

Sniffy Takes a Stand:
A Process Work Facilitator's Growth
through Drawing

Ginger Griggs
MACF 2, June 2010



Dedication

Sniffy and I would like to dedicate this final project to the three fabulous members of our study committee: Stephen Schuitevoerder, Ingrid Rose, and Herb Long.

To us, they are the embodiment of Process Work wisdom, heart, and strength.

We love you, guys!

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Sniffy Takes a Stand: **A Facilitator's Growth through Drawing**



Prologue

“Conflict is the beginning of consciousness.”
--M. Esther Harding

The following text accompanies a set of drawings that were created as the final project for the Master's Degree in Conflict Facilitation and Organizational Change. It would be pleasant but untruthful to say that the text flowed from me in a sudden gush of inspiration—as did the drawings it accompanies. In fact, the text is the final product of numerous false starts, demoralizing delays, and many months of internal conflict, tears, and soul searching. Try as I might, I have not been successful enough at reframing the writing part of my project in order to embrace it as an equally valuable part of this particular creative process. My logical self understands that without context, without imparting to the reader how these drawings relate to my Process Work program, I

cannot expect to fulfill the requirements of the degree. Still, to be honest, there is resistance within me. Sniffy (whom you will meet shortly) “doggedly” wants to do things *his* way—which happens, at the moment, to be non-verbal. “The *process*,” he proclaims, “is what *Process Work* is all about! We have searched within and we have produced incredible drawings of universal emotions that speak to the heart. Our growth and our drawings are our gifts to the Process Work world. Intellectualizing those gifts is like a cow chewing on its cud till all the flavor is gone.” “Sniffy,” I reply, “I understand your exasperation and I love your passionate desire for total freedom, but as glorious as I feel your lust for life is, and as much as I agree with you that the excitement was in creating the drawings, I *want* that degree--which means we must get our committee’s approval. I’m asking you to help me translate some small measure of our experience into words.” (I finish that last sentence and try to imagine Sniffy’s body language. I sit there, waiting, but the vision doesn’t come to me. And then...I am suddenly aware that my body is moving ever so gently from side to side—a kind of rhythmic wiggle...and I realize I am trotting—a small dog’s light-footed movement. There’s hope! Not a resolution, but more of a... temporary truce.)

I’m wondering now if it’s relevant to mention why I think Sniffy is so opposed to writing about this project. I think the “trigger” experience—the one onto which Sniffy projects his wrath, is my first Master’s degree in French Literature, many years ago. Although I had some very good teachers, there were also some I could liken to minor gods who mirrored their mythical counterparts in both pettiness and abuse of power. And in my quest for the golden chalice of that first graduate degree, I felt forced to bend to their will, so I systematically wrote what I thought would please them and waited on tender hooks for the grace of a kind word, a good grade, and ultimately, a

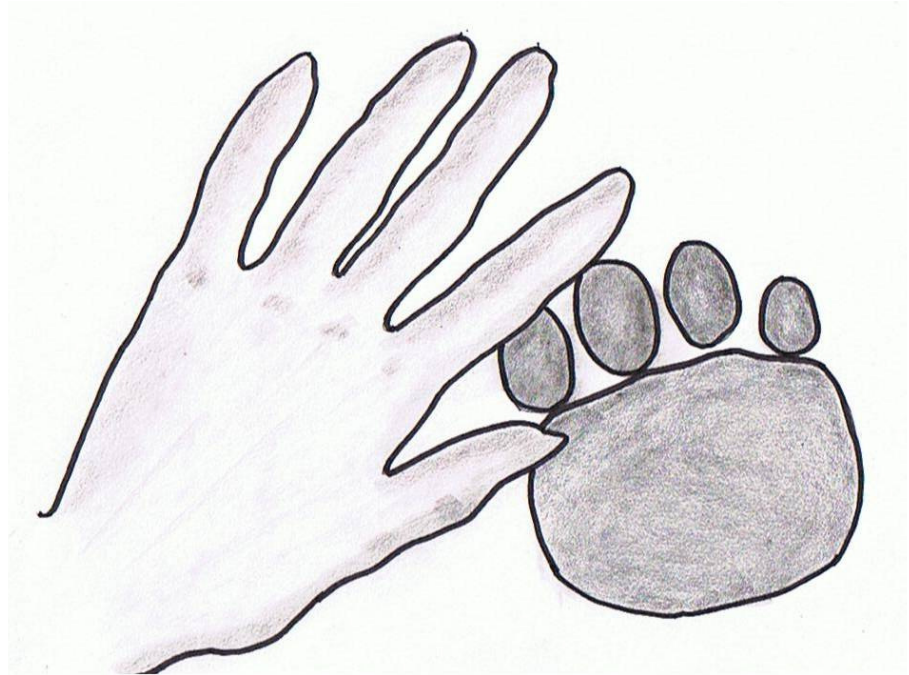
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Master's degree. I realize as I recount that part of my story that there is a role in me that is ashamed that I did not rebel. But then, throughout my life, rebellion has typically been secondary for me, with a primary that has longed for approval and acceptance. Today, having "sat in the fire" of a lifetime of internal and external struggles—as well as joys—Sniffy cries out, "I will not bend! I will not be dominated! Life is an incredible adventure, and I will live it, I will love it, I will explore it on *my* terms!" (As I write that last sentence, Sniffy's passion for life makes me want to grin. In spite of my frustration with him [admittedly, when I want him to bend to my will] I do love his spirit!)

I pause momentarily, and am suddenly aware of a sense of urgency. Both Sniffy and I want to move on. So we must finish this project quickly, before we lose our momentum. Not for the first time, I am reminded that *I* am the one who has been demanding of myself a lengthy written "masterpiece." It is not my committee members, but *my own primary identity* who sets the perfectionist standards that hold me back from completion. A voice whispers, "Write. Turn it in. They will like it. Tap into the strength of Sniffy's defiance and use that strength to finish the project."

"But am I bending to the will of others?" I ask. "I suppose you could look at it that way," answers the voice. "But that would be self-defeating. If we instead reframe this writing as *telling our story*, and we keep its length to a manageable size, perhaps we can turn the words into a lovely packaging for the gift of the pictures. Maybe even enjoy the writing—a little." "Not bad," I reply. "You might also remember," continues the voice, "that there is no reason in the world why you *have* to finish this project and earn the Master's degree—other than it's your *choice*." "Right," I answer, not filled with elation, but definitely with determination. "And I *do* want that diploma. We've all

earned it.. Sniffy—everybody--let's proceed—and *this* time, we *will* bring this project to a successful, creative conclusion.”



Chapter 1: The Birth of Sniffy

*I cannot believe that the inscrutable universe turns on an axis of suffering;
surely the strange beauty of the world must somewhere rest on pure joy!*

--Louise Bogan

By now, you have guessed that Sniffy is a dog. But not just *any* dog. Sniffy is a timeless spirit—a huge heart in a tiny body. I have always known his spirit lived inside me, but until recently, we had not been formally introduced. Sniffy is joy. He is laughter and abandon. He is also a seeker of life—of adventure—of the as-yet-unknown. He is endlessly alert for stimuli, and instantly eager to follow their trail. He is vulnerable to the will of my primary identity and is interminably at odds with her drive for responsibility and achievement. But whereas Sniffy is vulnerable, he is also determined that nothing and no one will extinguish his light. He is indomitable. He is the constellation of what I hold most dear in life. Through heartbreak and tragedy, he has held his little clenched paw high and sworn never to be taken alive—and to this day, he prevails.

But how did Sniffy and I finally meet? It was February, 2009. MACFOC¹ final exams and final project deadlines loomed large in the background--June would soon be upon us. Stephen Schuitevoerder had come to Japan to give a seminar and had agreed to work with the Tokyo contingent of our cohort, to help us practice for final exams. We were in the mountains surrounded by snow, in the cozy “company house”² of one of my fellow Japan-based Process Work students. As we paused for a break from our

¹ Master’s in Conflict Facilitation and Organizational Change. Also referred to as simply MACF.

² In Japan, it’s a common practice for companies to own one or more company houses in picturesque parts of the country, for employees’ professional or personal use.

review, snugly nestled in the tiny living room, Stephen casually asked, “So, how is everybody doing on their final projects?” (Now, you might recall that one of my opening remarks was that *my* final project is the product of numerous false starts, demoralizing delays, and many months of internal conflict, tears, and soul searching.) The casual question elicited an angry, frustrated tirade from me. “I hate that thing! I’ll *pay* one of you to do the damn thing for me—*anything* to get it off my back--just get it away from me!”

To my surprise, Stephen grinned and said, “Go, Ginger!” Again, to my surprise, some of the others (all of whom I had imagined to be almost finished) added that they, too, were having trouble moving their projects forward. A few minutes of excited chatter, and I suddenly had a vision. “I feel like a small dog being pulled on a leash. I can see a telephone pole just up that hill. I want to go explore what’s behind it! *I want to sniff around!* But somebody wants to force me to go where I *don’t* want to go. My skinny little legs are planted firmly in the ground, and *I’M NOT BUDGING!* I don’t *want* to go that way! I don’t *want* to write something for somebody else! I want to be free to learn in my *own* way!” I felt an approving energy coming from those around me, and I heard Stephen call out, “Way to go, Sniffy!” And at that moment—Sniffy—my stubborn, rebellious, curious, joyous little free-spirited secondary identity who wanted to sniff out everything interesting in life stepped out of the shadows. *Woof!*

When we returned to Tokyo, Sniffy was still so vivid to me--and he seemed so important--that I suddenly felt compelled to draw him. Did I say “*draw*”? *I can’t draw!* (My primary identity has always strongly related to Saint Exupery’s recounting in The Little Prince of an occasion in which he drew a boa constrictor swallowed by an elephant--and all the adults thought it was kind of a lumpy hat. This incident put an end

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forever to the author's aspirations to draw.) Nonetheless, in spite of my fear of criticism or ridicule, shyly--when I was sure no one was around—the first Sniffy drawings started to emerge. They were rebellious in a very light-hearted way, and were accompanied by Dr. Seuss-like limericks that joyously heralded Sniffy's desires and intensions. (I was particularly amused at the appearance of a Process Worker who, if I'm not mistaken, is a cross between Stephen Schuitevoerder and Carl Jung.)

A couple of days later, on the first day of the seminar Stephen had come to Tokyo to conduct, I brought the first few Sniffy drawings with me. I bashfully showed them to a fellow student, who exuberantly claimed that they were great, and that I must show them to Stephen. He also liked them, and they made the rounds of my friends in the seminar, where they were an instant hit! People seemed to love Sniffy's cheerful rebelliousness and his view of Process Work as it might be seen through the eyes of a gleeful child. A new final project had begun to take on life!

