

CREATIVE ARTS COMPANIONING IN COCONSTRUCTION OF MEANINGS

Warren Lett

First published 2016
Text © Dr. Warren Lett

Participant Coauthors:

Raelean Hall, Jenni Harris, Jean Blyth, Nona Cameron, Bernadette Healy, James Edney

Published by Dr. Warren Lett
Email: warrenlett@bigpond.com
Phone: 0408 304 110
www.drwarrenlett.com
Miecat website: miecat.org.au
or call (03) 9486 9081

Cover Image: Raelean Hall
Graphic Design & Editing: Angela Shi

Author: Lett, Warren R.
Title: Creative Arts Companionship in Coconstruction of Meanings
ISBN: 9781367514850
Subjects: Meaning (Philosophy)
 Psychology
 Counselling
 Arts
 Health
Dewey Number: 158.1

This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of study, practise, research, criticism, review or otherwise permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Enquiries should be made through the author.



Front and Inside of Nona's Match Box in Response to Warren's Poems

The Brown Leaves Dialogue

brown leaves
cover me
hold me-

I am immersed
in you-

you were green
once-

but you grew
and matured
and formed
and held the space-

where I became
a we-

and we were shed
blowing in the breezes
and winds of natural
forces-

finding each other
becoming companions
creating meanings
in being-

finding the aesthetic
everywhere-

in every moment
of ordinary being-

living the surprise
and mystery-

of the power of sensing
and knowing-

the who and the what
and the how
of our inquiry-

and the reception
given back
by the brown leaves
of maturity and meaning

as they fall and cover us-
you are the poetry of our
being

-Warren

A Dialogue Between Nona and Warren

Nona sent the following reflection, plus a small surprise box. These materials made the bases of our following interactions and dialogue.

Nona's Reflection

Was it a month or six weeks ago that I wrote to you, to tell you of my circumstances – events needing my urgent response. A lot of time had raced by since I received your work. I remember then, how, after telling you this, a tremendous stillness settled within.

Having sat that morning reading and re-reading your poems, I was curiously affected by them. Your words struck chords within, like a window, harp brimming with cold breeze. It was early winter, trees were surrounded by skirts of leaves, and it was raining fiercely cold outside. Though I was nestled on a soft warm couch, feeling internal and cosy, I was aware of a landscape of loss nearby, close within reach, shuddering distance away. Suddenly my own depleted form felt the powerful inertia that clings a stone to soil.

Immersing in your poetry, I thought of the sincere way that you make time and space for another, so that they can blurt out or stumble over the thing that bothers. And how your words chime with the rhythm of that meeting, acknowledging the thing unsaid or unprovoked.

From this collection I returned to, more than others, *Insubstantiality*, *The Grandfather from a Distance*, and *The Brown Leaves Dialogue*. Your words, I could feel visually, as images arising through embodied interaction, that led to various terrains outside of my momentary cosiness.

Returning to my matchbox reflections from a few years ago, I looked to see if one of these might hold qualities or elements from your words, so that I may re-purpose it for this occasion. The little dioramas were originally made as responses and reflections from a daily creative practice. They captured what stood out from each day over a year, carrying embodied pre-reflective knowings, with reflective queries, caught in the moment of making.

They carry meaningful relational encounters from my way of being in the world, not unlike the way of your poetry and haikus. I've found their significance goes beyond their original intention, how they are both specific and universal concurrently as little boxes of ambiguous paradoxes. They are not only my stories.

I liked the idea of using my past reflective pieces to meet your past reflective pieces, to then see what might arise from these interactions. The process content, as well as our preferred ways of creatively engaging, meeting to find what's new. It feels poetic to me, and produces internal smiles that I interpret as rightness of fit.

Every time I looked again through a chosen pile of matchboxes, one leapt out at me, adding touches to give singular significance. It was perhaps akin to honing a poem, altering word orders, adding or removing lines, or phrases. I recall on that day, my response to you would have been kinetic rather than sculptural. I had wanted to go into the street and cover myself with brown, red and golden leaves that had fallen, but it was raining and fiercely cold, so I didn't just then, using instead the box for this purpose.

