

On being a performer

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Volume 5

This describes/poems (as verb)/feels the work that my client, Kate and I did in our ninth session.

Issue 1

Autumn 2022

The clown with the hollow centre

“I don’t hear the invisible voices, I hear the habitual voices, the ‘hand-me-down’ voices coming out of battered leather suitcases.

Citation Link

Voices of good intention that are voices of harm – harming the speakers too – unbeknown to them.

Voices of fear, voices of compliance,

Voices of privilege, voices of whiteness, voices of anti-blackness

I’m a clown.

I can make people laugh, I can touch people

and inside is a hollow space

I used to fill it with alcohol and drugs

without those - the space sometimes panics -

and the visible voice shouts DRINK ME

from the Alice in Wonderland bottle:

‘drink me, shrink me’

I have obeyed that voice for so long

and now I’m standing up to that voice,

tuning in to my voices that honour my choices,

acknowledging those voices, saying – in astonishment to those voices -

‘you care about me? You – might – love me?’

I question hesitantly.”



Cardiff M.A.D.E ReLay Project 2021-2022

I wrote this in the Friends of KCC creative writing workshop, facilitated by Murmurations editors in May 2022, and then shared it in a small group on the final afternoon, I felt, content aside, that this might resonate with all of us, in our shared experience of being human...

As I wondered what to write, both the shared images and new images from the first day's session became such a strong presence. I started to write. Reflecting on the experience of writing, it felt as if it somehow wrote itself.

The unseen voices began to be seen. It felt as if space had opened up to receive them.

During the tenth session I shared with Kate (pseudonym) that I had written this poem in a workshop and asked her if she would like to hear it. I was both ... aware of the risk: how would Kate respond to this? and ... knowing that it was so much part of our work that I could dare.

She said that she would and I read it to her and emailed a her a copy. I later invited Kate to share her reflections:

"I cried! Hand me down voices resonated strongly and by the time I got to the lines drink me, shrink me my face was wet with tears. After reading your poem I felt seen. The

poem captured everything we'd been talking about. The imagery evoked in the title itself got me. 'How did she know that was me, a clown with a hollow centre! The imagery of the battered old suitcases of habitual voices really resonated with me. I thought about the vintage suitcases I use in my show.'

I later found this quote by John Shotter (2006), "We have to let the others and otherness around us 'teach' us how to relate to them; we have to let the otherness of the other enter us and make us other than we already are." This quote reminded me of what I have written above, before sharing the poem, about shared human experience: I feel that I have acknowledged my vulnerability in the poem. And Marilena Karamatsouki (2019, p. 35) writes how her story of practice includes "being reflexive – both self-reflexive, as I share my experience and include myself in the process, and relationally reflexive, as I take into account my client's experience of therapy and how she perceives me." If, with "rational mind", I would have thought about writing about my practice/ a session in this way = no way. By participating in the FoKCC creative writing workshop - I was able to park "rational mind" and connect with imagery and metaphor.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to Joanne Hipplewith, Leah Salter and Gail Simon for their encouragement over time to: "Write!"

References

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Author

Lorna Edwards is an independent systemic psychotherapist living and working in the South Wales valleys. She knows that caring for planet Earth and working for social justice is the only way forward - as an alternative to our previously deluded (anthropocene centred) way of thinking/acting. And that we can do this through community connection/action - both local and virtual.

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Citation

Edwards, Lorna (2022). On being a performer. *Murmurations: Journal of Transformative Systemic Practice*, 5(1), 98-100. <https://doi.org/10.28963/5.1.11>