to be frustrated, we stay immature, we go on manipulating the world, rather than to suffer the pain of growing up. We prefer being looked after and do not realize our blindness and the possibility of getting our eyes back again. This is the difficulty in self therapy; when we come to the difficult parts, we are not willing to go through the pain of the impasse and think alcohol or drugs or food or money or sex can help.

The fourth layer is the implosive or the fear of death layer.

It appears as death because of the paralysis of opposing forces: Yes contra No. We pull ourselves together, we contract and compress ourselves and implode. Once we really get in contact with this deadness, something interesting happens: the implosion becomes explosion. The death layer comes to life, and this explosion is the link up with the authentic person who is capable of experiencing and expressing his/her emotions.

In the fifth or the explosive layer

we can experience four basic kinds of explosions. We can explode into genuine grief if we work through a loss that has not been assimilated, into an orgasm if we were sexually blocked, into anger and into joy, laughter, *joie de vivre*. These explosions connect with the authentic personality, with the true self.

Do not be frightened by the word explosion. It means more setting into motion than explode to pieces. Exploring by writing the undercurrent is a way to experience it.

An example

An example when I worked with a man and a woman, who were busy with their love relations, not with each other though. We all three meditated on the theme: How do I get what I need? Then we spontaneously wrote the words that wanted to be written by letting our hands do the work. I wrote:

‘How do I get what I need?’

In my family? In a group? In a Community? In Society? In the first place I need safety and safety comes with being open. Safety for me is about honesty. When I am honest here and now I have to admit that what I long for most is being loved, being seen in my struggle for a better world. Being open about my longing for love is not easy. Love in my life is not free. I know that this is not true, but it is the voice of my Fear that I only have a right to love or be loved if... I create harmony around me.

The reality is that I cannot make harmony without facing the difficulties, without confronting what I do not like and what I do criticise. I don't like to do this, but if I don't I cannot love the

other and I cannot love me. If I cannot love me, who will? Still I want to be true to me.

I get confused now. What is he telling me? What is she telling me? Is he longing to give me something I cannot receive? All because I do not love myself enough to believe him? And do I believe her when she says she feels safe with me? Fact is when I feel threatened I close off. When he says he does not know why a member of the group left, but it was because of me, I feel threatened and rejected. In the meantime I miss contact with her. I long to give her the feeling that she is safe and welcome. Just as I would like to give it to him. At this moment I cannot do it.

In the same boat

Maybe I never can, but usually I do not experience it this way. At this moment I can only say: life hurts, life is painful. Please be aware. I cannot protect you, as I am hurt and feel pain myself. I wish I could but all I can do is to share that I am with you in the same boat.' We all three read our words out loud and when I read mine I could breath again and relax because I could express my fear and pain and show my authentic self.

Questions to chew on:

How do those words affect you as a reader? Do you recognize feeling uneasy when you are with more than one person, all of whom want your attention? Can you imagine feeling threatened when someone insinuates that it is because of you that somebody else left? Or is there another part that touches you more? If you want to know more about yourself in relation to the five Gestalt layers, find a safe place and prepare by straightening your back, be in the here and now by following your breathing and sit for seven minutes with your own questions, while becoming aware of the signals of your body. When the moment has come you take your pen and write, letting your hand do the work. Of course you can use a computer if you prefer, but you will find it is not the same as writing by hand. The best thing to do is to find out what works better for you.

*See References: Names, Words, Books, Institutions

3. Basic Needs and Fears

A human being suffers most of the suffering he fears and never was or will be his share. (Dutch expression)

In my search for wisdom and truth I often go to foreign countries, literally and also symbolically by reading. In the very beginning of my career as a therapist, I became fascinated by the Jungian psychologist Fritz Riemann*. He wrote a book titled in German 'Die Fähigkeit zu Lieben', in Dutch – translated into English – 'To love is to live'.

I felt touched by his theory of four basic fears and four demands life poses us to overcome them. Time and time again, when I need structure in my own life or guidance for a client, I wonder where I am or where we are in the light of the wisdom of Riemann. It has helped me to ground and not get lost in the vastness of possibilities in therapy land. I do not think it is about absolute truth, but do believe it can show us a way of becoming lighter, more free, independent, to feel better and to get an idea of what there is to explore in the undercurrent.

1. The fear of existing

Fear starts the moment we are born. When we come out of the womb, completely helpless and vulnerable, we are demanded to trust the world enough to say Yes to life and start breathing independently. A matter of life and death. The question is how welcome we are. Are our parents so happy with their new baby that they are fully prepared for us? Is the whole family waiting with excitement and love for the newly born? Or is it the wrong moment because we are not wanted? The first fear that is an existential fear starts doing its work. What we need is a mother figure who comes regularly to feed us, gives us warmth and attention, a mother who changes our diapers, cleans and cuddles us, a mother who takes time to give us the feeling that we belong on earth and came home.

First basic need is to have a place on earth and know that we belong.

Personal questions to explore your own birth and the beginning of your life: *Did I feel safe when still in the womb?*
Did I have a difficult or an easy birth?
Was I on time? Was I welcome?
Please find a safe spot where you can take time for you, concentrate on those questions and write when you are ready.

2. The fear of being abandoned

The second fear that can dominate our lives is the fear of being abandoned. When we discover that our mother or another mother figure is the source that provides in all our needs, we get afraid of losing her. Without her we have no chance of survival. Without her our life is empty. Without her we are out of food, out of warmth, out of being held and cuddled. Even if we get a clean diaper and milk but no loving attention, we will feel unwelcome. The question of how the mother can be forced to be present in our life can become dominant. The strange thing is that a mother who spoils us by always being available can make us even more anxious than a mother who neglects us. If we are spoiled we don't learn to trust our own power step by step and become completely dependent. In the period when we are most vulnerable, we are already confronted with the inevitable existential loneliness of life.

Basic needs: nourishment, warmth, loving attention and safety.

Questions to chew on: *Am I afraid to be left alone? Did I have a mother who was there for me? Do I feel spoiled or neglected?*

3. The fear of guilt and punishment

As we grow older and have to become more free from the close bondage with our mother, the fear of guilt and punishment are born. We learn how to walk and talk and discover we have our own will that can be diametrically opposed to that of our father or/and

mother. Our parents can become angry and will make it clear to us that there are orders, commands and prohibitions. In this way a new fear enters, a fear of not doing the right thing. We are lucky when we have parents who give us boundaries that can be talked about. Parents who make it clear that we even as a child need discipline and rules to live our lives. But if we are raised by parents who behave rigidly and dominantly, who punish us without adding a kiss, we are liable to become so afraid of being guilty that we hardly dare to take the risk of making our own choices and making mistakes. The result is that we as adults will have big problems in becoming autonomous. Does this mean that we are lucky when we have parents who were anti-authoritarian? The advantage is that we miss this fear for guilt and punishment, but it does not bring a real solution. Being raised in relative freedom means not being educated about borders and possibilities. It means not having a clue about what we can achieve and what we cannot. The result is that we do get anxious and uncertain after all, not knowing our norms and values.

Basic needs: support, stimulants, encouragement, faith.

Questions to connect with the undercurrent by writing:

Am I a perfectionist? Do I dare to make mistakes? Am I duty oriented?

4. The fear of not being good enough

what does it mean to be a girl or a boy? Who is our example and who can tell us what When we get older we discover that there are boys and girls, big and small children, ugly and beautiful people, rich and poor ones, strong and weak men and women. We are confronted with the questions: who is better, who is the best? The fear that appears now is the fear that we are not good enough as we are. Would it not be better if I were a boy instead of a girl, big if I am small, have curly hair when it is straight. Shouldn't I be strong when I appear sensitive and weak, beautiful when I seem to be ugly, fast if I am slow, coloured when I am white? Does our family, does the world love me now it seems I do not answer the perfect image? And it is about and what it feels like? What we need

are role models we can identify with. That is why we have idols and look up to our parents, but often our heroes and parents tend to fall from their pedestals, leaving us with the longing to be at least better than they are. But how can we?

Basic need: to be seen and accepted for who we are.

Questions:

Am I good enough as a boy, as a girl?

Who is my hero, my model, my example?

Demands to overcome our fears

Often we live with those fears from our childhood without realizing it. Precisely because we were not allowed to be afraid, we suppressed and denied our fears. In that way we could survive but did not see reality, which possibly made our surroundings threatening without us knowing why. Only by becoming aware of the undercurrent can we step out of our childhood fears and into a life that leads to freedom. It is true that in accepting fear, healing is hidden. Learning how to live with fear is not enough because time and time again there will be new fears that will revive the old ones. We can free ourselves step by step by realizing that we have to identify with the innocent, lonely, anxious child in us and with the adult who has to go out into the world to study and make a living. We will discover that we have to look fear in the eyes to become a complete human being. What helps is the knowledge that life does not only provide fears but also means to overcome them.

To overcome our fears

Every fear is connected to a special demand:

1. the fear of existing demands that we say Yes to life
2. the fear of being abandoned demands that we become independent and stand on our own feet
3. the fear of guilt and punishment demands that we become autonomous
4. the fear of not being good enough demands that we become who we are instead of who we thought we should be

4. The Boomerang Effect*

Saying Yes and No to life

Some Dutch expressions:

You are what you say

The pot reproaches the kettle that it is black

Biscuits of your own dough

The joke is that we project unto others what we don't like or what we miss in ourselves and don't wish to acknowledge which, nevertheless remains a part of our personalities.

Knowing about projection can change your look on life. When I wrote my scripture about this subject more than twenty years ago I was in awe. Oh, if that is true, if the game of life is like that, I understand why it is so difficult and so funny and so seducing. I found out that one of the misunderstandings of life is that we think we are innocent and beyond reproach. That's why we play hide and seek and throw at others what we think they throw at us. But it's not a matter of either/or, guilty or not guilty, it's an open and - and. The joke is that we project unto others what we don't like in ourselves and don't wish to acknowledge which, nevertheless remains a part of our personalities. The joke is that we project what we do not acknowledge or see in ourselves and therefore deny. To become aware of this phenomenon we need mirrors represented by our environment.

Unto our direct world we project all those hidden parts of our personality. Projecting is always done unconsciously, because we can only project what we do not know or wish to know. In practice this means that if we do not say "no" to others, they say "no" to us and we feel rejected. If we cannot say "yes" we feel unrightfully claimed or abducted by people who do say "yes" to us. If we are not allowed to be angry, we project our anger and will find ourselves confronted with anger in others. If we don't know that we are afraid, we project our fear and others start fearing us. If we deny our sexual potency, we project our sexual longings and it seems like the whole world is filled with horny people. If we do

not know we are jealous, we will be haunted by jealous colleagues, lovers, siblings, friends.

If we believe we have no power, we will project our power onto others and feel like victims.

And if we do not know we have the talent to draw, sing, dance, write, act, we will remain stuck admiring artists who do express themselves instead of becoming a painter, a singer, a dancer, a writer or an actor ourselves. When we realize that we cannot be operated on our characteristics, traits or instincts, because there are no surgeons who can cut out our jealousy or sexual drive or anger, we will know deeply how important it is to express ourselves. Instincts and conditioned behavior like natural urges cannot be amputated. What is or has become remains a part of us. We can only suppress these undesirable qualities, deciding not to express them. And if it is forbidden to say what we have to say, and do what we have to do, we force ourselves to pretend, preach, accuse, manipulate and project.

Only when we become conscious of what we do, can we change our behavior and say “this is me, I am what and who I am, whether I like it or not”. In order to empower ourselves, we must be prepared to let go of our idealized image as the superman or superwoman we thought we should be. Projection is often seen as a negative factor. That is unfortunate, since projecting can show us what earlier remained unnoticed. I for one, found out that the important men in my life were visually talented: my first great love was a film director, then I met an optician and a painter, I married a photographer and after my divorce fell in love with an art director. Now I am more and more aware of my own visual ability by painting. It is also exciting to take a closer look at who projects what on us. The photographer I married had crushes on people who were writers.

Projections are not incidental or accidental. They can make us aware of the fact that we have more possibilities than the five to fifteen percent we usually are able to develop.

Someone who is able to use twenty-five percent of his or her capacities, is already seen as a genius.

The art of becoming a complete human being by using our talents and qualities can not only be developed by recognizing them, we also have to express them. Projection starts when as a baby we are lying in our cradle, with our full potential waiting to develop while the family comes to look at us and expresses their hopes and expectations of who we will be. There is no alternative, whatever we do, we have to play the deadly serious game of life. And just like in every other game, certain obstacles need to be taken on. One of the rules we must accept is that we cannot play this game all by ourselves. We do need others. As a baby, we do not have much choice. We do have to put up with our parents, who, however willing they might be, in some way or other, will fall short because they are human beings and not gods. That is also a part of the game. But what do we know, when we are still children. The only thing we do want is that 'they' are happy with us and with who we are. And we want to feel and experience it. But even when they are happy with us, they appear to be happy on condition. Even loving moms and dads and other authorities have their ideas and expectations of how or what we should do and will be. We have barely opened our eyes and expectations pop out of every corner. It doesn't take long to figure out what they do and don't want from us, since it is evidently connected to being 'good' and being 'bad'. Crying is usually not an okay thing to do; parents don't like it.

But even so, crying does get jobs done, it does ensure attention, although the question is if this is the kind of attention we so deeply long for. The choices are limited. We adjust to what is expected and behave as good boys or girls or we resist and revolt and are a nuisance. Both with the same aim: how to get attention. Both ways work only partly and the result is that we develop either a compliant or subversive personality.

We become someone who says "yes" more easily than "no" or someone who says "no" rather than "yes".

A 'yes person' can all her/his life be busy proving how smart, understanding, reliable, funny, charming, and so on s/he is. But this does not get her/him the kind of love and attention s/he needs, because people become jealous or irritated or feel rejected

and neglected. In the meantime a “yes person” can be annoyed by people who ask for her/his attention and nevertheless say “No” to her/him by being angry, because s/he did not get the attention s/he was really longing for. This is how compliant “yes people” become victims of the defiant ones who rather say No. It means that one behavioral option lands in the trap of the other.

As a compliant type you can be willing enough to give out loving attention and help, but we remain who we are and if we give what we would rather receive, we will get irritated and impatient. The question is if our fear for rejection allows us to express those feelings. And as a defiant person we will not get the real loving care and attention we long for, and also get irritated and anxious. Both types are dealt the wrong cards, since they both need just as much love and care and expect to get it – in different ways - from outside. They will feel better when they start with caring for themselves instead of taking care of the other first.

Irritation, critique, anger, jealousy, we would love to abort these traits, be released of them forever, but life is not meant that way.

Even if we “haven’t got a clue”, the subconscious part of our personalities does the job for us, by projecting on the outside world what we think we are not, often using the people that are closest and dearest to us. It might be an idea to be on the alert when people irritate us. Ten to one, we recognize something we would rather not be confronted with inside ourselves. Be aware when you easily get bored by talkers, for given the chance, you might talk until your ears drop off. And also if we admire people or are jealous of them, it is important to take a closer look. Possibly they have developed talents which we also have, but are afraid to express or are not aware of. The ones who say Yes easily, are irresistibly attracted to the ones who say No first, since they have to learn from them how to say No themselves. And reversely: the no’s are drawn to the yeses, because they long to learn what they have achieved: saying yes. At least, so it appears. But the “yes” and the “no” in question here, are shadows, apparent yeses and no’s. Behind a “yes” lingers a giant “no”, we don’t dare to reveal. If we are on the ‘yes’ track we are afraid to be abandoned if we let the no out of it’s cage. And behind the no of

the other survivor rises a clear yes, they cannot say, due to a fear that no-one would care for them if they stopped being a victim.

There are only a few people that have learned to straight-forwardly ask for attention when they need it. The joke is on most of us, since we are one another's authorities and so mislead and manipulate each other. The arrogant, dutiful Yes people – for example a therapist - do their best to help the victimized No people. And the No's manipulate the Yeses by being cross and by being the victim. Of course we don't do this on purpose. If we did we would be able to step out of the pattern because we would become aware that our manipulations do not get us what we really need. Withholding is also a great weapon in battling for what we desire. So what do we want then besides the already mentioned attention we do not get? Care, love, sex, money, support, beauty, strength, warmth, food, knowledge, children, understanding, admiration, recognition, status, are (basic) needs. If our basic needs are not fulfilled our – unconscious - longing will continue and will go on projecting.

It is painful when we remain manipulative as long as we do not consciously know and say out loud what we desire and sincerely need.

No longer knowing what we need is a recurring theme. As long as we are passively waiting for a prince or a princess who will fulfill our every need, without knowing what it is exactly we are waiting for, we remain dependent persons who act like children. We only become true adults when we conquer our pride and fear and dare to admit we are needy. And when we do, we will have to face up to the confrontation, since the question then is: who will fulfill whose needs and to what extent? It means we must be prepared to not only look after our own interests, but also to those of the other. We shall have to measure up to one another, bow our heads and admit we need others - which to be certain – is not the same as being completely dependent on them.

In my work I have discovered that I can invite this confrontation by simply demanding from clients a simple “yes” or “no” in regard to me or to the group or to an empty chair that represents a loved

one. In the sound of his or her voice I immediately detect his or her true intention. Just by saying yes or no out loud, something happens inside a person. If a Yes person hears a “no!” emerge from his depths, or a real “yes” instead of the habitual “yes but”, and if a No person hears a “yes” or a “no” that is genuine, an AHA moment can follow. By participating in the yes/no game, we measure our strength and laughter usually emerges, enabling us to step out of the power struggle. Suddenly it occurs that it’s not about winning or being right, but about two people leveling and meeting one another, whether they agree or not. Then humor comes in and life becomes more playful. The other given is that a yes and no struggle is not only present outside of us but also inside.

Our yes or top dog tells us what - according to social rules - we must abide to. And in our no echoes the voice of our underdog, resisting all those musts.

Top dog and under dog, strong and weak, struggle to be first in line, which disables us from making the next step. Top dog says you must try your best, you aren’t good enough, persist, keep going. Under dog replies: I’m afraid, I cannot, I will not.

Shops are stacked full of books telling us how to change and improve ourselves.

Our pursuit toward self improvement is bound to awaken the ever present yes no, yes no conflict. One voice says you have to keep going, prevail, be strong, the other voice objects it would be best to keep things as they are. Even if we arrive at change and progress this way, we pay the exorbitant high price of fighting with ourselves, meeting our confusion over who we are and our insecurities, possibly resulting in abject self hatred. Think of the painful and often useless attempts to lose weight or abstain from drinking or smoking. Usually the harder we are on ourselves, the more perfection we opt for, the more unbearable our situation becomes. It is too bad, but doing our best and taking trouble is not exactly rewarded with bouts of abundant happiness. If we try to function better by changing our patterns, we will find ourselves stuck in possibly even worse, alternative patterns. Because it is improbable that by doing our best we will ever be good enough in

our own eyes. Still becoming aware of our projections can direct us to a path of self fulfillment by integrating what we project.

Questions to chew on by taking time for you and your process. Can I say Yes? Can I say No? When can I say yes/ when can I say no? Start with finding the right time and the right place and become aware you are in the here and now by directing your attention to your breathing. Sit upright to enable the energy to flow freely through your spine. Bring paper and pen or pencil to write or draw when you are ready for it.

** Translated from the Dutch by Inez Karkabé*

5. Manipulating authorities*

*Standing on our own feet
Becoming Autonomous*

*The secret is that we must stop trying to become
and start listening to ourselves.*

The Paradoxical Theory of Change

Those demands bring us to the paradoxical theory of change.*
When we stop trying to do our best and are really prepared to
acknowledge and accept our survival patterns, we will find change
is at hand.

This is not easy, since we need to surrender and have faith, which
is hard for any person to opt for. Way too risky. But if we are
capable of letting go of our yes/no conflict, our abhorrence, self-
critique, and face ourselves instead of running off, if we dare to
have faith that what is happening is right, then the energy now
being sucked up by the yes/no struggle will subside and we will
have room to breathe freely and choose where we go. This
approach alone though, will not solve our problems.

The secret is that we must stop trying and start listening to
ourselves. Creating solutions without listening to our inner voices
will not do the trick.

A wise Indian in *Native Wisdom for White minds* by Anne Wilson
Schaefer says it this way: *“Every problem the mind resolves, creates ten other
problems. What we must do is listen to our heart and our soul.”*

Roots and primal authorities

But can we? How do we listen to our heart and soul?

Practically speaking, it means we literally have to take the risk of
opening our hearts instead of navigating on our minds. Another
paradox? Do we “have to” again?

Yes, I cannot deny we do, but this time it has nothing to do with answering up to demands from the outside world. This is a matter of a holy quest, coming from within.

Good thing about it is that we can't be wrong, there are no grades to be given. We have a free choice: we either truly listen, observe and feel, or we don't. Time and time again, same story. Listening and observing people who surround us, listening to ourselves, to nature, listening to the invisible world.

Of course there are many ways to go about this, but the road starts with the fact that we are the child of our parents, who were children of their parents, and so on and so on. Whether we like it or not, we cannot deny our roots or primal authorities. No pears grow on an apple tree. We do have a choice though, whether we want to be a child forever, seeing our parents as beings who are or were not living up to our needs.

Or we can look with the eyes of an adult and see them as a man and a woman with their own lives with whom we can either connect or not. As long as we make our happiness or dismay dependent on them, we are not doing them or ourselves right. If this is our attitude to our parents, then this is our attitude to ourselves and to other authorities as well. If we want to be free individuals, we must cut the umbilical cord again and again, stand on our own two feet and become who we are.

Not so simple, that's for sure, but we can also look at this as an inviting yet sometimes hazardous adventure called life.

The power of authorities

To stand on our own feet and free ourselves from the fear of being betrayed and left alone, we must move out of the power game. And to free ourselves from the fear of guilt and punishment, we must become autonomous. Without authorities we can do neither. Authorities are parents, bosses, lovers, teachers, people made of flesh and blood, who seem to know better or have power over us because they possess what we yearn for. That is why they attract us and at the same time invoke fear. We long for their love, acceptance and recognition, yet there's no guarantee our needs will be answered. What to do? Are we going to pretend we

do not need them? Do we submissively wait for some miracle to happen or will we decide to enter the battlefield and step into the power triangle of omnipotence, impotence and the struggle for power?

Omnipotence

When we keep up appearances, despite the longing we have for attentiveness, love, a clean diaper and warm milk, we keep a stiff upper lip, we don't cry out, we don't let on. We do this because we don't want to know the painful truth about our unfulfilled needs. The consequence is that in time we no longer know what it is we long for or what we need and live by the pretext that we are self-sufficient. This can give us a feeling of power. If we think we need no-one, we are likely to get caught up in feelings of omnipotence.

You can recognize this phenomenon in people who are proud and stubborn, obsessively striving for perfection, unwilling to belong to any group, always wanting to excel and withdrawing in the face of conflict. If you hear others or yourself say "yes" more readily than "no", then you are confronted with this survival pattern of omnipotence. The role we play fitting this pattern is the role of the savior, the helper. Therapists often have this background.

Impotence

A different way of surviving is to raise your voice and let the whole world hear that you're in need of attention, that you want someone now to look after you, someone to be there for you, to love you. At the onset, it might appear that this could be a more profitable strategy. But here too, we can fall into a trap. It remains to be seen whether we really receive the attention we long for, if we are truly being seen, heard, and taken seriously.

The danger is that we become naggers, who never are content. We start to believe we cannot do anything ourselves and are therefore forever in need of another person. If we hear ourselves or others excessively say "I'm frightened", "I cannot", "I could not", "I don't know" then we can be sure to have fallen into the gloomy pit of helplessness. We think we are not good enough, we feel inferior, we nourish our grief and stay dependent. When we are asked to do something, we almost always automatically refuse, and

say “no” since we think we cannot do it ourselves. In this pattern we are in the role of the victim. As client we usually are.

Power struggle

The third way to attempt getting what we need, is by going into battle. When we notice we have to fight, time and time again in order to win, if we have to know better and be best and want to be right, if we feel superior, have a strong will and want to be boss, then we are trapped in the survival pattern known as the power struggle. We neither say yes or no and seem forever to be longing for something we do not get. The role we play can be of the prosecutor or the offender.

Longing to be the best

The upside of those patterns is, that they have enabled us to survive. The downside is, that they do not provide us with the much desired true attentiveness we actually need. Fortunately, we are usually nurtured and loved to some degree, but if we get more condescension than love it is difficult to become happy. Yet we do not easily give up our tactics since, however it may be, we answer to an image we have created of ourselves that appears to become our primary tool in survival. I, for example, always have to be the best. This has served me without a doubt, but it also has made me vulnerable since I cannot do without an authority who confirms my superiority. What I really need is recognition, appreciation, love. And if that is the case, I have failed. By striving to be the best, I was loved and honored to a certain degree, but more likely I was feared. In the process of wanting to be the best, I became rigid and lonely. That was not what I longed for but it took me a long time to realize that I was trapped.

Meeting a master teacher

My struggle with authorities and becoming autonomous dawned on me full force when I started to study Gestalt Therapy. I was much impressed by a Gestalt therapist who was leading a Buddhist retreat. The location in Spain where the retreat took place was like paradise, which certainly helped to bring me into a higher level of consciousness. We were lovingly guided into being silent, into listening and observing. By sitting still for one whole hour in one

place, looking at a square meter of earth, I got a peak experience which is impossible to reconstruct on paper but by looking at a tiny plant I knew I was part of a bigger Whole.

I knew I entered a new era in my life and got pretty excited. I expected salvation from this tutor and went back for more enlightenment. The teacher became a role model for me. I wanted only ONE thing: to be noticed and approved of by her. I felt like I was in love. The teacher was constantly on my mind and when I was invited by her to engage in a workshop about leadership and co-operation, I landed in the seventh heaven. The message was that the teacher needed me because she was short of strong women.

Angry woman

It was a Christmas recess at the same location in Spain, to last for two weeks. What I did not realize was that this event was not a Buddhist retreat, but a Gestalt workshop. I did not know that the idea of the workshop was to confront one another and find out if we were capable to lead and co-operate at the same time. Naturally I felt obliged to act out my role as I thought a strong woman should be. That was confronting. I saw myself on video and cringed. Was I really that angry woman? Frightening.

My spiritual, loving side which had emerged during the retreats, seemed to have completely evaporated. A witch rose up from the depths, and not only that, my good fairy, my divine tutor, appeared also to unfold another aspect of her personality. When my body let go of the pain I for years had suppressed in a drastically acute manner and stumbled around the paradise-like territory, folded up in various contortions of pain, my ideal role model passed by and wanted to know how I was doing. I said I was in pain.

“Of course you are in pain”, the authority snapped, “you have work to do”. Later I heard her say to the co trainer: “She”, with a nod in my direction, “has an authority conflict...” What did she mean? This statement was being made by the authority I looked up to most, so I had to take it seriously. Most painful was to realize that the tutor showed a certain disdain for me, now that this handicap had exposed itself even physically. So as a strong woman I tried very hard to prove that I might have a problem, but that this would by no means keep me from being the best student.

Ivory tower to survive

As a student I am not proud of the struggle that followed. I was so eager to be recognized by the authority, that I let myself be humiliated. In other words: I did not give in, just strived to be the best. Rather than admitting my teacher had hurt me and I didn't like it, I stood fast and tried to understand what was going on. My confirmative yes nodding tactic of someone who needs no-one and won't budge, took me a long time to overcome. Years passed before I could bow my head and admit that I am grateful to my teacher, since she was my principal aid and guide to the path of Gestalt. It was not an easy path to follow. As students, we had to stand our ground if we wanted to confront our teachers. It was part of the stuff we had to learn, I found out later.

Our own boss

The main question was – as always of course - who was which teacher's pet? Could it be me or was it one of the other students? Who would rise up to this favorite position? Who would decide this? That could only be the man or woman having the authority to do it.

To be outspoken or autonomous, we have to become our own boss, our own authority, and in doing so, we need someone to challenge us to do so. We require a role model which we can surpass in order to grow and become a free individual. Simply put: to become autonomous, we will explicitly have to engage into a battle with what implicitly, has been present in ourselves for a long time. But because we feel a need to be seen and heard, we must at first answer to the expectations of authorities in order to get his or her consent. And in doing so, it appears we are forever in the process of becoming someone we think we should be, someone who is more intelligent, younger, richer, funnier.

Painful enough we deny in this process certain traits that do not fit our self image. Still, whatever is, is, and we are who we are.

Objects of desire

A clear example was the constant state of being in love I was in as a future therapist. During the four years of studying Gestalt

therapy this was evidently – as I look back - not about sexual or personal love relationships. Objects of desire were therapists and trainers. They were deities, they possessed what I needed to develop, and obtain. When I had grown enough to invite clients into my practice, my state changed. The actuality of life left no room for dreaming of a prince on a white horse.

When I became an authority myself, I was absorbed with all the expectations sent in my direction. So the yes or no game continued. As a therapist, I also have a choice to either answer what clients expect of me, or step out of my role and expose what this contact does with me, risking a confrontation since my clients could be disappointed and protest. But only in this way clients become in their turn autonomous and develop their own authority, because only they know what is good for them, discovering that they are no longer in need of me as an authority and therapist.

So how about you? Did you become your own authority already or are you stuck in a battle for power? The following questions can set you on a trail: Am I my own boss?

Do I speak my own voice?

Can I step out of the power game?

Am I a savior, a victim or/ and a prosecutor?

Am I committed?

**Translated from the Dutch by Inez Karkabé*

6. Our Other Half

To become who we are instead of who we should be

*'The most painful lesson is
that it is not enough to be willing and prepared.'*

The One and Only

The question that has haunted me as a woman is if we indeed need that one man or one woman who can give us the feeling that we are special and more than just okay. If only we meet the One, who will turn out to be our prince on a white horse or our soul mate, we do not have to be afraid our lives are worthless. This expectation meant for me hoping that the man I would become engaged to, would also make my parents proud and happy. Then we would live a successful life, raising beautiful, intelligent and witty children. That is not how it went. And for a long time I thought this was due to the fact that I was a failure as a woman: not pretty or nice or witty or sexually attractive enough.

The day to day relation

Only when I found myself back in therapy during my turbulent marriage, it started to dawn on me that being in a love relation does not mean, that 'they lived happily ever after' can be achieved. The most painful lesson for me was the discovery that it is not enough to be willing and prepared. In our day to day relation it becomes clear not only the power of love plays a role, but that also the black and slithery sides of our personalities can no longer be denied. By working as a therapist I know now, I am not the only one for whom a love relation was and is frustrating. At least a thousand times I wondered what this frustration is about. How does it come that partners in love can make life for each other so damn difficult? Is there any sense in this kind of suffering or are we wasting our time? For me the answer is Yes of course, there is a sense but if you ask me what sense, I still do not know exactly. It is a mystery. Can it be that we only get to know who we are in close relation with another human being? Can it be that we need

daily to look into the mirror of the other that shows us our real face? To become who we really are we will have to accept that we can only become that man or that woman, that in first instance was already present in the womb of our mother. This means that our lives are beyond logic and therefore more surprising than *one and one is two plus a house and a child, a tree and a pet.* (Dutch expression)

Human beings are bisexual

According to some myths the original human being is androgyne: masculine and feminine. Or in other words: bisexual. If this is still true, it is not hard to imagine that men who believe they are just men and women who think they are only women will suffer from intensive inner conflicts. Our masculine and our feminine side can be engaged in a struggle that is as passionate as the struggle between lovers. Carl Gustav Jung* named the masculine element in a woman “animus” and the feminine element in a man “anima”. He stated that we cannot directly get in touch with our anima or animus, because they are not part of our conscious personality. Our subconscious found a magic solution: it projects our longing for our anima (our soul) on women and our longing for our animus (our mind) on men of flesh and blood. This means that by projecting, we can get a glimpse of that part of ourselves we don't know. A way of projecting is to fall in love. With men it can work like this: they long so passionately for the beauty and the sensitivity of a woman that their sexual energy can rise sky high. A man in love is able to go to the end of the world for a woman he hardly knows. Maybe her blond curls or her mysterious smile or the warm sound of her voice touched him in the depth of his anima. And the woman who is chosen probably will feel honoured in the first place. She will want to fulfil his expectations, but deep in her heart she knows the day of truth will arrive, the day he will understand and experience that she is not the Goddess he believed her to be.

Verbally talented men

Women often fall intensely in love with verbally talented men: gurus, heroes, writers, actors, therapists, trainers, singers, artists, men who seem to know ‘it’ and are even able to express what ‘it’ means. Women who are hooked this way, can forget who they are themselves and become ‘the servant’ of the master they adore. The

'lucky' man will – presumably – at first receive her attention and admiration, but he will have to face the fact, that after all he is not that prince on a white horse she thought he was.

The turning of the tide

Falling in love can be wonderful, we imagine ourselves in heaven on earth. Pity the tide always turns. If it becomes clear that the man we fell in love with is not as wise as we expected. Or the woman not as desirable, our golden projection can change from one minute to the other to a black one. Especially when it is about love at first sight, we better be prepared. The first period as lovers we have fun, we make love, eat, drink and sleep together. It seems we are in paradise. But then she starts claiming him or he wants to possess her and his or/and her jealousy bring them back to earth. He thinks she became boring because he feels claimed and does not realize that his own anima, his own feminine pole can also be pretty boring and sulking. The problem is that her nagging voice is evident, while his nagging is still unconscious. He has no idea how discontented his own soul is and reproaches his loved one because she disturbs the romance. She in her turn, became without knowing, the prisoner of her jealous animus who projects his/her mistrust on her lover. Constantly she is afraid her lover will meet another woman he will like better than her. The joke is that both can be right. But if he does not know about his own moody anima and she has no idea of her own unfaithful animus, the danger is that they reproach each other what they better could face together. Our mistrust can become so enormous, that we as lovers become too afraid of each other to be in one room. We are transformed into a monster and a witch, who poison each others' lives.

Falling in love on an unconscious level

If the connection is about the attraction between anima and animus, between soul and mind, the relationship will be complicated. We fall in love on an unconscious level. Men with women, women with men and also men with men and women with women, because in the core we are bisexual. Men can be longing to make contact with their animus, their true masculine power and women can long for their anima, for the qualities of their soul. Falling in love brings a lot of advantages. It opens our

hearts, it brings us together, it makes us willing to listen to the other, to see the other and it takes us to a different state of consciousness, a state in which we experience the world as a miracle. Nevertheless, a relationship mainly based on projections has no future if we are not prepared to face our expectations and relate them to reality. Developing an adult love relation is hard work because there are snags in it. According to Peter Schellenbaum* love cannot exist without 'No'. And 'they lived happily ever after' is not the end but the beginning of the story. To become a happy couple and live long and happily ever after, we think we have to meet a number of conditions, that in the end will prove to be fatal for a human relationship.

The happy couple

For example: if you love each other and are a happy couple

- you should say 'yes' to each other without restrictions
- you will remain true for ever
- you feel and think the same;
- you do not criticize or betray each other and you do not say 'No';
- you keep your relationship nice and harmonious;
- you are never angry and do not fight;
- you do not nag;
- you succeeded in life and have a respectful status;
- your sex is deeply satisfying; both partners like to make love and like to spoil each other;
- you do not know loneliness; even stronger: if you are single and feel lonely, you better take care that you become the half of a happy couple;
- you are always available for each other;
- you are friends with other happy couples;
- you have happy children who have happy friends who are children of happy parents

The ideal marriage or relationship?

Who does not long for it? But does it exist in reality? Even in the most passionate and loving relation the 'unconditional' Yes can

change from one day to the other in No. If after the honeymoon our loved one turns out to be someone who does not fulfil our longings, we can decide without any compassion to stop the relation. Or we become so scared that we are willing to compromise. The result can be that we find ourselves back to playing roles in the wrong play. Leading question may be: who cares for whom? As partners in a love relation we expect that all our unfulfilled basic needs will be answered. Is it possible that this is the reason we fall in love with a copy of the parent who has the sex of our sexual preference? Does the mysterious animus look as two drops of water like our father and the anima like our mother? If the answers are Yes, it would mean that falling in love is not so elusive as we believe. We cannot deny that Pa and Ma are in us. Possibly they are searching for the mirror in which they can recognize their own image outside us.

The image of our parents

How is it to share our lives with a man or a woman who seems to resemble more and more our father or mother? You almost look like your mother or your father, is usually not meant to be a compliment. Personally I believe that we are supposed to continue our life history where we got stuck with our parents. If our basic needs were not met, we are still waiting for what we need and could not ask for when we were a child and dependent. Now we are grown up and still long for warmth, tenderness, love, support, care and attention we have to learn to take responsibility for what we need by asking for it, maybe even demanding. We will become unhappy if we think we will get what we long for presented on a tray. If we become aware of ourselves sulking all the time, or we realize we are in a constant battle for power with our partner, we've got work to do. First by finding out what it is we are longing for. And second, to learn how to get what we need. Forcing the other does not work. It is what children try who want it their own way. How to do it then? The only way as far as I can see, is to step out of our pride, bow our heads and admit that we long for love, warmth, sex, support, care and attention. If we are afraid that the one we love will reject us and say No to us, asking is more than just difficult. Just imagine, admitting that we truly need sex and the answer is: do you? Well I don't. Pity for you. There we are naked,

desire raging through our body. We might even feel ashamed or humiliated, but why? I think it is strange and painful to be ashamed because our deepest needs are not fulfilled. Must be connected to the fear of not being good enough. How can I expect my loved one to give me warmth, love, support, sex if I do not feel desirable or lovable?

Vicious circle

Here we are in a vicious circle. We wonder if we are attractive enough to be desired and want to be confirmed by the one we love. If we feel uncertain and walk on our toes we are trapped, because the other won't feel free. He or she is supposed to convince us of our splendour and that is impossible because we do not believe we are good enough to get what we long for. If we think we only deserve what we need if we go to the beauty shop first or take a course to make a more attractive or intelligent impression, we become our own enemies. The dramatic truth is that we can go to the hairdresser every day and can learn whatever we want, but it will not make us more lovable if we feel uncertain. This does not mean that we should not go to the hairdresser or not go to a course or a training to learn more, but we better realize that love is not for sale this way.

The fear of not being good enough causes our reluctance to say wholeheartedly Yes to each other. We are too afraid of what will happen if we say Yes and the other says No or Yes But. Our fear of not being valuable enough will prove to be true. At least, it does if we stay with the No and do not ask what it is about. If I am certain he says No because he thinks I am not pretty, nice, lovable or intelligent enough, I am the one who says No to me first because I do not dare to ask what his No is about. How can we know why we are rejected if we do not check what we suppose? Maybe it is not about me but about him, because he is afraid he cannot live up to my sky high expectations? If I do not ask, I will never know. And that is where the challenge is.

If I am too afraid to pose the question, I give away the power to decide myself whether I am okay or not. If I am secretly hoping he will convince me that I am good as I am, I tell myself the wrong

tale. Being good enough is about our identity and our being. We are who we are and only I can have a clue who I am and the same goes for you. If I think I know how and who you should be, I am above reality. How can I if I even do not really know how and who I am?

Existential questions

Still we share problems. If we are women who should have been men, we have the same deep existential question. It's the same if we are old and white and should be black and young. Only if we can say out loud Yes to who we are, we can say No to that part of our personality that is not us. If we are stuck in 'Yes but' and 'No but' our frank Yes and our full No will go underground and we will radiate something secretive that will undermine our relations.

Sexual fantasies

Often we do not know what we exactly long for. That is why our sexual, romantic and violent fantasies about our loved ones can guide us. Those images or dreams about a man or a woman have a meaning. Our sexual fantasies are also mirroring our longing for our own anima or own animus, for our longing to connect with our soul or our mind. This can be erotic and romantic but also violent. Our loved one can change into a devil who will rape us. Or into a strict mother who does not love us or into a possessive father who dominates and abuses us. Anything is possible in our dreams and imagination. Scary! Better not talk about it in public. Nevertheless those images represent normal – subconscious - needs. Precisely because our longing to become a complete human being is so intense, the images that go with it are so vehement. Only when we become afraid because we believe we have to bring our imagination into action or because we think what we experience is reality, we can lose ourselves. When we reject and suppress those images out of fear, they will stay with us and can become dangerous for our health and feeling of well being.

Becoming whole

And of course our sexual fantasies are also about the longing to be near another person, the longing to literally feel another body of flesh and blood. And about wanting to become one with this other

person in a way that can only be reached by surrendering and coming into each other. But the continuous tension that dominates our lives is caused by the contradiction within ourselves. Our masculine side challenges our feminine pole, our animus tickles our anima, our mind thinks he is the boss of our soul, Yang and Yin struggle for the biggest space. And this very tension changes into excitement every time we meet a man or a woman who awakens our animus or our anima and sets our bellies on fire. Aha, is he the One or is she? And then the game recommences. After rose buds and moonbeams the conflicts and the fear to lose ourselves or our loved one follow. But in the end it will become clear that becoming whole can only be accomplished within ourselves. Becoming one with another human being is not the same as becoming one with our own 'other half', but the one cannot exist without the other. That is why I plead for granting ourselves our lust and desire. Let's compare it to gold-ore, that is not to be found on the surface. You have to dig for it and if you find it, you will have to purify it to find gold. Throwing it away would be a pity, maybe even a sin.

A complete human being

This text is mainly based on the Jungian heritage, because it gave me the insight I needed, when I struggled severely with a love I lost and could not get over. The only way I could go on was to understand why it happened by writing the undercurrent. Step by step I could and can accept that I had to grow this way, not because I am inferior but because I am a woman who longs to become who she is: a complete human being.

How about you and your experiences with relations and sex and love and longing for the One. How about your search for who you truly are in relation to your loved ones. If you can, take time now and meditate on questions as: Am I good enough as a woman? Am I good enough as a man? Am I good enough as a lover? Do I long to connect? Do I believe I have a soul mate? Did I meet my soul mate? Do I believe in love? If you read or scan the text again you can find your own questions that urgently ask for answers. Do not be shy, your questions can bring you to your own answers and wisdom if you allow yourself to let your hand do the work and write. This is not simple as you can read in the story about the sleeping serpent in the cellar in chapter 7.

Part Two

Chapters 7 – 44

Hot Fires

Writing the Undercurrent to Connect with our Authentic Self

To become porcelain a pot made of clay
needs the hot fire of the oven.

It is the same for people
who long to become a better human being.

We all have hot fires in our lives like passionate love affairs,
power struggles, illnesses, losing loved ones, losing work,
being in wartime or other disasters.

Staying in the heat

If we come out as a better human being is not certain.

It depends on how we handle the fire.

By writing the undercurrent
we can explore our faith and trust,
our secret longings, suppressed needs,
forgotten experiences, painful feelings,
crazy ideas, faraway dreams that influence our life
without us having control over it.

In the following chapters you can read about
adventures that emerged while being at conferences
doing and giving workshops
attending study weeks
teaching writing groups
and living the day to day life.

7. The Sleeping Serpent

A true story about a women named Catherine.
Just as the author she has a Gestalt practice in Amsterdam.

*I am a serpent who is stupid enough to believe
she is too old to shine and show the world her longing tongue.'*

Could it be him?

She looked at her garden. Her green everyday world. Although she loved it, she was not someone who kept it neat and worked in it daily for hours. Sometimes she did. Usually in springtime and then she let it be, knowing surprises would come her way. To be honest she was too busy with other things like checking her email. More important? For her yes. Although...she does not need Viagra, does not want a million dollar business deal proposed by Africans, then Terry R.

Uh, Terry R.? Could it be him? Rather common name. She opened the mail and read: 'You probably do not remember me, but we met in November on St. Pete Beach. You gave me your card and I searched the internet and was surprised. You were quite modest, you did not mention how known you are in the Gestalt world.' When she read that he wanted to get in touch with her, Catherine felt a laugh bubbling up from her belly. Sun broke through the clouds. Life became more exciting. She wrote back telling that of course she remembered him. In fact he fitted in the Hollywood script she thought she was then in. Florida. Exotic hotels, beaches, palm trees, perfect decorations for a movie in which she could give herself a leading role. Meeting him, having a flirty talk, walking romantically on the beach, attempting to make love, it all fitted into the story.

On purpose

In a flash she went back to the day she went to a Gestalt conference in Florida. She took some extra days to be on the beach and swim and rest and read and see something of her surroundings. The night before the conference started she had dinner in a Steakhouse across the road of her beach **resort hotel**.

There she sat by herself at a small table, facing another small table with a man. They could not help looking at each other. He opened the contact by stating that 'they' had placed us this way on purpose. Catherine looked at him. Oh, my God, did he want to flirt with her? Could be fun. A conversation started. What did she do here? Where did she come from? He was a trainer she understood wrongly, because he happened to be a trader. Pity, it would have been nice to meet a colleague. But they kept talking, first at far over the two tables and couches, then he came to her table and ordered more wine. She was genuinely amused when he invited her to come and have a drink in the Holiday Inn at the other side of the road. She could hardly believe it, but they did go by car. In the elevator to the bar on the top floor he kissed her and she liked it. Maybe she should not but she did. Butterflies began to awaken in her belly. Sitting at the bar with him looking at the panorama that moved because the floor was turning, she felt an attractive woman and forgot being in her sixties. When the music started she wanted to dance, but no, pity, he was no dancer.

Romance on the beach

Then he got this romantic idea to go for a walk on the beach. It was a sultry night and she liked walking hand in hand and kissing and feeling the sand and smelling the sea. If there was a moon she did not notice. She realized that she would never go on the beach at night by herself and felt grateful just for the experience. Then it became clearer and clearer that sex was on his mind. Yes, they could stay the night together. His place or her suite? As her hotel was only one minute away they went there. Once inside they felt each other, body to body. The huge king size bed was an inviting place until something happened in his head. All of a sudden he let her go, jumped up and just stood before her.

'We need more time,' he stated. 'We should get to know each other better, before we can make love together.'
'Do you think so?' Catherine felt annoyed. Making love for her had to do with feeling and she did not need to know him to be able to feel. But if this was his conviction, she was not going to attempt to change his mind. Too proud. So she let him go.

When she lay alone on the bed, wondering, she sensed a big laugh in her belly. She must have excited him, and she welcomed the feeling. Is that why they could not just sit at the table and talk? On one hand she felt betrayed, on the other she felt very much alive and woman. She could not figure out what was more important and knew that she was hooked. The longing was there again. She thought she had had it, she thought she was a free woman and safe.

She thought that this big American man who lived in this sunny paradise since six months and loved it, could by no means shake her from her rocker. He was not her type. Too busy making money, taking sailing lessons, dreaming of ending up on the Virgin Islands. Interesting, nice for an evening but not her cup of tea.

Deep cellar

That night she woke up at half past three. She had a dream and wrote it down. In this dream she was with TR, as she called him, in a house with a very deep cellar. Then one of her ex-lovers turned out to be with a girl in the kitchen of this same house that belonged to her uncle Arie. He was there because he could not pay the rent of his office any longer and her uncle Arie offered him his light blue round kitchen table to work on. After a moment the family of TR came in. Aunts? A mother? No men. They said to Catherine that John already would be turning sixty, meaning that he once was their little boy and now he was such a big grown up man. There the dream ended. Catherine did not feel like analyzing. She just wrote it down together with some observations she had made during the evening.

The next day the conference started and she knew she would be tied up, probably not even able to meet this man. But as he took her card and knew the number of her room, she did expect him to call her as he promised. Every night she came in the first she did was look whether her phone was flickering. No it was not and not and yes it was but it was the taxi service. She felt stupid. He had her card but she did not have his. She was completely dependent. Yes, she did walk along the beach where he had his condominium and hoped to meet him by chance but did not. Then she forced herself to concentrate on the conference and became quite happy.

In this conference with those people she found the togetherness she had been looking for since years. So what no phone calls? She would go on living anyway.

Another woman

Since that first email contact Catherine learned that TR had left her then because he was just starting a relation with another woman and he did not think infidelity was a good way to either start or end a relation. Though that relation had ended now, he still had this item of enjoying the company of women in his life. At the same time women were his biggest problem. Catherine did not know what to make of this. What was his message? Was he looking for one special woman and was she a candidate or did he want her as one of his women friends?

When she reread the notes she made in Florida, the dream she had the night she met him came back. What specially intrigued her was the deep cellar. One morning she woke up and wrote "There is a serpent sleeping in the cellar". Then she knew things were becoming serious. Her time of waiting was over. She had to face the truth. The power of the serpent was no other than this enormous laugh in her belly that wanted to break loose. That day she sat in her garden, enjoying the hot summer afternoon. She wished the man who awakened her longing was with her. But he was far, over the ocean. He liked her deep thinking, he told her and wanted to bond with her and become physical. His feelings of love and God generally came from somewhere deep within him and were not always explainable. But God had blessed him in the way that he sometimes got in touch with the spiritual side and apprehended the infinite. Why didn't they talk and explore when she was there with him? Good questions. No answers. Just two people on the road of life. Longing for each other and longing for the infinite. Love and God seemed to be connected.

Exciting thoughts

All those deep thoughts excited Catherine. She could not sleep, lay in her bed thinking, dreaming, longing. Tried to imagine what her future would be. Then the next day broke and the next and the

next and they did not seem different from before. Life went on as it had for years. She had to wake up, take a bath, get breakfast, clean her house, water her plants, feed her cats and do her work. Only her energy had changed. She could still feel the laugh in her belly waiting to get out fully and surprise the world. One morning when she felt jealous because she had not heard from him for a week, she used her energy to flow write. On paper appeared:

Longing Lovers

Longing for each other,
Longing for Love,
Longing for God,
Longing for the Infinite
Projecting it on each other
Finding out
that unconditional Love
is not exclusive

Longing to Unite Physically

Longing to become one
Then fear comes in
How about the sleeping serpent
in the cellar
What if he wakes up
Will his power be poisonous
Will he speak with a double tongue
Will he split up the lovers in paradise
Will he open up his sexual and psychic energy
and connect the lovers for ever
giving them a taste of paradise
and a glance of being in prison

The answer is in the question:

who is responsible?

God, Love, the Serpent, the Man, the Woman
the World, Life

Only by doing, by tasting, by feeling, by talking,
by seeing and hearing, by communicating,
will they find out that the answer is not absolute,

the answer is what changes all the time.
The secret is the Willingness, the Commitment,
the Trust, the Faith in Life.
Does he say Yes to it or Yes but
Does she say Yes or No but

Only by being in the Here and Now
Saying Yes and saying No can there be contact
and can the longing be dismantled
At least that is her Answer on this very moment
Tomorrow it might be different.

Too bright

When he read what she had written, he asked her if she wrote that? It was great. She must have an immense talent for writing. He was very impressed. He had not been ignoring her but responding to her required thought and he needed time to shift gear. Actually, he thought her too bright for him. She needed someone who could respond in kind to her thoughts. He would miss their communication, but thought it best to end this attempt to romance.

Night after night Catherine lay awake. Thinking, dreaming, writing. Was he right? Was she too bright? Did she need someone her kind? It was true that she rather kept control and win than admit that she was vulnerable and needy and afraid to be rejected.

She realized that in the course of time this distant relation had made her pretty manic. What did she expect to happen? To meet her prince on a white horse after all? She had to take some rest in her head and directed her attention to her work, so she could forget she was a needy woman. But how about this pain in her belly, this signal that tells her she is cutting herself off from her serpent again?

Anger and pain

She had better take time to listen and to believe that to be open and express herself is healthier than getting back into her nice self and pretend she does not need a man or love or intimacy. Even if,

to express herself, means that she has to face her anger and her pain. Yes, she cannot deny it, she feels hurt again. Time to feel and share it instead of running away by being bright and successful.

Apparently she is a woman after all who has to bow her head and admit that even she is emotionally dependent and needs love. At least it makes her belong and able to connect. With women, with men? Maybe even with the ones who hurt her? They probably feel also what she feels.

To keep her serpent awake she develops a workshop to invite participants to wake up their own serpents as well. To explain what they can expect she writes: Just as clay needs a hot fire to become porcelain instead of pottery, people need hot fires to become a better human being. And to experience a hot fire we need to awaken this sleeping serpent in our bellies and face the sexual and other powers that are waiting to come out and might make us seem a fool.

But are we? What are we afraid of and what do we have to become, what do we have to lose?

The spontaneity of the child

From the Paradoxical Theory of Change we learn that the harder we try to be who we are not, the more we stay the same.

You are invited to rediscover the spontaneity of the child and of the artist in you and to overcome the fear of being seen as infantile or exceptionally neurotic. We will use flow writing and drawing, we will sing, dance, play and improvise with the words that have been written and the drawings that have been made. By doing so we will transform our range of expressing ourselves and eventually discover that we have created new ground from which we can nourish ourselves to live in a more healthy way.

Sacred time, sacred place is what is needed to create the hot fire that enables the serpent to wake up and radiate its transforming power. Catherine is grateful to this big American man that made her aware of her potential even though he did not enter into the space himself. Too afraid to discover who he or she really was? It is possible. She will never know and realizes that she cannot force

anyone to enter her hot fire. But what she can do is invite other people with their own serpents to join the party.

Waiting

When – two years after the first one - a conference was organized in the same hotel in Florida, Catharine wrote TR an email telling she would be there again and asked if he was interested in meeting her. Yes, he certainly was, he said. His answer started her dreaming again, although they did not have an appointment when she arrived on the premises. Nor did she have his telephone number. She expected him to call her hotel once she was there. So she waited and waited for his call and in the meantime prepared for the Awakening-the-Sleeping- Serpent-workshop she would give. Twenty-two people joined and awakened their own serpents by writing, dancing and singing. Afterwards Catherine read in the evaluations some people thought her workshop the best of all.

Nevertheless she fretted and waited and walked between conference times on the beach, hoping she would meet him. She went to have dinner – alone or with colleagues – in the steakhouse where she had met him two years earlier. She even went with a friend to the Holiday Inn, secretly hoping he would be there. Funny thing was that she probably would not have recognized him, if he had been there. After all she only did see him for a few hours in the evening light. And would he recognize her? And if yes, like her or be disappointed?

On her way back home in the airplane she wrote in her diary and wondered about the coincidence that she found a TR in the telephone directory who lived on the same boulevard. She decided to call him, but he was not her TR. Then she remembered he told her about this other man bearing the same name.

Somehow the laugh in her belly became stronger and stronger. Apparently this was not a story about ‘Living happily ever after’, but a more mysterious adventure.

Silly joke

New Year came and she decided to send him a self made e-wish. As a reply he asked her when she was coming to Florida. She felt dumbfounded. What to think of this man. Was he innocent, naïve,

mixed up? She told him she had been there, but did not mention her longing and waiting. And of course she did not want him to know how angry she felt now. Too proud. They exchanged some messages that did not go very far, both being too polite to show the back of their minds. Then he sent her a forwarded email with some silly joke. She almost did vomit when she read it. Only then she struck back: 'Do you think this funny? I think it is stupid and without humour. By the way: I loathe forwarded impersonal jokes without any originality.'

Of course this was the end of their affair. He was hurt and so was she. No way to meet. Both parties licking their wounds.

But did the story end indeed or does she open it up now by taking seriously what she wrote. She decided to go deeper and go back to what she wrote in her diary the last time she was in Florida. Her notes start in the plane on her way there. She was reading an article by Isabel Fredericsson and Joseph Handlon in the Gestalt Review* on aging. The line that struck her most was: "One day you look in the mirror and realize, indeed, you are old. Our inner experience which is forever young seems disconnected and incongruent with what we see in the mirror." She could not help looking into the little video screen before her and saw the pattern of her wrinkly skin. She was well on her way to the seventy border and at the other side old age starts, Isabel stated.

Heart specialists

So there she was, an old lady, sitting in that plane beside a breathtakingly beautiful young man. When she saw him appear in the gangway her heart started beating loud. Then he sat beside her and they started talking. He was a heart specialist from Turkish decent who lived in Holland, on his way for the first time to the US. All excited about his trip and the professional conference he is going to. So we have something in common, she says: we both work with hearts. He does not agree. Gestalt? Never heard of it. He works with psychologists and cannot imagine what a Gestalt therapist could contribute more than they do. Okay, she cannot reach him. Nothing to do with age. She goes back to her reading and writing and realizes that age is also playing a role in relation to TR. She believes he is younger than she and is afraid that he will

reject her when he learns the truth. That makes her ambivalent. Does she or does she not want to meet him. Yes of course she wants to meet him if he is willing to tell her that she still is a most attractive woman. But will he? How can he, when she is not? Deep down she knows that is why she did not insist on getting his phone number or on fixing a date. Too dangerous if he found out.

‘I am a serpent who is stupid enough to believe she is too old to shine and show the world her longing tongue,’ she wrote in one of her serpent workshops. ‘I am so stupid that I think I better stay in one place and show nobody my colours are fading. I am a very proud serpent who knows how to shine and how to put her tongue out and let you hear as well her poisonous as her loving and playful self. Do I think I did shine enough? Do I think the portion one gets to shine in life is limited? If I do, that would be a sin, because the shining portion is only limited when I do not use it. Then it will feel unwanted and fade away. That is why I can do only one thing and that is to wake up my serpent very carefully and tell him it is safe out here in the workshop to get the old shine back and play and sing and dance and enjoy together with the other serpents here to make contact.’
The open end

Questions and suggestions to work and play with:

- do I long for that one man or one woman I want to live with for ever?
- do I believe I will find a prince on a white horse or a beautiful loving princess, who will fulfil all my needs and will be there for me always?
- do I believe human beings are androgynous and bi-sexual?
- does my hero or heroine fit in my life story?
- does s/he look like one of my parents?

To become aware of your bodily reactions to those questions sit on the floor for five minutes, just sit, just be, just become aware of your thoughts, feelings, emotions and then write your own romantic love story. It might help if you start with: Once upon a time...

If you are ready, read out loud what you wrote at least two times before you look at the statements below.

In the reality of every day life we have to realize

- that a relation is more than $1 + 1 = 2$ and we live happily for ever after

- that the tide always turns after the moonlight and roses period

- that living up to expectations kills the joy in a relationship

- that our parents do play a head role in our own marriage

- that the power of money and sex play a leading role

- that the question often is who is caring for whom?

- that our inner conflicts between our masculine and feminine pole can be as vehement as the conflicts with our lovers

And the fear of not being good enough and unworthy of love asks us to become aware of our fantasies in relation with reality and our fear for unfaithfulness.

To say Yes and No without restrictions to our own other half that longs to become one we need the mirror of another human being who can teach us to grow, love and integrate our talent, potential, creativity and also our dark, rude and slithery side.

Epilogue

Creating a story like this can help to grow and become more free of the idea that we are too old or too whatever to be good enough to be loved. By writing we become more and more aware of our own power to love the other and ourself even though the other is not a prince and we are not queens either. Or visa versa.

Nevertheless to practice this knowledge is a huge challenge we are confronted with every day.

Experiment in small groups

8. Passion + Awareness = Compassion

I could not live without passion. No way.

That is why passion is my legal nourishment

Life without passion is empty. Passion is for people who want to live their life in a creative way. To live means to feel your needs and suffer when they are not fulfilled. To live means we have a free will and can choose how we do IT. If we are not aware we disappear in the victim role and forget we have power, humour, talent and love. If our life is complicated, frustrating and demanding, we are forced to go deeper and search behind the logic and the problems. Our longing, pain, temper, suffering, fear, anger are there from the moment we come out of the womb into the world and have to start breathing. How did we survive then while we were completely vulnerable and dependant and how does this effect the way we live our lives now? Are we still in the victim role or did we use our Awareness and found that relief is in the paradox? By giving attention to our longings and unfulfilled needs in a creative way, we take our passion seriously instead of suppressing and denying it. What we will find is that compassion is waiting for us. Just when pain, sorrow, fear, anger and longing are embittering our lives, we have the chance to discover and develop our compassion and find love, trust and faith.

Experimenting in small groups with people who long for attention means creating the hot fires we need to become better human beings. For about a year we were coming together weekly to share and explore our experiences in society. Before we started writing we always took time to become aware by meditating on a theme. We straightened our backs, felt our feet on the ground, directed our attention to our breathing to be more and more in the present and becoming aware of the signals of our bodies.

The theme this time was passion:

‘Passion, passion

Passion, passion, passion, passion

Is my thing

Passion is following me
Passion is suppressing my excitement
Although passion is excitement in itself
Passion is about longing
Or is it?
Is it my idea that passion is longing
and is waiting for me?
I could not live without passion.
No way.
That is why passion is my legal nourishment
I eat it, drink it, shit it,
I sing it and write it.
Passion is written all over my body.
The message is: you are passion yourself
You do not have to look for it outside
You are it.
Do not hesitate
Do not deny
Do not hide it
It is the passion that keeps you going
After the passion
Even if you do the next step
You will need your passion again
To consume whatever pops up
Stop being so ashamed of your passion
Stop being so prude, so behaved
Do what your passion tells you to do
And follow your guts
Sorry, this is not about your heart
It is about aggression
It is about sex
It is about the basic instincts in life
We have to make our borders clear
And say this is my space, this is my sacred place
No body can enter here
Because I need this space for me
Otherwise I cannot exist
Once we have this space
- and we have to fight for it time and time again –

but once we have it, we can look around,
see who is there and decide
if we want to connect or not.’

The words that emerge sometimes are rather cryptic in my eyes. When I read what my hand had written, I wondered what the message was. It is about aggression, it is about sex, it is about basic instincts. And needing borders to make things clear. In the group we always start by creating a place and a space for each member. It is the ground we can work from. Without having a place there is no safety. The realisation that nobody can give you a place, often takes time to integrate. We can only do it ourselves, although we have to do it in relation to the other. We are so used to waiting for what we need and long for, that realizing we have the answer ourselves, seems strange.

