



The Gaps on Your Resume, by Kimberley Patton

My students say to me sometimes, as they apply to doctoral programs or jobs in parish ministry, "How shall I account for the two, or the ten, missing years on my resume How should I explain the gap?" And how I wish I could always answer them, "Tell the truth. Say, 'I took in a child whose mother was in prison and sang her to sleep every night while she cried. I worked the night shift in a rifle factory. I battled an addiction, and I won. My husband was crushed by a boulder that fell in our own backyard, and I tended his grave. (...) I fled to Caledonia. I fled to Paraguay. I lived in a monastery in Thailand where I came to see that all things, all things, are empty and undeserving of our outrageous attachment to them. (...) These are all true stories of the things my students have done during the "gaps" in their resumes. These experiences are how hearts are broken, and re-made; how souls are forged; how we become human beings with credible beliefs about existence itself. The gaps on the resume are the abysses into which we fall from time to time, and in the process, fall into the hands of the living God. (...) Looking deep into the religious traditions of the world, one learns that we need not fear these initiations, these times of breaking apart. The soul cannot grow or change without them. What the human ego or the human body experience as traumas, the soul instantly recognizes as opportunities to shed what is no longer needed. When the heart is broken, the soul is released from its prior constellations. It begins the ancient process of dissolution, dismemberment, and new life. The soul rushes toward rebirth. This is not a comfortable process. But it is a normal one. Tears are the holy water of the broken heart. "All through history," writes Clarissa Pinkola Estes, "tears have done three works: called the spirits to one's side, repelled those who would muffle and bind the [simple] soul, and healed the injuries of poor human bargains." --Kimberley Patton