Interruptions from another crisis, a court hearing and medical appointments then took me away and interstate again and again. Even more time has passed since that day when I wrote the email and found the matchbox. Some things have continued to hold me back.

In my travels I've borrowed your image of the brown leaves that cover us, being with impermanence, the faintest momentary impression as it washes over me, and the inescapable burden to wear the remnants of the inner chaos.

I feel tears not yet shed stinging, caught at my throat- will they melt away more than I can bear? Tears that release the tension of emergency, averted. The connectedness and belonging to a flawed humanity flowing within, grateful to be able to respond to requests of urgency. And through this one, I can collect myself, lick precious scars though living and loving compassionately.

Warren's Response

Nona's extensive dialogue touched and connected over time in so many ways. My first reflection was found from the deepest level of our shared experiencing.

The Flow of Continuities

piles of matchboxes and poems
histories of our meanings and past
reflexivities, now felt as our sensed
truths

trees skirted by leaves
yielding brown floods washing over
the recurrent floating burdens

tears melting away, needing to respond
to current urgencies, striking chords
within
landscapes of loss, words unsaid,
felt visually

through the scars
and embodied tensions of knowing
queries held in moments of meaning making
moving and touching
things unsaid and unprovoked

boxes of ambiguous paradoxes
daily pre-reflective dioramas
signifying present
goodness of fit in our specifics and universals

in our ways of feeling
in relational encounters
our meanings found to reach closely,
through the terrains of living and loving,
with our companions

Nona, from time to time I have sat with your matchbox
scenario, pondering. I have taken coloured photographs
of different sizes to enable a more closely felt connection
to the images within and surrounding.

Second Response

I have actually felt so much the feeling of pre-reflective
knowing and being over time, shared between us, not
necessarily through concrete events. The feelings of a flow
of shared, felt continuities. So much is said without the
details of events, or retained beyond life event references,
but held in the resonant, subjective connections of safety
and trust.

I attach another brief poetic version- *The We Spirit*. I play
with how to place our pictures, poems, dialogues and
felt knowings, to assist access to meaningfulness, never
trying to be complete in the story of the what, staying more
with the accumulation of felt experiencing, the source of
ongoing truth through our time and space.

The We Spirit

I sit again today
with our materials
curiously attending to the WE
of your and my searching
in poetic and miniature
matching the parallel in
our daily presence of
an unstated continuous longing
and in creating of forms
to hold the spirit and pursuit
of truthful being- our own-
and the universal shadow
of inquiry, beyond human knowing
each in our small spiritual space
our life in a matchbox
vigorously committed to the search
or the loss to abandonment in
an ancient long gone negative
and the symbolic power of the
protective shielding brown leaves
calling us back into the restoration
of being found in their gentle coverage
of intrinsic nature-
yet generously insubstantial
held within the generosity of spirit
we create in our daily inquiry
of loving meaningfulness
both giving and receiving.

Nona's Response

I reflected on what stood out about the process of our responding. After reading the document you sent me with our processes, it occurred that there was something different about the order in which things are represented.

I purposely responded to your poetry in a different modality, a preferred modality of mine that is visual/sculptural. And because you requested reflexivity on process, I then wrote the extended piece to follow the matchbox. Given the matchbox was my primary response to your poetry in my mind it would have been placed before my reflexive writing.

The order in which the document currently stands I think emphasises or privileges the writing. That made me curious about the different qualities that these modalities carry. There may also be the question of the temporal order of how what I sent was viewed and received, and what difference it would have made had I sent the matchbox response to you first and the reflexive piece at a later date?

And the question remains- does this really matter? It is just that my preference is to privilege the art making with the text as addition rather than the other way around.

Another little poem:

Meeting

the we of you and me
expressed in how we meet

in time and place, balancing
between images and text



Insubstantiality

my footsteps wash away
with the first break of a wave
so it is with my life
the faintest momentary impression
obliterated with my last breath

my life is but the curve of a breeze
held by its own fragile energy
driven by a force unknown
which can exhaust itself
at any moment
and return me to the
unknown spaces from which I came
unknowing and unknown

with this I must learn to be content
for this is the void in which
I must live without fear,
yet creating meaningful sense daily
in the mysteries,
magic and beauties
to be found in our being
within, without, together
in loving human connections.

