

In the Clearing

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Some context

I brought these words together in 2022 following a weekend I spent with my younger sister, Annemarie, and my younger brother, James, who came to visit me together, something that hadn't happened before and I was left humbled by their visit.

The conversations we created as the remaining elder generation of our family were moving and it was the first time such conversations took place. The context for this coming together was triggered by a chemotherapy treatment phase following my recent diagnosis of cancer.

Citation Link

This weekend became an important event in our lives thus far, and as I was exploring poetry as an antidote to patient-hood, as well as making my voice find its relationship to myself inhabited by cancer, I try to capture our conversations and share them with you here.

My sister and brother have given me permission to publish this. I honour them as "us" and our experiences we have shared.

We three gathered to create the clearing.
My imminent demise or not has hastened our dialogues.
With our talking sticks, we can hear each other,
voices and reminiscences from the passing of dissolving years,
like the melting of a Dali clock.

Carefully and delicately, we find our space for the words.
We talk of dogs, cats, and our children.
Our ancestors came to take their seats at
our behest, to our gathering.
Our words were more powerful, in
the present and in the future.
The ancestors' tangled webs of undergrowth
are swept aside for our clearing to emerge.

Our stories are not written, but this is a record of such beginnings.
We don't need the weight or the wait of their past.
We have our own stories, cared for, cultivated, and alive with possibilities
of life and love; we have the fruits to offer.
Flags will wave in the winds of our change.
We are we, wee, oui we ness is our cleared space.

We are passing in this life, but we are multi-layered and
our passings are many, touching the lives of others as we go.
In art and artistry, in poetics, in intimate moments of reconnections,
dialogues help create epilogues of our own design.
The flutter of our flags signals we are here doing this.

The gatherings will grow from this
like the meetings through our totem poles of stories.
We are on a cusp of connection like
Hindu festivals.
We can create our own gatherings,
rich and full of more, not less.
Not silence, but talk, not disconnection
by secrets, but celebrations of lives.
A clan maybe, if Scottishness is our thing.
A Shinto moment and the Kami for all
of us; we have arrived.

Author

Billy Hardy is a systemic psychotherapist, lecturer, psychiatric nurse and manager. Billy joined The Family Institute, Wales in 1998 teaching on all of the courses on offer and working as a Family Therapist in the staff clinic each week. As a clinical supervisor and course leader of the Systemic Intermediate, MSc and the Clinical Supervisor training, he has made significant contributions to the life of the Institute in its clinical and teaching contexts. Since 2020 he has been Co-Director for The Centre for Systemic Studies, the new home of The Family Institute. Billy has developed, consulted with and helped sustain a variety of community practices locally, nationally and internationally, forging long lasting relationships with many different agencies in the statutory, independent and third sector arenas.

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