

Survive & Thrive: A Journal for Medical Humanities and Narrative as Medicine

Volume 3 | Issue 1

Article 16

2017

Endnote

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Recommended Citation

Veeder, Rex (2017) "Endnote," *Survive & Thrive: A Journal for Medical Humanities and Narrative as Medicine*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 16.
Available at: http://repository.stcloudstate.edu/survive_thrive/vol3/iss1/16

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Endnote

Cover Page Footnote

N/A

Editorial

Endnote

Rex Veeder
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Jason, Frankie, and Steve, if you find a place at the end of the volume for this, I am okay with publishing it.

I have been at the point where reading and writing got me to sweat and even throw up. Text terror. You and this issue have pulled me out of that cave for a time. I love the cave. I may crawl back in, but not without a fight to come back out.

Steve, your intro and essay are, I do hope, going to get some people writing in response. Both pieces are of course masterful prose. I just hope that someone will respond. My response as you probably can't see is short, but I hope not unworthy of a response to your thoughtful argument.

I will be interested to see if anyone takes up the idea that what we are doing in Medical Humanities and Narrative Medicine is not confessional writing, or that only a small part of it is confessional. What the research shows is that people who write about their experiences and take an emotional approach to the topic experience healing—physically as well as mentally. The confessional poetry “movement” that was popular when I was getting a literature MA always seemed to me to be locked into a psychological method where simply talking about your problems would fix things. Now, of course, a good dose of medication and talking are expected together.

Also, the religious element needs some attention. Confessional poetry comes from the idea that confession is good for the soul—which it might be, and I am sure my Catholic friends would suggest it for me—but the issue of guilt is not always a part of survival writing, although all survivors are guilty. Notice that I encouraged and received an article on healing without religion. I thought it, too, should get people thinking about the issues of spirit and what we call spirit when we call it out or ask it to go away. I think the poems of the “buried self,” as Greg Orr calls them, are important for humanities survival, and perhaps thriving as well.

James Pennebaker has twenty-five years of research on the topic and has found that disclosure is necessary for physical and emotional health. There is consistent and mounting evidence that disclosure “of painful or traumatic experience has a stimulating effect on the body’s immune system” (Orr, 89). Whether the disclosure is confession or not is up to the individual, I think—both the writer and the reader.

Disclosure is the ticket that allows us to enter the rooms where we might speak and listen as human beings and not as creatures of institutional speaking and hearing. And the power of institutional language is such that it changes civilizations as the poets and writers responding to the Holocaust show us—as in Rozewic’s “I,” a poem through which he recreates the world after the Holocaust:

“this is a man/this is a tree this is bread/ people nourish themselves in order to live/I was repeating to myself/human life is important . . .” (Orr, 128-129).

Learning to Write . . . Again

I have a heart pump
They cut out a piece of my diaphragm to make it fit
I am all screws and electric line

This is the first thing I have written since
Wondering if I was a human
This is a disclosure

I am emotional about it
The fear of writing and reading after my death
Is such that I would remain silent

If it were not for people who disclose themselves
I freely confess I have been afraid
That I have wondered why I should be alive

When so many others are not
I toss this guilt into the air
Wondering if it is a rock to drop on me

Or a kite.

— Rex

To Steve and all, to the writers and readers of *Survive and Thrive*, I pledge to keep trying although I admit that there are many days when I am aware that I have been dead, having died fourteen times in two weeks, and that what I am seeing and feeling are perhaps not for me—so I confess—I will steal them.

Works Cited

Evans, John Frank. *Wellness and Writing Connections*. Enumclaw, WA: Idyll Arbor Inc., 2010

Orr, Gregory. *Poetry as Survival*. University of Georgia Press, 2002.