



What If? Why Not? How?

News, Views & Thoughts from Sally Wiener Grotta

February, 2020

Renewing My Creativity With a Little Help from My Friends: Van Gogh, Cezanne, Bob Dylan... and You

Hello,

A couple of weeks ago, I spent Wednesday evening wandering around the Philadelphia Museum of Art with a new friend, sharing some of our favorite works of art as a way to get to know each other. So we visited a few of my old "pals" -- Cezanne's [Bathers](#), Van Gogh's [Sunflowers](#), Duchamp's [Nude Descending Staircase](#), the chapel-like room of Brancusi's sculptures, and other works of art that are my current points of reference. These are among the artists whose pieces I visit when I need to be pulled outside myself, to find new paths into my own creativity.

I crave the fellowship of artists, writers and all kinds of creative thinkers, the many who came before, as well as those who "walk" beside me. I need them almost as much as I need air and water and chocolate. The wonder of an exquisite painting, the pure sensuality of a joyous piece of music, an intriguing, well-crafted book, a dynamic conversation... it helps me see beyond my here and now, and inspires me to reach deeper and wider in my own work.

But creativity and inspiration are everywhere, in the way we live, think and interact. All we have to do is seek it out. Often, I find it in an unexpected encounter, such as the chat I had the other day with a rather spirited woman who sat next to me on the bus. And sometimes it's more structured and purposeful. For instance, the other week, I was having difficulty with a scene in my new novel. I found a way back to my initial inspiration for the book when I attended a lunchtime lecture on the author Toni Morrison at [The Rosenbach](#) library presented by [Trapeta B. Mayson](#), Philadelphia's poet laureate. (To read about that eye-opening experience, see the link below.)

One of my favorite sources is you... everyone I interact with, in person or virtually (via my [blog](#), email and social media). Creativity can't develop in a vacuum; we need the influence of each other's perspectives and insights. What someone else sees in the crowds on Market Street can be as energizing as how Van Gogh saw a vase of sunflowers. So, please do share your ideas and visions with me, and let us both be inspired by what evolves out of our fellowship.

I'll look forward to hearing from you, Sally

P.S. Please feel free to share this newsletter with others.

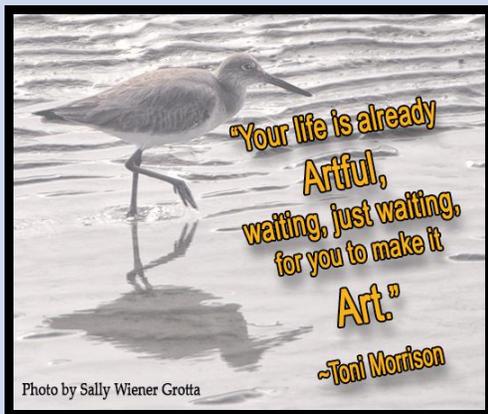
Below are links to recent essays about learning from others' creativity:

- [Thank you Toni Morrison... and Trapeta B. Mayson](#)
- [The Creative Magic of a Darkened Theater](#)

Plus:

- An awards eligibility post with links to two of my 2019 short stories and a novelette

- Download links for excerpts of my novels



Thank you Toni Morrison... and Trapeta B. Mayson

Trapeta B. Mayson's [lecture](#) on Toni Morrison at [The Rosenbach](#) library was an invigorating reminder that the creative process requires giving ourselves permission to stumble and even periodically fail on the rocky path toward our vision. ([Read more](#))

Interested in writing a guest blog on my website?

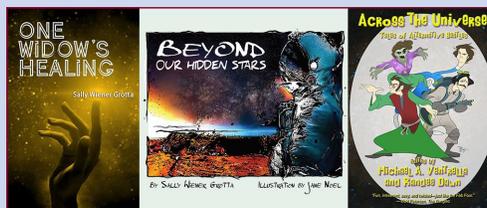
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[The Creative Magic of a Darkened Theater](#)

Last week, when I attended the Broadway production of *Girl from the North Country* (written and directed by Conor McPherson with Bob Dylan music), all my senses were energized, and my thoughts and emotions took off on unexpected journeys. (Please [click through](#) to read my short essay.)



Yikes! I have an [awards eligibility post](#)



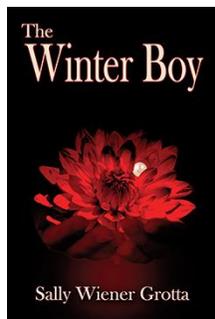
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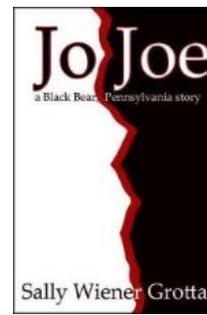
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