-Warren



Front of Nona's Match Box



Back of Nona's Match Box



Back and Inside of Nona's Match Box in Response to Warren's Poems

I have found my Insubstantiality
and Grandfathers- both-
placed in their inquiry spaces within

-Warren

The Grandfather- From a Distance

Trenches of blood
the unforgiving soil
a bravado of manliness
passions of lust and anger
rusted, brittle
external forms
held there
a soldier's armour
against others'
knowing
against the self

raging wars within
unassuaged
by the brutal toil
of rural servitude
the hazy gliding world
of alcohol
remits nothing
of self

a stone clings to the soil
powerless to move itself
waits for the rain
or tears
to bring it to
a more fertile place

I went again in search of you
What was it I wanted?

Have I held a part of you
within me
all this time?
an inescapable genetic tremor
an echo of disquiet
moving in the spirit
of all things
a search
to bring all the
irreconcilables of the world
into harmony?
a healing
before the last sunrise

or the acceptance
of bitter chaos
in our very bones?
Can one mortal carry all this?
Is this the
inescapable burden
of our humanness?
to wear the remnants
of the inner chaos
as an outer armoury
fixed in intractability?

What was your answer?
Is there one?
I speak now grandfather
man to man
myself a grandfather

let human tears melt the
armoury of self protection
and move us
to a living presence
in the vulnerability of our
chaotic beings
opening our stoniness
to possibility-
that possibility
of truthful inner knowing
able to be worn
on the outside too
a gentle genuineness
a respectful flow of warmth
held in the balance
of that known
and that never quite known
but staying always
in the inquiry space between

-Warren

Warren's Final Response

In the magical space of the world
of your matchbox, I found
the grandfathers, he and I
recognising the unknown losses
of our lived being

in the space of ageing, yet
calling me still to adaptations
of new knowings and acceptance

in multiple connections with others
all searching still and again
for meaningful presence

in unbelievable spaces of inquiry
and torrents of brown leaves
floating gently around us

Thank you Nona, from Warren

Warren's Final Reflection

Creating Our Being

the human coincidences of experiencing
arise so often from without
universal in the nature of being
calling us each for identification
with the core of every image from within

searching through multiple venues
for particular meanings
in the ways of humanity
arriving in diversities of ownership
attachments we carry and continue our search
through the hope and threats of ice
or the warmth of flow of
the gentle rustle of autumn leaves
symbols of the inner creations of meanings
parallel daily in the processes of
discerning how to feel, and how to be present
throughout this experiential demand to know
often through only sensed inability
the nature of the what and the how
of experiencing too complex
and staying beyond the wisdom of choice
submitting to what eventuates
yet still reaching to touch
how we may recognise our own felt presence of
temporary attachment to meaning

we engage the balancing powers
interacting though our struggles for becoming
to know and nurture our truth
to guide us into the qualities of being
that may define us, in our ongoing reality
yet reaching the inevitable moments
of cessation into the unknown, trusting
and grasping the qualities
of whom we have become
shown in our daily manifestations and images
of being present we are whom we have become

Nona's Final Response

Dear Warren,

Reflecting on my interaction,
my response remains pocket-sized
sporadic and hesitant

The matchbox, I see, holds
more of our process between us
balancing on a reflexive edge,

Beginning with a moment of meeting
our profound vulnerabilities-
with your poetry and my life at the time,

What then followed seemed to be
a staccato sort of dialogue,
from me- rather disjointed and mis-matched,

The matchbox shows two different perspectives:
as a leaf-covered woman
balances sideways to that of the man,

Seeing these residing together-
the resonance of connectivity
and awkwardness laying at odds,

Different from the first moment
of resonance with your poetry,
there's uncertainty with what I felt

I recall how unsure of how much or how often
I could be involved in this project-
there was little of me to spare,

Is this content in process I wonder?
My portion is small, fitting what I could
a pocket-sized moment as response

My awkwardness I offer
as transparency in process,
along with my vulnerable edges

So busy, my life is so full
I'm unable to do more
(even this has been hard to muster)

Warmly, Nona