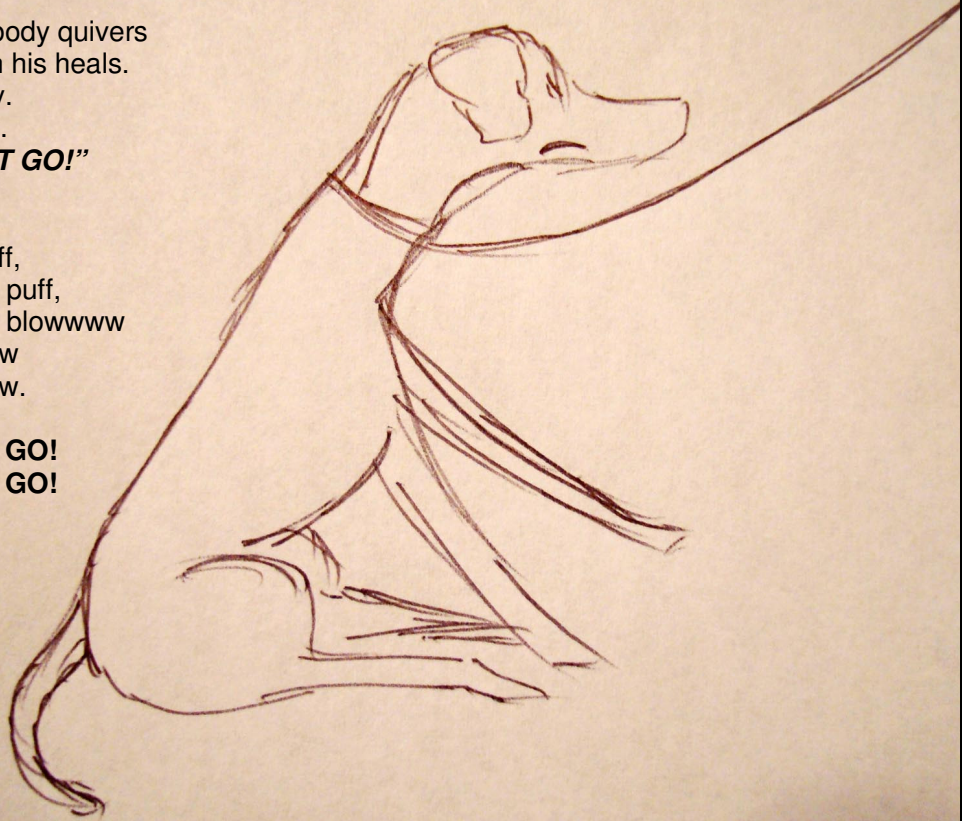
Sniffy Takes a Stand...

Sniffy Takes a Stand

"NO!" His body quivers
as he digs in his heels.
Emphatically.
Dramatically.
"I WILL NOT GO!"
He squeals.

"You can huff,
and you can puff,
and you can blowwww
and blowwww
and blowwww.

**I WILL NOT GO!
I WILL NOT GO!
I WILL NOT
WILL NOT
WILL
NOT
GO!"**

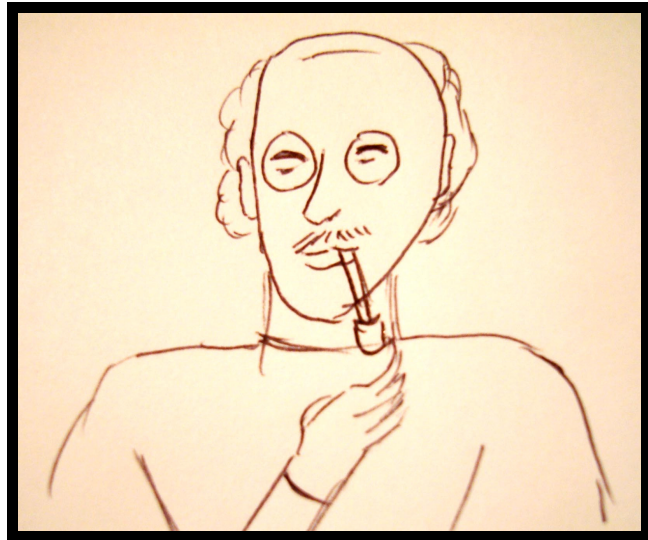


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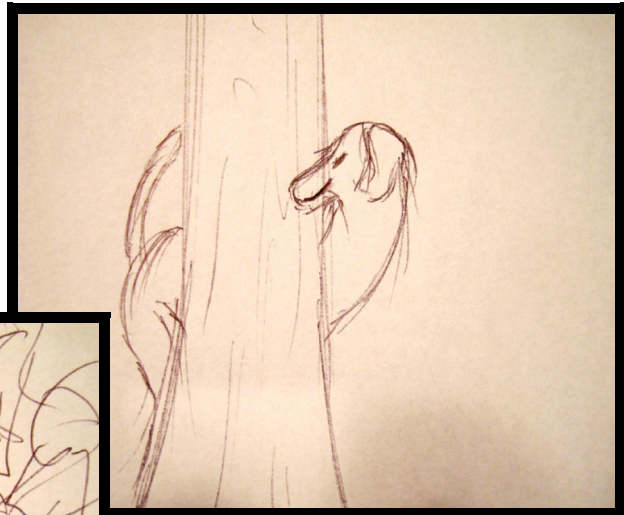
“Hmmm,” says the Process Worker.
“Hmmm....” again.

“Something appears to be going on here.
There is a role that is refusing to go a certain way.

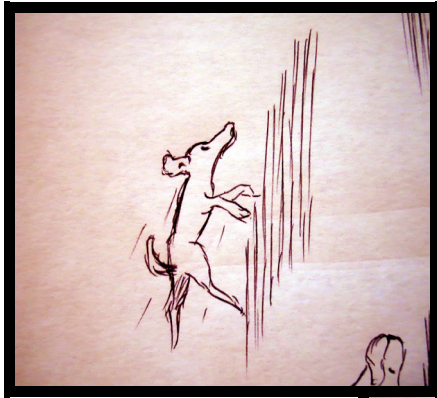
How interesting!
How delightful!
What might it have to say?



I want up that hill,
Around that tree,
I want to see
What there is to see.



I want to snoop.
I want to play.
I want to sniff
And find my way.



Out of the Way, Edges--
Not a Secondary to Lose!



Edges--

Going over!
Coming under!
...Sneaking around 'em!



New *me's* to find,
No rest till I've found 'em!

Chapter 2: Follow the Process!

*“Follow your bliss and the universe will
open doors for you where there were only walls.”*
-- Joseph John Campbell

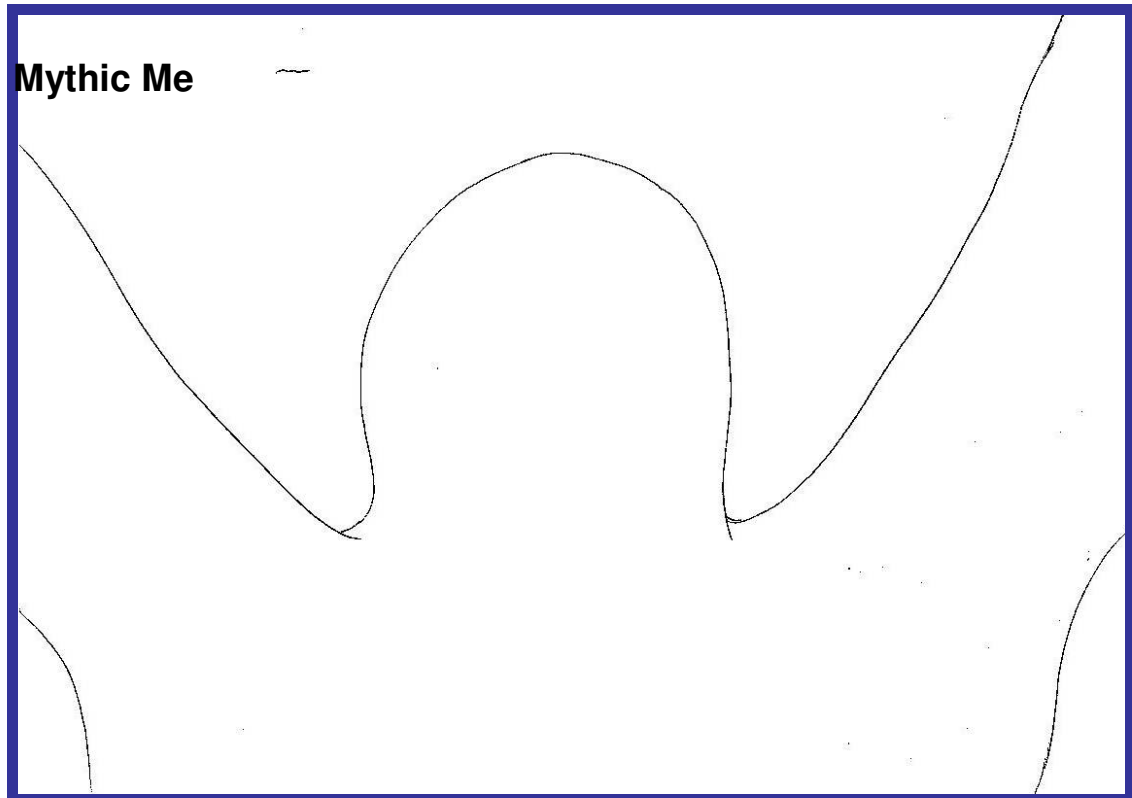
The Playful Spirit

Sniffy’s unexpected springing to life was fun! Drawing was exciting! I was a curious, creative follower of a process that was happening *to* me. Yes, I was still “me”—but I was also someone new—someone from whom drawings sprang almost effortlessly, practically creating themselves while I watched. Suddenly, I *wanted* to work on my final project. It seemed to have a life of its own, and I wanted to follow wherever it might lead. Whereas before, I would let even the slightest distraction derail my progress, now, when I needed to address other priorities, I found myself restless and eager to get back to the project.

At one point, I recalled with pleasure an exercise that we had done in one of our Process Work classes, and I wanted to draw that experience. (My primary feels compelled to interject here that she doesn’t remember the exact instructions in the exercise, but that Sniffy is pulling on his leash, urging us to forget that particular need for accuracy and get on with our story.) Anyway, as I was about to say, in the exercise, I was supposed to imagine a very special place on the earth and remain there until I could feel the embodiment of my “Big U”—that Ginger who is *more* than the everyday Ginger with all her human frailties and the pressures of her everyday life. To me, it was a search for my eldership—something grand and powerful without being prideful—a spirit so large that it was above pettiness, and could hold the whole world in its arms.

Understandably, given the rather noticeable gap between Michelangelo's artistic talent and my own, my meager drawing fell far, far short of what I saw in my imagination and experienced in my body and soul. I can only say that the moment was incredible--and even today, I remain in love with that image and the feeling it evoked. As "silly" as my drawing is, I include it here with a smile, knowing that you, dear reader, will have to use *your* imagination to interpret it.

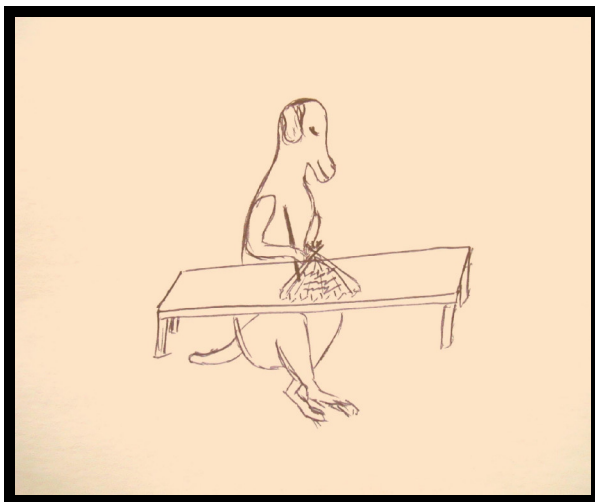
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In this sketch, I rise out of the ocean, a huge figure that is something like a cross between a Poseidon and a towering Christian Son of God. Water drips from me as I rise up, taller, and *taller*, and I hold my robed arms on high as I survey the scene before me. Far, far in the distance, I see the mundane world, an island where “Little Me” lies dreaming peacefully on a beach. Although she is no larger than a fly speck, I feel a deep, magnanimous love for her-- as I do for all humanity. I am far above the damaging emotions that torment mere mortals and that cause them to wound each other by the tens of millions every day. Yet as tiny and as distant as they are, I do not look down on these small creatures. My huge heart feels only love and a desire to help them.