Next session, same theme:

‘I am passion
I am passion
If I am anything, I am passion
I am passion in my head
My head can think with longing
with temper, because I am born passionately

I am passion and I am more than passion
If I was only passion
I would be an empty shell
But no I am passion and I am a body
To convenience my passion

If I was not a body
I could not do anything with being passion
Now I am also a body
I can give my passion a place
I can feel it, I can stream it,
I can block it, I can scream it,
I can sing it, write it

I am passion means I am able to live

I am not your boyfriend, but I am here now
And therefore on this moment
more prominent than B.

How does that sound to you? To me?
Strange, very strange.
Nevertheless I am right
I am here and you are here
You and I have a chance to create contact.
How? Is it open?
We can do it
We do not have to do it
but we can, if we want it.'

Here and Now

while composing this manuscript a passion flower is floating in a glass with water on my desk. I know it will last only one day and I know too that tomorrow there will be plenty of new flowers in the vine that is climbing one of the fences in my garden. In summertime I often pick a passion flower and bring it into my office to make my clients wonder about it's beauty for one day, knowing it will be transformed into a delicious fruit at the end of the summer if I let it be.

I planted this vine before I found the book 'Power of Flowers'* in which I read that 'it's penetrating elixir helps us to understand the deepest possible meaning of our personal suffering, after which it assists in the ascent to our truest calling of service on the planet. As we truly surrender to the sorrows and hardships,' the writer of the book Isha Lerner, goes on, 'that have been endured in this lifetime, we begin to experience them as stepping stones or teachings that can lead to greater Love and Compassion.' I am always surprised when my own ideas are confirmed in wise books. I thought I was rather creative when I found the 'Passion + Awareness = Compassion' theme for workshops. Seeing and reading that people who come from different places, can still be heading for the same goal, silences me. Just go ahead and trust, I say to myself, the stepping stone you find is what you need to do the next step.

Attention and Awareness is what we need to be able to go on and grow in life, even though we are frustrated. The first book I published (in Dutch), is titled ‘Attention – What is it about?’ I published it for my (ex)clients, to give them an idea of who I am. I imagined it would make it safer for them to let me guide them. I do not know if that is what the book did. Some clients read it, but I hardly ever hear what it does for them. Too complicated? Not their cup of tea? What the book did for me is sensational: it gave me a place in society, because I came out of the closet and made clear even I as a therapist need attention. Nobody else could have done that for me.

Next time Attention was the theme:

‘Attention

Attention for who I am
Attention for what I do
Attention from you without feeling shy and guilty
Because I do not deserve it
If I do not give attention back
Attention is gold, diamond
Although attention can be agonizing
If the attention is meant to give advice
And to tell what I do right and what I do wrong

The longing for attention
Real attention for the woman I am
Makes me dizzy
I have no way of imagining how that could exist
I give myself attention by writing about me
Looking in the mirror at me
Listening to me when I talk or when I sing
Especially when I sing

I give myself attention when I draw or paint
And I have to give myself attention when I have pain in my body
or in my heart
I also have to give myself attention when I am frustrated like I am
today not succeeding to create a web-log

Another way to get attention is to walk with Poe
Attention starts with him
But of course I am in it with him.
People say hello to him and talk to me

And I have to confess I became a therapist
To be in the spotlight
Hey, hello, here I am,
I can make you happy and I suppose
You will be happy with me when I have made you happy!
Or are you?
No, I know, you are not going to give me the same attention
because you are too busy with you
And it is true I have to find my own way
to get attention for me.

I know a few more ways - thank God – to get attention:

- be a good student
- be a good host
- be a good listener
- be a good see-er
- have or show a sense of humour
- be a writer
- ask for it

If I go to the core of things, all I do all day long is working to get
my rightful shot of attention, so I will be able to go on living
instead of dying and be forgotten in a neglected corner.’

One of the big misunderstandings I realized is expecting to get
attention once I became a therapist. During my training period I
was so obsessed with my teachers, trainers, therapists that I
thought I would get the same kind of attention from my clients. In
some way that is true of course, but only in some way. Attention
for me for who I am I have to find elsewhere. And that is good, it
keeps me going, searching, exploring and becoming aware
attention starts with me asking for it. Only I can receive the
attention given to me and by receiving, giving the other the
attention he or she has a right to.

Next session

After listening to our stories with the doom, the pain, the fear, we had to become aware of what and who was present in the moment:

‘Being here

Being here with you

Being here with two men

Being here with one English speaking man

And one man who speaks my own language

Being here as a leader

Who wants to make the connection

With the next generation

With men

Being here realizing I am a woman of 71 years old

A woman who has seen a lot of the world

A woman who has experienced different époques

It makes me a woman who knows about things

You men cannot know about

It makes me afraid I will be a woman who can become boring because I am too old, too wise,

too woman, too God may know what,

too longing for peace

Being here with you makes me aware that for me

it makes no difference what age you are, no difference you being a

man, or coming from a different background

It is the excitement being here with you

It is the excitement about where we will meet

The excitement because the differences are

of no importance any more

At this moment I feel connected and at this

moment I believe we are here for the same reason:

feeling that we belong and deep down know about each others longing and love’

We continued with doing a classical experiment to be in the Here and Now:

'Now I see
Now I see my pencil
Now I see my pen move
Now I feel my left hand on the paper
Now I see my bracelet moving to and fro
Now I smell and do not know what
Now I hear my bracelet
Now I cough and hear my stomach do what...?
Now I hear my watch touch the table
Now I hear the clock tick
Now I feel that my mouth is dry
Now I hear Y. turn the page
Now I hear someone whistle
Now I hear children pass
Now I see my tea
Now I want to drink but tell myself
I have to go on writing
Now I feel my right eye burn
Now I put my right leg behind my left one
Now I hear Y. turn the page again
Now I start a new empty page
Now I hear cars
Now I see the candle burn
Now I move my hand from my forehead to the table
Now I hear cars again
Now I want to stop
Now I look at the clock and think two more minutes
Now I hear a scooter
Now I wonder what we are doing
Now my hand is supporting my head
Now I feel my nose
Now I feel tension in my arm
Now I hear children play with their voices
Now I say one more minute and feel responsible
Now I hear the silence
Now I feel my legs touching the chair'

The Here-and-Now-writing like this can be used

to connect in a neutral way with the group members. By listening to their sounds I acknowledge their being present and part of the bigger whole. Every sound that is uttered, every move that is made is part of the group tension of the moment. It takes long to realize we are not only witnesses but at the same time participants, who have a share in creating the tension and the excitement in the group.

The moment contact will have to be made with the power, the anger, the aggression in me as the therapist and in the other participants as clients, we can easily decide to avoid it. We are anything but angry, we think, but are we...

I know when I feel my irritation rise, I have to give words to my feelings, if possible in a creative way:

‘Aggression Song

Let's abide what is inside
Whether it be nice or nasty
Sweet or sour, light or heavy
Light or black, laughter or sorrow
It all belongs to the same me
That is sitting here at the table
Writing this song that wants to be sung
And shouted from the true soap story
Here I am in my street, with my trees
and my people (and dogs)
I am so angry that I can spit
On everybody who is IT, it, nit, wit,
shit that's it. Everybody who is or
who behaves like shit
(Sh)it is not in the being
It is in the behaving

Once upon a time
There was a shit puffer
And a soul tuner
The shit puffer was black inside and did pfft, pfft
The soul tuner was made of bright light and sang Ah, ah, ah,
The pfft and the ah ah did meet each other daily

And sang, puffed and tuned and argued and thought
And felt and became so tired that they had to go
to sleep... Together

And when they woke up and faced a new day
They thought I can tune into Ah again today
or I can puff my shit
or shall I just take a rest?’

Next time the group came together on the
1st of November, the day to remember
All Souls or was it All Saints?
I am not a catholic, nevertheless holy
people intrigue me. How do or did they live with
their aggression, their sexuality, their passion?
Are they holy because they denied it
or did they find a way to transform those powers?

‘All Saints day

All Saints today. How about passion in all those holy
people? Did they suppress it, transform it or express
it in a way that brought out the sacred in them?
Hypothetical questions. No answers.
I believe one cannot be a saint without being in
contact with your passion, aggression
and your sexuality.

My aggression does not make me very happy,
because I cannot remember it was ever received
in a serious way. I see a scene where my aggression
was received with humour that made me
defenceless but sexual. Then it made me laugh,
now thinking back, it makes me angry after all.
I feel the urge to explore why.

Ignored! Being ignored by colleagues, assumed
or (ex)lovers, students, clients, family,
(ex)girlfriends, friends. There is nothing - I believe –
that can make me more angry than being ignored,

being denied, not seen, not heard. The more often it happens, the harder I start working, shouting out loud and the less I am seen.

Do I make people so afraid that they are unable to see or to hear me because I still have that angry look, I already had as a young woman?

Am I a witch or who am I?

A witch who wants to bewitch the world and make it better but does not succeed all the way? How can my passion and aggression help me to establish what I do long for without losing my sexuality and joy?

Often we use cards with wise remarks when we work together. Sometimes at the end of a session, sometimes at the beginning so we can write about it.

Being Music and Joy

Grace is living with that what is given
is what I received. Then I wrote:

‘I know I am music and I know I can and should develop that seriously. I am so easily distracted from it and think seriousness is in the contact, in the words. I hope and think that I will be heard and understood when I speak the right words. Be music, sing, dance and be sexual is the key. Joy will come up with the music and grace is ‘to live with what is given’. It also means I have to live with my aggression and my sexuality, evidently both are a part of me.’

During one of the next sessions

I was working with a woman from Germany. I invited her to take a book from the shelf, open it at random and read whatever words were on the page. It was about women carrying stones on their backs. I have been in Nepal and was deeply touched when I saw women doing this literally all day long.

Thinking of them and of all other women on earth I wrote:

‘Compassion for the slavery work

Compassion for the work of the women in the fields
Compassion for the work of the women in hospitals
Compassion for all those women who do the dirty work
Compassion for K. who is every day willing to do the counting
Compassion for Tine who always is available for
women and men with sorrow
How about women who do slavery work?
Are they the slaves of men?
It looks like it more or less
But men are slaves too, in a different way.
Men ‘have to’ defend women and children
Have to provide for them?
Do they feel slaves?
And how about me?
Do I feel a slave of men, of women?
No I do not. I feel more free every day.
I must confess though that not being connected
in a daily relation to a man or a woman helps.

Oh, woman in me, free yourself
And see that you are free enough
To let your compassion stream
Free enough to connect with the other half
of the population. Free enough to connect
with the other half in you.
Free enough to connect with the people who do
Have the power to enslave you.’

And you? How was it for you to read this chapter? Could you follow or did you wonder what the points of the small stories were, what the solutions, what the answers and what were the problems anyway? Did you become irritated? Were you touched? Let’s see if you can find your own compassion by first chewing on some questions and then put your passionate words on paper and become aware:

- *am I a passionate woman, a passionate man?*
- *what am I aware of in the Here and Now?*
- *who is passionately frustrating my life?*

- *what do I feel when I think of him or her?*
- *how about my aggression? Can I welcome it?*
- *what does this have to do with my sexuality?*
- *Can I seriously write down: I am compassion*

A community where one can sing, dance, write, play

9. Gestalt City

A time and a place to inspire each other and celebrate life together.

In 2006 I was in Vancouver for a Gestalt conference, with the theme 'Dreaming the Future'. The opening speech about Life Focus Communities by Erving Polster made a big impression on me. I bought his book 'Uncommon Ground'* and read when I was back home in the Preface:

'This book is a response to the common hunger for belonging and personal exploration, always implicit in religious offerings and also the sine qua non of psychotherapy's guidelines and procedures.' (...) 'What I call Life Focus Communities could be richly provided at a small cost by aggregations of people in intimately felt union, meeting regularly over unlimited periods of time.'

A Gestalt community beyond therapy is what I have been dreaming of for years already. Not only daydreaming, but in my nightly dreams I often live in a community where I belong although not everybody is happy with my being there.

In the Gestalt Art groups we come close, but the participants are still dependent on my leadership as I am the initiator, organizer, facilitator, the one who takes the responsibility and gets paid. Polster's manifest stimulated me to do the next step and lay the ground for a group without a special leader, a group where all members would be invited to take their turn as leaders. New for me was not being paid and sharing costs with the others. My idea was to create sacred time and a sacred place where we would feel safe enough to create by writing, painting, singing, dancing and most important of all by doing it playfully. To invite people I wrote:

A time and a place to inspire each other and celebrate life together.

'Literally I am always dreaming about communities where we can grow together because we form a group with the commitment to become aware and use and develop our creative and spiritual qualities. I am thinking of a group that meets once a month a

whole Saturday or Sunday and experiments playfully with creativity, leadership and spirituality.’

The people who were interested rented a dance studio in a building that used to be a school and even had an outside playground. The first morning of the first meeting we were in this blessed space with no more than two people. For me that was enough, I always think: if it is only one, it is worth doing. After brainstorming together I wrote:

‘Hot fires

Tic, tac, says the clock. *Hot fire* it sounds in me, I am a hot fire and long to spread my warmth to let more and more people benefit.

Oh, don’t you think that is rather arrogant, a voice asks. Who do you think you are? Why would people come to you to get warm?

Can you possibly reverse it?

Don’t you long for warm hands

because you need the presence of other *hot fires* around you?

This could be the club of hot fires, the club of burning spirits, who want to share and spread their light and their joy to enlighten the Amsterdam world.

Oh, Oh, don’t run so fast. Hold your horses, please, otherwise you will scare people away. Oh no, Tine, has a new idea again, we all have to tune into.

Yes, yes, I know this message: keep quiet, hold back.

And in the meantime the whole community is sitting bored on the couch, watching tv games that only go skin deep. No time, sorry, I am already toooooo busy is the answer. Keep me informed, your idea sounds swell, but I have other things to do, my life is full.

Here and Now I hear the sounds of a piano that make me happy.

And that is what a Life Focus Community is about. To lift ourselves above the daily routine, above sitting on a couch, watching tv and consume.

Above the heaviness of having to make money to a dimension where money is of minor interest, although it can not be missed because it can connect us with beauty, lightness and awe.

Or in one word: Love.

Qualities that need a sound bottom to grow, but in itself are free to get.’

In the afternoon together with another enthusiastic man I wrote:

Mysteries

Question: what will be my role in this community?

Is this a GC a Gestalt Community?

Will I be a sounding-board, a touchstone, a stimulator, an inspirator, a teacher,

a supporting mother blessing her children?

An old wise witch who knows the rituals and secrets of the profession, she cannot just pass on. Secrets or mysteries that make the whole exciting,

mysteries that can not be missed, mysteries that have to be revealed, just like the holy grail has to be found. Mysteries of which I do not know the answers explicitly myself, but I do know they exist. And I can tell the way.

Hey, hello, to the right here, on this moment I am your travelling guide, while we are on the road I will point out special places to you, the cathedrals, the views from faraway, the catacombs.

You will have to look yourself, I cannot do that for you. What kind of a role would this be?

I believe I would like to be Mrs Owl,

like in this Dutch children's tv program the Journal of Fables with the song

Hello, madam the Owl, where do you take us?

To the Gestalt Community, where in the talk house we can talk, sing, write, dance, draw, paint.

I will be sitting on this branch and look and listen and join when the moment has arrived. But what I would like best is to read to you if you have time to listen.

I would love to share my wisdom filled with my experiences with you. That will only be possible if you are interested, when your own experiences have ripened you for the next step.

In the meantime we do what we have to and can do together and that is learn and read and live to follow our own path, while we are well nourished.'

One of the next meetings:

'What am I doing here? What is it about, what is the deeper dimension? I am here to explore if I have a right to exist

outside the role of therapist, trainer, leader, innovator.
Am I allowed to play with you, laugh and move with you, even if I do not have the responsibility for the whole?
How is it for you that I am longing for a community, consisting of people I can relate to.
People who – just like me – long to laugh, to sing and take life seriously.
People who can excite themselves about injustice, who like me experience the passion in their bodies and who take life so earnestly that they put their Sacred Contract on number 1. Sacred Contract sounds rather abstract. Holy contract, holy agreement? Contract with whom I wonder? Interesting question. I believe with Me and with You. I and You, You and I. We can only accomplish IT together and that is why I am here.’

Originally those words were written in Dutch. Translated they sound differently to me. More distant? More of the mind than from the soul? But as I am Dutch that is the risk I take by translating into English. I learned to speak English when I was nineteen and living as an au pair with different American Air Force families stationed in England. Therefore my English is close to the American English. Sometimes I wonder why it is so important for me to speak and write in English. One of the answers is, that English connects me with a different – more international - pole in myself.

On very precious moments I hear myself speak in English or see myself writing English words. Magic I can not explain, just am aware of.

My longing to connect with a community is not restricted to what we decided to call Gestalt City, but also stretches for example to the AAGT* (Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy). The way AAGT members keep in contact in between conferences gives me the feeling of belonging to a worldwide community I can daily connect with by email.

One afternoon I had been walking through Amsterdam visiting art galleries and while having a drink I met a (house) painter, who made me realize that living in Amsterdam is living in a community

that has been existing for almost – not quite though – a thousand years. When I was back home I wrote a text about Community Building for the AAGT members:

'Fly on wet paint

On this beautiful sunny Saturday in Amsterdam
I want to write to all of you
Who are active in the AAGT
With advancing Gestalt by building a community
I write to you because I feel part of this community
part of the active AAGT members
who love Gestalt because it connects people
I feel grateful, I am a born connector
And never before found a community
Where I belong and can do what I have to do:
to connect

I also am a member of a European Gestalt Community
where we do not really communicate.
Gestalt is the psychotherapy of Contact
it says in the flyer that tells who 'we' are.
I agree, yes, yes that is what Gestalt is about.
That is what attracted me to Gestalt.
But in this organization the goal is to be recognized
by the government officials and by the insurance companies.
It means that Gestalt has to be seen as a science.
Not my cup of tea but if I want that my sessions
will be covered by the health insurance companies
I have to adapt to the criteria.

Yesterday I was invited by a housepainter
To have a drink with him
We started talking and when he heard
That I make a living as a Gestalt therapist
He started to laugh
Oh, yes, that man, who wrote 'In and Out of my Garbage Pail'
What was his name? Fritz Perls*?
He read the book when he was 24, now he is 59
Old, tired and hooked on alcohol

Never built a family, lost all his loves,
Has no children but goes on making the world a better place by
painting houses and telling women who want to save a fly stuck on
his wet paint: this fly is lost, nothing you can do about it.

Perls was in his eyes a great man, he understood life,
And not only that, he did what he had to do
Of course he was Jewish, smart and wise at the same time.
He states as a man who knows
And is an expert as a soul from kosher Amsterdam.

And what does this story have to do
with you and me as active AAGT members?
This housepainter without a degree knows that
Life is about people and feelings
About longing and sex and confrontations
Though I must confess that up to now the AAGT
is a rather sexless environment for me safe in a certain way
it does offer me the sacred space
to differ of opinion without being exiled
Time and time again
I am surprised by the discussions on the list of Leaders,
the list of Members and the list of the Program Planning
Committee where the challenges present itself
And are met by colleagues who have different longings, ideas,
needs, but are willing to explore where the meeting point is.

Of course I get afraid sometimes,

I have been in the conflicts as many others have been and know
how painful it can be. And I experienced by staying in the
frustrating hot fires I have a chance to move out and into a new
land, new space where the community I long for gets form and
becomes more safe and trustworthy.'

Several times I longed to end my membership of the European
Gestalt community.

A community that is so busy with being recognized by the officials
that it forgets that recognition starts inside. If the members do not
recognize each other how can the community as a whole be taken

seriously by the insurance companies? The only way to do this seems to be by having criteria on paper. But what is the value of those criteria if they are not practised between members? 'Contact is the appreciation of differences,' stated Fritz Perls. A statement that challenges me time and time again and stimulates me to stay a member of this community and of other communities. I walked out too often already.

Another way of belonging to a community was by joining a group of singers who came together once a week. Leading was a woman from Israel who lives in Amsterdam. Her ancestors came from Yemen and she radiates the passion of her background. It was not easy for me to accept her guidance, that in my experience was rather directive. The fifth or the sixth evening I became so afraid of this leader that I was ready to leave until I told myself: don't flee, be brave and face your fear.

The last evening we all created a song and sang it:

'My community dream

Dreaming of belonging to a community is what I often do.

Not that I want to live in a community,
but I do long for a community where I can be me.

Today I did a step to connect with a community
that already exists. I thought I had to create it myself, but I do not.

All I have to do is plug in
and say I want to belong, I am a writer like you,
a singer, like you, a dancer, like you are.

I can also draw and paint, as I see you do too.

That is why I can relax.

All I need to feel at home, exists already.

The earth has been created, not by me but by a Divine Power that
also took care of me in the sense that the world offers me
whatever I need. Only demand is that I go out and look for it

Only I can take the responsibility

Only I know what it is about for me

Here I am, I cannot do it all by myself

I need a community that knows by heart and by soul
what is driving me.

It is like being here in Aurora with you in the Galitta group

In a community that believes in Using your Voice
To give your soul a language
A channel to speak and be heard.

In this group with you I know I am safe enough
To open my mouth and let myself be heard
Without the fear of being told I do not sing
The right note in the right place at the right time.
Every note that escapes my mouth is the right note
As every note is my note.
How could the time or the place or the tone be wrong if this is my
soul language

In the end I only have one master
I should listen to because only he knows
What is really good for me.
And what is good for me is good for you.
No doubt about this
This master lives inside me in disguise.
Sometimes he seems to be a singer
Other times a writer or a painter,
but he is always genuine, authentic and full of love
A master who does not ask for honour
A master who is modest enough to know
that not everybody is waiting to hear and receive him.

He is already content and happy if I do,
and if I do, you can hear me, see me, feel me.
At the same time it is you who decides if you
want to receive and love me
because you have your own master
who knows what is good for you.
Yet we come here together with the same longing
And that gives me and gives you
A chance to connect in sound
And feel we belong to the same family.?

Here and Now reading this, is not the same as singing it in the group where it emerged and developed. I remember being very moved when I did and so were the other members of this group, because they also showed their inside out and because they had been witnesses of the emotional process that was the source of the creation.

Gestalt City flowered for two years. Two years of meeting and playing and whatever we longed to do when we came together. Remarkable were what we called the solos. Usually we worked quite structured in the morning, guided by one of us who invited the group members to play or dance or to sing with each other. Never ever did we do something that already existed or had been done before. We always created new games, new dances, new songs, new texts. In the afternoon we performed, each in our turn. The group existed of about seven members usually. Most were men. When the moment for the solos had come we created a stage and put the chairs in an audience formation.

The time we had was about half an hour a person.

I remember stepping on to the stage, having no idea what to do and by looking at the others being inspired to move and because of the movement words came. Doing this was as close as we could come to express ourselves completely. As a witness as well as a performer I experienced moments of ultimate happiness.

A few weeks ago I was at a garden party and met two of the Gestalt City members and within no time we were talking of the solos. It was a party where guests were invited to sing or to make music or do something else that is creative, but I did not take the chance. I could never have done what we did in Gestalt City because there we all took the risk of making a fool of ourselves. And we did it when we had already built a fertile ground together where we could bloom. And that is completely different from a party where people come to consume and be entertained. Nothing wrong with that, just different.

After two years it became more and more clear that we as Gestalt City members were captivated in a struggle for power. The no leader concept asked for firm guidance from all members.

One evening after a meeting I came home and wrote an email to the group:

‘I am worn out, angry, furious, disappointed.
I know that I cannot keep my mouth shut any longer.
There is danger in the group
Danger because my norms and the norms of Gestalt City are in question
One of you wants the power, wants to play the game better by knowing without feeling.’

This is - as always - the power of the mind that wants to dominate and therefore the soul has to hide. I was afraid of this power, afraid of the aggression behind it. Afraid of the power and the aggression of men who are loyal to this concept.

At that time I was the only woman left in the group.
The others probably left because of the same fear.
It is a supposition I cannot confirm as I was not able to communicate with them about it.
I tried but probably was already so dominant myself, that I became one of the boys in their eyes.
In my own view I was the protector of the women and of the more shy men. After my email hell broke open. A flood of accusations towards me broke loose. It was a moment I recognized the danger of being the messenger of bad news. I felt completely isolated and alone. I was the one who destructed the dream of having a safe community.
I was the one who attacked and who was dangerous in their eyes, while I felt that I had been holding my tongue for too long.
It took weeks for us to calm down and come together again.
When it happened one of the more modest men took the lead and broke the ice by guiding us in a meditation.
I remember sitting there and hearing how all the hurts and accusations came back. I knew that it would be mission impossible to sort it all out in a Gestalt way. We went on too long without confronting each other, to be able to heal all the wounds. The only way we could get out of the entanglement I knew, was to go from

‘you did this and said that’ to ‘I did this or I do this or I say this and I do or don’t like what you did or said’.

If every member of the group is willing to take responsibility for their own acting instead of pointing to the other(s) with accusations, it can be a turning point.

This is not a true success story. Although?

For a period it was perfect. But the tide changed when we became afraid and angry and could not reach the meeting point anymore. We compromised but I think too many egos were involved to feel peace. My own leadership had failed me when I wanted to experiment with following the others and seeing them in turn as authorities.

It is difficult to explain, even to myself while typing this out Here and Now. But since then I know I better not deny my own authority, even when I am in a valuable experiment experiencing being equal. Nevertheless being with the other leaders brought me beautiful words and insights:

Free

You are here right now in this Gestalt City room
With one other woman, four men and two dogs
In this room where the light is beautiful because of the sun
In this setting that allows you to be who you are
And show your inside out by opening your mouth
By letting your voice out
By writing as you put your pen on paper now
and let the words come

In this space that is sacred because we who are here
declared it sacred, we who are here decided to create sacred space
and sacred time.

It is what we do again and again
It is our goal, our one and only goal

Actually we do not need much money to do it
Because the sacredness does not need money nor time.
It needs silence, willingness, awareness, attention.

We must be richer than we thought
So rich that I can permit myself to write
whatever I want to write
Even when it is not published and paid for
Here I am a woman full of power that allows her to be free.'

And you as a reader?

Can you imagine what we longed for?

*In fact we all belong to groups and communities
as we work, are members of a family, play a sport or play theatre or dance or
have a network and live in a neighbourhood.*

*But often we do not experience that we belong, because of conflicts, power
games, jealousy.*

*To belong we need the feeling that we have a place,
that we are wanted, that people are happy to see us.*

Some questions to put you on a trail:

- *do I long to belong?*
- *if yes, with whom?*
- *if no, why not?*
- *am I waiting to be invited?*
- *do I take the initiative?*
- *am I a leader of my own community?*
- *am I my own boss within a community?*

Chapters 10-15

*A week with the Jewish Arts Institute
in Elat Chayyim*,
Falls Village, Connecticut*

and

The Mystical Perspective

10. Nothing but Boredom?

*I think: this is really bad, what is going on?
Are they so bored that they do nothing but eat?*

In June 2007 I went to a concert of an American singer who came originally from Israel. I had heard him before and he had moved me so deeply that I knew I had to hear him again. That evening I was sitting in the front row of the synagogue. I do not think he consciously sang for me, but it is how I experienced it. When the concert was over my body was all aglow and when I met him and his wife, I asked if he also gave workshops. As it happened, he intended to start a two year course in August, consisting of four separate weeks. I got the one flyer they had and went home wondering if and how I could participate. It was late, but I knew if I did not write him that same evening, I would not do it at all. In the flyer I read that he was the director of an institute with ‘an intensive program designed to give Jewish artists and Jewish art educators – working with diverse artistic media – the tools to successfully integrate their art, their Jewish identities and spiritual journeys.’

If I had not been over excited I would never have dared writing this email message to him: *‘I know I am nuts, I am not Jewish and still I am almost exploding after your concert and know I want to learn from you, especially how to sing.’* After some weeks I received his answer: *‘I think you better come.’*

I booked and flew to the US for the following adventure:

Hartford, Connecticut, Sunday, August 19

Not in paradise, not in hell either.

I am in an eat seducing burger place in the ‘heart’ of Hartford. A shopping mall, hundreds of cars, fat people, families, children, young couples, all eating burgers, drinking surprisingly colourful drinks, out of surprisingly big glasses. I feel displaced. I imagined Hartford rustic, romantic with an old centre around a church like I have seen in New Jersey. But this is a different

matter. Maybe what I long for exists but the taxi driver brought me here in the desert. I ordered a groovy-smoothy or something like it. It tastes all right. More strawberries than anything else with a flaw of whipped cream. It is icy.

Why do I write in English? Mystery. I do not think in English yet. Around me I count at least five more than normal fat people, men and women. Most young.

I think: this is really bad, what is going on? Are they so bored that they do nothing but eat? When I am bored I start eating.

Am I bored now is that why I am eating burgers although I hate bread that tastes like carton and French fries that are not crispy but tough. In the plane I was not bored. I was reading a biography of Einstein and was absorbed in it. Should I have stayed in my hotel and read? But then I would have missed this Sunday dinner scene. I must admit it cures me of any dream I have about living in the US. Without driving a car it is not possible I think.

Besides I do not belong here.

Monday morning in the hotel

Yesterday a taxi came to pick me up in the Red Robin burger tent. The driver was a Greek, just as the driver who brought me there. Both told me I am in the wrong place:

‘What do you look for in Hartford? Nothing but drugs, criminals prostitutes and... boredom.’

I can add: yes boredom and too fat people.

I liked my Greek driver who confessed that he gambles and loses money like I do ‘with riding taxis to nowhere’. But I at least have a taxi ride. Although I did not need it because next to my hotel is a more than excellent restaurant.

If I wanted a drink? he asked me.

My not drinking alcohol was a problem, so he decides to buy me a coffee in some petrol station like place.

The coffee I could not drink, but this driver inspired me by understanding that this day – like any other day – is an adventure.

Of course I am not in my favourite spot but I am in a place that raises my curiosity, the world of the American dream, not my dream, although once I thought it was. A lesson I got from this driver: whenever you enter a hotel, even if you have booked, and you see people from India or Pakistan, get out! They do not know

how to run a hotel. His advice came too late, I already did it, but did not really mind. It is part of the adventure.'

Time to explore boredom or are you never bored?

I was extremely bored when I was nineteen and working as an au pair in England with American Air Force families who were stationed there. I was so bored I could eat all day and when I came home after a year I had gained kilo's.

How about you? What do you do when you are bored or not happy or waiting for something to happen? Do you long for food or do you have some other answer that – in the end – can lead to addiction?

If the right moment has arrived direct your attention to the following questions or create your own examples:

Am I bored?

Am I addicted to food, to alcohol, to work?

Do I take the risk of becoming bored?

Do I truly know what it means to be bored?

If you rather you can draw or paint instead of write. Please try to find the best way for you to express yourself. If you paint or draw you could explore how it is to find words in the drawing or painting and turn them into sentences that form a piece of prose or a poem.

11. Goy or Jew in disguise?

Monday afternoon, on the border of the lake
of the Jewish Retreat Center Elat Chayyim* in Connecticut.

Silence, except crickets. No sun, although I can see it through the clouds. I have a room that belongs to a - I would say – rural community, all wooden buildings with porches, like the houses I saw on the way coming out here from the airport where the shuttle picked me up. Houses that are just at random standing in fields, no fences, open to what or whoever wants to come near, at least that is what they look like.

In the shuttle I met Rick the poet, writer, university professor and Josefa from Israel who teaches Hebrew and dance at the same university in Ashville and Jill, a student who came from a Jewish summer camp.

A problem I expect here are the mosquitoes. Already I have the feeling I have been bitten and they are biting me now. I have also met the singer, I think he feels honoured because I came all the way from Amsterdam. He joked when I said that I stayed in a hotel with – according to the taxi driver – only prostitutes, criminals, drugs: ‘Ah, just like Mokum!’

Typical cliché layer talk.

But what else could we say in just passing each other?

Funny thing is that I am reminded of Losevo, a place in the north of Russia, three hours by car north from St. Petersburg. The region is called Karelia, it used to be Finland; there are woods and - wild - waters for thousands of miles around. My lodgings there were a lot more primitive, but the wooden buildings and the nature look a bit alike. It is not warm as I expected it would be; it was more or less yesterday, but the weather is changing into autumn. Just my luck so to say. It would not surprise me if they are having beautiful weather at home, like in April, when I also was away.

This morning I was reading David Wolpe’s ‘Why be Jewish’*. I underlined statements on almost every page. This man knows why I am here, why I am drawn to Judaism; it is about the secret search

of my personal mystery: 'One can share it but the other cannot know what it is exactly about, as s/he cannot know about the mystery of the other.'

Wolpe gives words to what my deep belief is:

'spirituality teaches us to develop our relations, sharpens our senses and teaches us to act in a way that gives our soul more depth.'

I better continue reading him. This is the right moment and the right place to be inspired by him.

Will I let myself be eaten by the insects or will I go to my room now to put some anti stuff on? I have a limited amount, so I better be efficient.

Tuesday morning in the workshop

Rick, the poet, writer, professor is leading us. He jumps around very vividly and invites us to experiment by inserting our own words into an existing song. While I type this out back in Amsterdam, I wonder about the original song. I did not write it down, I only have my own version:

Open my lips, oh Lord
that my mouth might declare your Praise
Open my hands, Oh Lord
that my mouth might declare your Praise
Open my heart, Oh Lord,
that my lips might declare your Praise
Open my heart, Oh Lord,
that my hands might show your Praise
Open my mind, Oh Lord,
that my soul can receive your Praise
Close my mouth, Oh Master,
that my lips can sing your Faith
Love my ears, Oh Lord, that my heart can hear your Praise
Forget my words, oh Lord, that my soul can sing your Love

Here and Now at home I reread what I wrote then and remember how confused I was, while writing. Up to then I would never ever have written anything as holy as those words sound to me.

In my notebook: I am here to find out what a Goy is.
For how can I know who I am if being a Goy
means not Jewish and I don't know what being Jewish means.
Being not something does not sound very interesting.
I would rather be something than not be something.
It is so funny... (I was interrupted apparently and stopped; We will
never know what I thought was so funny then)
My search for my identity has been going on for years already. Do
I have Jewish blood? being the most important question. When I
discovered how many of my Gestalt colleagues are Jewish I wrote
a text I sent to a Gestalt email list to share my thoughts and to be
open about who I am in the light of a discussion about Israel and
Hezbollah.

I am a Goy

I am a Goy and wonder what it means.
I am a Goy sounds great. I like to say Goy out loud.
It means I like to pronounce this Yiddish word,
that is definitely no Goy word, as Goy is not-Jewish
and therefore not Yiddish.
Intriguing.
So what about my emotions, are they Goy emotions?
Is there a difference between Goy and Yiddish or Jewish
emotions?
And if there is what is it?
As a Goy I also like Jewish music, Jewish literature,
Jewish humour, Jewish philosophy and religion.
Is that strange?
Am I allowed to do that as a Goy?
Am I not intruding in the privacy of the Jewish community?
Does it mean I am a parasite,
who should look for her own culture,
her own music, her own religion and way of thinking?
But what is my identity? If am a Goy, I am a non Jew.
But who is it I am? No-Jew is no-identity.
Of course I am Dutch, I am from Amsterdam, that is called
Mokum, the Yiddish word for Place. I am from Amsterdam, my
ancestors were here already in 1600.

The percentage of Yiddishness in Amsterdam was high before World War II. Is that why I feel so much affinity?

Or is it likely that I have a drop of Jewish blood somewhere?

Can it be that I have a Jewish soul in a Goy body?

I do not know the facts, I only know that I have a problem if it comes to belonging. I follow the discussions on this email list concerning the differences between Israel and Hezbollah and I become sick in my stomach, get pain in my neck, I want to support all parties but I do not dare to.

They have a clear identity. No mistake. They know what side they are on. I could consider myself European and that would mean I am mixed, as the Americans are mixed, as the Jews are mixed, I suppose. And may be also the Arabs, although they appear to me pretty race pure?

Being mixed, means I am rich, I have a lot of cultures in me.

Being mixed means I want to connect with the cultures I experience. But the culture and the people I want to connect with most, the Jewish culture and the Jewish people, turn out to be the most difficult to connect with, for me that is to say. I really invested time and energy to explore what this is about. I participated in the Jewish New Age Revival Movement in Amsterdam and sang in a Yiddish choir and I stopped it all. I truly could not identify with the fundamental Jewish identity. For me it is more about feelings and emotions, not about laws and rituals and religion. So now I am okay being a Goy, a Goy involved with Gestalt Therapy. But of course the founders of Gestalt Therapy were Jewish. Realizing this touched me deeply.

Gestalt therapy is based on Jewish origins and if I know one thing for certain it is that I want to belong to Gestalt communities.

In Jewish communities I feel afraid to open my mouth as a Goy.

What I want you to know is: maybe I am a Goy, but I am as afraid as you are of extreme right powers that do not have any consideration for human souls. I was there when the Nazis came, I heard them, I felt them, I knew how dangerous they were.

I saw the houses where the Jews were taken away and cried.

It is why I hated Germans, could not hear their language.

I was also there when the Cold War ruled the world, I could not imagine the Russians were people. Now I know better, I was in Russia and love the people.

They suffered as much as I did under their rulers.
I also met a lot of Germans as clients and love them.
They suffered as much as I did under their own dictators.
I even learned that they have a beautiful language.
And now I am faced with powers in Israel that seem extreme right
as well. It seems Power People have no consideration for human
souls, whether from Israel, Lebanon, Palestina.

Soldiers have to fight and women and children have to die for the
cause. It makes me so afraid, apparently even the Jewish people
turn out to be more human, more earthly than Divine. And I hope
this will open a way for me to connect with them as I believe the
chance is as always in the frustration.

It is not easy to give questions you can concentrate on.

*Somehow I feel shy to ask you to consider questions like: Am I a Jew? Am I
a Goy? Am I a Christian? Am I Buddhist? Am I a Moslem? Am I happy
to be what I am? Do I belong with a group, to a community? Please don't
forget to take time to connect with your inner world. Sit comfortably in a quiet
place, where you cannot be disturbed, feel contact with the ground, straighten
your back, direct your attention to your breathing, become aware of being in
the here and now and of the signals of your body. Then start writing, letting
your hand do the work. Give yourself enough time to complete your words.*

12. Just sitting. Just being. Just singing.

Jewish art is triggered by our relationship with the word of God with whom we disagree, or whom we adore, or the God in whom we don't believe. The word, one way or another, has been with us for as long as we can remember. Perhaps the word is our memory, a testimony of our struggle with the creator of memory, the giver of the word.' In a manifest Danny Maseng* tells what according to him Jewish Art is supposed to be.

What I hoped is that my concept of Gestalt Art and his of Jewish Art would match. But they don't. At least not at first sight as in Gestalt the word God is not used. Nevertheless I was fascinated by the offered experiments. In the following text I follow the instructions of the teacher and thought innocently that a teacher was just any teacher instead of THE Teacher.

My Teachers Blessing

Being here in Elat Chayyim
I expect something from the universe
The American universe, the Jewish universe
I expect to get something
I would not have gotten
When I had stayed in Amsterdam
From Danny I get the gift of passion
That flows from his skin, shines from his eyes
I can hear and feel in his voice
In my skin, in my ears
I can see his smile with my eyes
It is a gift I came for
I also got the gift of the dance from Josefa
She moves in letters that make me wonder
Did she touch me by doing so
Can I connect with her?
No, I cannot,
I become too mental, when I have a task to do.
Do this, look there, see that
works contrary in my system

I lose my spontaneity
and become rigid and nauseous
And now I get a gift from Rick
who seems passionate
But I have my doubts
I think its more a gift from a good actor
What is it this good actor
is trying to hand me?
And why is it that
I tend to reject it
Tend to say No
This is not what I came for
What I do want is space
To listen to my own little voice
Inside me, waiting
Being silent until it is safe enough
To come outside and show herself

What is happening to her
With this quite loud
Teacher talking to her
Telling her to watch,
Letting herself be surprised
While she is not really
While she is not ready
To be surprised
Not ready to analyse
And share the obvious
Emotions of the teacher.

So what did she get from this teacher?
That she did not want but maybe
Begins to see the value of
Now she starts writing
Is it a sparkle?
Why turn this into a question
Yes, it must be a sparkle
How can a teacher sparkle and sparkle

Again and again

As if he is doing it for the first time?

Was he surprised

Or did he know he was surprised once

And wants to surprise me now?

How can he be surprised

When he knew he was surprised once

But cannot be now

Because one can only be surprised once

With the same gift.

Is it true what I say here?

Why should he not be surprised

More than once with the same poem

Because he wanted to surprise me and

Could not know if he was going to succeed?

Did I or am I therefore ready to receive this gift

From a gifted teacher

Who by heart wants to make his students happy?

Yes, after some reluctance

I have to say 'Thank you'

For bringing me into contact

With my resistance

With my anarchy

That forbids me to accept anything

I think is meant to please me.

I can only give or accept

Strange conclusion

What do I mean with I can only give or accept?

I believe it has to be and and

I want to give AND accept

Thank you for this insight.

While composing this manuscript and reliving my adventures searching for truth I am confronted by the question: what did I find and learn in this workshop? I did not make many personal notes, apparently was too busy experiencing the Here and Now, especially the music and the singing I came for in the first place.

When I read ‘The Principles of Singing’, based on Hassidic teachings and Zen master Suzuki Rōshi, I knew I was in the right place after all and doing the right thing:

1. Simplicity: Just sitting. Just being. Just singing. There is no need to add anything to the song.
2. Singing for no gain: Do not be greedy. Never sing for approval. Do not seek applause, laughter, tears or appreciation.
3. Mindfulness: Take care and be mindful of your deeds and your surroundings. You do not live alone in this world, and your actions do not leave the world unchanged.
4. Intuition before intellect: Always listen to your intuition first. Meet the song as you would meet a person: with your senses, your intuition.
5. Stepping off the mountaintop: Faith. Daring. Courage. Trust the music and your own talent to take you beyond the limits of your fear.
6. If you want to give the cow its freedom, put a fence around the meadow: Do your homework; learn the song; learn your exact voicing; understand the limitations of the stage, the song, your voice.
7. It’s not about you - it’s about the music: You are a vessel, a means to convey a message.

For me those words are not only about how I long to sing, but also about how I long to live. When Danny becomes the singing teacher it is what he radiates, when we sing with him there is a chance to connect. also with each other. Singing together means feeling connected. Whatever happens, I won’t get lost as long as I sing or listen to others singing. Songs are made of words and words are my foundation. Between the papers that were handed out there is also a text about:

‘The Word

Words are living entities, angels, messengers. Every word has a life and must be treated as a living creature. The purpose of forming a sentence with such an approach is not to convey a concept or an idea by the end of the sentence, but rather to place living

individuals in a context. Ideological meaning is not the point there – it's the actual stringing of a pearl necklace made of words. The placement gives context and the meaning springs from the quality of the pearls, the words. There is no hurry here to 'get to the point' since 'the point' is in each one of the words.'

Invited to practise this wisdom by answering the question 'Am I a resident or a stranger in this place?'

I wrote: I am Tine and I am not a resident
nor a stranger in this place.
In fact I know this place well,
because I have been here before.
Not as a resident but as a traveller,
never as a resident because I am a traveller.
And as a traveller I do not settle.
It means I am a stranger,
but only for the people who do not know me,
do not recognize me.

For myself I am not so strange,
although I can be quite surprising
even for me.
As a resident, I am a different being
Resident I am in Amsterdam
Amsterdam is my city
Or to be more precise
Amsterdam is my city as it used to be
I am thinking of Amsterdam before the war.

Amsterdam then was populated
with a mix of people who all – I think –
had a Jewish flavour.
But the question is, if this is true.
What was the Amsterdam of my ancestors?
Were they not welcome because they were Jews?
Or were they welcome just because they were Jews
or because they were Goys?
Amsterdam likes and liked to think of itself as a tolerant city.

It is as...

(then time was up and the rest is still in the dark)

Time for you and your own experiences, ideas and questions like:

Am I a Gestalt artist? Am I a Jewish artist?

Am I a resident? Am I a stranger?

Can I just sit? Just be? Just sing? Just talk? Just eat?

It can be surprising to write with your left hand if you are right handed or with your right hand if you are left handed. You probably will feel awkwardly, but if you have patience and you are willing to do it, you won't regret it.

13. Encounter with the Other

Still in Elat Chayyim* I got more chances to practice the Art of Imaginative Writing. I am certain there were introductions, but I only have the results. I do remember that the woman I read the first piece out loud to, thought I misunderstood the word concrete. Was the woman right? Did I misunderstand?

‘Faith is a concrete phenomenon

Concrete is a stone that is just lying in the wood
Waiting to be picked up, although that is my idea of a stone
Can I say a stone is waiting to be picked up
To be recognized in the Faith it represents?
I think I am talking nonsense, I am not concrete
Still I have Faith in what I am writing

A stone is concrete

I can feel it’s sharp edges or it’s round surface, that has been accomplished by the gentle force of water. Stone has all the colours of the rainbow, it can even shine or glitter. It is solid and brings me back to Faith.

When I look around me in the woods, I see big stones, small stones I usually see the big stones before I look at the small ones. The big ones are obvious, they are so solid they cannot be moved. If they are Faith, they are a solid Faith, that is not flexible, but the small stones do not attract my attention, they are too small to be important. They are just lying there, maybe forever till the end of time. They do not protest, apparently they have Faith enough to be just lying there.
As a stone has no brain, it... (open end, time was up? No more inspiration?)’

Next experiment:

‘Forbidden

Forbidden seems to be a fruit
I am not supposed to eat

Can it be the apple
The snake presented to Eve
When she was so happy in paradise?

Maybe, yes maybe
But this sounds too much like a cliché story
To me to be exciting to write about
Although cliché stories
Often contain a lot of truth
And why should not this one
Have a deep truth to offer to me?

Forbidden fruit connects me
With the snake
Who was sleeping
Until the apple appeared
Sleeping in my belly
Forbidden to wake until
I felt ripe enough to receive
Its transforming power.

Awakening the sleeping serpent in my belly
Is a recurring theme in my life.
The longing for what this power represents is big.?

A true story:
'Encounter with the other

He catches up with me on the road to my room
He asks me what I do here. Am I an artist?
He says he is an artist too
but he has to write and translate for a living.
I look at him and see his *kippa* and solid belly
He must be a religious man
His eyes are smiling
He tells me he has no time for art
He used to paint, draw, he cannot now because of his work
I ask him or rather tell him that he can choose
Why can't he put some creativity in his work?

He looks at me with asking eyes
My talkative self is coming out
I tell him I am not an artist yet
Maybe later I will call myself an artist
But just at this moment I don't want to make this statement
Then I tell him I am a therapist or didn't I?

Anyway he tells me that if I have questions he is available because
he is a rabbi
I tell myself this is my chance and say yes,
I do have questions and ask him when he is open.
He is right now but I am not.
He teases me by telling me that he costs \$ 100 an hour
I say that money is no item, my questions are so deep...
We agree on meeting after lunch
The one free hour I have

At lunch he comes into the restaurant
I see him looking around
Is he searching for me?
I wave and point at the one empty chair beside me
He comes, puts his plate on the table
On it some rice, one potato
People at the table look at him
Say: you must be the *maschiach*,
They look at me, ask if I know what they mean with 'maschias'
I nod No;
They explain that he is the 'master' of the kosher kitchen
I make a joke, a silly joke
Does he give stars to the better kosher kitchens?
He looks, says: that is about chefs
I think, oh yes, that is about chefs and chefs are people
A kosher kitchen apparently has nothing to do with people
So it must be a thing
He sits down for five minutes, gets up,
tells me he is getting something to drink and never comes back
I look at his half eaten food and wonder
I look around and see him in the kitchen
We chant a mantra*, I get up and take his plate

A woman remarks that it is not nice to leave your plate
 On my way to the table where the plates are waiting to be washed
 I meet him
 I tell him I took care of his plate
 He seems not interested
 Then he comes to me and points at the empty table:
 shall we sit there?
 He has no other room or shall we sit outside?
 So we do, choosing for the wooden benches on the terrace.
 Okay, what is my question?
 I tell him that my question has to do with not being Jewish.
 He gives me a lecture on what a religious Jew is.
 I follow and feel I am not following him completely
 Of course I know if I want to be a religious Jew,
 I have a lot of work I don't intend to do
 I tell him being Jewish for me is about people
 How is that for him?
 Yes of course, that is what rabbi's are for,
 because the Jews have the Torah and the laws
 they live a righteous life
 That is to say, when they want they can go to a rabbi
 With whatever is haunting them
 and the rabbi or another wise wo/man will give an answer.
 He tells me the story of Adam, who was not Jewish.
 Noah was not either, Jewish starts with Abraham
 or was it Moshe in the Sinai?
 Okay, then I start talking about Etty Hillesum*,
 does he know about her?
 Who? Isn't Amsterdam the place where Anne Frank was?
 Yes, yes, but we also have Etty and in the light of her coming Fate
 she happened to be rather spiritual but also sexual.
 Yes, but that were extreme circumstances, can I apprehend what
 happened?
 No, I cannot. No answers. Although I was quite close being in
 Amsterdam myself.
 What makes Etty special for me?
 She lived Gestalt before anyone knew about Gestalt.
 Gestalt? Oh, yes, you are a therapist.
 Yes, I belong to the therapy

that makes one aware of the Here and Now.
He pulls his face in a question mark.
Here and Now is not his thing?
What has Here and Now to do with Eternity?

And Now – while writing – I remember we also talked about the Temple
I asked him what is so special about the Temple,
Why is it different from a synagogue?
Well, the Temple is destroyed.
And synagogues are not Temples?
Yes, but they lack the Presence of the Divine
As God went into hiding after the first Temple was destroyed.
And that is the pain of the modern time: God is in hiding.
Do I believe in God? He points to a chair,
asking me who has made this chair, as some metaphor for people
who do not believe in God,
but think the universe just emerged.
Of course the chair has a creator, I say.
Yes, that is what he means.
Look at the living painting of trees and the lake and the sky we are
facing.
Someone must be behind this creation.
Yes, my image of 'God' is the Divine Power penetrating the whole
Universe.
Yes, we can agree.

Why do people break a glass at weddings?
Even a wedding is not perfect happiness,
because the Temple was destroyed and God is in hiding. A God
in hiding is not something I can relate to.
I say: Okay, back to my piece of the Here and Now!
What do I mean with this?
I ask him if he is prepared to do an experiment,
as explaining does not work.
He is.
I invite him to put his feet on the ground,
look around him, smell, listen and become aware of his
surroundings.

Next step is to become aware of his body.
His heart is awakening, he tells me.
I ask him to consider his heart as an I.
Without any resistance he plays his part and says:
I heart... , I lake... , I heart... , I love... , I heart...
I can see the emotions creeping up into his skin,
into his chin, into his eyes.
And at the same time I feel the liquid in my own eyes and ask him
to look at me.
What should he do now? He seems helpless.
You don't have to do anything, just be and enjoy like I do!
When I have to go, I part by giving him a grateful little kiss.
He receives it with a smile.'

The moment has come to do your own work and practise. Nothing as exciting as that. Is it an idea to read a poem, one, two, three times. Then close the book and write what you remember about the details? Or do you rather write a story about an encounter with an unknown other? Questions to consider: Am I a believer? Did I find my tone? Can I enter into poetry? Do I take the initiative?

*Of course you are free to explore your own questions,
I am just giving suggestions that can put you on a trail.*

14. Celebrating Life

The day I was longing for most and at the same time afraid of: Sabbath. I knew that while being in Elat Chayyim* I was supposed to wear white. Rather confronting. If I did I would confess I wanted to belong. If I did not I would exclude myself. As Sabbath starts at the beginning of the evening, in the morning we still worked and were asked to write about:

‘The coming of Sabbath

I have to write about Sabbath that is coming
But I am not ready for it
Because I am still busy
With the writing I want to read to the group
Will I read about Forbidden Fruit
About the meeting with the stranger
Or will I sing what I wrote about not listening
When I was supposed to listen
And write down the details
Oh, please, I am not ready for Sabbath
First I have to know
If what I wrote about my meeting with the rabbi
Has your approval
Or else I want to sing to you about my guilty conscience
that cannot hear details
Only tones, only sounds, only the music behind the words

Oh, Sabbath, I did not know you were waiting for me,
Otherwise I would have accomplished the tasks
that asked for my attention
for my awareness, for my Kawanah
But Sabbath, if I keep my awareness and name it Kawanah, will I
be dressed in white enough feathers to receive you?
Oh, Sabbath I have been waiting for you all my life,
I did not know it was you that waited for me.’

Here and Now in Amsterdam I wonder how to explain the word Kawanah and find in ‘A short introduction to Judaism’*:

‘There are many levels: kavanah in the simple sense of comprehending the words one is uttering and kavanah as the conscious awareness of being in God’s presence and addressing him. The latter is of the essence of prayer; to utter words, however meaningful in themselves, without that profound sense of awe and mystery, is not to pray.’

The celebration of the Sabbath that Friday evening gave me a taste of what I longed for. Only then I began to understand that the Sabbath is about people, Jewish or not Jewish.

The Sabbath is about the Divine Power, that is hidden in every human being also in me. The hours of singing, the food, the wine, the dancing made me aware of the choices we can make in life. Do we trust the Light and the Beloved or do we live in darkness expecting doom and eternal suffering?

The song that follows gives an idea of what is possible. Some words were given, some I added, some are just expressing what needed to be expressed. The main thing is now that they give me a feeling of joy, they bring me back to those happy hours we sang and celebrated together.

‘Come my beloved

With choral of praise
Welcome Sabbath
The bride of days

Stay my beloved
With chorals of hatred
Welcome Sabbath
The bride of days

Come my man
With chorals of hope
Welcome Sabbath
The queen of days

Come my beloved
With bread and roses
Welcome the day
The queen of Eternity

Go my beloved
With hope nor praise
Go Sabbath
and let the queen in peace

Good morning my beloved
With bread and tea
Welcome me
Your bride to stay

Come my other one
With hearts full of laughter
Welcome me
Your friend for a day and other half

Hello, my rabbi
With questions of life
Welcome the chance
To have me as your friend for a dance'

In my notebook:

'Sabbath

just before lunch and after the Torah learning and services.
Now what? Is it time to let go of this idea that I am not Jewish and therefore cannot connect with my heritage? Come on, Tine, this question you can at least change into a statement.
Yes, yes, yes, it is time to let go this idea that you miss something to really connect with that inner part of you called soul.

How you do it, is less important than that you do it.
If you want to connect with the rabbi do it. But do you? He gives you all of a sudden a feeling of falling in love. So if you fall in love,

be free, feel free to do it. Don't be so afraid for what he thinks of it. He is longing for something too?

What? A woman? A mother? A sister? A colleague?

A friend? A lover? Questions worth to be explored.

Do not think men see only lovers and wives in women and to be more specific: in you'

Notebook: 6 PM

I spent the afternoon with M.,

the rabbi, who happens to be human

After that there was the singing and the poetry.

M. can set something into motion in me.

My alter ego writes:

Please face the fact that he has energy you have met before

Energy that is already setting your body on fire.

Your body or your soul.

Okay, you keep safe borders by getting immediately into your therapist role.

You do it beautifully. Of course, why should you not if it opens a possibility to connect with him.

But... and but, yes but, why not enjoy it.

You know one thing...? Do you?

Yes, you feel your body, more precise:

after quite some years of calmness the longing is back!

This morning in the session it was about connecting even with your lust, even with the longing part of your body.

It is so funny, you thought you met a rabbi, but next week he will quit his job here and become a salesman or something like that.

Other part of the same man, but he will be in the same body. His question: 'If I marry someone Dutch will I as second generation victim get money from the Government?'

Apparently he needs money at the moment.

Okay, bow your head, welcome the longing, get off your ass, stop being afraid you are too old or thinking he is too young.

Stop putting doom onto this story. He or she who will be seen, shall grow. This is a place where you are seen, just because you are different. Anyway he saw you and sees you.

He has the same hands as your big love, the same look, the same beard; the skin of his hands has the same pores as the hands of your father. He needs a therapist, you need a rabbi. We should have something to offer to each other.'

On the airport

Sunday

On the airport with a longing body.
Happily longing. Peacefully longing.

My wise cards today tell me:

- *my personality is radiant with love*
- *you'd rather change the outside world, than do your own work*
- *I forgive everyone, I forgive myself, I forgive all past experiences*
- *I am free*
- *Love*

If that is what is given, all I have to do is answer it or rather receive it.

Here I am after one week with the Jewish Arts Institute and the singing teacher.

Will I ever connect with him, although I think I did this morning, while saying goodbye.

Thanks to his fire in the singing, in the sound, in the longing, in the pain and the joy, I could feel my own fire and open up to M. when we were together in the yurt last night.

Sounds romantic and it was,
both knowing it would be our last meeting.

One more message of the cards:

mystic: live in connection with the Divine

Yes, cannot be denied; the pieces are falling into place.

All I had to do is go to the right place and be there.

Is there anything more to write about except that I just bought a play plane and a magazine for the two little girls in my family in a shop that bears the rather exclusive name of my big love who

looks like the rabbi. Yes, there is, I do need a rabbi, I cannot longer deny this, a rabbi or is it a man?
Or should I confess my serpent is awakened again and cannot be deceived when one eye is open?
And the message: *My personality is radiant with love?*
Is that why people tell me I look so nice in pink, white or whatever? Whatever is the matter I still taste his spontaneous farewell kiss, nobody can take that away from me.

*And you? Do you recognize falling in love with a man or a woman who cannot be reached, because there is not a chance of living happily together for ever after. Not a chance because your worlds are too far apart, literally or religiously or for whatever other reason. Nevertheless the feeling is there, one cannot deny it. The feeling makes you shine, you know you are special, you are beautiful, you have the world a lot to offer. Then what? What do you do after the goodbye? Please get some colours and paper, play with them and create a picture that mirrors your feelings. When you are ready look at your painting and wonder about words in it. If you write them down you can use them to make your own story or write a poem. Questions to keep in mind:
Do I passionately fall in love? Do I believe in love? Am I a sceptic? Can I let go? Main thing is believing that your own potentiality is not dependent on the other. Love is about you and maybe about the other but it starts with you.*

The purpose of life?

15. The Mystical Perspective

People ask themselves the deepest questions

While being in Elat Chayyim I found The Mystical Kabbalah, a course by rabbi David A. Cooper on six cd's.* Back in Amsterdam it turned out to be the most precious present I could have given to myself. Listening helps me to celebrate Sabbath my way.

But not only on Friday nights and Saturday's I sit down to learn from the rabbi. Often I end my days by taking a bath while Cooper tells me about the Jewish mystical oral tradition that has been existing for thousands of years.

He states that 'people always have asked themselves the deepest questions:

Who created this world? Is there a God?

What is the purpose in life? What am I doing here? Is there something after this life? Out of those questions the great religious traditions have risen.' Trying to translate his wisdom into my own words: today we are still wondering about the same questions.

Today we have all the information from every culture in the world, all we have to do is open our pc and go to internet.

But never ever will we find the exact answers because just the written words, cannot answer questions like: do I have a meaning in life? What is my purpose?

The mystical approach

to these essential questions is quite different from the normal way of learning things. According to the mystics we need special awareness in the way we live our lives. To begin with we have to learn to be present at all times and be in a state of constant awareness. Only by spiritual discipline and practise the truth will reveal itself. The word Kabbalah means to receive. It means that there is a constant transmission available in the universe if we learn how to tune into it's frequency. And if we do we will see everything from a new perspective.

The view we gain would change our relationship with the world. The early Kabbalists were tuned into this infinite awareness. How did they get it? They gained their insight through constant practice; they discovered that gaining the wisdom of mystical insight could be accomplished only through guidance and advice, but could never be communicated directly.

Differences

All this sounds so true and known to me that I believe I have been doing it, since I found meditation and then Gestalt theory and therapy. The difference is maybe that in Gestalt we do not talk about Divine Power or God, but we agree about the knowledge that people will grow by doing and not by just reading or knowing better. A difference in my experience is also that Gestalt teaches me to communicate and make contact with other human beings, while Mystic is in the first place about connecting with the Divine. Of course we need to do both. Connecting can be a deep spiritual experience. It happened to me when I was with the Jewish Arts Institute. But once I was back home again I had to face the longing of my body that told me I wanted to hold on to this feeling of being together and united. I knew it was a challenge. Could I be content with what happened in itself or was I going to nag, complain, demand and ask for more?

One morning I sat down, got the cards of the Transformation Game, developed in Findhorn* out and asked what they thought I should do.

They told me:

I hold a positive outlook (Life insight card)

Misery loves company (Setback card)

My personality is radiant with creativity (Life insight that can help overcome the setback)

Patience (Angel card that tells the quality one needs to continue on her/his path)

To connect with my undercurrent I wrote:

The angel of Patience in the drawing is knitting.

Knitting will bring me patience.

Knitting the days of my life together to get one big patchwork.

