

From Chrysalis to Butterfly –by Jay Ramsay



There is a poet in all of us. However unknown or neglected that part of us may be, it is there, often just waiting for the right conditions to present themselves.

Beyond writing poetry and being (and calling myself) a poet, I have known this since I realized that poetry is not just about literature and words on paper, it is alive in the living air all around us in any moment, and it is about our attitude to and relationship with life (all of life, and so death and dying also).

Poetry is also about that primary voice in us that we can also think of as the most radical part of who we are, belonging in our feelings and our individual authentic response to what happens to and around us. That primary voice is something we all get educated and socialized out of (to a greater or lesser degree)—indeed society would be impossible without these agreed terms of reference and description—however something is also lost in this process that Wordsworth referred to as ‘shades of the prison house’, which was why Miroslav Holub, the Czech poet, spoke of poetry as being among ‘the first things of Man’. We may think of this in terms of dreams too, as well as play with its sense of expanse and experiment: in both the stirrings of our creative unconscious are free in a way they may later seem not to be.

Poetry is also about the imagination and gaining access to a different level of meaning. Nothing means anything merely at the concrete level beyond its function. That is materialism. For meaning, we have to get to another level which is also symbolic where things and events resonate with spirit. This is what the early 19th C. Romantics—Wordsworth, Coleridge—knew as Imagination (with a capital ‘I’). Through it, we can open to our lives as intrinsically meaningful as journeys of experience and development in time—that is, when we can find that primary voice, that basic experience of identity in us again. This is where the work begins.

If I don’t know how I feel, I don’t know who I am. What I have experienced working with groups and individuals again and again is the power of the imagination and the heart to restore us to what we feel and therefore who we are. The expression that comes as a result—through drawing and group sharing as well as in writing—is fundamentally healing, and may also involve the naming of something long held and never spoken. Again and again I have seen faces lit up from within during and as a result of the writing that follows, and it is always a thread in the way I work in my private therapy practice as well. The Greeks knew this as catharsis, for me—wield and suspect as it may be to the literary mainstream—it is living poetry where poetry and healing are about the same thing: that spark that makes us know who we are, the relief and wonder of being back inside the skin of things.

As a result of this conviction I developed my two part course by post Chrysalis—the poet in you, which very much approaches the teaching of poetry from the point of view of feeling and imagination. If that comes first, technique can follow, building on someone’s actual experience of their own voice in writing, raw as it may initially be. Both parts take 9 months including one set of notes per month with individual empathic correspondence between myself and each student. Part 1 is designed for beginners and people who are busy with other calls on their time; Part 2 is more advanced, concentrating more on form and the framework of literary and cultural history. All of it is set in an imaginative and spiritual context, connected also to my training in psychosynthesis psychotherapy, and also spiritual healing (where I work in private practice). I work regularly at Hawkwood, lovely as it is, running related day and weekend courses (see ad on p.—), as well as in Ireland, and abroad. I also run two on-going poetry groups in Gloucestershire and London, which (like the two courses by post) have the advantage of continuity where personal development and positive critical feedback on language go side by side, both implied in each other. You might call it ‘poetry therapy’, but for me it is fundamentally to do with helping people to awaken to the spark within them that is their authentic expression and being, that has not only to do with healing (in this sense) but creating, and being vitally ‘part of’ of the real life of things, and the process of Creation itself as it unfolds mysteriously all around us.

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You can find more information about Chrysalis, see About Jay and Ongoing Groups. See below for course information.

The Programme

A poem is like a butterfly. A moment seeds itself inside us. A memory. An experience when we saw, we felt, perhaps, even, we knew.

It touches deep in us. Deeper than words. And something begins, in that inner space. Something that is uniquely ours, to speak of.

Creativity is naturally a process of incubation and birth. The service of CHRYSALIS is to assist and guide you in this process.

CHRYSALIS is a non-academic, critically affirmative approach designed to respond to the needs of each individual person.

CHRYSALIS aims to honour and empower your own unique experience. All you need is a commitment to yourself.

The Chrysalis Course

(Parts 1 and 2 can be taken in sequence, or separately)

PART ONE: for those who feel drawn to writing as well as reading poetry. It is made up of an Introduction and nine modular sets of course notes (one per month) which contain teaching, imaginative exercises, study poems, suggested reading—and poems to write to be sent in for individual feedback.

PART TWO: a more advanced course designed for those who want to go more deeply into poetry, its origin, form, process and technique. It is made up of an Overview, and again, nine sets of notes which specifically emphasize form, with broader reading material, as well as nurturing and stimulating the imagination. Again you will be invited to send in work and write about what is happening to you.

EDITING: an experienced editor, Jay offers a number of services such as appraisal, advice on selection or structure, proofreading and copyediting in both poetry and prose. Please ask for further details.

ONE TO ONE SESSIONS: 60 -75 minute work with Jay on your poetry or in a therapeutic context in connection with your creative and spiritual process and where you are in it. This includes journal keeping, drawing and writing.

PERFORMING AND READING: performing or reading poetry and learning how to relate to an audience is an art of its own. These sessions will help you explore your voice and presentation in doing justice to your work.

WORKSHOPS AND TALKS: Jay's day and weekend writing workshops 'The Poet in You', 'The Sacred Space of the Word', 'Keeping the Faith' and its sequel 'Touching the Source' are held regularly. They offer an immediate and inspiring way of working, and an invaluable opportunity to meet and exchange ideas. Please let us know of your interest.

FEES: Parts One and Two are £195 each, inclusive of VAT, printing and postage costs in Great Britain. For the USA and other countries please add £20, with payment by international money order or sterling cheque. Payable in full or £75 in advance, with the remainder payable after four sets of notes have been sent out. Some concessions are available, especially for younger people and OAPs. For one-to-one sessions in Gloucestershire and London, either on your poetry or for therapy, phone Jay on 01453-759436.

PLEASE APPLY TO: For both parts: Jay Ramsay, 5 Oxford Terrace, Uplands, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 1TW. Phone 01453 759436 Cheques to Chrysalis. Please also let us have your email address.

PART ONE of this course is now available as *The Poet in You* (O Books, 2009) available via Jay's Book page, www.o-books.net or Orca Distribution.

You can work through Part One in this form either on your own or with Jay as a tutor.