Sensing my frustration at my inability to adequately capture this particular experience in my drawing, Sniffy came to my rescue:

Sniffy Writes a Tanka on a Japanese Fan



***Rising, arms outstretched,
From the ocean, Mythic Me.
Below, the island
Where Little Me lies sleeping.
Transformed, transfixed, I hold them.***

He combined drawing with my admiration of Japanese culture and the discipline of writing poetry, a mechanism I had used years ago to channel my anguished emotions

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at those moments when I thought they would otherwise tear me apart. Sniffy helped me remember my “Mythic-Me” experience in the form of a Japanese *tanka*, an ancient form of poetry that predates the *haiku*. My little secondary sat down at his short-legged Japanese writing table, took out a blank Japanese fan, and with understanding, empathy, and the delicate swooshing of his calligraphy pen, he captured the experience in the mandatory five lines with their strict 5-7-5-7-7 syllable count. Seeing him sitting there writing made me grin. I wasn’t fooled into thinking that I had *really* been able to adequately draw my experience--but I liked Sniffy’s “style” and I appreciated his intentions. And as I said--drawing had become fun and exciting, and I was a curious, creative follower of a process that was happening *to* me.

And then--something happened....

Over the Edge

The drawings suddenly changed--dramatically. Whereas Sniffy was light-hearted and his drawings had a certain cartoon quality, a different kind of drawing suddenly began to appear--drawings that were deeper, darker. It was as if Sniffy had gotten his wish. He had demanded “to see what there is to see.” He had warned edges to get out of the way...and now--it had happened. I had gone over an edge. The story was no longer *about* Sniffy. It was taking place *through* Sniffy. When I thought about it later, I was in awe of the power of simply *following the process*. Approaching the edge, or doorway, through *play* had been a way of “tricking” it. Before I even realized

it, I had gone over it, and drawings of emotions that had desperately needed to be processed poured forth.

The first was *Goodbye*, a drawing of my father in death. It's not much more than a line drawing, really, made with an ordinary pencil on plain white printer paper. But as I looked at it, I was shocked at how good, how powerful it was—how it captured the essence of death with just a few simple strokes:



Goodbye

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First had come the picture, which flowed from the deep well of the sentient level. Later, as I stared at it, fascinated, searching for meaning, thoughts and words began to form:

Today, I have finally drawn my father in death. It's early March and his image hasn't left me since I stood by his deathbed last September. As I stare at this picture, I am transported, in the moment again. Why am I so fascinated...so drawn to him in death? I feel embarrassed—like a ghoul. When no one was looking, both my brother and I took his picture after he died. Somehow, we were both drawn to capture and hold what we saw—but at the same time, we both felt we had to hide the pictures--that people would be pained by seeing them and shocked at our having taken them. Staring at this drawing, as I explore my emotions, I can say now but would have been ashamed to say at the time--I was glad it was over. Returning my attention to my gaze, I feel like I am looking at a death mask. I self-consciously admit that had I come upon this gaunt face on the street, I might very well not even have recognized it as my father's. This is a shell—my father--yet not my father. The spirit has departed. Strangely, though, the image captivates me—and as I look at it, I am at peace. I don't quite know why... There's just something comforting about the stillness, the emptiness... No more struggle to stay alive, no pain, no fear—no...anything. Just quiet. I kind of like it here. I'm not afraid of death right now. I think I'll come back and visit.

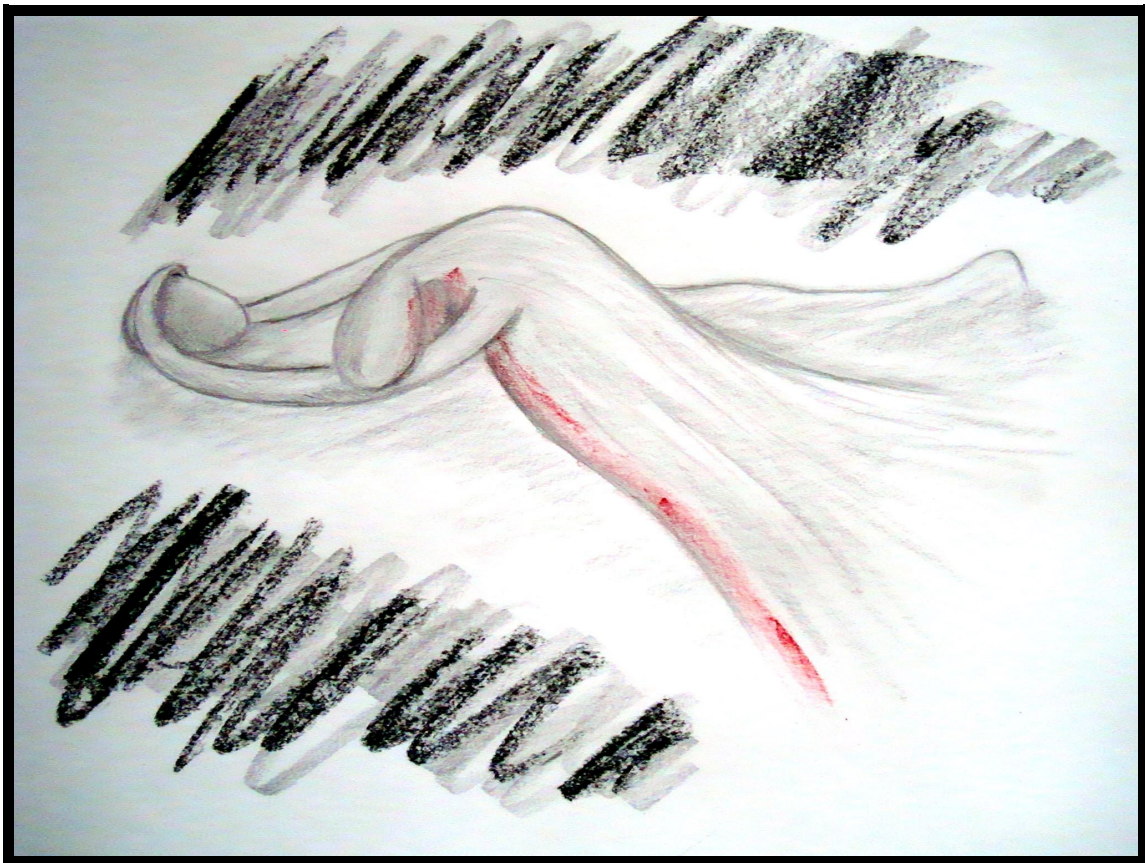
My father's death had been a long, painful journey. I eventually lost count of the number of trips I made from Japan to Arizona to visit him, always fearful that each trip would be the last time I would see him alive. And my saddest recollection of those years is that my father kept clinging to life not for the joy of living, but out of the *fear of dying*. Far from being able to help him be at peace, *I picked up that pain and fear*. But standing at the foot of my dead father's bed, capturing the image, and later, *returning to it through drawing*, I discovered through his passing that for me, the emptiness of death is no longer terrible nor frightening. It simply is. And it holds me,

fascinates me, and even comforts me. When my time comes, it will enfold me. This drawing was cathartic, and continues to act as an anchor. Each time I look it, it quickly transports me to the same fascinating, yet amazingly peaceful place.

So how is this useful to me as a facilitator? The drawing was my way of “burning my own wood” not only around my *father's* death, but around the accompanying fear of my *own* old age, pain, and death. I discovered through it that similar to stream of conscious writing, there exists something like stream of conscious drawing. The process helped free me from some of my “demons” with neither the help of another person nor the use of words. The former is important because people aren't always ready to open themselves to another person, nor do they always have the financial means to obtain professional support. The latter is important, since at the time of the drawing, something in me was strongly opposed to using the verbal channel.

In summary, the experience helped free me from strong emotions that hurt me as a human being and could have caused me to get stuck or even “knocked out” as a facilitator. It also provides me with the potential for a creative method of working with others, should I decide to go in that direction in the future.

But I'm getting a bit ahead of myself. Returning to my own unfolding drawing experience, shortly after this first “dark” drawing “manifested itself,” still under the spell of the encounter, the following drawing emerged:



Holding the Dying

In *Holding the Dying*, the figure holding the dying person (me, of course, but also a role), wants the dying person (my father, but obviously another role) to feel her physical and emotional presence--to transmit warmth, love, and a life energy that lets him know that he is not alone--that he is loved--and that everything is and will be OK--everything is as it should be. Her body seems to be rising toward his legs, extending the physical contact. She is exhausted, possibly momentarily asleep. But while she is awake, she talks to him gently. The single red line running down her body is her pain at losing him and her sadness that he has been in pain and has been afraid to die. The heavy black on the outsides of the image represents night time, as well as the long, peaceful night of death. Along with the sadness she feels is a great deal of love and a

tremendous gratitude that she is there to comfort and accompany her father as far as she can go with him on this final journey.

Not long after these two pictures “drew themselves,” I came across an email inviting participation in an end-of-life care course given by Ingrid Rose, Gary Reiss, and Pierre Morin, three of the Process Work Institute’s faculty. It immediately brought to mind a two-day workshop on aging that I had been fortunate enough to attend while going through what turned out to be my father’s last months. The latter workshop had been given by Herb Long, another Process Work Institute faculty member whose age, life experience, gentle wisdom, and meta-skills had been so helpful to me as I struggled with my father’s pain and approaching death (and the frightening projection I turned on myself).

Moved by the thought of all of these skilled, remarkable people helping others through the last stages of life’s journey, I sent the two drawings to Ingrid, Gary, and Pierre, thanking them for the course they were giving and sharing some of my feelings about my experience. I was touched at their responses, and particularly moved when Ingrid asked if she might share the drawings with some of her end-of-life care students. Of course, my answer was a whole-hearted “yes.” The idea touched me deeply that the drawings and the expression of my feelings could touch others’ hearts and be useful to them as they explored the many emotions of the many roles that accompany us through aging, dying, and care giving.

I have since flirted with the idea of hosting a workshop here in Tokyo on caring for the aging, and of finding a place in it for my drawings--and perhaps the drawings, poems, or other creative expressions of willing participants. Accompanying an aging parent through the last stage of life is not only a topic of great personal interest to me, it

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is also something that is extremely *present* here in Tokyo, where I know many Japanese women caring for their aging parents, as well as non-Japanese “ex-pat” women wishing they could do more for their aging parents back in their home countries. The situations, cultures, and expectations of these women are different, but the human drama remains poignantly similar. However, that workshop remains a vision for the future, and Sniffy and I must first finish this final project. Which again brings me back to my story.

After the first two “dark” drawings, the next drawing that welled up from deep inside me and expressed itself was *I disappointed you*. This drawing exposes my shame at a part of me that desperately wants to please others—to win their approval. She is the fruit of a seed planted over half a century ago in a young child who wanted at all costs to be worthy of her mother’s sacrifices for her children. Out onto the paper poured the desperate collapse, the melting of my soul--my very being--into a shapeless mass at the thought of being a disappointment.

