

METAMORPHOSIS AND SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP

Spiritual growth is most often grounded in trauma, suffering, longing and misadventure. It seems like our instincts to actually reach for and touch God, the Beyond, or however you might refer to the ground of all being, are only activated when we have lost much (or have much to lose). And those losses paradoxically both destroy our older selves, but also give our new manifestations wings to reach for previously unexplored and apparently unavailable plateaus.

But before we can fly, our traumas and wounds need to be composted and assimilated, as they weigh us down and prevent our ascents. It's hard to soar with that much baggage. So, we need to experience a kind of metamorphosis, like the caterpillar to the butterfly.

As the caterpillar turns into a butterfly, its insides literally turn into a pulp as it digests itself, leaving only "imaginal" disks or cells guiding its evolution into a butterfly. In the chrysalis, this pulp combusts and composts the original caterpillar.

Similarly, while our grief and sorrow eat away at us and threaten our very extinction, they also reveal the imaginal disks of our holy selves, the architecture of God for our arising.

All of our growth is steeped in paradox and regret, with yearning and longing ideally resolving into acceptance, insight and understanding.

Although a few have done so, it is very hard to take this journey alone. Most of us need the warm and

continued on next page



METAMORPHOSIS (CONTINUED)

continued from previous page

gentle embrace of others to make this journey.

And this is where spiritual companions come in. They walk along with us, acting as faithful mirrors, reflecting and providing perspective as we wrestle with our pain. Listening, deeply and committedly. Witnessing, and thereby encouraging. Letting us know that we are not alone. Plunging in with us, even as they remain still, quiet and unobtrusive by our side.

Allowing us to marvel as those imaginal spiritual disks reveal themselves, and as our wounds compost into the fertilizer that becomes the sustenance of our aspiring souls. Facilitating our travel through our hurts so that we may be able to arise into the light of God, the wonder of the Universe, free-flowing, and unfettered.

This is a journey without a destination, a foray into deeper and deeper recesses of the unknown. And the price of admission is steep, requiring the death of what we used to know and hold on to, even our most dearly held notions of the Divine. "For a soul will never grow until it is able to let go of the tight grasp it has on God," as San Juan de la Cruz said.

Life and Death, this "great matter," is no easy matter! Because when constructs are finite, the Infinite is to be feared. Thankfully, when we finally become rooted in the unrooted, and grounded in groundlessness, we may experience release and freedom, far beyond our prior notions.

And it is much easier to travel this path without end with a spiritual companion by our side.

May we all find those gentle friends.

-Rev. Seifu Anil Singh-Molares



Listen

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LISTEN@SDIWORLD.ORG



The following questions are offered for guidance, journaling, or meditation.

1. What “deaths” have given you new insight on your spiritual journey?
2. Can you give name to some of your own “imaginal disks”?
3. What else arises for you upon reading Reverend Seifu’s reflection?

If anything arises that you would like to share with the community, please tell us at listen@sdiworld.org.



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TO MY BODY

Holy ash, animate dust
Stunted conductor, demented cache

I smell the winter in your nose,
carry you from my bed,
scan the grass with your feet.

With your mouth I taste filth.

Your nerves keep me safe
and keep me awake.
You are channel and dam.

You show me cliffs
and hang me from them,
the conception that drowns
the growth and growths.

You warm
and burn

sprint, sway, float
break, infect, sprain.
You play, write, know,
block, stop, retard.

Another day.
Senses seen.
More skin to shed.
Body to be

Rachel A. Parsons, MA is the founder of Fratres Dei Spiritual Direction and Ministries. Ever-captivated by the physical nature of spirituality, Rachel incorporates ecstatic dance and other body-centric meditations into her practice. She lives in Arvada, CO with her best friend. Contact her at www.fratresdei.com.

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Thankfully, when we finally become rooted in the unrooted,

and grounded in groundlessness,

we may experience release and freedom,

far beyond our prior notions.

LANGUAGE

There is another world, but it is in this one—
W.B. Yeats

This language you speak—
Is not every atom an exclamation point?

Each leaf, veins filled with fluorescent color,
A song of praise in a mighty whisper?

Every star, seen or hidden,
A (tw)inkling of persistent hope in the
darkness?

Is not every drop of water
Filled with an infinite amount of your mercy,
New every morning like glistening dew
On a single blade of grass?

Does thunder not clap for you?
Do the smallest of insects not hum your
name?

Are the birds not rapt by your bounty?
Do trickling streams not trust they are a part
of something grander?

Is the empty wind not brimming with your
presence,

Each gust a graceful shout to the deaf?

Unseen deep black soil, housing seeds of
dream,

A womb to your goodness?

Do delicate flower petals not dance
To the loving rhythm of who you are?

Do the stones and mountains not sit in
silence,
As they revel in the utterance of your breath?

Are fields of wheat not pervaded with pierced
body,
And grapes suffused with redeeming blood?

This language you speak—
Is not every created thing a holy word
Fallen from the edge of your lips?

Your Spirit made flesh,
Man of Sorrow, enamored of all,
A poem?

Andreas Fleps is a 26-year old poet based in the Chicago suburbs.