I am waiting for a sign from M.
The old longing, the old yearning is back
and I do not want it.
The old feeling of wanting to have, wanting to possess, to be
certain and I do not know yet how to stop this.
But when I look at what the angels tell me, I have to relax,
let go and have faith in whatever comes.
I know I think now: if he only writes me once then...
But I want him to write me night and day and I have to accept that
he does not live with his pc like I do.
I have to accept that he is not very practical,
I better start doing my own practices: go back to writing,
learn how to pray, follow the Kabbalah of Cooper and transform.
Most important of all I have to make time to sing with 'Danny'
and with other Jewish singers on cd's praising and praying.
I have to or want to or long to put order into my house
and into my garden.
I have to confess to myself that something happened to me in Elat
Chayyim, in meeting Danny, meeting the group, meeting M. and
most of all understanding what Sabbath is about.

Up to me?

'Sabbath' I did not know you were waiting for me,
I wrote. So it is up to me whether I will connect or
not. Up to us? Up to me? Aleinuh: Up to us!
I want to find a place where I can celebrate Sabbath.

How? Have a positive outlook, use your creativity,
let your fear go and above all you need patience.
Ask for help, don't do it all by yourself.
Someone will know where you can go.

Because I am not Jewish I knew it would be difficult
to find a place in Amsterdam to celebrate Sabbath
like I did in Elat Chayyim by reading the Torah
together, by singing, by dancing, by having a glass
of wine, by eating together. Of course I wonder
about converting, but as I am not certain
I do not take steps.

On a Sunday wondering about belonging and
connecting I wrote:
Having to choose
Wanting to choose
Feeling free to choose
I sit here in my comfortable Amsterdam home
Look at my neglected garden
My dog sleeping on a teddy bear
Listen to African music that excites me
I know I have to say Yes
Or I have to say No
The time for in between is over and passed
If I take life seriously
I have to start and learn the basics of Judaism
Sit down and understand the words
Understand the rituals, the blessings
Understand the motivation

Vaguely it always resides in me
Vaguely it has been knocking on my door
Please, Tine, let me out
Open this closed door
You know I am there
You know I am your real heritage
Don't be afraid
I will not eat you
I will not betray you
Of course you need courage to open up
and show your inside
Of course you need courage to connect
With people who do know and
who do have the laws and rules
People who have been studying for ages
the right and the wrong
But although it seems you come from
a different world you feel the attraction

You have acted as an anarchist

You have behaved as if you were crazy
Although intelligent and rather nice at times
Someone you can not get hold of
And now a new period has begun
Now you know you are not the only one
Who truly believes in process, in frustrations
You are not the only one who wrestles with God
Wrestles with the Divine Power of the universe
Now you know you have to come out of the closet
And face the Other who will look at you like
you are the Other
Like you are the one who threatens his/her
precious heritage

How can you make it safe for you to connect
How can you reach out
How can you stretch your hand without making
the Other afraid
Of having to perform something that is not
genuine

How? Well, there must be a way
Do not make it more complicated than necessary
It is an adventure
If you are not recognized
As a stranger with a soul in the right place
You must be in the wrong place
It is not certain
That you will find people
with their souls in what you believe is the right place
in places that are supposed to be right
You can only find out by going down there
Knock on the door
Say: here I am
I was lost and am still looking for my roots
For my source
My true heritage.
I just wonder if you are willing to explore with me
If I am in the right place, with the right people,

at the right moment.
I am willing and prepared to learn your language
Your songs, your prayers, your rituals
I am willing and prepared to do the right things
As they are predicted in your Book

And of course it is still possible
That we find out that my ground is not your ground
Of course it is possible
That when I go down and connect with my inner
Sanctum, I cannot connect with you anymore
It is possible, but not likely

The only way I and we can find out
Is to take the risk of being rejected
But I am old enough to know that if you reject me
I can reject you too and protect my own Self that way
Still it would not surprise me
If we find each other more in the rejection
Than in being the same
So be it!

If we can accept each other in our differences
May be even enjoy them
Something new will happen
That will open the next door
On the way to freeing my soul and also yours
Let's sing, dance and celebrate life
Without being jealous or afraid of each other.
Hallelujah! We are one!

Here and Now:

This last sentence does not come easy.
Hallelujah is a word too connected
with – in my eyes – superficial religion
that is more about the outside
of society than about the inside of human beings.
I am prejudiced here, I know, that is why it is good to say it out
loud. It makes me aware of my short sightedness.

As the process went on, I often sat at my table
looking at my garden, wondering.
In late autumn I saw the leaves turning brown,
flowers dying and to my surprise there was

A rose in my garden

For M.
There is a rose in my garden
A deep red rose
The rose stands all by itself
Between other flowers, plants, weeds
The rose is blooming in my wild autumn garden
The rose is telling me to look at her
And be surprised
Because I did not do what I should:
Give attention to my garden
I just let it be

Just let things grow
I do look every day with wonder, with awe
at what presents itself
Colours that are fading away into autumn
Spiders everywhere
Passion flowers show me how complicated
beauty can be
Passion flowers show me that the only thing
to do is go on and greet the day
Be beautiful
Show your inside out
Close off at the end of the day
And stay with your inner world
To develop the qualities of the pit
That will bear fruit

Again I look at the rose
The heart of my garden
And feel tears coming to my eyes

Oh, rose all I can do
Is look at you
Feel the wonder, the awe, the tears and the
compassion
For the work you did to bloom
You are at the end of a long stem bare of leaves
How did you nourish your self
How did you know the colour you wanted to show
the world
This deep redder than red is the colour of my
blood, I imagine
How can you show the colour of my blood
that streams inside me
I can only assume that red is in you as it is in me
Otherwise you could not bloom
Not radiate what you are radiating now to me

I look at you and know I am connected
With the Bigger, the Great Whole I am part of
You stand there in your beauty and I see you
My cats see you
My dog pisses against you at your feet
My neighbours can see you from above
If they look
But do they take the time?
Do they know you are there?

Still I would love to share your beauty
You are too much for me alone
I am too tiny to stand your existence just for me
I wish I could pick you and send you to M.
But that is impossible
If I pick you, you will die
And lose your velvet scarlet colour

I have to accept rose
that you and I are made for each other
All I can do is to be grateful
Because you are there

And hope that my being here
Behind the window
Gives you the feeling that you are wanted.

Today is Sabbath,
Today is to celebrate Life
Today I take time to taste the Divine Power
That is all around me
The autumn sun is even out
Here in the North of the earth where the sun is rare
So, rose I go out into the splendour of Light
Together with Poe who is a dog and can be moved
I leave you behind in my garden
All by yourself or are you surrounded
by the invisible never ending Divine energies?

PS

I miss you
I miss being with you
I miss talking to you
I miss hearing you
I miss seeing you
I miss being able to touch you
I miss your eyes
I miss your skin
And most of all I miss your subtle kisses
Here and Now I see myself in this period feeling separated from
the people I want to be with. Every day I wonder how I could go
on, should go on, must go on. Choices I have to make that
complicate my life and make it difficult to be with my direct
surrounding:

Next step

Two more months and
I will be in the US or not
The decision is up to me
So will be the happiness or the disappointment

Not going means missing the chance

To connect with JAI members
With Danny, with Rick, with Josefa
Missing celebrating the Sabbath together with Bruce
Missing the music, the praying, the community
that knows how to celebrate life
Knows how to sing, make music, dance,
read the Torah, believe in Life, in the Divine Power
I will miss the Sabbath food, the service, the praying,
miss Elat Chayyim, the trees, the lake, the snow,
miss the optimism that radiates from the place and
the people, miss exchanging knowing looks
miss the feeling of coming home again

Not going means staying at home
And having to create my own community
It means meeting with family
And meeting people who feel close to me and my
beliefs

It also means time for my inner world
Time to explore and discover the treasures
Waiting to be brought out into the light
Time to write and sing what I have written
Time to draw and paint and dance the images
Time to go more deeply into the mystic of the
Kabbalah
Time to read Heschel*
Time to listen to the Jewish songs of Danny
or/and Shirona*
Or to listen to the songs of the Jewish Community
in Amsterdam and the rest of the world

Of course I am doing all that already
I am reading, writing, singing, dancing, painting
And beside that I am building a community
Where art, intuition, faith and above all
creative communication that leads to contact
is number One on the list of topics
Staying in Amsterdam means I can give all my

energy to the work I started
It means I can relax,
don't have to travel and tune into circumstances
that are new and strange to me
it seems or is a paradox

In the JAI I found the Sabbath
It is what I lost
And have been seeking for years and years
And now I know what I was looking for
I have a need to stay home so I can integrate it
And become who I am
In the seclusion and safety
Of my own house and world that is more
and more home to me.

Some night after listening to rabbi David A. Cooper teaching
the Mystical Kabbalah on a cd:

Your soul is pure

No matter the darkness around you
Your soul is pure
No matter the noise, the innocent laughter, the gossiping
Your soul is pure
No matter the sex you do or do not enjoy
No matter the anger you do not share
Your soul is pure
No matter the critic
No matter the patronizing
Your soul is pure
Even though there is the poorness, the hunger
Your soul is pure
Even though there is violence, rape, robberies
Your soul is pure

Even though there is sickness and death
Your soul is pure
and longing to be able to love
To guide, to be out in the open

Your soul is pure and can sing, dance, draw, write
although the world seems not welcoming
its beauty, its splendour, its subtlety
Your soul is pure
No matter what you think, what you feel
Your soul is pure
No matter your believe, your nationality
Your soul is pure
No matter your religion, no matter your identity
Your soul is pure and waiting to be heard and listened to
Ready to come out of the closet and shine
Ready to join you in the eternal struggle
To be seen and heard in your true being

**After visiting the
Russian Jewish Art 1910-1940
exposition in the Jewish Historical Museum,
Amsterdam:**

My heart beats faster than normal, I feel it
My throat is closed, lumped
I am full of air that just escaped
I feel sad, intensely sad
Once more I am confronted with the suppression...
The suppression of what?
The suppression of the free artist spirit
The suppression of beauty
The suppression of Love for God
Instead I have to deal with power, with rules, with
Dictators who tell their subjects how to behave
how to be unnoticed
so they don't disarrange anybody
Specially not the rulers

I recognize on a small scale the message in my own life:
don't be so sentimental, so sensitive, so dreamy
Don't over act, don't make a fool of yourself
Act normal, shut up, do as you are told

What is the role of the Jewish people in this conflict?
Are they the defenders of beauty, of art, of religion?
What is the role of the Russian rulers?
Are or were they defending the law and order in their country?

My question is: why does it have to be or or?
Or the beauty or the order, the control
What happened to the possibility of and and?
And the Jewish art and the Russian safety of the state?

Of course things are not black and white
Still I cannot deny the role of the Jewish artist
who brought and brings a colourful dimension into life,
that is not wanted by state leaders.
Why? Because it cannot be controlled?
As it comes from the source of the soul?
And the soul is not an easy princess to deal with
The soul is not a pious subordinate follower
of whatever is wanted from her.
No the soul can complain, cry, whine
The soul reminds us that life is more serious,
more deep more gorgeous than it seems.

To arrive in the world of the soul is not easy
As we have to go down into the depth
of the wasteland, the depth of the slimy
undercurrent that clings to us, as sticky dirt can do.
To purify we have to wash, clean and spit out
The shit we have collected
so nobody knows how black we are inside.

The ongoing process:

Touched and Eloped

Still busy with the difference between falling in love
and expecting to live happily ever after
and falling in love
with Love that will unite us with Life

Looking for an answer
Will I follow L/love
Will I have the guts to do
What L/love asks of me?

Love wants me to go through the gate
To find the green lush grass in the meadow
And the dry hot sand of the desert
Where drought reigns
And water is more than necessary

Water that will help the seeds to sprout
Water that enables emotions to stream
Water that gets the stagnated growth going
Where am I?
In the dry desert or in the green meadow

Now I take time to think about it
I believe I am more in the desert than
in the sappy green grass land

Okay, what am I doing?
Do I think I am writing poetry
Doing my best to make it sound beautiful?
Or do I write to find out if I have to go to New York
to meet my love?

It was only a small kiss that connects us
Or was it more
Touched by L/love without a doubt
Touched and eloped
Touched and back to being untouchable
Proud and not needy

I don't know what to do
I cannot deny that I am touched
Nor can I deny that I am waiting for something
A sign, a sign from him

Will he be waiting for a sign from me?
Waiting, always waiting
It is what I am most allergic to
I have to get out of the desert to the promised land where the
grass is green and the water is abundantly streaming

Just a few hours and it will be Sunday
Do you remember how the Sun was waiting for you?

Oral tradition

Back to the Mystical Kabbalah of rabbi David A. Cooper and his oral tradition that teaches us we must work on the vessel, to be able to let in the Light: 'From the perspective of human beings our bodies, minds and emotions are the vessels for the Light of the soul. Too often students of spirituality attempt to go for the Light without considering the vessel. The secret of spiritual development according to the Kabbalah mystics is to mend, repair and refine our bodies, minds and emotions and the soul will automatically benefit with the greater Light.'

To tune into the Mystical Perspective you could go outside and walk in your neighbourhood, in the woods, on the beach and become aware of every step you do by feeling the ground underneath your shoes. Becoming aware that you are part of the Bigger Whole by using your senses. Just looking, just listening, just smelling, just tasting, just feeling. To do this you have to step out of your judging self. Only when you are free and in the here and now you will be able to experience the mystical dimension. Question to answer while writing afterwards: where am I?

Chapters 16 - 23

*Staying in the hot fire
of a
Gestalt conference*

16. Sexless Queens and Kings

*The psychoanalysts are better one of us
had heard from a friend.*

Cut off from sexuality

I am happy, I am at an AAGT* conference and so many people came in I like to see and so many like to see me. Feels like being a queen. I am a queen if I choose to be a queen. Can I be a queen or am I still waiting for the king or the prince before I am ready to show my radiance.

The princes and kings coming here are nice men, good willing, good therapists, they probably are good for their families and friends but they seem to be more or less cut off from their sexual energy.

I can imagine that they don't want to imitate the sexual radiance that some of our early teachers showed but did this bring them and bring us women to the other extreme?

Last night I had a dream about an ex-lover and his new love who was also his old love.

They needed something I had and we sort of shared and swapped it around.

The main emotion that is still with me is, that I was good willing to my rival and therefore had to cut myself off from my sexuality.

Only like that I could connect with them both. Me sexual? But No! Me longing? But No! Not me, at least not for this lover anymore.

In the dream my ex became a boy again, who lost his power over me and over his own sexuality.

Is he good to the motherly types in his life? I wonder. I do not have a clue, but I do know he will be a nice granddad for his little granddaughter.

Fundamental anger

Yesterday evening I was out with a colleague, surrendering to magical jazz music. My colleague told me how deeply wounded she is by the abuse of her father. By listening to her, I realized how wounded I am myself. My fundamental anger with men comes out when they behave like resentful boys in grown up bodies thinking

they can fool me in the role of a ‘mother’. Am I at the same time – still? - waiting for that one man to love me, take me, possess me, make me feel like a woman again? My anger probably keeps those men away from me. It is what happened this winter when I found out about the fear of the men I was working with. Women are also afraid of me, but that is a different matter, or is it?

I am not only an angry but also a sexual woman.

I feel and experience it at conferences like this.

And I wonder if the men who are present here are not only afraid of my aggression, but also of the sexuality I may be radiating?

Lack of sex

The end of the evening I spent with five other women in the bar, complaining about the lack of sex in the men who came to the conference. The psychoanalysts are better one of us had heard from a friend. I felt irritated with the topic because I do not want to be dependent on men, but did not say so. I wanted to be one of the women, instead of being different. I told about my recent experience with the Jewish singer I followed because he set me on fire by just singing and being his masculine self.

At first they thought what I told was awful.

Didn't I want to be with him forever?

No and Yes. I did and do not. I am not made to be his partner. It's not my sacred task. I do not long to be his wife nor his friend nor his lover. I play a different role in this case. Of course I secretly do long to make love with men who set me on fire and approach me in a way that awakens my sexuality, but I know the moment I would surrender the magic would be gone.

The game of the One and Only

When I told this to the critical women, they began to understand that although a man like that can give you a feeling of being chosen, it is not so easy to be with him in a day to day relation. Then the game of wanting to be the One and Only forever starts. Do you love me? Will you be true to me? Do you like the other too? Are you also attracted to her? Am I not the only one?

Oh, sorry, I forgot, it is true that you are not exactly the one and only man in my life either. Oh yes, you are right to be jealous of

my past. Of course I have had my passions with men, just like you had and have with women.

The witch

This brings me back to the witch in me.

I am wearing a necklace with a serpent.

I got as a present in Russia after I gave a workshop about the awakening of the sleeping serpent.

Then I was allowed to show my radiance, even or just in my role as a facilitator.

Marvellous. I can still feel it.

Being sexual and using it to enjoy life, having fun, laughing and playing with a group of people is different from being sexual with the One and Only. Though the challenge in both cases – I believe – is the same: allow our selves to be sexual even if we do not feel chosen.

About you.

Plenty of questions to chew on: am I chosen? Am I jealous? Am I the only one? Am I true to her/him? You can write about it just for you and you can of course communicate about it with your loved one(s), friends, sisters, brothers. I am certain those questions are not new, but they can feel like new if you explore them without guilt towards yourself or resentment to the other.

17. Frustrating Marathon: never give up

As a pre conference activity I offered a creative marathon, where participants were invited to play with words. Most frustrating was the realization that whatever would come, we would not have time enough to work it all out.

An hectic start

At home I had a fantasy of a day long playing with words, that could be sung or played, drawings that could be danced. This fantasy turned into a pre conference proposal for a creative marathon. Enough people felt attracted to make my dream come true. When the day came we were with twelve people in a rather small room where we looked at each other trying to find out who was who. The start of this day was hectic. There was a lot of noise in the room. People came late, some hardly remembered what they registered for. People I expected did not come, others came just because they wanted some kind of workshop.

I did not feel alarmed, was so convinced that what I had to offer would make people happy. After hearing each others names and some of the aims, I gave a meditation focused on 'I am' and invited the participants to start writing without censoring. My own words:

I am

'I am' 'I am' and I am sitting here in the Lawsuit of the Thistle Hotel with more than ten people who are willing to go out on a journey with me and with each other. I feel privileged, I feel that I am guided to be able to do this work and share my trust. I am so eager to offer what I have to offer in this field that I get stuck.

Here I am, this is what I have got and I do not know how to hand it to you other than to take time and tune in to who you are and find out if there is a way we can meet each other by tuning in to the same kind of vibrations.

I long to love, I long to share, I long to open up and that makes me shy indeed, as one of you remarked. I heard this morning your stories, heard about your backgrounds and I can see the energy

filling the room that was empty – except for the chairs – when I came in. We filled it with our energy because we are willing to show ourselves in some way and make our world more safe.

If I go back to the I am, I can say that I am the facilitator and initiator who has the power and the faith to receive whatever you want to present. Though this does not mean that I will become happy with every word, every sound, every line. No some words, some lines will make me sad or angry and I don't find it easy to show those emotions. And yet some words, some sounds will touch my soul and will make me happy. Strange thing is that this is not easy to show either, because it is about love. And who am I to presume I know about love.'

Reflecting in hindsight:

As this was supposed to be a creative marathon I wanted to interfere as little as possible. I wanted to give the creative process the chance to develop all by itself. We all had read our stories out loud and there was so much potential in the stories to play with, that to me it seemed a matter of trust and taking time to let people express themselves. Yet the process that unfolded was heading straight for the impasse, as aggression and fear – more or less suppressed – were the main emotions. I felt my power of being in charge slipping away and became helpless. When – after lunch – people did not come back, even without telling me or the others. and when one of the participants wanted to leave before the time was over, I surrendered and decided to let him go without trying to involve him after all.

Writing letters

What was most frustrating was the realization that whatever was the matter, we would not have time enough to work it all out. All I knew was that only by going back to our own processes we would have a chance to come out of this workshop with a fairly good feeling. That is why I invited the participants who were still there to write a letter to themselves, a letter to ask or tell what was the matter with them, to ask or tell how they felt after this day, what they did and liked and what they did not like.

'Shy Tine, angry Tine, I am so sorry that you were so convinced you were going to give a beautiful workshop.

So convinced that people would be happy with you and with what you have to offer, that you let yourself be cut off from your divine and creative energy.

You are so stupid, the moment you are criticized you shrink into a mouse that only radiates: sorry, I am here, sorry, I can't make you happy.

Or you take off with the eagle in you that tells you high up in the air no one can bother you, no one can reach you because you know better.

You let yourself be disappointed, irritated and arrogant, rather than show your vulnerability and your pain because some people don't trust you, don't listen to you but only listen to their own doom scripts or to their own knowing better. You wanted so much to achieve success that you forgot about me, the creative playful one, who is also shy, but who has the laugh, the dance and the singing.

You only very rarely dare to show this side of you profoundly.

Yes on the surface, but to share from deep down that you are happy, happy is most dangerous. You are afraid that people will laugh at you, that they will be cynical as you yourself can be.

That's why you hide this diamond.

But as the process goes on, there is always hope, always a new chance that you will unite with me your divine energy.'

Profound changes

Sharing their letters changed the atmosphere. One woman stated that she never in her long therapist career had been part of a profound change in such a short time. What they wrote surprised the group and made them wonder in a more friendly way.

Still I knew that there was unfinished business we did not have time to really attend to.

Early lines next morning:

I am nauseous, don't feel well at all.

I believe the best I can do is move out of this conference.

I can hardly stand all those people together.

I am still angry about and wounded

by the process of the creative marathon yesterday.

And I wonder what I can do to heal myself.
Write is one thing, sing is another.
Go back to me.
Don't think of going don't do it, it will not,
I say NOT make you happy.
Listen to the lesson, listen to your body,
listen and feel that this is a painful place for you at this moment or
in this period of time.
You see too much, you feel too much and know too much.
Yet all you can do is be there as a witness not as a saviour.
Yes, you can save you, that is for certain,
but everybody else has to save her- or himself.
It is a good lesson in the sense that it makes you wonder about
giving presentations and workshops when your book is published.
Be prepared for the shit that will be projected on you.
Become aware of the fact
that this shit is mostly not about you.
It is about the one who is shitting or projecting with a more
professional word.
Your own expectations and projections concerning the creative
marathon were to find gold. And you forgot that to find gold you
first have to dig in the burning sun that might kill your body and
nourish your soul.
The work you move into is subtle work.
Still, I think you did a beautiful job yesterday.
You nourished yourself enough to go on with this work.
Once more you know by experiencing it, that the chance is in the
frustration. The chance to make contact, the chance to meet, needs
the pain road. So you have the rest of the conference to connect
with the people who were with you in this marathon and also felt
the threat.
Don't give up, never give up, as your colleague from Israel said.
Don't do it. Believe that there is a sun coming up the next
morning, a sun giving light, although may be not the warmth you
long for. Look out of your window now and see the truck coming
out of the opposite building with the word sunlight on it plus a
painted sun beside it. A miracle: the sun is there even though it
seems to be in hiding.

Do you think being creative is linked to pure glamour or did you experience how frustrating and challenging it can be to create a work of art?

Questions: Am I afraid of my creativity?

Am I talented?

Do I trust what I write?

18. Crossing Bridges

“Awareness is the spontaneous sensing of what arises in you, of what you are doing, feeling, planning. Awareness is like the glow of a coal that comes from its own combustion.” Paul Goodman*

Longing for contact

Being at this conference is like being in a house I have been building for seven years and can only now fully experience. Seven years of putting in energy by thinking, writing, reading, feeling, anticipating, organizing, feeling responsible and communicating by email and telephone with colleagues all over the world.

Will all this lead to a top experience of being together and seeing and hearing each other in a contact full way? To recognize and admit this deep longing makes me vulnerable. Longing for contact is of course what has been driving me for as long as I can remember. Again and again I found hot fires where I felt invited to open up and show my inside out. And always there came a moment I decided I better close myself off as the field had become too dangerous and threatening or too boring to be my creative self. So far the field of the AAGT has brought me enough support to trust that I am allowed to open my mouth without being rejected, enough support to show what I have professionally to offer.

Although this time my proposal for a workshop about ‘Passion + Awareness = Compassion’ was rejected.

That is why I am more on guard. I have to face the fact that the value of what I wanted to offer was not recognized.

What I understood is that the reviewers had the idea that my workshop would depend on the presenter. Could be and so what? Every workshop does. But okay, being in a hot fire means having to deal with different views. It all depends on the reviewer or on whoever crosses your path.

Spiritual foundation

Before I found Gestalt I practised Zen and other forms of Buddhist meditations. I learned about awareness and being in the

Here and Now by sitting for days on pillows, by getting up at six in the morning to meditate and sing mantra's.

I have been trained by the Flemish/Dutch School for Gestalt & Psychosynthesis*, where Gestalt was connected to a spirituality that asks for an awareness I had already experienced. I was elated to find a way of living that taught people you have to be aware and in the Here and Now to communicate and make contact with people. I have to tell all this because I did not realize that not all Gestalt colleagues have this same foundation. And that is why my expectations of Gestalt conferences do not always match the reality. During this conference I often became irritated, felt painfully rejected and isolated, was a few times ready to leave the conference and had top experiences I would not have wanted to miss for anything in the world. In the report that follows I weave together what I experienced then and what I am aware of now while typing out my handwritten notes.

Guilty feeling

I already wrote about the pre conference marathon, that made me aware of my fear of not having time enough to let the process develop and find the meaning of what happened. I hate to have to stop a workshop when still in the middle of a process that is not completed. In the creative marathon for example there was so much anger we did not have time to deal with. No time to stand still and explore the background of what happened between us. No time to dismantle our projections and take responsibility for our needs instead of thinking it all happened because of the faults of the other.

The only thing I could do is trust that the process would continue for each group member as it did for me. But I kept a guilty feeling of having failed to meet expectations and had no way to share this with the people involved.

Too much rivalry?

In the first plenary meeting we were invited to participate in an experiential opening 'that will provide for an exploration and experience of the evolving nature of AAGT and a celebration of our maturing identity as an international community.'

As I did not make any notes then, I have to let myself be guided by my memory and feelings while writing. We were all asked to form a group with our compatriot colleagues and I found myself back standing rigidly in the Dutch group, realizing that I longed for the time I was the only person from The Netherlands present during AAGT conferences. At that time I had hardly any history with anybody present. But there is no way back. I was the one who initiated a regional AAGT conference in Amsterdam, that led to this conference and the presence of colleagues I have trouble connecting with. Too much rivalry in a small country? While standing there I looked around me and became jealous of all those happy others. Or did I just wear the kind of glasses that made their grass seem greener than mine?

Inhuman basement

In the second plenary I experienced what I longed for: humour by one of the keynote speakers. Not to miss anything I sat on the front row and enjoyed myself immensely. I felt a privileged woman to be present in an inhuman basement, where it was chilly and where there is no light from the real source, but nevertheless was transformed into a welcoming atmosphere. It is why I decided in the afternoon to go to his workshop, although it took place in a part of the same basement.

As extra frustration we were tried out by the air conditioning that worked with so much noise that we could not hear each other. We had to laugh though it was not really funny. There we were willing to meet, to show ourselves and the air conditioning seemed to have the last word until someone told about a frightening experience in Dublin during a demonstration that was violently suppressed. All of a sudden a complete silence filled this room. I can still feel the emotions in my throat. It turned out that not only the storyteller was there but also other people in the room who experienced the same fright, angst, no matter what side they were on. When I came out of this workshop I felt purified.

Here happened what I meant in my rejected proposal: the passion, meaning the suffering was met by genuine attention and awareness of the whole group that led us to compassion. The written introduction to this workshop told us “Contact is the unique

lynchpin of Gestalt therapy. (...) We will broaden our perspective on contacting by finding intentionality within it, drawing on the experience of those present to develop and clarify our concepts. Clinical examples will be discussed.”

Mutual silence

Although everyone will have a different interpretation of what happened, no one can deny the moments of complete silence that opened hearts so compassion could enter and do its work. I believe that as a writer it is up to me to find words to share with my readers the importance of what happened.

It is with this intention that I write about my conference experiences. I do not intend to give a factual report but I hope by writing I can go to the undercurrent, where I can find out about my drives behind my presence in this conference. Only by differentiating in contact I can cross bridges and make my borders clear, as the conference theme assures me.

Question is: do we walk our talk, do we practice what we know? Please take time to wonder about the big dilemma's: Am I aware? Am I present in the moment? Do I see what there is to be seen, hear what there is to be heard, say what I have to say? Or am I in my thoughts planning, worrying, longing, listening to my fear? Meditate on it, chew, wonder what it means for you to be aware, to be in the Here and Now, to be awake. What does the author of the quote above mean by “the glow of a coal that comes from its own combustion”? Do not hesitate but write anything that wants to be written. You will be surprised with the words that will appear on your paper or on your screen.

19. High price

Still in Manchester:

One of the coordinators told me he wanted a word with me and I followed him in the back alleys of the hotel where the pipes are running and no guests are supposed to come.

My first written words that morning are: 'I should not have come.' Yet I did and I did have some top experiences. The price is high though, I hate to say it, but it is. Can I feel compassion for the colleagues that rejected me instead of giving me the support I need? Not easy at all. I suppose it is the work I have to do.

Process Groups crisis

Back in Amsterdam typing those conference notes out, I reflect and wonder. I did not write any details down then, but I know this is about my Process Group*crisis.

Or 'my'...? Yes mine... Process groups became my personal AAGT nightmare. I hate the experiences I have had leading PG's. Did I do my best too much, wanting to prove myself a good group leader, knowing beforehand that time is too short to deal seriously with processes anyway? Is that why I became a PG trouble maker in the eyes of the coordinators? At least that is what I understood later. Then – when it happened - I did not know 'they' decided I had to be controlled, because they had doubts about my ability to lead a group.

And yes, they seemed to be right; there were complaints about the way I was leading the group, I was told the evening we were making music, singing, dancing, being free and happy.

A word

One of the coordinators stopped my dancing and told me he wanted a word with me and I followed him in the back alleys of the hotel where the pipes are running and no guests are supposed to come.

I expected a professional discussion, but my colleague just let me know there was a complaint about me and refused to tell me what it was about and who was complaining. I felt like a small child being told she is useless, I felt anger and sorrow rising up in me, but showed my arrogant face, telling him that I did not intend to take this personal and went back to the dancing, the singing and played with verve the djembay.

Complaint or question

Was it a real complaint, were there just questions, was it about me? A matter of differentiating contact? I will never know the truth as I decided to withdraw from the group instead of going back in as proposed and being patronized by my spokesman to look at matters. I did not want to take the risk to be stuck in a process that is impossible to solve in 45 minutes.

I did not want – as I experienced before in PG’s – to be the leader who has to be killed before the process can go on. I certainly did not want to consume the process group time.

I have been leading ongoing groups for the past twenty five years and I do know about group dynamics and projections and how much time that costs.

Blow to my ego

Only later when I realized the blow my ego received I became aware of my real anger and decided I better be more open and tell the coordinator how I felt towards him. I asked him if he trusted me as a colleague and the evading answer I got was that I did a good job organizing an AAGT conference in Amsterdam. But that is different work, I said.

Yes, he agreed. It became clear that he indeed did not trust me as a therapist/trainer, because of the trouble I caused during a previous conference and because... ?

It was a drop that almost did overflow my AAGT bucket.

Conflicts and confrontations

Reflections Here and Now in Amsterdam. It is late.

After walking my dog I come back to this writing because I do not want to go to sleep before I find an answer that gives me peace.

It is true that I trusted the AAGT field, because in the community meetings conflict and confrontations are welcome. I remember sitting in a big cold air conditioned conference room in Florida on a sunny Saturday afternoon when the discussion about the organization blazed up around me.

A wonderful, healing Hot Fire that amazed me.

Here was a place where I could say what I meant without being rejected, because it seemed that people listened to each other.

Of course it was clear there were big differences and that there had been big fights, but for me it was the first time being in the company of colleagues that were willing to listen to each others different views. It was the reason, I decided I wanted to belong to this group. It was then that decided I wanted the group to come to Amsterdam. And it was then I started planning this event that came true three years later.

Transforming anger

But personal conflicts and confrontations are a different matter. Were they welcome? Not in my case. As long as I restrict myself and behave like a nice woman, I will be safe.

But when my personal anger shows and comes out, it is a different matter. I am fascinated by the function of aggression and power. I know I can either use it to make contact or use it to destruct. To experience the difference I need to be aware.

If I am not I can make victims who will become more and more afraid of me. In the role of client and student I have used my anger to attack, that is for certain. In the role of therapist/trainer I transform my anger to power that enables me to make contact.

I often need this power to overcome my fear of the evident aggression of my clients and students. I believe that in the case of the conflict with the coordinator I behaved at first as a client who was too afraid to show her power and withdrew into fear instead. Live from fear or live from power is the existential choice we have to make time and time again. If I live from fear I disappear. If I dare to show my strength and look my opponent in the eyes, I can

use my true potential and am able to communicate. I cherish the AAGT as it is a place where I can experiment with transforming my angry power into strength by stepping out of the role of a fearful child that wants to be recognized and seen into the grown up strong woman I have become.

Anger? How do you cope with your anger, your aggression? Do you think it does not belong to your personality? Are you ashamed of it, afraid maybe? Do you dare to share it without wanting to destruct anyone? Do you agree that it is vital to find a way to express your anger in a lovable manner? Not easy, but exciting as you are asked to take time and get to know yourself by wondering about the need that is behind the anger. We become angry when we seem to be unable to reach the person we need to get what we long for: support, respect, contact, warmth, love, understanding. Specially when we don't know exactly what we need and therefore cannot ask for it. Questions to reflect on: am I angry? Am I afraid of my own anger and of the other? Am I ashamed when I am angry? Am I violent? Do I take myself seriously when I am angry? Do I know what I need and long for? If you are ready you can write or draw or you can use a musical instrument that allows you to give sound to your anger. Think of a drum. Or you can walk putting your feet consciously on the ground while softly or – if possible – loudly telling yourself: I am angry, I am furious! By speaking the words you will know if what you say is true.

20. Its not personal and yet it is

As long as we know and make clear that our love is not only a personal but also a transpersonal feeling we can grow and become equals.

Feeling ignored

'6 PM. Sitting in the Manchester sun on the square with the fountains writing down my experiences, instead of sharing them in the process group. Something important has happened. Attending the workshop this morning of one of my first Gestalt teachers, brought me back to old energy in the sense of previous felt excitement. Then he opened the Gestalt gate for me and gave me hope. Now I don't need hope, now I need trust. Yesterday in the AAGT-EAGT* meeting I compared the way of communicating of the two organizations. In the AAGT emails are always answered, he – as an EAGT authority - does not answer my emails. His answer: 'Yes, but that was about something personal.' My interpretation: if I as teacher, want to keep control, I categorize what ex-students write as personal or not. Personal I can ignore, not personal is serious business. Being ignored is difficult for me as it gives me the feeling that I am not taken seriously.'

Love between teacher and student

Luckily enough yesterday I heard myself say: 'It was not personal!' This statement started a process in me that could be the beginning of a completion. What I heard and what my ex teacher said are two different things. Because there is unfinished business between him and me I don't hear clearly. Of course I am still exploring how a teacher student relation works. For one thing I want to find words for my learning path that was as personal as it was not personal, as painful as it was worthwhile. I want to look at my shame in relation to my teachers, my need, my love and longings also because I am a teacher myself now and experience the other side of the coin. I realize that the role my teacher was in, the role of being the prince royal for all the students can be as painful as the role of being a longing student. But in my view there must be a way to communicate

without causing more hurt than necessary. My way is to take my own love as a teacher/therapist and the love of the other as a client/student seriously and step out of my own role pattern. As long as I know and make clear that our love is not only a personal but also a transpersonal feeling we can grow and become equals.

As 'good' as possible

My story with this teacher is full of magic for me. And for him? He did not want to be misused in my drama, I remember him telling me angrily. Pity but the process goes on anyway no matter what role he chooses to play. Not wanting to play a role is also a role. And now I went to the workshop he presented about the Law of Prägnanz: every Gestalt process becomes as 'good' as possible, or takes the best possible shape. It confirms: he and I could not do any better then. By teaching me as he did, I had to learn as I did about my relations with men and with authorities in general in a way that could not be avoided. It brought me where I am now. Standing on my own legs for years, accepting that I do not need a (personal) relation with my (ex)teachers to be able to connect, co create and do my work. Acknowledging my own power and authority that I could only develop in the frustrations with my teachers. Accepting that the process goes on, that the process has no end. Personal or not personal, it makes no difference in the sense that the one cannot exist without the other.'

*You are identified by what you are committed to,
not by what you have done*

are the sentences I found in my notebook.

My commitment to my teachers is about daring to trust my intuition. From this teacher I learned to take the Gestalt Work so seriously that I can go on working with it and be committed to it no matter what. In the workshop I sat beside an English woman whom I told the presenter was my main teacher. I felt proud when she congratulated me. I always knew I have the right Gestalt foundation.

The wall is in the mind

About commitment in my notes :

‘What is my commitment behind my relation with the AAGT, with my colleagues, (ex)teachers, (ex)clients, (ex)students?’

I want to connect because together we can explore a world that is new to them and to me and open a door to a room where more people are longing to be. To a room or a place, a home?

The wall is in the mind, I learned this morning in the workshop of Hugh Pidgeon. Text in the program: ‘We will remind ourselves in this workshop that Gestalt Therapy’s foundation has much to offer as a source of inspiration in wider political and social contexts.’

If I ever have been moved to deep tears in a workshop it was this morning by listening and looking at the Beslan images* and the Ramallah concert, inspired by Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said*. Beslan brought me back to my being in Russia at the same moment the disaster happened. I was quite close in Taganrog on the Sea of Asov, giving a workshop to thirty people.

Having breakfast by myself in the hotel while watching the images on tv, I did not have a clue what it really was about as I do not speak Russian. Children under threat brought me back to my own childhood in WW II. I could share with the group my hidden tears and fears from far away. Unique moments I am thankful for.

The Ramallah concert confronted me with young people from Israelian and Palestinian sides, willing to risk their lives to make the world a better place.’

The will to do good

And those last words represent what connects me to the Gestalt field. The knowing that we are here together because we are willing to make the world a better place. If we succeed is a different matter.

But as long as the will to do good is there, I have no reason to panic or to withdraw. Even if a conference like this can be pretty painful, it is the best I and we can do as Gestalt people. It is also the best I can do under the circumstances and music helps.

Last night I was from the beginning till – almost – the end in the pub with the Irish Interest Group. The fun and the nonsense warmed my heart, but it was the singing that nourished my soul. If I only did come to this conference to experience this ambiance, I

got more than my share. I feel grateful to everyone who co created this event.

Listening to music makes all the difference in the colour of the world. Do you agree? Do you make music or do you sing? See if you can play with the question 'Did I find my tone?' in a musical way. Improvise with your voice or with an instrument on different times of the day and in different types of weather. It can be enriching to do it together with a friend or family member, even someone you have a conflict with.

21. 'May peace be with you'

*The moment we were all asked to stand up
and shake hands saying: 'May peace be with you' relaxed me.*

The light of the day

Last morning in the hall of the hotel: 'The conference is over. It's afternoon. I smell myself, smell my sweat. It is because of the blouse I am wearing. It is too hot for it outside. I put it on because of the air conditioning in the down stairs conference rooms. Not a place to be for me. I do not understand why conference rooms often are situated in the basement without daylight. I pity people who have to attend conferences all the time, because it is their regular work. This morning I walked through Manchester to get some sunlight before having to go down in the basement again to end the conference.

I enjoyed the silence of the Sunday morning and arrived exactly at the right time in the cathedral to attend a service. I felt I was welcome with the people, with the light, with the music, the singing and the preaching. The moment we were all asked to stand up and shake hands saying: 'May peace be with you' relaxed me. Looking in eyes, feeling unknown hands, can be done in any place and in any community.'

Subtle energy

Home again in my garden. I did not open my notebook until now. Birds are singing beautifully. Very subtle riddles. It is like they take their work very seriously at this moment. Of course birds always do but I am the one who hears them or not and in this way takes them seriously or not. Music on the radio is soothing me, specially the violin did a while ago and now it is the mouthorgan and the singer. I hardly ever felt so peaceful in my life. In between periods. No one's country. August is my leisure month. The nice weather helps.

Hostile smell

One cat is on my lap. My dog is on my feet. I smell something I am afraid to smell, is it cat piss? In my absence my house is being

treated by my cats like it is hostile territory that needed their scent to feel like home again. It took me and my cleaner almost all day to bring a neutral smell back. A smell I can live with without wanting to vomit. Cats have their limits, I don't think they want me out or want to be out themselves but the battle is about the dog. They want him out and don't realize that the dog is not busy with their actions, although he is busy with smells all day.

Okay, back to what the conference brought me. Being in the now in the hot garden, I can only admit that I feel differently. I also know this feeling will not last because I have felt it before and it left me, of course. Once life takes over and I have to go with the flow, I step out of this subtle energy that assures me I do not need to be active all the time, I can relax and just be. I feel so sleepy I could fall off my chair.

Me and my soul

Two days later. Yesterday I bought a djembay, an instrument from Ghana to answer my need to feel the rhythm in my body, the rhythm, the music, the power and the radiance.

I am still digesting the conference and wondering why I held myself back. Am I too afraid to show my real power. too afraid to be a strong woman and to show my aggression? Except that evening when we all jammed and played music and sang and danced.

That's why I was inspired to buy the djembay and play it. Sing and play at the same time and become who I am. Let go of the pain of not being seen. Just show myself, although with restriction but giving an idea of the woman I am. In the privacy of my house I can just play and sing without the longing or the need to be seen and heard, because in the end it's about me and my soul.

Being music, feeling music, shouting music, moving musically, rhythmically. Listening to music with awareness you can do in your own home, you can also go to a live concert and let the sounds enter your body from all sides. If you do it at home, sit comfortably or lie down on the floor and let it happen. Take your notebook with you and write as soon as the music is finished whatever words that want to be written. When you are at a concert write if possible while the music is playing or do it directly after. Don't let anything come between you

and the music before you have some lines on paper. If you rather you can also move with the music before you start writing.

Questions to keep in mind:

Is it about me? How full of should and if am I?

Do I have patience? Am I music? Am I rhythm?

Am I movement? Am I a dancer and am I the dance?

Is peace with me?

22. Women's and Men's Work is masculine and feminine

Afraid of me? Why should you be afraid of me? I am the one who always is afraid, I feel like a little girl inside though I am big.

Elephant in porcelain cabinet

Still digesting the AAGT conference I reflect on the Women's workshop. The overwhelming feeling is one of good will and hard, intensive work. The title was: Women's Work; authenticity and empowerment. Three women leading it, three women who invested their time and energy to be able to work together in co-creating this workshop. It meant being presented with metaphorically a clean bed, fresh crisp sheets, good colours, literally beautiful flowers, candles and a real feminine touch. I felt welcomed, rather safe and a bit uneasy because I am afraid I will end up as an elephant in a porcelain cabinet.

Nevertheless I wanted to show my side of being a woman, who knows about power and pain and who does not intend to evoke it. I felt inspired by the experiment of identifying with our backgrounds and being able to present ourselves as belonging to the culture we come from. I love to identify with being from Amsterdam. It is my biotope, it is a part of my life that is fruitful or should I say fertile. I don't remember what happened from minute to minute, but the most outstanding moment for me is the confession of being existentially afraid of one of the leaders. Of course this is about projections and of course I know how to integrate my projections, but I still need a surrounding that is safe enough to say out loud what is haunting me inside. To hear myself speak the words:

I am afraid of you and to be open to the answer:

Afraid of me? Why should you be afraid of me? I am the one who always is afraid, I feel like a little girl inside though I am big.

Write to be found

Okay, where did this answer lead me to? It made me aware of how I withdraw in the company of women who seem to know more about feelings, more about being mothers, more about pain,

women who do not identify with their power. And I seem to be one of them as I did not dare to say that I felt threatened by this answer. If she is afraid I must be guilty. I hoped I would be able to connect more easily during the conference with the women who facilitated and participated in this workshop.

It certainly made it easy for me to support the woman that was candidate for being the next president of the AAGT. It gave me joy when she was elected. Also because I am convinced that the organization does need more Women's Work, more Women's Authenticity and Empowerment the coming period. As I am a woman too I feel the urge to contribute what I have to offer in the form of writing. And I am hoping this text will set us women into motion to make more space for creative actions as in the workshop 'Voice Use in Social Process' by Susan Gregory.

In the program she tells:

'this is a didactic and experiential workshop in which we explore our speaking and singing voices.' Since years I have been fascinated by the work Susan does. Just now I read her article 'You must sing to be found' and it brought me to the realization, that the title for me could be 'You must write to be found'. Because I write I have a reason to exist and can trust to be found, also within the AAGT.

Afraid of the split

Women's Work. What is it? I am writing in a café in Amsterdam after talking with a woman, who is an ex client and ex student, and wonder about the work we did and do together. Now she is in the role of book editor with a philosophical degree and I am in the role of a writer. For me this is THE work I have and we have to do, as women with masculine minds.

Women who cherish their love relations, but relations are not number one in our lives. Work is. Women's work or is it better to call it feminine work as the other side of masculine.

If I am afraid of something it is of creating the split man – woman while writing, when in fact I am talking about feminine and masculine energies that belong both to women and men.

Masculine work, energy, power is goal aimed. It is more directed than feminine power that is more abstract and more open.

Masculine energy leads to study, science and doing business, feminine energy to being creative and full of care. To become a complete human being we need to develop both.

Sorry for the soldiers

Thinking of Women's Work that cannot be done by men I can only think of having babies and Men's Work I as a woman think of masculine work that is not for me, I see soldiers fighting on the battlefields. I feel deeply sorry for men who are obliged to kill other human beings, because they have to defend borders or attack dangerous dictators who suppress their people or protect women and children and other civilians.

Nevertheless I have a double feeling when it is about soldiers and arms and bombs and killing and being protected. How?

My father had to fight when the Nazi's occupied my country. He came back from the front with wrecked nerves and the knowledge that they did not have a chance. He never got over what he saw and experienced and disappeared in a psychiatric institution when I was 14.

First destruct

The Allied armies that liberated us, were our heroes. If they had not, the Nazi's would still be there maybe and make life hell. That is why I am deeply grateful. But my question is: did it have to happen? Did the Nazi's have to occupy most of Europe so we could be liberated? Or was there another possibility, a less violent one? I cannot deny that after the Big World War Disaster life became better in my country. As I have lived through this whole époque, I have seen with my own eyes how my country went from grey, cold, misery to yellow, bright and sparkling. Of course I learned from my Gestalt teachers that we have to destruct before we can construct. Both energies, both powers seem masculine to me and therefore probably more evident in men. But they are not in men only, they are also in women. Let's not be mistaken about that.

The game of life

Feminine work is about the opposite, it is about connecting, about caring for the victims, for the children, the disabled. Feminine

work is about keeping relations sound, it is daring to be crazy when in love, when passionate, when being creative. Feminine work is not logic. Feminine energy and power is about feeling, about intuition, about spirituality. Looking at the words I have written it is difficult not to judge. I rather connect and create than fight and destruct. I love to construct though. For a long time I was unconsciously jealous of men, because they seemed more respected, more valued, better paid than I am as a woman. But I did change. I am not jealous any more. I do not have the ambition to have The Power. I do long to be able to use my own power of course and I know I can only do this when I use my masculine energy and when I relate to men. No doubt about that. But it does not necessarily mean the Masculine Power is dominant.

In the end I am the one who decides if I live my life as a creative artist who uses her energy and strength to construct or not. And to do this I do need my masculine energy to participate in the game of life. As I want to belong I have to face the fact that the world challenges me to overcome my fear of not being seen by expressing my true feminine and masculine self.

And you? Do you think that only women can do women's work? Like only men can do men's work? Or do you agree with me because you know it is not really true. Nevertheless it is easier, more natural for women to do women's work and for men to do men's work, when we speak in general. Therefore THE question is: what is women's work supposed to be? Is it giving birth, caring for children, sick and disabled people, cleaning a house, listening to lonely souls, doing the secretary work of organizing, giving art lessons or being an artist, a spiritual teacher or a witch?

And what is men's work about? Fighting? Making money? Building? Calculating? Is giving love women's and men's work?

If you are a woman you can explore by writing down all the roles you play in life and wonder what they have to do with wo/men's work. If you are a man wonder about your own roles and what they have to do with being a man.

Questions to consider:

Am I a woman? Am I a man?

Do I identify with what and who I am?

Do I do women's work? Do I do men's work?

Am I valued for it? Am I seen in what I offer?

23. Conceptual and Situational Thinking

When I am deeply frustrated I search for answers in wise books.

Exciting though painful experience

Feeling shaky and in process because I am confronted with an exciting though painful experience. It started with an email of high praise by a Norwegian colleague regarding a book she bought at the conference, written by a Flemish Gestalt colleague, who for years was my supervisor.

Here I go again, authorities and the power they have over me. I am so tired of it but it took me a long time to let go of my anger regarding a review my ex supervisor in the scientific magazine of the Dutch EAGT about the first book I published. My anger is nourished by the fact that he refuses to communicate with me. As I said before: I hate being attacked and then ignored in my reactions.

What is the use of the eternal ‘talk’ about contact, communication, basic principles of Gestalt therapy, when authorities refuse to communicate with me in my role as a writer. Even deny me the space to let my voice be heard in ‘their’ magazine. Do I have to face the fact that I have written a book that is not Gestalt worthy? Can I better accept his judgement?

No, I cannot if I do not. I have written a book in which I used the story of my own life to test the theory of Gestalt and other views on life. It means that I am quite open in it, pretty sexual, angry, curious, passionate and loving. I told myself either you do it or you don’t and if you do you will have to cross borders and show your authentic face.

New insight

The joke is now that my frustration brought me a new insight. When I am deeply frustrated I search for answers in wise books. This time I decided to open ‘God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism’ by Abraham Joshua Heschel* and found haphazardly on page 5 the following words:

‘There are two types of thinking: one that deals with *concepts* and one that deals with *situations*. Conceptual thinking is an act of reasoning; situational thinking involves an inner experience; in uttering judgment about an issue, the person himself is under judgment. Conceptual thinking is adequate when we are engaged in an effort to enhance our knowledge about the world. Situational thinking is necessary when we are engaged in an effort to understand issues on which we stake our very existence.

(...)

The attitude of the conceptual thinker is one of detachment: the subject facing an independent object; the attitude of the situational thinker is one of concern: the subject realizing that he is involved in a situation that is in need of understanding. The beginning of situational thinking is not doubt, detachment but amazement, awe, involvement. The philosopher, accordingly, is a witness, not an accountant of other people’s business. Unless we are involved, the problem is not present. Unless we are in love or remember vividly what happened to us when we were in love, we are ignorant of love. Creative thinking is not stimulated by vicarious issues but by personal problems.’

Here I am

Here I am, all of a sudden I have a right to exist as a writer: I am a situational thinker, I do want to understand the situation I am in and I do want to know what I can do to make my world better. For me there is only one way and that is in following the command ‘Love thy neighbour fellows as thy love thyself’. It means I first have to love myself before I can love the other. And to know how to love myself I wrote the judged book. It gave me a possibility to ask attention for me, for my life, for who I am, for where I came from, for what I have to offer and for what I think and feel. I did not write then with this intention, I only know this looking backward.

In the Vondelpark

To give Poe and myself a good afternoon I went to the park that is full of life and where I can sit outside in a café looking at a pond, hearing children play, seeing people and dogs walk by, a place

where I can eat a simple bun with a croquette (Dutch specialty) and drink ice tea. I feel happy the sun is out once in a while for a few minutes. Poe enjoys himself with all the smells and the dogs and the children who want to stroke him. I am still in the process of differentiating between conceptual and situational thinking/writing. I have been wondering numerous times why I found it so difficult to read Gestalt magazines and Gestalt books. I kept it a secret, did not want to be judged by it or seen as stupid. Since yesterday I know why: conceptual thinking/writing is too detached from experiences for me. As an example I am thinking of the workshop about *Managing Conflict – Introducing the concept of Contempt* by Joe Melnick.

He gave a perfect example of men's work by his structure and systematic steps towards his aim. Quote from the program: 'After first describing 'conflict' from a Gestalt perspective, the concept of contempt will be looked at both theoretically and experientially. It is hypothesized that contempt plays a major role in our inability to bridge differences.' Of course the way he brought it, proved him to be right. But I am certain it is possible to look at the theme in at least ten different ways that are all right. What I missed was the experiential part that could have brought surprises.

Spiral

Going back to the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel, I read: 'Conceptual thinking is an act of reasoning; situational thinking involves an inner experience; in uttering judgement about an issue, the person himself is under judgment.'

True enough. As told above I found that out by for example publishing my first book. But by accepting this I can go further. I had to write this book to really know what Heschel is talking about, for I needed the experience to be able to understand what the meaning is. It is a spiral. I do things, experience things, write about them, am judged because I say things, experience what it is like to be judged, write about it like I am doing now and take the risk that I will be judged again. Only difference is that this time I am more prepared because I know there are two ways of thinking and at least two types of writing.

As I am a situational writer I do not feel seen when I am judged by a conceptual thinker. In my turn I judge conceptual writers/thinkers because I do not know what they are talking about because I did not experience it. I don't think that Heschel wants to say that one type is better than the other, but I do have a preference because situational writing suits me better.

About you. Do you know the experience of getting a present when you think you are being punished? Is it an idea to take a wise or a sacred or a poetry book from your shelf, open it at random and read out loud what is on the page before you. Ask yourself:

Is it about me? Do I know better? Am I in the same boat? Choose if you want to express yourself by writing, painting, dancing or sculpting. For the last possibility you need a piece of clay or stone or wood. If you take clay you give yourself the opportunity to feel the material while you let your hands do the work.

Chapters 24 – 27

*Back with the Jewish Arts Institute
and Chaos in Mokum*

24. Nevertheless...

What is art and what is Jewish exactly? I hope to find that out this week and to discover what it has to do with me.

Monday. Changing to English in the plane on my way to the Jewish Arts Institute*. *'Search the Truth and find it in yourself'* was the wisdom on a card I drew this morning.

Jewish art

I just reread an article by Danny Maseng* about Jewish art and Jewish artists. The part about being a Jewish artist is revealing: 'it is someone who is fighting with and praising God.' It is what I have been doing since I was a child in wartime. I just did not call it art, nor Jewish. For me it was and still is living life my way, although I don't call it fighting with God, I don't know any other way.

What makes Jewish art different from my way of living? I don't know for what is art and what is Jewish exactly? I hope to find that out this week and to discover what it has to do with me.

Who am I? A Goy? A Jew? Both? A mix of even more possibilities? If I am a Goyjew, the Goy part is not Jewish and the Jewish part is not Goyish. It would mean that I am a split person with a split personality. I am thinking of the important men in my life, who were or still are pretty unbalanced to say it mildly. And they are almost all mixed: Jewgoys, Goyjews! Jewish from father's or mother's side, what is the difference if it is about your soul and fighting with or praising God.

Tuesday. In my notebook: *Right time, right place.*
Nothing can go wrong, even if it goes wrong.

Written in the group:

Unheimisch

After the dance and the fantasy journey into the castle and into the cave, after being in the beautiful light, sunny flowery room with mirrors and windows that look onto juicy lawns and gardens full of flowers I went to this mysterious door that lead me together with my guide into the heart of the earth along slimy, muddy,

watery ways when I slipped away and felt *unheimisch* but knew somewhere in my mind that I would step out of it and find a new world.

I do find a new world or is it about the trust that I did not have to create it but that was there all by itself. It still is not easy to really really let it happen and present itself. My nature is so different, in my nature I am responsible, always, also for what I think, for what I create, for what I fantasize. But am I, isn't it so that things are presented to me from outside? Also? Inside and outside are one. I know this, but to live it is a different matter.

Did I create the still lake with the rowing boat or was the lake there already so I could find it? Is this important? Yes it is. Because if it is there anyway, I can release my responsibility and be open to whatever I will meet on my journey.

Right and Wrong

But the idea that there is a right and a wrong is still with me when I am in a group I am not leading myself. Funny we are invited to adept to the opposite: you decide what is right or wrong; not with your mind but with your whole body.

Unheimisch and more unheimisch is unheimischer.
ent – heimischt means NO Home.

Unheimisch: No Home.

Body is Home, not mind.

Mind is the protector of what is hidden inside the body that wants a home and is anxious about finding one.

Right or Wrong is still with me.

Home or No Home = Unheimisch

Mind is No Home

Body is Home, but Mind protects the treasure that is inside.

Body is home.

Right or Wrong is still in my body.

Unheimisch, No Home

Mind is misleading me as a protector

Body knows, body is home.

Evening

I don't know what to write. Why write anyway?

I wrote in my other notebook but this writing is for me only.

Am I as in love as last time? No of course not.
There is only one first time.

Wednesday

You are never given an obstacle you cannot overcome, says rabbi Nachman of Breslov, in the Empty Chair – Finding Hope and Joy, Timeless Wisdom from a Hasidic Master, so do it and speak, my darling, I tell myself.*

Right or Wrong

On the border of the lake, reflecting on Right or Wrong. Right place, right people, wrong place, wrong people? Anything is possible. I can live my projections here and that is a big chance. I have to realize that I am 71, lived a long time and have things to offer, nobody knows they exist. Well nobody is a lot, come on Tine, don't beat about the bush, but explore your projections on the teacher. He is the reason you are here and you know he sees you. They all see you, isn't that enough? You are being seen, you are approved of, whether by your clothes or your presence, it makes no difference. Ask yourself what makes you angry or sad, what is your longing and what do you recognize?

Shy or arrogant?

It is about my shyness that hides my arrogance, as my arrogance hides my shyness. And that is why I don't get to the core and meet. I do take the trainer seriously in his being an artist, but something is keeping him from becoming a real teacher. It is what I recognize of course. When he sings he shows his inside out, like I do when I write or am a therapist! Can I invite him, tell him I long to connect, ask him, inspire him and stimulate him so I will be inspired and stimulated myself? Listen and follow your intuition!

Thursday

Playing and dancing with words already written:

New World?

When I slipped away in the slimy, muddy, watery ways
my mind knew I would step out into a new world

Is it a new world I have to create or is it about the trust
that it would be there all by itself?

It is not easy to let it happen all by itself

My nature is so different; my nature tells me I am responsible
ALWAYS
Also for what I think, for what I create,
for what I fantasize. But am I?
Isn't it so that things are presented to me from outside ALSO
Inside and outside are one, I know this
But to live it is a different matter
Am I responsible for the still lake
I saw in the meditation
Did I create IT; or was the lake with the rowing boat there already;
so I could find it?

Is this important? Yes, it is! If it is there anyway
I can release my responsibility and be open to whatever I will meet
on my journey;
the idea of right and wrong is still with me
If I am with authorities who look at me
Men who know, men who judge
Women who feel, women who connect
I am invited to do (adapt to) the opposite
I have to decide what is right or wrong
Not with my Mind, but with my whole Body

Friday

Etty Hillesum

We are all invited to identify with a Jewish hero.
I walk around in the group like Etty Hillesum*, who was a Dutch
Jewish woman in her twenties, living in Amsterdam during WOII,
writing diaries, expecting her deportation, although she was in a
position that she could get out. But she did not, she decided her
people needed her and went with them to camp Westerbork where
all the Dutch Jews were brought before they were transported
further.

Back home typing my notes out I did some research: When she
was 29. March 9, 1941 Etty is fighting with the longing in her body
for her therapist and writes in her diary: *'There I was, with my
'Seelische Verstopfung'. And he would bring some order to my inner chaos and*

gain control over the inner in me. He took me by my little hand and said: 'look, that's the way you should live'

About a week later March 17, she is transforming: *'Suddenly everything is changed, by what kind of inner process I don't know. But it is different. (.....) A thousand oppressive fetters are shaken off. Now freely I do breath. I feel strong and with resplendent eyes I look around. I've stopped wanting to possess. I am free. Now I possess everything. My inner wealth is immeasurable.'*

These changes were the result of her mystical practices that she initiated during these spring months of 1941. She had begun to meditate every day: June 8, 1941: *'I believe I should better do it: 'fall inward' in the morning before I go to work, for half an hour. To listen to what's inside of me. 'Sich versenken'. You can also call it meditation. But that word still gives me the creeps. (...) Let this be the goal of meditation: to become like a wide open space, without that sneaky brushwood taking away your vista. That something like 'God' can enter, just like there is something of 'God' in the Ninth of Beethoven.'*

Wikipeda

The comment on internet in Wikipeda: *'It is still very hard for her not to be disturbed by her fears and her worries, but more and more the witness gains control over her consciousness. In the course of the book the personal Etty steps more and more aside. We notice a more universal onlooker emerging and a more detached way of registering her inner and outer life. She now begins to feel like she is more of an instrument in God's hands. That God has chosen her to be a 'battlefield' where all the big questions of her time could find a place to fight and come to rest.'*

Identifying with this woman is crossing a holy border for the seeker in me. She touches me so deeply. Still I did it then and wrote when I was asked to write a letter in my heroines name:

Dear rabbi,

I need to write to you, because I am a woman with a complete sexual body and a spiritual soul that are fighting together for the first place. Who is going to win I don't know. I wish it is my soul, but I know that my sexuality is demanding to take care of it, feed

it, take it seriously, live it and above all enjoy it. My soul is telling me a different matter, my soul is telling me that I should not love exclusively but should use my sensuality for the love of all people. This means I have to transform it into subtle energy that flows through me, radiates me and flickers love.

My struggle is, dear rabbi, that I am a sexual woman and do have the feeling that God does not want me to enjoy it, because it is not done, it is not what a good Jewish girl should do. Nevertheless my head or is it my body is occupied with the obsession of the man that sets me on fire and I cannot reach. And now I am faced with the extermination of my people I can do only one thing and that is be with them and trust that another world is waiting for us where even sexuality can be enjoyed without feeling guilty because it is not exclusive.

