Numinous connections: poetry in the hospice


Abstract

This thesis offers a distinctive approach to writing poetry which has been developed within the context of the author’s/researcher’s observations of, and participation in, end of life care. It will be argued that poetry can have a unique role in supporting patients within a hospice setting. It emerges that there may be a further role of the poem as ‘memorial art’. The practical base to the research has been writing poetry based on conversations with, and the creative artwork of, hospice patients throughout a period of over three years. These working methods have enabled the author to produce a substantial collection of poetry, presented at the start of the thesis, as the prime evidence of the value of the approach. In this research context the ‘numinous’ is interpreted from its extended definition as relating to transcendence, wonder and otherness. Particular components of the writing practice have formed a ‘numinous poetics’. The numinous as a focus in this research has emerged through careful and scholarly reading and reflection as part of the author’s response to the perceived qualities and value of the poems as they were written. Seeking for the ‘numinous’ was not a prelude or prescription for the research but a consequence of it. It encompasses cognitive, linguistic and literary components, and further draws from the often numinous experience of a poem’s inception whilst talking with an individual patient. The numinous is argued to be of particular value to inform the creative representation of a patient’s life at a time when a more simplistic presentation of meaning and understanding may prove inadequate. The research details the poetics of the various components, and documents the writing experience to demonstrate the potential to other writers choosing to work in hospice settings. Following the Creative Work of 93 poems beginning the thesis, Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the numinous approach and outline components of numinous poetics. Chapter 3 details the development of particular techniques and skills by specific examples, and then Chapter 4 fully explains the practice and key learning points gained as a hospice poet. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with further key issues regarding the role of the poet and the case for this approach to be integrated within the end of life care aims regarding a ‘good death’.

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Learning to let things go. Read More. With our online content, live activations and retreats, The Numinous is at the hub of a global shift in consciousness that’s reshaping our societies in real time. Read More. Books. Out now. Sober curious. Offering an eye-opening new way to think about our relationship with alcohol, Sober Curious reveals the enormous benefits that come from unlearning the mindless habit of drinking and embracing the life-enhancing choice of sobriety: greater joy, clarity, confidence, and connection. Read More. Out now. Material girl, mystical world. Numinous dread. Otto calls the feeling of numinous dread, aka awe or awe-fullness, the mysterium tremendum. C.S. Lewis’s illustration makes clear the nature of numinous dread and its difference from ordinary fear. Accompanying the disvaluation of self is the feeling of being unworthy to be in the presence of “the holy one” (we fear that our presence might even defile him). Being profane, we need a “covering,” in Otto’s term, or a consecration or grace, “that renders the approacher ‘numinous,’ frees him from his ‘profane’ being,” so that he is no longer unfit to relate to the numen. The numinous has another aspect which co-exists with the mysterium tremendum, the power to fascination. Numinous by Leila A. Fortier. In the great tradition of Rabiʿa al-Basri, who as an eight century Sufi mystic and poet is regarded as the first female saint of Sufism, setting forth the doctrine of Divine Love, the poems in Numinous seem to arise from the deepest memories of humankind and a communion with the spirit. They are an invocation of that spirit. Following the ecstatic tradition of the divine, mystic poet, Fortier offers an encompassing interplay of seeming opposites—pages overflow with emptiness, words emanate musical silence, and we are led deeper and deeper into the lucidity of dream. Here is a collection that illustrates, page after page, what we need to remember every day, that one simple truth: All is sacred.” ~ Melissa Studdard, Author of I Ate the Cosmos for Breakfast.