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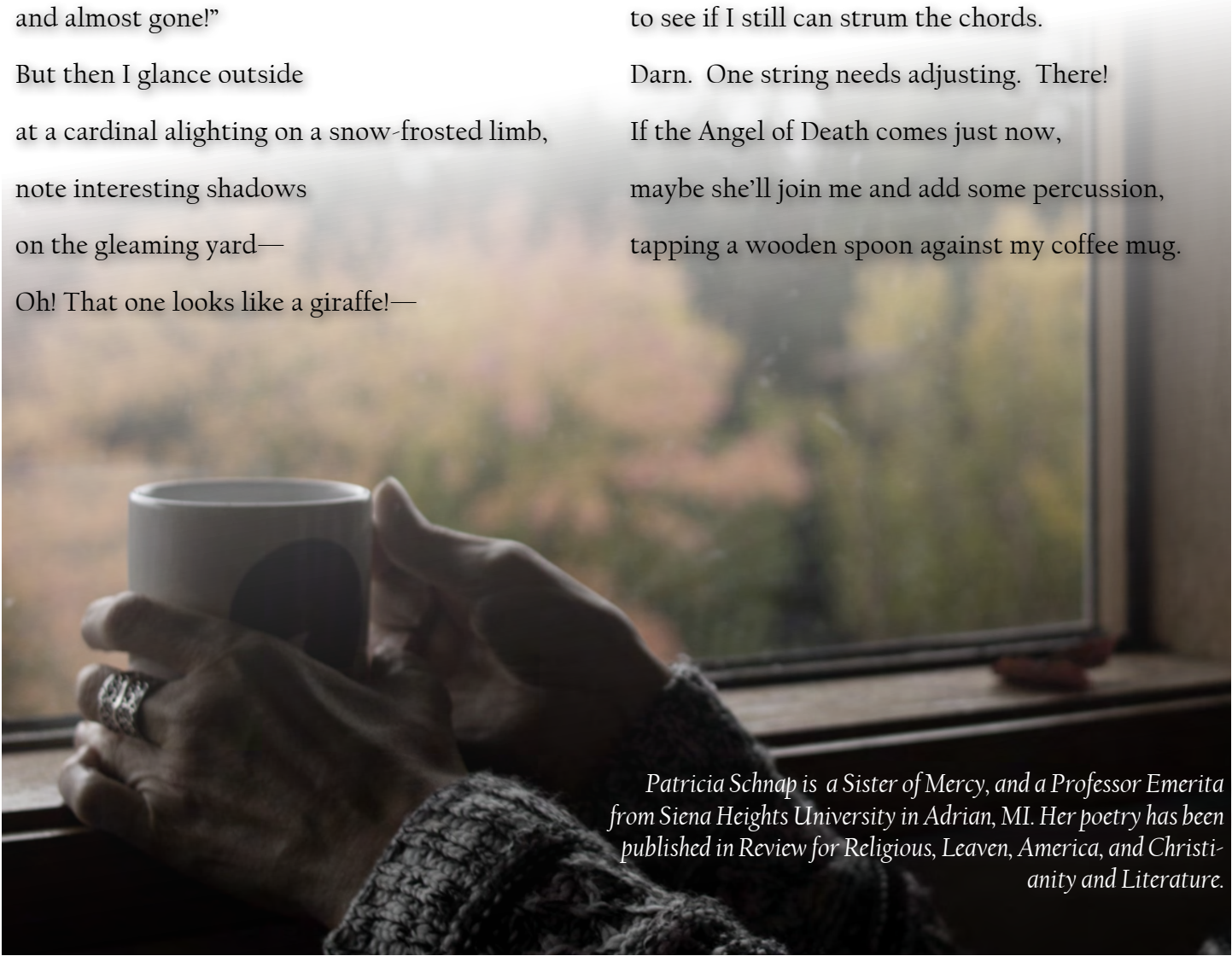
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care.


MORBIDITY DEFICIT

At the milestone of eighty
I should “serious up,”
have death always before my eyes.
I don’t.
It hides from me, like my cell phone
under a kitchen towel on the sink
or in the pocket of my navy-blue sweater
hung hours ago in the closet.
I tell myself “Shape up!
Sand is pouring through your hourglass
and almost gone!”
But then I glance outside
at a cardinal alighting on a snow-frosted limb,
note interesting shadows
on the gleaming yard—
Oh! That one looks like a giraffe!—

and death vanishes.
I’m meditating on my funeral and suddenly,
before the final “departure prayers”
are intoned,
which might be good for me to hear,
I imagine the strains of “How Can I Keep from
Singing?”
(my request)
tingling the chapel’s stained-glass.
And I start humming and fetch my banjo
to see if I still can strum the chords.
Darn. One string needs adjusting. There!
If the Angel of Death comes just now,
maybe she’ll join me and add some percussion,
tapping a wooden spoon against my coffee mug.



Patricia Schnap is a Sister of Mercy, and a Professor Emerita from Siena Heights University in Adrian, MI. Her poetry has been published in Review for Religious, Leaven, America, and Christianity and Literature.





Pause ... Listen

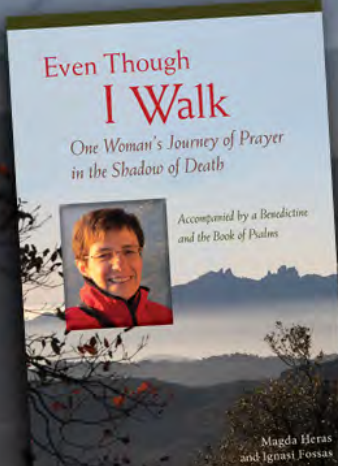
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EMBRACING TAO

Embracing Tao, you become embraced.

Supple, breathing gently, you become reborn.

Clearing your vision, you become clear.

Nurturing your beloved, you become impartial.

Opening your heart, you become accepted.

Accepting the World, you embrace Tao.

“The Tao (‘Way’) that can be explained in words is not the true Tao (‘Way’).”

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