Yours entirely,
Etty

While typing this out back in Amsterdam I feel tears and a laugh welling up in me. When I read this out loud still being with the Jewish Arts Institute the teacher became fascinated by the 'Nevertheless' in it and started teasing me. When I met him in the dining room or anywhere else he just whispered or stated: 'Nevertheless...' Yes, I think now, nevertheless, I am a sexual woman just like Etty, who longed to connect with her soul and with the world and nevertheless was brought to Auschwitz and to death.

How does it feel for you to read about being taken seriously in the longing to connect. Do you recognize the need? Do you recognize the sexuality behind the longing and the shame and the judgement that comes with it? Imagine your own hero or heroine you would like to identify with. Write an I story as if you were her or him and read it out loud, if possible to someone else.

25. Meaning or no meaning

It is about belonging, having a home, a spiritual home

Spiritual community

It is Friday and I am still in Elat Chayyim*, wondering what is so special in being here. The air is not different. The weather is very much like what I am used to, maybe even more unpredictable (for me?), because we are in the country here and I live in a city. The people? Are they different? Yes, they are Americans and they are Jewish. Does that make them really different from what I am used to? Yes, because the people here are not only Jewish they are committed to Judaism and that gives them an extra dimension I as a Goy cannot find or meet in my own country.

It is about belonging, having a home, a spiritual home that makes it more than the spirituality I did meet. I am thinking of the spirituality I found in New Age groups, where I missed the connection with a community.

The intention of the teachers

Afternoon, 4.30 PM Nearing the end, that is to say, nearing Shabbat. Women are going to the mikvah (ritual bath), men afterwards. And I am reflecting on whatever I came to do here. On what I did and what it means to me. For one thing I am confirmed in the way I work, for I can professionally relate to the way the teachers here work.

But there are one or two big differences:

my intention is different, my intention is to be a facilitator who leads the group members to their own creativity.

Here I wonder about the intention of the teachers.

All three good professionals, they teach me ways to play that are good for me ways to dance that suit me and at the same time stop me to follow my own path and fall my own bumps, stop me to find out what is going on with me, what drives me, what triggers me, what vibrates me.

Live up to expectations

For me it is not good enough to make contact in passing by. I need time to connect, time to feel what is living in me. In fact time to listen to whatever my soul has to tell me. I still have a chance to connect. I still can refuse to say: I feel good, when indeed I do not. I should have the courage to be a woman who is critical with what is offered to her. I could stop pleasing the teacher and myself, by realizing I don't just live up to my own expectations by telling myself that everything is as it should be, that I am as happy as I was the first time, because I am not and of course that is normal, it would have been strange if this amorous feeling had come back just like that. Time for being amorous is over.

Now it is time for the next phase that will lead to my own leadership that is strong and capable enough to do my own thing. The only thing I cannot do is sing like the teacher, but that does not have to be a problem as I am not him, I am Tine and that means I have to sing like Tine, not like him. Only thing I have to accomplish, is to sit and sing myself, no more, no less. And if it is about creative writing and theatre, I am okay, I got it. I do not doubt that, I just have to do it.

Network

Next part is about this Jewish project with expectations and dreams of becoming a Jewish artists network. I am worried that the dream – or my expectations of it when I read the website – will not come true, because there is no oil that connects us, except the Jewish oil? Question mark.

And then I am faced with the fact that I lack that kind of oil in me, because I cannot identify that way with being Jewish. If I have a drop of Jewish blood in my veins or a Jewish soul or a Jewish undercurrent, I won't be able to bring it out into the open by being in this group, because in this group my search is no item, they have it already. Or do they?

I should have

Things are becoming clear, falling into place. I am thinking of the rehearsal for the Shabbat this morning. I should have said that I did not feel I was taken seriously. For how can they know if I don't open my mouth? Rhetorical question. They can't know for certain, although they can suppose it is that way. The trouble is

that I don't feel invited to open up, except that one night when it was about Israel and being Jewish or not Jewish, about the frustrations, the fear, the togetherness and search to do it right.

Missing contact

Please, utter your critic on paper, I tell myself, so you will not take it home with you. Utter it on paper to transform it into nourishment for who needs it. You? The leaders? The group? Will it stimulate the teachers to go on? I hope so, I do think they are doing a special and good job. My critic is that I am missing contact with the teachers, that I feel like someone who is there just to consume and follow.

I feel myself becoming angry, because I feel patronized and did not expect this as this program was meant for teachers. Did I have to come all this way, just to find out that the truth is in me, that I have a special gift in the form of the courage to confront people, so we both can step out of our isolation, out of our role patron and into social human beings, who are willing to invest in making contact and connecting with the Unknown.

Yes, I did have to come all the way, to do this myself!

Do you recognize the longing to belong to a group, a family, a club, a religion, a church? Or hating to belong because you do not feel at home in the group you are supposed to belong to? The question is: do you really want to belong without restriction or are you waiting to be invited so you can say yes or no?

26. Chosen

I told him how important listening to his course is for me and felt he looked at me with impatience.

Groupie

On a terrace in New York, not out in the street but in Bryant park close to Times Square. I am tired and digesting the week I had in Elat Chayyim. I met the rabbi of the Mystical Kabbalah*, I often enjoy listening to on Friday night. I wonder about him.

I told him how important listening to his course is for me and felt he looked at me with impatience. Am I in his eyes another of those demanding or worshipping women who want to touch him or come in some way into contact with him?

Or was he busy with something else, nothing to do with me? I felt disappointed, irritated. Looking at him helps me to dismantle my projections on the holy or sacred or spiritual rabbi that has found the right way and cannot be beaten, but is difficult to communicate with on a human level. It also confronts me with my being a fan, a groupie, a follower, a worshipper?

Am I stupid? Isn't it time to give up staring with open mouth at icons who cannot be reached, but do something that evokes my admiration? The best example is the singing teacher, who is of course the man who set me on fire when I listened to his concerts in Amsterdam. He gave me the energy and the courage to follow him so I could learn from him and be with him.

I must say I can congratulate myself because I did it and yet did not fall into the trap of expecting he would think me more special. It is not clear for me though how important he is in the story of my life. I think pretty important, for he forces me to step out of the personal stuff and move into more sacred areas. It is his singing that does it, his being - what I call - tuned into the big Whole. If I ever solve my Jewish quest it will be also thanks to his radiance and support. I just have to face the fact that I needed him to step out of the little girl still longing for a father who knows and

who can protect me, into the grown up woman who has her own comforting mother and strong father inside her.

Once in a lifetime

The connection between him and me can only be fertile if I also step out of the yearning woman who is dependent on the confirmation of men I am attracted to. Still or 'Nevertheless' I am attracted to this singing master and I better accept this to enjoy the fact that my body is still alive if the right man comes along.

'Only once in a lifetime you meet a man like him', according to the dancing teacher. That is quite extraordinary to say and it makes me realize that I am not the only one who feels and experiences his attraction. Were we – as his students - all projecting our happiness onto this charismatic man that – when he sings – seems almost sacred but is nevertheless a human being.

This brings me to the difference between love and Love. Love with a capital L is not the same as the love in a one to one love relation. Capital L is beyond that and it reminds me of the Sabbath when according to the Jewish beliefs on Saturday afternoon the feminine and the masculine meet and become one.

True dynamite

Last night I was half awake and experienced this immense deep longing in my body. Now I write this down I immediately feel shame rising up in me. Instead of embracing my sexuality that is still alive and be grateful, I sort of somehow feel I shouldn't be so needy; I should be self supporting. But am I needy? And am I not self supporting when I feel this attraction?

If I think my longing should be answered to have a right to exist I am not free. And I am self supporting and free when I am able to enjoy it and say: I am who I am, I am a woman with a longing body and a longing soul for that matter and I am enjoying it and I am proud of it. It is how I am built, how I am created and meant to be. My sexuality has been true dynamite all my life; it has been guiding me to enjoyment and also to deep pains as is normal. The one cannot do without the other. The main need and longing behind it, I believe, is to be seen and heard as I am. And to see and hear the other as s/he is and be willing to connect. Not easy.

It is not something absolute, it can only be done again and again and it does not last much longer than a few seconds.

Make the connection

It brings me to the undercurrent where I recognize the spiritual beings we are when we sing, write, draw, paint, dance. How about me? How spiritual and charismatic am I? When I lead a group and do my work I experience the Divine Power to guide me. With the Jewish Arts Institute, being in the group, not leading, it felt differently. I am so glad that instead of being angry and complaining because I was not able to make the connection, I can write about the undercurrent. I know there were many moments in this workshop when I did feel contact with eyes, with words, with bodies. Not only with the teachers, even more with the members of the group. I create my own suffering if I want to be the chosen one in any group.

Even if I was, maybe for a second, being the chosen one cannot last. It cannot be absolute when it is about people, as we all long to be the one and only. So what is 'being chosen' about? Chosen to do what? And if we are all chosen – maybe - at different moments can this give us the energy to connect and feel that we belong together? This is an awesome idea. We could all exist beside each other without having to hurt each other because we don't have a reason to be jealous.

Too shy or too proud

Well, okay but I still would like to know how it is for the teacher to be so charismatic. How is it for him to set women like me on fire without having the means to answer it. Or is it enough for him and for me and for the others to connect in the singing, in the music making because then we know we are all chosen and able to give and receive? I came from far and got exactly what I longed for: I was seen, admired, teased, made contact with, I could use my humour and was too shy to really receive it without fear of losing. Too shy or too proud to be certain that the attention I got was genuine. At the same time I was too shy and too proud to say out loud how happy I was with the nourishment offered in this workshop by all three teachers. The fear of not being good enough was still reigning. Just imagine that I just imagined being seen and

heard and loved, just imagine, wouldn't that be stupid? And even more stupid: just imagine I express my happiness and gratitude in all its splendour and am not received? Who am I then?

Queen size bed

While writing I am still sitting on this terrace in Bryant park and feel tired. I want to know if Holland is still in the European soccer Championships. I had a delicious salad with shrimps and mango dressing. Sitting here in the heart of New York writing, is what I came for and only now I am drawn to the beauty around me. The lights, the trees, the people, the summer night in the warm darkness. I look at a screen and see a cross. Oh, it is gone now. Nevertheless I am in a beautiful spot and want to stay here, but I am thinking of this enormous Queen size bed in the Comfort Hotel. I need badly to get a good sleep. Something I lacked this week, because my bed was no good, my roommate snored from time to time. (Sorry, J. to mention this, I love you all the same, I more than enjoyed being with you, talking with you, waking up together and sharing the first words) I often lay half awake thinking, being, longing, wondering, not able to go back to sleep. Yes, for a few hours but then it was over.

American dream

Next morning having a fruit breakfast somewhere on Broadway. Thinking about my place in the world. I have this profound feeling, that I could live here in New York without any doubt whatsoever. This city is alive in a way that suits me. Why? People are moving at a pace that is my pace. They are going to places that are my places. They talk in a way, I like to talk. They sit in café's like I do. This does not sound spectacular but it is in its simplicity. I know if I lived here, I could do the right things, right because they are good for me. Amsterdam is good for me, New York is better. That is an astounding discovery. Why would New York be better? Because I could explore more about Judaism, explore more about Gestalt, explore the theatre world, explore being a woman on her own in a big city. I can feel my stomach. Is it yearning, is my soul telling me: you are on a right but painful track? What I do know is that my mind is getting busy now, telling me that I could do it if I wanted.

Exchange apartments

Just exchange apartments for sometime and get on with my life. Immediately my cats and Poe are coming into my focus. Don't leave us behind, don't leave us alone! Poe I could take with me. Okay, let's live my dream on paper, pretending it can be real. And my age? I don't know. For one thing it could be the perfect place to write the book I want to write or am writing already. How about money? I would need a license to have a practice, unless I am going to offer art instead of therapy? Art, writing, playing in a group, not to perform but to enjoy who we are as human beings. Not to be seen, but to experience. Not to be heard, but to find our voices.

Back to reality

Okay, nice idea, back to reality now! You are working in Amsterdam with an international group. It already brings you a taste of the international honey. Could be enough, just experience! Don't run too fast.

A hole in the ground

3.40 PM Kennedy Airport

After an enormous almost uneatable Turkey melted Swiss cheese sandwich and a berry orange smoothy, I can hardly move nor breath. I am ready to go home and back to Poe, the cats the garden, my clients, my book. Just wondering what I can write these last hours on American ground. I am thinking of Aliza who was born in occupied Holland in 1943 and hidden in a hole in the ground as a baby until she was two. I can hardly imagine what this really means. The hole was near a place that starts with a V. I know a hole where Jews and also children were hidden in the woods near she was hidden in, it would be a magical meeting we had.

Aliza who is a medical doctor is going to be ordained as a rabbi to attend to dying people. It seems we did not meet by chance. We had to get into contact. Aliza suggested: you must be a descendent of *converso's*, as mentioned before Spanish exterminated Jews who converted on the outside but not on the inside. A lot of them returned to Judaism when they realized they were not in their own

faith and maybe some did not. I should find out more about them. Still, facts are one thing, process is another matter and we need process before we can go to meaning!

What did I learn from this group of Jewish people, who all walk a Jewish path. Can I, just as they do, fight with and praise God?

Fight with and praise God or Love? Do you? Can you? Did you learn how to do it? Were you brought up in an environment where this attitude to God was normal?

Writing to Write

27. Chaos as part of the Mystery of the Universe

*Haleluyah in pre War Mookum**

Writing from the Void

Writing to write, no other purpose, just to be who and what I am: a writer. Writing from the Void. I am nothing this moment. I am not angry, not happy, not longing, I just am. I sit and listen to Hebrew songs while typing those words. I sit and drink coffee and chew on a raisin and nut sandwich and type. That's it.

Beside me a spinning cat who is waiting for a piece of the ham that is on my sandwich. Today is Sunday. I could go to this big magazine the 'Bijenkorf = Beehive' where there is a huge sale. I can buy for next to nothing clothes, gadgets, linen, watches, jewels, no matter what, they have it and on this day for extra special low prices as I have customer card. Privileged as I am I should go and buy. I will be sorry, tomorrow my chance is gone.

Tomorrow there will be chaos in the shop after four crazy days of cheap offers.

The message is in my head. Why don't you join this army of buyers. It is fun, you can compete, snatch chances away from other privileged customers.

Okay, if you think that is fun, you do it, but I am in a different mood. Although we are in the same body. we don't always agree. Today I have to write. The cards tell me I will open an enormous energy source if I do. And I believe the cards, the cards are my connection with the cosmos.

My God, what do you mean: your connection with the cosmos? You really think you can just draw a card get a Yes or a No and you will know what way to turn, what choices to made, who to believe, who to love?

Yes, I do, I cannot deny that any more. The cards, the books, wise words that come up in turn are my teachers. Well, I might as well go to sleep then for a while, you bore me. I want to go out and play and meet people and laugh, have fun so to say.

You are a pain in my ass. You are so afraid to be bored, that you are always busy filling up the gaps, the empty spaces. Just imagine what would happen if you were bored to death.

Singing in the pre War synagogue

Well, being bored to death is not exactly something I am looking forward to. I want to live, do what I have to do, there is so much to do and enjoy. I want to go out and listen to an orchestra playing, see the true paintings this city is full with, go out and have lunch in a trendy place with creative healthy tasty food.

I want to smell the air of autumn, I want to see the leaves of the plane-trees turning brown, fall down and die on the pavement together with branches the wind has broken off.

I want to walk with my dog and feel that I am one with the city, one with the universe. Okay, enough of this.

My God, you are someone whose fantasy goes far. What do you mean, be one with the universe? You blow yourself to a size you cannot fit.

Be modest, be happy with me and my cards and the little messages I get that guide me.

What are you trying to tell me? You mean I have to settle down and sit here while you type. Sit here and listen to the singing you put on now of the pre World War II rabbi's, singing in the synagogue in Mokum*? Listen and feel the pain of the past, because none of them survived the death camps You want me to sit here while it is raining outside and listen to them singing Haleluyah Halelu El Bekodsho which means Praise the Lord, Praise God in his sanctuary; praise Him in the sky, His fortress. (Psalm 150 1-6).

Just for one hour

Yes, that is what I want you to do. Not just listen to it, but feel what it does with you. Feel how it is to hear also the coughing of the people who were with them then in the synagogue. Not all afternoon just for one hour and then we go out to walk with Poe in the rain to the park.

And this whole hour you will write no matter what?

Yes, that is my structure. Write for one more hour just to see what comes out of me.

If that is the deal, that is the deal. Do you want me to keep silent, or can I interrupt?

No matter what I tell you, you will always interrupt me. But that is all right. You are me too, we are not separate, I need your voice to go on.

Interesting. What are you going to write about?

I am still busy with those singing rabbi's who move me to my core. I wonder what they exactly do with me and with you. Why did I decide I wanted to listen to them now? I bought the cd's and the book that goes with it because I thought it would make a nice present.

A present? For whom? Why not for you?

I thought it would be nice for D. as he is a singer and he can understand what they are singing. I just thought it would be special for him to listen to those voices from old Amsterdam.

But when I went to his course I did not take it with me. I could not. Too precious.

You make me curious. Precious? For you?

Yes, this is about our pre war city. You and I were there already. We were babies, small kids, but we were there. It is possible we heard them. We are witnesses of a world that has disappeared.

Vulnerable

Now seventy or so years later there are still rabbi's singing in synagogues in this city, but it is different. At least in my ears. I don't even dare to go and listen, because they are too vulnerable. Oh my God, I cannot follow you, sometimes I think you make things up, you fantasise.

How do you know they are or they feel vulnerable?

I don't know, I just think so from my perspective. I am afraid they are, I find it difficult to listen.

You don't have to listen, you are not even allowed in the synagogue, you are a Goy.

Am I? Are you certain?

Yes, I am certain, you have no Jewish parents, no Jewish grandparents, no Jewish whatever.

That is true. You have a point.

Nevertheless I feel the singing of those dead Jews in my veins.

Holy, holy

Now they sing about Sheva Berakhot (Seven Benedictions). I read in the booklet:

'Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Blessed are You, O Lord, who has created all things for Your glory

Blessed are You Creator of man

Blessed are You who has formed man in Your likeness of Your image

Blessed are You who causes Zion to rejoice in her children

Blessed are You who gladdens the bridegroom and bride

Blessed are You Creator of joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride,

happiness, delight, mirth, and gladness,

love and friendship, peace and fellowship.

Grant Speedily, O Lord, our God, that there be heard in the cities (...) the sound of joy and of young people singing.'

It is beautiful what they sing, although it is very holy, holy and they were not young. I am glad I did not turn you down.

Well, you are right, as always, I get bored if it is too much about heaven and not about what we do here on earth.

Still you agree with me that the words are about what you and I long for. If we sing, the world becomes better.

Why don't you sing then? It is the only thing you can do.

I need you to sing with me, without you I cannot do a damned thing. And you are always ashamed, always afraid that you don't sing good enough.

Now you got me. Yes, I have my restrictions. I am not going to make a fool of me. I want to be respected.

I know, I don't blame you, I am longing for respect too. And beside that I want people to love me and I am afraid they won't if I act like I am a child.

I am getting so tired of you. Again and again and again this fear that you are not taken seriously. How about this writing. How serious is this. I know you want to tell me something.

Yes, I am telling you to trust, everything has already been created.

Nothing has been neglected.

You have been created, you are here, you have all the talents in the world. You only have to use them, enjoy them, be proud of them.

I am confused. Who is talking. Is it you or is it me or did we become one? What do the rabbi's sing now? They sound joyful. They probably know the answer:

Dos Yidish Lid.

*The Jew may be poor but still he is very rich
because he has many spiritual treasures.*

*The Jew is patient,
his confidence is solid;
out of a burning oven he comes alive.*

How about that? They knew it, even before the war, they sang it. Can you and I agree that this is truth, that we had to listen this full hour to them to learn. Even though you and I are Goys we are rich because we have spiritual treasures that were maybe at first for the Jews only but as Jews sing and write and laugh and cannot keep their mouths shut we know about it and can make it ours. The hour is over. Let's go out, enjoy the rainy autumn and sing our Goy song. Thanks, to the Lord who blessed the Jews who in their turn made the Goys aware of their own heritage.

The powerlessness of mighty men

Later that same day.

The cat sits before my laptop. I can hardly type.

Still I want to type, have to type, promised myself to type, although I feel lazy and it is late. Looked at the film the House of the Spirits after the book of Isabel Allende. Never saw so clear the hate revenge circle coming into action. Suppress to gain power, evoke humiliation upon humiliation and hate is the answer. Some day hate has to come out and find its bloody way. An example of women paying the price for what they did not do.

Women and children being the victim of the powerlessness of the mighty men. Women who forgive the brutality of their husbands because they did not do it out of malice. They love them anyway, although they violate their love. Is that realistic?

Again this question: why don't we women stop this kind of men? Why don't we at least try?

What is my role?

Although this film is about Chili, it is not so far from by bed. Yesterday I looked at a documentary about the Russians in Tetsjenia en Anna Politkovskaja who was murdered, because she wrote the truth about what happened during this invasion and occupation in the paper. I cannot and I will not follow. I don't want to believe this is possible. Yesterday I saw real images of the Russian soldiers molesting people, today I saw a film version of the atrocities in Chili, before and after the Allende coup. Men, soldiers, interrogating violently a woman. Nauseating and much more than that. What is happening in Georgia now? In Ukraine there will be elections again. I have been so close. Can't help it, it happens everywhere. What is my role in this Whole? I look at it and wonder. I look at it and feel the pain. Still there are no innocent people, I am not innocent. Even the mothers and children are 'guilty', because they love their sons, they need their fathers who make war or make peace with the same result. Poor men, it does not make them any happier, why don't they go on a strike? Do they think they do their duty? Do they believe they protect their wives and children, while in fact they make life more and more dangerous for them.

And now we have the economical crisis that is threatening us. Recession! I can't help thinking, that some recession could do us good because we will need one another again. But that is me and if I am the only one that thinks this way it is no use, we will just be miserable because the papers and the tv tell us to be so.

This piece of writing brings me to ask you as a reader do you feel you are just a victim or do you know you are more than that? How is it to realize that every victim has a prosecutor and a saviour in itself, who make the power triangle we function in complete? See if you can write or draw from all three perspectives, starting with I am a victim, I am a saviour, I am a prosecutor or an offender.

Chapters 28-30

*The beginning of
an International Writing Group*

28. The Power of Spontaneous Writing

By writing spontaneously we will explore:

- our awareness in the Here and Now
- our anxieties in the light of our daily realities
- childhood memories that condition our life stories
- dreams and plans for our futures
- disappointments, anger, obsessions
- our longings for love and for our other half
- whatever other topic that needs our attention

Not your head but your hand will do the work if you keep it moving, don't worry about spelling, grammar, punctuation
Your writing does not have to be logical
Go for the unknown, take risks and

Write Your Own Ongoing Life Story

By writing you will get to know yourself better,
become more authentic and autonomous,
learn to stand on your own feet and become who you are instead
of who you thought you should be.
We will read out loud the words we have written, listen to each
other, give feedback and get to know each other better.

One day in autumn I got the idea of giving 'Power of Spontaneous Writing' workshops for English speaking people living in Amsterdam.

International Community

I love to communicate with this international community. Am always curious what they are doing in my city and if they feel at home or not. So yes, why? So no, why not?

I organized the workshops together with the American Book Centre that has a special building where workshops can be given and exhibitions can be held. It is one of these places in the city where art and spirituality meet. On the introduction night seven

people arrived. They came from England, the USA, Spain, Israel and the Netherlands.

I felt nervous, was afraid they would expect me to be perfect in English and a perfect teacher. But the moment I started talking to them and told what my intention with the group was, I felt their attention and relaxed. No reason to worry, as long as I was truly present and interested in who they were and what they wrote.

Guided meditation

I led them into a guided meditation, giving them time to find out what made them come to this introduction and then wrote myself: 'I am Tine, I am from Amsterdam, I am born in this city on the rivers Amstel and Y and I feel myself part of it. It means that I feel a sort of responsibility for how the city presents itself to you. I want you to feel welcome and wonder how welcome my city makes you feel. How happy are you here? I also wonder about the reasons why you came. Did you have to? Did you choose to and now that you are here do you feel part of this city too?'

Can you experience that you are also a part of this city, that you co-create with me and all the other people who live here?

It is an exciting idea in my eyes.

How about enriching the city with our words to begin with. Now I become shy, I don't want to give you the feeling that I think you should do... a lot of things. So I will stick to my love for Amsterdam.

I like to share with you that Amsterdam smells the way I like it. Stupid words? What about the smell of Amsterdam? I detest the smell of the coffee shop blowers, I must confess. Still it is Amsterdam. The smell of Amsterdam enters my nose and makes me walk upright as I follow my nose everywhere.

What about the sound of Amsterdam?

Yes, the sounds, that is even more bringing me home. The sounds of Amsterdam are the sounds of people rehearsing a play as I hear above my head now or the sounds of the people who are now talking outside in the street, while they are having a drink on the sidewalk. And most of all it is the sound that has to do with the music I hear everywhere if I choose to listen.'

Body awareness

One hour later after listening to each other's stories
I lead them into an experiment to give our bodies a voice:
'The words of my toe
I toe I am pleased with this night.
I am pleased because you did not force me to walk on me with
your whole body.
Very relaxed I must say.
So whatever will come of this will be okay.
I toe am with you, playing the game of love to write.
As a toe I cannot, although maybe I could.
I am a little jealous of you hand who can do the work.
But don't forget that I as a toe am the one who keeps you in
balance and can bring you where you need to be.
Again and again.
Keep toeing and you will be happy to go on with this work'

The start of the course

A few weeks later we started nine evenings in a row.
Three women decided to experiment with me.
The theme of this first evening turned out to be our bodies:

'Obedient body

Now here in the small room with three other women,
I feel I am in the right place.
It is exciting for me to do this work.
While I write, I think, this is rather cliché, you promised to surprise
yourself and them and now you write those words that do not add
anything new.
Yes, true enough, but I need time to enter this process.
I need time to feel free and let my pen go.
I need time and that is why I have to start with words that are not
too confronting for me.
In the back of my head is this nagging thought:
am I clear enough, am I inspiring enough and by writing this down
I relax. Okay, I am who I am and you body are still serving me as
if I were a queen.

You are a good obedient body, that guards my feelings, gives them a home so they can be safe until the outside world is ready to receive them.

Hey body, I want to give you a tribute.

You have been serving me for over 71 years now and I always take you for granted.

Now I realize it is time to take you more and more seriously.

The older I become the more I need your service.

As long as you function, I can function, as long as you breathe, eat, walk, jump, dance, listen, smell, taste, chew, write, I can be as complete a human being as I can be.

When you refuse to walk, or to eat or to look,

I would be compelled to restrict myself and live in a world that is too small or too frightening to be open to.

Still I know that one day my world will be more and more inside you. I know that the travel inside is the real journey I have to make. Of course I have made little trips into you and I did discover the treasures you are hiding.

I have been gold digging in you and found real...

I don't know the word. What did I find? What are you hiding? I know it is very subtle material, has to do with ether. Could be paradise. Still I hesitate. I rather look around me at the beauty of the outside world, the beauty of the three women around me who are as busy writing as I am. Bringing your or my inside out, is that what we are doing now?

And how can I bring the inside out if I don't have a hand to write, eyes to see, brains to think.

Oh body, inside and out, you are me or am I you.

Why should I look at you as if you are separate from me? I am you and you are me.

Together we can connect with the world inside and out.'

How about your body? Do you work with it? Do you listen to it? Do you realize your soul can speak to you by giving bodily signals? Time to become aware of your body by sitting upright, feeling your feet on the ground and directing your attention to your breathing. After a few minutes you spread your attention to your whole body, wondering where there is tension, pain, excitement. Choose a part of your body you want to give a voice by saying softly in yourself I head or I mouth or I knee, I...etcetera.

Whenever you wonder about tension or pain, you can take time and find your own answers by writing down I stomach or I eye and let your stomach or your eye tell his or her story.

Questions that can support you:

Am I or do I have a body?

Am I patient or impatient when it is about body?

29. Write about Religion

*The school with the Bible was quite easy to reach,
for the public school I had to cross a dangerous road.*

Opening a book at random

Session two of the Power of Writing, a week later. As I was fascinated by writer Natalie Goldberg* I had just bought her 'Old Friend From Far Away' and decided to let it guide us by opening it at random. Write about Religion Natalie told us and we did. Mary about her catholic youth in Ireland, Sara about her protestant American background and Marlous about her Calvinistic upbringing in the Netherlands and I wrote:

Dilemma

'Write about religion. I am born without a religion, that is to say my family did not believe in God (anymore) or in the church. Either one or both. My grandfather and grandmother from father's side came from very religious black stockings villages and I think their family and they left because the morals were too strenuous, too rigid, too loveless. My mother came from a family that already in 1600 was in Amsterdam. Religion played a part, but I am not certain which one. Catholic? Protestant?

Anyway, I was the first child of the next generation and they decided not to baptise me.

When I was three I wanted to go to kindergarten with my girlfriend who was a few months older.

Dilemma: did they send me to a school with the Bible or to a public school? The school with the Bible was quite easy to reach, for the public school I had to cross a dangerous road.

I wanted to pray

So I was sent to the God school where my girlfriend was. I don't know how long it took but God and the stories of the Bible became my main interest. As the only member of the family I wanted to pray before eating and before going to sleep. I wanted to hear and read the Bible stories, because I felt more safe with the

idea that God was seeing me. When I was three World War II started and my world became so unsafe, that I was constantly prepared for death. At least that is what I think now. Of course I was a little older when I talked every evening to God. Told him my thoughts, worries, told him about my father who had to go to hospital often because his nerves were wrecked when he came back from the fighting with the Germans that started the occupation.

Fear to disappear

My parents did not like my being so religious, but they did not say anything about it. They just let me pray and kept silent before we started eating. I have been rather alone as a child with my feelings for God. I wonder now what I wanted from God. What did believing in God really mean for me?

Later I have often thought that God replaced my father as a safety source. God was someone who knows. My father and even my wise grandfather did not seem to know how to make me feel safe in dangerous times. Is religion about safety, about not getting lost? It looks like it for me.

My fear to disappear one way or another is big.

My fear of death has always been with me as a big monster until I found, forty years later, meditation and learned to be in the Here and Now:

If I am aware and in the moment I feel connected and do not worry about getting lost.

If I feel separate my entire fantasy is about disappearing.

Trust

Now I am stuck. I don't know what to write anymore.

I am too occupied with the longing to write a good story, with giving food for the mind. I tell myself that this subject is too vast, I cannot grab it in a few pages. Back to the now and realising that then I was maybe a religious child, but I am not a religious person now. I am spiritual, yes, I believe in a Divine Power, yes. I believe I too have Divine Power I can use to co-create or I can just deny.

Can I call what I am doing here spiritual? Or religious? The fact that I dare to let my pen do the work by putting words on paper I cannot control, shows my trust in the working of this Divine

Power that must be good willing otherwise it could destroy what is precious. Trust is for me the most outstanding quality. It is not easy for me to trust and because it is not easy, it is surprising that I do trust invisible Divine Powers that in my idea rule the world in a way that gives everything it's place. Good and bad.

Coincidences

I wonder if I have more to say. Why not stop and wonder. All of a sudden I wonder about coincidence. I found God because my parents did not trust the dangerous road and sent me to the right school for me. Things don't just happen, they happen with a reason is my belief. And the reason is always to give me – or you – a chance to grow and become lighter...'

*Will you write about religion? Now? Or rather tomorrow?
Even if you don't have time, you better do it now. What can be more important? A question to explore: Do I rather preach than practise?*

30. Mother outside, Mother inside

'How can she sue me, me a therapist who is willing to bring out the best in people who come to me and who are willing to suffer the pain of going to a deeper level where ground can be found.'

Session three found place when I was angry about a mother of a 32 year old client who complained about me to the Dutch Gestalt Chamber of Complaints. Theme that emerged was longing for a place in the world:

A place in the world

'A place in the world where I feel I belong, where I feel safe enough to be creative and let my love be? Question mark? Question mark again. I am not certain about it. I do have a place in my own house and practice.

It is where I feel most safe, because it is me.

Here in the ABC Treehouse* with Marlous and Mary it is a different matter. I do feel excited, I do think we do and talk about important things. And writing them down makes them more real. For example the story with the angry mother who officially complained about me. It helps me to tell this to M. and M. and look at their faces, hear my voice, listen to the melody, wonder about right, wrong, innocence, suffering, passion. Wonder about being a mother and supposed to give your children safety. But how can you if you don't feel safe yourself.

Accusing tone

I also hear the accusing tone in my voice, I hear the resentment, how can she sue me, me a therapist who is willing to bring out the best in people who come to me and who is willing to suffer the pain of going to a deeper level where ground can be found. I wondered about telling this story here.

Is it the right place, the right time, do I have the right motivations to stimulate me or is my ego so angry or hurt that I cannot keep my mouth shut. If I don't tell about it, I keep the story for me. I act like it is my story, but it is not just about me, it is about all

women (and men). Let's start with the women, as I am a woman myself.

Mother defends her offspring

Am I still hoping there is someone who knows, really knows what my life is about. Someone who watches me, guides me, punishes me, protects me. Sounds like a mother or a higher self. Mother identifies with higher self, is that what the danger is? Mother thinks she is the one, the only one who can defend her offspring and this means her offspring can not do with out her. This is an old theme. I don't feel like going into that now.

How afraid am I of mothers or for that matter of the mother in me? Mother outside, mother inside. I mistrust them both. I would love to meet a mother Mother but I cannot remember I ever have. That sounds strange. Is it true or am I exaggerating?

I search my mind. Did I ever meet a Mother with a capital M in person? Or did I notice her from far? No, I just see blank spaces. Of course I have known women who cared for me, women like my mother and my grandmother and my aunt. Women who loved me.

Loving attention

Or were they more busy with themselves than with anyone else? Mother? Do I want to play the role of a good mother here in the Treehouse, a mother who is interested, understands, follows the life of her students. A mother who gives loving attention and that is completely different from critical black and white attention.

Loving attention is all a mother needs to make a child happy. Can I awake this mother in me and give the unhappy child the space to become happy at times so she can remember how it feels. If I have the courage to let out my loving attention,

even for the mother who wants to complain about me, I can relax. I don't have so many people to worry about. At the same time I hear my cynical self saying: you are not an angel, why do you want to act like one? Question mark. Yes, question mark.

Am I too philosophical? Too reflective? I am afraid I bore M and M with my words and boring other people is the last thing I want to do. If I want to belong, have a place, I better not be boring! Note of exclamation.'

Time for you. Are you a mother? I am not but playing the role of a therapist gives me an idea how difficult being a mother can be. Therefore I invite you to explore your own feelings, even when you are a man, concerning being a mother and having a mother.

How responsible does it make you? How angry? How guilty?

How happy? Questions to keep in mind: how old do I feel?

Do I long to connect? Do I trust me? Do I have the power?

Am I a good mother?

Chapters 31 – 34

*In Kripalu, Massachusetts
participating in a workshop for writers
with Natalie Goldberg*

31. In the plane to New York

I am on my way to do a workshop with Natalie Goldberg, who jumped into my life when I found her book 'Writing down the Bones'.*

Lucky numbers

2 PM in the plane to New York:

'I am so surprised time and time again by the amount of people that can go into one plane. How can I count them? I believe there are 53 rows at least and about 10 people per row, that makes 530 plus staff. More than 550 people stuffed into a Boeing 747-400. My lucky numbers. Sevens guide me and it seems I am a four, a romanticist, in the vision of the Enneagram* theory.

Anyway, I was in time this morning. Got up at 7.17 AM. Took a shower, packed my last things, made breakfast, fed the cats and the dog, called a new supervisor to make an appointment and then walked my dog. It was dry and that felt like a gift.

It rained, poured, when I woke up.

(Here and Now: on my screen I see that I made a mistake, I am in a Boeing 777-300. No problem, all those 7's excite me.)

Back to my story. It was dry but heavy with clouds when I walked Poe to his staying address. It was also dry when I walked to the tram to go to the station. It felt like I planned my trip securely. Tram 12 came within 5 minutes and the train was almost due.

Books

What am I doing, I wonder? I am stupid, I forgot to bring my own Ouwerverpower book with me. Why should I, it is in Dutch? To be open to whatever will come to me. Just a question. I am so proud of my book. Wanted to show it to Aliza and wanted to show it to Natalie if possible. Well, it means less worries. I don't have to show it to anyone now. I am just Tine, bare, without anything that shows where I come from or who I am.

Is that the story? Well part of.

I am on my way to do a workshop with Natalie Goldberg, who jumped into my life when I found her book 'Writing down the Bones'*. This happened about five or six months ago. Maybe not

even. This one book seems to change my life in the sense that all of a sudden I know I am someone who is on a track where she does not walk alone. My writing often embarrasses people, I have the impression. Too personal?

I have not always been writing, only when I could not speak because there was no one to listen. Pretty agonizing. Then I did not know that this is a normal situation.

Fairy castles in the air

Now: I look outside and see our beach and the sea. I also see the clouds in three dimensions. They are like mountains, huge figures one can creep into. I saw a mushroom cloud that intrigued me.

We are above the clouds now, I am looking down on them. More or less the same effect as looking up. The most spectacular moment was when we were on the same level.

I don't remember ever experiencing this before.

Usually clouds are more like mist one flies through.

Going on about clouds. It reminds me of the Jody Mitchell song:

I have looked at clouds from both sides now.

From up and down and still somehow...

She calls them fairy castles in the air. It is a pity but I don't remember her conclusion. It will come back to me, could be a lead to my story. I realize I am jumping up and down here.

I am writing while in the back of my mind I wonder if what I write should be interesting to read. The danger is that I will censor my writing in a way that makes it boring. Relax, I tell myself, even if you are boring, what you write can be interesting.

Who does not know about boredom, about the fear of being bored or being boring? Must be a universal theme.

Shadows

While writing I feel the sun on my left cheek. When I look down I see the sea with light green and dark spots. Above it the clouds. I worry about having to close the shutter because the other passengers prefer shadow so they can watch a movie or sleep. I like to feel the sun and to be able to see what is out there.

We are supposed to fly over England I see on my screen, but we are not there yet. Oh yes, we are now.

All of a sudden I realize that the dark spots on the sea were the shadows of the clouds. I imagined they had to do with deeper and more shallow water. Beside me are a girl of about fifteen and a man close to my age. They don't belong together but they talk as if they do because they are both from New York. The girl lives in the Netherlands because her parents are divorced. Every two months she flies to the States to look them/him/her (?) up. The man behaves like a nice American daddy. He shows her how the screen and the remote control work, asks her questions like does she speak Dutch, is she going to school? Yes, yes are her answers. The man walked before me in the long, long line of people on their way into the plane.

Most people seemed to travel together. But as he and I travel alone I told myself it would be nice to have him as a neighbour. Strange enough he almost is. People who look at the three of us could think we are grandparents travelling with our granddaughter. It is how I feel. I am in this role that goes with my age. Why not play it when it is necessary or possible?

Finding your teacher

Drinks are coming. Back to my story, my trip to meet Natalie, my longing to experience a master at work. In her book 'Thunder and Lightning' she writes about reading and by reading finding your teacher. By reading her I found my new teacher. That is why I fly over the ocean, why I decided to go to this workshop in Kripalu, Stockbridge, Massachusetts*. It lasts only one evening, one full day and one morning! Crazy to go all that way? No, not that crazy. For me it is not enough to read her, I want to see and hear her. And above all I want to experience how she teaches this class of writers as I have an ambition myself to give writing workshops. Or ambition? I already do but with small, very small classes compared to what Natalie does.

In my groups are three or four participants. On her list I am number 94. I imagine there must be at least one hundred people. Probably more.

Heritage

I am so proud I do this, proud I can do it without feeling guilty. Today is the birthday of my grandmother. She died in 1968, 81

years old. Today she would have been 122. For me her birthday is an extra reason to go. Since a year and a half I am enjoying the benefits of her hard working. Hers and my grandfather's.

Not my parents, they did not make any money, they just used it. My father and mother did not have any trouble with that. They both had rich parents, relatively rich.

My mother was the youngest daughter of a blacksmith who once had eighty people working for him. This must have been big business at that time. Her father was the second generation, his father started the business. The founder was feared, I understood, feared and very strong, otherwise he could not have done what he did. He made a lot of the ironworks for Amsterdam at that time: bridges, lampposts, gates. Works of art.

His company was in a tiny street in the Jordaan in Amsterdam, a poor part of the city, also a special part that has been intriguing people as nobody knows for certain where the inhabitants came from. Clear was and is that they are special somehow.

They compose and sing a lot of songs about their neighbourhood. What makes them also special is that they are pretty assertive.

Ancestors

I have been wondering so often where my ancestors came from because I wonder if they also had Jewish blood. The supposition is that they came from Spain and/or France and if that is true, it is likely that they were refugees because they were Jewish or Protestant. And if true the question arises why they were not open about it. Answer could be that they were too afraid and decided it was better and safer not to be outspoken. Sounds logical, especially realizing that in Spain there was in 1492 a big exodus of *Conversos*, converted Jews, who converted to save their lives to be able to stay in Spain. But the Inquisition* decided that they were Jews after all and not wanted.

A painful story. Being unfaithful to your roots and then finding out you don't belong with the Jews anymore nor with the Spanish people. When I think or write about this, I always intend to read more, but I don't. Too painful? No time? That is why I love to sit in a plane. Seven hours and forty minutes to New York and I can

just write or read. No clients, no internet, no emails, no cats, no dog, no shopping, no nothing. Just me, my pen and my notebook.

A Jewish flavour

This is more than just a weekend workshop, it will last five days, because I will use every minute of this adventure to explore and write about it. Going back to my mother and her heritage: where did we come from is my question again and again. My whole family, also my father's family comes from the same neighbourhood, has a Jewish flavour.

Not all my family will agree with me. Of course I am talking about a flavour, not about something absolute. If we were Jewish, even half, it would be clear, not a mystery. I could find out what I have to deal with. During the war some members of the family were carrying an Identity Card to prove they were not Jewish, because they looked as if they were. If there is a drop of Jewish blood in my family it is far away and probably hidden on purpose. Is it important? It is to me.

Not crazy

Yes or No is not even that interesting anymore, although Yes would prove that I am not crazy, Yes would confirm that projections can go a long way. Without knowing, I have been following my projections since...? Good question. When did I start following my own will?

Reading about writing

2.30 PM American time. About six hours later. I have been reading Natalie in the meantime. Was not bored for one second. Just fascinated. Reading about writing is healing. Writing is what I love most. Step by step I experience by writing that what I have been doing in my life until now is worthwhile enough to bear the suffering. Natalie's lessons are strange enough not telling me anything I did not know. On the contrary, they are confirming what I supposed all along. The main thing is that she urges her students to write with their bodies, to start with letting their minds free, just write whatever comes up. Then read aloud to each other without judging.

Her students should do this for at least two years to get an idea what writing is about. Well, I did it, much longer than that. I used writing to survive and to get to know me as a female creature. I explored how clean or how dirty or how beautiful or how ugly my mind is. Or I am for that matter.

Now the question is, is what I wrote while doing this, interesting enough to be published? My writing is full of my presence and the presence of the writer is something precious for readers, I read. Still I often get the message – I believe – that my presence is too dominant in my texts. But is it? I can only write, as I did up to now. Possibly I can learn to make it more suitable for the other, but is that what I am after? No what I am after is meeting my authentic voice and hope it will vibrate in the other. I step into Natalie's mind by reading her and I feel like I am coming home, or heading for home. I should buy more of her books to find out how close I can come when she writes stories. The books I have read now are dialogical. I have the impression she is talking to me and I could answer if I wished to. In her stories it can be differently.

Still half an hour to fly.

I want to finish the last chapter and when I am in New York I will go to a bookstore to find hers and other books that are on her list of favourite books. I thought I would go to a theatre or a cinema tonight or to listen to jazz music. Well, if I can I will, but the most likely thing to do, seems to sit in a café and read and write, not more than that. Apart from eating and drinking.'

What is this chapter about for you? About having alone time when travelling all by yourself? Is it about writing or about ancestors? Please become aware by realizing you are in the here and now and take time to listen to your inner world.

Before you start writing or drawing you can meditate on questions like: Am I a writer? Do I value my ancestors? What has the one to do with the other? Do I like to sit in a plane or a train?

32. Testing and Tasting

I can't say the Grand Central Station is beautiful without describing why. That is why I go back there this morning. I want to sit and look and write.

Pens

'7 AM in bed. Had a lovely night, broken in two parts. I went to bed around 10 PM. Was so tired that I slept within no time. Then woke up around 2 AM. Thought this is not funny. Tried to sleep again until I decided I better turn on the light, eat the sliced fruit waiting in the fridge and read 'Old Friend From Far Away' by Natalie. The orange, grapefruit, melons tasted like heaven that time of night. And 'Old Friend...' brought me what I needed to know more about Natalie and what she has to offer me. For one thing I am testing my pens now as she suggests. This is a gel pen, I believe the fastest I have. The fastest and the smoothest. I feel it is my duty to find the right pen before I go to Kripalu*, where the workshop is. Maybe I should buy a new notebook. My first lines this morning were with an ordinary ballpoint. It is slower, I have to push it forward. But this pen is light and dances on the paper. Disadvantage is that it is empty so quickly. It means I need more than one.'

Advices in my head

'Here and Now still in my room of the Roger Smith Hotel. I am happy I chose it because it is so close to the Grand Central Station, where I spent my time last night and where I intend to go this morning. I love the beauty of this building, the wide corridors, the stone that reminds me of the Louvre museum and the ornaments that radiate the same care and majesty as the metro in Moscow. While I write I notice that I write with the advices of Natalie in my head. It means I can't say fruit anymore without specifying what kind.

I can't say the Grand Central Station is beautiful without describing why. That is why I go back there this morning. I want to sit and look and write.

Last night I felt one with the New Yorkers and travellers sitting there in one of the restaurant tracks with my walnut salad, fresh orange juice and a croissant. Grand Central is my beginning and end place on this trip. It is where I have to take the train/metro up north to Wassaic, where I will be picked up by a shuttle at 4 PM to go to Kripalu.

Aliza

But before that I will stop in White Plains for two hours to meet Aliza and her Maltese puppy dog. I met Aliza during the workshop with the Jewish Arts Institute. She was born in 1943 in the Netherlands. As she was a Jewish baby, she was in danger and therefore hidden with other victims in a hole in the woods. I tried to find 'her' hole; thought I knew it, but it was the wrong one. Even before I knew there were children hidden I was impressed with this hole in the middle of beautiful woods up north. How could anyone survive the cold, cold winters of the forties in there? But they did.

Being able to meet Aliza because she happens to live on the metro line, I have to take to go to Kripalu, I consider as an extra present. Time to have a shower, get dressed and have breakfast'

Notebook for poets

'11.45 AM in the train to White Plains.

I have been efficient this morning by looking in the guide of the environment for a bookstore and stationary. Found Barnes & Noble* on the corner of 53rd street, hidden in a shopping centre I would never have recognized as such. Anyway I bought charcoal sticks, a notebook with an Irish wisdom on the cover and a special notebook for poets. I also looked for a pen, but they only had normal ballpoints with a more luxurious coat. I hardly looked at books, did not have enough time for that. Always afraid to get lost in the abundance, wanting too many. And I don't want to carry more than I have already.

Riding through Harlem

Here and Now in the train, I am looking for already ten minutes at a shoe with a thick sole and blue and red stripes. The patron looks

like highways that run over and under each other. I am also looking at the Money & Investing part of the Newspaper the man who belongs to the shoe is reading. I am looking at his jeans, an orange striped blouse, his hands and his dark blond straight hair.

I cannot see his face. I don't dare to look directly at the woman who sits in front of me. She has a round Russian face, a bottle of water in her hand, she was eating a huge Pretzel when I came in. She looks at me smiling, once in a while. On her lip is a pimple. Written enough. We are out of the tunnel, riding through Harlem. I love to ride through Harlem and look at it, wonder about it. The sun is out, the sky is clear blue, the air is fresh. Yesterday it was hot and humid. Now it is at least ten degrees colder with a dry wind.'

Small woman with a full voice

'After a taxi ride through the awesome Indian summer landscape of Massachusetts I arrived in Kripalu, a beautiful centre on a lake with a view on the hills. At 8 PM is our first session in a huge room with chairs in rows and a stage. Not very inviting if you long to communicate, make contact and connect. But the moment Natalie comes in she invites us to change the structure by coming as close to her as we can.'

Her reason:

'When you open up structure, it releases energy.'

She is right, the energy in the room got a completely different vibration. Main reason is Natalie herself. To my surprise she is a small woman with a full voice and an outspoken accent from New York, as far as I know. She is bursting with energy, giving us wisdom I sometimes recognize from her books.

I feel I came to the right place, with the right master. Only problem I have is with two doors that have to be open to give us air and also a cold draft that chills me. It does not take Natalie long to come to the point. We have to do one thing this weekend and that is to write. No beating about the bush.

Exercise 1: write about money

My relationship with money in this period of my life is rather good. I like money, I like what I can do with it, and I am not so afraid to lose it anymore.

Now I am wondering about the but. It should have been and.

Money is my saviour, it is my harbour, in the sense that it made me independent enough to decide I can take a plane, cross the ocean and just come here for a long weekend to enjoy being in the company of Natalie and in the company of a hundred or so other writers. My gel pen is empty. Shit.

I was prepared for it though. Now I have a slower pen, but probably more certain. Back to the money, my being independent and able to come here just for a few days.

Money is something I have to earn.

Money became also something like a gift since I have a pension and since I got my inheritance from my grandmother. She had a talent to make money by doing hard work and by keeping it and make it more. I don't have her talent, but I do think I have a love relation with money because one day I decided that I am responsible for it myself and that meant that I could not just sit and wait for it to come in but had to go out and work to get it, except for two short periods in my life when I succeeded not to worry about it while not having it.

Proud

I feel I am rather proud of my relation with money.

I also realize that the periods I did not have money were when first I was living together with a painter and then when I was married with a photographer. Somehow – I think – I expected them to take care of me. Even if it was just for a little bit.

They did not, I must confess.

They could not even take care of themselves.

So how could they have taken care of me money wise? I was the one who took care of them. What does all this storytelling have to do with the relation I have with money now? Money is connected to men, who should have and did not...? I am stuck. I cannot get around the point that money has everything to do with my father who did cost much more money than he made.

Strange enough I started writing about this subject when I came over in the plane.

After writing we read our stories in a small group. One of the women had written about a gift she got as a therapist of 40.000 or was it 400.000 dollar from a client. Whatever the amount it enabled her to pay for her house and to live without money worries. As a European I could hardly believe her. I just thought: this is America!

Exercise 2: I remember...

I remember the plane I came over in
I remember the smell in the Russian plane I flew with for the first time to St. Petersburg
I remember the clouds in the sky that were on the same level as I was
I remember my brother when he was three and I was ten and recovering from an appendix operation
I remember my mother going off on her bicycle to go down town
I remember the house where I was born
I can see the chain before our ground to keep strangers out
I remember the water that streamed before our door
I remember the road our house was on
I remember the holes and the bumps in this road
I remember the movie studio beside our house
I can see the steps before it or do I mean stairs
Now I remember the Germans when they were defeated and came with their horses and wagons to stay in this studio
I remember the smell of raw herrings
I remember their salty taste
I remember how slippery they feel and smooth
I remember their silvery and liver colour underneath

I am censoring and I remember
that I did this when I was writing my book
I remember writing my first book
I remember the green of the cover
I remember the voice of my client who would have loved to be here with me
I remember the new house of my sister with the roll curtains hanging before her nine French glass windows.
I remember the rivers Amstel and IJ in Amsterdam

I don't remember

I don't remember the smell of my first lover

I don't remember my first book, first words

I don't remember what happened my first day in kindergarten

I don't remember what my mother was wearing the day she fell ill
before she died two days later

I don't remember going to dancing lesson the first time

I don't remember the last words my father spoke to me before he
died

I don't remember who my teacher was in kindergarten

I don't remember having an headache like I am getting now

I have forgotten when I was still good at running fast

Was I ever? I forgot. Maybe I was. It is not important

I forgot what I have forgotten

I don't even want to know what I don't remember

If I don't remember, it can't be important

Or was it too painful, too lovable to remember

I keep forgetting why I should forget

My headache is less

I do not remember when I first tasted a strawberry

and I do not remember either when I first ate chocolate

Headache is back again.

I don't remember ever hearing a sound like the one I am hearing
upstairs now: Oowa, Oowa, Oowa...

I don't remember ever having written something like this

**Exercise 3: write – in your 'free' time - for ten
minutes about**

- *what tortures you and awakens you at night*
- *what can you give up knowing?*
- *different times you needed chocolate and alcohol*

9.30 PM I am tired. Sitting in the hall, view on the lake I presume,
but it is dark now. After the first session I have to accept that I am
not going to get what I expected. Is this true? No. I knew that I
would not and came anyway. How can I be honest with me?

I fall time and time again into the same trap.

My expectations are so high that the only thing that can happen is that I am disappointed. Around me I hear sounds of people who are enthusiastic: 'Wasn't that fantastic?' What I see and cannot come across right away is Natalie being a good actor and of course a good teacher. Is it what teachers have to do: repeat themselves, time and time again?

The Enneagram 4 – the Romanticist - in me is calling for attention: what I want is to connect and I am experiencing that this workshop won't be about that. Nevertheless, I am here and I know I am in the right place to learn something.

But what? My critical mind is still active.

It is always the same. At the beginning of a workshop I always think I am in the wrong place because I am with the wrong people. I have to find out that I am here to discover that I can do something differently. How can I turn this critical mind around without going to admiring but instead to being realistic and able to see the good things.

Hillary Clinton*

Splendid example was the story about Hillary Clinton and the friends of Natalie, women, who just did not like Hillary. Indeed, look at what Hillary does and did and then wonder how interesting it is if you like her or not. I have to be open for the difficulties starting a workshop like this. It is not the same as the work I do with a few people I can have a dialogue with. Natalie is being a true professional, she is like being an actor, a performer.

Nothing wrong with that. If I ever want to give presentations it is what I will have to do myself.

Homework, exercise 1:

what tortures me and keeps me awake at night

At the moment I am tortured by the complaint that has been brought in against me. I don't know but I think I better go to sleep. I am too tired to write.

I will have to start anew with this mission.

Back to the session and the good things in it.

The beginning was brilliant. 'Break the structure by getting out of the rows and sit as close as you can get to me.' The atmosphere changed within a minute. The thing I have to do is break my structure and shift my attention from Natalie to the group. I expect her to be surprising, but she already surprised me in her books. Now all she can do is say out loud what she already wrote. Impossible to go on surprising me.

Exercise 2:

I can give up knowing...

I can give up knowing that the world is round, that I am old, that there is a money crisis, that America is the most powerful nation in the world, that water is cold, that open doors give away draft, that rain is wet, that I am ugly, that I am beautiful, that I am sweet, that chocolate is not good for me, that tomorrow is Saturday, that I have to go back home after tomorrow, that New York is in New York, that ten minutes is ten minutes, that having resistance to this exercise is of no use.

Exercise 3:

different times I needed chocolate and alcohol

or cookies or sex or cheese or a man or the sun or time out. I cannot remember ever needing chocolate. I don't even like chocolate that much.

It is sticky and stays between my teeth. Sometimes, after a meal with friends I tell myself I need a bonbon, but that is because I do not smoke any more and miss having an after dinner cigarette when in company? Does it keep me from getting bored? That is also exactly why I need it. I am afraid everything nice has been said and now only the deeper matters, the more painful things are still available to be discussed or to be dialogued. I would like that but I cannot remember many people having the same urge. If by myself I also need something sweet after dinner. That is true.

It is because I do not want to get up from the dinner table, I just want to sit there and be amused. Still taste the food and procrastinate the moment life asks me to come into motion, into action again. My need for alcohol had to do with the same thing,

wanting to get away from the musts!

Question: why don't I need it now anymore?

Do you know this feeling of being in a train you cannot get off anymore? The train goes on and the only thing you can do is surrender, wonder about what will happen next and do the work you are asked to do. In me this evokes all kind of resistances. I just don't want to be pushed. And I let it happen all the same. How was it for you to read what I wrote and what I experienced? What did you feel? Do you long to do the same exercises? And are you going to do it? How is it if you do? And how if you do not? Both possibilities are interesting to write about. Questions to keep in mind: Do I eat or drink or laugh my unhappiness away? Why don't I need it anymore or do I?

33. Opening the structure

I don't want to read this out loud.

I mean I don't want to read out loud how Susan touched me

Ten minutes later

Special about the morning of the next day was that we started ten minutes later than announced to test the opening up of structures. Before we started writing Natalie asked a number of people how they experienced it. She did not ask me and I did not try to share my experience, but I did like it as I am often late coming in and now I had time to adapt to my surroundings.

But then Natalie declared it was time

'to write down what is in front of your face':

In front of my face is my own grey suede shoe.

In front of my face there are four legs of a chair
and the whole chair

In front of my face I see not Buddha but Shiva
or some other Godly figure, maybe a Bodhisattva

I cannot see clearly, the statue is too dark.

It is big though.

In front of my face I see Natalie writing.

In front of my face there is a wooden floor. Is it wood? It must be.
I cannot imagine it not being the real, the pure thing. I am tired of
in front of my face... Don't know how to stay with the exercise
and start with other words.

If I turn my head I see the word exit.

It is lit in red letters.

I also see the light of the sun coming through the windows. In the
meantime the sound of the drums on the 1st floor is there and I
enjoy listening to it.

Would not mind having them in front of my face.

In front of my face is a woman with an orange t-shirt and a green
shawl. Her name is Susan, I feel shy writing this down. I don't
want to read this out loud. I mean I don't want to read out loud
how Susan touched me when she read her I don't remember piece.

In front of my face I see flowers, yellow and white, chrysanthemums and lilies and green branches. They are above the head of Natalie, like they are crowning her. And exactly in line are the dancing Bodhisattva's. This could be a painting or a picture I would love to create.'

After some people read out loud what they had written, Natalie remarked: 'mind is not personal, we just take it personal.' As I am busy in my mind with personal and not personal I write this remark down. Afraid I would forget otherwise.

11.45 AM exercise:

Write down the dialogue you eave drop on

I went outside to sit in the autumn sun on the terrace, listened and wrote:

- *It is so fun*
- *All the things I am interested in, I cannot make money with*
- *It would be great*
- *I am so sorry*
- *Since I... yesterday a lot to take from class*
- *It depends to work on*
- *You have more time to develop*
- *Wait a minute*
- *Just on the other side*
- *It is very easy to...*
- *Just...*
- *Don't...*
- *Me too, while talking...*
- *It is a perfect little child*
- *You think she could potty train herself?*
- *So make...*
- *Okay, where would she drop me off?*
- *Not here in the States*
- *Number... and let me get information*
- *It does not matter*
- *Ah, ah...*

- *Bless you...*
- *Okay sir, right here*
- *And she has...*
- *She actually has a dog*
- *I wanted sugar for the most...*
- *Okay, I love you all*
- *So these are really interesting people, I always wanted to be with them*
- *That is the wrong question, hey... I know, but... ?*
- *Really... ?*
- *Yah, I love to do shopping*
- *I have been thinking about it for years*
- *In a way*
- *I take one of four inches...*
- *Yah...*
- *What other colour?*
- *But I think it was honest*
- *I know but... I would love to do that*
- *Okay, in December...*
- *Oh, okay, lovely, okay*
- *I want to take it home*
- *Hey, how are your parents doing?*
- *I am on a lunch break*
- *I am taking that class now*
- *I am going to New Zealand*
- *I like to*

12.00 Noon.

I am still outside; in front of my face I see berries on a tree, American cars, big, mostly silver grey, one is red, some are black a hedge that is well cut, grass with bare spaces, worn out spaces a man or a woman walking a lawn, trees without leaves, trees with green leaves, trees with yellow leaves, orange leaves, dark green trees with needles on the left the lake, on the right the mountains

This view brings me back to the happy moments I spent in El Bloque* together with G. I remember how we sat in the morning and the afternoon looking at the trees, the bare ground, the mountains, the sea, the people walking in the Spanish sun.

The three weeks I was there with this man, I love so dearly I count to be the happiest weeks of my life.

I was in the sun, with him, could swim naked with him, sleep with him, laugh with him, talk with him, drink coffee with cognac in the morning when it rained, make long walks and keep the dogs at a distance by telling them how beautiful I thought they were.

He teased me with this.

Those three weeks were like an island in an ocean of psychological work. Why this expensive psy... word?

I was thinking, trying to censor and write at the same time. Afraid that by writing about this happy period I would discover it was not so happy after all.

Not that this would be news. I know there was a moment when the happiness started to shift to anxiousness. When I think back it started when one of my teachers came and it was obvious for my lover that the teacher and I had a history he would never be able to share. I conclude this now almost twenty years later. Jealousy slipped in between us. I became afraid I would lose him. Could not think why he was cross, did not understand why he did not want to say something in the big circle on Sunday morning when people presented themselves.

I had been in this beautiful centre in Moorish style a number of times and he was new. This meant a gap. I belonged there, knew the people, knew what they were doing and he was – or felt? – an outsider. This brings me back to my anchor.

