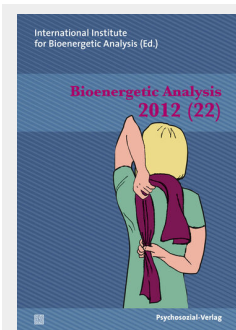


Linda Neal

Poem



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Cover image: Drawing of the Bioenergetic technique *towel pull sketch* by Vincenia Schroeter

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Describing or defining a poem always involves the risk of saying too much or too little. I'll say that "Toward Water" is a free-verse, unrhymed, lyric poem in five stanzas. To paraphrase W. H. Auden, if you're writing poems because you have a message for the world, forget it. If you're writing them because you love words, the sound of language and adventure, you're on the right track. So, I write a poem like I go on a trip. Language is the vehicle. The process is the destination. Though a poem (like "Toward Water,") has a kind of organic unity of images, a storyline or theme, the end comes as a surprise to me, and likewise probably to the reader as well. That's how a poem works – kind of like a good bioenergetic session.

Toward Water

On this cold November morning
I sit at the window, with my hot coffee
looking out at the nearby pine,
its branches spread out against the sky
its cones hanging on by the hundreds.
One thuds to the damp morning ground.
A squirrel cracks another in her jaw
but our destinies do not intertwine
even though when I was eight I shinnied
up bark in old jeans. The season didn't matter.

Because truth came down
to my childhood classroom
a Mason jar standing on an oak table
in the corner
and inside an embryo
floating
delivered into water
dead
like the contraction
in the pit of my stomach
when my mother walked in.

I expanded in rain
sloshing through puddles
alongside bones and coins
wearing red rubber boots
knowing
trees and water
as hedges against
my parents' dark weather
the muddy confluence of family strife.

At night in the dark
came the merging of the one with the many
the small with the large.
Some nights I became so small
I could hide inside a drop of water
and becoming water
be the whole ocean,
be everywhere at once
see my grandmother's grandmother
washing her black hair in a lake
and myself, safe and small
inside my mother,
before I entered the plains
of daughterhood and danger.

Safe in salty water,
alone and becoming
I could thrum a string
for the one who was to learn
no safety, not even, especially not
in the net of family.
Fished out of that warm and private sea
thrown up on dry land
I have looked for water
wherever I go, and exposed
to darker energies of close kin
I trek down
to damp sand, swim in the sea
search for wet valleys
sit at the mouths of caves
and the edges of waterfalls
exploring the flooded wilderness
of my life
absorbing the pulse of water,
learning
life not as a maze but a labyrinth.

About the Author

Linda Neal, MFT lives and works in Redondo Beach California. Her writing has appeared in a number of journals and newspapers, and she is currently working on a novel and memoir. She completed the bioenergetic training in 2003. She can be reached via email at lindarneal@gmail.com and by telephone at 310-540-2291.