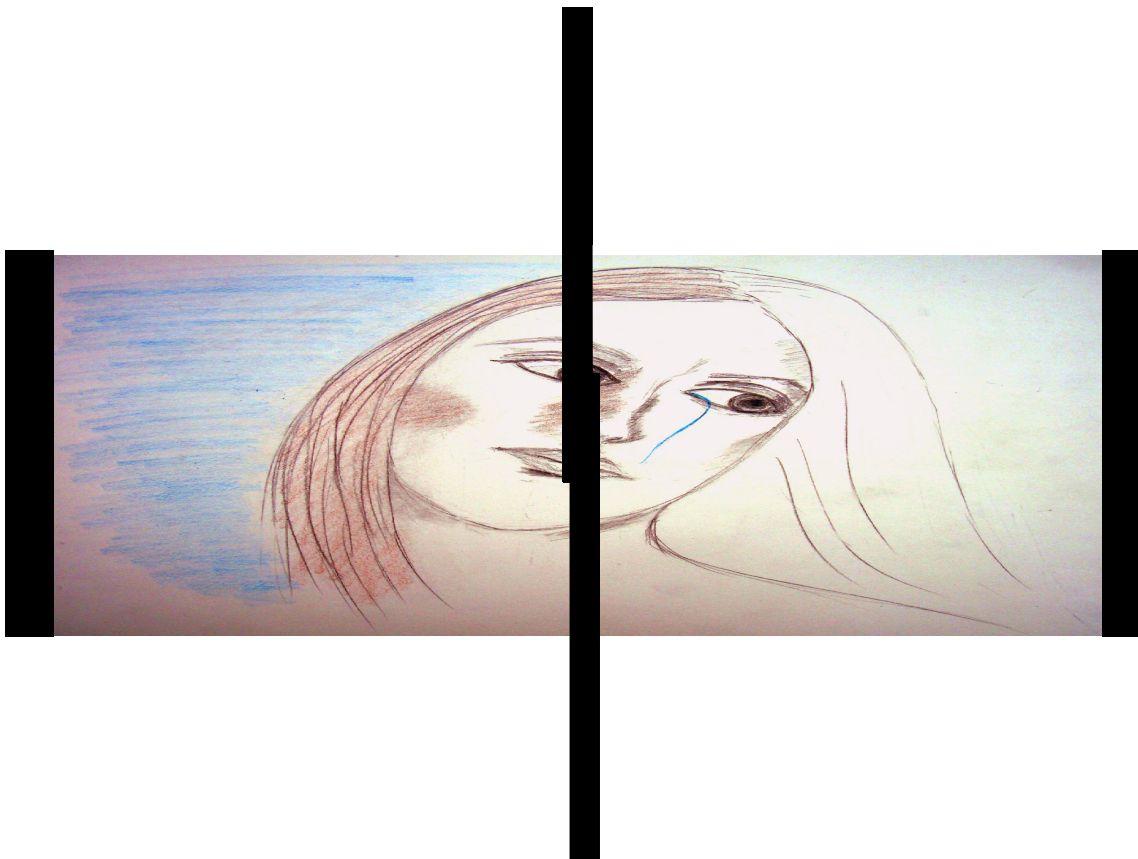
In *I disappointed you*, faceless, bent, my neck exposed as if to the chopping block, I ooze to the ground, a disgusting, worthless puddle. I see the drawing and at the same time that I feel incredible pain, my primary identity stiffens--she is glad that we are generally successful at hiding that repellent Ginger, yet annoyed that the necessity even exists. If only we could annihilate the weakness!



I do give myself considerable credit--over the last few years in particular--for working on that need to please others. In a moment of pride, I can say that I have made tremendous strides in feeling on the inside more like I hope I appear on the outside when I must oppose or disappoint someone. I sometimes even find myself inwardly smiling at my small victories--at how *easy* it can be to stand up for myself and how effective I can be at it. The key for me is a combination of self-love, self-talk, and skill in delivering the message. But as I continue to grow, the drawing remains an anchor that reminds me of where I have come from, where I want to go, and what another person may be feeling--even if it's not readily visible to me or to others.

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Following the shame of my need for approval, the next emotion that emerged was my pain of isolation. On the surface, I am outgoing and I am generally well-liked, but still, there are moments when I feel tremendously alone and it seems like everyone else is “connected.” Even at those times when someone in me *deserves* to be marginalized for poor behavior or has simply been overlooked by others with no hurtful intent, this part of me suffers from a throbbing ache that is so loud, it is crushing. In *Outsider*, this me watches longingly through the window of my eyes, hidden behind the screen of my well-practiced, confident nonchalance.



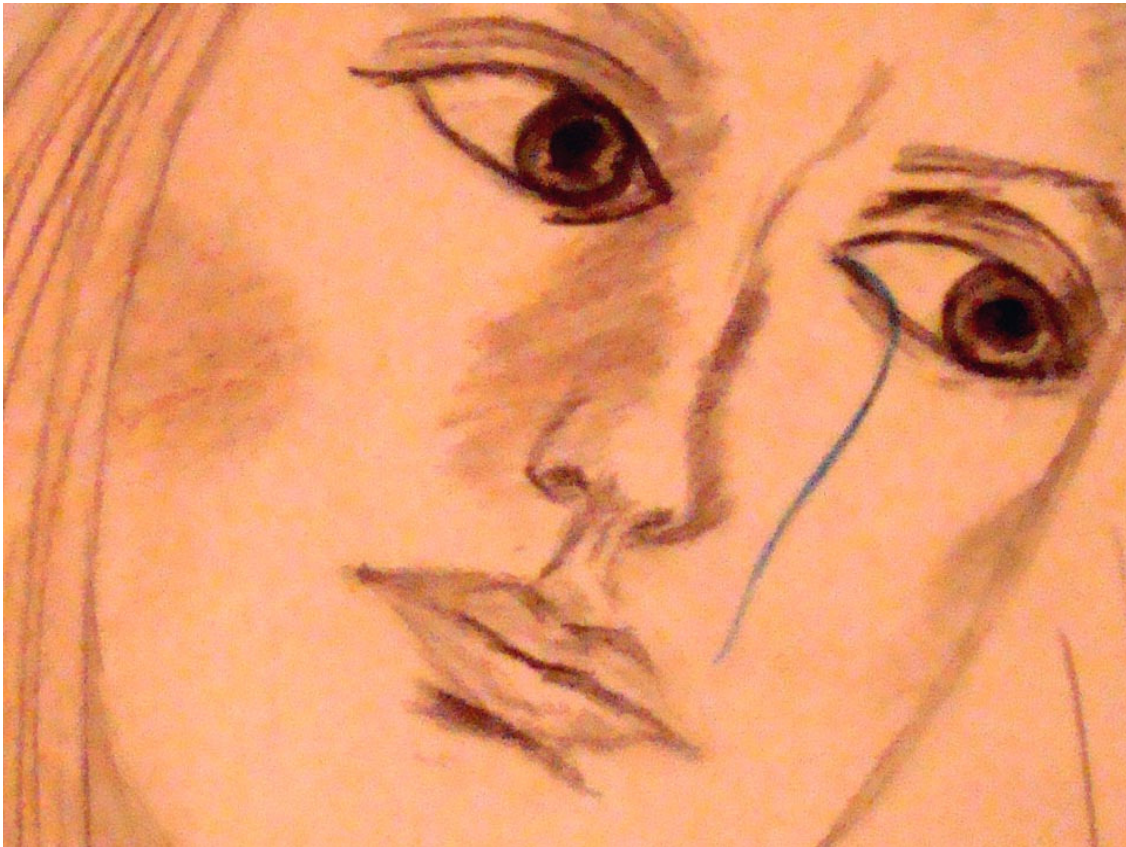
Outsider

Her head is bent, her neck bare and vulnerable. I ask myself why her left side lacks detail, and a voice responds that it's her fading away into the nothing. Her eyes in particular attract me. They seem to stare into space. They are averted--she doesn't

want the others to see her looking at them, longing to be wanted. Pride will not allow that. Yes, it's the eyes that captivate me. In them, a universe of sadness.

Today, as I write about these sad, withdrawn eyes, I notice that I have just described them in the paragraph above as "eyes that captivate me." I am intrigued at why they should fascinate me to the extent that they do. Somehow, I feel a connection to something that I can't quite put my finger on—something about being drawn to my father's face in death. I pause, searching for the connection. Perhaps it is that the dead are also "outside"—outside the community of the living. And yet, I no longer perceive the isolation of death to be painful. In fact, in my father's case, it was just the opposite. The "separation" of death was actually a welcome state of peace. With that thought in mind, I look again at *Outsider* and ask myself, "At times when I discover that I am feeling like I'm isolated--on the outside--and I find it painful, as a Process Worker, can I tap into the role of "the one who is at peace on the outside" and use that grounding to better observe the field and follow the process?" Excitedly, I answer that I think I *can*. I don't have to pick up the pain of a victim's role. Suddenly, I am elated. I feel the power of *Mythic Me*. I am determined that when I feel *distant* (a separation chosen by me) or *distanced* (a separation which seems to be imposed on me by others), with awareness, I can remain grounded and engaged in the process. Not that I choose to forget or ignore the pain that "Outsider" feels. I need the ability to tap into that in order to remain compassionate. But by picking up the peace of *Good-bye* and the power of *Mythic Me*, I will be better prepared to cope with my own emotions, as well as to help others cope with theirs.

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The insistent nudging of a wet little nose reminds me that I have digressed long enough, and to get on with our story. *Outsider*—the tapping into the abyss of isolation-- led me to the crossroads of the physical and emotional worlds. The next drawing that appeared before me was *Alone with my pain*. As the name suggests, it represents the particular isolation that sometimes arises from my *physical* pain. To preface this picture, I should mention that I suffer from herniated disks, spinal degeneration, arthritis, and something akin to fibromyalgia. And as unpleasant as it is for me to admit it (even to myself), sometimes, I am in enough physical pain that I cannot function—it becomes too distracting. I become trapped and lost in it and time has only intermittent meaning for me. It's as if I'm swimming in a silent, slow motion

whirlpool dragging me under. I occasionally break through to the surface and spot the distant shore where some urgent task waits for me, but then I am immediately pulled back into the mind-numbing swirl. When I finally break free, I am ashamed of how much time I've lost and how falling prey to this state affects my ability to get things done.

In *Alone with my pain*, I lie naked, hopeless, withdrawn, curled in a fetal position facing away from the world. Although Process Work has helped my primary identity take a bit softer stance toward this secondary Ginger, for a very long time, she has viewed her as an aberration—a broken thing—something to be hidden. And the more I tried to pretend I could keep up with the rest of the world, the more often--or more dramatically--the disabling physical and mental states appeared.



Alone with my pain

Sniffy Takes a Stand
Ginger Griggs

This drawing represents an important process for me, and one that I have been struggling with for a very long time. As evidenced by my fascination with my father's death, something in me longs to go inside, to retreat, to be left in peace--but it finds itself endlessly pulled back out again, in a constant tug-of-war with "the Achiever"—the Ginger who earns love and confirms her value on this earth through her deeds. I am Prometheus, eternally bound to a rock where a giant eagle eats my liver every day--only to have it grow back to be eaten again and again.

As I read what I have written, I turn and look at Sniffy. "Even you, my little friend, are a 'doer'. The Achiever is not the only one making demands here. Keeping up with *you* also taxes my body."

Fortunately, these days, I have pain medication I can use when I really need it, and in general, I do try to take pretty good care of myself. But to be honest, it's still tough and I still have significant work to do on myself here. I admit that I am *envious* of those who can do absolutely nothing and *still love themselves*. I pause as I write that last sentence, noticing the hard lump that has suddenly appeared in the middle of my chest and the tears that have welled up in my eyes. Part of me envies the peace of death. "Is the message *ever* going to get through to you?" a tired voice asks. "It's 9:30 p.m.," comes the cruel response. "We've been working on this paper all day—and we'll keep at it all night if we have to." I slowly circle my head on my aching neck and forge ahead. Yes, there is still work to be done between the primary and the secondary here....

And then, suddenly, I feel guilty and angry about the preceding couple of paragraphs. My primary revolts at leaving this part of my narrative on such a false note of self-pity. Primary Ginger stands up inside me and accuses Secondary Ginger of

being one-sided, maudlin, wallowing in self-indulgence. “Most of the time we’re *very* happy!” she almost shouts. “How *dare* you paint us in that pitiful style! We have an excellent life! And when we have to push our body hard to meet deadlines it’s *your* fault—yours and Sniffy’s! *You’re* the one who procrastinates and does...whatever it is you do in your slow-motion whirlpool—or whatever--and *he* just wants to play! *Somebody* around here has to take charge—and I *resent* the fact that it’s always me!” (I suddenly recognize my ex-husband in that last remark, and I’m quite shocked. I’ve been wondering where he’s been hiding inside me in these last years. His role has hardly made itself known throughout my entire Process Work experience, and I’ve found that odd. I’m surprised to hear from him and shocked at Primary Ginger’s sudden vehemence. I feel like a pendulum going back and forth between Secondary Ginger, who’s feeling very sorry for herself, and Primary Ginger, who’s ready to help the eagle eat my liver. It’s confusing and a bit frightening. I want to retreat—move on to the next drawing--be anywhere but here! I feel the momentary hatred and the desire to punch Secondary Ginger, and for a moment, I want to cry. And then I look at what I’m writing. I pause, and then I let out a loud and hearty laugh. That’s undoubtedly the most authentic dialog I’ve ever had between those two! Perhaps there *is* hope after all for them to one day come to a mutual understanding. And with a deep understanding, who knows? They might even one day be able to support each other by integrating the peace of my inner world with the pride and pleasure of striving and accomplishing.

