

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

## Obsession

by Olivia Sprinkel

Obsession gets a bad press. Passion, that's a good thing. Obsession, that's bad. The roots of the word give a sense of this. Possession by a hostile or evil spirit. Going further back, to being besieged. Again, as if we have been taken control of by an outside force.

But maybe that which takes control of us is not a hostile or evil spirit. It is just that it is labelled as such by our polite society. Of course, an obsession may turn bad. But maybe that is because it has been kept under wraps, and then bursts forth, uncontrolled, seeking vengeance.

In his book, 'Courting the Wild Twin', Martin Shaw writes about our wild twin that is exiled at birth, the missing part of us, that we need to court if we are to be whole. He recounts a story about the wild twin. Because it is an old story, it involves a quest and a forest and a wise old woman, who is also part tree.

The telling of the story leads me to wonder again about the role that forests play in our psyches and stories. We leave our castles in order to go into the forest and discover the wisdom that will save us. We also need to go into the forest to bring our exiled wild twin in from the cold and the trees.

What is it about forests? Is it just they represent dark places? Or do they represent the experiences of those early tellers of tales who did leave their castles and did go into the forests and come back as storytellers?

Obsession is driven by desire. The wild twin is possessed by desire. But polite society doesn't know what to do with this.

Sometimes it is the obsession which will lead us to discover the wild twin, and then peel back the layers. In the story, the serpent who is the wild twin, has to shed 12 layers of scales and then be agonisingly scrubbed clean, until his true form is revealed as a man of 'ordinary beauty'.

Obsessions are the only things that matter. Until we are unpossessed. Unbeseiged.