



### **A Reflection by Bonnie Zindel**

Writing on the Moon is fifteen years in the making and it is about imagination and originality—two crucial elements in our creative life—and the ability to magically rearrange memories and emotions that have been stored away in some deep and ‘unworded’ place. Young children have direct access to their creative unconscious and touch of wonderment. But many of us lose some of that ability as we get older and become more constrained and concrete— and perhaps frightened of that playful part of ourselves.

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<http://elfearsandblood.tumblr.com/>

When I was a young girl I would spend hours in my large walk-in closet, playing with my imagination. I would put on my glasses and my wooly cape, and I would make up stories of traveling across the desert to live in a small Bedouin town, selling exotic perfumes. Or turning jewels into meteor showers. I would consult elders about secret watering holes, which led to narrow trails and berry patches. The elders scratched a map in the dirt and showed me where quicksand hid and monsters lurked.

When I returned to my room and put on my wide-awake hat, hours had passed. And in that slip of time, I had entered the timeless place of creativity. I did not know it then but I was in a sacred place—my creative unconscious—where things rattle deep inside; a place of plaster and clay, of warm pools of humanity, all beyond my conscious knowing.



[http://ktvk.images.worldnow.com/images/13771694\\_G.jpg](http://ktvk.images.worldnow.com/images/13771694_G.jpg)

Another important step came in my junior year in high school when Mrs. Lave took me out of Miss Nehren's geometry class, where I couldn't tell the difference between a hypotenuse and a trapezoid, and put me in a new class she was forming on mythology. There I had no trouble remembering which goddess turned into a flower, and the names of all the gods and demi-gods on Mt Olympus. These days, I like to remember that the gods are far from perfect. If I put Zeus on the couch, I would learn about his unusual traumatic birth, springing from the head of Cronos, his difficult childhood filled with danger, a stormy and jealous union with his wife, Hera—when angry, he would hurl thunderbolts.

After college where I majored in psychology, I started writing plays, screenplays and novels. I would ask my creative unconscious for help, but it refused to be cajoled or yield to demand. Then when I would least expect it, a new idea would appear in all its glory, and I would stop what I was doing and listen. To make an apple pie from scratch, you must first invent the universe, said Carl Sagan, an astrophysicist. Each time you are creative, you must start from scratch.

After my years as a writer, having published three novels and written three produced plays, I wanted a job that wasn't so lonely and where me just being present was crucial. In the early 1990s, I was with my family in the Caribbean for Easter vacation. I happened to pass a woman on the beach and we began talking. In the five minutes we conversed, she told me about a graduate program she had attended to become a psychotherapist. Upon returning to New York, I applied to graduate school at Columbia University, and my life changed. Eventually I became a psychoanalyst, and I never even learned her name.

During the four-year program, I felt that I could not serve two masters. So, while my literary writing was put on hold, my analyst, Mannie Ghent, and I did share a creative play-space. As part of my training analysis, it was a prerequisite to be in therapy. I would bring in fragments of creative work to Mannie, and he would close his eyes and listen as if he was listening to a dream.

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Following each session, I would go to a café and write scribbled notes on the session. He seemed to open the buried parts of me. The ritual: always writing. I *am* a writer, and it seems like I have no choice but to write.

In 2001, I was part of a group at my institute planning to start a new scholarly journal. It was important to me to create a permanent space for creative expression. This was an unorthodox idea. It had never been done before. While psychoanalysis had long been interested in creativity, no journal had previously made space for it. I am enormously grateful that the editors were open to taking this leap with me. The Creative Literary Section made its debut in the first issue of *Psychoanalytic Perspectives* in 2003 and has continued to be part of the Journal for each of its 29 issues to date.

As Creative Literary Editor, I started the first issue with only three poems. The second issue consisted of a poem by Thomas Ogden, whom I had gotten to know through our mutual interest in creative writing. Alongside his poem was a poem by his niece, Emily.

For the third issue, I was puzzled. I needed to cast a wider net. I wanted people in the field and beyond to know there was now a space for poetry and creative non-fiction in the journal. Our institute had a list-serve, and so did many other institutes across the country. Why not send out a Call for submissions that would reach thousands of potential contributors both here and abroad? I put out a Call for submissions of "Poetry by People in Analysis." The response was overwhelming. Hundreds of poems poured in from as far away as Australia, South Africa, England, France, Scotland, Israel, Canada, New Zealand and across the United States.

Suddenly, I was faced with a dilemma: how to select the eight or ten poems that I had space to publish. What criteria would I use? I am not a literary scholar. I have no training in critical theory. I am a psychoanalyst and a writer. How did my psychoanalytic sensitivity effect what I responded to? And my thirty years of writing? And so, I decided to trust my creative intuition and analytic training. Did I

respond emotionally to the poem? Was I moved? Did it feel original? Did I want to read it again? Did the poet allow me into their being? The feedback on this issue was very encouraging. Psychotherapists told me how meaningful it was to have this place to bring another part of themselves. And readers told me how much they enjoyed the themes and selections. I realized I was on to something, and in the years ahead, I put out many other Calls that stimulated the imagination: *Dreams as Poetry, Love Calls, A Call For Love, Strong Women's Voices*. In the Call for *Mothers of the Milky Way* I said, "Mother's come in complex ways. Surprise us." You will see the fruits of these Calls throughout the book.

The ideas for the Calls came from my creative unconscious and leapt into the red-hot embers that animated the creative unconscious of many others. The *Notes From the Creative Literary Editor* that I began to write for each issue are also unconscious collaborations. This is what Shakespeare called "epiphenomenology," where one person's idea sparks another and another— like shooting stars. When these sparks happen, the ideas are combustible. The outpouring of submissions and the quality of the work have been extraordinary. I am thrilled to preserve some of the best of these shooting stars in *Writing on the Moon*.

**Bonnie Zindel**, LCSW, is a psychoanalyst in private practice in New York. She is a faculty member, supervisor, and training analyst at the National Institute for the Psychotherapies. A founding editor and creative literary editor of *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, she is the author of numerous articles on creativity. She is the author of "A Bird that Thunders: An Analysis of Emmanuel Ghent", in *Clinical Implications of the Psychoanalyst's Life Experience* (Routledge, 2013). Bonnie has conducted writing groups for psychotherapists for over twenty years and has conducted writing workshops at international conferences in Rome, Madrid, and San Francisco. The *New York Times* said, "She runs what may be the most nurturing writing group on the literary scene." A playwright and novelist (HarperCollins, Viking, Bodley Head), Bonnie is a former member of the Actors Studio Playwrights Unit. She has most recently written a play, *My Simone*, based on the life of Simone de Beauvoir, which was recently performed in New York.