Stepping back from the tumultuous dialog above, as well as my potential for the future, looking once again at my drawing and allowing my thoughts to flow freely, I can admit that sometimes, my pain has dulled me to the pain of others. I assumed a kind of psychological rank. (“You may temporarily feel hurt, but you could not possibly know

Sniffy Takes a Stand
Ginger Griggs

what *I* have to endure. You have not been initiated into a pain that does not end, and therefore, I cannot feel all that sorry for you.”) I can *also* admit to quite the opposite—that sometimes my empathy for another person’s pain (be it physical or emotional) could spark the full force of my own pain in me, and I would get stuck--lost in commiseration--no longer able to access the awareness and skills I needed to be truly helpful to that person. Returning to this picture is in many ways an anchor for me--it reminds me of a road still to be travelled, a dialog to be continued, and work yet to be done. It helps keep me on the road toward eldership. I don’t have any plans at the moment to use it in a group session about pain, but I certainly could—I can easily imagine myself using it to open the door for others to feel safe to express their own experiences with pain, as well as for those who come into frequent contact with a chronic pain sufferer to express what that’s like.

Continuing my journey with the “dark” emotions that were emerging on paper, the next drawing to announce itself was *Exploding Emotions*. In it, I found myself reliving the almost unbearable grief and rage I felt for years after my mother’s suicide. I choose at this time not to go into detail about the long, unhappy marriage I felt trapped in at the time of her death. I also choose to keep private the details of my childhood, other than to say that my parents’ relationship was an unhappy one for as long as I could remember, and from a very tender age, I took sides. I idealized my mother and distanced myself from my father, and for a long time after her death, I blamed him alone for what I perceived as both her anguish and my lack of a happy childhood. Having put her on a pedestal, after her suicide, I was all but incapable of admitting to myself that at

moments, I not only hated my father, but hated my mother as well, for *choosing* to take her life and leave me behind to deal with the grief and guilt.

A captive of my beliefs and an adopted value system that demanded unrelenting faithfulness to a commitment once made--and absolute privacy regarding family matters--I shared my torment with no one. At the same time, I desperately wanted to run away from my own long, unhappy marriage. Incapable of doing so and horrified at the thought of wanting my husband to die so I could finally be free without having to take action, I turned, instead, to fantasies of my own death. By day, I was on the surface, an engaged, engaging high school teacher, while inside, I longed for the freedom of not giving to others. And so I remained in my private hell, battered by thoughts and emotions that frequently robbed me of sleep.

As I finish that last sentence, I feel Sniffy rest his head in my lap and look up at me, the curiosity evident in his big brown eyes. “Is there a pattern in these drawings of a desire for withdrawal and the peace of death?” he asks. “And why weren’t you able to *not* give to others if that’s what you wanted?” I’m startled. Sniffy is highly inquisitive when it comes to the world around us, but I’m not used to his internal probing, and in any case, I’m finding myself at an edge. I’m not sure I actually *want* to search inside for the answers right now. “I’m a bit tired, Sniffy. Let’s just move on with our story for now and I’ll think about it. Where did we leave off? Oh, yes. I was in my ‘private hell,’ battered by thoughts and emotions that frequently robbed me of sleep.”

The drawing *Exploding Emotions* recaptured this torment, springing onto the page in a Japanese *manga* (comic book) style.

Exploding Emotions

Here was a Ginger whose emotions were so extreme, so unrelenting and without outlet, that they finally exploded, bursting her organs, tearing open the flesh of her core, and spewing her bloody limbs out into the universe. Poor thing! It took her many years to get up the courage to make decisions in favor of her own happiness--and even when she finally did, she was eaten up with guilt about it.

I look at this picture again, and am drawn in. There is a continuing process going on here that connects my pictures. I pause. Then I warn Sniffy to stand back. I stare into the black, gaping hole of this Ginger and let the explosion happen. “Bahhhhhh!” Then—silence. In contrast to the violence of the explosion, my essence floats aimlessly in the vast black emptiness of space. I am dead, yet conscious—and aware of the peace I am feeling. It’s so...so... (I find I don’t even want to demean it

with an adjective. It is beyond description.) I feel almost giddy. I am so happy. I smile the faint, enigmatic smile of a Buddhist statue--a contentment that is not of this world. I feel so incredibly good--so good that it kind of tickles my stomach. I follow the tickle and it leads to a gently scratching finger. "Come here," whispers the scratching. "Notice this." "Notice what?" I ask. "Notice how you feel, *here* in the lining of your stomach. *Here* is the connection between your *body*, which knows without language, and your rational mind, which merely *tells* you that you need this state. You must *know* this spot. It is a part of you—always there, in the midst of any strife--and you can access it will." I take a deep breath and grin. "I get it! Alright already!" I laugh out loud. It's no coincidence that the same few themes—or facets of the same theme—are weaving themselves throughout this project.

So how am I going to use this awareness? Obviously, I'm going to have to continue working on the integration of "Achiever Ginger," Sniffy (the playful, explorer Ginger), and the Ginger who sometimes just needs peace and quiet.

But there's also *another* way I can use it. I should preface it by mentioning that even after experiencing the recreation of the explosion of myself a moment ago, I realize how *really secondary* the Ginger of *Exploding Emotions* is to my primary of today. That Ginger dates back to a time when I really *believed* I was a victim of my circumstances and that *I could not choose to change* those circumstances. My primary of today finds the beliefs and mental state of that young woman to be so irrational—so *alien*--that she can hardly believe it was ever really me at all. But acknowledging that that young woman *was* me reminds my primary that people aren't stupid or obstinate when they trap themselves--even for long periods of time--in damaging emotional states or beliefs that are detrimental to their own, and possibly, others' welfare. I know from

Sniffy Takes a Stand
Ginger Griggs

experience that the mortar from which these barriers to change are made *isn't* rational thinking. Being able to tap into my own tormented, “trapped” state can help me feel compassion—and hopefully, courage--where I might otherwise be impatient, annoyed, judgmental with somebody, or too intimidated to try interventions outside of my normal comfort zone.

I'm aware that I've digressed again. Sniffy is snoozing in the corner. He lazily opens one eye, looks askance at me and lifts an eyebrow, as if to ask, “Are we moving on with the story yet?” “Yes, yes,” I reply. “But you have to bear with me when I interpret the drawings. Without the interpretation and application to facilitation, our committee will pop this thing right back in our laps. And we don't want that, do we?” Sniffy puts one paw on top of the other and yawns. “OK—get on with it.”

As the drawings emerged one after another, it wasn't long before *Ogress* appeared. She is an unrelenting internal critic who can rob me of my confidence and stop me in my tracks if I let her. She can also turn her ugliness outward, where her suspicions, projections, and unwarranted sharp tongue can wound others, leaving “good Ginger” to deal with the damage done to relationships. Petty, mean, the ogress is downright nasty!

Being conscious of her presence--concretely *seeing* her image--emboldens me to confront her. These days, I quickly recognize her voice behind negative messages which, if allowed to, make me feel small and powerless or prompt me to act in petty, mean ways towards others. And becoming familiar with her has brought me the

awareness of how tremendously much easier it is to tell a *known* voice to shut up and get lost than to fight one that hides behind a hazy fog!



Ogress

I actually think that as an edge figure Ogress stands for more than one voice from my past, and I've found that an advantage of identifying her very concretely as a role is that it's no longer so relevant to determine from *whom* I gleaned a particular attitude or belief—the important thing is to recognize the *role* speaking and allow other Gingers to react effectively. Then, too, just as I can pick up the inner peace in my drawings about death, I can also pick up what is *good* in Ogress. True, she is often unkind, but she is also powerful and fearless about speaking up and taking risks. She also represents high standards and expectations. And because she *is* me, her strength,

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her expectations, her courage and conviction are also *mine*. She-I am *powerful!* In fact, as I write that last statement while looking at Ogress, the image of *Mythic Me* comes to mind—and both Sniffy and I find something a lot more appealing in Ogress. We may just decide to keep her around—as Sniffy suggests, training her not to be quite so abusive, but at the same time, complementing and appreciating her for lending us her power.

Following the appearance of *Ogress* in the growing crowd of “secondary Gingers,” there came an emotionally charged awareness of how much of my “unacceptable self”—or better said, my “unacceptable selves”—I have typically hidden (or at least tried to hide) from others. And judging from the reactions of people to whom I have opened up in varying degrees, I’ve been pretty successful at it. The drawing entitled *Shadows* is the manifestation of those roles lurking behind the mask.

Looking at this drawing and reflecting on my perceived need to hide the imperfect Gingers, I suddenly recalled how duplicitous I had felt in the years following my mother’s suicide. While she tormented me fantasized of dying, what my impressionable high school students saw was a mask--a me driving a sporty car, dressing well, smiling and cheerful, active and seemingly happy. It was an unreal image that some of them compared to the reality of their own and their parents’ lives, and found those realities lacking.

In spite of an occasional heart-to-heart in which I would tell one of these young “fans” that they only saw me during school hours, more or less on my best behavior, I *knew* that without what I determined to be an inappropriate amount of detail for a teacher to share with her high school students, such occasional cautions did little to

dispel the myth of “the one who has it all.” My “shadow side” of highly imperfect secondary identities remained hidden, and it wasn’t until many years later—very notably in my Process Work Master’s program--that I gave these Gingers permission to come out into the light.



Shadows

These days, I’m much more aware that I’m not alone with my “ugly” and “weak” sides—that in general, we live in a world of masks and projections. Knowing that I am not unique in that respect gives me confidence. And a significant step on my road toward eldership is that I’ve learned not only to acknowledge the *existence* of these marginalized parts of myself, but to acknowledge their *contributions*, as well. In each

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of them, there is something good, something that I need, something that I can learn to use wisely. By embracing them, they can enrich my life.

As someone who wants to help *others* as well as herself, I've also learned that it is extremely valuable--when appropriately done--for me to publicly acknowledge my secondaries so that others can feel safe to acknowledge theirs. As a matter of fact, I recently did just that in a two and a half hour interactive presentation/workshop I gave, entitled "Creating your Own Career Path." It was the largest number of participants I have worked with to date, consisting of about 260 members of a bilingual networking organization comprised predominantly of young Japanese professionals. The size of the group and the relatively short length of the session presented interesting constraints. However, I was still able to bring in some of my own life experiences, to integrate them with business information and interactive exercises, and to put a subtle Process Work "spin" on the session.

What particularly relates to this final project is that I shared the following three drawings as individual slides to talk briefly about emotions that come up when we want to or *have* to make a significant change in our lives:



You may notice that I changed the titles somewhat to express the emotions that were most closely aligned to the occasion, but I feel comfortable that the drawings kept their integrity. Admittedly, they were only part of a broader session, but they had a tremendous impact in helping me bring these emotions out into the open—to be able to say in a fairly light-hearted yet sincere way, “Here’s a drawing I made of how *I* felt when I faced that particular challenge....” Each time, the response was a tangible energy ripple throughout the room, accompanied not by hilarity, but by a relieved laughter as people related to these feelings--and the shared response connected people without them having to individually expose their own fears and situations. The feedback to the session was extremely positive, and afterwards, quite a few people came up to me and spoke very personally about what they were currently going through. I was particularly touched by one older Japanese gentlemen who spoke to me about having recently been laid off, and one young Japanese woman who asked, “Did you see that I had tears in my eyes when you were speaking?”