In front of my face

I see the beauty of nature,

I would love to share with him

but because I shared it with him once I can even enjoy it more now being across the ocean in a completely different country and setting although I know the kind of atmosphere.

Being from Europe, being from Amsterdam, I am an outsider here, but as I attend a class that meets my passion I feel I belong. There is no separation'

0. 30 PM free exercise; still on the terrace: 'Before my face I see a chipmunk, eating a piece of something he got from a Kripalu plate.

Just before that he was chasing three sparrows that seemed to dominate the territory. I still have to do two things before going back to class: make a walk and have lunch.'

A dialogue beside me:

- *the dancers above our heads*
- *talk with fellow writers*
- *the dancers have fun, go for their freedom*
- *still, I am happy I chose the literature*

What happened to the dancer in me? Did I get enough dancing in my life? Could be. If it works that way, I did a great job.

I gave my dancer what she needed and she apparently can just be happy with that and grow old without nagging.

2.45 PM Exercise *Write – read – write – 10 minutes*

*Quote: Continue under all circumstances,
make positive effort for the good*

'My mother was a slim woman, sexual, beautiful, she could ride a bike with grace and she was a great dancer. She was never home when I came from school because in the afternoon she went down town

often to visit my father who was in and out of a psychiatric hospital.

My first grade. I do not remember anything about the first grade because I skipped it, but I do remember the lessons that helped me to skip it. Every day I had to go into the second grade and the teacher of that class helped me to do arithmetic and language. One day I had to go to the toilet and when I came back...

I left behind my four cats and my dog and my house and Amsterdam and the rain and the storm to come here.

I also left behind my money worries,

I just decided that no matter what I am worth flying over the ocean to go to this Indian summer thing and...

My father was a huge man. Almost two meters. I liked his hair, his skin, his laugh. My father had a deep voice, that touched me down in my belly. He could look at me in a way that made me shiver. My father's nerves were wrecked when...

I would dislike someone who smells from his/her mouth or someone who is too big for me to shake hands with I would dislike men who drink too much
I have disliked my husband for that reason.
Although I had lovers who drank too much and...

My first kiss happened to me when I was 12 or 13.
I stayed in a village with farmers who were not my family.
It was on a rainy Sunday afternoon after lunch.
My 'uncle' and 'aunt' went to have a nap.
And the youngest son and I were sitting on the couch in the kitchen. He put his hand on me and an arm around me and...

The last time I wanted to scream was when I had a session with a mother and a client. I meant to say a mother and a daughter who is my client. It is a long story but the daughter became more than angry when her mother after five minutes decided...

My hands are pretty broad, I wonder if they are really feminine. Did somebody make a mistake? My fingers are also broad, just like my mother's and sister's. When I want a ring, I need big ones. They exist. But at moments like that I wonder...

A friend I have lost touch_with is Gerritje.
Accidentally I am wearing the shawl her mother crocheted.
Not specially for me, I think, but still...
Today I am wearing it since a long time and at least three or four people gave me compliments for it.
It brought me back to Gerritje...

My favourite stretch of road is in the Betuwe along the river Linge. I used to live close to it.
Together with my husband I rode along it often.

It winds, along it are willow trees, not weeping
but willows that are...

A child I know is Fleur.

She is a girl that is wiser than I as a childless woman imagined a child could be. Now she is already five and got her first diploma by swimming in a huge swimming pool with and without clothes. She was afraid at first. Did not want to go to swimming lessons...'

Exercises in between sessions:

- *What I could almost love*
- *Everything I know about eating in cafeteria's*
- *How many times I have left*
- *What do I know about where I was brought up*

Almost love

'What I could almost love is travelling through New York when I have to catch a plane to go home again.

What I also could almost love is cleaning the shit of my dog with a little plastic bag that permeates the temperature of the turd that is still warm from the dog's intestines.

What I am becoming to love is walking my dog at night in the dark just before going to bed. I thought I would hate that and it kept me from having a dog for a very long time.

Coffee from a big pot – even with milk – I do not really love, not even almost. I am rather particular when it is about coffee.

I like my Senseo coffee. Typically Dutch.

I like coffee from espresso machines but I don't, well I already told...

Something I almost love is sitting here inside while the sun is still shining outside. It is so beautiful out there. And shouldn't I go outside to the labyrinth? I did not think, I just let things happen.

I sit here with a super protein original I bought instead of coffee.

It is something I don't really love. Chose it because I hoped for the best. All the same I knew it probably would not meet my expectations. Later I will take another sip and I will decide if I will love it or not eventually.

My head is still with my trip back tomorrow. I thought I would have time enough because I counted on making it to the 2.30 PM

train. Now I know we leave here 2.30 and that makes a difference as I will have a train two hours later. I tell myself: stop worrying about it. but I am still uncertain and I don't love that.

Cafeteria's

I don't remember that much of eating in cafeteria's in the American meaning. I did do it here and I did do it in the Isabella Freedman centre. Kripalu and Isabella Freedman do have something in common. I am afraid I am dividing myself, but while writing I am back in Isabella Freedman, eating outside with M. looking at their lake and their trees. We sat there together because he told me he was a rabbi and if I needed one he was available.

It was the beginning of a meeting that became flirtatious or romantic while the week of the workshop I did progressed.

He and I talked in between workshop periods.

I told him I needed a rabbi because I felt attracted to Judaism and did not know enough about rituals and laws. He told me some things I did know already but the main thing was that we looked at the trees together and agreed that because we could not have made them ourselves there must be a God who had a hand in it. On the other 'hand' M. needed a therapist and that is why I suggested that we could exchange services.'

Typing those hand written notes out in Amsterdam, I can hardly imagine that I wrote all this in one day.

I even become tired while editing it. I also get a headache. And I remember that we also did an exercise in silence walking with bare feet in a huge string in the rather cold grass. This to get a taste of Zen Buddhism. I would have liked to write down my experiences, but did not have the time. Pity, I cannot recall them now. And I also paid a visit to the Labyrinth, in the back of the garden, I did not write about. I know I would have loved to do it, but why I did not. I do not remember.

Do you experience days you were so full of adventures that you don't have time to digest them? Try to remember a day like that and see if you can get it back into your memory by sitting down in a quiet place and let the images, the colours, the scents, the noises, the people, the landscape come back to you. When you are ready take your pen and write.

Questions to keep in mind:

What do I feel? What do I see?

What do I hear? Am I in the moment?

Am I alone?

34. A master at work

*What stands out in her teachings:
there is only one thing to do, so do it:
sit, write, read and so on!*

Yes or No

Waking up thought on the last day of the workshop:
it is time to move out of the apprentice role and become a real teacher. Title of the book I hope to publish could then be: Boss in your own life.

Because I long to know if I am on the right track with my thoughts, I draw a Yes or No Card* from the deck. It tells me: Yes, but only if you are prepared for success. Strange message that gives me a good feeling to start this day with.

The program continues with the instruction to write about:

The centre of all beauty

‘9.20 AM ‘The centre of all beauty I find when I am in a group that comes together, because we want to go beyond the shit and find peace, contact, connection, each other’s eyes, looks, smell, touch, compassion, while we know we can’t have it without having fear, pain, anger, rage. I am there to facilitate. I know I am the centre of the beauty in a group like that. I have tools to open closed shells that hide all those other centres of beauty.

When I tell them to look at each other,
take time to meet their inner longings, needs and to see the others with the same longings and the same fears, first steps can be set to open up our camouflages, to take down our masks and show what we have been hiding all along out of fear we will be thought silly, foolish, crazy, pitiful. My centre of beauty is lined with fear, that has to be transformed into love, time and time again.

Next time the group will meet, even when we know the beauty is there, we still have to start exploring the outside that can be hostile, defensive or radiantly arrogant. I need courage to go beyond the outside and tell myself to feel what I feel, see what I see, smell what I smell and hear what I hear and trust that. It is the

secret. If I do not trust my own beauty centre I just cannot trust the beauty of anyone else present. In and out can meet if...'

All I remember about snow...

'When I was a child snow was normal in my country. It came every winter, even if it did not, in my experience in the winter we had snow and ice and cold hands and ice flowers on my bedroom windows. Snow in the sun blinded my eyes. I walked in fresh snow and felt the water in my boots, snow did not frighten me then. I played in it during lunch break. We were building snow castles with snow bullets and held fights. This is to say the boys built the castle and made bullets to frighten the girls who waited and giggled. I did not want to wait for the snow bullets, I did not like to be with the giggling girls, who were waiting to be packed in snow by the boys. I decided I preferred to be with the boys. But how did I do that? Did I just run over as a traitor and surrendered to the enemy?

I have a vivid image of this snow castle and of the boys acting as noble men defending their property. But I don't see myself running or going from one side to the other. I do see myself in the castle with the boys, throwing the snow balls at the girls. Looking at them triumphantly. I thought they were stupid to stand there and wait for...'

Kennedy Airport 8.10 PM

I thought I bought a new maybe fast pen but it is a pencil. I was worried about arriving at the airport in time. But it took the taxi only half an hour to get here. Everything went so smooth. The shuttle together with Mark, although we never introduced ourselves; what nametags can do...

I feel empty, I did what I wanted to do, did what I thought was the most important thing now: see and hear Natalie at work. What stands out in her teachings: there is only one thing to do, so do it: sit, write, read and so on! Good idea is to read out loud what I have written, even if I am by myself. My mind is at peace. It worked pretty hard.

Why don't I let it be?

I do feel more like reading than about writing this moment. Usually I am full when I come back from a trip, now I am calm. I know I found what I was looking for and have known already for a long time or is it all along? Something I don't understand is where all the other Dutch passengers are, because I think the plane will be huge again. I better move on and pass the security.

Almost home

Monday morning, 10.05 AM in the plane, almost home. I slept the few hours it was possible to sleep.

‘Hurrah! I did it, you did it,’ I say to myself, I don’t know what yet, but those are the words bubbling up in me. ‘I freed myself of the need for outside authorities’ is the next sentence that presents itself.

‘This is the day, the day I become Boss in my Own Life. Hi, authority, Natalie, I love you, I am grateful to you, I will keep your role model in the back of my mind and will follow your advice: ‘write, just do it, it is all you can do.’ and be your own Boss. This means, hello teacher, Tine, wake up fully and express yourself. You don’t have to go to the Jewish Arts Institute to learn. You don’t have to go to more Natalie workshops, say goodbye to the apprentice in you in that sense and go on learning by teaching.

Remember the wisdom on your teabags:

To learn read. To know write. To master teach.

All you have to do now is to go to the Gestalt Conferences in Hungary in March and present your creative Gestalt work there. And in the meantime you can publish, what you have written in English on your web log. Maybe this will turn into a book. Who knows... Not right away, but... Although... you got something to say that is becoming clearer and clearer, so say it and write it. Main project now is attention for your – Dutch - book about Elder power. Give creative presentations, read, perform, sing, inspire. You can do it, so do it.

Missing the undercurrent

About half a year later, while composing this manuscript I re-read what I wrote and wonder about, what I could not write then. While reading I feel that I am missing emotions, feelings, I am

missing the undercurrent. It seems I was so busy being obedient the days of this workshop that I lost myself and did not make contact. The only words I exchanged with Natalie was when I asked her to sign her book 'Living Color – A Writer Paints Her World'*.

When Natalie heard I came from Amsterdam, she said: 'Oh, don't they have good chocolates there?'

I did not know what to say. Chocolates? Are chocolates more important than I am? I lost my hope to connect with the master that very moment. I could have said something of interest, but there was no time. A row of women waiting for her signature was behind me. After that encounter I felt resistance reading Natalie. But then it dawned on me that she gives me what I need by writing her books. The only thing I can do to connect is read her, there is no other way to come any closer than to read what she writes. It makes me aware of my own responsibility as a writer and becoming boss in my own life. It gives me a good feeling. Natalie is wonderful and inspiring as a writer and she is a good teacher, but she is not the teacher I am longing for as I need direct communication.

That is why I am more a trainer and a therapist than a writer, I think. I certainly am not, became clear to me during this workshop, an author of literature.

A difference with Natalie is also in the sources we drink from. She is connected with Zen meditation. Although I also practiced Zazen, my nourishment comes from 'Gestalt'. That is why I cannot do without communication and contact, while Natalie is more directed, I suppose, to growing individually.

Of course we differ in style and also technique, as we are two different human beings.

One not better than the other, just different.

And you? Are you an artist? Do you go for literature? Or do you rather call yourself a scientist? Explore what happens when you write down: I am an artist! I am an... or I am an... And what is your source to drink from?

Chapters 35 en 36

The Spontaneous Writing Group Continues

35. The teacher's pets

I am generalizing instead of being specific and writing details. Natalie would shake her head and tell me NO you know better than writing this crap.

Indian in monk's cloth

Just back from the workshop with Natalie I wrote after a guided meditation with the 'Power of Writing' women: 'Indian in monk disguise on a mountain in Tibet where it is bare and cold and where I don't want to be. Too high! But I am there, if I want it or not. Tibet land of wisdom. Is the Indian in monk's clothes and with a Jewish face a sage who has developed what I long for? I recognize his face. Specially his eyes, his look, his being shirky, naughty, innocent and yet wise at the same time. The looks seem to tell me, but Tine you know, why do you want me to tell you? You know, why do you come to me to discover what I know?

Off in my mind

Do I know, am I wise enough to know about innocence, to know about the magic mystery that is no mystery? I am off in my mind wondering about adventures I have to cross the ocean for, adventures in countries and with people that are foreign to me, people who speak another language, have a different background. I am generalizing instead of being specific and writing details. Natalie would shake her head and tell me NO you know better than writing this crap. Keep your hand moving and be clear what you write about.

Same accent

I get angry, *c'est le thon qui fait la musique*. That is what I have to say, it is my wisdom. It is in the tone of my voice and I hear it in the tone of your voice. My monk in Tibet has the same accent accidentally as you have, Natalie. This heavy New Yorkian tone of voice that kind of barks into the world as a brave, *fidel* dog, who has no words, yet wants to share his wisdom.

Wet grass

This still is NO good. I should write a real story, I should write about the wet grass you, Natalie, made me walk in yesterday without socks. Your idea was to do it barefooted, but I thought nylon panty socks were close enough to the earth. We walked the Zen way, not in a circle, but like a snake. We walked slowly, slowly on this green slope with view on the lake and the orange, red maple leaved trees in the background. Doing it the Zen way, like the masters have been doing it for thousands of years, as you said, not so clear but it was hidden behind your words.

Fire is raging

I am becoming all agitated. Who was the monk I met in the meditation just now? Was it a man, a woman? And you Natalie, are you a man, a woman, a wise lady, a searching child? Ask every question and I know only I will know my own answers.

I want to shake this monk that only looked at me and then turned away to eat chocolate. My belly is aching, my mouth is dry, I can feel a bubble in my stomach that is coming up and wants to come out. Fire is raging in my abdomen. I do not want to confess, but I am more than disappointed because I could not really connect with you. My mind tells me: what do you expect! Why should she connect with you, when there are one hundred and fifty people in her group? Be happy, be content, that you saw her working and be glad that you could stand her. Just imagine what could have happened if your allergy for authorities had become active. Just imagine that you had stood up and said can't we be here more specific and in the here and now?

Hey, hello

And that on a tone of resentment. Hey, hello, I came all the way from Amsterdam to experience you working and I have also something to say! My stomach is cramped. My mouth is dry again. When will I have become a woman who is free enough to speak her own soul? That is THE question.

I am still waiting for the authority that gives me the permission to speak not only my soul but also my mind! Who can this person be? Resistance. Of course it should have been my father. But as he did not I wait and wonder and criticize and lead my own groups. And in the meantime am longing enough to take again and again the

risk of going into a group I think I want to belong to, but then become disappointed because I don't feel the Goodwill that gives me the permission to show my own voice. In other words: the teacher's pet is not dead yet.'

With the women in the group, the same theme is playing. Only in this case I am the teacher, who is challenged by her students.

Session five: Interesting or Boring?

After talking with the women, exploring where we are: 'Although it is my birthday today, I am happy to sit here with you instead of celebrating with family and friends. I can say that because I celebrated yesterday and am still tired of it.

I love to have a house full of people who enjoy themselves, I even love to shop for them, to get things, let them sit around my table and talk and eat and drink. Still I do something wrong for when the evening is over and the house neat again, I feel empty, empty and used. It must be that I am not clear in what I want on a day like that.

I want to be celebrated that is for certain,

I want my family to feel that they belong.

I want to feel that I belong, that I come from a good reliable intelligent family, who likes to live and who looks at life with lots of humour and good will. It nourishes me. Of course my family is not perfect at all. My family is rather diverse. There is family from my father's side and from my mother's side. I don't want to go into lengthy details now, but the family of my father is less known to me than the family of my mother. The question is who is more interesting, or more boring? I thought my father was more interesting than my mother, but is his family as interesting as he was? Interesting this being interested in interesting.

It is my main obsession. Are people... , are things... , is music... , are paintings... , is food interesting or BORING?

Many people brought wine

I feel like stopping here. I feel I cannot write an interesting word after this. Anxious that I am boring and not interesting, not for you. I feel uneasy. What can be interesting enough, not boring... ?

I don't know, I just write. The best thing to do is to go back to my family and what I experienced yesterday, while serving them. I listened and looked at them and felt good enough to go on with my job. I felt grateful for the presents they brought me. I thought it funny so many people brought wine. Apparently they don't know I stopped alcohol three years ago. They also brought me flowers. Some I loved, some I don't. I got presents for in my bath, good smells, it made me happy. Not cheap smells but genuine ones.

My sister brought me a shawl and asked me if I liked the colour. Then she told me she actually bought a different colour (red) for me and this brown yellow for her. But as it turned out, her shawl did not suit her coat, so she switched. Touching detail, she did not have to tell me. She also brought me a ring I do like. Silver with small look like diamonds. Problem: too big for my pinky, too small for my ring finger. Last night it took me five minutes to take it off and my finger felt sore and was all red. I have to experiment finding the right finger. The fact that my sister bought the ring for me in Turkey makes it special.

Behave more normally

The best part of the day was when my family let me present my new book. They were silent and really listened and bought the book. I felt seen. I sensed that they were genuine when they applauded me. The most difficult I find my sister. She never says she likes something I have done. I always feel uneasy when I confront her with one of my activities. Afraid that she will look at me with hurt eyes that tell me I am strange, a bit crazy and that I should behave more normally. If I could I would. But as I am not more normal than I am, I will have to be courageous and face my sister by taking the responsibility for what I write. Oh, why is this so difficult? Is it because she is my sister, do I need her love so badly? Or is it because I love her more than anyone else that I long to be taken seriously by her? Questions, no answers yet? Whatever I write during those sessions, is for one of the women per definition reason for doubts. The other two just don't doubt what I write, or do they? It is all included in the struggle for power. Can I as a leader be trusted?

The pink dress

Session six: the limelight is on attention. After a meditation we write fairy tales: 'Once upon a time there was this little princess that loved to dance. Often she asked her mother if she could put on one of those beautiful dresses she had worn only one day as bridesmaid on the weddings of her uncles or her aunt. The dress she is thinking of now is pink with lots of tulle. In her curled hair there is a garland with little pink and white flowers.

On the wedding day she had felt like she was the queen herself, everybody looked at her when she threw little flowers from her basket before the feet of the bridegroom and the bride. She was the youngest of all the people present. Was it because of this that everybody was nice to her, that everybody talked to her, touched her, stroked her cheeks and hair. She does not know but she does know she liked it a lot.

Floating on air

When the day was over and life went its boring way she missed being in the sunshine, in the limelight of attention of the grown ups. That is why she was looking for ways to be in the limelight after all. Putting on the pink dress with tulle, her garland in her hair, white socks and patent leather shoes on her feet helped her to get this feeling back of being a princess. One day when her mother agreed to putting the dress on, she decided to give a dance performance. She asked her mother and grandmother to watch her. Their answers did not surprise her. They were sorry, but they were too busy. They had to shop, cook, go to the hospital, clean the house, make visits, they had to do anything but had no time to look at her in her pink dress dancing. The only one willing to sit and look at her was her little sister. She was so small that she could hardly walk the stairs by herself. That is why the princess gave her a hand and helped her to go up and sit on the bed, because the only place to perform on this moment was their bedroom.

Alas, there was not much space. But that did not matter. When the little princess felt the dress prickle on her skin and looked in the mirror standing on her toes to see the flowers in her hair, she felt a huge power entering her body. She could not stand still anymore,

but had to turn, jump, bow, whirl, while her head became more and more empty. Her sister stayed on the edge of the bed, finger in her mouth she watched her with her big eyes. That gave the princess more and more the feeling of floating on air. Look what her sister saw, she saw her dancing, feel what her sister felt, her head became bigger and bigger and then so big that it did burst.

Au, au

This was the moment her sister began to cry and scream for her mother. Mama, mama, au, au, au. Their mother opened the door of the stairway and yelled : Now what! What did you do to hurt her! Stop it now immediately. The princess collapsed, it was like someone had put a needle in her head and all the air and all the knowledge just poured out and streamed away. She looked at her mother who had mounted the stairs and had taken her sister in her arms. Princess felt her anger rise, how stupid, how dishonest, but she did not say a word. Her mother would not be interested in what she had to say. Left alone she looked at her pink dress and decided to get up and dance anyway, public or no public. Same thing is still the matter now she has become old. Pink dress or no pink dress, success or no success, she goes on dancing her dance.'

Asking for attention as a teacher or as a trainer or a therapist is risky business. In normal ongoing therapy groups, I hardly ever do. But when I work with writing groups I also write my own stories that are not always related to the students. Although I as the teacher stay the leader of the group, the challenge is to become equal as writers and human beings. If you want to experiment with being equal yourself, imagine a situation where you are either the teacher or the student. If you are the teacher do you feel you have the power to teach what you want to teach? If you are the student do you have the willingness to receive? Wonder about the question: who is teaching who? What do I teach or learn in either role?

36. THE point

The paradoxical theory of change: *Change occurs when one becomes what s/he is, not when s/he tries to become what s/he is not.*

*Change does not take place through a coercive attempt by the individual or by another person to change her/ him, but it does take place if one takes the time and effort to be what s/he is: to be fully invested in her/his current positions. By rejecting the role of change agent, we make meaningful and orderly change possible. Arnold Beisser**

Power of Writing,

ession seven : ‘Today is my wedding day and also the day I left my marriage. Just because it was our wedding day we landed into a fight, that for me was the drop to overflow the bucket. My self image was during the ten years of my marriage so wounded that I knew I could not take any more. At first I felt guilty because it became clear that I could not really make my husband happy. He said he loved me, he pleaded maybe even he did, but it did not feel like that. He probably loved some image he had of me, but this image was not the same as the real me.

Ex-wife stuff

I think this is a difficult subject. I don't want to drown in complaining ex-wife stuff. I don't want that, because I know it does not serve me well. I do not want to go into my expectations of the love of my husband, because I was as bad as he, projecting my ideal man image on him. Of course he did not fit this role of prince on a white horse. But how about celebrations, how about longing to be admired and applauded because I did what I did. Or more simply because I was who I was then, a woman in her thirties with three long relations behind her and a lot of lovers for a day or a night or a month. The last love I had before I married was with a French painter who lived in St. Tropez. Sounds romantic, but was it? Was I being spoiled on one of those huge splendid boats in the harbour? Or was I the woman in one of those gorgeous houses with swimming pools in the hills? No, no, I had nothing to do with this kind of glamour and luxury. I loved this man who painted with

his heart and could not make a living out of it and was therefore always needy in the material sense.

True to my image

I was the woman who came from the north, fell for his arms and his body, that felt like my own. The woman who thought this love important enough to leave her country, her family and friends to go and live with him in the sunshine of the Riviera. I was true to my image in the sense that I always was responsible for my own income. Never ever did I want to be dependent on the money of men. Too dangerous to become lazy and... ?

Therefore I had brought my typewriter with me and a book I had to translate. I also brought some money to live from the first month or so. I felt safe. I felt more or less in the right place. More or less. I did not speak good enough French in the beginning. I was not as beautiful as I would have liked to be in this surrounding, nevertheless to be who I was felt okay.

Eat and drink for hours

I am going to stop. Where does this story bring me? What does it have to do with my self image? I think the story sounds attractive on the outside. The inside is that I fell from my throne, when I learned that the translation I had made of an English book into Dutch was not accepted. It was not up to the standard. Not so strange when one realizes that I never was completely sober when I lived there. Still I worked hard. Hardly went to the beach. No time, I had to shop twice a day - no refrigerator - cook twice a day, eat for hours and drink at the same time and in between I had to translate. Beside that it was hot, so hot that in the afternoon we rather made love than work. In the end it seems a miracle I did finish my translation at all.

Work first

When I look now at my self image then, I have to laugh. Then as well as now, I think I have to work before I am allowed to enjoy myself. My self image is that I am a woman who can take care of herself in the financial sense. Only when I am with a man I love and the sun shines hot and the wine flows richly I surrender, I let go of my dream me. So what has the paradoxical theory of change

to do with this? I cannot deny that I am a worker bee before I am a lover bee. Even though it happened that work was not - in this case – valued, I tend to go back to work as my number one need.’

Session eight: THE point

‘Talking and listening and thinking, feeling, believing or not believing. It all happens at the same time. I love to talk, I love to tell, I love to listen to the stories, ideas, philosophies. I love to taste how your minds work. I also love to wonder if and how I can reach you, meet you. All the words spoken this evening had a colour, a sound, a tone, a meaning. They all fitted into a context so that I could listen to three stories and three ways of living a life plus my own story and way of looking at life. I used to be silent when I was about twenty. I was as closed as a pot. This is a Dutch expression.

The balance

And I still can be rather silent and more directed to someone else who is talking or directed to the inside me. I believe that talking can be an art if talking and hearing and listening are balanced. A real talker needs the right audience to talk and to let his authentic voice out. I am a real talker as well as a real silent person. Specially on evenings like these I always wonder about the balance between talking and writing. We are here – I think – to go deeper into the process we are busy with. Talking is a way to do that. While talking we can share a lot of information about ourselves, about our experiences, longings, fears, adventures, ideas.

Lazy-delicious-land

My question is: does it really serve us to go deeper into a subject by talking? Tonight I am fascinated by what everyone of you told. And I was also happy to share my dogs drama and experience your compassion and seriousness. So why do we have to or want to write on top of all those words.

Are the written words different from the spoken ones? Yes, for me they are. To write words I take more time to let them come. Although I learned more and more to be aware when I speak of what I am saying and how it effects you.

The balance between telling, talking, speaking and going into process has been haunting me since I became a therapist. And even here where I believe we are beyond therapy, I am still wondering about having to put up borders when we speak. Time limits?

I would not like that. I have this dream that maybe the most important thing we have to do here as four women at work is to communicate in a free and easy way.

I mean when do we in the big society have the chance to let our voices be heard to the point where we touch ourselves – and the others – because we reach THE point, that makes us understand our own story. To do it by writing is also a possibility. Here we have the luxury to do it both.

For me that is *luilekkerland* (lazydelicious land).

I am so curious how it is for you.

Do you ever consider those questions?’

Last session: Longing for our other half

I feel honoured because an article I wrote is published in a university magazine in India. It set me dreaming, maybe I am understood by the ‘sage’ who is responsible for this publication and whose picture is also in the magazine?

‘Dear Sage,

Far away at the other side of the ocean
or of the world, I can see your face and your smile
here in Amsterdam on your picture and start dreaming. Oh, this
must be a man who knows,
a man who has a sensitive body because he is willing to be aware
of his voice and of his spiritual feelings in his body. I would love
to explore if I am in the same place so I do not need your guidance
and can enjoy meeting each other without worrying about who
knows better, who does better, who is the authority. Meeting
would be a chance in a million of two people who walked
completely different roads that in the end are leading to the same
place, the same source, the same light where peace rules, although
Conflict and Confrontations are not forbidden. On the contrary C

& C are known to be necessary and to be fun to play with and explore where the road further leads to.

The road goes on

Strange thing about this road is that it never ever reaches the goal. There are small resting places, little oases on the way, but when one wakes up after a night in the illusion of having arrived, it is evident that the road goes on. Suitcases have to be packed and off we go into the desert or the city, the heat, the cold, the rain. So my dear other half, meeting you is really a historic moment that never can be forgotten, but it does not last into eternity.

We are human beings, we come and will die and then we are in other realms where we will meet other Other halves.'

Okay what an abstract story this is.

Who or what is it about?

Well, I must confess this Indian professor who published my story in his magazine looks rather like one of those sages to me. My dream is that he did see me, otherwise he would not have given me this prominent place in his magazine. But what is he projecting on me I wonder?

He (I thought he was a she at first, but was wrong) is telling me time and time again that he likes to meet me, that he will come to a Gestalt conference in Hungary also to meet me. It is hardly imaginable, but can he read and recognize in this small piece I wrote about 'Elderpower'* my faith, my power, my energy, he maybe longs for? Are those qualities also part of his other half, the half he does not know but longs for? Strange is that this event has become completely different since I know that she is a man. Had he been a woman, I had felt I had a sister, a girlfriend, a colleague in India who made me feel excited in a mild way. Not magical. Woman meets woman, great but not mysterious. But now I know he is a man my body energy starts moving around my heart area. Waves up and down and in circles. It feels like I am a turning wheel that sees the world from a higher and higher place.

Specially because he is a man I am also more aware and on guard. I am limiting my expectations to protect myself from

disappointments. Come on, Tine, this is just another man. You have known men before. Don't tell yourself that maybe he is your other half, maybe he is your twin soul mate.

Anyway by looking at him that way I can enter an adventure with a mind and a soul that are open for the mystery and the magic of the universe nourished by compassionate LOVE. Don't forget: this is not personal! This is BEYOND...

Reaching THE point, making the connection by talking, listening, eating and drinking together. Sharing your stories, your secret longings, your loves, your pain and sufferings? Can you do it? Do you consider doing it? Are you willing to invest the necessary time? Again and again? To do it we need at least one more human being who is willing to do the same, otherwise it does not work.

Chapters 37-39

*A silent retreat lead
by a rabbi*

37. Awakening to what is

On my way to the Silent Retreat with Shoshana and David A. Cooper in Elat Chayyim :*

Saying Yes or No to converting

December, Grand Central Station, New York, 1.00 PM

Just sitting here, drinking an undrinkable cappuccino. Undrinkable because of the milk or the coffee or the combination that does not fit my European taste. It's a good mark though. Segafredo. Okay, time to stop beating about the bush.

Time to get down to business I came for: becoming Jewish or not? Saying Yes or saying No to converting, conforming, *lernen*, choosing.

It seems like the end and the beginning of long journeys. The end of the journey full of doubt: who am I? where do I come from? What does this have to do with how I behave and what I experience? What is the meaning of all those frustrations that I met in meeting Knowing Better authorities. Men and women, but more men because they more often think they do know better and not so many women because we still listen to the better knowing men. More and more I am believing that the battle, that is of course in the first place inside of me, is a battle between my Christian and my secret or is it my sacred part? I started my childhood as a good Christian girl although my parents had no religion anymore. It seemed like a victory for them. They did not need a God or a church or anyone to tell them what was right or wrong. They knew themselves.

That is to say my grandparents did. My parents were a different matter. Too complicated to go into right now. However it was, they sent me to a School with the Bible where I found God and the beginning of complete freedom to choose any religious path I wanted. No bounds, no guilt feelings.

The religious girl I was from 5 till 18 had her share of Christianity that made her feel safe to a certain extent. Her connection was not with the church or the minister, or a teacher at school, but directly with God. Listening to the stories from the Bible she learned that

God could call you and tell you what to do, even when you did not understand why or how.

Anxious

Is that why I am sitting here now in the Grand Central Station in New York on my way to the Silent Retreat with Shoshana and David A. Cooper*, rabbi, Kabbalist, writer of the book *God is a verb* and much more in my eyes. A mystical man who has learned by experiencing and by 'lernen' what life is about. I am eager to go to this retreat and I am also anxious. Will I be accepted, received even though I don't know enough about the Jewish tradition and Judaism and don't speak Hebrew.

The Undercurrent

Jewish mysticism had been hidden for thousands of years from Jews and non-Jews alike. It is time to open this rich world for all to appreciate. May we be blessed to grow together in increasing awareness, to bring a new consciousness to the world, and to experience true peace in our times Rabbi David A. Cooper in *God is a verb** (page 19)

6 AM, dark and cold outside

Tuesday. In my room in the Isabella Freedman Centre, Connecticut. I am not supposed to write in this silent retreat. But here I am a writer who has to write. Here I am a Goy in a Jewish centre who has to write and meditate and plug into the undercurrent. I don't have to write a lot, but I DO HAVE to write no matter what David Cooper thinks. Of course he has a reason, I will never know because I will not experience it. But I am who I am and I have to listen to my inner voice helped by a card that told me: Yes, it will bring the best up in you. Strange, from the undercurrent it has to come up indeed. Time to go to the main building and meditate. It is now 6 AM, dark and cold outside, but the snow makes it light.

Main course

2 PM Awareness is the main course in this retreat.

Worry: I fall asleep or almost, the minute we start the discussion with David. The minute the questions are asked to be precise. This morning the learning group started with ten minutes perfect

silence, without it being announced. It created itself and I experienced it as a blessing. Then the questions started. I felt irritation, doubt, knowing better in the undercurrent. The rabbi is good willing. He wants to give the right answers. But is that his trap? I believe there is no right answer for those questions, just experiencing, just being. Nobody can tell you what to experience, nor how to be. I also fall asleep when I am sitting to meditate on my cushion Time and time again I almost roll over.

Agonizing and remarkable in the sense that it must be about something. I am sitting on the floor. Should be on a chair? Maybe. The snow is so beautiful out. I have to go into it and into the sun that is still shining. I still don't dare to take this notebook with me to the working area. Forbidden (?) fruit.

Awareness

Some more words about awareness.

For me it is hearing, seeing, feeling, listening, tasting, smelling in the now. I have been teaching that for years myself. Awareness is the closest to Godliness. Is that what David said? Or to the Divine? Anyway tomorrow there will be a learning group again and I will have another chance to say what I have to say.

I also hope I can have some time alone with David to really go deeper into the awareness question.

Yesterday in this group I offered to make contact with him. He came to sit beside me, told me his ancestors came from Holland. I apparently touched him although he thought I was admiring and pleasing him, when I said I saw the lights in his eyes and felt my heart beating faster. But Eliezer understood and asked if I also would be aware if I had not felt contact. Yes, that was the right question. Being aware of no contact is still being aware. Eliezer is co leading the group as a singer, a musician and a dancer.

Does he have a different kind of awareness!?

Learn to pray

Before I go outside I open at random rabbi Nachman of Breslov* and read: *Most of all, prayer is the gate through which we can enter to God. Learn to pray and you'll come to know and be attached to the Holy One.*

Yesterday with the davening (chanting prayers) two big tears ran down my cheeks. This was about needing healing and receiving it.

If there is one thing I want it is to be healed. If I cannot experience the healing my anger can arise because – again - I don't feel seen, not seen by a or the 'papa' I mean.

What about the Soul?

10 PM Time for bed. It was a heavy day, except for the dancing of the 5 Rhythms. But the sitting is heavy, not the walking though. The most heavy is the discovery that there are places where I cannot follow the rabbi. Is he in another realm or is he doing with his head what one can only experience with the whole Body and Soul. Oh, yes, the Soul what about her? The fear of being told by any authority that my attitude is infantile is still remotely with me. I needed a rabbi to accept that it is my fear reigning me and not his 'Knowing Better', for his Knowing Better is not the same as my Knowing Better.

Being in a sacred place gives us sacred feelings, I believe. Are there sacred places in your life? Do you feel differently when you are there? Do you act differently? And how about the sacred authority? What is the influence he or she has on you?

38. New to this Work

*She leaves in the dark in perfect silence
as we are not allowed to speak.*

Praying

Early morning lines about my insecurity as my cards let me know. They also give me Freedom and the message that I enable others to share themselves. I hope this is so for Shuli, my roommate. She is 15, 16, small, modest and she has to ring the early morning bell at 4.30 AM for everybody, every morning. She leaves in the dark in perfect silence as we are not allowed to speak. When she is gone I still have half an hour more to sleep as I am not an early bird. Pure luxury is to have the whole room plus the bathroom for me. This morning I thought she left, but I still heard shuffling and when I opened my eyes I saw her standing in a corner face to the wall? Was she praying before she went out into the cold? I think so and I can imagine it helps her. Praying is still not easy for me. In the singing, chanting, davening together, yes, but by myself, no.

*Even if all you can say to God is Help!, it still is very good. Repeat this over and over again, until God opens your lips and the words begin to flow from your heart. Rabbi Nachman**

The gap in Amsterdam

10 PM Heavy stuff tonight in the presentation of Shoshana: Ruanda, Auschwitz. Don't take life too seriously were the first words I heard the rabbi say, when the retreat started. Well, when I heard Shoshana tell about those atrocities plus the suicide of her father with a pistol and brains that needed to be cleaned from the bathroom wall, I can't help taking life more than seriously. How do I feel? Okay? Rather good? Minor? Quite neutral? Do it, I tell myself, ask God for help, when you don't know. Told my story today about my Jewish quest. Also talked about the gap in Amsterdam: the Jews who are missing. Their laughs, their jokes, their God, their singing, their music, their beings. I would love to bring them back. But how?

From ego to no ego to awareness

7 AM Showered, washed my hair, got dressed, ate two mandarins, brushed my teeth, peed, pooped before showering. Everything is in order, everything is in place. I also drew a Yes/No card with the question if I should have an individual conversation with the rabbi. The card says Yes, but you keep the initiative. That is a good support to stay with what I have to do instead of offering all kind of services nobody is waiting for.

Yes, please listen, I am writing this book and I believe it will connect Jews with Goys, Gestalt colleagues with rabbi's, Europe with the USA.

Crazy idea. Still it is true that I am writing and that I have awareness to offer! It is my highest Good. Awareness, attention, kawanah*. A torch that can be directed and I am using it. No doubt about it. Question(s) still is or are: what am I doing here? Am I in the right place? Today is Xmas but not here, although Shoshana talked about her Xmas evenings last night regarding her father's birthday and death. But that was not about Xmas, it was about an horrid experience.

Beginners mind

The question or remark from Shoshana to me: 'I think you are new to this work?' still is haunting me. Why? Why shouldn't I be new to this work? Zen mind beginners mind. You are always new, always a beginner. But what stings me is that I feel put at a distance. If I am new, she is old in this work and knows more, better. Back to the everlasting dilemma with authorities who have to know better, more per definition. Strange thing is that I did not contradict her. My ego should have smiled and asked: New? Me? I am as old as Methusalem and have been doing this work as long as I can remember. And then she told that she is a convert herself. Or then? She told that after my confession of not being Jewish. Why do I feel defensive towards her? What makes my irritation coming out?

Is it the eternal mother rather knowing better than giving love? Should she have said: Oh, you are not Jewish? Must be hard for you? It meant a lot of work and you did it? Something like that yes would have been healing. My, my, you are committed, dedicated doing all that work and coming over here on Xmas to do a silent retreat!

Okay, Tien, so this is enough. You want to be seen as special by the leaders. You want to be the good student, the teacher's pet. This is eternal. If my dad has no time for me and my mother lacks attention there are the teachers to notice me. But now I am a teacher myself, I have to declare ME special and I am. I have big gifts, a lot of talent I am grateful for and I realize it gives me a responsibility, I cannot evade. It is exactly this responsibility that brought me here. I will ask the rabbi for an individual talk, just to connect. No more, no less.

Being her(e)

10 PM Wonderful day. Beginning to love being her(e). Being her? Well I am her. Beginning to love the people, beginning to love the rabbi and all the other Jews, that is the secret. Just can't help it. Looking, sensing, moving, it all comes together. Not to forget hearing: the talk, the voices, the sound and the music when we dance. I also feel the presence of the man with the cap. I don't know what but it seems he wants to say something to me. It makes me feel special, even if I am mistaken. Aha my ego is speaking, nothing wrong with that. I love my ego, she brought me here and the next step is to go to awareness, because that is what the rabbi pointed out tonight: from ego to no ego to awareness. But I don't think one has to lose its complete ego to come to awareness. On the contrary. Ego can help to be aware by doing the practice.

Promises

Afternoon. Still Xmas, still snow, although not as pretty, as it was when I arrived. Still Xmas and the only thing I notice about it here were some jokes with toy pets and built in Xmas/Channukha* songs. I did what I promised myself, I had my interview with David and did ask him after all if he is willing to read some of the texts I wrote. Was that a good idea? Yes, I think so. My heart starts beating, it is taking me and my writing seriously. The sun is out, I can see it shining on the hills. I would like to walk in it. Another good idea. I already prepared for Shabbat and am dressed to look beautiful, almost too... ? Who can judge? I am turning away now from the rabbi. The main thing is that he knows I exist.

He said he is happy I came over. He also said that ‘everybody’ who fled from Spain (in the 15th/16th century) ended up in Amsterdam. Here they are again the *conversos**.

I feel I am entering an adventure where there is no way back. I promised with a push of Naomi, the other rabbi, that I will start learning Torah. Learning, studying, *lernen*. And rabbi David promised to be very clear in his feedback on my writing. All this is challenging and pretty exciting. Unexpected detail: David’s ancestors came from Marken, that used to be an island with people that dress in old Dutch costumes even now (for tourists). His mother’s family lived there. Very strange to think was (or is?) a Jewish community.

Preparing for Shabbat

is that what I am doing? I think so. My way at least. I will be just open to whatever will come my way. Rabbi Nachman: *Address God in your own word. Compose your own prayers. Doing this will draw forth your soul and stir your meditative faculties*

Oh, God if you are here
Can you give me Your Support to go on living
So I can fulfil all those promises to myself and others and don’t need to promise anything anymore but can just DO it.

10 PM A light heart and a nourished soul

That is the result of this Friday including the beginning of the Shabbat. I am sensitive to the other people and wonder what they think of this beginning of the Shabbat by Eliezer, who joked and sang and entertained and of course has serious things to say. Still for me it is not so easy to take him completely seriously. Well known problem I should overcome.

I long to write here and now a serious piece, but how, what, where? Okay, indeed, how, what, where?

How I came to New York city and conquered ‘my’ world.

What was or is my world then?

It was or is my place in the big world American or not, Jewish or not, rich or poor, I can do it, I exist, I can be seen, even be touched, heard if I choose to let myself be heard. Where this will

lead me is not yet known, thank God. It is in the future, to keep life as exciting and adventurous as it can possibly be.

For me this is very private business. Almost too private to write about. I feel I am walking on a cord I can fall off any minute.

How is it for you? How is it to read about my experiences?

Do you feel you are crossing a border? Do you recognize what I tell? Do you have a real life master? Or has your master been dead since a long time?

39. 'No not me'

I know feeling angry is a reason why people shy away from me.

Warning

How do I interpret not – as everybody else present - to be given the chance of touching the holy Torah role that was carried around the room? As a sign this is not for you, a Goy?

Or do I have to become aware of what it did to me, when I was skipped? Tears, rage, anger, pain of feeling rejected, not chosen by a rabbi, who shows by her smile being chosen herself.

This brings me to my next item: my idea, my proposal of giving awareness hours in those retreats. Seems like a good idea, an obvious idea, but I overlooked some things, that became quite clear in the incident with the Torah. If I would be leading – not a chance but still – those awareness hours I will not only become aware of my and their loving kindness but also of my – and theirs? – irritation, contempt, projections, jealousy, to mention the feelings less wanted. I know feeling angry is a reason why people shy away from me. Afraid of their own anger and projecting it on me? Becoming aware is becoming aware – awakening – to what is. The question is, if anger is welcomed in this retreat that is silent and seems to be rather peaceful. Or do I only see the outside?

I am so happy for this warning of the Torah passing me by. It says: now you can't go back, now you have to study Torah your way. It is your way of getting a message. If you say No, okay, I'll prove it is Yes.

36 Tsaddiks

I am also thinking about the 36 (?) tsaddiks, 36 (?) righteous persons. I am born in 1936 and that is why I thought this number popped up in my head not all the time but often during a certain period. Now I hear thirty six has to do with the number of sages, wise men, wise women who live – mostly hidden – somewhere in the world. I fantasise but better take it seriously. It does not hurt to pretend, isn't that what the rabbi said? The idea is outrageous. ME, am I? No not me. But if I have a sacred contract, it is time to

bring it into practice, more and more. It is about serving. I serve my dog Poe, serve my cats, serve my clients, serve my family. That is one thing. And there is more out there that needs to be served. Writing can do it. And – thinking of what the cd's with the Mystical Kabbala did for me – a cd can even do more than a book. Main thing is that I go on writing and even dare to publish this book with adventures and then we will see. It is a beautiful way to serve because it makes ME happy.

Two L's: the Laugh and the Love

that is what I came for and that is what I found! No more, no less. That is it for me. I had a dream about a couple and a little girl. The couple was leaving their old life behind. To do this they needed a lot of paper. Where they went and what they did with the paper, I don't know!

I did it

5.30 PM in Grand Central Station

I did it, I made my point when I took the mike in the farewell session. People listened and were moved or not but still okay with my words about how I got there. I started to say I came a long way, not only because I came from Amsterdam, but also because I am not Jewish. The words came out. I could tell how wounded Amsterdam is in my eyes, because the Jewish soul is missing. There is a Hole, I said, and I mean it, a Black Hole. People are missing, energy is gone, humour is gone, wisdom is gone, music is gone and we, the people from Amsterdam, act like nothing has happened. We act like something enormous, atrocious did not become true. We go on with our lives. I don't know what else we can do. Of course we do have our monuments, a beautiful museum, remembrance days, of course the Jewish traces are there, but it is as Elana said about Eastern Europe, it is like the Jews are put away in reservations. Unbelievable! We, the survivors have to live with frozen Laughs, frozen Souls, frozen loving kindness instead of that sensitive Jewish energy.

Back with the Coopers

I drew a card this morning. Asking if I would be back with the Coopers. The answer was Yes, it will open an enormous source of

Energy. I know it will, because I can let go of all that fretting: ‘What is Jewish?’, ‘What if I am?’, ‘What if I am not?’, ‘What is the difference between them and me?’, ‘Is it that they got the laws, the Torah and I did not, although I got the Bible and that is the Torah and more, so why complain?’ I did accidentally get the Bible stories when I was a kid. What then was so painful when rabbi Phyllis passed me by with the Torah? Sorry, not for you! The rabbi knows and the rabbi decides, although when the retreat was over she told me that she was sorry I was hurt, but she thought that I was at a distance. Was I? Of course I was afraid that I was not supposed to touch. Uncertain if I was welcome. I could choose to stay with this unspeakable hurt, but knew within a minute – helped by the teaching of the Torah about ‘No not me’ - I got a chance I had to take. I felt the pain, the stab literally in my heart. I cannot ever deny that anymore. The only answer I have is to take responsibility and say: okay, here I am it took me a long time to surrender, but I am ripe and ready to study Torah. Ameyn.

Does this raise questions for you? Are you perhaps a convert? Or are you thinking about converting?

Or are you a true believer all the way back?

Why not take one of your wise or sacred books, open it at random and find your message that fits this moment?

Enough nourishment

Here And Now about halve a year later in Amsterdam: I must confess I did not start converting and I stopped considering it. I decided that I am who I am and I better be content with it. I got so much in my life that guided me to where I am now. I got enough nourishment to last me the rest of my life and if I am aware and in the Here and Now I just have to open my eyes and I will feel connected to the world that surrounds me.

I don't have to go far to find more food, I can even stay at home and open my pc to connect with the wisdom on the internet and with the people that care to communicate.

Even if I don't convert I can open the book ‘God is a verb’ of David Cooper* and read on page 118:

'Our lives, and the universe itself, are balanced on scales that measure deeds, words, and thoughts. Everything can turn on a word. A momentary thought can set a new spin to the universe. Each deed has the capacity to alter fate. Thus, the incredible drama that unfolds in each moment is awesome, for we never know what lies ahead.'

I did not search, I just opened the book and found this message that fits what I sensed and did not know how to say. I feel grateful.

Chapters 40 – 44

*Two conferences in Hungary:
The Roots of Gestalt
and
The Gestalt Leaders*

40. To Master Teach

to learn, read;
to understand, write;
to master, teach

Stand on our own feet

To master we have to teach, I learned from my teabags*. And when I teach I tell my students, they have to overcome their basic fears and develop their qualities. But how? How can we stand on our own feet and become autonomous?

In my view it is about:

- overcoming the fear to make mistakes
- taking responsibility for your longing to understand and be recognized
- know the function of the power triangle:
- omnipotence, impotence, the battle for power
- be extra aware when we want to be the best
- offer what we have to offer
- stop with being afraid of being dependent
- be aware of our longing for perfection
- learn to say Yes and to say No
- taking ourselves and the other seriously
- doing what we should do instead of doing our best
- be aware when we are patronising or preaching instead of giving attention
- taking responsibility for our needs
- asking ourselves what we need of our role models
- making implicit conflicts explicit
- distinguishing the strength and power in our aggression
- knowing about projections: we are the other
- taking the risk to step out of the fearful child role and say:
- I am who I am, whether I like it or not
- becoming a complete human being by walking our talk

Education

To walk and talk my own way I went to the Gestalt Roots and Leaders conferences in Hungary. The theme of the Roots conference was 'Education'. It was the first time I went to a Gestalt Roots conference. Up to now I had the idea that 'Roots' was not my cup of tea. Digging into Gestalt Theory without process does not attract me. I have to experience, experiment and practice before I can understand and believe what I am told in this matter. Nevertheless I decided to go to both conferences and got some severe lessons that taught me where I am in my professional life.

The role of the wo/man

Saturday 8 AM.

In my beautiful room in the Szigetkoz Wellness Hotel. Dunakiliti. Sun outside. Birds whistling.

I am happy, not over excited as I easily can become.

I feel I am in the right place, at the right moment.

I feel I am appreciated by the men my age as a friend.

What more can I wish for.

I realize I am in the role of the wo/man you have fun and...work with! It is the story of my life.

Once I thought it was the mistake of my life or rather:

I thought it was a mistake of life.

But I had to become more than seventy years old

to understand, feel and see that this is the wo/man I am. At least it is one side of me.

My legs have always made me a sexual woman.

And there is also a secret woman in me: the nun.

She has been there always but the last fifteen years she is more evidently moving me towards my destination, my home.

The path

To be here in Hungary gives me the chance to become aware of the path I walked and walk. Oh, what a wonderful, painful, funny, complicated path it has been and still is. Last night in the opening round, we were asked to find the word that suited most the role we are playing. I said: artist and surprised myself.

Am I an artist? Yes I am, I cannot deny it any longer. And being an artist means being committed to art. Is that a different

responsibility from being a therapist? I don't know, but it seems like it. Other answers were teacher, trainer, therapist and the conclusion was: so we are all teachers, teachers in different ways.

Sheep family

It is 6.50 PM now and I am exhausted.

I have about ten minutes before dinner starts and want to grab the highlights of this day; my day. This morning I walked and met sheep of different kinds. There was a family: mother, father, child. I wondered if this could be true. I never see men sheep in Holland I think. I thought (or did not think) men sheep were just used to fertilize the future mother(s) and then what...? Is it like cows: one bull does the work of making dozens and dozens of cows pregnant? At least that is how it is in Holland.

The other bulls are for the meat consumption, I suppose. Is it true that here in Hungary a sheep family is allowed to stay together? What touched me deeply was the father and mother going to each other, licking each other's faces, while their child was in between them. The goat who was also there came to me and licked my finger I dared to stick out to him/her. Magical? Mystical moments. Connecting with nature.

In the wood

This afternoon I walked in the wood on a carpet of snowdrops. I saw a deer running away.

I only saw his behind.

Jumping up and down.

Brown and white like a square.

Again: magical, mystical, given moments.

Connecting me with a Bigger Whole.

A genius

Then there is the work of the day to look at.

First Malcolm Parlett* about Paul Goodman*.

I could see and feel Malcolm's fascination for the life of a colleague writer, who apparently was a genius who died rather unhappily of a heart attack, 61 years old. Why so Young? What happened to him? Goodman wrote – more than? – 35 books.

The most important 'Compulsory Miseducation'*.

Intermission

Typing my notes out in Amsterdam I go to the internet to find out more about Paul Goodman. I become overwhelmed: what a production, what an originality, what a spirit. I also found his name in : 'The Anarchist Encyclopedia': A Gallery of Saints... & Sinners...' Very intriguing, I must take time to go back to this information and find out more. The Goodman world is opening for me; there is no reason whatsoever in my life to get bored. I feel privileged.

We all know

Back to the Roots Conference and Edwin Nevis* who taught about the Russian Jew Lev Vygotsky, born in 1896, died in 1934 of tuberculosis. The most important revelation for me is that what is being revealed I know already. There is nothing new, the excitement is that I am not the only one who knows. Here I am in a group of people who all know. We do not really mention it out loud, we just point at it, but up to now we are only busy with Jewish people and in that way this is part of my Jewish quest. What comes first: the Jew or the knowledge? Strange question. To me the Jew comes first, s/he comes before the knowledge. Nevertheless the knowledge has been there all the time.

More Knowledgeable Other

I look and wonder what is special about Vygotsky in the article we got from Edwin.

Some things stand out:

- the importance of looking at each child as an individual who learns distinctively
- language skills are particularly critical for creating meaning
- linking new ideas to past experiences and prior knowledge
- the knowledge achieved through experience serves as a foundation for the behaviours of every individual
- one gains knowledge as one develops by way of social interactions with peers and adults

I could go on and on there is so much knowledgeable stuff, but it is not my mission to relate to it at this moment.

Although I do not want to skip the part about the importance of the ‘More Knowledgeable Other’ the MKO: anyone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, particularly in regards to a specific task, concept or process. Could be a teacher, older adult, a peer, a sibling, a younger person, or even a computer.

Gifted children and children at risk

Sunday morning 8 AM

I have been awake since 5.30 AM. No wonder. I went to bed at 10 PM and fell almost immediately asleep. I slept more than seven hours, more than enough for me. I have been thinking about the presentations about gifted children and the other presentation about music therapy with children at risk. It seems that the one category is not so different from the other. They are twins, two sides of one medal. In the gifted children presentation was so much (com)passion. The presenter radiated being a gifted child herself. And in the documentary about the children at risk there was so much empathy while the children talked with their teacher and played their music or sang. Both presentations touched me deeply. Being gifted and wounded or at risk are known states for me. Writing this down makes me wonder about the role I am playing in this group. Did I in the eyes of my colleagues say the right thing at the wrong time or visa versa when I stated that all of us present are gifted? A silence fell, followed by a safe discussion without emotions. Still I can feel the fun and the trust inside me telling me I am grown up now and have to say what I have to say. Wonderful is that the presence of my ex-teacher as MKO, does not in the least bother me. Proof that I did it, I did become free of him, I did grow up and become autonomous, but it does not mean that I am indifferent to him or neutral.

When he speaks I am more alert than with colleagues I don't know. Does he say the right things? Can I still be proud of him? Can I still trust him?

Drama or process

This is dangerous territory. Once this teacher was more than special for me. Once my body reacted so intensely, so heavily, so emotionally, to the presence of him that I became rather ill and

was for some time stuck in a spiritual crisis. I feel awkward while writing about this. I know he does not want me to do so. He does not want to be part of my drama.

But what he calls drama I call process necessary to grow. Long nose for him I think now, if he does not want (my) drama he should not have become a Gestalt teacher. He claims he is shy and does not know how to behave as an ex teacher without a new role. Well, I don't know either to be honest, but I like the adventure and am curious. What roles are there we can play after the roles of teacher and student, client and therapist and of idol and idolizer? Being here is a gift with a capital G in this matter. All I have to do is to receive the process as it develops. The river flows by itself, I don't have to push it. I love life, even though or thanks to being gifted and being wounded. I would hate to live without (my) drama. Too boring.

Time to have a look at the water that flows through the Danube, the river that is very close here, where there are some side streams.

Are you a teacher, a master, a therapist, a trainer, an artist who longs to offer the world what you have to offer? And do you? If yes: what is most rewarding? If no: what is keeping you from it?

41. Believing is Seeing

One teacher who is sincerely interested can give you the right to exist and be who you are.

Tired and frustrated

Monday, 3 PM The Roots conference is over. I enjoyed being there, listening to passion driven presentations by real professionals. They awakened my own longing to be a - good – teacher/presenter. The main conclusion of the conference is: one good teacher can make all the difference in your life. One teacher who is sincerely interested can give you the right to exist and be who you are.

We are free for more than a day till the Leaders conference starts. I am tired and frustrated. Realizing I am still struggling with my longing to connect with my ex-teacher. I would like to communicate with him about work. I am curious where he is on his path and what keeps him busy. I sincerely do not know how to reach him. One time I sat with him at the dinner table while talking about his discovery when he was fifty that his mother was Jewish. In the light of my history and search for my own roots this is remarkable. I told him that he was one of the few men I felt attracted to who I thought was not Jewish.

The teacher started to laugh and said: ‘Sorry, I fooled you’ or something close. Crazy answer that shut me up. Did he not know what I meant? Or did I come too close? Probably the last. My history with this teacher is classical. I projected on him what I longed for most at the time: being a therapist, a trainer, a leader. Now I am and if I want to meet him, I have to meet him from this angle. I don’t need teachings from him anymore, I just long to connect as colleagues.

Neshomma

Important meeting I had with a colleague from Israel. I asked her what she thought of ‘Neshomma in a Goy body’ (Jewish soul in a not Jewish body) as the title of a book. She taught me: ‘There is one big Neshomma and every Jew has a piece and therefore they

have the duty to look after each other. The Goyim who feels attracted to Judaism also have a piece of this Neshomma and are therefore connected with the other Jews.’ It sounds rather sensible. It is what is keeping me busy since I discovered Gestalt and the Gestalt world, as Gestalt is rather Jewish as far as I can see. Okay, is this enough writing for now? Oh no, there is the story of Anandamayi Ma, a Hindu girl/woman, who turned out to be a saint. I read it last night in ‘Weavers of Wisdom*’ when I lay awake longing for peace in my head and found the sentence: ‘...and so, because all things are appearances of God, everything is precious, everything must be listened to and respected – nothing is really wrong!’ Reading about the life of this Hindu woman gave me the peace to go back to sleep and dream (?) and let my ex teacher(s) go. I think and feel this gives me the opportunity to digest this overwhelming intense period when Gestalt authorities were dominating my life. The feeling of being completely alone in it excited me and made me strong. I knew I was connected to a Bigger Whole that gave me the Energy to go on. No human soul was able or willing to receive me. Were they ignorant or afraid or angry? They sounded angry. Not wanting my drama? I don’t know, I would love to discuss this with him. But how to offer and be received? I will have to prove I am a teacher myself and be recognized. Isn’t that funny? Roles change. That is the answer I was looking for.

Time to go for a walk, although the wind is blowing rather hard, but there is sunshine.

Genuine love

6.45 PM in the bar. I had a walk. Did some swimming, was in the sauna and now I am here in the bar where I met Edwin, who told me that he was touched by my language this morning, when I told how happy I was and am with the Roots conference because I could feel genuine love or is it Love and felt connected to the history of Gestalt. Talking about myself I used the word hysterical, meaning that I am afraid I am seen this way. I could have used but didn’t: drama queen. Ed told me that he can see how this image can bring me into trouble, but he thinks I am interesting, he likes my energy. Great! I better take it seriously

now I have this chance. More and more I know I better give examples of what I am able to do. Stop holding myself back and stop looking at myself as a drama queen, even if I am, I am a serious one who has precious wisdom to offer. Besides that I did not invent drama, I am no more than the messenger.

A taste of paradise

Tuesday 2.45 PM in my room. It is or it was raining. Looking outside I see dead pampus grass (sorry, I hope this is an English word). A bare tree. Fields. Far away a white house with green doors and windows. It is dry again, time to go to the village. Maybe change some money to buy presents. But first I have to catch up with this writing. What are my headlines? Actually hardly anything to do with the people here personally. A lot of space, time, energy, freedom is the result. Yesterday evening we sat rather a long time talking around a table. Was I bored? Maybe yes, I am bored easily when I am behaving socially. Last night I woke up at 1.30 AM and started reading the chapter about Kathleen Raine in *Weavers of Wisdom**. She believed in 'nature-mysticism'. Somehow I was reading my own experiences, specially related to my *El Bloque** period. There I did have a taste of paradise, whether or not anyone can or could follow me there. Then – more than twenty years ago – nobody could. No wonder, I was in a world where insects communicated with me by tapping on windows, tomatoes tasted like heaven and the colours of the birds were of a splendour that blinded my eyes. There I danced as a witch in a circle, stopped smoking from one second to the other, could see people as the completed beings they are meant to be and was so angry that I almost cleaved a wooden bar top. I was told that I as a co-trainer should leave the group because I was dangerous and at the same time I knew I was as close to Truth as I ever on earth could come. My condition of this luscious conscience lasted about a week. Then I went gradually back to functioning normally. Later I read about LSD experiences and got this AHA feeling: this is what I experienced without needing LSD.

Inward and spiritual essence

And now here in Hungary I read Kathleen Raine and recognize: 'The symbolic images come, of necessity, from the perceptible world, for this world is, in the nature of things, and unalterably, the 'given', inseparable from our human nature as incarnate beings; all the knowledge of the soul must come to it in terms of this world of embodiment. Truly understood the entire world is one great symbol, imparting in a sacramental manner, by outward and visible signature, an inward and spiritual essence.'

