

TRANSIT III: A PERSONAL RESPONSE

Once upon a time there lived a young woman who wanted to be an actor so she hung out with actors and slept with actors and went to all the parties that actors go to, and worked very hard to make sure she didn't miss out on the most fun, the biggest kicks and the best drugs. She auditioned for roles and became stage-fill for big productions. She moved in with an actor and they became known as "the actor and his girlfriend". And then one day she woke up and realised that she was unhappy bored empty and mortal. One day she woke up and realised that that every choice she hadn't made was a choice leading to this moment. She had gone with the flow and ended up in a brackish back-water. From a puddle in the gutter she looked up and saw The Great Parade of Life passing her by...

Dear Julia,

I have lost count of the number of times I have begun this letter to you. For a time the pages covered the dining table and spilled over onto the floor until I gathered them together and set them aside. I never seemed to get past the first page, which in some way reflects a life of serial beginnings.

Each time I sat down to write about my experience of Transit III, I began writing instead about the catalysts which led me there in the first place. Chief among these was Magdalena Aotearoa, which I attended in 1999. This experience was pivotal in consolidating a shift which had begun to occur in my relationship to theatre. I have now come to view my life "pre-" and "post-" Magdalena Aotearoa. It was in Wellington that I looked up from the puddle in the gutter and saw a Wondrous Parade passing by. Like the naive woman in the tale of Bluebeard I had opened the forbidden door and glimpsed "what might have been". The years leading up to that moment suddenly seemed an overwhelming waste. My heart was constricted by fear and I lay gasping on the floor. But as the panic subsided, I realised I had caught a glimpse of something else as well, a glimpse of "what *could* be".

Over the ensuing months an uncomfortable awareness slowly dawned on me: that I had been waiting all my life for someone else to validate my existence and my choices. I began to listen beyond the needy voices within me, the ones clamouring for approval, and I became aware of another voice, deep within. This voice has enormous energy and appetite. It moves and rises. It is a voice demanding action. That I act.

When I returned from New Zealand I began taking actions which placed me outside my comfort zone. I wrote and began performing "*ruthless*", which is the story of my grandmother, the one she could never tell. I consented to an operation I had been avoiding for two years. I realised it

was vital that I find a way to attend Transit III. I acknowledged my dream to host a Magdalena Festival in Brisbane, Australia.

A generation in human terms is thirty-five years. I was thirty five when I arrived in Holstebro on January 18, 2001.

I came to Transit III for my professional development. To develop my skills, my confidence and my voice. When you passed the stone and asked us to speak our question in eleven words or less, mine was : what can I learn from an older generation of women practitioners about generating and sustaining work? More than eleven words. At first I thought that the answer to my question lay in what I observed of the older women through the ten days of Transit: their tireless focus on the work and on supporting, encouraging and challenging each other. Since coming home I have endeavoured to shift my focus from myself to my community and I have re-discovered a great energy and appetite for work.

After ten days, when you once again passed the stone, I was able to keep within the form, this time three words: Move Towards Fear. Initially I thought this was my response to the question Gilly Adams had posed about finding courage for change. But today, for the first time, I realise that those three words are also the answer to my original question. For me, the energy for generating and sustaining work lies in identifying what I fear and moving towards it. I see now that this knowledge was instinctual and already at work in my life. It was present in my creation of "*ruthless*", in my consenting to surgery, and in coming to Transit III. But it is only now, months later, as I sit in reflection, that I have been able to articulate this for myself. Now I understand why I have persisted, despite the piles of unfinished beginnings, to compose this letter to you.

In coming to Transit III I moved towards what I feared and this released an energy within me which has carried me forwards. Since my return to Australia, as I continue the work of building connections around the continent and planning for Magdalena Australia, 2003, I have had to confront my fears time and again. Each time I move through them I sense an increase in the flow of energy in my life. No longer absorbed in the puddle in the gutter, I've become a part of the Great Parade and I'm dancing down the road!

Thank-you, Julia, for creating the space, for challenging me, and for asking me to reflect.

Love,
Dawn

Brisbane, Australia, June 24, 2001.