I have presented twice on different topics to this particular networking organization, and have been asked if I would be willing to come back again in the coming year. I will definitely do that, and will be prepared at that time to offer one or more smaller, lengthier follow-up workshops where I can employ more in-depth Process Work techniques.

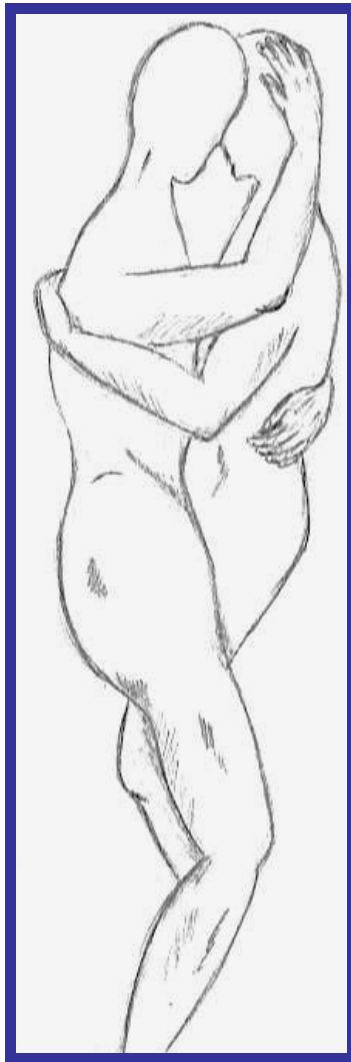
Reemergence

A loud bark from the corner brings me back to my “creation” story. Several weeks of “drawlessness” followed *Shadows*, and when I was again impelled to pick up

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my drawing pencil, the tenor of the next picture was strikingly different from the darker images I had been drawing. It was the beginning of my journey back from the depths of an anguished soul to the world of sunlight and interaction.

I found myself suddenly struck with the desire to create an image that represented to me an experience I had had working with a young man from India who had sought me out for advice about his love life. When he came to me, he was finding himself caught in a difficult love triangle. On one side were his traditional Indian parents, who were expecting their *only* son to marry *soon* to an *Indian* girl of *their* choosing. On the second side was his *Japanese* girlfriend, who wanted to marry him and was pushing him to meet her parents. On the third side was the young man's own internal struggle, in which he felt strong filial responsibility, uncertainty about his feelings towards his girlfriend, pressure from *both* sides, questions about the nature of love in general and what part it would play in his future happiness, and finally, fear of speaking openly and honestly about *any* of this to *any* of the parties. After a couple of lengthy, intimate conversations with this young man, the drawing *Love of Other, Love of Self* came to life:



Love of Other, Love of Self

As I began drawing what started out to be my own interpretation of deep love for a significant other, feeling my pencil sculpt the lines of first one body—and then another—I noticed how similar the figures were. In fact, as they emerged fully, they appeared to be androgynous mirror images, and I suddenly realized that the drawing had *two* meanings—on one hand, yes, it represented a deep love for another person, but it *also* represented the deep *self-love* that every individual should be encouraged to nourish—and which has for most of my life been very secondary to me.

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Just as in my own case, the marginalization of self-love was evident in my young Indian client's case and is prevalent here in Japan, where even today, self-sacrifice is more or less the expected norm. *Love of Other, Love of Self* serves as an anchor for me both in striving for balance in my own thoughts and conduct, and in helping others to do the same.

After *Love of Other, Love of Self* came *PET "Machine gun fire,"* a flashback to a defining experience I had had during my cohort's fourth of six residencies. In spite of its deceptively static appearance, this sketch of a plastic PET bottle actually represents an undertone of repressed violence in the field, and is a superb anchor for me when I begin to doubt my Process Work abilities. In setting the scene for this sketch, I must digress a bit by first mentioning that my cohort was exceptionally driven, and our lust for learning resulted in residencies characterized by long, sedentary hours--a combination of required class time and *additional* practice sessions organized by the students ourselves. Our days extended from early morning till evening, and were filled with frequent periods of high emotion. I was constantly torn between my desire to keep up with the others and my body's extremely painful reaction to the stress I was imposing on it. Finally, no longer able to endure the physical pain, I acquired a prescription for an anti-inflammatory and went to the nearby Fred Meyer's pharmacy to pick it up.

I handed in my prescription and waited...and waited...and waited. Others were waiting too, and I could sense that I wasn't the only one getting edgy. Music blared through the store's speakers, and I found myself rather unconsciously listening to it. And then, I noticed a different sound—a different rhythm—a kind of hollow, insistent,

overtly aggressive drumming. I looked around and noticed the source. It was a man leaning on a nearby shelf and tapping an empty PET bottle on it with the explosive energy of rapid machine gun fire. It was the sound of barely repressed rage. As a student of Process Work, I approached him and started to chat, watching his signals, reacting to them, “casually” asking him questions, *listening*, and doing my best to empathetically employ my budding Process Work skills. Within a few minutes, out-poured experiences of the Vietnam War, his much more recent loss of work in the construction industry, his economic downward slide and increasing isolation from family, friends, and eventually, society at large. This long wait for his prescription, without care or acknowledgment for the inconvenience, was one more in a long line of insults to his humanity. As we talked, I could see and *feel* him relax and regain his emotional balance. When his name was finally called to pick up his prescription, he was actually *disappointed* to leave! We had connected. And I was for the first time convinced that *I am a Process Worker—I can do this!* I was elated—walking on air—and for a short time my joy totally eclipsed my own physical pain. This simple, not particularly skillful sketch of a PET bottle is a reminder to me not only of that experience, but of the power of a profound sense of purpose—the joy of helping others--to be tempered only by the need to take care of myself.

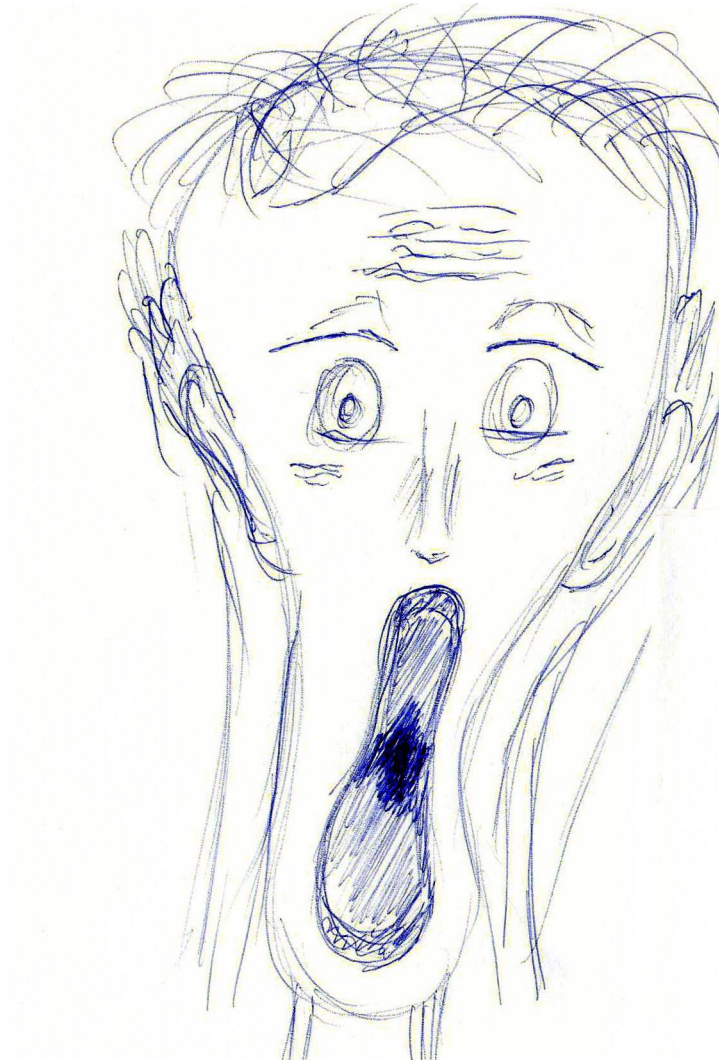


PET “Machine gun fire”

Before continuing, I pause and wonder how Sniffy is doing. I’ve been writing a lot and his patience is drawing thin. I look over at the corner where he’s been sleeping, only to find it empty--and then I notice him near my right shoulder, looking at the PET bottle. “That was a *cool* adventure,” he remarks with a grin. “Yeah,” I say, returning

the grin. “I agree. And I think *you* carried the ball on that one. How come we weren’t afraid to go over to that guy?” Sniffy sits back on his haunches and a moment passes in silence. “I think,” he says, drawing his words out—“I think it’s because *that man is us*. As you said in the story, we connected.” I’m momentarily blown away by the depth of his awareness. Sniffy is right! That man *is* me! I’m beginning to really *believe* the Process Work concept that there is no emotion I can sense in another human being, no role that another human being picks up, that I cannot in some way relate to in myself. “Man, Sniffy! I’m *really* impressed by what you just said! And *now* I understand where our next drawing sprang from!”

In *No more!*, by using myself as the model, I wanted to depict what I had connected with in the man from the pharmacy—what it *feels* like to be overwhelmed and not be able to take anymore. I wanted to sketch that Ginger who can lose her normal ability to cope, to think calmly and rationally, to put things into perspective and find solutions (or failing in the latter, to find at least peace and confidence in accepting that there is *something* for her in whatever process is taking place). The sketch *No more!* represents that *role* who is overcome and desperately needs help, but whose huge momentary negative, aggressive energy is likely to drive others away if they feel free to flee and make them terribly uncomfortable if they feel they must stay put.



No more!

There is something closely akin to *Exploding Emotions* in this sketch, but when I drew it, I was in a much more curious, observing, less pained mode than I had been during my “dark” period drawings. Even so, there is a surreal quality about it, with its elongated, wavy head, its mouth that seems to scream an agonized “noooo!” and its saucer-like eyes that seem almost to be filling with...what? Tears of frustration? Anguish? Panic?

This is me, but there's something very universal about it. If I were to show it to the man in the pharmacy, *he* would understand. And when I showed it as part of my final project presentation, one of my fellow students came up to me and told me--referring to *herself*--that she knew who the inspiration was. I *like* this sketch for its powerful portrayal of that moment when, like a rubber band that has been stretched too far--I snap! This role is a call for help. It is a momentary "mini-breakdown" that serves as a warning of something far more ominous if not tended to. The theme of balance, of needing to care for myself has returned. "Take heed!" this image warns me. "Thank you," I reply, bowing my head slightly in the Japanese style to which I have become accustomed. "I am still learning to listen with integrity to the message, but I am truly trying. And understanding you gives me courage to work with others as they pick up the role."

"Hmmm," I hear myself say. "How do I proceed from here? I need a transition to the next paragraph." "Shall we take a break?" Sniffy asks hopefully. His suggestion makes me aware of some achiness my primary has been doing her best to ignore in my back and hips. I badly want to finish this paper quickly now. It is mostly written, and I am editing and filling in the gaps. I stare at my computer screen for a moment, noticing guiltily how dark the room has gotten while I've been sitting in this chair. "How can you *possibly* ignore what you just wrote in the paragraph above?" asks Sniffy. "OK. You're right," I answer. "I used the word *integrity* in that paragraph, and that's a word that means a lot to me. Let's take a short break, and then we'll start fresh on the next sketch...."