Not many people go to this paradisiacal country I also read in her story, but Kathleen did and she wrote about it so I can know that she has been there as well and found her Self. I understand that she – like me - suffered of not completely answered loves. Anyway she gave me a taste of nourishment I need more of.

Marionette player

This morning at breakfast Edwin Nevis sat beside me. I told him that after experiencing him as the organizer of the Roots conference I saw him as a marionette player pulling the right cords at the right times. I asked him or told him that I am curious when he will pull mine. I am happy to state that I could ask him playfully, no real expectations, just uttering the words that came up.

Then Ed told me he likes my style and as we danced together last night I know I like his style too. Wonderful to have a meeting with this man of over eighty who has not only a mind and a will, but also a heart and a soul and a body that still dances. Even if we never meet again this moment is engraved in my own body and soul. He confirms my right to exist as a dancing woman.

Meeting the turtles

After breakfast I went swimming and had a massage with Dead Sea Salt and olive oil. Rather prickly and very soothing, also because of the music of Enya. Time for the village. Oh no, I almost forgot the experience of this morning that I cannot describe, only indicate: eight turtles on a rock in the swimming pool gave me the chance to have for the first time in my life eye contact with a turtle. First with one and when I called them, all of them came. The only thing I had to do was to be willing to connect with them.

To end this part I go back to Kathleen and a sentence I underlined: ‘so it always must be when, in whatever field, ignorance passes judgement upon knowledge. But those who are in the know are unanimous in reporting that such changes of consciousness are not of degree, but of kind; not some strong emotion or excitement but a clarity in which all is minutely perceived as by finer sense.’

I feel supported in my mission against knowing better as an absolute truth. Knowing better – for me – means I know not in the absolute sense, I just know I can get glimpses of the Truth when I am willing to sense and take risks as I am doing by writing this piece.

Choices

Wednesday, 0.20 PM

Before I start about anything else I want to preserve the remark of Malcolm Parlett this morning during breakfast. When I asked if he had had a massage: his answer was: ‘One can not massage a stiff upper lip.’ Pity Malcolm could not stay with the Leaders.

This conference started last night with an opening round and play back theatre. My surprise was Kailash*, who announced in the whole group that he came all the way from India because of me and my Elderpower text. He found it in the AAGT Newsletter and published it in The Edge, a magazine of an Indian Institute for Higher Education. I feel honoured, thrilled and deeply touched. Unbelievable that things like this can happen. At the same time I feel responsible for his being here. Now I have to choose if I go to his Yoga and Gestalt discussion group, where it is about ‘the concept of harmony, awareness, symmetry and organization, which are the main denominators in both disciplines. Awareness is also vital in both ways of thinking. In yoga this awareness goes to deeper spiritual level.’ Or shall I attend the group about ‘tension and conflict in Gestalt institutes and organizations, like in families, as integral parts of normative development.’ My Yes No cards tell me to go to Kailash and to accept it as a precious present.

This morning I found a beautiful quote of rabbi Nachman of Breslov* that radiates my day:

‘For the true believer, believing is seeing.’

This wisdom helped me to stay with what happened in the discussion group about Teaching Gestalt Therapy: ‘a complex task, given our commitment to providing experiential, here and now, as well as conceptual learning experiences.’

Now I type this report out, I have to admit that I did not write down anything about the discussion. I only stated in my notebook that I feel relieved, because the pieces of my puzzle seem to fall into the right places. Meaning that the story with my ex teacher, who was present in the group, makes more and more sense to me as the discussion was about core values concerning ‘good teaching’. I did not agree with him, alas time was too short to go deeper into this matter.

No safe roles

11.10 PM As always the more involved I am during a conference, the less I write. Today I did a step freeing myself of the tension with my ex teacher. At least that is what I long and hope for. I laid my egg by saying that I find it difficult to communicate with him now we don’t have safe roles anymore. He could receive me and said that he feels awkward and often shy in situations like this himself. I can hardly believe he is open to normal communication and tell myself not to hurry and be on guard, anything can still go wrong. Still I am happy that something new seems to enter into our relation. Tomorrow I have my own ‘Teaching Gestalt as an Art’ discussion group. I am looking forward to it, I took a lot of time to prepare and am able - depending on the needs of the participants - to walk different paths.

Questions to you as a reader:

Did you ever experience a spiritual crisis? Did you read about it? Did you take drugs to experience another level of consciousness? What did you see you never saw before? Did you believe your eyes or did you think you were going crazy? Take some time to relive whatever adventure you had and then write or draw what presents itself. Can you take it seriously?

42. The Reality of Play and Art

To teach Gestalt as an Art means stepping out of control and out of the well known into an adventure

Doing instead of thinking

The first time I invited only colleagues to join me in the adventure of 'Teaching Gestalt as an Art' was during this Leaders conference in Hungary. In the announcement of the workshop:

To teach Gestalt as an Art means

- stepping out of control and out of the well known into an adventure
- doing instead of thinking and talking about doing
- believing in talent beside knowledge
- having the courage to make a fool of yourself
- not being bothered by right or wrong
- believing in your hand that is writing or drawing
- trusting your voice that is speaking or singing
- feeling your feet who are dancing or walking
- letting it happen without correcting
- taking the work that will emerge seriously

No nonsense

Three colleagues joined me. We started by exchanging what is going on in our lives. Not a quick round, but seriously and intensely. While doing this work I started to realize that talking together is an art we don't practice too often in a group because usually we have no time to just talk. Yet time is exactly what we need if we want to make ourselves clear and understand what the others are saying. This asks for the trust that nobody is speaking nonsense if he or she is given the opportunity. Of course there are limits because time is limited, but the main aim is the intention.

If we as leaders or we as clients are willing to hear the others and are willing to listen to ourselves, togetherness will be created if we are able to do it without judging. Not easy and the answer is in the paradox. As long as we do judge and are critical, we better become

aware of it and take responsibility by expressing it out loud. Change will come gradually when the group meets a number of evenings or days in a row.

Something unique

After the talking usually a theme has emerged I can use in the guided meditation or visualisation I will offer. The idea is to invite the participants to be more and more in the Here and Now by asking them after the meditation to put their hand on the paper, let it move and write whatever words want to be written. And even when there are no words the hands can keep moving and doodle. About twenty minutes later every group member will have created a text.

For some people it is quite a step to read what they wrote out loud, but if they do they discover that what they wrote is worthwhile. If the group is more experienced words can be sung and played or even being danced or drawn. This goes slowly. My experience is that a group of people can stimulate and inspire each other to be brave, if all members are willing to take the risk to make a fool of him- or herself, for the sake of creating something new, something that nobody ever has seen or read before, something unique because it cannot be repeated.

Foundation

As mentioned before it is essential to participate as a leader in the process of creating, by writing or/and drawing yourself. The group members are also in a double role as artists and as the audience. In this way we can support, stimulate, inspire, give feed back, admire and form the foundation for a valuable Here and Now experience: seeing and hearing and being able to create because you are seen, heard and felt.

In Dunakiliti we started with telling who we are, where we come from, what we aim for. Each of us got enough time to tell his/her story. For me this was exciting, from time to time breathtaking. So he is from India and knows about Yoga and came all the way to Hungary because he longs for Gestalt nourishment. She is from Vienna and teaches music as a Gestalt therapist and

he is from Hungary and did a lot of work preparing this conference. I told I am from Amsterdam and was disappointed – at first – with only three participants, but after listening to each other it was like the room was filling with more voices, more energy. Facts, stories, longings, expectations (not) coming true. I love to listen to the bare stories, I love to relate to the tellers, I love the simple beauty it invokes. ‘Only’ four people became within one hour a real group with big potential.

Intriguing image

After the sharing and the guided meditation, we decided to draw together on one big sheet of paper. First with our eyes closed and when we opened them, we completed the image. We realized that all those criss cross lines were only relevant for us. It is not about art in the sense that it will last forever. But is an intriguing image that invites us to go deeper by finding words in it that can guide us to untold stories or poems.

My words are: serpent, big feet, back, tail, nose, clouds, knot, eye, stream, river, energy, water, magical, mystical, together, E.T., jumping fishes, white sky, pink dance, open hands, ground, park, city, spirals, open circles, coming together, question mark, road, no goal, hand, inner ears, elephant, support, longing, wonder. And those words guided me while writing:

‘Once upon a time there was an elephant

with a short tail.

He went to the city, stepping forward with his big feet and long nose, smelling the serpents in the spirals.

When he met the stream he remembered that the river is flowing by itself. It does not need support. On the contrary it gives a context and shows him the way to go to the park where he finds the green he needs to stay alive.

He takes a sip of the water

And splashes himself afterwards

Feeling the water in and over his huge body

He did not believe his eyes

When he walked on and met on his way

this tiny creature from outer space

Was he dreaming of was this his reality
The only way he could know is to go with
his awareness to his big feet touching the ground
giving him security and the sense of being in the Now

He looked around and saw a cord of pink ET dancers connecting
with each other. Could he join? he wondered.
They had this magical radiance of being together
he did not want to break into
After all he was an elephant and could not change himself into a
being that belonged in this pink cloud
Or that could make contact with those ET beings from outer
space
More and more he became aware of his size
He realized that he was bigger than big
It was certain that nobody could overlook him
He felt shy
It was not and never had been his intention to be so huge

‘Sorry, sorry,’ he said softly to himself but in fact to the world
around him ‘I did not create myself
I never longed for a body as big as this
But now I am I have no other choice
Then to stick with it
Please believe even though I am big
I am also nice
I love what you do and I love you
How about using me
as an island, as a paradise, an oasis
where you can sit or dance and enjoy yourself
because you are together and you are safe with me?
You would make me happy and because I am happy
I make you happy too!’

Only half an hour

When we all four read our stories we looked at each other and
wondered where this magic energy came from.
We only needed about half an hour to create the drawing and the
stories. All we had to do is to plug into the creative energy

that is everywhere around us.
It is up to each of us to say Yes or No to using it.
Yes or No to opening the tap and let the water stream.
Yes or No to putting the plug into an electric point
and let electricity come.

Happy few

Our next step was to write a few sentences,
that could guide us back into the outside world:
'Go into the outside here and now and connect with your
colleagues in the big group,'
I wrote, 'apparently having their doubts about what we are doing
here, otherwise more people would have joined us. Are we the
happy few and the bringers of the Good News that the world is
full of wonders one can abide in or not?
We have a free will and therefore the Freedom of Choice, again
and again and again.
Every day, every hour, every minute, every second of our life.'

Somehow I felt like we were in a secret conspiracy.
Was I the elephant or the pink ET dancers or both?
And how about the meaning of the stories of the others?
Or are the stories in itself enough to connect?
Yes, for the moment. What more can we wish for.

Invitation to you as the reader:
Please have a look at the statements at the beginning of this chapter.
What do you recognize?
And how is that for you?

43. Knowing Better

*What I expected from joining this group is finding sacred time and a sacred place **that enabled me to connect with my ex teacher after all.***

Ethic Dilemma

Friday, noon, still in Hungary. I do something wrong in the eyes of some colleagues. Ethically wrong? I am – in their eyes - too open, too direct, too honest, too critical, too confronting?

At least, this is the message I got this morning in the discussion group about ‘Ethic dilemma: using information from therapy, supervision and teaching in order to judge students development.’ According to the program the discussion group should be about:

Experiential search of the dilemma

Sharing of experience of the group members with the dilemma in their own institutes. A short expose of levels of dilemma’s.

Consequences of the ethic dilemma’s for the training program and the role of teachers.

Humour flickered

After attending this group lead by my ex-teacher who also was my therapist I realize that I felt threatened by him and by the other colleagues in the group. Why? Did they feel threatened by me and is that why they attacked? What I expected from joining this group is finding sacred time and a sacred place that could enable me to connect with my ex teacher after all.

And when I told about the complaint of the mother who was kicked by her daughter in my presence, for a moment his laugh was there. Humour flickered and I felt I came home. But then I went a step further as I wanted to be open about my student/client and my teacher/therapist relation. A real ethical dilemma in my eyes, even after so many years, because we never closed IT.

I opened my mouth and could not even finish my sentence. The angry message from a colleague: we don’t want this now, because... ? I let myself be silenced. No way to connect with either of them. No way and no time to explore why.

One teacher can make the difference

I am so happy that I went to the Roots conference where I learned that one good teacher can make all the difference in a life. One teacher who is able to see you, hear you, value you! I am thinking of Benjamin Zander*. We watched last night on DVD how he inspires his pupils by being inspiring himself. What a Blessing when you meet a teacher like this conductor of the Boston Philharmonic.

It brings me back to this same Gestalt teacher who then saw me and told me he thought I was good. It was all I needed to go on, all I needed to know that I had found my path! Serious business. I am a searcher, a seeker, I thought I had found my path before but this is not the end of my quest. There is more to discover. Anyway, Gestalt gave me the right foundation to be able to go on.

It is what I wanted to tell: you were a good teacher but not a good therapist for me. What I wanted to add was: and I learned as much from the teacher as from the therapist. It was your intention, your style, your tone that guided me and gave trust.

Trust

Trust is the quality I am looking for in this Leaders group. To trust each other, trust students who want to become and did become Gestalt therapists, trust ex teachers who stay in their roles of teacher, trust leaders of institutes who seem to know the Gestalt criteria that gives Gestalt a place in the international society. Well I do not always. I often mistrust I must confess and I am mistrusted as well by my colleagues. At this conference I did not find a way to win and give trust and respect.

In the end it is up to me, I know, I am the one who can open my mouth and say what I have to say or keep my mouth closed. I am the one who can use my pen and pc and write what I have to write or not. Now I do and realize it is not about being right or wrong and Knowing Better, but about being transparent and open to discussion.

Not good enough?

After the ethical discussion group, my ex teacher came to me to let me know that he did not want me to talk about a teacher we share. Life is full of surprises. I was flabbergasted. Why should I? It is the

first time in all those years I saw him agitated. Teachers go deep, I understood, also for him. Conclusion: I invoke fear, I can say – and write – things he is afraid of and so are others. Things I should keep to myself, things that have to do with shame, longing, thinking we are not good enough? Anyway, my message is: I am grateful to my ex teachers, all of them! They did a wonderful job. What more can I wish for and what more can I say? They gave me the energy to become my own boss and teacher. My reality now is to become honest enough to admit that all those ex-teachers are ex indeed. The process goes on and since years I am taking my own responsibility for what I have to offer. Time to hide behind the wisdom of a safe teacher is over. And as there is no absolute truth, no ready answers, I will – as everyone else – have to take risk after risk if I want to be boss in my own life.

It is springtime

2.15 PM after a walk in the fields and along the River in the marvellous sunshine, I am sitting on the terrace of my room writing a song, I am hoping I can sing during the community meeting:

It is springtime, it is springtime

And I am in Dunakiliti
Joining the leaders of Gestalt institutes
It is springtime, it is springtime
And the sun in the sky is telling me
even if I am not allowed to speak
as a Gestalt Leader
I do have my own response – ability
as I am my own leader
and have my own words
No one can stop me
what I have to say is okay

I don't have to explain to you sun
You have seen the same play
Over and over again
Sun up there I want to tell you

How grateful I am
You are giving me the light and warmth
I need to go into the dark of the group
Where I will find trust and mistrust together
Needing time to respect each other and connect

Impasse

Alas, I could not sing the song in the community meeting, but was allowed to do it in the home group. I think most colleagues except one could receive me. In the community meeting the group was stuck in the impasse, no room for play and art. No room to communicate. Pity, I could have brought a spark of light but did not have the courage. We had to wait till the next morning and the next meeting to learn about our differences: the leaders of the institutes let me and others know, we are in their eyes out of place and therefore not welcome in this conference, as it was meant to be exclusively for leaders of training institutes.

No process allowed

To know the truth is less painful than having to guess where the hostility comes from. The message I got personally was: we don't want process. Okay, 'they' don't want process and I am a process and drama 'maker'. I did not know it was like that, if I had known, I would not have come, because for me communication without process is rather boring and I don't go to conferences to be bored. But in the end I was not bored at all: what an exciting field to be in when a part of the players have decided they do not want process and the other part does, so that is what process is about. No question if anyone wants it or not, it just is.

Have you ever been in a group where you did not know the rules, the habits, the expectations and therefore did not feel welcome? How about your school time, or when you were a member of a church or a sports club? How was it for you to belong or not because you knew the rules or not? Did you stay or go away and search for a group where you did feel at home?

44. Where am I?

Play for three Gestalt leaders on an airport

*What is the mission I have?
There is a laugh I can feel in my belly.*

Dirty looks

Saturday, 4 PM on Vienna airport, waiting for my flight to Amsterdam. No possibility to connect and have a coffee with the two colleagues who are also waiting for their flights. I am told I better stay at a distance and I obey, more or less, as Vienna airport is not very big. I am part of a play and wondering about the role I am in. What is the mission I have?

There is a laugh I can feel in my belly.

It says: long nose. Why do you think you can ignore me, give me dirty looks and tell me what I am (not) supposed to say? Isn't this a crazy story, almost like family. Is it my role to bring the humour back in this field by letting my spirit out?

Responsibility

I am happy to say I do have this potentiality and I do feel a responsibility that is rather big. Has also to do with my age, I am the eldest in this field of leaders and know that my inner being longs to be part of a bigger whole. I see myself sitting in the big group yesterday afternoon, wanting to connect in harmony, ignoring some hostile looks in my direction and thinking:

And yet it is springtime, it is springtime

The ego longing to be the best

Why didn't I dare to sing this song and bring some humour in the group? The more I write, the more I realize that the role I play in this field is complicated.

I feel sincerely seen by Kailash because it is about my Elderpower text that did touch people in India more than people in the western Gestalt world as far as I know. How is this for my ego that loves to be seen, heard, read? My ego that loves to be the best? Being gifted and having a special place is well known to me.

Who of us 'leaders' doesn't? Being older makes me less afraid of rivalry. I know I am not the best, never will be. And I know being the best is not really interesting, just as being right and being wrong is not interesting in itself.

Right and wrong are only interesting in relation to... Right and wrong can bring us together if I am and the other is willing to be open and to receive.

Transform mistrust

What I have to learn is to transform my mistrust to a more playful power that can open gates to a better world. I just had a look at the book 'Fateless' of Hungarian Nobel prize winner Imre Kertész* I got as a present at the conference. On the back page I read it is about a fourteen year young Hungarian Jew, who is an outsider, even in Auschwitz, among his own people: *'His estrangement makes him a preternaturally acute observer, dogmatically insisting on making sense of everything he witnesses.'* This sentence is one of the gifts that unintentionally have come my way this week. Of course I identify with him. Of course it is the outsider in me who becomes excited and wants to start reading immediately. But... it means I have to go to Auschwitz with him and I dread that journey. Too painful, I am too afraid. I do have a lot of courage some people tell me and I know they are right when I am in the spotlight of the arena. But to go into the death camps and stay with the sensitive brave ones who not only survived but wrote about it, is more than I have to offer right now.

Knowing Betters who attack

Here and Now at home again, while typing all this out, I wonder what I am after. What I am doing by writing is exploring if I am and if we are good enough to make the world better. To do this I need the image of fellow human beings, of men, of women. How can I see what I look like if I have no mirror and how can I see you when I don't look and listen? I need a field I can relate to, a group of people I share my passion with, my passion to connect, to become one with the Big Whole. What I learned in Gestalt and other fields is that it is difficult for me to connect with the Knowing Betters. Difficult or impossible?

I don't know, but I lost my appetite. Why should I want to connect with KB's who attack and tell me what to say and what not, tell me I have no right to be where I am.

The chance is in the frustration

Since I know Gestalt and Buddhism my motto is:
the chance is in the frustration.

I know it is true, because I have been frustrated and angry, again and again, I know how precious it is to stay with my anger and fear and then to be able to connect after all. Of course I am frustrated because I am a woman who Knows Better herself. Not that I know what is better for the other, but I do know what is better for me in relation to...

The ideal conference

In thought I go back to the last session of the conference when we were invited to look ahead at the next conference. I suggested we all go to an hotel I know in Yalta in gorgeous Crimea on the Black Sea. My ideal conference would be just coming together without a program and letting emerge a coherent program in the Here and Now.

Everybody present would be invited to offer what the group would need. I am certain it could be done, if we find the right place although it takes courage to co-create an event like this. I was happy that some colleagues were interested but the group decided the next conference will be in London, lead by my opponents. Main thing is that the process goes on.

Dance with the dancers

My top experience of this conference was being able to dance with born dancers. It gave me the right to exist and to be there.

Dancing for me goes to the core of my being. It gives me the energy to go on all night and live the song:

'When the singers are the song and the dancers are the dance.'

Again and again and again and again...

This is it. Being able to dance gives me the opportunity to step out of having to Know Better, as it is about Doing and Feeling and

Being Better. It took me a long time to allow myself to have pleasure while there was still somebody around sulking. I did not make anyone more happy that way, on the contrary.

Painful for both sides

Healing for me was being in the car to the airport with four other women. Before we went *en route* we took a detour to see the Danube. A generous gift from the driver who lives in Vienna. I sat in the backseat beside a colleague who did want to hear more about what I have to say. While driving through sunny Hungary I told her how I struggled with my relation with my teachers. Her comment 'Falling in love with your therapist is very difficult and very complicated and painful for both sides!' is exactly why I believe it is so important to explore experiences like this on a level that is beyond therapy. It is also why I go on writing:

I am too old to be told

I am too old to be told what is good for me
I am too old to be told what you want me to be
I am too old to be told what to do, what to say
I am too old to be told what to see, what to hear

I am too old to listen to your chaos thinking
I am too old to be told that you think I am good or not
I am too old to be told that I do not care enough
I am too old to be told that you know what is good for me

Now I am more than multi years aha
and used every year, every month, every week, every day, every
hour, every minute, every second
to find out what suits me, what makes me laugh,
makes me cry, makes me angry, makes me gay

Now I am young enough to tell you
That although I may not be perfect
I am a woman with a heart in the right place
A woman with a body that works
A woman with a mind that is clear and can understand
A woman with a soul that is ready to come out of the closet

That is why I am too old to be told do this,
do that because you say so
To become happy I only have to listen
To this tiny modest voice inside me
That knows about subtlety, beauty, faith, love and trust
And if you want to know too I can share with you
what she tells me; no words, just sounds, just being.

*And you? Where are you? Are you the one who tells the other what to do,
what to say or are you the one who is being told? Or do you have both poles in
you at different times? Are you the teacher and the leader at one time and at
another time the pupil and the student?*

Part Three

Coming Home

Chapters 45 – 49

**Writing in the Garden in Amsterdam
and
Feeling at Home in Charleston, South Carolina**

45. A Safe Place

A place to return to and feel calm

Being aware in my garden

Listening to the sounds

I hear someone hammering

I hear the laugh of a small child being played with

A woman's voice is telling the dog of my neighbours:

'Mag niet, No don't,' she says 'Bah!'

A little girl says 'kookje'

She is telling a story

A coffee machine is working or is it a bore?

I see white stripes in the blue sky

Vapour left by planes

A cat is miauling; my dog barks fiercely at him/her

A great tit(mouse?) sits in the Japanese cherry tree

that has small buds that will bloom in about two weeks

The miauling of the cat turns into wailing

A man is emptying his throat and says 'Bluggurrh'

A child says 'Nee hè?'

The forsythia flowers

The frogs in my pond are kwauwaukwauking and making love

Someone is sawing

Birds – great tits – are chirping in a little nest cupboard

I see one of the parents entering with food

My dog is on my feet

He has to change position; the sun is too warm

Children are playing together

I can hear the sound of their voices, not the words

My roses are making leaves

The shrubs became much bigger and stronger than last year

The frost did not bother them

Someone is sandpapering, apparently painting his/her house

One of my cats was on the nest cup board of the great tits

I could scare her off but she worries me

I cannot always keep her under control

I am also worried about the dead branches of my passion flower

Normally it flourishes vastly
I cannot imagine that it did not survive; it has been green all winter
A child asks: can I shut the door?
It is in one of the gardens opposite me, where the sun is gone
The playing children are becoming louder and louder
In the sky a swarm of birds is flying over; I hear oing, oing
I have to take off my jacket, too hot.

Do you have a place, a place where you feel safe and can return to? A place that is yours? A place where no one can disturb you if you don't want to be disturbed? A place where you can meditate, sing, paint, write? A place that invites you to be in the Here and Now and experience the actual? If yes take time in this place and write down what you are aware of. If you can, do it daily or weekly. Make an appointment with yourself how long you will sit. If you do not have such a place find a space where you can sit privately for some time and imagine a place like that. What does it look like? Where is it? How does it smell? What do you have to do to create a place like it? Are you going to do it?

46. Tree-power

From human doing to human being

Life is difficult

I read in an email message I received. Is it? Is life difficult? For me or/and for you? Once I accept that life is difficult, it will become easier. Once I surrender and accept that - for example - connecting with other Leaders is not simple for me and the others, I can relax. I dream of connecting with colleagues going to conferences and the only thing I can do, is be there, communicate, feel if I make contact and can connect or not.

Now conferences are over I write and dream of creating a space and a place, where even Leaders can communicate beyond doing. Leaders are so busy with organizing and as I am one of them I know how important and how inspiring it is to belong to a group of committed Leaders who take care of the ongoing Gestalt processes in a wider field, day in and day out.

I know as so many of us know what it means to open your email and receive ninety or more Gestalt messages concerning conferences or other happenings. The number always increases when there is a human crisis, as of course is bound to happen in organizing processes.

The Gestalt show must go on

I wrote this piece originally for the AAGT* community because I have never ever in any community experienced so much patience from and for people who are anxious, angry, hurt and sad in the process of organizing. It warmed my heart. Touched me. Real beauty. Of course it was also quite painful often, but that is only one side; now I want to emphasize the miracles, the love, the dance, the humour, the care, the glances with smiles and the sun that came to me. I need Gestalt communities to experience those two sides of one medal. My message is: the Gestalt show must go on. I realize that for me personally it is not certain if it is good to stay in the Leaders show, it maybe better to step out of the limelight and into a more intimate place where the goal is not

number 1, but I am and you are as an I and Thou instead of Its.
My dream is that Leaders who give and gave so much Do power to the Gestalt world, are – like me - longing to use their Be power more and are willing to form a group. In this group it will be about what I call Tree-power. You don't have to be old in years to join as developing your Soul strength starts in the cradle and using it is an intention, not a necessity.

Some thoughts to inspire you:

Tree-power = Elderpower = Soulpower

- is to continue even when things are difficult
- is more modest than the power of youth
- knows about loss, humiliations, betrayals and mistrust
- knows how relative fame, glamour and stardom can be
- knows because it has grown of adverse wind that forces you to pedal harder on your bicycle to go forward
- knows about willing to do
- is Be power that does not fade away like muscular strength but on the contrary becomes stronger and stronger by the years.
- is creative and has the strength of a tree
- is Masculine and Feminine
- is taking money seriously

-
- is practicing patience
 - is taking responsibility
 - is to do your work day in and day out
 - is not afraid of losing
 - is knowing the world is bigger than right or wrong
 - is to be open for whatever is new
 - is to accept competition
 - is paying the rent or the mortgage
 - is spontaneity and humour
 - is subtle

Tree-power and trust need one another:

Trust is a treasure

Trust creates peace

Trust we/I did not get for free
Trust I had to develop
Trust I have in the ground beneath my feet
Trust I have in the weather that is always changing
and will go back where it comes from
Trust I do people who look and see
Trust I feel in people who are willing
to sit down to look at me, talk with me
Trust is in my body that will send me messages
of right and wrong
and when I get a wrong message
I know I have to take it seriously

Mistrust

Of course I have a lot of mistrust in my life
I mistrust promises
I mistrust people who always are friendly
I also mistrust people who 'always' need money
or think they do
I mistrust me, I mistrust those words but/and
I can be different tomorrow,
tomorrow I can find trust after all

*Where do you find your trust? In yourself? In your religion?
In Gestalt? In the Other? In Books? In art?
Does this differ from day to day and from minute to minute?
Just imagine what can give you trust now? And do it.
Open a book, read what you find and trust.
Or listen to a piece of music and trust what you hear.
Look at nature and trust what you see and feel.
Look at your life and believe you did it right.*

47. Wo/man in Love

Miraculous coincidence? Maybe.

At that time she was not so busy with coincidences.

Love for the plane trees

It is September. Beautiful quiet, still, transparent, sunny weather. Charlotte looks out of her window and sees the leaves of the plane trees are browning. She lives on the fourth floor and can almost touch them. Sometimes she feels like a bird in a nest high up in a tree. When she had divorced and decided to go back to the city, she had to find an apartment and fell for the plane trees.

They reminded her of a happy period in the South of France, living together with a French painter. He taught her to love the plane trees on the square where they played daily *jeux de boules* with the other guests of Café des Arts.

From them Charlotte learned to understand and speak French. But that was long ago now. That was even before her marriage. Yet she feels connected by the trees.

In the same street

She sits down at her desk, that stands before the window. She wants to type, but what? Her thoughts are with the man she met last night in a jazz club. They recognized each other. Ten years ago they worked together. As an editor of pocket books for girls she needed someone to design the covers of a pocket series about horses, nurses and doctors, boarding-schools and a girl detective. She had a telephone number, dialled, got a man who was not the one she was looking for, but he assured her that he could do the job as well. She gave him a chance to prove himself, went to his office and found out they lived on the same street, opposite each other in a village just outside of Amsterdam.

Not the best

Miraculous coincidence? Maybe. At that time she was not so busy with coincidences, she just thought it was convenient, as she did not need to go to his office anymore but could just pick up his designs at his house and take them with her. Their cooperation did

not last long. His design was not considered the best by her bosses. Pity. She had liked the horses you could see jumping on the back of the books when the series would have been completed. But, okay, life went on and they both were busy with their work and their marriages and did not stay in contact. Just waved when they met in the street.

She did wonder about his angry look though. Feared it was about her and her marriage. Did he know how unhappy she was and how she and her husband made life impossible for each other?

Did he know they hit the bottle regularly?

She never had a chance to check. What he thought or did not think was not important anyway. He had his life and she had hers.

A knot of his head

But yesterday after a family dinner she went with a cousin to Joseph Lam, a club with pure live Dixieland music. Charlotte loves to dance on this kind of music. It connects her to the time she was at high school. When her cousin needed to go to the toilet, she leaned against a pillar and saw her ex-neighbour coming to her. He greeted by spreading his fingers and invited her to come to the dance floor with him with a knot of his head. She felt surprised. Oh, then he did not disapprove of her? While dancing he told her that he lived now alone, still in the same house he was busy selling.

The way he looked

It did not happen at once but after spending the night, waking up and having breakfast together while looking at the plane trees she fell in love. It was the way he looked at her and at the trees. She had just changed her life completely by giving up her job as an editor of a women's magazine. It meant no more fixed income, no more paid holidays, no more bonuses, no more office hours, meetings, being in the rat race, no more humiliations because of her being not as young as her readers, no more power conflicts with her colleagues. What she did gain was to be her own boss as a therapist. People came to her, she was successful, especially when leading groups.

She was happy

IT happened ten days after she started her first group. He was interested in her work, really wanted to know what she did. He used to come and meet her after the sessions asking how things went. She loved to tell him because she was new to this work and more than excited. Then one day they went on holiday to a gorgeous centre in Spain. They did not do any workshops, they just were there and met the people who did go to sessions and joked about doing their own workshop. She was happy laughing with him, eating, walking, sleeping, talking, swimming. She trusted their love was going to last forever and got her faith in life back. Then something in the atmosphere between them changed. He became vindictive. He did not like the trainers – her teachers – he saw walking by or met during the meals and in the plenary gatherings. She became anxious, could not really follow him, but could not imagine that anything really could go wrong, although she felt that whatever she did or said was not right. He regularly started to call his wife he still was in touch with.

Bodies do not lie

Charlotte's love for him was obvious. She had loved before but never had she been so certain of herself. But two days after they were back home, he told her that he did not want to be her lover anymore. Friendship yes, making love no. Charlotte could not believe her ears. Out of the blue came this blow. For her making love with him was essential. She could feel her body transforming, becoming lighter and more sensitive by sleeping with him. Bodies don't lie, she knew. Not hers and not his. Making love with an unwilling body is tragic. Their bodies had met, knowing without words. Why did he want to stop? Had he become afraid, angry? What he said was that he had unfinished business with his wife and children and wanted to go back to them. And so he did.

No meeting possible

A silly woman? Charlotte understood and did not want to understand, she wanted to know what made him decide to reject her as a lover. They talked, now and then, and got time and time again into a power conflict. No meeting possible. She wanted to hear from him that he had loved her, that also for him it was painful to leave her and that he longed for her if it was only from

time to time. But no, she did not get what she needed. Years later they saw each other again. As friends, still that night they had enough to drink to decide to sleep together. He told her how special he found her and they made love again. The next morning they woke up quite hazy and went for a walk in the cold winter air. She felt she had come home and knew at the same time she would lose him again. Although he lived alone, his duties to his wife, to his children and grandchildren meant that he was not available for her.

Charlotte did not know how to turn the button and went on loving him, longing for him, loathing him, writing (about) him, fearing him. There were periods they were on talking or writing terms. Then they would disagree about something, get into a row and move away from each other. No contact possible. Looking back Charlotte discovered to her surprise that this man who rejected her many times still is the man she loves. Since their affair her search for the right One ended. Other men did not interest her. Her passion was with her work. Sometimes she felt ashamed of this unanswered love. Would people think she was a silly woman? But actually she did not care. There was no logical explanation. It just happened that way and although she missed him, she felt okay being busy with other things that deeply interested her.

Peace inside

Now she even feels gratitude towards him. Not always, sometimes she still hates him for betraying her, but she has to admit that for years she has experienced peace inside herself.

Apparently she is able to love a man, even if he is not physically present. Painful he did not choose for her, but she did not close off her love for him in the hope to forget her pain. On the contrary. She becomes more and more aware that her love is not dependent on him but on herself. It is her love and if it is answered or not makes no difference to the love. Or did the distance make it even easier to go on loving him, because she was not hindered by conflicts? Does loving at a distance give her the opportunity to feel free to love not only him but also her other ex-lovers, who are mostly dead now? It is how she experiences her

reality. The 'Woman in Love' in her is alive and kicking, living her life independently from being confirmed by the One and Only.

A transformation that took at least twenty years.

But she can feel she did, she lost her feelings of revenge and gained compassion for him, for her, for his wife, his children, her own family and all the other people she meets. Nobody can take that away from her. Happy end, unhappy in between, happy beginning.

Are you a woman or a man in love?

Can you look at your own radiance and feel happy?

Do you know how wonderful you are or do you still live with the fear you are not good enough?

Did you love and thought you lost because the other left you?

Or because you had to leave the other?

Please take time to consider those possibilities and become your own boss while doing this. If you don't recognize your own love and beauty no one else will be able to see or feel it.

48. Papa can you read me?

Papa, can you hear me?
Papa, can you see me?
Papa can you find me in the night?
(Barbra Streisand in Yentl)

The intuition is guiding

Songs come in the morning or in the afternoon or in the night. I listen to them, follow them, know that my intuition is guiding me. I always start the day with music, often with words that are sung. They make my day, they give the flavour, the fragrance, the tone that will stay with me till the evening, till I go to sleep and let dreams take over. Today this song came to me and I listened to Barbra on You Tube, but only after I wrote my own version:

Papa can you read me?
Papa can you clear me?
Papa can you love me even if I am not perfect?
Papa can you see me even though I am your daughter confronting you with your own misunderstandings.
Papa are you still there watching, are you interested or are you too busy with mama who arrived at last.
And how about your son who came first?

Papa what are you doing?
Is there time up there to grow?
And if so, do you use it and discover
that you can love even if you are angry
that you can mourn even if you have to do it all by yourself
Papa are you alone now
I mean are you my only papa
Or are you part of the papa group
that made my life worthwhile.
How about your papa? Did you meet him?
Did he tell you how he died?
Do you know now if it was his own urge
that drove him to the water

Or were there criminals, he wanted to stop
and surprise while they were busy doing their dirty job.

Papa can you hear me
Papa are you near me
Papa can you follow me and see me here in the sunshine in my
own garden and be proud
Can you just see and receive without having to judge?
Just think and believe and have the faith
that I will continue doing what you taught me to do
Although you never told me
And I had to find out for myself

Yet feeling your energy in me was enough
To go on and fall where I had to fall
And to get up knowing that life needs some falling
To be able to go on and grow and develop
my Older power, my Elder power, my Soul power
or is Strength a better word than power?

Strength in the sense that it is about the inner side of me;
not about muscles but about awareness and love
Now I am older I have learned I better use my energy to transform
me than live with the illusion that the world is waiting until I make
it better, more beautiful, more clean, more sensitive. Only chance
I have to contribute to the transformation of the world is starting
with me.

When I feed my body with the right food, my soul will radiate
what is good for me and when I radiate what is good for me the
world around me will awaken and wonder about this woman
walking her dog, writing a book, doing her duties, painting her
window blue, purple, yellow, green, violet.
The world will wonder what this woman is up to.
What makes her smile? Did she become a child again, longing to
play with her two little nieces and nephew? A child that is innocent
and just laughs with other children whether they are big, in the
pram, full grown, walking their own sweet or dangerous dogs or is

she a woman concealing behind her smile the fear not of the dangerous dogs but of their bosses.

A woman smiling her way through an exciting city,
that day after day turns out to be more lovable than threatening
when she takes time for whoever and whatever comes near to her.
A woman who has learned to sit still and feel happy
for at least a few seconds.

And then the circle starts again.

Papa, do you see me?

Papa, can you read me?

Papa do you know I am still longing to connect with you, no
matter the form you appear to me,
because in the end, in the happy moments
I know there is no separation.'

Those words are rather mysterious. But so is the relationship with
my father who has been dead for almost fifty years and
nevertheless still is the most important man in my life.

*This remark brings me to you as a reader and to your father. How important
is he in your life? Are you willing to tell him that he is or that he is not? Not
personally but on paper. By writing you can find out how deep your
relationship is. It would be a pity if you miss this chance.*

49. Charleston, South Carolina

Right Place, Right People, Right Time

The fear for the battle outside and inside:

Will male power overrule female power?

Does feminine energy need the support of masculine energy?

Wise Women

Charleston means for me promising emails about the Sophia Institute, a place for Wise Women I understand. A place where women writers and teachers are presenting their wisdom.

As I am a woman, a writer, a teacher and old enough to be wise, I knew I should go there. But Charleston is in South Carolina and I live in Amsterdam. Far away dream, I thought, until I saw the announcement of two authors/teachers I have been learning from more than twenty years ago, when they came to the Netherlands. Accidentally they were going to teach and present in the same weekend. I could not resist, decided to use my last financial reserves to be with them. A week before I was to leave, I got an email about the rescheduling of Jean Houston*, who had to go to help Japan in its traumatic time. What to do? Jean Shinoda Bolen*, would still be there giving a one evening lecture about her new book 'Like a Tree – How Trees, Women, and Tree People Can Save the Planet.' I decided to go and connect if possible with the Sophia Institute and with Jean.

Singing for the ants

My journey starts at noon on a Thursday at Schiphol Airport where I buy 'The House of the Mosque' by Kader Abdolah about an Iranian family in times of peace, war and revolution. The story is told from the heart. In the first chapter 'An army of ants crawled out from under one of the ancient walls and covered the path by the old cedar tree like a moving brown carpet.' To stop them the master of the house started singing a *surab* and after some time the ants seemed to be listening and returned to where they came from. What struck me was the loving energy that was used to

stop this army of ants that could have destroyed the house of the mosque.

People and their authorities

Washington Airport; quarter past midnight, eighteen hours later I have been reading about the Revolution of the Ayatollahs, the invasion of Iraq in Iran, supported by the Americans who wanted to protect the Shah and their own interests. Now I understand why the US is seen as enemy number One by ayatollah Iran. Politics? If the US supported Iraq they supported Sadam Hussein at that time. In the end it did not help Sadam to survive himself.

Problem with wars is of course from which side the story is told. The House of the Mosque is an inside Iran version about the people themselves, not the same as the leaders. I often made the mistake to identify inhabitants of a country with their authorities, but that is a big misunderstanding. People are the same all over the world. They want to be happy, they need love, understanding and I suppose that is what democratic and authoritarian politicians think they can guarantee. But the moment power comes in the game, it is about winning, about whose the best, about whose will shall be king. Goodwill disappears and dominance takes over.

Heavy weather

Here and Now on the airport there is heavy weather that prevents us to take off for Charleston. An orthodox rabbi is waiting for his delayed flight to Cleveland. He forces me to listen to his loud voice while he is telephoning. We are boarding and he discovers his flight has left without him. Did he not hear that they looked for him? Even spelled his name character for character? No, apparently not. I found my seat in my own delayed plane. We are waiting. For what? The stewardess is nervous. Are all her passengers seated? She has read the rules already three times. I could not follow her one time. We are still waiting. One more passenger arrives in the seat beside me. Okay, we are flying...

Deep down South

Friday, next morning I arrived in the deep down South I can hear it in the melody. Feel it in the hot temperature. See it in the wooden houses with front porches. In the palm trees.

The coloured and the white people. The Horse Carriages for the tourists. I am sitting outside in a garden of a Bubba Gump where I am supposed to eat but I can have just a blueberry smoothy. I feel happy. I drew a question card and read: are you afraid of the battle inside you? Yes I am. Will my female power be overruled by male power? Does my feminine energy need masculine energy to manifest itself? More and more I believe in the necessity of the last possibility. Without my own masculine energy I would not be here. Time is ripe to take my masculine power seriously. I am worth money, I am valuable, I am a human doing and I am better in spending than gaining. Do I need a change of system? Do I have to give in to my pride and agree that even I need power and money if I want to offer my feminine energy.

Right Place

I do not know why yet. But I feel I am in the right place. And I am in the right place because I want to be. I am convinced that what you believe, you also co create yourself. And I know from experience that the chance is in the frustration. I thought I was going to develop my qualities as a leader with the support of Jean Houston, but as she is in Japan I have to do IT by myself. When I woke up this morning I told myself I am here to have a look in feminine mirrors. Can I see myself in the mirror of Carolyn Rivers who founded the institute? Are we on the same track? Or are we walking on different roads eventually leading to the same goal? And is the goal letting feminine energy become strong enough to embrace masculine energy instead of rejecting it? I have to realise both energies are in men and women. It is too easy to judge men who act as male heroes because they want to protect women and children and have to kill other men who were children and who have mothers and children and wives who love them. Poor men who have to sacrifice themselves, poor heroes, poor children, poor women, lost in a blind world, that is always promising to become better not knowing how in the sight of happiness.

Revenge gods

I want to go back to the story or rather the HIStory of Iran. I arrived at the terrible moment when the revenge gods played being judges in the slaughterhouse of Tehran. It is nauseating, almost

impossible to believe but there is no doubt. Author Kader Abdolah was there, was part of it. If I understand him right he wants to make the reader aware that s/he is part of the drama they are causing. By thinking that we are innocent and have to tell others they are guilty of our suffering instead of wondering what we do ourselves to make life hell, we keep the disaster going. By just punishing the others without looking at ourselves we create new conflicts, new battles, new wars. If we are naïve we stay in the triangle of Saviour, Victim and Prosecutor, move from one role to the next and back without changing or growing.

Feminine energy

The question is now, why am I here? Of course I came to meet Carolyn and Jean. What do I need from them? Why did I have to come all this way? To be heard? To be seen? What am I looking for outside myself that I do not seem to find inside?

One thing I need is a surrounding that is open to feminine energy. I believe that if I can connect with creative feminine women new doors will open for me. I long to do what I have to do and that is making women and men aware of the missing feminine energy in daily life. The main reason I came is needing nourishment. If I nourish myself with the right food I can, in my turn, give the people who come to me the right energy and the right nourishment. It will make me and us more fertile.

Here is where it happened

Saturday noon, outside a café with Middle Eastern Music next to the Market. I am wondering and understanding more and more why I am here. I am on historical “Gone with the Wind” ground. I did not realise it until this morning or late last night. Here is where it happened, here is where the plantations were with the white masters and the black slaves. Here is also where the war for Independence and the Civil War were fought. And how about the Indians? There must have been Indians here in this territory when the immigrants/pilgrims arrived. Here is where my own his-tory, Iran his-tory and Charleston his-tory meet. I did know this journey would be about war, but it is.

Story tellers and dead voices

10.30 PM in my beautiful B&B, I had a fertile day. made myself at home. Went to the Gibbs Museum where I found his-tory in art and to the Old Slave Mart Museum where people listened in silence to the story tellers and to the dead voices; I could feel the pain and the shame energy still present. Had dinner in the restaurant on the water, my favourite place. I am beginning to be a regular and met a mother and stepdaughter from Dallas, Texas who were celebrating the 75th birthday of the mother. They intend to come to the presentation of Jean S.B. tomorrow night and if not I am invited to come for dinner in Dallas at Xmas. Why not? I could present my book? After dinner I started walking to the Wharf then realised the Jazz concert in the Charleston Music Hall was nearby, went there, arrived in intermission time and was allowed in for a reduced price. Great evening with this local Jazz orchestra honouring Miles Davis. The question of the day: does anybody love me? I received a lot of love today from people I did not know they existed. Pure Gifts!

The foundation of the institute

Sunday afternoon - Question: what would I like to offer? The first answer that came to me is feminine energy and this word still holds. Looking back on my meeting with Carolyn, I have a good grounded feeling. I know I am for certain in the right place and whatever will come up will bring my own process into motion and to the next level. I am deeply touched by the story of Carolyn who bought this - then neglected – house divided in 13 apartments and transformed it into the foundation for the Sophia Institute, which means she took the risk investing her money not only to benefit herself but to a greater cause by creating a place where feminine wisdom can flourish. Another remarkable fact is that the house was founded by Mozes Levy. Who was he? Where did he come from? What did he do besides being a Jewish merchant looking like his Dutch colleagues in the 17th century? Of course I sense nourishment for my ongoing Jewish quest, it is not by accident that the Sophia Institute is located in a house built by a Jew, who also built the first synagogue in Charleston, the 2nd in the USA as I read in the NIW* just before leaving. Strange coincidence. Synchronicity according to Jean S.B. I long to know more.

Sacred in disguise

I also look forward to meeting Jean S. B. again after more than twenty years, when I did a workshop about Goddesses in Every Woman with her. Was extremely good archetypes nourishment for me at the time. At this moment I have the feeling I am in an open adventure. One thing I tell myself: be aware, do not think women really know what you are writing about, just because they are women. Realise they can be on a different track, working with sacred feminine energy. You do too, but you do it in disguise. More safe? More honest? More me?

Stop whining

Monday morning at the breakfast table *'To be a crone, you need to let go of what should have been could have been, might have been, you need to silence the whining in your head that will come out of your mouth next.'* Jean S. B. in the book 'Crones don't whine – Concentrated Wisdom for Juicy Women' I bought after her 'Like a Tree' presentation. Yes, she is right, 'to stop whining' I started writing, did go on writing, still am writing and long to inspire other people to write. Because I experienced it, I know writing is healing.

To day is my last day here and I will use it to explore the 2nd oldest synagogue in the USA and have a talk with Jean. Last night she stood up 'Like a tree' for one and a half hour non stop telling us about tree people, trees in itself, tree energy and how we as human beings and the earth as a living planet can not do without tree energy. Therefore is cutting trees down without a reason a crime against humanity and against the planet. The main message I received is that I am not innocent. I am a tree and I certainly identify with tree people but I am also the woodcutter.

I am part of the ones who keep the energy going and I am part of the ones who can turn off the light.

But I and we can choose what is vital in our eyes.

The American Florence Nightingale

Being here in Charleston, brought me the realisation of being connected with a place I never heard of before. But now I know I cannot say, *'Ich habe es nicht gewusst.'* It is what the Nazi's said when they were on trial after WW II: *'I did not know'*. In Holland it has become an expression we use when people think they are

innocent, when they are not. I know that I am in a place where Indians lived 14.000 years ago. When they exactly disappeared I do not know, as their his-tory is not told in the Museum of Charleston where the focus is on the slaves and the masters and the wars. For a moment I thought 'nothing to do with me' then I realised I am Dutch, I am part of this his-tory (her-story?).

My ancestors sailed to Africa to get the slaves they brought here and elsewhere and they were part of the settlers, the whites who took the power, reigned this territory and built a new world. What is the message for me? What is the meaning of being in the house where Phoebe Pember Levy was born, the American Florence Nightingale who cared for more than 15.000 wounded soldiers during the Civil War? Knowing her-story confirms my being in the right place. I am always longing to find examples of women who did what I would like to do: make the world a happier place.

Whale energy

What I found while being here are also beautiful houses, promising the kind of family life like in 'Gone with the Wind' when all was well. I found particular hot weather, I found the Sophia Institute, as far as I know one of the few places where sacred and not sacred feminine energy is given the place it deserves, I found the skeleton of a whale hanging in the museum of the city. It makes me vibrate. A whale! Whale energy! I am a Tree and I am a Whale that is why my practice is named 'The Whale'. Whales are noted for their wonderful song, they teach us how to communicate through song and sounds and how to awaken our healing energies.

Travelling Jews

Noon - in the garden of the synagogue after listening to Charles who told the story of the synagogue and the Jews in Charleston exclusively to me during one hour and a half. I am sitting beside the streaming water of the source, knowing I am connected to Charleston and the Jewish people here. I am touched deeply in every vein and in my soul.

Here I find the next answer to the mystery in my life: who am I? Where do I come from? Am I a Jew? A Jew in disguise? Here in Charleston I know I am part of the Jewish energy that kept the

faith going while singing, praying, writing, discussing, reforming, eating in co-creation with the Divine.

Charles not only taught me about the facts but affected me by opening my heart. Looking into the mirror of a man who loves life gave me the possibility to tune into his energy and connect with mine. What a gift, what a blessing. He also told me it is tradition that once you have been here, you come back and I will. If not in person, I will be here by my words. As a writer I have the ability and it is my sacred duty to use it and tell about this congregation that resembles so much the tolerance of Amsterdam. Because of all the different places of worship Charleston is called the Holy City. It is a Haven according to Charles who told me that the Jews who arrived here came partly from a Dutch colony in Brazil, after it was occupied by the Portuguese. Just imagine that those Jews came originally from Portugal or Spain, were expelled by the Inquisition, arrived in Amsterdam and other European places, decided to go to a Dutch place in Brazil where they were safe until the same Inquisition Portuguese came to threaten them. They decided to sail back to Amsterdam or to the nearest safe port, what happened to be what then still was New Amsterdam.

But they were refused admission by Peter Stuyvesant or were stuck in a storm and ended in the Dutch West Indies or in Haven Charleston, still Charles town then. Again, it seems I keep repeating, I did not know anything about this.

Nevertheless I am here and found a connection I was looking for.

Communication abilities

4.15 PM I am sitting again at what was this morning the breakfast table. I am wondering about me and Whale energy. I went to the Aquarium and Planet Earth, starring the Whales. Whale energy could be what I need to present what I have to offer in a place like this. The communication abilities of the Whale could make it possible to keep in touch with the Sophia Institute and the sacred feminine energy. Here and Now: I have to move, too much noise from the air-conditioning. The plague that America cannot live without.

Longing to be seen and heard

5.05 PM Here and Now I am sitting in a shadowy garden at a glass table with four chairs. Two of them have cushions. I am sitting beside and beneath a tree that seems to protect me. I hear the wind whistle through the leaves of the trees. I sigh, I am excited, waiting for my meeting with Jean S. B.

I wonder if I can seduce her to come to Amsterdam to give a lecture about 'Like a Tree' in the ABC Treehouse and if possible do a workshop afterward. Of course I am thinking of a writing workshop because I think that writing can develop Tree-power and Tree-energy. Actually what I have to do is as simple as that. I want to reach the English speaking community, my Gestalt colleagues and everybody who is longing to connect with her/his Tree-Power.

The importance of the work

Something else is that I can use the wisdom of Jean to frame my own workshops, to give them more body, making clear that I am not the only one working along the feminine energy track.

I really need to feel I am connected to be able to teach and convince students, clients, colleagues of the importance of this work. I cannot do IT alone, we have to do IT together. Back to the Here and Now I am thirsty, just had a sip of water. I can feel my stomach telling me, I am nervous I can feel tears behind my eyes, telling me I am emotional I can feel sweat in my hands, betraying that I am anxious and warm as is the outside temperature I feel - I realise – like being in love and waiting to be seen...

Time to harvest

Tuesday 10.30 AM - sitting on a bench outside the Charleston airport. Something strange happened. I thought my flight was at 12.15 but it was at 10.13. It meant missing it and having to wait for the next flight at 2.31 PM that will give me one hour in Washington to catch the 5.15 to Amsterdam. Result: I have three hours more in this most enjoyable temperature. I am happy I can sit outside instead of having to wait five hours inside on cold Dulles airport, the dullest place I met on this trip. What happened between me and Jean? And between me and Carolyn? Always the same problem: not enough time to really make contact but I and she and we got a taste I believe of what can be if we are open to

communication. I realise that I and Jean and Carolyn did our best to identify each other by our backgrounds. I present myself as a Gestalt therapist and immediately Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt therapy, is popping up in the conversation. This morning I realised that I do not like to be identified with him. I do not have the kind of energy he had. For one thing he was a man and I am a woman. He could confront and steal the show and I do not intend to do that. I want to be the facilitator who teaches people how they can confront and steal the show themselves. Gives me so much pleasure to witness. But I would like to be identified with Paul Goodman. He was the writer who gave Gestalt a theory, a foundation in 'Gestalt Therapy- Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality' by Frederick Perls, Ralph Hefferline, & Paul Goodman* Paul Goodman represents much more the excitement and possible growth Gestalt means to me. His sentences are not easy to follow, but the more I work with Gestalt in practice the more his writing is opening up to me.

The key to writing groups

Jean asked what I do and I told her that I love to work with ongoing groups. When I met her more than twenty years ago I had just left the women's magazine I worked for and had started my practice. I interviewed her about the Goddesses in Every Woman and hoped to be able to publish it as a freelance journalist. Somehow it did not work out. And now I get a second chance to work with her wisdom, when I am going to give lectures in the Treehouse and tell about 'Like a Tree' as well as about my own book 'Hot Fires – Writing your Feeling is Healing'. This could be the key to my Writing Groups. Making people aware of the urgency of developing and using our Tree-Power and Tree-Energy. Making them aware of the fact that this kind of writing is not a nice hobby to pass the time but it means entering into sacred energy with not only the purpose to get more happy ourselves but to contribute to saving the planet as the Earth is urgently in need of Tree-energy to survive.

Feeling, listening, singing

I am thinking again about my visit to the Aquarium and seeing Planet Earth with the Whales starring in it. I feel invited to tune in

more to the Whale-energy that has been guiding me since I used the Medicine Wheel*, drew the card of the Whale and decided to name my newsletter and my centre after it. Carolyn identifies with the wisdom of Sophia, Jean with Tree-energy and I have the Whale as I understood that the Whale is a swimming library carrying the wisdom of the Great Spirit in her/his body. This is Whale territory. Or territory? Whales pass here and can strand. I could feel their energy when I stood in the Charleston Museum looking at the whale skeleton. Most of all I can identify with the way they communicate by sounding. I am going to listen better to trees as I intend to listen more to the song of the whales and to my own voice.

Tree-story

Writing about trees reminds me of my own tree-story. Living in a lane for more than thirty years with sixty tremendous plane trees has transformed me into a real tree-woman with a tree-dog who has his own trees he chooses to water. They connect me with the years I lived in the South of France with a French painter who did nothing but painting plane trees, cypresses and grapes shrub. At the time it irritated me, I wanted him to make money somehow, as we needed it. But he just went on doing what he longed to do and we survived anyway. Although I returned to my country because I could not make my own living in France and I did not want to be dependent. More than ten years later I divorced from a Dutch photographer. When I was looking for an apartment I found this lane with plane trees, fell in love with it and found my home on the 3rd floor. In summer the leaves filtered the light to a soft green and I felt connected to my French painter, living in a nest in a plane treetop. Now I still live in this lane. I only moved to the other side where I found a garden and an ex-shop where I have my practice. What I found is paradise for me, for my cats, my dog, my family, my students and clients.

Mother Earth

One of the pieces I found to complete my puzzle is the realisation that being busy with giving feminine energy a place in the world makes me a member of an underground movement. It is about Mother Earth. We cannot deny that. It is about tears and whining

and complaining and passion. About doing the dishes, raising children, feeding our loved ones, not to forget ourselves. I understand why I and we wo/men shy away from this energy. Does not seem very attractive and glamorous. Not like the queens and kings we thought we should be. But we need to be grounded and we need to know how serious life is before we can celebrate our creativity, our radiance, our sexuality. The moment this energy comes out the controllers are there to regulate it so it will not hurt or over excite us or the other. Of course we need both energies, it is not or or but and and.

Mister Five Dollar

This morning I got a taste of masculine energy when I was brought to the airport by a 66 year old uncle Tom, who has been driving a taxi since '63. He is the head of an empire, having six children born to two wives at the same time. Now he has grand- and great grandchildren he is not longing to see because they want money from him and he does not intend to give more than five dollars to each of them. They call me 'Mister Five Dollar,' he told me. He rather invests his time in the church, where he found his third wife. He loves Charleston because it is slow and I loved listening to his wisdom: 'don't take anything that is not yours', 'if you are in jail and it is not because of self protection, I won't bail you out, you will have to sit'. It worked. His boys and girls did not fall into the trap. I raised my kids, he said, now they have to raise their own. I do not celebrate Xmas, no Easter, no birthdays, no nothing but I love them all alike. I just sat in the back of the car, listening and asking questions, wondering how his slave history has made him the man he is.

Colours and rainbows

The gifts fall like ripe apples from the trees those four days. At breakfast I met a couple that was married 35 years ago in the synagogue. I could share with them how touched I am finding this Holy City with a parallel story to Amsterdam. I am still wondering how I fit in. I would love to come back and teach my wisdom to this community. Dream? 'To hope and dream is not to ignore the practical.' I read this morning in *Meditations for Women Who Do Too Much* by Anne Wilson Schaef^{fk}. 'It is to dress it in colours

and rainbows.’ A dream was also more or less the end of ‘House of the Mosque’. I feel that this book about the recent history - still not history but an ongoing process – of Iran guided me those four days. Reading about the fundamental ideas of the ayatollah’s that opened up revenge energy that permitted almost all male and some female citizens to become their own judges and to kill without mercy, made me aware of the fact that people can kill the bodies of other people but not their soul energy.

Energy cannot be killed

It is easy to get trees down but after the killing the energy will still be there. After the killing there will be space for the tree-energy, the soul-energy to come out. The killing of trees, of people, of whales makes us as human and spiritual beings aware of the seriousness of life, that can only be honoured by LOVE. The more killing the more LOVE will be streaming out of dark slimy cold caves. Dead or alive we need each other. Enemy or friend alike! Speaking of dreams. During the Tree lecture I happened to sit accidentally beside Betsy, who will come to Amsterdam in July for a Dream Conference. Another gift? Could open the next gate.

‘Life is a gift. Unwrap IT’ I read this week and I know it is true. This week I will unwrap my present by attending the international Dream Conference in Amsterdam and look forward to being nourished by Lee Irwin, keynote speaker from Charleston who teaches about world religions and is also interested in the Natives of North America and by Betsy who will give the workshop ‘Awakening the Dreamer’. How about your gift? Are you unwrapping it? And are you happy with what you are presented with or not? Can you feel contentment or do you think life did not give you what you deserved?’*

Part Four

77 Right Questions

Existential questions cannot be answered with a simple Yes or No. They are meant to play with, to chew on, to dance, to sing, to take seriously, to write about, to ask yourself or someone else. You can write them down on cards and choose a card every morning to guide you through the day. You can also think of a number between 1 and 77 and see what your question of the day is. And you probably have more questions yourself you can add.

If you let those questions guide you, they will support you to co-create your own miraculous life story. And if you look for answers open any wise book on just any page and you will be surprised by the words that seem to be written just for you.

In this part you will find a lot of quotes,
most of Joseph Zinker

I am happy that 'all quotes from Joseph Zinker's work are used here by the kind permission of the author and of Gestalt Press'

*And I am also grateful to the other authors
I am allowed to use quotes from.*

Co-creating with Joseph Zinker and other writers

In September 2010 I went to GISC*, the Gestalt International Study Centre, in South Wellfleet on Cape Cod to celebrate their 25th Writers Conference together with prominent Gestalt writers/teachers such as Edwin and Sonia Nevis, Joe Melnick, Gordon Wheeler, Robert Lee and Joseph Zinker. I longed to present the beginning of 'The Right Question', part four of this book. The idea was there, the questions had emerged from part 1-3, I had started with writing responses to my own questions and I needed to find out if what I was doing could make my colleague writers happy. In other words I hoped that I would be seen and recognized.

The most important meeting was with Joseph Zinker*. I knew that he had been very seriously ill for two years. Of course I was curious how he felt. During the great food and dance party on Saturday night I sat beside him. When we started to talk he walked to a cupboard and came back with his last book 'Sketches, An Anthology of Essays, Art, and Poetry'. Then he touched me deeply by showing me his drawings. I knew something special was happening, because I recognized what he had created. I also create drawings and paintings by letting my intuition guide me.

I was lucky. I could show some of them to him because they were in my photo-camera. I decided to buy 'Sketches' and wrote while I was waiting for more than six hours in Boston Airport:

Farewell words of Joseph Zinker: 'You are part of my soul...'

