

*Tuesday 31 January 2010*

*Introduction*

I had for many years wanted to be a writer but apart from the odd personal letter, some business correspondence and a journal, I hadn't written much at the point I left a long term partner late in 1988. Six months later I wrote this little book in the space of a couple of weeks. At the time I had taken extended sick leave and was seeing a counsellor, trying to figure out why I felt so bad when leaving my partner was such a right thing to do. What seemed as if it was a particularly bad bout of depression became a time of intense grieving as I began what was to become an ongoing healing process. Up until then I had not confronted the pain of loss of my birth family, a loss I was to continue to grieve periodically for many years to come.

I never sent the manuscript off to a publisher back in 1989, fearing rejection I suppose. Indeed, twenty years lapsed before I read the story again, and it wasn't until 2010 that I began to feel brave enough to contemplate putting it into the public domain. It takes courage to admit to a breakdown, and courage to describe the process one has used to put oneself back together again.

*The Ways of the Wicked Witch* describes the process I used to make sense of a number of significant experiences which had left me feeling wracked with guilt and a complete failure. I used the metaphor of the Wicked Witch of the West from the Wizard of Oz film to examine those cognitive processes which kept me in a loop of self-hatred and self-blame, as well as other stories to move through and out of the psychic conflict. Rather like the character of Philip in the recent A.S. Byatt story, *The Children's Book*, (2010, p. 133), I also used fairy stories for insight into understanding myself and to give me ways of understanding and describing others.

Reading *The Ways of the Wicked Witch* again in 2012 is like reading a story one is familiar with and yet disconnected from. The woman writing in 1989 is in many ways a stranger to me now, "some personage visiting from the past" (Daly, 1985, p. 14). Yet the inner work this stranger did back in 1989 allowed me to become who I am now. While I might read with sadness for what she had gone through, or with tinges of embarrassment for her ignorance or arrogance, without her I could not be me. I'm reminded of Mary Baker Eddy's comments about her own early work, that they were the "first steps of a child" (Eddy, 1994, p. viii), and remembering this encourages me to be kind to my young self, to not condemn her, to see her with the delight I've watched my own children begin walking, begin school etc.

References:

- Byatt, A. (2010). *The Children's Book*. London: Vintage Books.
- Daly, M. (1985). *The Church and the Second Sex. With the Feminist Postchristian Introduction and New Archaic Afterwords by the Author*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Eddy, M. B. (1994). *Science & Health with Key to the Scriptures* (1910 ed.). Boston, Massachusetts, USA: The First Church of Christ, Scientist.

*Friday 11 August 1989*  
*A Gift*

*On* the second occasion I went to see Wayne, he gave me a wonderful gift. He read me a story he had written about a mushroom. The mushroom had a rough time growing, it didn't have perfect growing conditions, but was trodden on and abused. The mushroom blamed itself for its difficulties in growing. It thought it was to blame, it didn't know any better. But with strength and courage it grew and grew until it burst through the ground. Then it rested. Then it grew and grew and grew.



I had tears in my eyes as Wayne read this to me. I could relate very well to that mushroom.

Wayne also read me a story about a friend of his who was going to try hot air ballooning. She was scared but very excited. She had to learn how to throw the sandbags overboard, taking great care not to throw them hurriedly or too many at once. Once she had done this she could then enjoy the lightness, peace and pleasure of floating in the sky.

When I heard this I knew that was what I wanted for myself. The feelings of lightness, of peace, of happiness. I brought a copy of the stories home with me and have read them many times. I will always cherish the stories of the mushroom and the balloon.

This is now my gift in heartfelt thanks for that which was given to me.

*Friday 21 July 1989*  
*My Grief*

*Loss* of a continuing relationship with my natural parents. Loss of a continuing relationship with my sister and three brothers. Loss of a close, binding relationship with my younger sister. Wanted - want - this but haven't been able to form it. No love, physical affection, warmth and closeness during my childhood and teenage years.

Loss of my youth. I surrounded myself with older people from eighteen on with no friends my own age. Loss of friendships half formed but distanced because of my inability to communicate my wishes and express my feelings. Loss of fun. Carefree, joyous, harmless fun.

Loss of career opportunities through staying with Peter. Loss of my identity. Being out of touch with me. Who am I? What do I really feel, want, need? Lost time spent being self-absorbed instead of living. Loss of friendships never pursued though desired.

Loss of freedom to express myself because of a need for approval by others and a fear of being rejected if I expressed what I really thought, felt.

The two babies I had aborted.

*Friday 28 July 1989*  
*The Ways of the Wicket Witch*

I've decided that my monster is a Wicked Witch. I haven't bought or made her yet, but I will sometime soon. Then I'm going to make some symbolic 'sandbags'.

I think I'll go down to the beach and collect pebbles, wrap them and label them with all the losses I have suffered and all the garbage I've been carrying around with me - guilt, anxiety, low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, fear, anger at myself, love, warmth and affection withheld.

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