

Weaving Beauty: In Words and Wool

The best way for me to keep track of my progress is to look back and see how far I have come. This is why I keep a journal. When I know where I have been, I feel less anxiety about my current struggles and difficulties. I am also more understanding of what I perceive at the time to be my failures, for by looking back I can see that what seemed to be failure at the time often leads to progress, or to an important lesson in the end. This was particularly clear when I went on allergy food binges, just to feel terrible and distracted. At these times I would feel that I had broken faith with myself, when what I really needed was a rest from the intensity of the work I was doing—a rest I did not know how to grant myself.

I use my journal to remind me of the importance of always moving forward in the healing process, for if I stray from the path, I find myself investing in stasis, which is unattainable except in depression, psychosis or death. This does not mean that I do not get stuck for long periods; it means the price of staying stuck is a heavy one indeed. (p.20)

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I went back to read my journal of the spring and was reminded of the commitment I had made. I saw a glimmer of light, and I wrote my way to that point. Ten years of filling more than two thousand pages with my dances toward it and screaming retreats left me with the image of a tunnel in a mountain. Once I got out of the tunnel, I knew I would have to climb the mountain. I did not think I could do that. I had no help, no guide, no one to hold my hand so I could take the first steps. So I wrote, creating a rope ladder, learning to climb one word, one day, at a time. (pp.25-26)

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I began my long, slow healing process through my hands. It made me feel good (and slightly warmer) to be absorbed completely in a weaving project. I taught myself and was soon very skilled at it, eventually winning prizes for work that would culminate, ten years later, in a gallery showing of my textiles. Poverty, however, seemed never-ending, for although people praised my work, it never found a steady market, though I hauled mountains of scarves, stoles, jackets, ponchos and rugs to craft fairs and tried to sell them through the trendy little craft shops of the time.

I cannot adequately describe how important the work with my hands was to my healing. Even as I felt ugly and hopeless beyond measure, my hands learned to speak an eloquent beauty and to weave the strands of my future into whole cloth. I could not see the beauty I made, fought seeing it for many years. Yet now I see how vital this work with my hands was to my process of recovery.

But I did not only sit at a loom or spinning-wheel, trying to earn a living with my hands. I spent hours, days, months, years with a tea tray on my lap and a pen in my hand teaching myself to write, to think and even, slowly, to begin to feel. During the worst years of my crisis, in my early thirties, I sometimes wrote sixteen hours a day, just to find a way to see and experience myself as real. (p.37)

Elly Danica, E. (1996). *Beyond don't: Dreaming past the dark*. Charlottetown, P.E.I: Gynergy Books.