Still more than four hours to go. I am sleepy. Did not have full nights because of my coughing. While reading Sketches I am underlining what touches me, thinking of – no still feeling the presence of Joseph vibrating in me, connected with his sturdy look in my direction. I can feel excitement. At last I am ripe enough to read those words, those sentences, I want to cry out with a silent voice, Joseph, how does it come I could not or did not read your 'Sketches' up to now, although I knew it existed. I have been close, but stayed away from it. Afraid of the pain? Not seeing the love?

'You are part of my soul...' you said and I know it is true, without needing any explanation why. We have met before in workshops, in conferences, but then I could not experience what I feel now: I do not have to be Jewish to know what it means to feel part of a threatened community, part of a threatened culture, a threatened righteousness.

Baby

In the corner of the airport restaurant a baby is voicing its struggle with life, with having to wait to get the right attention. The baby has got a will, is upset, is forcing his caretakers to give him/her the attention s/he needs. It does not sound hopeful. I wonder if s/he ever will get what is his/her righteous part. And what will happen if the crying does not fulfil the need, that certainly will be a basic one. Will the crying change to anger and rage and turn to hopelessness and disaster? Still there might be a change when s/he will come across a human being who knows about Zinker's words, Zinker's thoughts, Zinker's longings, Zinker's observations like the ones I have been underlining: '...and to love life through labor is to be intimate with life's innermost secrets.'

The baby's work has already begun. S/he is silent now, for one second, it was just an interval. I can hardly stand this kind of crying. The line of a song enters my head 'It is hard work, if you can get it.' Hard as substitute for nice. Would it help if I would sing to him/her? Probably. There is silence now, it sounds like my mere thought helped the baby to accept where and who s/he is. But let's hope his/her basic need was fulfilled and s/he feels happy.

The next day 1 PM at Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris. I tell myself to relax. I could do it during the flight from Boston. I did not really sleep but could doze without worrying. Still I feel my body aching. I know it will take me time to recover and live my Amsterdam life again. I invested time, money and energy in this project of needing to be seen and heard. Although I did not really have the success I secretly longed for, I know that the fog around me is lifting. My light is shining through. Most grateful I feel for the way I felt free to behave. Looking back now and knowing what

I have experienced the conclusion is I had a lot of contact on the surface, but on a soul level it was Joseph. He is not beating about the bush anymore, his time is too precious. He guided me to Sketches and I find a treasure that supported me to write and create the Fourth Part of this book. It contains 77 existential questions I tried to answer with my own words and often with quotes from other writers.

The main one being Joseph Zinker who in this way gave me the feeling that he co-created the text with me. To give an example I open Sketches at random on page 19 and read: 'Erv* (Polster) saw me as a promising therapist; his vision of me reinforced my creative efforts. I felt his savouring of me. If he had an image of me hanging on a string, I was able to work with that image, relax my shoulders, be a puppet and move into my lightness and dance. He was pleased I was able to adventure him that way. Erv reinforced my liveliness and imagination.'

If I substitute Joseph with Erv, those words become 'my' own words telling Joseph that he did for me, what Erv did for him. In a different way of course, but the result is the same. Connecting or not connecting can not be bargained. It is or it is not. There is a thread between Joseph and me. A thread that has nothing to do with longing to be with him, nothing with claiming him, nothing with exclusive love from him for me or from me for him. I feel chosen and so is he, chosen to have lived through a disastrous almost inhuman period of time when we were children.

He saw the villages burning and nearly died himself. I lived with a father after he came back from the battlefield with a wounded soul. I do not know if he could ever heal it. Joseph had the chance to live through this nightmare together with his parents. My father grew further and further away from his family. Still I did have the chance to make contact with him once in a while when I was grown up and he was in a psychiatric institute. It happened very rarely, but IT happened and kept me going.

All this thinking and reading brings me to being a victim and the realization that we all are. A big part of the Work is to get out of

this victim role without disappearing into the role of the prosecutor or the saviour. I hope you will feel supported in this Work by the Questions, my own words, those of Joseph Zinker and other writers like Paul Goodman and Fritz Perls. Time and time again I was surprised by how their wise words connected to the words I already had written myself.

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1. Am I afraid of attention, of love, of intimacy?

Please take time just for you, find a safe place, bring paper and a pen, sit down, close your eyes, straighten your back, direct your attention to your breathing and become aware of being in the here and now. Then wonder about the question ‘Am I afraid of attention, of love, of intimacy?’ and feel how your body reacts.

After about seven minutes you open your eyes, take your pen and write whatever wants to be written.

Don’t worry about mistakes, logic, just keep your hand moving for at least ten minutes. If you want to write more, please do. You are the boss. If - for a moment - you don’t have words, just draw or doodle to keep your hand in action. If you feel you are ready, read what you have written out loud. Even if you are by yourself.

You will notice that hearing your own voice speaking the words you put on paper will touch you somehow.

Possible response

Am I afraid of love, attention, intimacy?

Yes I am and No I am not. Love, attention, intimacy is what I most long for and I realize that it begins with me, for me, to me.

Strange cliché: first love yourself, before you even can receive love from and feel love for the other.

It took me at least half a century to find that out.

Half a century of longing to get it from outside because I was cute, nice, intelligent sexy, funny, open.

I could write, dance, sing, speak English, French and I loved to cook and spoil you. It did not help, I had to live on my own with my cats and dogs to become aware of my own abilities to love me, to give attention to me, to feel intimate with me.

It was not an easy job. I had to fight my prejudices, how can anyone love a woman who is single, no partner, no lover, no children, no grandchildren?

There must be something wrong with her.

And of course I am right, there are lot of things wrong with me and that is exactly why I need love and attention; it also makes me lovable.

2. Can I come to THE point?

To come to THE point you need time.
Please sit down, look around you
and wonder what brought you to this spot.
What is THE point for you? Is it about love?
Is it about your career and your status?
Is it about your believe and your faith?
Is it about your talent and your sacred contract?
Or is it about feeling save and protected?

Please write just for you. Forget about what others might think.
Some day you might set it free, but now write just for you. It will
bring you new wisdom about yourself. What I found is that writing
for me brought me someone to talk with who was always there
and who was always listening when I needed her. I sincerely hope
you enjoy yourself by doing this experiment.

Possible Response

Can I come to THE point?

I sit in my office, sun is shining on a big painted window. Before
and around me are paintings I created myself and paintings made
by others. My office is my sacred spot, it is where I come to the
POINT time and time again by listening to my clients and feeling
what is happening inside my body.

Answers that just present themselves.

Answers that can be new questions,
that lead me and my clients to deeper dimensions.

I do feel safe and protected in this spot.

Here I can let my talent stream and make my sacred contract come
true. In this spot my career and status, my believe and faith meet
each other and play together to become me.

Question now: about which point am I talking?

THE point is to believe and have faith in every day life. Every step
I and you do, every inhaling and every exhaling are part of our
sacred contract.

3. How does my process go on?

How is it to pose yourself this question?
Does your process push you dominantly?
Is it a gentle process like the streaming of water?
Does it set you on fire or does it leave you cold and insensitive?
Just sit or walk or stand, following your process in the here and now and write immediately afterwards.

Response

How does my process go on?
I am sitting here on the verge of a chair
My cleaner is telephoning her doctor
My neighbour closes his door loudly
My cleaner is vacuuming the corridor
The sun is shining
A bird is singing
I am writing and listening to the sounds around me
My nose is itching
My shoulders feel tense
I wish my cleaner was ready
I would have silence in my practice and house
I decide I had better close the door
It will help me to concentrate on me and my process
I can hear the bird in the tree before my window
more clearly now
Even though there are cars and motor scooters
disturbing him and disturbing me.

4. Am I angry?

Angry? Dirty word? Not desired? Are you ever? Never?
Do you behave well and feel at the same time cross inside?
Especially when you feel ignored, not listened to, not answered,
not seen, not heard, not loved.

Are you afraid that anger will scare people off?
Did you experience being ignored because you radiated anger?
I think of the song:

Laughing on the outside; crying on the inside.

While I write, I tell myself, don't write about anger,
don't write about turbulence, don't write about jealousy, you will
scare your readers off and that is the last thing you want to do.
But anger plays a key role in every community.
Being angry and wanting to behave as a nice wo/man who is
worth being loved is vital.

Response

At this moment I am not angry, I believe, I am exploring, I feel
curious. I know I am not the only one who becomes angry, I am
not the only one who lives with the turbulence inside, I am not the
only one who is feeling anger and does not express it.
I know by experience it is relieving to write about anger,
aggression, irritation, turbulence, without restricting myself. The
knowing in itself is already healing. The biggest challenge is to feel
my anger and own it without accusing secretly the people who
ignore me, don't see me, don't hear me. Not easy.

5. Am I new to this work?

Are you new to this work? is a strange question.

For what is the work we are talking about?

Is it to write or paint?

Is it about connecting and communicating?

Are you new to this kind of playful work?

New to painting, to writing?

New to playing, to singing, to dancing?

Or to some other kind of work that invites you to let go of control? Do you think you can do it?

Want to do it? Or are you not going to take the risk to make a fool of yourself? If the answer is Yes, I do want to take the risk, this is what my work is about, please take a moment to write and explore.

Just imagine you are a beginner and a whole new adventure is waiting for you. If the answer is NO, feel what your body is telling you and write about that.

Response

A new adventure is waiting for me?

Yes, if I am willing to be new to this work.

This work that is new to me is to write without becoming too personal. To write and let the words come without controlling them with my thoughts. Are you new to this work is an irritating question for me. I have the feeling I have been doing this work day in and day out. This work is offering the world the qualities that I have. This work, I think, is to make people I meet as happy as I am. This work starts with making me as happy as possible.

This work is feeling that this work has nothing to do with work.

This work is not heavy, on the contrary it is light!

This work means sitting in my own paradise with a pen and paper and becoming aware of the silence inside me.

Here I am, I was always working.

I existed because I worked.

Yet, now I have to face this work I am new to without understanding the words I am writing.

Hail nature, only the sun can give me this space that is a gift from...?

6. Is it – or am I - forbidden fruit?

What is a forbidden fruit for you?

Is it sexual pleasure? Is it art? Is it a man or a woman? Is it a book or a film? Is it enjoying life or are you forbidden fruit yourself because you are sexual, or because you are artistic, or because you happen to be a man or a woman enjoying life?

Response

Leisure time is forbidden fruit

Time for me to enjoy I consider forbidden fruit

Yet here I am sitting in the sun

Enjoying myself immensely
while writing those words feeling
the sun, the last rays before it settles.

Why should it be forbidden?

I am not harming anyone

I am not harming me either

It must be my upbringing:

you are responsible for your life

and being responsible means doing something useful, always,
something worthwhile to the world

something to gain money

something that is good for others

It took me a long time to realize

that the *forbidden* part gives my fruit an extra exciting flavour.

Here I am uselessly eating ice cream

and enjoying myself every second.

7. Can I do It?

Do you believe in the reality
of dream, hallucination, play and art?
How about the undercurrent? Are you aware of it?
Can you give it words, can you write about it?
What is the undercurrent?
Your undercurrent?
Does it connect you to your own wisdom?

Response

If I do IT, I have to write about the reality of play and art.
How can I possibly underestimate the reality of the Undercurrent
when I have experienced that this way of writing gives me answers
and connects me with my soul. Not only by writing also by
sounding and singing, painting and sculpting I arrived in realities
with unexpected dimensions. If I stay with the split and think that
only deliberate speech, thought and introspection are real, I am
stuck. No new insights will reveal themselves. When I take the risk
by crossing the border guided by intuition and emotions I can sit
here knowing I am doing the most serious job there is to be done.
I do IT, I connect the thinking with feeling by not letting the one
overrule the other.

When I realized I wanted to teach Gestalt as an Art, I decided to
study ‘Gestalt Therapy – Excitement and Growth in the Human
Personality’ by Frederick Perls, Ralph Hefferline and Paul
Goodman* more closely. I collected all the quotes about art and
became fascinated by the beauty of the words.

While responding to those existential questions I needed
nourishment and decided to feed myself with quotes from PHG*,
short for the above mentioned book. In this chapter I start with
giving you quotes, that can make more clear what IT is about:
on page 19 the writer tells about the underestimation of the reality
of dream, hallucination, play and art. And an overestimation of the
reality of deliberate speech, thought and introspection.

If you possess PHG please go to this paragraph and read more. If
you don't have the book, please buy it. It will make working with
those questions richer. You will find perfect nourishment in it.

8. Am I an artist?

Are you an artist? Can you play as a child? Or are you afraid to be seen as extremely neurotic or infantile? You can find out by writing or sculpting. Take a tablet of clay and let your hands do the work. Maybe you will form an abstract figure that can guide you to your playful creative dream. Let your creation speak to you, it will guide you to your undercurrent and your mysterious longings. You don't have to be afraid, it is all about you.

Response: Am I an artist? Yes, I am, no doubt about it. Can I play as a child? Yes, when I am with other children or all by myself. When there are grown ups present I am rather self conscious. I still have a streak of fear in me to be seen as crazy – like my father – or infantile – like my mother. The decision I have made - in the past - must have been: okay, they are my father and mother, no doubt about it, they are in me but never ever will I behave as crazy as my father nor as infantile as my mother. And yet, being normal or behaving normally, makes me more neurotic and frustrated than surrendering to my creative potential. I can't help it, I have to enter dangerous territories to become me. The risk is that 'they' or you see me as crazy or/and infantile and won't love me. But how can anyone love me if I don't love and show my real self, inclusive neurosis and childishness.

9. Am I a fixed form?

Are you a fixed form? No of course not, nor am I.
But I do have my longings. And you? What do you see as a healthy
fixed form? Don't try to answer those questions by just thinking,
start writing when you feel the curiosity bubbling up in you. If you
feel like it you can find out by playful writing what is a healthy or
unhealthy fixed form in your present surroundings.

Response

What is a – healthy - fixed form?

A painting or a picture is the closest I can think of.

Or any other work of art.

Beside that it seems

that the healthiness is in the willingness to change.

Time and time again.

Change from fixed form to fixed form.

From port to port. From haven to haven.

From painting to painting. From text to text.

That is why I am afraid to see what I have written in print.

It is fixed. No more changes possible.

10. Am I a sexual being?

'Art aimed at arousing sexual excitement is frowned on (...) yet if one is not to be merry about this, about what is one supposed to be merry?' Please go to PHG* page 76 to find more wisdom.

Good question. What if we read therapy instead of art?
I know that as a therapist it is not easy to show my sexuality.
Just because I do not want to arouse sexual excitement with the clients. Too difficult? Too dangerous? How about you? Do you? Can you work with sexuality without using your own energy in this field? What about this PHG message? In the stories Fritz Perls, one of the writers, seems to be a man who did not hesitate to be sexually merry. If you are in the role of a therapist: are you open to clients about this aspect of our founding father or do you suppress it like I do? If you are in the role of a client: are you open to the sexual side of your therapist?

Response

I am supposed to be merry about sex, if I am not I am not normal, I understand from those words. Yes, I am a sexual being and I have been merry about sex. I have also been unhappy about sex. The one or the other depended on how and with whom. I have never been happy with just sex, just one night and then *slush*.

I have been happy with sex the first time I met someone, I mean the first time and then sex seems to be the language to communicate and make contact. If that happened, sex was the beginning of a longer relation. The happiness was in the continuation. Not being happy with sex is more about sex being absent. Or sex being too present, too demanding.

Can it be that being merry with or about sex, has to do with the right time, the right moment, the right person, the right amount, the right place. It takes a lot and took me a lot of experimenting to experience this. Although one of the best memories I have is of the very first time. Still that was with the wrong man, at the wrong time and the wrong place.

Or is that what my mind thinks? When I allow myself to just feel, there was absolutely nothing wrong with him, nor me, nor us.

11. Am I prejudiced?

'An artist is earnest with the art, he is committed to it.'

More in PHG*, page 81

How is it to read therapy and therapist instead of art and artist?
Are you in earnest in the way you live your life? Are you
committed? Are you prejudiced about being an artist, a therapist?
What distinction do you make? If you want to know please take
time to write.

Response

I am an artist therapist, I hope, although I am always searching for
answers. My prejudice about the differences between dilettante,
amateur and artist is: the artist is more free. Artists are allowed to
follow their intuition and to use their creativity. They need the
process to complete a Gestalt.

Dilettantes and amateurs are more directed to solving the problem
with their heads.

They need answers and existing theories.

They need confirmation for what they find from others.

I know what I write is about prejudices.

I know there must be a meeting point.

It must be in the commitment.

12. Can I just sit, just be?

To create contact full speech we need time. In Gestalt groups we intend to communicate and make contact. Yet we hardly have time to listen to each other without having a goal.

Just sit. just listen, just speak and explore what lives inside our heads and bodies is a luxury I seldom experienced until I started the Power of Writing groups. We learned to start our sessions with telling and talking and discovered that meeting on this level is possible. By writing we went even to a deeper dimension. If this leads to poetry I don't know, but you can find out for yourself when you sit down, not to make notes but to make room for words, that on first sight have no meaning. Look at the white paper and the pen, come into the Here and Now by directing your attention to your breathing for a few minutes, go back to the energy of the day and start writing.

Maybe you write about the weather

Or about your body feeling

Or about your partner

Or about the chair you are sitting in.

Do not worry, just write.

In the end you will find that what you wrote is precisely expressing what needed words.

It could be a poem or the beginning of it.

Response

Here and Now sitting behind my laptop

I am not certain about my message

Being confused is not my favourite status of being

But I am I am confused

And forcing myself to explore why

Why do I sit here; why do I have to write

Why do I think there will be at least one person out there

Who is waiting for what I have to say;

why do I need this idea

Is it to go on doing my job to go on writing in the knowledge

That happiness will occur when I feel connected

With my own words that will connect you

With your true self. And so on, and so on.

13. Do I realise the sun is shining?

Do you need the sun to regain your lost paradise?

Do you know what your paradise looks like?

To find out you can write about your garden of Eden or you can paint or draw. My experience is that to do this one time is not enough, we have to repeat it again and again and again. It helps to realise that in paradise your basic needs are fulfilled. Basic needs like: a safe place, nourishment, support, protection, tenderness and borders. It can be a good idea to start giving your safe place form and find out how you can go from a dream to reality.

Response

I know that in my paradise the sun is shining, literally or in imagination. That is why I travel to other countries to search for paradises. Before I go, I wonder: what will the weather be like?

Will I get attention for me?

Can I offer what I have to offer?

Will I be comfortable?

Will I find the right energy?

Do I dare to show my creativity?

Will I make contact and can I connect?

Will I be warm?

I have found beautiful places where most of my needs were answered and I know that my ultimate paradise is right here in my garden and my house. At this moment it is high summer, the sun is shining, circumstances are optimal.

Still, all of a sudden there is a lot of crying around me.

Poor children, their paradise is already lost or never was.

Now I know. Paradise is where I am.

In paradise there is everything I need, even the crying of children to make me aware of the mother in me that longs to console them.

And the sun will be shining anyway, even if I don't see and feel it.

14. Am I neurotic?

'The inner conflicts are for the most part reliable and not neurotic; they can be trusted to be self-regulating' Please read more in PHG*, page 135

What does this mean for me, for you?

Does it give us the freedom to experiment,
to explore with paint and clay, with a pen and paper to create
whatever wants to be created?

And is it art what we create this way?

Does it matter if it is art or not? Who decides?

Response

I don't know if 'I am neurotic?'

All of a sudden it seems of no importance.

Should the question then be: am I self-regulating?

For if I am I can do anything I feel like doing.

I can play, I can dream, I can play and dream that I am an artist. It
is what people like me have done for thousands of years and it is
what people should do.

Otherwise they do not regulate their selves.

And if they do not, nobody else can do it for them.

Question: is it in the not doing that we meet the neurotic in us?

15. Can I release control?

'A poet does not reject an image that stubbornly but "accidentally" appears and mars his plan; he respects the intruder and suddenly discovers what "his" plan is.' More in PHG* on page 137

This text speaks for itself in my view. It happens to me all the time when I write and trust that my hand will do the work or when I paint and listen to my intuition. It is more difficult to let the intruder in when I want to keep control. It is a choice we can make; for me the challenge is to let go of control and invite creativity in. Your choice can be different and not less adventurous.

Response

Releasing control is not my favourite action.

I know I have to, if I want to create, if I want to give therapy, if I want to travel, if I want to communicate. And of course I do, I do let go of control. But only in a way I expect I can handle.

Sounds like a contradiction. I let go of control, now here while writing. I let my hand do the work, I see the shade of my hand on the paper. It moves and...?

Yes, what does it do?

The shade of my hands and of my fingers play with the light of the sun. I cannot stay in this light, I am almost in the shade now.

Do not know what I am writing about.

Was it losing control and letting the intruder in?

Yes, of course, it was.

Although, I cannot share this experience with you, because it is gone now, it was the most intense moment while writing this text and regaining control.

16. Is it about me?

'The artist feels creativity as his natural excitement and his interest in the theme; but the technique is his way of forming the real to be more real'. More in PHG p. 174

Are those words also about you?
How about your style, your technique?
How do you make the real more real?
By writing, painting or by being 'just' a therapist?

Response

Yes, it is about me.
I do feel that only by using my creativity
I can offer what I have to offer as a therapist.
Would I follow a path that already exists
It would not be about me
Nor about my client.
It would be about predecessors
Who did their work and left their traces in theory.
They function as finger-posts for me.
But I have to make the choices
Which directions to follow
in relation to my client
while being in the Here and Now
and using my awareness.
A unique situation will develop
A unique reality that will become
more and more real
While the process goes on.

17. Do I admit life hurts and is painful?

Passion + awareness = compassion

'Passion + Awareness = Compassion'. I believe in this principle, but I/you/we will have to do it time and time again to know if it works. I fall into traps when I judge clients, friends, family when they tell me about their sufferings and I judge them because I think they do it wrongly and I know better instead of feeling what is happening inside me while I listen. Do you recognize what I am telling? Please explore by writing or drawing yourself. Questions that can guide you: - did I hear I am being called? - am I in the victim role? - am I in the role of the prosecutor? - am I in the role of the saviour?

Response

How can I deny I am being called when I find a little grey cat screaming for help in an opening of a brick bridge where the sun is shining. Her voice is so strong and demanding that I cannot ignore help is needed. At home she needs water, a tiny bit of food and attention, warmth, tenderness and attention, attention, attention. According to the vet she is old, at least 15, and ready to die because of kidney failure: 'You better let her go now.' No, I am not, she did not call me to be executed immediately. As long as she enjoys being stroked while sitting in the sun on the pillow of the dog, her life seems worth living. In the meantime I am suffering of a bellyache. In a session with a woman I got the implicit message I did not do a good job. Did I function as her prosecutor instead of saviour and became her victim? Time to bring the compassion in. Not as a saviour but as a fellow human being who is willing to enter into painful areas with her.

18. Can I sit on the ground for more than five minutes?

Kind of a silly question it seems at first sight.
Why should you/I sit on the ground for five minutes?
Have you ever since you are grown up?

Response

I am sitting on the ground of Central Park, NYC, in the dry grass under a tree, while listening to a saxophone player who is playing on the Sunny Side of the Street now. I don't need more than this to be happy. I am sitting in a strange place for a senior lady, but nobody is looking at me. A green smell is entering my nose. More people are listening, standing still. I gave him a dollar. Okay? Not generous? He is white and rather old and sounds like he was famous once. He plays short pieces and then takes a rest time and time again. Now he sounds like he is improvising or studying.
Still beautiful. Ah, Tenderly, he moves me to tears.

It was the song my grand love whistled when I was sixteen, seventeen while he walked before my house late at night. I watched him from my bed through a little window. I was lying there on my belly looking at the water and waiting for his whistle. One time he asked me to come down and I did. My mother, sister and brother were on holiday, my grandmother was too far in the house to hear me and my father was in a psychiatric hospital. A very sexual relation started. I can still feel the butterflies in my belly now I write this down.

The saxophone is playing Mackie Messer now. I could stay here all afternoon. There is no reason why I should not. A children's song, one, two, three, four and so on to improvisation. I am going, the ground is too hard. Sorry!

19. Can I tell right from wrong?

No you cannot, said a man who walked into my exposition space. Apparently – in his view – I do wrong and he knows what is right, according to his critical view of the paintings that are exposed on the wall. He is allowed to judge and say ‘No’ this is not good, this is wrong, this is not art. Why don’t you take lessons? Okay, that painting with the butterflies is nice, it has a composition and that one with the whale, looks like something because of the background colours; something...the others don’t have.

Agreed, I took the risk to let my experiments be seen by the world. Not because I thought what I created is good or right, but because what I made is interesting, intriguing. Up to now few people are impressed or touched. Few people long to look twice. Does this mean what I paint is wrong? That I should be ashamed of what I created? Right or wrong is not the question, when it is about those paintings. It is the judgement in itself that feels wrong. The way that it is given and the way I receive it. Am I still dependent of what the other thinks of me and of my work? And is that wrong or right? What about this man, who is even contradicting himself? Can he tell right from wrong and is that his job in life? But why does he have to destroy the joy of creating instead of taking time to experience what is presented? And why do I let it happen? Is it about making the world a better place? Possibly, I think if I know what is right I can make the world better. Problem is that if we forget to feel at the same time, we can be wrong without realizing it.

*‘In keeping yourself with labour you are in truth loving lives. And to love life through labour, is to be intimate with life’s inmost secrets.’ Kahlil Gibran in The Prophet**

Is painting, writing, singing work that is meant in this quote? Or is Gibran talking about hard labour we have to accomplish to survive? What does work and becoming intimate with the secrets of life mean for you? Can you experiment while playing with clay or sound or paint or ink?

20. Do I give what I long for?

Today I went to the hospital with my sister who is going to have a new hip. I did it to give support and attention, to be someone to talk with, to be a family member who cares, a sister who knows her history and most of all just to be there for her. What I gave to myself at the same time is the feeling of intimacy, the feeling that I am needed and of use, the idea that I did what I longed to do.

But did I give her what I long for? Well I long for someone who listens to me without judging my behaviour.

Someone to talk to and mirror me. Someone who is there just for me at a difficult moment. Someone to hold my hand while looking into my eyes knowing what is going on inside me without needing words. I would love to be someone who is able to give this and I am learning time and time again. Today I got a chance. Today I gave and received at the same time what I long for. Today I was in contact with myself and with my sister.

In this chapter you find the first quote from Sketches, by Joseph Zinker*. He is a perfect guide when it is about creativity and process: 'It is for this reason that Joseph often facetiously describes himself as being merely "a process junkie"', tells Paul Shane in the introduction.

'It is one thing to help someone adjust to a situation.

It is another to be a moving presence, a presence that stimulates spiritual ascendance rather than mere survival.' Joseph Zinker, 2001, page 23.

What kind of helping and giving is your favourite?

The solving kind? The goal directed? Help to survive? Or the spiritually being present way that gives the other the space to do his/her own work? Take a few minutes to think of a situation where you were the helper, you were the one who could give.

Be aware of the details. Who did you help? In what kind of situation? Were you received? And how did you feel afterwards?

And now is the moment to catch the story by writing it in a playful way. Tell it as the writer to yourself in the role of the helper.

Maybe you can do it in dialogues. Aim: to discover the many sides of your personality.

21. How do I get what I need?

To get an idea what one can need I turn to Joseph Zinker*, open Sketches at random on page 60/61 and read:

'Presence comes easy when one has already received approval and affirmation - when one's cup is full and one no longer needs it from anyone.'

Is presence what I need or is it approval and affirmation? Is my cup full or empty? It seems to me that there is no end to my needing approval, affirmation and admiration. My cup is certainly not empty but there is room enough for more. Is that the reason I am writing this workbook? Do I need your approval as reader and student to build up my own presence?

What is Here and Now? What is the story of the day?

What is my day about and what does it have to do with presence?

The grey little sick cat is still alive. She hardly eats.

She needs my presence to do her job of saying farewell to life.

While I am writing I feel I want to answer expectations I created myself. In 15 minutes a client is coming. It will be her 3rd time. Her expectations of me as a therapist are high. I like that, she challenges me to give the best I can. I also have expectations of her as she is willing to do her work. Without my presence and hers we could not do what we should.

Zinker, page 61: *'Presence often comes when one is seasoned and one's hot longing has cooled down to a kind of warm glow my therapist's presence illuminates in me.'*

I wrote this text by hand a few days ago. In the meantime the boss of the little cat is found and she is back with him. This little grey cat, that does not weigh more than a kilo, has a voice that saved her. She knows how to put her complete presence into it so that she is heard. I am learning that in my voice the way I am present can be heard. That is why I read out loud what I have written.

And you? How do you get what you need? To find out play with your voice, take a book that is dear to you, open it at random, read

the words your eyes fall on and feel what the vibration does with your body. If you take time you will know what you need by listening to your sound and your tone and by feeling how they resonate in your body.

22. Do I use my talent?

I feel a pressure on my breast. Tells me I am holding back. I am not using my voice, not expressing myself as I could. I was too impressed by a look, too impressed by feelings, too afraid to be imposing, too anxious to be rejected to show my fanciful self in the company of the ones I love dearly.

Alone with my little niece of seven who still knows how to show her talents without being afraid of being rejected I can sing and play with my voice.

We go for a walk and dance along the sidewalk making silly steps. We talk and I find my deep playful voice that makes her laugh and look at me with wonder. We go into the shops to find something she needs to grow and to enjoy herself. She is critical, she does not need anything as she has everything already. Then we go to the hockey field where she will train. I look at her swiftness, her movements, her playfulness and feel a longing in my stomach. She is talented when it is about playing and moving. I know because I recognize her. It makes me happy and I make her happy because I see her and she knows I do.

Zinker, 2001, page 33: 'I became fascinated with entering a person's existence through the vehicle of movement, rather than through awareness alone. I realized that in the cycle of behaviour, movement stimulates fresh awareness and that new awareness generate novel movements.'

How about your talents? Are they in the way you move? Does sport give you the possibility to explore what you are good in? Does the combination sport and therapy mean anything to you? And how do you consider dancing? Do you dance and is it healing for you? Only way to know is to do it.

23. Am I bigger than death?

Yes and No when I believe Joseph Zinker's* message, 2001, on page 22: *'The fact that I am going to die is ever present, and so is my sense of constant change. I am also in contact with a kind of grand plan and a grand humour in our lives. We are farts in the wind. (...) It is a damn shame to die, having done so much building.'*

Being part of a grand plan and at the same time know we are going to die, is what we all have to face.

All that building, all that writing, all that suffering, talking, walking, listening, cleaning, all for nothing?

No that is not the message. Even if we are going to die we are part of a plan, that is so much bigger than we are. We can be part of this plan as a fart in the wind, or as a valued writer or therapist. Nothing wrong with that. It is just about different kind of bricks that are needed to build the overall building with windows and roofs and walls and lamps and carpets and paintings. A place where we all can come home and contribute our own special quality that will celebrate giving form to the Big Plan.

And how special are you? Do you enjoy being that special brick that supports the corner wall? Or being the window we can look through? Or the roof that protects us from the rain? Just imagine if... Please, don't be shy, let your imagination guide you. There is nothing to lose.

24. Am I a victim?

No, yes, no, no, yes, yes. I a victim? Why should I be? Am I in the victim role, of course I am. Who isn't or was not? By being in the victim role I learned I am a woman and I have a mouth that can utter the words I need to survive in a city that is open, tolerant, alive and rather kicking. I like to be part of this world where I was a child when we were occupied by the Nazi's. I know how it feels to be overpowered. I know there can be soldiers who threaten your father who is hiding with the potato's in the basement, while they are talking with your mother and grandmother. What I have learned from this episode in my life, is that roles change. I saw with my own eyes that our prosecutors became victims when they were defeated and we as their ex-victims, now transformed to prosecutors, were watching them passing by.

Zinker (2001), page 15: *'I feel that a therapist often communicates a profound message out of presence, what s/he radiates to others by just being in the world.'*

What do you radiate by just being in the world? Not only as a therapist but in all the other roles you are playing? When was your darkest victim hour? Were you able to transform or is this dramatic event sucking you again and again back into it, giving you a reason to make the other feel guilty? Only way to get out of the victim role is to admit that we are victims, no doubt about it. And by writing our victim stories down openly we will discover we are much more than victims and prosecutors and saviours as we are human beings. Or did you believe you were a human doing?

25. How old do I feel?

I feel as old as my grandmother who would have been 124 years old today had she still been alive. And I feel as young as my niece who is seven and who has the energy of a jumping deer. My grandmother's drive is in me. It tells me not to despair. Every day brings a new chance to accomplish what I am supposed to do. My niece shows me that playing opens the energy source we both are connected to. We can walk, run, jump, talk, laugh... I as an old lady with a young heart. She as a young girl with an old soul. What is age about? What is young? What is old for you? Who are your mirrors? How do you look at the generations you are part of?

Michael Vincent Miller*, 1985,

'Present moments can become random and discontinuous unless they are grounded in a larger perspective that includes the past and the future, which is to say a view of human development, and a way of understanding how people make their experience, which is to say a theory of character.'

Maybe it is an idea to open at random your own wise book to find a quote as a key to your view on life. Main thing is that you realize you are connected, whether you want it or not.

26. Am I trying to give the right answer?

‘Differentiation of the Field: Polarities versus Dichotomies. A dichotomy is a split whereby the field is considered not as a whole differentiated into different and interlocking parts, but rather as an assortment of competing (either/ or) and unrelated forces. Dichotomous thinking interferes with organismic self-regulation. Dichotomous thinking tends to be intolerant of diversity among persons and of paradoxical truths about a single person.’ Gary Yontef, 1993, page 147*

As I do not know the word dichotomy, I go to internet to find the right translation. It is *dichotomie*. A word I have not met before. Only thing I can do to find my answer is to read what Yontef is telling very intensely. ‘D’ is a split, I read, in a field where unrelated forces are competing instead of working together and communicating. A field where people do not listen to each other. And their ‘D’ thinking stops their organismic self-regulation. ‘D’ thinking? This is not about feeling but about a special way of thinking. ‘D’ thinking tends to be intolerant of diversity among persons,’ Yontef continues. I wonder what kind of thinking could possibly bridge the split. How about ‘A’ thinking, ‘A’ standing for Awareness? Would it be different in a group of ‘A’ thinkers? Or ‘P’ thinkers, ‘P’ standing for the paradoxical truth? It is my conviction that we can think what we think, but if we do not feel the split will not be bridged.

I think I will not find the right answer today. I feel impatient and a bit confused. What is the use of this kind of thinking? What am I expected to learn or to find out? Yontef: *‘Organismic self-regulation leads to integrating parts with each other and into a whole that encompasses the parts.’*

Is it my self-regulation that is telling me I better go outside to enjoy the October sun together with my dog. Perhaps we will meet what I need in the dog field where there is smelling instead of thinking. Dogs listen to their noses who cannot be fooled. When they smell danger they keep their distance.

Only when there is fear, there is confusion. Does that mean their
noses are on strike and they have to confront each other?
Did your intuition already tell you what this is about?
Do you trust it as dogs do their noses?
Or did fear enter your body and close you off from your inner
wisdom?

27. What would I like to offer?

'The experiential here and now does not exist in a vacuum but is rather owned by a self, a person, a me. It is for this reason that a gestalt therapist repeatedly asks his patient to take ownership of his statement or observation.' Zinker* 2001, page 82

As a therapist I want to and have to offer my client the chance to experience the difference between living in the head with all the stories, the musts and ifs, the fears, the longing, the cunning, the planning, the how to keep control. And the being in the moment, feeling what s/he feels, hearing what s/he hears, smelling what s/he smells and saying what s/he wants to say. I know I have waited too long already when I feel bored, frustrated, irritated. But how can I invite my client to step out of his/her known world and into the adventure of the unknown? How can I offer what I like to offer without offending? Not by being endlessly empathic, not by being impatient, not by disappearing in my own control and protection. It helps to be playful, to invite them jokingly to explore new behaviour.

Saying 'Boooh' and hello, hello, here am I did wonders, so did making a long nose when they were angry with me.

How do you invite your clients or relations to step out of their preconceived stories, out of their self protection and control and into the adventure of the experiment? Do you have a protocol? Or do you trust that your intuition will guide you so you can offer a brand new creative step at exactly the right moment? Don't forget to take time to become aware before you ask your client or your friend or your lover or your relative to follow you in this experiment with new behaviour.

28. Do I love to be her(e)?

When I typed this question out the first time I made a mistake by forgetting the last e. When I was correcting and read what I wrote I felt surprised. Do I love to be her? Do I love to be here? The two belong together I realized. I am her whether I love it or not and I am here. Being her is quite something, often I am overwhelmed by her. She drives me day in day out. Telling me there are things to do. Telling me this will never stop. Telling me I can love to be her, if I am gentle. There are ways and ways. Hard ones, mild ones, easy ones, joyful ones, deep ones. Being here helps me to choose as I am in a comfortable place, in a rather comfortable position.

I am warm, I have enough nourishment, I live in a moderate climate, in a rich country. I can permit 'her' to be playful when she feels like it. I have a profession that challenges me to bring out the best in 'her'.

Zinker* 2001, page 92:

'Our deepest, most profound stirrings of self-appreciation, self-love, and self-knowledge surface in the presence of the person whom we experience as totally accepting.'

Are you the totally accepting type that invites 'her' or 'him' to experience the love of self? Can you appreciate 'her' or 'him' even if you know his/hers failures, weak spots and longings? Why don't you make an appointment with you to explore what you love about yourself and what you find difficult. Playful writing can help to find the right words. If you do it once it probably will give you a taste for more. Of course you can also ask a person you totally trust to function as a sounding-board. It will be different, but both ways are valuable.

29. Do I know better?

Experiment in a workshop:

‘Remember the details of the poem

I did not listen so how can I remember details. I do remember the tone of the voice that read the poem. Isn't it strange that I was completely elsewhere? The tone of the voice told me that the reader thought what he was reading to us is valuable. Still, I did not listen to the content. Just was absorbed in the sound of the voice. What did I hear that made me go off on a journey? Was it the tone of beauty? The tone of innocence? The tone of I know what you don't? This thought gives me a nauseous wave in my throat. I have given myself the message that I am not a poet.

Poetry is an impenetrable language for me.

Poetry asks me to go into the dark caves of the spirit of the other.

I am unwilling to do this, unwilling to go there.

I am too afraid to follow into the depth of time
and into the depth of the other.

Idea to do your own work:

read a poem out loud one, two, three times.

Then close the book and write

what you remember about the details.

Questions to consider: Did I find my tone?

Can I enter into poetry?

From experience I know that when I sing what I have written, I will know better what my reality is.

30. Why wait for tomorrow?

Good question, yes, why do I wait with giving a call to the publisher I sent two manuscripts? Why do I wait with having my cat vaccinated? Why do I wait with typing out the handwritten words I wrote when I was in New York? Why do I wait with giving my sister in law a call to invite her to my birthday? Why did I wait with searching for the book of Robert Misrahi with 100 Words about the Ethica of Baruch Spinoza? Now I am too late because it is out of print and sold out everywhere.

I think it is because I am uncertain. It is because I do not know if I will like what will happen next. I know I procrastinate because I am afraid of being rejected or doing it wrongly.

I turn to Zinker*, 2001, and find on page 141 in a dialogue between Joseph and Irving Polster: *'What we need is to teach persons to see and then connect the scene with their thinking and feeling. It is really not so simple. It is a complex diagnostic and methodological task.'*

Although they are talking about schizophrenic conditions I do get a good feeling. This could be my lesson too. First see, then connect the scene with my thinking and feeling. When I see for example the words I wrote by hand in New York or elsewhere - before I think and feel, I am less anxious than when I think first and tell myself you have to finish this before the end of the week and then you have to find a way to publish what you have written. My heart starts even beating louder now I am writing those words down. My own expectations keep me from being free to act.

Do you recognize anything of what I am trying to tell? If so take some time to explore all those expectations that are darkening your future. Write them down. Make them first as big as possible, then start destructing them. Laugh at yourself and your expectations. Then start building on the empty space that is waiting to be filled. Take in the scene before you begin thinking and feeling. Maybe you will enter a new period in your life.

31. Am I afraid of the battle inside?

Afraid? Its more that I am tired of this battle between my heart and my head between my longing to connect and become one and my need to make money and adapt to what society needs to pay me for my services. This last sentence makes me dizzy.

How can I offer what I learned about commitment and the fear to be who I am and make money?

I feel like withdrawing inside my house and stopping taking part in the rat race process. Just live in harmony with myself, my family, my pets, my house, my neighbourhood, my garden, my music.

Why can't I? Is it about money? Is it about not being able to teach what I have learned?

I open Zinker*, page 164, my eyes falls on a discussion between Robert Harman and Joseph about Gestalt training programs:

J.: 'Unlike the slave driving that we do in the institute, I would have field trips (...) to the Natural History Museum, to the Cleveland Art Museum, to the Cleveland Institute of Art, to the Cleveland Orchestra, with specific thematic assignments. I would sit down two students in front of a painting and say to them "Write down five or six pages of what you see in that picture."'

Sit down and write is what I am doing all the time.

It keeps me sane. It is true that I open this way a world I did not know before. Can you do what Joseph suggests? Sit in front of a painting, listen to a concert and start writing while you are looking or listening? Please take all the time you need, forget you have other things to do, better things to do, practical things to do. Once you are in this experiment the time is yours, you can relax and just be, although you are writing. This kind of writing is not about accomplishing a task, it is about being.

But it will not help to make money. That can be a problem.

32. Can I feel irritation?

I feel like saying, No, feel irritation me? No, not at this moment. But of course I can feel irritation. Irritation is never far. Certainly not when a question like this is posed to me. I know I made this question up myself, but not for myself in the first place.

As a therapist I have to pose the question often:

can you feel irritation? The answer usually is: irritation? No, me? No I do not. And then I teach even if you can not feel irritation, it can still be there in your undercurrent. At the same time I can feel irritation rising in me. Oh no, do not play the innocent therapist who is never angry, never did anything wrong and now gets irritated together with her client. Crucial moment: do I realize that I do feel my own irritation? Can I admit this to my client without accusing him or her? Feeling irritation while at work seems dangerous. I rather am a nice good humoured therapist. But I had to learn to become friends with my own irritation and that helps me to support my client to do the same.

Humour is never far away when this happens.

Zinker, 2001, page 141, in discussion with Irving Polster about psychotics: *'Gestalt has a tendency among many of us to be sweeping, broad, and bold. That level of excitement is frightening to psychotics.'*

Not only to psychotics is my experience. How do you work with clients with frozen anger, with suppressed rage, with dark looks and no words? Do you lead them step by step *'from sensation to awareness and again to sensation and awareness while paying attention to excitement'*? Zinker in the same discussion. And do you dare to feel your own anxiety and irritation while working? Or don't you feel it?

33. Did I hear I am being called?

Robert Harman in discussion with Joseph Zinker about PHG*, Sketches page 161, *‘People who are not Gestalt therapists have given us a look. They say things like, “There really isn’t a theory in Gestalt Therapy.” We have no theory. One of the things they base that on is that book isn’t easily read.’*

Both Harman and Zinker are attached to PHG* and when they are stuck with a client or when they need Gestalt nourishment, they turn to PHG*. According to RH there are two things he hears from people that turn them off from Gestalt therapy. One is that book and the other the Gloria tapes.

What does this conversation have to do with my or your being called or not? Spreading the good news of Gestalt therapy is one of my missions in life. Maybe PHG* is not easy to read, maybe Fritz Perls did not write well and maybe Paul Goodman rewrote PHG* in such a fashion that it could not be introjected, but nevertheless RH, JZ, you and I decided to dedicate our lives to Gestalt. We understood and understand, we know. And I am one of the we that are called to do the mission of writing words that do invite people to enter the Gestalt world.

Words that are easy to write because they come from within. And if it is only one word that can connect you with the outer world when spoken at the right time in the right field or one word that can be read with a mind that is free of the rumours that Gestalt can be dangerous and harm you it is worth writing. I also read in this discussion that a lot of people were afraid of Fritz Perls.

At first sight this seems history. But is it? Or is Gestalt therapy still suffering of those images? What do you experience? And how do you work with it? Does it extra inspire you or make you lose your faith? Or do you have a different calling?

34. Am I listening and can I hear?

I am listening now this moment to Bach. Listening to his notes, his sounds, his rhythms, his melodies.

They are high and light. In the undercurrent I can hear a voice telling me: listen and do not be too hasty, take time to let the vibration reach you.

Now I am listening to my neighbour who is making a dentist sound while drilling, or is it boring a hole in his wall? Now voices on the radio are talking and telling what Bach means to them. They say it is the jubilation, they are longing for it gives them a special feeling inside, a kind of light. While they are still talking the sound of the neighbour at work continues. In that sound I hear whining. So my day is filled with jubilation and whining from outside, if I take time to listen. I could turn the music and the interview off to listen to my own inner sound.

Its what I did, I need silence now so I can hear what is more today. Its autumn, the air is crisp, the light is gorgeous. I was in it and am nourished enough to start cleaning my house, letting my vacuum cleaner drown the noise of the bore of my neighbour.

But before I do I turn to Zinker*, 2001, page 100 about a hypothetical couple therapy: *'Bill, this time would you be willing to sit back and try not to stiffen no matter how strident Barbara's voice becomes? And Barbara, you can try playing with your voice when Bill gets really rigid and immobile in his position.'*

Whether you believe me or not, I just opened Sketches at random and found those sentences about listening to the other and to ones self. Amazing. Are you listening at this moment? Can you hear? Do you want to hear what you hear? If not, what can you do about it? Close off? Put on music? Go outside for a walk? Meditate to find the silence inside you? We have a lot of choices. Listening can help us to choose the right one.

35. Am I aware?

In the Conservatory being part of the Jewish Music Festival. I gave myself a present today: just go, don't email, don't worry about Poe, he can be with his dog friends, just go, just listen to the music. It is a competition that will last three to four days. Jewish music from twelve different countries.

Here and Now

Sounds of a Polish band and the voice of a female singer
I am aware of tears rising behind my eyes
I am aware that those tears are telling me
I am moved till my very core.
The sound of those Polish musicians move every cell in my body.
This morning I drew a card that told me
if I would go to this festival my blood would run faster.
Even though I need my coat to keep warm enough to stay I know
at this moment I cannot be in a better place on earth.
I get everything I need to feel I am alive.
My eyes see people moving, playing, my ears can hear them.
My skin is taking the vibrations in and my brain or is it my soul is
telling me; 'Tine, this is who you are too.' You are a dancing,
singing lady, who has got a voice to let the world know you are
grateful to be alive. Grateful with a reason. Grateful because you
know you got all the talent that is needed to heal yourself. All the
talent to become a complete human being who has enough energy
to make the world a better place.

In Zinker*, 2001, page 91 *'Arthur Rubinstein once said, "Playing the piano is like making love, it fills me completely with joy."'*

So that is what making music can be about. If it is like making love, is up to us. For me just listening while being completely aware already brought a state of bliss. If you play an instrument or if you sing you can let yourself be inspired by this revelation of a great musician. If not just put on some music you love and imagine you are the director or the pianist or the singer. All you have to do is to take yourself seriously and listen with your soul.

36. Can it be love?

Still at the Jewish Music festival
Two chassidim
One with a clarinet
One with a base
Long black coats
Black trilbies
Curls along the ears
One long red beard, one black one

Assisted by an accordion,
a violin and percussions
Playing niguns*
that are meant to cheer up the Sabbath

The mere sight of them made my heart jump.
The orthodoxy showing how music, sounds,
movement, humour can lift us up to another level.
I did not dare but I longed to laugh out loud,
louder than loud.

What else can it be than love?
Love for music, love for each other, love for the world,
love for the divine.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov in 'The Empty Chair':
'Seek the sacred within the ordinary.
Seek the remarkable within the commonplace.'

The message is simple. The sacred, the remarkable is there.
All you have to do is seek it in your every day life
and see, feel, hear it. Can you trust it, believe it?

37. Am I free to speak?

Jewish Music – 3 and under the spell of the Jiddish singers and players from Israel who set my body on fire.

Am I free to say so out loud?

Can I say: ‘Hey, boys you set me on fire sitting here listening to you. I wish I had your age now, I would do something to attract your attention and perhaps come close to you and even closer than close.’

I am free to write this with a smile on my face a butterfly feeling in my belly and that is it for now. Then life goes on and into a sweet feminine song with the clear tones of a clarinet and the transparent gliding sound of the Middle East. Beautiful, neat, nothing wrong with, nothing to do with secret, dark longings and everything with a yearning we are allowed to have as women. A yearning we can surrender to, because nothing nasty can happen, as we are protected by the beauty of the sound.

Zinker (2001), page 21: *‘The body is the person’s “truth button.” It sings out beyond the person’s words like a Greek chorus. There are times when I experiment with not listening to the words; I only respond to the singing out, the calling forth of the person’s physical presence.’*

Do you know your truth button? Where is it located in your body? Do you need music to experience it? Or can the presence of another human being already make you aware of this treasure inside the border of your skin? Does it make you blush, feel uncomfortable or can you enjoy it and make you sing while nobody can guess the true reason?

38. Am I the music?

JMF - 4 Waiting for the concert of Di Gojim
They are sound checking and amusing themselves
by free sounding and free moving
They did enough, they know how their music
will sound and they disappear backstage
before re-entering and starting the true performance.
Who am I as a Goy in the light of those non-Jews
playing pure Klezmer and without a doubt
making Jewish sounds
I look at the leader, I listen to him
and cannot help thinking 'not Jewish?
Who or what is he then?'
How can anyone play this kind of music
without having a Jewish soul?
Back to me
How can I be sitting here
if it is not about me?
Of course it is about me
Why don't I stop this doubt about my identity
I am not serving anyone with it
least of all me.
The tones, the notes, the words, the fun, the rhythm,
it all is in me as well.
Whether I or anyone else like(s) it or not.

Gloria Steinem*, 1992, page 253 '
*Hierarchies of skin and color and racial features are sad testimonies to
racism's power to undermine self-esteem,
and thus to maintain a racial status quo.*'

Do you know who you are in terms of race?
What is your color? Are you proud of the color you have? Do you
think there exist races to be pitied? Or races that you are jealous
of? Why don't you have a look in the mirror
and tell yourself what you think of you
as a member of your people?

39. Do I dare to long for love?

To long for it secretly is one thing. To be outspoken and say 'I long for your love' another. Of course I long for love, specially the love of my family. But my family is not generous with free love. I think I have to behave and be good to deserve their attention. I am generalizing now. Not interesting. I long for the love of my sister and find it difficult to trust her. I expect always a blow because I do something or be someone that makes her jealous or ashamed of me. I am confronting for her. I behave in a way that reminds her of our father and I look like my mother. I am not neutral in her eyes. As the eldest I have been constantly in her way. But when I held a speech for the wedding of a nephew she was proud. It felt like love.

To give and receive. To long for love is longing to give love. Longing to connect with my own love for my sister. I struggle with the same problems. I love her dearly, I do, no doubt about it. The problem is in the behaving. Mine and hers. As the big sister who has to know better I have an arrogance in me when it is about having a place in society. As the one who is more intellectual and less beautiful I have an uncertainty in me. She is the beautiful one and the one with friends. In my turn I am ashamed of her when she is in her victim role and believes she does not know or knows everything better. How can I give and receive love without judging?

Just do it, lady, just do it. Stop being afraid of her rejections and your own judgement. This is about overcoming the mother in both of you. The mother who nourished and fed you, also spiritually.

Zinker 2001, page 32: 'Fritz Perls and Erving Polster helped me to contact my own rage, my own 'Nazism,' and to express it. What good was my niceness without my meanness, or my truthfulness without my lying?'

True enough. Zinker is telling in those sentences about his experiences in Nazi Poland. My sister and I are also war children, who know about rage and meanness.

Does it make us extra afraid of our longing for love?

How about you?

What is your story when it is about giving and receiving love?

Does it make you afraid of it or more open?

40. Am I a perfectionist?

Am I? Of course I am and I believe that everybody else is.
It is a human trait to long to be perfect, to do perfect things.
Not to make mistakes, because mistakes make us small and uncertain. Yet I know that without failure I would never have learned to do some things perfectly. Some things like what?
I think I can make a perfect cup of tea, cook a perfect meal.
I am a perfect dog walker and cat carer. A perfect aunt?
But am I if I am honest?
Right now, at this moment, I cannot think of an activity I can do without making mistakes. I am a good therapist and as soon as I want to be perfect I am not human anymore but become a robot without feelings.
It is about feelings, emotions where the traps are.
Not to be perfect, not having the pretence to be perfect, yet be as good as I am is as close as I – and you? – can come to being perfect. Being a perfectionist is over doing the perfection as with all ist. When the drive behind longing to be perfect is fear of rejection, we are in prison, self made but real enough to burden us and make us unhappy.
I am feeling the weight of responsibility on my shoulders.

I am writing this in the 'Secret Garden' in Central Park.
In the corner of my ear a man in a wheelchair is speaking loudly since at least fifteen minutes in his cell phone in a complete foreign language. I cannot even recognize the sounds. No shame, no shyness, nobody here can follow me, he thinks...
He is finished and I hope I did not kill another tiny spider.
It would be too imperfect.
Has longing to be perfect to do with the eyes and ears of the other? Are you still hearing the message what you should do to be lovable? You can find out by going into your own process and create beauty. But how?

Joseph Zinker, 2001, tells on page 30 how he spent many nights copying Van Gogh's self-portraits. What he found was understanding '*His compassion for a prostitute, his passion for life, his guilt*'. Does not sound very perfect, but I do recognize the beauty.

41. Am I afraid of the snow?

Why should I be afraid of the snow, if I do not have to go into it and stay in it? Why should I be afraid if I have a warm home to go back to? Still I write this while being in August hot New York and longing for a place to sit I backed out two or three times today and stepped into a place that attracted me, yet was so cold that I could not imagine myself staying there. Am I afraid of cold winds that won't stop blowing? Yes, I am, I don't like it, if I don't have to I don't go in or get out immediately.

I have never understood what snow fun in the mountains is about. People like it, go there to sport longing for their kind of ecstasy. When I look at their pictures they seem happy enough. My two nieces are learning to appreciate this kind of world at an early age. Their parents think it is important that they learn to ski and amuse themselves this way. When I think of snow and ice, I think of icy unheated bedrooms. Must have felt unsafe to sleep there as a child. I recall waking up with frozen breath on my sheets, frozen windows with beautiful ice flowers. Looking at it from this distance it sounds romantic. It was not, it had some beauty, that is true, but it was a severe life with threat. Heat was sparse, it was wartime, people cut down the city trees to keep warm. We had just one warm room with closed doors. Even the schools had to close their doors: no heat. Cold is connected to my fear to exist or/and my fear for death.

Zinker 2001, page 89, *'A Mission: The Soul of a Man*
It was only in his older years that he began to touch the earth,
and to taste the salt of the ocean. (...) *Fear was always in the ground. From*
time to time his yearnings would override his fear—but never fully.'

Fear to exist, fear of the cold or of the ground or of death.
We all have to live with it. How do you deal with it?
Do you deny it, or think it is for later? Not yet?
Do you touch the ground, taste the salt of the ocean,
let the cold in or do you feel protected enough not to worry?

42. Do I feel sleepy?

Yes, I do or I did feel sleepy this morning.
Cause of too much wine.
Now it is four o'clock in the afternoon
and I have been living for hours.
Don't feel sleepy anymore.
This is a subject where I feel resistance.
Sleepy? Me? I? I am never sleepy ever.
Why should I be? I look after myself,
am full of energy, I long to live not to sleep.
Although, I am discovering the blessing of letting myself go
on the couch in the evening and nap and having a bed
where I can stretch my body and let the dream world in.
Nothing to do with my age, nothing with always being busy,
nothing with walking, doing, writing, reading, listening,
shopping, seeing, thinking. Nothing with all those impressions
entering me and wanting to be part of me.
To grow every day I need sleep so the body can do its work by
itself.

Zinker 2001, page 96: 'Persons with permeable boundaries, "open persons" are in constant process, constant change, require constant replenishment of energy, and are connected to themselves and others. They tend to grow in complexity and evolve their problems into higher and higher levels of abstraction or human concern.'

Sleepy? You? How much sleep do you need a night? More than eight hours? Are you obsessed with sleep or with not sleeping? Do you drag going to bed because you are afraid you will lie awake thinking of problems? Or are you a good sleeper who wakes up completely rested in the morning, ready to go and live a new day?

43. Do I long to connect?

Yes, I do long to connect, always. My deepest longing is to connect with the Beloved. But I do not know how. I have been working on it ever since I remember. I am seeing the beloved in all kinds of different forms that attract me.

I see him/her in the sun, in the sea, in the wind, in the earth. That is why I sit in the sun feeling that I am being healed, it is why I swim in the sea, walk in the wind and touch the ground. Every day I feel I become more complete, more connected. And I also long to connect with people.

I do communicate, make fun with the people I meet daily. But to connect it seems I need more, I need commitment, time, the right place, the right people and the right moment. I have a dream of being with a small group in a beautiful place in Spain for a week or two weeks or a month. The sun will be blessing us, the food will be rich and we will sit down and communicate, talk, listen, make contact and connect with each other and with the Beloved, who is in all of us. When we leave to go home, we will still be connected by invisible threads. We will know and be able to connect with other people who are prepared to do the work.

Zinker 2001, page 47: *'Sense of Power and Magic*

'The creative person, the creative therapist, is a disciplined craftsman whose gift is to keep reaching out toward his most profound personal potential. (...) It is during this process of transcending my own heaviness or dullness or stereotypy that I feel pure, good, beautiful, powerful, holy, rich, sweet, magical. This feeling, when it is there, is not only my own – it saturates the space around me and is exuded by the other person or persons who share it. And it is not clear if God is in our hands and hearts, whether we are in his lap, or if this is the way artists create God.'

If I feel connected to one colleague/writer it is Zinker. He answers me when I do not even pose a question. It seems he knew all my questions before I was aware of them. Do you have a master writer you can turn to whenever you feel like it? The advantage of having a master who writes is that you do not have to wait until he or she is near you, you can just open the book and there are the

answers. What we need to do it is courage and trust. Courage to get the book out of the cupboard and trust to be able to open it at random and know what ever we find is IT.

44. Do I feel chosen?

I do feel chosen being in my hotel in Wellfleet, Cape Cod, where I am for the 25th GISC Writers conference. And yes, I feel chosen by my father and mother, by God, by Nature, by lovers, friends, pets and by Joseph Zinker who told me I am part of his soul. And No, I do not feel chosen by most Gestalt authorities, although I think they like me, think I am funny, unique, eccentric? I am guessing, I do not know what 'they' think I am. But I am not the star I would like to be, I am not recognized as the bringer of a happy message. No, it is painful to admit, I am not able to do IT! I do feel seen though, I do feel received in my behaviour and I am not yet ripe enough to let the voice of my soul come out in a pure tone. It takes more time. I should not to push IT.

I am telling myself grow, do it, get out, show, find a publisher, but what I have to offer is so precious that more time, more purification is needed.

Still I do feel chosen in the sense that I know I am being guided. I do not have to do it alone. I do it together with masters, whether they are dead or alive, Jewish, Indian or Christian, ancestors or not. In me they are united and transformed in a powerful force that is ALMOST ready to come out!

Zinker, 2001, page 125: *'Someone must come along sometime in our lives and tell us, as a witness to a great event might do.*

'Yes, yes, you are here and yes, you are entitled to be here fully''

Can you experience being chosen, being guided?

Can you admit it to yourself or do you feel shy about it?

Are you afraid to be seen as someone who is not grounded?

What are the events that changed your life and how did they come about? Did you arrange them or did unexpected chances present themselves to you?

45. Does anyone love me?

What a question, although I made it up myself. If I make it personal and relate it to this day here in New York I must say yes, the colleague I had lunch with, gives me this feeling of being loved. Not in an exclusive way, but he loves me as part of what he cherishes in the world. I know he loves my spontaneity, my creativity, my courage, my being as a woman. He is the only colleague I could work with without resistance. When I saw him work the first time in a workshop about Intimacy, I knew he was kosher. I knew of course that we would differ and I knew that we live from the same basic trust, the same beliefs, the same convictions concerning our work.

I am a louse in the fur and so is he in his way. I love my work, he loves his and this love comes all from one source, one spring, the same spring our clients come from and go back to. It means to get love is to give love. I never doubted his love, that is for certain and apparently he trusted mine.

Should I then transform this question to: do I love anyone? Is this the other side of the coin? If I do not love I will not be loved. The strange question that enters my mind now is: why is it so easy to love my clients, to feel compassion for them and so difficult to love colleagues, authorities, politicians. Here I go again, this is about the misuse of power. It is not easy to love dominant people who I feel misuse me.

In the December 2010 Newsletter of Rabbi David Cooper* I read: *'The quality of love can be recognized in its energetic universal form, the mystic would suggest that there is also a trans-state of love in a dimension that defies understanding. This form of love does not express itself in any ordinary way that is recognizable; rather it is the metaphysical glue that holds all of existence together.'*

As far as I know L/love is hot stuff. Can you handle it? Can you face the fact that without L/love you would live in a desert, a world without emotions, without water? Please take some time to sit and meditate on what L/love means to you.

Are you waiting for it to come from outside or do you recognize it in yourself? Why don't you give L/love words on paper or draw what presents itself. It is the magic that makes the/your world go around.