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Although I can't honestly remember now what prompted the sketch, *won't*, *can't*, *shouldn't speak*, I am acutely aware that it is a return to the theme of wanting to hide from the world my internally marginalized roles and the things those roles think and feel. In this sketch, two faces (both me, of course) present themselves in a kind of Siamese twin effect. The one on our left is the "outer Ginger," whose gag is invisible to others, and the one on our right is the "inner Ginger," whose gag is apparent. Interestingly, *both* Gingers have their eyes closed--perhaps because although they may appear to *others* to look *outwardly*, in actuality, they look *inwardly*, asking themselves what would happen to them if they were to say what they *really* think and feel.



won't, can't, shouldn't speak

No Third Parties

As I look the two faces, I suddenly feel Sniffy's eager nudging —“Go ahead! Pick up your power! Take the risk--*not* with the intention of being hurtful, but of being honest and of creating relationships that are built on trust. Yes, it's scary at first, but it gets easier.” I sit back in my chair and ponder for a moment. “So this is a personal challenge to myself to become more vulnerable—and paradoxically, more *powerful*--by exposing more of myself. Got it.”

Not only is this a personal challenge to myself, it is a challenge to me as a Process Worker to help others do the same—particularly here in Japan, where the standards of a socially acceptable façade are both rigorous and as crucial as a shell is to a turtle. As a facilitator, this image challenges me to hone my powers of observation, to look for signs that others might be holding back, and to improve my meta-skills and my use of bold interventions, where necessary, to help others speak up.

A companion sketch of *won't, can't, shouldn't speak*, and one that followed pretty quickly on its heels, is *Do I pick up the pearls?*. With a return of some of Sniffy's initial exuberance and humor, this is a rather tongue-in-cheek look at my still somewhat less than perfect ability to embrace feedback *regardless* of the manner in which it is given or how much it challenges my primary identity. I mention it as a companion piece to *won't, can't, shouldn't speak*, since it also reminds me that in the vignette that follows, I didn't “return the favor” of having been given feedback by sharing with the giver how that feedback came across to me.

The sketch in question depicts an incident in which I had just given a one-day training on effective time management. The course, which I have facilitated a number of times in different multinational corporations in Tokyo, is in English, and although its

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contents are standardized, facilitators are given considerable latitude in how they deliver the material.

As it turns out, the bilingual Japanese HR person who had hired me on this particular occasion was certified to give the same training in Japanese and was interested in certifying in English as well. (“Ah-ha,” says a little voice inside me—“a competitor.”) He sat in the back of the room all day observing my course, and when we debriefed at the end of the day, he proceeded to tell me about all the *great* things he had developed for the Japanese course and how *I* could improve *my* course by following his lead. On one level, I do believe this man’s intentions were good, but on another, I couldn’t shake the patronizing, “better-than-thou” attitude I attributed to him, and it ruffled my feathers and made me feel defensive. (I pride myself on being an excellent course facilitator, and I must admit that my primary identity was offended by the thought that this man might perceive me as “less than great.” What’s worse, with a bit of distance, I can admit that my primary identity was *also* threatened by the thought that there might be some *truth* in his perception that I lacked greatness—at least on that particular occasion.)

When I got home, I drew *Do I pick up the pearls?* As you will certainly notice, dear reader, just as in *won’t, can’t, shouldn’t speak*, I have two faces: one superficially “glad” to hear this man’s advice, and another--the internally censored one--who resents it.

In the sketch, I am small—disproportionately small—a child or dwarf compared to the giant “preacher” who looms over me, casting his pearls of wisdom into the basket that I pretend to hold out appreciatively. But I am *two* people in this one tiny body, and one of them is definitely not happy.



Do I pick up the pearls?

As I look at this picture, part of me is amused and pretty tolerant of my human weakness. I'm a work in progress, after all, and at least I am aware of my prideful resistance to objectively evaluating the content of the other facilitator's feedback. At the same time, I give myself a small pat on the back for *ultimately* having taken a couple of his suggestions to heart and having incorporated them quite successfully--in my own way--into my facilitation of this course.

And then, in the midst of my levity and momentary self-tolerance, Ogress appears. "You're repeating yourself," she accuses. "The same themes keep appearing. The reader has undoubtedly noticed and is losing interest." "Yes, I know about the repetition," I respond, "but through it, something has happened to me. I'm *really feeling* the impact of those themes--in every fiber of my being. I'm somehow *different*."

Sniffy Takes a Stand
Ginger Griggs

I'm suddenly aware of feeling embarrassed, and I see Ogress raising an accusing eyebrow and looking at me with the disdain she feels for zealots. In a headlong rush, keeping her in my peripheral vision, I blurt out, "Maybe helping myself and others deal with those themes will be my greatest gift to Process Work--to be able to embrace everything that makes me human—the "ugly" as well as the "beautiful"—to explore what those roles in me have to say and then encourage others to do the same—maybe *that's* what I'm meant to give to the world." I turn to Ogress with a defiant pursing of my lips and tears of pride in my eyes. "There, I said it. And I'm not taking it back!" I feel something warm leaning up against me. I look down, and there is Sniffy beside me, wearing little red boxing gloves. A tail excitedly thumps the floor.

Chapter 3: “Drawing” to a Close

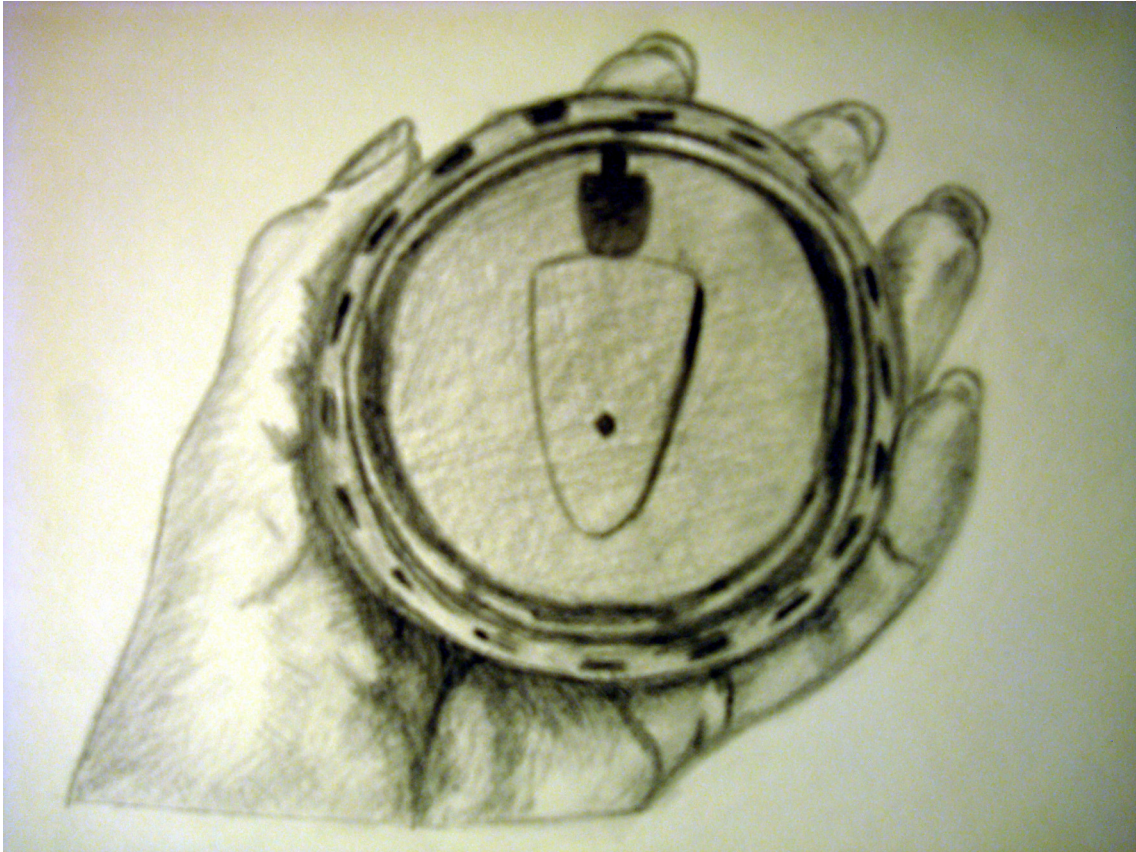
*"He then learns that in going down into the secrets of his own mind
he has descended into the secrets of all minds."*

--Emerson

I am again lost in reverie, taken back in time. It is our last residency and I am exhausted. It is late at night, but thoughts of the day swirl around my head like a swarm of bees, making sleep impossible. I am alone in the tiny kitchen of the youth hostel where many of my fellow students are staying. I am quietly fixing a cup of tea in my own tall, insulated cup that has faithfully provided me throughout these many months with warm liquid and some of the familiar comfort I imagine *Peanuts*' Linus finds in his blanket.

Tonight, the plastic top smells of the coffee I've had inside the cup. Although I've washed it several times, I can't get the smell or the faint coffee taste out, and now I want *tea*. The thought passes through my tired head that the plastic in the top has absorbed what it came into contact with and made it part of itself. With a shock, it hits me that *this stinky plastic top is me!* (What did Arny³ say earlier today? Oh, yes, "You can *never, ever* meet something in life that *isn't* you. Even if it's *awful*.")

³ Reference to a class Arny Mindell gave at the Process Work Center on May 29th, 2009.



Coffee, the Plastic Top, and Me

I continue to stare at the top in my hand. Like it, as I was growing up, *I* absorbed my environment—everything I ever came in contact with and everyone I ever knew. It all oozed into my pores and became part of the fabric of my being. It permeated “my plastic.” And at the moment, I am *hating* part of what I absorbed. I lean my head back and look at the ceiling with tears in my eyes. I feel weak, lacking in courage, sometimes so afraid to speak directly and risk confrontation—risk *breaking* something—something fragile--inside myself, inside the other person, inside our relationship—as if everything were made of delicate glass, and I can’t risk touching it. I *hate* my weakness! I hate it! I hate it!

Then, from deep inside me, I feel a presence--a small, sad voice. “Don’t hate and reject me! I am you.” After an edgy moment of trying to access my Process Mind,

I breathe deeply and let myself go. My head becomes filled with the sound of ocean waves. The tension flows out of my body with the sound of the receding tide. What did Army say of himself today? “I am neither wild nor quiet. I am the ocean.” I pause, looking down at my hand. True, I *am* like this “smelly” plastic top. I am a composite of *all* that I have ever encountered, wreaking of “odors,” some of which I would rather not have. But I am not *defined* by any of them. I am neither cowardly nor brave--I am human--the embodiment of *all* the attributes of our collective human experience.

A few moments pass. I look at my drawing and ask myself, how am I going to make this useful as a facilitator? I think that the plastic top will be an anchor, a dream door into my Process Mind at those times when I’m feeling afraid to “break the fragile glass.” It will remind me that I am strong just as much as I am weak. That even when I sense or imagine the other person’s vulnerability—they are also strong—and if I forget that, I’m underestimating them. Lastly, if someone is willing to work on a relationship with me by our both saying the things that are hard to say, then that relationship cannot fail. And if the other person is *not* willing to do that, then that’s *their* process. Either way, I will absorb the experience into the fabric of my being. I need only remember that as I weave the fabric, the quality and color of the thread I use is always *my* choice.

“Art is a form of catharsis.”
--Dorothy Parker

These days, I continue to sketch and to draw, although not as intensively as when this final project began, and I no longer feel compelled to draw my deepest anguish. The drawing process that Sniffy, my rebellious, joyous little secondary identity initiated on a whim has turned out to be profoundly cathartic, and in helping me

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confront my pain, he has helped me embrace my marginalized sides. If those were its only justifications, I could still recommend drawing to Process Workers as a way of working on themselves.

