

ARTFUL AGING

The Road Not Taken: Reclaiming the Unlived Life

By Lynnaea Lumbard, Ph.D. · Spring, 2016



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Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
ROBERT FROST

We have all been at this yellow-wood crossroad, where we make a choice to turn down one path and forgo another. Maybe we give up skating to become a money manager, or painting to become an engineer. Perhaps at mid-life a career path gives way to having children, or children leaving home opens a door to a life of travel or leisure.

Sometimes the pieces left behind continue to weave through our lives like golden threads in a tapestry. And sometimes they go underground, like certain seeds in the desert that patiently await the right conditions in which to burst forth from the dark and flower in the sunlight.

I came to this yellow wood in my mid-thirties. Faced with making a choice between pursuing a relationship that might have led to marriage, or committing more deeply into my career, I took the road less traveled and spent my child-bearing years creating a national workshop company, often bushwhacking the trail to open the field of transformational seminars.

But my road-not-taken continued to call to me in the form of loneliness and longing for intimate relationship. Then at forty-four I met the man I would marry two years later. And so, like Morgaine in *The Mists of Avalon* (the high priestess who leaves Avalon for a life with a neighboring king and his children), I took a new road into life as a wife.

Today's Inspiration

"I swear life passed by at
crawl when I was young
leaps by like a deer."

—Liz Taylor

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Carl Jung used the term “enantiodromia” for the emergence of the unconscious opposite in the course of time. This is the path of reintegrating the road not taken, living out the unlived life. These choices can occur many times in our lives, when we shift from one kind of life to another. And now that our generation is living so much longer, and we have new conditions of time, energy and money, we have yet another opportunity to reimagine our own road not taken. What would be in our lives now had we taken that other road so many years ago? And what are our choices now; what’s asking to be birthed, or rebirthed, in this third act of life?

For Victoria and David, it’s taking on this magazine. For me, it’s fulfilling my dream of being a writer. What’s calling you? What part of you is asking to be seen and heard? Yes, there’s always the bucket list of things to do and places to go. But what do we secretly want to be, to explore or manifest in ourselves? What remains unexpressed of a long-held dream of creativity? What deep inner longing is unfulfilled?

At this new junction in the roads, Mary Oliver’s words come to mind: “what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” Do I have the courage now to once again step onto a road less traveled? I know it will make all the difference.

Lynnaea Lumbard, Ph.D., is co-president of [NewStories](#), a Washington-based non-profit dedicated to illuminating and nurturing pathways toward a life-affirming future. A transformational psychologist, interfaith minister, community weaver, and social change philanthropist, she lives on Whidbey and Cortes Islands with her husband, Rick Paine.