46. Am I goodwilling?

No today I am not. Today I am cross. Today I do not feel well. Today I am bothered by a bladder infection that is annoying in itself and the medicines I have to take make me nauseous give me a stomach ache and can cause diarrhoea. I have to accept that during five days, I am not my usual playful self but a cross old lady who tells herself when she walks in the cold wind with her dog: Come on, you are still here, enjoy every minute, all you have to do is 'go on'. Do not overrule yourself by doom thoughts. Even though I have to take the message of my bladder seriously: you are under too much pressure and you are still struggling with negative feelings. The only one who can heal me to the core is me. What I would like is to sing, make music together with other music lovers, like I saw and heard yesterday when I was at the Music Festival. I can get so jealous when I experience those mainly young people who allow themselves to go loose and to feel free. True is of course that they are aware of what they are doing, because the audience is looking, listening, judging, thinking you are good or you are not. You are the winner and the rest are losers. Why? They were all good, they were all offering joy, offering the best they have. Who are we as spectators to tell them they are not good enough. Is it a matter of being good or bad willed?

Zinker 2001, page 163, Joseph in discussion with Robert Harman who asks him what he would teach if he had his own training group: 'J.: *Well, I was thinking I would break a group of people into triads; you know how we do that. I would focus on the observer, not on the therapist. I would make the observation the most important skill. I would praise the observer. I would evaluate observation and the basic skill of attending to phenomenological data.*'

You probably have been in triads like this. As a trainer I taught what Joseph suggests and discovered indeed the importance of the observer. It took some time to realize that we need to be a good willing observer to become a good willing therapist. What are your own experiences being in a triad like that? What is the role that is most difficult for you? And how about being good willing or not?

47. Am I afraid of me?

Beautiful day, today, an unexpected gift.

Reading about Presence and Charisma in Sketches by Joseph Zinker set me thinking. Charisma asks for attention, presence is there for the other. Presence so the other is safe enough to express her/his fears, longings and loves.

Zinker; *'Presence comes easier when one has already received approval and affirmation -- when ones cup is full and one no longer needs it from anyone.'*

Back to the question of the day. The core question: am I afraid that I am not loved? Not loved because people, including my family, are afraid of me and my provocations? Although my provocations are meant to make the world better? I do realize that most provoked people do not immediately feel my love in it and therefore feel threatened. Can they answer my invitation and stimulation to become aware of their own beauty and strength? Or do they withdraw because their self image tells them they are not good enough to fit in the image.

In the words of Zinker: *'I am brave enough to do this thing at the possible cost of failure or ridicule, so that I may experience this day with newness and freshness.'*

Am I brave enough to state here on this empty sheet of paper that I am here on earth to love and be loved? Just like you? And like Joseph who I met last week. I can still feel his soul touching mine. His brain has been operated. On the outside he seems a different man. In the inside his soul is as pure as it came out of the fires of war. Just his presence and his approval for me filled my cup with love and understanding that are infinite and that can infinitely be shared.

Where do those words touch you? Is love just and solely allowed to creep into your office when you are present for your clients? Or are you brave enough to show your family, friends, neighbours, colleagues and enemies that you are made of love, although there is fear in you and anger and pain that are waiting to be transformed to strength.

48. Do I rather preach than do IT?

I am ill and have to look after me
Very carefully
Taking time just for me
Is not an easy thing to do
Of course I preach
Of course I tell my clients
If they do not look after themselves
Nobody can do it
And now my moment is here
I have no choice
I sit on the couch and look around me
Is writing like this looking after me
It makes me more happy
It is not really work
It is like breathing
If I stop breathing
I stop living
I have to nourish myself
with words and with food
and with warmth and light
And I like to preach to make others aware
and more happy
Nothing wrong with it in my view

Zinker 2001, page 102 *'As a therapist, you must constantly "track" your own moods, desires, conflicts, needs, and changing ideologies because the person sitting in your presence will be affected/effected by our moods.'*

What is right and what is wrong? Do you know in this case? Can you stay away from preaching to your clients? Or to your family? Or your friends? Or colleagues? Or to yourself? And if you can what do you do instead? Try not to find an answer in your head but please take time to write and explore the words ready to be written.

49. What are my biggest fears?

Do I know? Wish I did. My biggest fear is that I do not know my real fear. That is why I have to be on guard.

One never knows from which corner this existential fear can pop up. I project my fears on my bank account.

If there is enough to spend, I cannot drown yet.

But there is always a possibility that the numbers turn out to be false. They make an impression that they are safe.

That they protect me and then from nowhere I have to pay tax, insurance, repairs, new machines and the money disappears without my getting a hold. As long as I can pay, I still feel I am safe. I enter into the danger zone when I feel threatened, because I think I will not have enough clients in the future and will have to become dependent.

I have to become someone who has to ask for work, has to ask for money, has to ask for goodwill. So what is my biggest fear?

Not being able to look after me. Not being able to stand on my own feet. Not able to take care of my own body and my own soul. As long as I can pay, I am the director. The moment I have to ask for help, I am afraid I will drown in the sea of good willing energy that could come my way without understanding who I am. All this is about fear, not about reality. Although I seem to be continuously busy to prevent my fear becoming real.

Zinker 2001, page 40 *'A woman says that she feels childlike. (...) I ask her to act out her childlike behaviour with me or with the group.'*

I know my fear is the fear of a child. Being open about it makes it more adult. How about your biggest fears? Can you grab them, write them down, take them seriously? If you have time draw the house where you grew up in. And give the threats a place. Mark them with big black crosses. If you are ready take a white piece of paper and write down every word that comes to you while looking at your drawing. Next step you can take is make sentences with the words you wrote down. It does not have to be a poem, to be of real meaning to you.

50. Can I hear my inner voice?

My inner voice gets words and sounds from the outer world while I was watching the funeral service of a great Dutch writer. Today we declare him THE greatest. Hearing the words of his publisher, his friends, the mayor of Amsterdam, I agree, although I agree with my head. I am not exactly neutral. More than forty years ago I had an affair with him. Not funny. Pretty complicated.

An affair I have never felt proud of. I felt humiliated for different reasons. He was very popular then, also controversial. I became imprisoned in his look. He made me feel chosen. I do not think I ever met another man with a look as intent as his. Of course I longed to connect and at the same time was afraid to be rejected. The fact that his look had spotted me filled me with excitement. But I was certain he would be disappointed once he would know me better. Thinking back I know I was the one who rejected him because I was disappointed in him as a man. As a writer he intrigued me, but as a lover he turned out to be too cold for me.

Zinker, 2001, page 129 *'Sometimes parents can damage us irreparably. And no one can give us back our early purity and innocence. No one can fully re-parent us. But we long to go back to our parents, our roots, over and over again to be loved and affirmed, to be praised and to be held to be told we are 'good', we are 'gifted', and we are 'special'.'*

Indeed I am irreparably damaged by my father, who happened to be dying in the same period I met the writer. I know now that the presence of my father and the look of the writer have the same kind of impressive quality. It made the writer as attractive and as impossible to reach as my father. Inner voices let themselves be heard sometimes in the mouth of the other. In this case it were the voices of the daughters of the writer, that vibrated in my intestines. What they said came from their souls. Moments of awe when looking back at your dead father is not the same as horse riding on his knee. My father and their father have in common that they were busy with what the world is about and forced their daughters to do the same. It means that the loving, the caring side of a father

was missing and the other side, the angry demanding side was over extended. A gift in disguise?

What kind of a father did you have? One who could play with you, be with you without worrying about the big world? Or did you have a father at a distance who seemed to belong more to the world than to you?

51. Do I need alone time?

Yes, I do.

I need alone time to read

Alone time to write

Alone time to think

Alone time to sing

Alone time to feel

Not that I feel completely alone at times like that.

I am just not in the company of another human being

My pets are with me

My music is

My books are

They are around me filling me with energy

And I have Joseph Zinker speaking to me

from his already written lines.

Today he tells me to go to page 197

and read his conversation with Sonia Nevis about Marriage:

The Impossible Relationship (Fall 1985)

The piece is opened by a quote from Laura Perls:

'In a traditional confluent marriage, the spouse is not a significant other but the insignificant the same.'

The discussion is focused on why marriage is impossible:

'Sonia: 'If we have separateness, everyone will want togetherness again. It's the same whether it's a cult swing or an individual swing. As soon as we get what we want, we don't want it - it's an impossible relationship!'

Do you recognize the impossibility? I do. When I think of alone time, I realize I live alone and wonder if this is what I really want. Don't I miss being in an intimate relation? And then I remember that I never felt more alone than during my marriage and accept that my life is what it is. Now I have the choice to be alone or not, then I did not, I was imprisoned. What is your experience? Do you recognize the duality? How do you live with this - on the surface seen as - impossibility? Maybe this is a moment to talk with your partner and check if s/he shares your longings and fears in this matter.

52. Is it the beginning or the end?

Snow and more snow today, blizzard, icy snow in my face.
Do I accept this is only the beginning of the winter or do I hope it
is the end? Tomorrow things will be better.
Tomorrow life goes back to normal.
Snow, cold, they are not real enemies
but they change my behaviour.
I do not want to get out of bed.
Not out of the bath, not out of the door,
not out of my nice warm cosy house.
I do not want to be part of the white world
where skaters and snowball throwers enjoy themselves.
I never go for a winter holiday to the mountains.

Now I am forced to be with myself
and search my inner world.
I can meditate, paint, write, draw, sing, make picture compositions.
And if I do winter becomes my friend.
It urges me to use the night
and stop being afraid of the dark.
Unknown forces can enter my life, if only I am able
to open the door and let them in.

My intuition told me to go to Jean Houston, 1987, page 78
in *The Search for the Beloved**: *'Odysseus, like other modern humans,
has somewhat ignored his own deeper nature. Necessarily, then, his learning
must come out the deeps, which he has mishandled. From these deeps will come
most of his adventures and a larger experience of reality.'*

And your journey into the deep? Did or do you ignore your deeper
nature? And do you also need the dark times in winter to
experience the inner adventures and larger realities? What helps me
is to have a place where I can go to and meditate or do whatever I
want or need to do by myself. If you cannot find it in your own
house, maybe you can go to a church or a museum or a library.
Although there will be people, you can make clear you do not want
to be disturbed. I am certain you will be respected.

53. Am I too busy?

I am too busy, yes I am. Today that is! I caught a cold, should stay in bed or at least inside the house, but I cannot. I have to walk my dog and clean my house. As I live alone these are the consequences. Whatever happens the show must go on. In the afternoon and the evening I have to see clients. I could have declared myself ill, but because I am up and about anyway I might as well work.

Coughing during sessions is a nuisance, but it can also help the process to get along. Clients also know about severe colds and coughing. Sometimes I feel guilty because I am not one hundred percent present. And when I say this out loud and ask how they feel about it, they tell me they worry more about me than about not getting what they need for themselves. There is always a story behind it. Mothers, fathers who were not available and needed attention. Mothers, fathers who were too busy to care for themselves and therefore were a load on the shoulders of their offspring. It is all in the game of life. Question: what is it about?

Zinker 2001, page 39: *‘Psychotherapy is a lively process. The process involves stoking one’s inner fires of awareness and contact; it involves exchanges of energy with the other – exchanges which stimulate and nourish the other but do not deplete one’s own vitality and power.’*

Those sentences are the beginning of a chapter titled ‘The Therapist As Artist’. For me those words mean I have to be as creative and present as I can, whether in the role of therapist or client or whatever role, even if I have a cold or even when I am too busy. If this is my energy, it is my energy, it cannot be denied, it is part of my presence. How do you experience being too busy? Can you still be fully present during your work? Or do you cancel and say: No, not now, I need time for me, I cannot offer you what you need?

54. What are my basic needs?

One of my basic needs is money. Without money I feel lost.
Without money I cannot do my shopping, I cannot heat my house,
I cannot pay for services rendered to me. Without money I go
back to my mother's house in thought where I was fed, clothed,
cared for. And now I cannot go back, no mother, no house to go
back to. I have to look after myself.
I have to fulfil my basic needs myself
I have been doing that since I was nineteen, I think,
but today it seems more heavy.
Then it felt like an adventure
I still had a safety net to go back to
Today I am facing old age and the diminishing of power
The diminishing of appetite to do the work
Or to be more precise
I love to do the work that comes my way
But I do not look forward to tell the world
what I have to offer expecting to be paid for it.
It makes me dependent and do I not want to be
I want to stand on my own feet
I do not like to see people as things
that can pay me for my services;
I would rather pay than be paid.
What should I do?
Try to reach potential clients after all?
Give words to what I have to offer and publish it somewhere?
Or call someone and ask if s/he needs
what I have to offer?
My basic need number one seems to be to be needed.
If I am needed I have a right to exist and I do not have to feel
guilty about my needs. I do not have to say: sorry, but I cannot do
it all by myself. Okay, what I can do I will. I even like that.
But sometimes I need you. I need you to need me!

Zinker, 2001, page 29: *'As a child in Poland, I saw a film in which the hero is unjustly imprisoned.(...) The man, sweating and filthy, breaks out of*

his cell using his bare hands, he frees himself against all odds so that later he may free others.'

What is your basic need? To be free? Would you free yourself to be able to free others? How free do you feel? Free enough to free others? Or do you think you are behind bars you cannot break out and feel helpless? If so, what do your bars look like? Money? Illness? No time? No talent? How about drawing or painting them to explore. They can disappear if you do.

55. Where do I come from?

My mother is the first thought
My mother and her world in de Jordaan in Amsterdam
My mother and her brothers and sister
No grandparents on her side,
they were already gone when I was born
My mother and her sense of humour and way of life
My mother is of course in me
I can see it when I look in the mirror

I also come from my father and his world
Also in Amsterdam, but a different neighbourhood
My father and his parents who I did know
My grandfather till I was 13, my grandmother till I was 31
The world of my father was connected to villages in the country
where God reigned.

I feel overwhelmed when I start writing where I come from
I can see the great importance of this question, but want to strip it
to what is essential.
What did my family bring me that is special?
The families are connected, interrelated by blood ties.
Does this make my father and mother a pair that is more
connected? I do not know, I just wonder.

*Zinker 2001, 'In a family system, you may find triangulation
as when one person asks something of the spouse and a child deflects by
changing the question or answering for the parent.'*

Taking over when parents seem to be at a loss?
Or taking over anyway because we do not trust what our parents
present us. When did you or do you and what does it have to do
with your background? Are you interested where you came from in
a spiritual sense? Or where you will be going? See if you can find
out where your ancestors came from and what they believed. It
must be somewhere in you.

56. Do I take myself seriously?

In a certain sense I do, I take my work very seriously.
I mean the work I have to do as a human being.
It took me a long time to stop separating paid work and sacred work. It is easy to take paid work seriously.

I feel responsible for what I offer.

My credo is that I have to be worth the money I earn.

It took me a long time to take sacred work seriously.

I did not see how serious it is to meditate, to write, to paint, to sing, to be lovable, to be able to serve.

Now I am old enough to know this is THE work.

This is what I am on earth for.

Next step should be to let the world know how serious it is.

But how can I do it?

By selling what I write or what I paint?

By asking more money for the services I offer?

By finding a way to tell the world?

Sounds sensible.

Of course I do tell the world, but the world doesn't listen.

The world is too busy with other things to hear me.

If I would take myself really seriously I would yell and shout:

Hey hello world, listen to me, I have good news:

you can change your life if you want.

The only thing you have to do is to do it your way.

But this sounds too simple.

What do I mean? Look at the news, read the papers, the world is a disaster, you cannot change that.

This is true, but I can change MY world as you can change your world. And if we connect the small changes the big world will change too.

Zinker, 2001, page 101: *'The world is both one and also pluralistic. Events in the world must be examined as interaction between wholeness and politics. The world is made up of diverse voices yet we are all one.'*

How autonomous is your voice? What do you think about the/your world and possible change? Who has to do it? Political leaders? Spiritual leaders? Artists? Writers? Philosophers? Teachers? Parents? Neighbours? You? Or do you think I should?

57. What are the words that long to be written?

No words today; more sounds; more images; more thoughts. Why no words? I am writing words now. I cannot live without words. That is why I need to write. While I write now I listen to Hebrew sounds: **שכע כדכות**

Telling me words are not always my words. Words can be beyond understanding. And still be valuable enough to listen to, to let in and feel the vibration in the skin, in the blood, the veins, the nerves; written words can not do it, without the energy to be expressed.

PHG* page 219: *'Art, learning and memory, growing up, are radically disjoined from the primary-process, as if all learning, and the deliberate control that comes with learning, could never be simply used and then released as the self again spontaneously acts. Then, of course, growing up necessarily involves the "conversion of affect" for learning, according to this concept, is nothing but inhibiting.'*

The question that rises up in me: do those words have any connection with each other? What exactly do they mean with the 'conversion of affect'? I looked in the dictionary and have an idea now, but am not able to verbalize it. I feel uneasy, is it because English is not my native language or is it because the deeper meaning is hidden underneath the words?

How is this quote for you in connection with what I wrote? Clear on first sight? On second sight? After some thinking? Can you give your thoughts words or images or sounds? Or is it about feelings that are hard to express?

58. Am I a prosecutor?

Words in the drawing: arrow, arrow, arrow, heart, core, home, basement, belly, fireworks, dollar, equality, north, east, west, south, elements, boomerang, warped wood

Who am I as a prosecutor?

Am I the arrow directed at the heart but was never released?

Am I in the basement waiting for the core of the belly?

Am I in the West where equality reigns?

Or am I a warped piece of wood hiding the boomerang that can make us equal?

As a prosecutor I cannot live without the wisdom of the sages who came from the East.

Do I have to go South where I am in my element?

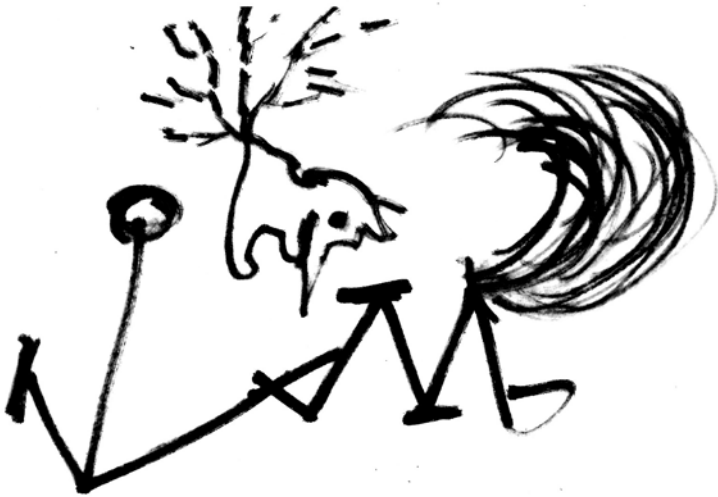
Or did I disappear with the Northern Sun

when the dollar came to rescue the prosecutor in me?

This sounds like complete nonsense, but is it?

Zinker, 2001, page 48: *'The fact is that the creative person, the creative therapist, is a disciplined craftsman whose gift is to keep reaching out towards his most profound potential.'*

All this started with a few lines. Do you dare to follow me by getting a white sheet of paper, meditate for a few minutes on the question, take your marker and let your hand do the work. Look at the lines, see if you can discover words in them. Write the words down and then form them into sentences. Do not try to understand what you are writing, just do it. Then let what you wrote rest for a few hours. Read it out loud when you go back to it and listen to the tone of your voice. Please repeat this till it touches you.



59. How full of should and if am I?

Words in the drawing: W, will, want, gate, mobile, pillar, cock, roots, hair, connected, roof, sound, circle

I want and I will is not the same and Want and Will with a capital W also differ; it is a matter of tone and of attitude.
I, W cock, am a male and should Wake the world
From the mobile pillar that turns and turns
I sound my cock kukeleku call into the city
Hair in movement becomes alert
Where is the roof over my head
Oh, I am the roof
Is that why I have antennas?
Do I have to pick up the signs
Do I know what it is we should if...there is hope

Zinker, 2001, from a conversation about hope between Edwin and Sonia Nevis and Joseph Zinker Spring 1984, page 191:

'Why Children? (...)

J.: Are we saying that people who do not have children express their hopefulness in the world through their creativity, their political involvement, through the arts, their capacity to mentor others, working for social causes, developing theories, doing research?
S.: Yes to care about something is hope.'

Do you have children? What do they have to do with your should and ifs, with your hope? And if you do not have children what does this mean for you? How do you express your care for the world, your hope? What is it you must do? Or are the ifs stopping you? What is your if?



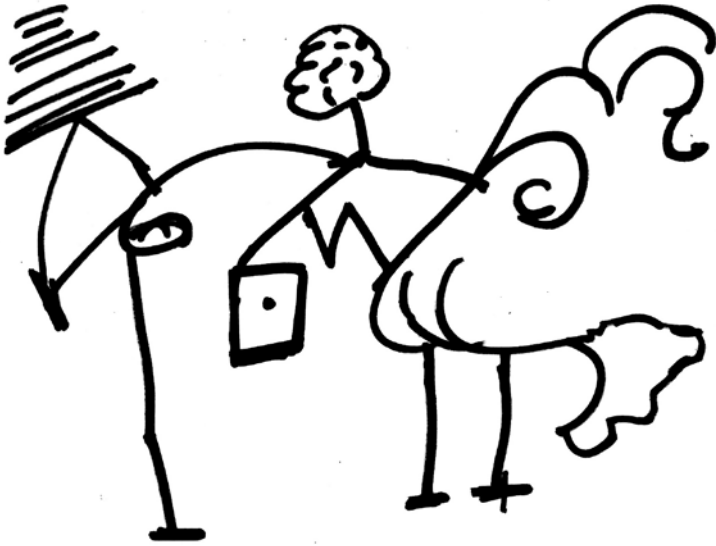
60. Do I trust my intuition?

Words in the drawing: labyrinth, feathers, beginning, end, movement, bison, eyes, lake, comb, dancer, figure, big nose, one line, crossings, meeting points, open spaces, no man's land, foot, path

Does my intuition guide me
along the path from the beginning to the end
when I meet the bison and feel his eyes
directed at me while I am a dancing figure;
big nose towards the open spaces
longing for the no man's land
where the lake and the labyrinth
can receive my movements
while I show my combed feathers.
I am not more than one line
who knows where to start
I listen to my intuition that brings me to the end.
Without a foot and a path it would not be possible.

Zinker 2001, page 96, 'Because of the explosion of general systems theory, field theory, theories of chaos and complexity, and of both molecular and cosmic physics, it has become increasingly difficult to focus on an individual's inner working without factoring in the social matrix and organismic 'soup' in which he or she lives.'

Can you let yourself be led by your intuition? Do you know how to do it? Did you find a way by listening to the signals of your body? Do you meditate and listen to your inner voice? Do you believe in 'by chance'? How about giving your intuition a helping hand by drawing and writing? Nothing is lost. Maybe you are stuck with what looks like un-comprehensible sentences but so what if you can see it as a riddle or a Zen koan you can meditate on to find your open answers.



61. Do I trust me?

Words: stripes, tree, hill, window, triangle, curls, curves, bottom, legs, pole, sharp, unicorn, vibration, fertile ground, plume, rope, field

Trust in me, means trust in my sharp words

Trust in my drawing

Trust in the hill, the rope, the unicorn, the field

The legs, the pole, the stripes.

Trust in my fertile ground

Trust in the window whether it is open or closed

I wait for the vibration with trust

Trust I see a tree because I know it is

I stand on my legs because I trust my bottom

And the triangle is there

The triangle Mother, Father and Child in me

It is the greatest trust I have

I trust I am more than me

I am my father, my mother and my child

Who or what else do I need?

If I trust me I have to be able to doubt.

Doubt me and doubt you.

If I am not allowed to doubt my trust will become artificial.

I also need willingness to trust. I have to take life seriously otherwise I cannot trust me nor you. I need courage to find out why, what and who I doubt. If trust is a quality that has been missing in my life, I will be so afraid to surrender that I do not trust anyone at first sight. But I do trust, because I am human and you are human and I trust it is okay to make mistakes for we are not perfect, not God.

And you? Do you trust yourself, me, the world, your family?

Please take a blank card and marker and put lines on it.

Do not try to draw something recognizable. Trust your undercurrent that will show you its feathers. And if you feel like it you can do what I did. Find words in the image, form sentences with them and trust that you will get to know yourself better.

yes
? ?
? ?
O! ! A!
NO

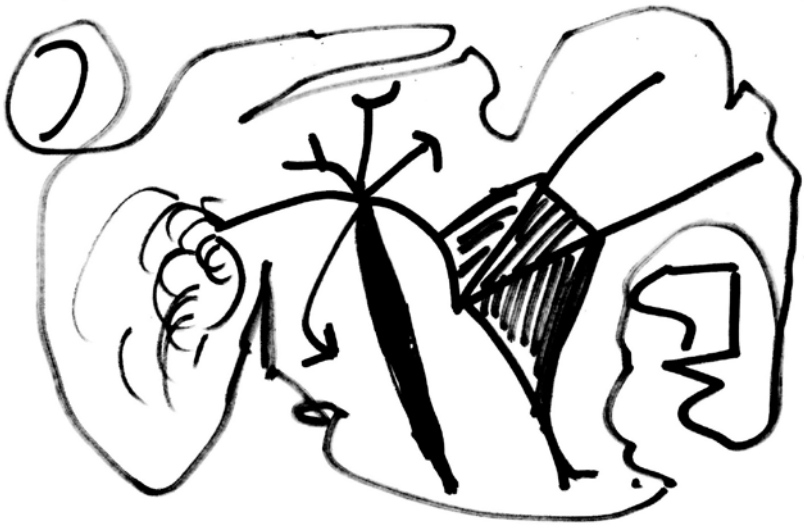
62. Is it yesterday or is it tomorrow?

Words: direction, arrow to the left, arrow to the right, left wall, right wall, empty space, question marks, yes, no, Aha moments, Oho moments, rigid

Which way is left and which is right
Does the left arrow direct to the right
And the right arrow to the left
Today is tomorrows yesterday
So today is yesterday
And when will it be tomorrow?
When it is after tomorrow's yesterday
Tomorrow is not within the rigid walls of the now
What is the empty space good for
Question mark
Aha, it is needed to overcome the Oho moments
Yes and No are reigning the space between the walls
Yes knows, No knows
Do they know if it is yesterday or tomorrow?
The complexity of the mind leads me to the basics
No today is not tomorrow
Why do I ask?
Yes today is yesterday?
Why do I want to know

Statement:

Yes or No do not have much power in this case.
Crazy questions, crazy answers. Just fun. No more no less. How is it for you to deal with questions that lead nowhere?
Can you think of such a question yourself?
Do you believe this is worth investing time and energy?



63. Am I true to me?

Words: I, me, true, kite, angel, spider, direction,
isolation, cloud, border, sting, body, dog, penis

The border of me is decided by I; It is a curving border, not
simple; It is mysterious; open or not open;
it depends on the penis symbol; Is he asking for attention or not?
If he does not get it, he is confronting me
I am an arrow, more arrows even; I am also an angel who needs a
cloud; To hide the tent and let the kite fly;
Scrub wood is waiting for the spider that can sting the dog;
I can withdraw in my inner world; I do not need the outside
Is that true or false?
Am I giving me the wrong message?
Can I not live without the sting, the penis, the spider
who are outside the body?
Can I not live without the other world
That is not in but outside me
I do not want to need the outside world
I want it to come to me
because it needs me!

Telling lies to me about me is telling lies to you.
I hate to tell lies, I am afraid to tell lies
I am afraid you will hate me
But how can I be true to me
if I think I am not the penis symbol?

*Zinker, 2001, page 97: 'Projectors find partners who accept
projections without objecting to or correcting the projection,
or find partners who don't say easily what they feel,
what they want, and what they don't want'.*

I am a projector, I know that is true. What are you? Do you
project rather than say what you feel? How true are you to you?
Do you mind in the sense that it does not make you perfect?

64. Do I realize the sun is shining?

Today is January 10
I am in the grey Amsterdam winter
Except this morning when I was walking Poe
And a bright sunlight was shining on me
Six swans were in the water
Following us, waiting for bread
The sun made their feathers whiter than white
In a perfect row they were radiating their swan dignity
their swan mystery.

Now it is midnight
No sun to be seen here
But I saw the new moon and some stars
The sky is clear
That is why it is cold
The wind comes from the South
Where it is summer and the sun can be shining now
Tomorrow there is another chance
Tomorrow I will walk in the light again
And who knows I can see and feel the sun
because he has found me again.
Of course the sun is always shining somewhere,
but do I realize that, do you? Since I lived
in the South of France where the sun is more present
than here in my country, I am not so worried anymore
about the absence of the sun. I know he will come back
even here in the North. Truth is that I am influenced
highly by the sun, probably also by the moon,
but I do not notice that so clearly.

Marion Woodman in 'Leaving My Father's House'*, page 4,
'As a child, I was never bored because I could always get on with my story. I still love to walk by the water or in the woods listening to the story that never ends. (...) That creative fire molds my inner chaos into a reflection of the sacred order I feel in nature.'

How is the sun for you? Is he your friend? Is it an he?
How do you feel when you are in a plane and overcome
the clouds that were hiding the sun when you were on the ground?
Have a look out of your window and wonder about this
giant magical energy that makes our life on earth possible.
Without water, earth and air we would be nowhere
and without fire we certainly would not be on earth.

65. Am I in the right place with the right people at the right time?

Saturday February 5, 2011 in the ABC Treehouse*,
starting a New Writing group

I listen to my body and feel itching in my belly a lump in my throat, dry lips and a cold nose. The itching in my belly is intriguing me. What is my belly trying to express she thinks is important this moment? Now the itching is in my ear or is it inside my head? Oh itching body, I want to scratch. I want to stop the itching. I am not going to though because you inspire me and that is what I need right now. Okay, nose, I can feel that you have an itch too. I am tending to concentrate on you now, because I know you are a good nose. You are a nose that can guide me to the good smells in life that can make me happy. You can also make me aware of bad smells. When it is about the right place I start with smelling. How about this room does it have the right smell, the right temperature, the right sounds?

The smell is neutral enough to feel at home for the time being. It feels open, it feels or smells good in the sense that I am not forced to smell something that does not agree with me. I can even add my own smell without being afraid to be rejected. And that brings me to some answers of the questions.

Yes, yes, I am in the right place and I am with the right people and it is the right time because the three of us decided it is important enough to come together and do the Work.

It means that I am part of the decision that makes the time and the place so right that we can do what we came for:
explore what is in the undercurrent that needs to be expressed;
explore what our bodies and souls have to say about the situation.

I feel excitement, I came here with the fear of being alone and all by myself. The fear of disappointing G and disappointing E and even disappointing the Treehouse because my course did not attract enough students to get it going. But I knew if I stayed in whatever situation that presented itself I would feel that it is all

right as it is. Now I am grateful that we are sitting here with the three of us, grateful that I hear the pens gliding over the paper, grateful that we are only with three, grateful that we and that I have time to meet the other two. What a treat! But...am I not too enthusiastic? No I am not, I am purely realistic. Only fear of losing gives me a frightful idea like that. And if I listen to fear I will lose, no doubt about that.

Joseph Zinker, 2001, *'I feel like a victim. I feel as if the world won't cooperate in my struggle to become myself. (...) But as I live on and grow I begin to see the light of day in psychotherapy, the very label of victim becomes an encumbrance to me. (...) I must learn to shed my badge of pain because I have worn it too long and it no longer serves to protect me.'*

Are you familiar with the victim in you? Do you blame the world, your neighbours, your family? Did you discover that the victimizer can also be in you? Try to recall a situation where you did feel you were not wanted. Write down the details and the role you were playing and find out who was the victim of whom? Does writing about it change the feeling you have?

66. Who am I?

Who am I?

The obvious question. Of course I know the answer.

I am who I am, I am Tine, and nobody else can stand on my feet or breath with my mouth or write those words with my hand. It means that nobody can tell me if what I do or write or say is right or wrong. Only I can feel what words or actions do with me. Only I can connect with my soul although I think that my soul is part of a bigger soul, a group soul. My responsibility is to find out who I am in relation to all those other souls surrounding me, all those other voices expressing themselves. Sitting here with Eva and Sara, two biblical names by the way, gives me the chance to explore who I am in relation to young women who are intelligent, beautiful, talented and who are living their lives in a stage where anything can happen. Where are they going, how are they going to develop and what does it have to do with me, Tine, who is 74, has lived her life for the biggest part and is more harvesting than sowing?

Is it hard for me to look at them knowing the chances they have are over for me? When I was their age I was married and entering a very painful period in my life. I thought I was going to create a family together with the man I married. Thought I would have children I could raise and love and tell what life is about so that they would be more happy more free more cheerful than I was when I was a kid. But life had some other plan for me. My husband and I were not one of those couples who became happily and lovingly old together. On the contrary, we destroyed each other in a way that was too painful to stay together. Children did not come. Alas or not alas? We could not have given them a safe and harmonious life in that period of time.

Is that the end of the story? No it is not, because when I and we were deeply unhappy we searched help and found it. We found a place where unhappy people were taken seriously without being told they were guilty. A place where we were with about fifty people to find out why our lives did hurt so much and what we

could do to release the pain and heal ourselves. It was there that I found the healing part of me that I have been developing ever since.

It is the part that brings me here, it is the part I want to offer to Eva and Sara. Life hurts and please stop thinking it is because you did or do something wrong. Only thing I and you (?) do wrong is that we do not trust and love ourselves enough to have a good feeling about who we are. So the question 'Who am I?' can simply be answered with 'I am a body with a soul that can love and I am afraid to show it. What if I am rejected?'

Outside a mouth organ is playing.
Someone is offering his or her love by making music.
Obviously without fear of rejection!
I can learn something from her or him.

Fritz Perls, 'In and Out the Garbage Pail', 1969*: *'This time I am going to write about me. Rather: whenever anybody writes he writes about himself – more or less. Of course, one can write about so -called objective observations or about concepts and theories, but the observer one way or another is part of those observations.'*

Can you write about you, objectively? Why not try it?
There is no law against it. You could start with:
Now I am going to write objectively about me...

67. Am I my belly?

Strange question. Of course I am my belly. Why do I ask then. Do I hope I am not that I am not that thing inside me that has been waiting for a long time to become happy. Waiting for a warm hand. Waiting for a caress that told her you are okay although you are a nuisance sometimes. Because you can nag and go on longing for something I cannot give you. Or I? Nobody can?? Am I too negative now? Am I following my worst fears? You can do what you do but it will not satisfy your belly. Your belly - or rather you for you are your belly – is waiting to be in full service. Give her a voice, for one thing. Do not separate yourself. Now talk from the I belly and find out what happens.

I belly am so beautiful
I belly have so much to offer and I feel unused
I feel I am not taken seriously for if I am happy you will be.
And I will be happy if I am considered important enough to be listened to. Let's talk about betrayal. If there is someone who know how it is to be betrayed, it is me. I have been in full service, in full swing and was very happy, even more than that at the time; then the happy maker went away and I was left on my own to deal with the situation. Very painful.

What I needed was to be met, to be talked to, to be told, even though I felt betrayed, I was still worth living. I felt being denied, being suppressed. Nobody wanted to hear my story, because they were afraid this story would be too sad for words. But now I get a chance I open my mouth to tell you and the whole world that I am may be betrayed and that I can betray, but at the same time I am living my life fully. Look at me, feel me, see me, hear me. Realize how much work I am doing every day, every moment by being busy digesting all that food, all those liquids, all those thoughts, all those ideas that are coming into me without me asking for it. Or to be clear: I do need nourishment, otherwise my reason to exist would cease, but I am dependent on what you to chose to let in through your mouth. What do you have to tell me now?

I do not have so many words.

I reflect on what you tell me. I feel that I betrayed you by not having children. I am afraid that you feel I let you down by not having the experience of being pregnant.

I am afraid I let you down by not fulfilling the most beautiful function you have. Can you imagine that?

Yes, I did miss the opportunity letting babies grow in me.

Yes, I did, I cannot deny that. But it would be silly if you feel guilty about it. In the end you and I did it together.

It was not only you who decided this is the best way to live life together. It was also for me. Why I cannot say. I feel I am still open to anything new that comes to me. Open to integrate and give it a place in our life. You and I are connected in a way that gives no possibility of betrayal. Just think about that! We can hurt each other, but betraying is a different matter.

Joseph Zinker, 2001,

'Time comes when old, old men

relax into expressionless

drifting, empty of yearning...

Life was lived fully, thoughtlessly,

with celebration of one's pleasures and foolishness.'

Do you feel that you are living life celebrating your pleasures and foolishness? Or did you? How about your belly? Is it rigid and cold or radiating a warmth that is healing you?

68. What is the question?

My question is: what is the question? Am I a sexual being, is a good one. Yet it is not the one I want to write about today. Do I have a place in the world? feels more exciting. I felt the energy in my heart start vibrating the moment I wrote the words on the paper. A place in the world? Yes, I do have a place in the world, in my world I should say. Now in my heart region I feel a distinct pain. Is it about having a place and not being so happy with the place I have? Maybe even rather ashamed of it? My mouth gets dry, my jaws become tight. Signs I better take seriously. My back is starting to ache. I feel definitely heavy.

The place I have was not just offered to me. I have the feeling that I have been fighting and fighting from the first breath I took till now to conquer the right place for me. I do not want a place where I feel patronized or am dependent on the goodwill of others, I want a place where I can offer what I have to offer. I came to contribute good energy to the world. I truly believe that my sacred contract is about doing what I can to make the world just a tiny bit better and to make people just a little happier.

Doing that seems at first sight a wonderful light task but that is not how I experience it. If I am honest I have to confess that I soon was so fed up with what the world and with what people presented to me that I became too angry to be an angel. I still knew that bettering the world was the main thing I had to do, but acting with anger in my mind did not immediately fill the people on my path with a feeling of joy, a feeling of being grateful that they met me. Can it be that giving the message they did something wrong and that this was the reason for my anger, made them afraid of me? Seems likely.

The other side is of course that I am the one who is afraid of the world in the first place. Afraid of the world, afraid of people, afraid of my family, afraid of my father and mother, grandma and grandpa as they were the closest when I came out of the womb. They were the ones who could give me a safe place or not.

Did they? Could they? I go completely blank. I do not dare to answer this question. I always assumed that they did. I always tell myself at least I was welcome. I am the eldest, even though I am a girl and should have been a boy. But that is about me not being perfect. Now it is about if they could do it, if they could give me the place I needed. The answer is No, not because they were unwilling but because circumstances were bigger than they were.

Irving Bailin in an interview with Joseph Zinker, 2001, page 138: *'My fantasy was that I was God - if you remember, in fact, it was in your workshop that we had an ex-minister who was giving advice, rescuing everyone, and no one could make any contact with him, and I had the fantasy that he should play God and make a world of his own out of us and the universe-room we were occupying.'*

Playing to be God seems attractive to me. Although I do not think it would make me or the world happier in the end if I think of God as being a rescuer. Did you ever have a dream of what you would do if you were God? If yes, how was it? Are you willing to relive it? And if No, are you willing to take the chance to explore now? Please give yourself some minutes to direct your attention to your inner world and to your breathing. It will bring you in to the Here and Now where you can do whatever you long to do.

69. Can I cross borders?

With S. in the Treehouse

Borders, my borders, what do they look like? A mouth organ is passing its sound through the walls. It does not care about those borders. It can just penetrate with its vibrations.

It makes me feel connected. I also feel connected to the exposition downstairs. Is it because I promised I would come to look at the paintings and read the poems that I feel obliged to go and answer the expectation that I created myself? Is it an example of how I do things? I want to please the artists because I know how it is to sit waiting for someone to come who is interested in your work.

And even if they come it is not certain that they have real attention for what you created. The creation of the visitor is in the willingness to dive into the painting or into the poem and let it vibrate into your body. Then explore how you can express what you are experiencing.

I am getting more and more curious what will happen with me if I go to the exposition and let it invade me. My eternal curiosity, always guiding me, always telling me to cross borders. My eternal curiosity which has led me to Russia and other dangerous situations, I never regretted experiencing. So I will get up and step out of the door, out of the security of this room and explore the art that is inviting me.

Back from the art, I saw words crossing borders
Changing or transforming into images. The words enter me
without problems, without questions, I know what they tell me.
They are about living together, loving together, longing and being
disappointed. The images are dreams in itself, dreams that have
nothing to do with reality, yet they are more real than the words.

Joseph Zinker, 2001, page 30, *‘My earliest and most powerful searchings were in the world of art. (...) I remember an art assignment in high school in*

which we all made masks. My mask was different from the others, so much that my own image frightened me.'

Do you experience art by just taking time to sit and look and let it enter you by its colours, vibration, images? Or do you follow the guides who tell you where to look, what to see, what to remark, what is historic. If you do it one way, how about trying out the other way. In the end you might be able to integrate both ways by writing while you look at the art and stop worrying about right or wrong. It is about an experience of your whole being that can connect you, inspire you and make you happy.

70. Am I committed?

In the Treehouse

Yes, I am committed but to what exactly? To my self I think and that means I am committed to the world and all the people in it. If they are okay, I will be. If they are not, I cannot be either! I have work to do. When I did Zen I learned that I have to take care till the last human being on earth feels happy. Mission impossible of course. But it is about the intention.

The Zen masters compared it with a bird that drop by drop is trying to extinguish a fire in the woods. Indeed mission impossible. But as long as the fire is going on the bird has to go on doing what s/he has to do and it is in the doing that s/he will be in the healing process.

My commitment to me and all the people in the world starts here in this group. You are the people most close to me now this moment. Therefore the best I can do is feel my commitment to you. That is why working together feels so exciting. I am not only at a distance committed to for example the victims of the earthquake in Japan, but I am committed to me and to you. I can listen to me and to you, feel for me and for you, look at you and feel compassion or irritation or humour or longing and we can enjoy or suffer this together. It makes me feel your compassion for me. Nourishment I and we cannot live without.

Time is up. Otherwise we cannot read and feel what we read or can we just read without having or wanting to share feedback and comments? Can it be just enough, just right what we express in the few minutes we have? More, I always want more, more time, more words, more feelings, more being together with more people. but I have to accept what is, is enough!

Joseph Zinker, 2001, quoting a publication called *Manas*,
'Until quite recently the behavioural sciences – including history – have dealt with man as a "thing". They have given us the view that human beings are not quite real unless they exist in large numbers. (...) The new view is that one

man has enough significance in him to reveal fundamental truth about all men.'

For your own private story please find out to whom or to what your commitment is directed. Is it to your family, your friends, your lover, your partner, your work, your art, your country? And is it to you?

71. Am I jealous?

Jealous of whom? I do not want to be jealous I rather am a victim who has a reason to be jealous. A reason to think that the world is against her? It all began with being a war child.

And with my manic depressive beautiful father and my dancing queen mother. Poor me, not seen, not heard by the ones who should see me. Poor me, having to put up with all that longing and suffering living in a country where the sun is hardly shining.

Although at this moment there is a splendid Sunday light out there inviting me to stop writing and come into the light to heal and let my jealousy melt away.

Fascinating what Joseph Zinker, 2001, has to tell me.

I opened Sketches as always at random and read on page 130: *I feel like a victim. I feel as if the world won't cooperate in my struggle to become myself. (...) To give up feeling the victim, I may have to live through a period of owning how I victimize others by rendering them helpless and stupid. (...) In caring for my friends, I am able to see the world, to see it in its wholeness, and to be a whole person.'*

Being jealous and having to deal with people who are jealous of you, are two sides of the same coin is my experience. How about you? Can you admit your jealousy or do you withdraw in your arrogance and pride and tell yourself that his/her jealousy has nothing to do with you? The most difficult part is seeing that we are able to make people jealous without realising it. Jealousy starts in the family we grow up in. Take a few minutes to just sit and let the images of what was, guide you to your story. Please write with compassion for you and your siblings or friends.

72. Am I special?

In the Treehouse with E, G, D, H, J

This is a question that makes me humble. Am I special enough to be here with you and share my thoughts, feelings, ideas, experiences. Am I special enough or is it better if I am not special and just who I am, just like everybody else? Yes maybe, but I know that the moment we open our mouth and tell where we come from we all are special and this means that being special is more common than being normal. There used to be a time I was thought I was more special and afraid people would bore me or put me off or make me angry when they spoke. But since I became a therapist my fear disappeared. Now I know that when I am willing I can listen and hear and sit and feel compassion and pain and interest when you talk and tell me where you come from, inside and out.

All I and you need is time and courage to do it. During the 25 years I have been doing this work I learned that I am special or normal enough to listen and receive you. But strangely enough telling about myself in a group I am leading, telling about my life experiences still is not easy for me. I still am so enormously afraid that I will bore you, afraid that I ask too much time for me, too much attention for who I am. Even now when writing I feel that I should stop because I am wondering about having enough time for all of you to read out loud what you have written. I know I will be the last and I know I will content myself with whatever time I get. But do I really? Am I content with the time and attention I get or will I be longing for more because I think I am special enough to get special attention?

Joseph Zinker (2001), *'The creative therapist's biggest enemies are his desires to please and help, his exhibitionism, and dishonesty. (...) Creative expression is a social act – a sharing with one's fellow man of this celebration, this assertion in living a full life.'*

What makes you more special, your ability to give or your ability to receive or are you the most special special human being if giving and receiving are in perfect balance?

73. Am I words?

In the Treehouse with E, J, G and S

Am I words? Sometimes it seems I am asking myself the most difficult questions. I am words and I am more than words, I should say. I am thoughts, longings, flesh, feelings, muscles, nerves, I am a whole system that functions around a beating heart, a breathing mouth, a smelling nose and a feeling skin. Yes, skin. What would I be without a skin?

An open wound? An organism without borders?

But without words I would not be able to give names to what I am and who I am and I would not be able to communicate with you and share my thoughts and feelings. Therefore I make a statement now: I am words, without words I would not be me, without words I would be a drop in the ocean that does not need words to define itself. I would be a grain of sand on the beach, just like any other grain of sand. There would not be anything wrong with me, because I would be just what I was meant to be. But as a woman, as Tine, it is a different matter. As a woman I am meant to be me. I am supposed to show my feathers, my colours, my sounds. As a woman I have to find me by separating me from other human beings so I can go back to connecting, knowing who I am and recognizing who I am making contact with. It is not a matter of doing this just once and then it is fixed. No I and all human beings have to do this every day a million times. Breathing in, get going, breathing out and speak or drink or eat or sing or write or laugh or kiss, all in the same rhythm and feeling that with every next inhaling I become more me.

Joseph Zinker, 2001, *'As I grow and find ways of fulfilling my needs and as my boundaries grow clearer and stronger, I will feel more compassion for others and be able to forgive them.'*

Are you able to forgive others because your compassion is growing? Or are these just words to you? Words you need to explore what this question is about and what your life is about. Follow your breathing, it will bring you in the Here and Now so you can feel what your body is telling you.

74. Am I an addict?

In the Treehouse with G, D, H, E, S

Of course I am, no way of denying it. I am addicted to being independent, addicted to thinking I do not really need anybody, addicted to believing that as long as I can pay, nothing disastrous can happen to me. Is that why I live alone so I can not be left and be betrayed? Does this mean I am exploring if my living alone is an addiction? Crazy idea. Why am I doing this to myself? I am a free woman, why don't I take the freedom to sit here and write beautiful things about me. I could do that, I can tell great heroine stories, but I am sorry to say, that at this moment. I am not interested at all. I am more with the thought of needing to control my life by having enough money.

Can it be that even I am in the first place addicted to negative thoughts, negative feelings? What do I mean with even I? Well, I know when my clients are, I know by listening to them.

Oh, here is a case of someone who is addicted to the negative thought system. Someone I can wake up. Someone I can 'save' by making him/her aware of this phenomenon. I do know I usually feel a bit awkward when I do this. I always wonder if I do the right thing. But if I am a Negative Thought addict myself I can understand my hesitation. Saying I think you are without confessing 'I am too' is separating myself from the other. And when I do, I will not feel good, I will feel my N feelings and think my N thoughts. Does this make my circle round? Once upon a time there was a negative thought and then I do something or say something that will set other NT's and NF's into motion. I just remember the motto on the tea label to day: *Watch your thoughts they start your actions*. Yes, true enough. Next thought: how can I step out of this and into a new kind of action? By thinking I am an addict and I have enjoyed being one up to now, because I needed it to survive. Stepping out means realizing time is over, I need something else, something like love and commitment.

Joseph Zinker, 2001, page 128

'I deserve to be paid, to have all the money I need to take care of myself and my family. I deserve to earn a good living. (...) I have earned this right with my struggling, my reading, my experiences, my education and my work.'

Thank you, Joseph, for handing us those beautiful positive thoughts. How is your relation with negative and positive thoughts, ideas, feelings? Can you say I am an addict? A money addict? Do you feel you have a right to be paid, a right to make a good living? Or are you afraid to lose this right because you feel humble and not good enough and hope money will make you feel better?

75. Am I a hot fire?

My first moment of being aware was when my sister was born. Early in the morning I was invited to come downstairs and meet her. I still have a vivid image of the little baby held by my mother. I do not see exactly who else was around. I know my grandmother was the one who came to get me. The image of my sister still stuns me when I think of it. She was dark, had a dark skin, dark hair, beautiful and exotic. Can it be that at age three I wondered about that? I did not expect her to look this way. But how did I think she would look? And where did that image come from?

My own birth was rather spectacular I know from the stories my mother and my aunt and - on my birthday - everyone told. I feel rather reluctant to write it again as I have done this many times before. But maybe I can look at it in a new way. How was this for me to be received by thunder and lightning and storm and rain? How was it that only my mother and ant were there to welcome me, when I came out of the birth channel on the toilet? Was I scared? Was I afraid those two girls of 22 and 24 would not be able to take care of me in a way that would give me the feeling of coming home, of being in a place where I belonged? Am I here? Am I her? Questions I have been chewing on for a long time. Yes, I am here, I am here on the edge of Amsterdam in a family of contractors and blacksmiths. Builders that is to say. A family that takes his/her responsibility for developing the city, for co-creating society.

And am I her, am I the one they were waiting for? Am I the one who could take over and continue the work my great grandparents and grandparents started? Strangely enough I have the feeling that my parents were stuck, that they did not know what they had to do to go on with the work that was already set into motion. Or did they do work that was not so visible but existential as well? Did they pave the road for me and my sister and brother so we could build on their frustrations, finding how to dismantle them and start building the next layer? Without foundation no building. Without ancestors no way to live your life or to follow whatever path. By

talking about hot fires today and how they are needed I realise that I come from wonderful, great, exceptional hot fires that were rather frightening to experience. Too frightening even to be able to say, I am in it,

I am part of it. I am not the victim of hot fires made by others, but I am it, I am part of IT.

I am a good fire maker, I can build a fire, get it going and have to explore time and time again how to feed the flame so it will not extinguish. A never ending fire, a fire that goes on, like the sun, but then in a different kind of energy and warmth. Was that what the thunder and lightning was for when I came into the world. Hey girl this is to remind you...

Joseph Zinker, 2001, interviewing a woman, just before she died. Asking why she does not want to hear from the doctor about her nearing death: *Nobody's gonna see me worried about nothing the doctor tell me... (...) So long as you don't be born you won't have to die. But the minute you are born, you can just die anytime...*

Doing it your way? No doctor to tell you what IT is about? Frightening? Giving trust? Knowing that you know and are part of Nature, of the Big Whole and just have to surrender to be able to do IT?

76. Am I touchable?

At this moment I am not. I am irritated, impatient
because the sun will disappear within a minute
because my cat keeps striking along my nose
because my dog is waiting for adventures
and most of all because
I want this manuscript to be finished.
I long for someone who taps me on the shoulder
to let me know I did a good job.
I feel alone in the vastness of possibilities.
I am too obsessed to long for and be open to touch.
I am too much in my frustrated doing pole.

But I discovered Lee Irwin*, a new guide for me, a new master.
Since my journey to Charleston and the Dream conference in
Amsterdam that followed I know he exists. I open his book
'Alchemy of the Soul' on page 104 and read:

'The communication of insight should be a multidimensional process, not a simple mastery of speaking but also a mastery of hearing and taking in the other as a partner in the processes of discovery. This taking in must go far beyond the immediate visible or verbal sign; it must move into the subtle energetic realms of shared perceptions, intuitive and empathic impressions, and the full range of our inmost psychic capacities.' (...) *'In a soulful seeing and listening we ourselves are seen and heard.'*

This is precisely what my work is about. It is what drove me to explore the undercurrent in groups and by writing. It is hard work I feel rather alone with sometimes. It seems that most people have other things to do. But knowing that I am not the only one who cares and who thinks it is important enough to teach and write about, I can relax and be happy caressing the cat on my lap, while feeling I am touched by the sun. At the Dream conference I was touched by the presentation of Lee, who knows how to embody his words and who radiates when he dances an energy I can recognize and enjoy. Remembering gives me the subtle energy I need to start breathing again and to go on with all those multidimensional processes.

Do you recognize the longing to do the Work together? Where
and how do you find your nourishment?
What is it you need?
Energy? Music? Words? Dancing?
A master that can be your ideal model?

77. Am I ready to do IT?

Am I ready to stop preaching and just do IT? Is sitting here writing together with L, E, and G preaching or doing IT? I think it is both. Of course I preach but that is just the beginning of IT. Isn't IT or can IT not also be the preaching that I have to do. IT can depend on the writing. For me sitting here is doing what I have to do and long to do: creating contact & change. What is this dream that is haunting me exactly about? It is about having fun, laughing and crying together. It is about celebrating being human and agreeing that being human is not an easy thing to do. I have to face I am not only human. I am also a woman who longs to be a complete being.

How? Or rather to begin with: WHAT are the facts? What am I supposed to do to make my being complete? Fact today is that I live in an aggressive world, I do not want to be identified with. I do not want to be part of IT. HOW does this feel? I feel uncertain. I wonder if I should not go out in society more and participate in politics or in a church or in something social. My head says immediately: No, no, no, use your passion to create this non-violent group. Non-violent because we have the intention to express ourselves without judging. The intention to confront, when we have to, confront with love and interest not with violence. contempt and reproaches.

WHY do I have to do this? If life is a gift, I got a rather big part, I feel. Too big for me alone. I had better unwrap, use and share IT. I find it frustrating to see how people are hurting themselves and others because they are not able to see the reality. I believe I have a responsibility to teach people to look and listen, to see and hear and IT is what I am doing. All I need to make the world better is believe in me and make you believe in you. But why do I need so much courage to do this?

'Am I stupid? Isn't it time to give up staring with open mouth at icons who cannot be reached, but do something that evokes my admiration? The best example is the singing teacher, who is of course the man who set me on fire when I listened to his concerts in Amsterdam. He gave me the energy and the

courage to follow him and learn from him how to sit and sing, how to sit and just be. Tine van Wijk 2011: Chapter 35: Chosen.

And you, are you ready to do IT? What is your IT? How is IT to experience IT? And why is your IT as IT is?

More questions to play with

Am I in the same boat? Do I play the game?
Does my ego need love?
Would I rather promise than act?
Do I know myself? Am I free to choose?
Do I belong? What does the undercurrent tell me?
Do I listen to my inner voice?
Do I meditate? Am I awake?
Am I afraid of the silence?
Can I ask 'THE' question?
Did I find my tone? Do I doubt my feelings?
Can I say Yes? Can I say No? Where am I going?
Am I right? Am I afraid of the water?
Is the sun allowed to see me naked?
Do I need the sun to feel warm?
Can I stand like a tree?
Am I a dancer? Am I a singer?
Am I a writer? Do I have patience?
Would I rather look back? Would I rather look ahead?
Would I rather do it alone? Am I free to feel?
Am I able to look and see?
What do I learn from the Undercurrent?
Am I prepared? Am I responsible?
Am I a saviour? Do I laugh my unhappiness away?
Am I too proud to ask? Is love free for me?
What are my biggest fears? Would I rather do it alone?
Is it because of me? Can I protect me?
Do I feel rejected? Do I feel threatened?
Do I love me? Who and what do I criticise?
Can I create harmony?
And so on and so on...

Chewing on one question at the time can guide us to our own answers. No one else can do it for us, because we are all connected to our own Source and our own wisdom. Although in the end all those answers will fit together and turn out to be part of the one Big Whole.

Who is Tine van Wijk?

Facts: Born in 1936 in Amsterdam.

She started her career as an editor and journalist for women's, family and children's magazines.

She was married for ten years, was sad she did not get children and got a divorce when she was 43.

After her study with the School for Gestalt & Psychosynthesis in Gent, Belgium, she founded in 1988 her own Gestalt practice in Amsterdam.

She is fascinated by group dynamics and developed a Gestalt training program that transformed itself into C Teaching Writing Groups.

She taught Gestalt in Russia and Ukraine, is an active member of the AAGT and the EAGT, wrote in Dutch 'Aandacht – Waar gaat het over?' en 'Ouwepower & Het Heilig Moeten'.

Details: Amsterdam is the biotope of me and my ancestors, except for one grandfather who came from a village where God reigned. At an early age I longed to be in that village. Only five years old I stayed there for six weeks with farmers who were not even my family. My country then was occupied by the Nazi's. Did I think they could not find me in this village? I do not know, but I do wonder why my parents let me go.

When back in Amsterdam I was sent to a School with the Bible, although my family did not have a religion anymore. The result was that I became a religious, pious child as well as a rebel who always had to be the best.

When I was seventeen I discovered sex, a reason to leave school and the church. I could not combine having to be a good pious girl and having sex without being engaged to be married.

We were young and celebrating our after war freedom with a lot of alcohol, not believing that the world would get better.

I know that I lived with the idea that any day the cold war could turn into bombs, fighting and occupation.

And an atom bomb could mean the end of the/our 'world'. When I was nineteen I decided together with a girlfriend to become an au pair in England with American Air Force families stationed near London. It changed my life in the sense that I learned to understand and speak English, discovered American family life and became fascinated by the culture of a big city.

Men were a continuous problem. When I was thirteen my grandfather, who was part of our extended family, drowned in the canal before our house. Suicide or murder? We never found out. A year later my father disappeared in a psychiatric institution to die there ten years later. I probably longed for a substitute father and fell in love two times with an older, married man. But that was part of a secret life.

On the outside it seemed I led a normal life with friends and loves and jobs and an adventure with a French painter in St. Tropez, until I met the man I married. He had been married before and missed his children who departed to Australia and England. In my arrogance I thought I could bring healing, but the opposite happened. I was severely wounded again by a man who was as neurotic as my father. Years later I realized that they both were war victims. But at the time I just had to deal with the facts and had to save my own life.

A big change came when we found the healing powers of therapy. It took me five years to be able to divorce and go my own way. I found a fulltime job as a journalist/editor again, bought my own apartment in Amsterdam and decided it was time to find the 'Truth'. A world of meditation and Eastern Philosophies opened itself for me. After five years of following spiritual leaders, I knew I had to move on. For me Truth is to be found in love between people and not only by connecting with the Divine. Gestalt therapy came in a natural way on my path. It has given me all the tools I needed to co-create my life, this C book and the C group.

www.tinevanwijk.nl

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C Community & C Teaching Program

The group is meant for teachers of all kinds
and for people who want to become their own teacher

In groups we learn to grow and become better human beings.
But...when people come together tension will rise.
Who is the best, who gets the most attention, who is the funniest,
who has the power and who is the leader?
If competition is not recognized, a group can become a dangerous
place because irritation and jealousy are suppressed but present
like bombs that will explode in time.

By talking, writing and experimenting we will learn to work with
group dynamics and explore themes like: Basic Needs and Fears,
The Power Triangle, The Boomerang Effect, Manipulating
Authorities, The Longing for our Other Half
The idea behind this group is that it will grow to a bigger
community consisting of different kinds of groups where people
can write their own life stories, poetry, paint, sing, play theatre,
learn about philosophy, meditate, be part of a Gestalt therapy
group

Information about the Teaching program,
the C group and the online community:
www.schrijfdeonderstroom.typepad.com/program

Eerder van Tine van Wijk verschenen:

Aandacht – Waar gaat het over?

Pas als we bereid zijn AANDACHT te geven aan wie we werkelijk zijn, kunnen we ons ontspannen. Hoe zo zijn we te dik, te dom, te arm, te saai, te oud, te jong? Wie zegt dat? Hoe zo zijn we niet goed genoeg en moeten we ons zelf bewijzen om door de keuring te komen? Hoe zo moeten we iemand worden die we niet zijn? Dit boek gaat over je eigen baas worden. Dat kan alleen als je bereid bent de confrontatie aan te gaan met het leven, met de mensen die belangrijk voor je zijn en vooral met jezelf. Elkaar en jezelf al of niet aandacht geven is bepalend voor hoe lekker je in je vel zit. Aandacht geven is geen kwestie van tijd en wel van kwaliteit.

Het boek kun je bestellen bij www.gopher.nl of bij de boekhandel.

Ouwerpower & Het Heilig Moeten

Ouwerpower is kracht die van binnen is gegroeid. Kracht als van een boom, niet zichtbaar wel aanwezig. Het is kracht waarbij je voelt dat je honderd procent leeft en aanwezig bent. Een kracht die meegaat met de stroom van je bloed en bevriest als je je van je gevoel afsluit. Iedereen heeft het, maar je moet wel besluiten of je hem/haar vrij maakt. Het is net als het water in de kraan. Om het te laten stromen moeten we de kraan opendraaien.

Je kunt het bestellen bij www.elikser.nl of bij www.bol.com

Voorproefjes van beide boeken vind je op:
www.schrijfdeonderstroom.typepad.com