***“A few observations and much reasoning lead to error;
many observations and a little reasoning to truth.”***

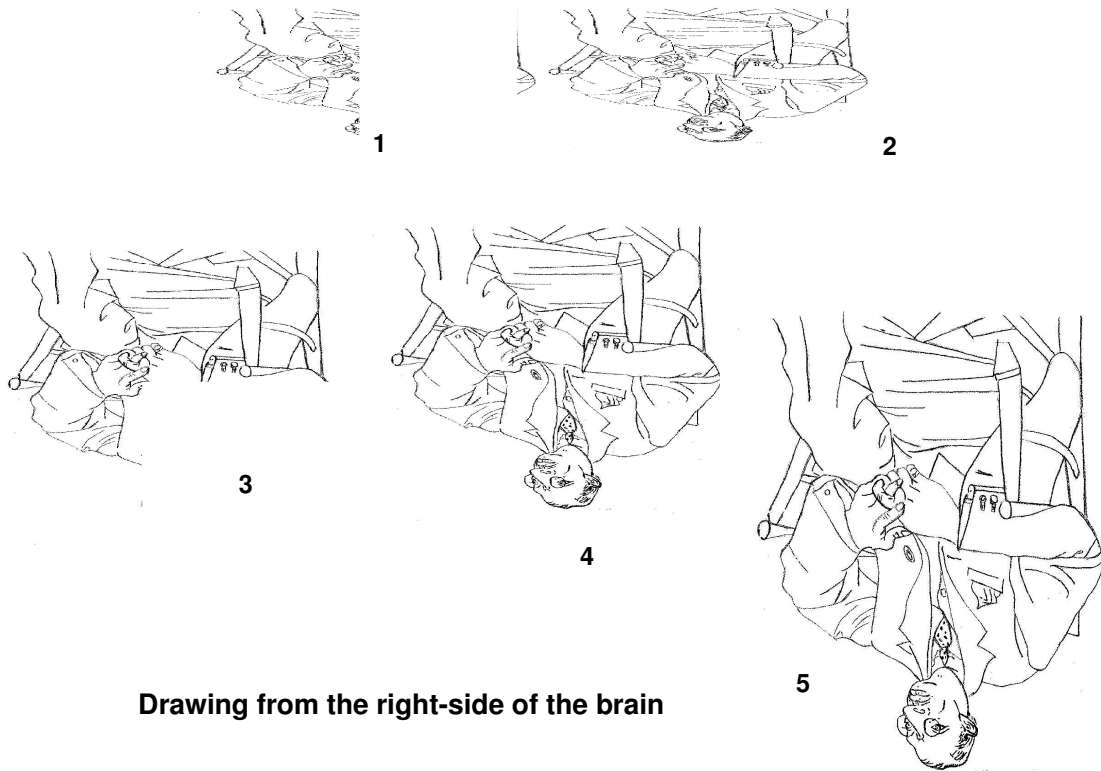
--Alexis Carrel

But in addition to providing a unique avenue for inner work, to my delight, drawing is molding me into a much more skilled observer, sharpening my ability to see what's *really* there instead of what my mind *assumes* is there. Just as an experienced Process Worker quickly picks up the secondary signals that others miss, through drawing, I am learning to look *beyond*--to see *more*, and to see it *more quickly*.

As Fate, the Tao, Serendipity, or Chance would have it, part way through my final project, I was helped along the path of observation by being given the opportunity to participate in a right-brain drawing workshop. The instructor was a talented artist and gifted teacher who can take even the clumsiest scribblers and bring out the artist in them. The workshop was short; its impact long, and months later, Sniffy is still too excited about it *not* to include mention of it here.

One of the drawings that Sniffy and I created in that class resulted from an exercise in which we were instructed to copy the line drawing of a man sitting in a chair. Granted, that's *not* a particularly radical exercise—except that we were to disassociate ourselves from our preconceptions about what we were copying by turning the figure *upside down* and without questioning what we were seeing, painstakingly

reproduce it. I followed the instructions to the best of my ability, and the results astonished me!



Drawing from the right-side of the brain

When I turned my work right-side up, it was amazingly close to the original!

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Original



Copy

So again, how is this relevant to Process Work? It boils down to perception and preconception. Because of my preconceptions, had I just picked up a pencil and paper and tried to draw this man sitting in his chair, I would have failed miserably. (“As proof,” chimes in Sniffy mischievously, “just look at some of our other sketches!”) What bowled me over in this exercise was how accurately I was able to see what was in front of me, and to capture it in drawing, by just *taking in* everything I saw without trying at the same time to mold it into *my* framework, *my* view of *what* things were and *how* they related to each other. It was an interactive exercise that resulted in a huge “Ah-hah!” for me. In short, it moved me from *rational acceptance* to *emotional commitment* to the concept that, “If we reserve judgment, set aside our preconceived notions, and use our “Beginner’s Mind,” we will see a whole new reality.”

Thinking of that new mindset, I actually have to laugh when I recall one of my last late nights during our final residency. I was still doggedly trying to prepare for exams. Sitting on my bed, I was “beavering away” at my computer, when I looked up and spotted the lamp on the night stand next to my bed.



And then I saw *it*—the *other* reality in my lamp:



Dreamland

I was so excited, I immediately grabbed my camera to capture the moment. (Again, I have to laugh. I was suddenly like a little kid—“oh, oh, look at that! *Look* at that! That’s so *coool!*”) Inside the yellow lamp was *a whole other world*—a tiny lamp inside a light yellow volcano shape; a protruding half circle lying on its back; and even a *nose* in the neck of the lamp! That’s when it hit me. I am *not* the same person I was before I started to draw. I was always curious and alert to the world around me, but now, I am a hundred times more open and receptive to the quick whispers and fleeting glimpses of “Dreamland”. Whereas before, I unconsciously waited for “flirts” to come to me, now--just as the 13th century mystic poet Rumi held open the door and ushered emotions in--I am actively *looking* for flirts, *beckoning* them to reveal themselves to me.

And they register on my brain! I am *consciously* aware of them. “And *that*,” adds Sniffy imperiously, “is a measure of a *true* Process Worker.”

I turn to him and we both grin. “And on *that* note, Sniffy, I think we should say goodbye to the reader. We’re done—finito, finished, free.” There is the slightest quivering, hopeful flicker in the tip of his tail. “Yeah?” he says, leaning his head provocatively to one side. “Yeah,” I answer. “So, how do you feel?” (I am expecting an excited “Woof!” and an invitation to go out and explore. But to my surprise, the atmosphere has suddenly changed. It’s as if somebody suddenly sucked the energy out of the air.) There’s obviously something going on here, but I have no idea what happened. I backtrack mentally to the last place before the atmosphere changed--my question—how Sniffy felt. “Yes...?” I say slowly, leaning slightly forward, elongating the word and adopting what I hope is a supportive tone. Silence. And then, “I’m definitely glad it’s finally over. But I had the drawings done months ago. *Your* part—the *words*—were what held us up. This thing took forever...and it’s gotten *soooo* long!” I clearly recognize the accusation about all the time I took, but I’m sensing something else here. I’m just about to say something when I notice a slight droop of Sniffy’s ears and a lowering of his head. Quietly, he adds, “And now--the drawings get lost in all the words. We even left a few of them out because you’re too tired to talk about them.” I feel tears well up in my eyes and a lump suddenly appears in my throat. I *love* this little guy, and I’m afraid that maybe I *did* betray him.

“Sniffy, I’m so sorry! You’re right--I *did* let the words carry me—us--away. And maybe some people *will* pay more attention to them than to the drawings.” (I was feeling so good a moment ago, and now I’m so sad and wondering what I can say or do to make things right.) “I love you, Sniffy. And the drawings are precious to *both* of

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us--we *don't* have to imprison them in this final project. We can make a book just of *them* if you want. No words. We can put them on the walls. We could put them on the Internet and share them with the world and ask people everywhere to *use* the drawings in whatever way they want to, as long as they're trying to touch the hearts of others."

Sniffy raises his bowed head just a little and looks at me through the tops of his eyes. I recognize with relief that a bit of his usual gleam is returning. I pause for a moment and then gently continue. "But can I ask you—truly—were there ever *any* times at all when you enjoyed the writing part—even just a little? We both know there were explanations I added just to meet the requirements, but sometimes...." My voice trails off as I find myself having difficulty confessing the "awful" truth. Almost afraid to look him in the eye, I gather up my courage and blurt out, "Sometimes, I actually *enjoyed* the writing. And I was *elated* at Stephen's enjoyment when he read it out loud over the phone. I *loved* that he loved it! (I have tears in my eyes again, and I'm not quite sure what's happening inside me as my words come tumbling out. And then it hits me—I'm feeling vulnerable and guilty that Primary Ginger at times *enjoyed* what we had agreed to hate. And now, *she wants Sniffy to love and accept her anyway.*)

There's a hush in the room. Our eyes meet, but for a moment, neither of us says a word. And then Sniffy breaks the silence. "I guess there were moments when I actually *did* like telling our story—especially the parts where you brought me in--and the humorous parts—I liked those, too. They kind of made me feel like Dr. Seuss." (Ah, common ground—the "Doc.") I cautiously grin. "And maybe we actually *did* find out some new stuff about ourselves by having to 'sit in this damn fire' of a final paper."

The mood changes. There's excitement in the air. I let out a huge sigh. Again, the tears, but this time of relief and happiness. I smile, suddenly recalling what Stephen

told me about *the process*. “When you say you’re following your process, you have to remember that it’s not just the process happening *inside* you—it’s the *whole* process you’re a part of.” I pause, and for a moment, jumbled thoughts float willy-nilly through my head—my history, the school’s requirements, the support of my committee members, my Process Work classes, Sniffy, me, my fellow students, strife and growth, and where I go from here. A parade of words marches across the page like the circus coming to town—sadness, exuberance, submission, rebellion, struggle, resentment, creativity, awareness, connecting, disconnecting, integrating.... The parade goes on. The *process* goes on. That grand and wonderful thing called life goes on. As I ponder what I’ve written, I’m suddenly aware that I’ve placed one finger over my lips. The “schuss” sign, I notice with a grin. Enough words. Time to wrap things up.

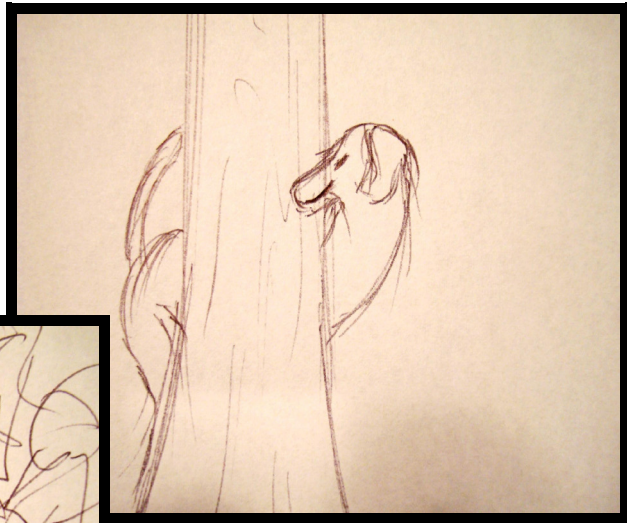
“How should we close, Sniffy?” I ask as we start down our imaginary road into the imaginary sunset, in a happy shoulder-to-shoulder trot. “With me, of course,” he replies. “*I’m* the one who took the stand that got us started.” I’m sublimely contented to agree. “Take it away, Buddy!”

“The way I see it, life is like an incredibly big, incredibly tasty meat bone. You’ve got to *bite into it* to know what it *really* is! You’ve got to play with it, explore it, savor it! So my advice to everybody—you included—is: Go ahead and bite! Keep trying new things! Keep challenging your edge figures and going over your edges. Make mistakes—the world won’t crumble! Just think of mistakes as teachers.” With a twinkle in his eye, he adds, “And you’ll be amazed at how far you can get your primary identity to go if you don’t give up on her!”

“I love you, Sniffy!”

“You always get the last word,” he replies with a grin.

**Go out there
and make
messes!**



**Messes
are good!**